

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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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

Monday, April 29, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 30—The Forest Health Protection
Amendment Act (Heritage Trees)**

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I move, seconded by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino), that Bill 30, The Forest Health Protection Amendment Act (Heritage Trees), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill seeks to establish a nomination, selection, recognition and protection initiative for trees of environmental, cultural, social and historic importance. Many of our trees in this province tell stories and now we want those stories better heard. After all, we will only fight for what we know and what we love. Thank you.

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

**Bill 31—The Workplace Safety and
Health Amendment Act**

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I move, seconded by the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief), that Bill 31, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la sécurité et l'hygiène du travail, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Howard: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 31, The Workplace Safety and Health Amendment Act, today. This bill builds on our commitment laid out last week in our five-year strategy on preventing injury and illness in the workplace and will help us to continue to be a leader in workplace health and safety towards our goal of making Manitoba one of the safest places to work.

These amendments include provisions to allow immediate administrative penalties for high-hazard contraventions that present an imminent risk to workers, the ability to stop an employer from undertaking work anywhere in the province if that work may place workers at significant risk of injury, allowing for penalties for failing to maintain appropriate systems after an improvement order has been issued.

This bill enshrines workers' rights in legislation and penalizes employers that prevent workers from exercising those rights and provides for stronger protections when a worker refuses unsafe work.

These changes are based on recommendations of the Advisory Council on Workplace Safety and Health, as well as public consultations. I believe—we believe—that work-related injuries and illnesses are preventable and that every Manitoba worker deserves to go home safely at the end of each day, and we hope that these amendments will help ensure that.

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by M. Nacci, D. Roberts, C. Graham and hundreds of other concerned Manitobans.

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

Provincial Road 433 Improvements

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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.

This population growth has generated an increased tax base in rural municipality.

Cape Coppermine Road was not originally built to handle a high volume of traffic it now accommodates.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

This petition is signed by L. Penner, A. Penner and C. Radwanski and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by R. Sharpe, B. Fansher, L. Hedley and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Highway 217 Bridge Repair

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The bridge over the Red River on Highway 217 outside of St. Jean Baptiste was built in 1947 and provides a vital link for economic opportunities and community development on both sides of the river.

The Department of Infrastructure and Transportation closed the bridge after spending significant sums of money and time on the rehabilitation efforts in the summer of 2012.

Individuals require numerous trips across the river each day to access schools, businesses and

health-care facilities. The bridge closure causes daily undue hardship and inconvenience for residents due to the time requirements and higher transportation costs.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to repair or replace the existing bridge as soon as possible to allow the communities on both sides of the river to return to their regular activities.

And this petition has been signed by J. Bird, L. Barnabe and E. Dupuis and many thousand other fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Mr. Speaker: No further petitions, so we'll move on to—

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flooding Update

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I rise in the House today to provide an update on the rapidly evolving flood situation in the province.

Warm temperatures over the weekend created a situation where snow has melted quickly, causing localized flash flooding throughout many areas of the province. Emergency management personnel worked day and night over the weekend to clear blocked drains and monitor road conditions. Localized flooding resulted in a few individual homes needing to be sandbagged in RM of Rhineland. The First Nation of Sioux Valley evacuated 40 people due to flooding caused by a blocked drain—that they are expected to return home today. Numerous roads were overtopped due to the rapid melt. Those living in rural areas are advised to travel with caution as road conditions can change rapidly with such rapid melt.

Water levels on the Red and the Assiniboine rivers are rising quickly as a result of water flowing into the system from local tributaries.

The Red River flood wheel will need to be operated today as water levels in the city of Winnipeg are reaching flood level. As of 11 a.m. this morning, senior officials have recommended that the Province begin immediate operation of the Portage Diversion in order to protect homes and communities on the lower Assiniboine River from ice jams.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I thank the minister for the statement.

We will be closely watching the forecast and look forward to regular flood updates as the spring events unfold. We were pleased to hear the impact of the spring flooding in Fargo has lessened: however, the forecast over the next few days will have an impact on the flooding potential here in Manitoba. We still need to be watching moisture levels in Saskatchewan and the Qu'Appelle and Souris River basins.

My colleagues and I are working and committing—committed to co-operatively work with the 'minners' of government, our communities and our neighbours to tackle challenges in this spring's flood may pose.

As with past disasters, Manitobans will pull together in times of need for the *[inaudible]*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave for the honourable member for River Heights to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: I appreciate the statement from the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, update on the flooding situation. I was travelling around parts of Manitoba on the weekend and certainly noticed that there's a lot more areas where there's water and snow melted rapidly and that we've got to be on the lookout for issues.

I think that the—one of the things that I do note that the minister's talked about, the fact that the floodway gates will open at—starting at 6 o'clock tonight. In the past, it's not unusual for 12 or so hours later there to be problems with ice jamming and flooding north of the outlet and it was—certainly been helpful if the minister had filled us in on the situation with regard to potential for ice jamming and making sure that people in that area are thoroughly alerted, because that has certainly been a risk in the past and I just wanted to make sure that the minister is on top of this.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have from Murdoch MacKay

Collegiate 24 grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Kim Dudek. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

And also in the public gallery, we have with us today members from the Northwood 13A3 hockey team. Dave Sherman, the head coach, and Shane Lilley, assistant coach, are both—are the guests of the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Manitoba Hydro—Bipole III East-West Route Costs

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The hits just keep on coming, Mr. Speaker—NDP tax hits, that is. On the back of the PST hike that will take \$1,600 a year out of Manitoba households comes the news that on May 1st, there'll be another hydro rate increase—this time 3 and a half per cent. Now, what that means is that over the past year, Manitoba's hydro bills have gone up by over 8 per cent, and that is the highest increase in Canada. But don't blame Hydro; blame the NDP.

The fact of the matter is that a big reason, according to the Public Utilities Board, for the increase in these rate hikes is the NDP's own billion-dollar boondoggle, the bipole west boondoggle, which no one we can find, at least from Manitoba Hydro, supports.

So my question for the MLA for St. Boniface is: Why power dumb, not power smart? Why spend additional dollars on a bipole west route, and how much will that bipole west route cost over the east option?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member for Fort Whyte just put on the record that there would be a certain amount of additional PST paid by a family. By our calculations, that would take \$160,000 a year expenditure, so I want to recommend that the member for Fort Whyte take a careful look at his numbers. He seems to be exaggerating, as he does on so many questions in front of the Legislature, and it's very unfortunate that he's doing that.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has said that he wants to put the brakes on hydro

development. He wants to stop all future hydro development in Manitoba. In less than 10 years, we will need all the power we're currently on the path towards developing. If the member had his way, within 10 years Manitoba would have to be an importer of power and the rates would be much higher than they are now. Any province that is importing power into its jurisdiction has much higher rates than Manitoba.

