

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This one's signed—this petition's signed by D. Kulber, M. Provo, M. Baldwin and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, 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 reserve his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by L. Labossière, S. Labossière, R. Labossière and many more fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by D. Barr, E. Lussier, R. Oleson and many fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

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.

And this is signed by G. Lahaie, C. Hébert, A. Myskiw and many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

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 not to raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is presented on behalf of R.J. Griffith, A. Glowachuk, T. Goddard, many other fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

And (4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of their democratic right to determine when major 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 H. Wiebe, M. Dyck, D. Driedger and many, many other Manitobans from—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Arthur-Virden.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

And (4) Bill 20 strips Manitobans of the 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 petition is signed by M. Nichol, W. Kenderbine, A. Wilkins and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Ring Dike Road—Ste. Rose du Lac

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The Ring Dike Road is a well-used gravel municipal road that is used as a secondary road in and out of the community of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Given this heavy pattern of use, there is strong interest in the community in seeing the Ring Dike Road upgraded to a paved provincial road.

It would be most cost-effective to upgrade the Ring Dike Road to a provincial