We're building it for the future of Manitobans. We're building it to ensure that we have industry and business thrive in Manitoba. And when we build hydro, we need more transmission and we need it—

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

Manitoba Hydro Advertising Campaign Costs

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I don't mind having my integrity attacked by a guy that's never been to Truthtown in his life, Mr. Speaker.

The Public Utilities Board says that hydro rates are going to more than double over the next 18 years. Wave goodbye to our Manitoba advantage under this government.

Now, the spendP wants to put Hydro into an additional \$20 billion of debt so that it can gamble on exporting energy outside of Manitoba, but the Public Utilities Board says production costs will be triple the market price. Now, that means that this new energy will be sold at a loss, and the Public Utilities Board says that we should be prepared to lose money for at least 16 years. Now, Manitobans today and tomorrow are on the threshold of a monumental risk without precedent in the history of our province, and all we get is spin from that member.

The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) needs to tell Manitobans how much money he forced Manitoba Hydro to spend on an ad campaign before this ridiculous expansion proposal of theirs was even approved.

How much money—

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

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The member opposite, not only does he expect every Manitoban to spend \$160,000 to justify the ridiculous number he

puts in front of the Legislature, the member opposite does not want to build Manitoba Hydro. He wants to halt it in its tracks. He is now saying we should not build Manitoba Hydro for export.

Mr. Speaker, when we built Limestone, members opposite were opposed to building Limestone. It cost \$1.6 billion. Within 10 years, it earned \$6 billion; it paid itself off and it provided 1,300 megawatts of power to Manitobans when they need it, and the capital had been paid for by export revenues. This is the tried-and-true approach.

We have firm contracts from our export customers worth \$7 billion of profitability for Manitoba Hydro.

Future Rate Increases

Mr. Pallister: Well, Mr. Speaker, again I submit that this isn't power smart; this is power dumb. And the reality is that the NDP is kissing the Manitoba advantage goodbye. They're kissing it goodbye.

Now, the NDP inherited low debt in this Province when they came in and they doubled it. They inherited low red tape and they doubled that. Now they're saying, we got a low hydro rate; let's double it too. And now they want to double down in the United States on an export market that's high risk at the expense of Manitobans and their future.

* (13:50)

Now, we know that they love to double down with other people's money, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is that the NDP plans to increase hydro rates by 4 per cent every year for 18 years, and that's if their speculative approach is correct, which the Public Utilities Board questions.

So I've got to ask the Premier: Will he admit that his high-risk hydro gamble will be funded by the highest rate increases of any Canadian province?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants to turn the lights out, and within 10 years, in Manitoba unless he brings in exports. We have a law passed in this Legislature that requires a report every year to show that Manitoba's hydroelectricity rates, home heating costs and auto insurance costs are the lowest in Canada.

The first report came out by an independent accounting firm this year. It confirmed we were the lowest in Canada on those three items. Our hydro rates are lower than Saskatchewan, where they're going to spend \$15 billion upgrading their system. They're lower than Ontario, where they're spending

even more than that to upgrade their system. Manitoba's hydro rates will remain among the most 'inforable' in North America if we build Manitoba Hydro.

If the member opposite gets his way and stops Hydro in its tracks, rates will go up rapidly. We will be a net importer of power and the economy will suffer. Our economy has more than doubled since we've come to office. Our debt load is half the cost it was when he was there. Only the member opposite likes to play with math—

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

Manitoba Hydro Rate Increases

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): In their notice of decision, the PUB raised the following concern, and I quote: "The PUB is concerned with the projected future deterioration of Manitoba Hydro's financial targets . . . even with projected annual rate increases of approximately 4 per cent twice the projected level of inflation."

First, Manitoba taxpayers got hit by the big NDP PST lie, and now hydro ratepayers get hit by the big NDP mismanagement rate hike. Why should Manitobans continually be forced to pay for this NDP mess?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I thank the member for the question. This increase is needed to fund investment in the province's electrical system to keep up with our growing economy and maintain the reliability within the province. The lights have to stay on.

Mr. Schuler: Perhaps the minister should actually read the PUB report. In their notice of decision, the PUB raised the following concern, and I quote: "Because of low export prices, Manitoba Hydro is now forecasting losses for the first ten years of operations of Wuskwatim . . . Manitoba Hydro forecasts the project will not be profitable until 2023." End quote.

So on top of the 1 per cent big NDP PST lie, Manitobans are paying a cumulative 8 per cent more for hydro over last year and another 4 per cent increase planned for next year. Exactly when will this NDP-inflicted pain ever end?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member a lot for the supplementary. The quote I read

to him was from the Province of Saskatchewan, where the rate's going up 4.9 per cent and they're increasing their expenditures by \$15 billion to renew coal and import power from out of province.

That's a Saskatchewan quote, where the prices are higher, Mr. Speaker. We're doing it lower. We're exporting it. We're making money for Manitobans. And we're not going to market rate like you want to go, which would double the price like it did with the telephone system.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I would like to remind all honourable members, especially the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines, please, when you're making comments in response to questions or you're asking questions, I ask that you direct your comments through the Chair, please. That's a caution for the House.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and while the minister's at it, perhaps he should tell us that the PST in Saskatchewan is now 5 per cent and not 8 per cent like it is in Manitoba.

In their notice of decision, the PUB raised the following concern, and I quote: The board further notes that the integrated financial forecast first predicts export prices to rise above 10 per cent per kilowatt hour after 2028. This suggests that a project such as Wuskwatim would not be profitable based on export sales until after 2008. End quote.

By this NDP government's own numbers, losses will be incurred until 2023 on Wuskwatim. Hydro ratepayers are reeling from the 1 per cent big NDP PST lie and an 8 per cent hydro rate increase this year. They now face a further 4 per cent year-over-year hydro increase.

Why must Manitobans pay for the NDP mismanagement year over year, over year, over year?

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

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in Canada, the three provinces that have the lowest electrical rates are all hydro provinces. The province that has the lowest electrical rates is Manitoba. In Saskatchewan, families pay \$663 a year more. In Ontario, families pay \$785 a year more because we've built hydro and because we're building hydro for the future.

We're investing in hydro, Mr. Speaker, helping pay the upfront cost so that when we need power in 2022, which is less than 10 years from now, we'll not only have the hydro here but we'll have prepaid it, and we've pledged to have the lowest rates in the country as we had last year, the year before, the year before and the year before that.

If we went the way the members opposite did and privatized hydro or went with market rates, we'd have, just like they have in other provinces, market rates the highest in the country, Mr. Speaker, and we'd be importing coal or oil to heat our—and to provide our electricity. That's not what Manitobans want; they're proud of our hydro system.

Manitoba Hydro Future Rate Increases

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, the examples just roll out: 5 per cent sales tax in Saskatchewan—what is it now here? Eight per cent in Manitoba?—\$5,000 less in income tax in Saskatchewan—what is it here? Oh I—it's just unbelievable, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said during the election that threats of a PST increase were nonsense. The PUB is concerned about the deterioration about Manitoba Hydro's financials, as the minister should be. Even with projected increases of 4 per cent, over twice the rate of inflation, Manitoba Hydro may face losses for over 10 years, maybe even more, according to the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, what will the projected annual rate increase be? Four per cent, 6 per cent, 8 per cent, or is that just nonsense?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): At the Crown Corporations committee where we discussed this for four hours, the president laid out the next 10-year plan for Hydro, which called for steady increases over the next 10 years but would still keep Manitoba rates the lowest in the country.

Mr. Speaker, let's compare two provinces. Manitoba's spending \$20 billion to create hydro for a hundred years, of which we'll have power they—we can export. Saskatchewan is spending \$15 billion over 10 years to renew coal and to buy imported power.

Let me compare: \$15 billion to renew coal and buy imported power or \$20 billion to produce hydro

for a hundred years, keep the rates the lowest in the country and export to other jurisdictions. What seems more obvious to you, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Helwer: Let me compare: 5 per cent PST in Saskatchewan, 8 per cent PST in Manitoba. Shocking, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government lied to Manitobans about PST increases.

Mounting losses at Manitoba Hydro are causing Manitobans to ask: Is this NDP government also lying to Manitobans about hydro rate increases?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I already pointed out, and it's in the budgetary documents that the member could just look, that we have the lowest electricity rates in the country. And we will continue to do that.

We also have the lowest rates, Mr. Speaker, for commercial enterprises that come here, and that's one of the reasons for the Manitoba advantage. We've actually legislated—we had a body; it's reviewed our expenditures for power and for home heating and for car insurance, and we've been found to have this lowest bundle of prices in the country.

It's in the budget papers. It's an independent analysis. But members opposite don't believe it because they want to privatize—they want to privatize—the hydro system as they did the telephone system where we'll end up having to pay double rates and not have the advantage of having those benefits be coming to all Manitobans by having the lowest rates in the country.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only person talking about privatizing is the minister responsible for hydro across the floor and—is that why we're in Nigeria with Manitoba Hydro? We're learning how to privatize Nigerian hydro, and they're going to relearn those lessons, they're going to put them into force in Manitoba?

Well, you know, it's just sad, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans want an answer. This NDP government lied to Manitobans about the PST increase. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) will not rule out another PST increase next year.

* (14:00)

How high will the hydro rate increase be next year? Eight per cent, 10 per cent, or is that just nonsense?

Mr. Chomiak: The members opposite are running out of material, as they keep answering the same questions, Mr. Speaker.

You know, Mr. Speaker, at the four hours of committee hearings, the president of Hydro laid out a plan that the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) said, every Manitoban ought to see this plan; they ought to see what's happening in hydro. That's what the member from St. Paul said.

And at the time, the president of Hydro outlined what the rate increases would be, what the capital development would be over the years and the fact we would have \$7 billion in firm contracts and up to \$16 billion in proposed contracts—would help pay the cost of developing hydro.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just that it'll benefit Manitobans. The clean, green energy will be of benefit for a hundred years.

Hydro projects last a hundred years. They will pay all Canadians and help in the climate change issues—

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

Government Spending Impact on Taxpayers

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, spending by this NDP government is out of control, and now taxpayers and ratepayers are paying the price.

Manitobans were dealt a double whammy last week when they were hit with another hydro rate increase on top of the NDP PST hike.

So I'd like to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Why is his NDP government forcing Manitobans to do the heavy lifting to pay for their financial mismanagement?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, what's very clear coming out of the discussions that we've had on this is that indiscriminate, across-the-board cuts are just foolish.

And these, Mr. Speaker, are the indiscriminate, across-the-board cuts that the members opposite seem to be hanging their hats on. They want to pretend that this won't hurt Manitoba's families. She pretends like she's interested in Manitoba families and she says they're doing the heavy lifting.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba families want us as a government to be able to invest in infrastructure in this province. Manitoba families want us to invest in flood infrastructure to help farmers, to help businesses, to help Manitoba families.

Members opposite wouldn't make that possible, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite—

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has mismanaged the finances of Manitoba and now they've gone after a PST money grab.

The NDP have politically interfered with Manitoba Hydro and now they're driving Manitoba Hydro towards bankruptcy. In both cases, Mr. Speaker, their incompetence is costing Manitobans more money.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask this NDP government: How much more NDP incompetence can Manitobans afford?

Mr. Struthers: The member for Charleswood is absolutely incorrect, Mr. Speaker, and, furthermore, her leader absolutely exaggerates in this House.

Mr. Speaker, this was the government that reduced from 11 down to five, the number of RHAs in this province. Those administrative costs were plowed right into the front lines to help Manitobans receiving health services in Manitoba—that's good for families.

This is the government that merged two Crown corporations and saved millions of dollars in administrative costs, Mr. Speaker. We don't need to take any back seat to anyone when it comes to controlling—

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

Taxation Future Increases

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): And, Mr. Speaker, that is the government that lied to Manitobans in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, in a letter to the editor, Leonard Turton from Winnipeg said, and I quote: The cookie jar is empty. My pockets are empty, and now this NDP Premier wants the lint, too. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are hurting because this NDP government keeps taking more and more of their hard-earned money and they have not ruled out future tax increases.

So Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Premier (Mr. Selinger): How many more times is his

government going to pick the pockets of hard-working Manitobans?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, there she goes again, Mr. Speaker. She's wrong again. *[interjection]* Yes, the—I understand how touchy they are on this issue, because they haven't been telling the truth on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is in the last two years this government has had the second lowest per cent increase in spending of any government in the country. That includes Saskatchewan. That includes Canada. On a per capita basis over the last five years, we've had the second lowest per capita spending increases of any government in this country, and we did it by reconfiguring services out in the regions, which every member of that side of the House opposed.

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

Government Spending Impact on Taxpayers

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, but we need no lessons on truth from the member of a government that lied to Manitobans before the last election and said they weren't going to raise taxes.

We see this NDP government continuing to dig deeper and deeper into hard-working taxpayers' pockets to feed their spending addiction. Mr. Speaker, \$184 million in increased taxes and fees last year; a 1 per cent increase in the PST this year, and now last week we hear an 8 per cent increase in hydro rates.

Mr. Speaker, when will they stop asking Manitobans to dig deeper into their pockets to feed their spending addiction?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, again the member for River East is just incorrect, just as the member from Charleswood is incorrect, just as the Leader of the Opposition exaggerates in this House, Mr. Speaker.

I've already—and just for her own information, I've already said in question period several different ways in which we have managed expenses from this side of the House, with no support from people opposite—from the opposite side of this House. We're serious about making government more efficient for Manitobans. We have been doing that and we'll continue to do that because our premise is that we all

have to do our part to protect Manitoba families. Manitoba families are doing that. The taxpayers are doing that. We're doing that. It seems to be the only people who aren't interested in investing in Manitoba's future are—

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

The honourable member for River East has the floor.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, and an answer from a minister and a government whose Premier stood up and said: Read my lips, no new taxes.

Mr. Speaker, we saw an increase of \$184 million last year in increased taxes and user fees. We've seen another 1 per cent increase in the PST this year, and now an 8 per cent increase in hydro rates in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, when is this government going to stand up and say to Manitobans we are going to stop picking your pockets? We are not going to continue to perpetuate this tax grab on Manitobans to feed their spending addiction.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, putting \$1.4 billion into taxpayers' pocket is the opposite of picking it, to use the language of members opposite. To give Manitobans one family after another a break on their property taxes like we have done is not picking their pockets.

Mr. Speaker, part of the announcement that we made in the budget was to show support for seniors who have paid a lot of taxes over the years to all kinds of governments. We are giving them a break in their property taxes.

It's bad enough that members opposite ignore those kind of facts but to pull facts out of the air like they have—like the Leader of the Opposition did earlier today, \$1,600, Mr. Speaker, does he think every—

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, but all that rhetoric from a government that's shown Manitobans that they've had the biggest tax increase in the last 26 years, since the last election. Shame on a government that does that and continues to stand up in this House and say that they're working on behalf of Manitobans. Manitobans are working harder and

harder to try to make ends meet as a result of \$184 million in new taxes last year and another 1 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax this year. And on top of that they're going to have to pay more for their hydro bills—8 per cent more.

* (14:10)

When will this government stop the runaway train and give Manitobans—

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

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, over and over again, every budget that we have presented since 1999 has represented a decrease in taxes for the people of Manitoba. Now, the member for River East can write that off as rhetoric if she likes, but it is a fact, and it can be backed up in every one of those budgets that she voted against.

And, Mr. Speaker, don't you think it is quite rich that the member for River East, after sitting in a government that said no, no, no to tax breaks and said yes, yes, yes to cuts to services to Manitobans now gets up in this House and forgets the fact that when she was sitting in the Cabinet that the property tax rate credit was \$250—\$250? You know what it is today? Seven hundred dollars. That's real money for—

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

PST Increase Referendum

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I think it's pretty rich that the Minister of Finance is trying to sell a PST increase as a tax deduction. Manitobans have been trying to catch the ear of this Premier (Mr. Selinger) when it comes to the PST increase, and it hasn't been easy. Fifteen thousand people booed him at the Winnipeg Jets game. I think even the people who got those free Crown corporation tickets were booing.

Thousands of others have been going to websites and sending emails. But, because the Premier has refused to listen to them, they've now decided to come here to the Legislature on Thursday at 6 p.m. at a rally to say to this Premier this is an unjustified tax increase and they deserve a referendum.

I want to know from this Premier, Mr. Speaker: Is he listening?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Of course, we're listening to

Manitobans. We are out, as members opposite are out, listening to our constituents, meeting with them when we talk to them about their needs for new schools, meeting with them when we hear about their needs for additional child-care spaces. Of course, we're listening to Manitobans, and we will continue to do that. We'll continue to listen to them and pay attention to the things that they're asking us to do.

Nobody believes it was an easy decision to make this decision to raise the PST. We all accept it's a hard decision to make. But we also know that Manitobans want to make sure that their homes are protected from flooding, their kids have a school to go to and their parents have a home-care worker. And those are the things we're investing in Manitoba.

Government Committee Attendance

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, we keep hearing the Premier's listening, but who is he listening to? They weren't chanting, PST tax increase, at the Winnipeg Jets game. They're not sending emails to the Legislature saying, please, increase my PST.

I didn't hear the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), I didn't hear the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), from Southdale; I didn't hear them stand up with a petition from Manitobans demanding that the PST be increased.

So now those Manitobans are going to come to the Legislature—150, at least, to come to committee and many more who are going to come to a rally. Both of these individuals, through these rallies and through the committee, want the Premier to listen.

Will the Premier (Mr. Selinger) come to the rally? Will he come to committee? And will he come with an open mind to change his decision on the PST increase?

Ms. Howard: Of course, we are out there listening to Manitobans, listening to what they have to say. And we listened to the opposition. On day one, the first opposition—the first day that they could come in this House and ask us questions, what did they ask us to do? Member after member after member asked us to build them a road, to build them a bridge, to fix something in their community. Those were the requests we got on day one.

The difference is that their plan to pay for those things are to cut services in health care, to fire nurses, to lay off teachers, to put the brakes on, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, on the things that we're doing.

Our plan is a responsible plan. It's not an easy decision to make, Mr. Speaker, but it's a responsible one.

Prebudget Consultations

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, this is a Premier who refuses to admit what everyone knows. Nobody at the prebudget consultation meetings were asking for a PST increase. He isn't interested in listening to Manitobans who come to rallies, who are going to come to committees. That's the truth. His Cabinet ministers and his backbenchers, none of them have the internal fortitude to stand up and say no, and to stand up for their constituents. Those are the truths.

In fact, there's one more truth, and that is that this government will do everything it can to quickly ram through Bill 20, and the other truth is the Manitoba Progressive Conservatives will do everything that we can to stop that from happening. Aren't those the truths?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, on the first opportunity we had to bring that bill forward we brought it forward. We've provided the opposition with information about that bill. We have heard from the members opposite that they're anxious to get that bill to committee, that they want Manitobans to have a chance to speak to it at committee. We are here to debate that bill. We are here to make sure that it moves through the process, and we will see what kind of co-operation there is evident from the members opposite to make sure that Manitobans can speak to it. But that is their choice. We've made a choice to protect the services that matter to Manitobans, to invest in critical infrastructure, to protect Manitobans from the flood, not an easy choice, but a responsible one.

PST Rebate

Low-Income Families

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has many who live in extreme poverty. This is manifest in the highest food bank use in Canada, in high numbers of children being taken in to Child and Family Services care and in high levels of crime. And yet this NDP government refuses to raise shelter rates. The NDP have raised the PST and now lower income Manitobans have to pay the Province even more tax.

I ask the Premier: Will the government provide a PST rebate for those who are lower income just as the federal government provides a GST rebate for low-income earners in society?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member from River Heights for the question, because unlike the HST, which the Leader of the Opposition supports and all members of the opposite benches support, we have—*[interjection]* I know, I know, it's tough for them, Mr. Speaker. They like to make accusations, but when the truth is pointed out about their position, they have a real tough time with it.

Under the provincial sales tax, we carve out the necessities of life, Mr. Speaker. Food is not taxed like it is under the HST. Clothing for children is not taxed like the members opposite taxed it. Clothing and essentials for children, for babies, are being carved out and are not taxed like the members opposite taxed when they were in office. Books are not taxed like the members opposite wish to tax. We have carved out the essentials for people to live in Manitoba, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, under this Premier, a large number of new services of all sorts are being taxed under the PST just like under the GST. You're aligning the two taxes.

Why can't the Premier align the PST with the GST and provide for those on low income a rebate? *[inaudible]* make logical sense, and the Premier has already done a lot of extra taxes on services.

Why doesn't the Premier align the PST with the GST in terms of the rebate?

Mr. Selinger: If the member is saying he endorses a harmonized sales tax, let him be clear about that. Rebate or not, let him be clear about that. We know he has supported that after saying he wouldn't at the federal level as well, just like the members opposite. It's—the HST is a Conservative-Liberal way of taxing people, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we have carved people out from paying taxes on the necessities of life. In addition, we have a personal tax credit which go to the lowest income Manitobans.

We also have a shelter benefit that we've increased by \$6 million this year, and we have committed to another 500 social housing units on top of the 1,500 that we started to build and we're ahead of schedule on, and we have a special targeted benefit for people with mental health issues so that they can get stable housing first in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we will do everything we can to help—

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

Shelter Rates Request for Increase

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, if the Premier wants to write Liberal policy, he should become a Liberal member.

We have consulted grassroots Liberals across the province, and they have said no to an HST. This is not Liberal policy, and the Premier shouldn't be trying to make Liberal policy. The Premier should be addressing the real need; he should be raising shelter rates.

* (14:20)

A hundred and forty organizations in Manitoba, led by Make Poverty History have argued, have said that this makes sense, to raise shelter rates. Sid Frankel has said it—the policy of this government makes no sense.

Why is the Premier not raising shelter rates?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Thank the member. He says if I wish to join—and make Liberal policy, I should join his party. In turn, I'd say if he wants to make policy on this side of the House, we would welcome him in the caucus, Mr. Speaker, if he wants to join this side of the House.

The reality is this, Mr. Speaker: When it comes to reducing poverty, we're the only political party in this House that believes you should raise the minimum wage, and we've done that again this year. Members of the Liberal Party, members of the Conservative Party are a hundred per cent opposed to raising the minimum wage. They have put that on the record.

Mr. Speaker, we have raised shelter benefits. We have designed shelter benefits. We added back the National Child Benefit, \$48 million, \$500 for a single-lone-parent family in Manitoba. The members of the Conservative Party clawed that out of the hands of low-income single parents in Manitoba—

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

Mentorship Programs for Youth Government Investment

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, today the Premier announced investments the Manitoba government is making to make mentorship

programs and to create opportunities for our youth. Can the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities please provide the House with an update?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I was able to be part of an announcement today with the Premier: Budget 2013 investing over \$8 million to support mentorship programs. It reaches over 13,000 young people in the province of Manitoba, 20 different types of mentorships altogether in terms of medical, sciences, the arts, communications, cultural, sports—just to name a few.

We know that these kinds of investments improves academic achievement for young people and gives all young people a tap on their shoulders, say, post-secondary is for you. We also know that according to Colton [*phonetic*], a grade 12 student, said today: It creates, inspires and engages many students to build and explore many careers here, right here in Manitoba. Thank you.

Flooding Compensation Claim Settlements

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Today in Portage there was a rally at the Portage Diversion about the concerns of lack of compensation from past floods. What these people are saying is they have not had settlement since the flood of 2011 and other floods, and preparing for yet another possible flood.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) about the total mismanagement of the flood of 2011, as a number of outstanding claims in his department has yet to receive settlement.

Will a commitment today be to settle these claims and get people back into their homes?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Well, Mr. Speaker, this morning at 11 a.m., a recommendation was made by senior officials who operate the Portage Diversion. I'm surprised that the member opposite, apparently the member from Portage, would actually lend any credence to a protest that is right now putting people's lives at risk in terms of their lives and safety.

It's putting communities at safety because the inability to operate the Portage Diversion puts communities in the Assiniboine Valley at risk. It also creates scenarios where we have to have different

operating levels for the—[*interjection*]—and they want to shout it down, but right now the operation of the Portage Diversion is essential to protect Manitobans.

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

Point of Order

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, the member for Lakeside asked a very clear question to the Minister of Agriculture regarding unsettled claims on behalf of hundreds of Manitobans who were made a promise by this government and haven't seen that promise fulfilled. He clearly directed it to the Minister of Agriculture who was responsible for the file. I think that the many people who are waiting to get their lives back on track and to know where their lives are going to go, are waiting for that answer.

So I direct you, Mr. Speaker, or ask you to find the Minister of Agriculture in fault of not answering the question that was directed to him by the member for Lakeside.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, on the same point of order.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order.

The member referenced a protest that is taking place as we speak, at the Portage Diversion. That protest is putting in jeopardy the ability to operate the Portage Diversion.

Mr. Speaker, that creates greater flood risks for people in the Assiniboine valley, and, because of its impacts in terms of the operation of the floodway, could create artificial flooding south of Winnipeg. The member opposite raised the issue of that protest, and as I indicated earlier in ministerial statements, this is a very serious matter.

And, Mr. Speaker, I rose to respond to the fact that the member opposite, along with the member apparently from Portage according to a tweet—and I will let the member for Portage speak for himself—are supporting the protests, and I would hope that rather than bringing forward what is a bogus point of order members opposite would support us in the safe

operation of our flood-protection systems and not put Manitobans at risk.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach, I'd like to thank all honourable members for their advice on this point.

And I wish to direct members' attention to the rule book that we have, the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, 2009, where it states on page 509 that questions, although customarily addressed to the specific ministers, are directed to the ministry as a whole and it is the prerogative of the government to designate which ministers respond to the questions, and the Speaker has no authority to compel a particular minister to respond.

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

Mr. Goertzen: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I challenge the ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair will please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Goertzen: Could you request the attendance of members for a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order. Order, please. The one hour provided for the ringing of division bells has expired. I'm instructing that they be turned off, and we'll now proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

All those in favour of sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, pardon me. Please rise. We've already done the ayes. Recorded vote.

An Honourable Member: It's been a long day.

Mr. Speaker: It has.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 35, Nays 15.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair is accordingly sustained.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: To resume question period.

* (15:30)

PST Increase Legality

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): This NDP government announced a while back that the youth under the age of 18 if caught without a bicycle helmet on would be fined \$50.

Mr. Speaker, why does this spenDP government feel that they are above the law when it comes to not allowing Manitobans to stand up and have a say about the PST hike? Why is this spenDP government saying, do as I say, not as I do?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there are Manitoba families living in every constituency of every member of this legislature, including the member for Lac du Bonnet's area. Those families depend on us to move quickly to

make sure that we put in place the kind of protection that they need.

Manitoba families know that time after time after time we face flooding issues in this province. We're facing a flood this year, the third in five years. We are not going to base our decision making on anything other than haste to get the job done, to provide that protection, rather than taking the indiscriminate, across-the-board kind of cuts that members opposite have put in place, that members opposite propose, Mr. Speaker, cuts that would hurt Manitoba families. We choose to invest in that infrastructure and get on with—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

Point of Order

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the question posed by the member for Lac du Bonnet, a question about why it is that the government feels that on one hand they can impose a law on a certain segment of our population, but on the other hand they don't feel that they should be held accountable to that law.

I also listened to the answer for the Minister of Finance, and he didn't respond to that answer.

So I point, Mr. Speaker, to page 508 of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice, written by O'Brien and Bosc, a second edition, 2009, where it says: If ministers—if they don't have an answer to the question they have an option: they can defer their answers, they can take the question as notice, they can make a short explanation as to why they don't know the answer or they can say nothing.

I would ask that you call the member out of order for not choosing one of those options instead of putting on the record the answer that he did, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On the same point of order.

I don't believe the member has a point of order. That will be up for you to rule, of course, as has

always been the tradition in this House. Members put questions, government members put answers. We don't look to make the Speaker political or partisan by passing judgment on the goodness of the questions or the answers. We look to you to maintain order in the House. You know that's your appropriate role. I know the members opposite know that's your appropriate role.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Steinbach, the Official Opposition House Leader, I thank all honourable members for their advice on this point of order.

And I must direct members' attention to O'Brien and Bosc, page 510, and where it indicates that members may not insist on an answer, nor a member—nor may a member insist that a specific minister respond to his or her questions and it is not for the Speaker to determine who answers the question on behalf of the government, nor the content or the quality of the answers that are provided.

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

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, with respect, I challenge the ruling.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Goertzen: Could you call the members in and assemble them for a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

* (16:30)

Order, please. Order. Would—the one hour allocated for the ringing of the division bells has

expired. Therefore, I'm instructing that they be turned off and that the House proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 36, Nays 15.

Mr. Speaker: Ruling of the Chair has accordingly been sustained.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, reverting back to House activities, we'll proceed with—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Flin Flon Hapnot Senior Kings Basketball Team

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize an incredible young team's accomplishment.

This year, Flin Flon's Hapnot Collegiate senior Kings basketball team was top of their division, winning their zone banner and placing fourth at the AAA provincial basketball championships. The team showed that with dedication, passion and teamwork anything is possible.

The Hapnot senior Kings basketball team was enthusiastic to begin the season back in November. With the anticipation of success, the team strived to attain three goals: win their zone banner, achieve a high ranking provincially and make northern Manitoba proud. Well, Mr. Speaker, the team accomplished all three goals.

The Hapnot senior Kings played a challenging season, which led to an impressive record four tournament titles and a rank of third in both of the Winnipeg tournaments the team entered.

At provincials in Winnipeg, the Flin Flon team's first game of the championship had an early start at 9 a.m. When the boys entered into the gym, the team noticed loud cheering coming from the stands; as it turned out, a group of devoted parents had driven eight hours through the night to make it on time for the early game. The incredible support shown to the team from their parents, their peers and their community helped to lead the young men to rank fourth in the province. Provincial champions also recognize Sam Kingsley with the players' choice award.

The basketball team had created excitement throughout the community; people were engaged in sport and proud of the school team. The young men became a positive example of commitment, drive and teamwork.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members here today to join me in congratulating the Hapnot Collegiate senior Kings basketball team for their impressive season. It is also important to thank the coach, Don Dyke, assistant coaches Neil Campbell and Dale Wride, as well as the parents and community who encouraged the team to work together to achieve success. Congratulations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to request leave to include the names of the players into the record.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to include the names—team names of the players? [*Agreed*]

Sam Kinsley, Garrett Whitford, Nick Yewchuk, Ben Wride, Luke Holubec, Riley Rachuk, Blake Wallaker, Max LeClerc, Ryan Russell, Zack Reykdal, Dustin Hartery, Nick Novasal.

*(16:40)

Concordia Hospital Foundation

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, and today I wish to congratulate the Concordia Hospital foundation on their 30th anniversary and commend them on their fantastic fundraising gala on April the 19th.

A big thank you is necessary to the organizers and the volunteers who worked so hard to make it happen. This year, the Martin Bergen Award, which is presented annually, honoured the Movement

Centre of Manitoba for their outstanding contribution to Manitoba society and to the community served by Concordia.

The Movement Centre, which recently celebrated its 15th anniversary, was started by Margy Nelson, née Lage, born and raised in North Kildonan, who was motivated to spearhead the centre on behalf of her son, Bryce, who has cerebral palsy.

The centre's a non-profit charitable organization which, in 2002, was gifted their permanent home at 1646 Henderson Highway by Martin and Miriam Bergen. Focusing on conductive education—a system that merges education with therapeutic programming to help clients gain or regain physical mobility, increased confidence and functional independence—the centre works with children and adults living with cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, stroke, head injury and Parkinson's disease. The centre receives no government funding, so they charge their clients a subsidized fee and then must work diligently to raise the remaining funds necessary to operate.

Currently, there is a significant wait-list for both children and adults. There is a need to expand their programs, recruit a third conductor from Hungary and hire additional support staff.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize, congratulate and thank the Concordia Hospital foundation and the Movement Centre of Manitoba for all their amazing work. Their efforts and dedication help make the quality of life for all Manitoba families better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Northwood 13A3 Hockey Team

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize an amazing young team's accomplishment. The boys of the Northwood 13A3 hockey team are this year's city champs. This team is a cross-section of 13- and 14-year-old players from some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the North End, as well as from in and around the Garden City area. They practise out of the Northwood Community Centre in Burrows, and despite some economic barriers and limited access to supports, this team was able to overcome huge obstacles to win this coveted championship.

Mr. Speaker, these boys learned some valuable lessons and shared some special experiences on their way to the city champions title. Some of their most important learning opportunities included

developing and strengthening relationships through understanding and acceptance. They are working together to keep healthy and active, to strengthen their friendships and to make the most of wonderful opportunities. I'm so proud that they call Burrows home.

Mr. Speaker, successful people do not achieve in isolation, so it is important to also recognize those who have supported these boys along the way, and I'm pleased to announce that head coach Dave Sherman was named the Seven Oaks Minor Hockey Association's coach of the year. It was recognized that he was able to take a diverse group of teens and bring them together as a team and become champions. Working closely with him in the team were assistant coaches Shane Lilly and Richard Sousa and team manager Angie Lamirande. The team staff helped with driving the boys to and from practices and games, and did as much as they could to ensure that transportation issues were never a barrier. Many thanks to the staff and families who support these young men in their hockey endeavours.

It's been many years since the Northwood Community Centre had a championship team and, to quote Angie Lamirande, their win is the stuff of Hollywood movies. And I agree. This is certainly an incredible achievement worth celebrating, so congratulations, boys, and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

St. Jean Baptiste

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, approximately 50 miles south of Winnipeg and just 20 miles from the American border lies a beautiful town called St. Jean Baptiste. In the Rural Municipality of Montcalm, the town is on the margin of Highway 75 and sits on both the west and the east banks of the Red River.

Around 1869, a few Metis families from St. Norbert settled the area and it became known as the rivière aux Prunes. Once Abbot David Filmon discovered the fertility of the soil, he dreamed of establishing French-Canadian communities and started recruiting families from out east.

On July 22nd, 1872, the town received its name when a civil corporation was founded and was comprised of over 20 families. Amazingly enough, by 1916 the town had more than 186 families.

In 1877 the town's first chapel was erected and was important for the community not only for spiritual reasons, but also to help in other aspects of

life as well as—such as record keeping and education. Following the construction of the chapel the town started developing with the arrival of a post office in the same year and other buildings which followed, such as grain silos, general stores, the Parenteau Bloc—an impressive building for its time, was erected in 1904—and the Hochelaga bank in 1911.

Since families lived on both sides of the Red River, the first ferry was built in 1876 to facilitate the come and go of residents from one side to the other. Later, two other ferries were added as extensions and the—once water levels would return to normal it would act as a floating bridge. It wasn't until 1948 that an actual bridge was erected.

St. Jean Baptiste was established as a community of farming entrepreneurship, faith and a heritage of what is known as la joie de vivre. St. Jean Baptiste is a town worth acknowledging. It is one of the many great towns located within my constituency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oscar Lathlin Research Library

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday I was honoured to attend the grand opening of the Oscar Lathlin Research Library at the University College of the North campus in The Pas. The university-accredited 16,400-square-foot research library named after my predecessor will serve the two main UCN campuses in The Pas and Thompson as well as the 12 regional centres throughout northern Manitoba.

Oscar Lathlin left a great legacy to OCN, to The Pas and to all the people living in Manitoba's north. As a former chief, member of the Legislative Assembly, Cabinet minister, father and friend, he showed the courage, dedication and love needed to create a better life for all of us in northern Manitoba.

Oscar was a champion of education for First Nations. He believed that everyone should have access to education within their community. It was this belief that brought the University College of the North to 14 communities.

This was a man who fought for his people until the very end. The day before his passing, Oscar chaired a meeting on northern opportunities around the Cabinet table. He never gave up and he teaches us to never give up, to be tenacious, determined and strong for the things we believe in.

Oscar cared deeply about education and this library is a way of showing the current generation and future generations the significance of education and of having dreams. Here in this library students will be able to research, read, relax and visit. A library is a peaceful place, a quiet place, a place where we can reflect and share wisdom.

Mr. Speaker, the Oscar Lathlin Research Library will mean a great deal to the communities it serves. It will mean a great deal to all who knew this great man and all who will learn of him through oral and written histories.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements. We'll now move on with—

GRIEVANCES

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): So much to grieve; so little time.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2011 election campaign the member for St. Boniface, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) made a commitment in which he said, read my lips, no PST increase. Surprisingly enough, he even went so far as to say, no new taxes. The then-leader of the opposition pushed him and said, how are you going to pay for all of your promises? You're going to have to raise some taxes. And, again, the member for St. Boniface, the Premier said, read my lips, no new taxes.

And I'm sure many of us in this House are getting emails like the one that I just received today, Mr. Speaker, from a constituent of mine called Jeff, and he writes: I'm writing you to voice my displeasure with the sales tax increase. I am no expert on the balanced budget legislation, but if what I hear is correct that the NDP is breaking the balanced budget law, I expect you as our MLA to pursue this vigorously. And that's exactly what I'm going to do.

* (16:50)

And in his email he sent me a little interaction between, of all people, the Premier, the member for St. Boniface, and a beer vendor, and it goes accordingly: Beer vendor sees somebody walking into his establishment, and he says, hello, Mr. Premier, good to see you. Need a case of your favourite beer? Yup, says the Premier, Doer's in town and he's coming over to my place. Oh, says the vendor, that'll be \$26.50, please. The Premier says, you know what? I only have \$25 cash, what

happened to the pricing? Vendor says, remember when you raised the taxes on liquor and then the PST? Well, that's what happened. Ah, says the Premier, no problem, I have a spenDP gift card. Vendor says, well, Mr. Premier, there seems to be a problem with your spenDP card; it says insufficient funds. Oh, says the Premier, now that's embarrassing. Vendor says, well, you know, Mr. Premier, I want to help. I have a couple of cases that are past due—I have a couple of cases that are past their due date, and you understand what that's like, being past due date, right? Well, I'll sell it to you for what the distributor would give me, \$15 for the case. The Premier says, \$15, wow, why so cheap? The vendor says, well, I'm not charging all the taxes and levies that are hidden in a case of beer. And that, Mr. Speaker, is exactly what Manitobans are facing on a daily basis.

They are seeing the products—in fact, I remember the former Premier Gary Doer, if he spoke once, he spoke a hundred times about, oh, going with the guys and, you know, kicking back for a beer. I'm going to, you know, go and have a cold beer with the guys. Well, you know what? He has to go to Washington now because that's where the only place he can afford a case of beer, it's gotten so expensive. They've even chased the former premier out of town, Mr. Speaker. They've—they're—at the rate the NDP is going, they're putting the Pony Corral out of business.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's a fun way of looking at the struggles that Manitobans are having. And we're getting an awful lot of these emails where individuals are saying, you know, the price of the things that we enjoy—you know, we're heading someday into the summer season and at that point in time, you know, people will be looking at getting—will be getting some libations—*[interjection]*—and there's an awful lot of excitement in the Chamber here today, clearly a lot of other individuals are going to want to grieve by the sounds of things—but Manitobans have some concerns.

Then they find out on Friday that if 1 per cent PST tax increase isn't enough, that the government is going to be hitting them again with an 8 per cent hydro rate increase. And so what happens on the one side, it's way more expensive to air condition the house, and if you can't afford that, you can't afford libation because of the tax increases on that. They are literally taxing Manitobans every way possible and everywhere possible, Mr. Speaker. Manitobans can't have air conditioning and they can't afford a

core—a cold beer, so that's where this is going with the NDP, and what a condemnation when you read the report that was put out by the Public Utilities Board. The Public Utilities Board, amongst an awful lot of things, talks about the decisions that are now coming home to roost.

In fact, in the last two elections we were trying to indicate to members opposite, and they weren't listening, that the Bipole III was going to have an incredible cost on Manitobans, and that cost is now coming home to roost. Fact, I had a phone call right before I came up here and somebody indicated—so, you know, on this whole Bipole 'thring'—III thing, can you guys actually stop it and—probably not. It's a done deal; it's probably gone too far and now will come the ramifications of it. Now will come what you're going to have to pay. Fact, the Public Utilities Board, of the 3 and a half per cent increase that they've allotted for this time, the 3 and a half out of the 8, 1.5 per cent of that is going to have to go towards the bipole debacle, Mr. Speaker. And we know that the bipole is going to end up costing Manitobans far more than the 1.5 per cent. It's going to end up costing Manitobans a lot more than they were ever told by members opposite, and it is very unfortunate.

And—however, if ever the NDP has been unmasked, it really goes back to that commitment that was made during the 2011 campaign by the member for St. Boniface, the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Selinger), when he was categorical; it wasn't that he was in jest saying that there wasn't going to be a PST increase. It wasn't that he was, you know, sort of offhand, making a comment.

He was asked directly numerous times where he stood on a tax increase that potentially might have to happen if he wanted to pay for his promises, and each time he was very clear. There was no ambiguity. He was straight up that there would be no tax increase.

And he went so far as to say no PST increase. Fact, he called that nonsense. And here we are today in this Chamber talking about the 1 per cent PST increase that is going to burden Manitobans for years and years and years to come.

I have received emails that are actually quite disturbing. There is one email that came from a family, and they've said that this added \$1,600 to their tax bill now is going to mean that they're going to have to cut within the family, and they have come to the conclusion that it's going to be music lessons

that are going to be cut for their daughter. They have two parents that are struggling to make ends meet. The kind of taxes that have been imposed over two years—and Manitobans know that it's not just the 1 per cent tax increase that the NDP imposed on them. They are taxing their insurance policies; they are taxing every place that they can get their hands on.

And, at some point in time, for working families, for individuals who are trying to raise a young family, it just becomes too much, and that's when the cuts come.

So I've—we've heard one of the members off the front bench talking about tough decisions. So what they've decided is, rather than not making a tough decision, they're going to punitively attack working families.

Well, I can say to all the ministers on that side, the families now are making the tough decisions. They're the ones that are going to have to decide how they're going to deal with this increase, 8 per cent increase in a hydro bill, \$1,600 tax bill that they're now going to have to deal with because of the PST increase. They're the one that are going to have to decide how it is that they are going to offset the increases that are coming at them, because the PST is attack—a tax that really does attack the lower middle class and the middle class the most, the ones that need to go out and purchase sports equipment and go out and purchase things that young families need. Those that are looking at perhaps building a new home, this will add a lot of expense onto a new home. It's very unfortunate.

It is very unfortunate that this government has decided to go where they've gone with their taxes. We hesitate, Mr. Speaker, to think what might come this Friday. There seems to be a continuous pattern of a government upping fees, taxes, hydro rates. It just seems to be never-ending.

But we do know that after being in government for far too long that they now are going to have to, at some point in time, figure out how they're going to pay for all the expenditures they've made, for the debt that they've incurred, for the promises that they've recklessly made, and now somebody has to pay. And, unfortunately, they've made the easy decision by forcing it on families who have to make it—make the tough decisions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further grievances?

The honourable—on House business, the honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

House Business

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, a situation has arisen that I need to ask leave for from the House. It doesn't occur very often, thankfully, but if—on the order paper for today there are two bills, Bill 2, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Respect for the Safety of Emergency and Enforcement Personnel); Loi 'modifiant' le Code de la route (sécurité du personnel d'urgent et des agents de l'accent de la loi), and also—*[interjection]*—I think that was the third official language now—and Bill 6, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Flexible Short-Term Regulation of Vehicle Weights and Dimensions). Both are standing in the name of the honourable member for—the former member for Morris, Mrs. Taillieu.

I need to seek leave to see if we can have the bill remain open instead of in the name of former member for Morris.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, April 29, 2013

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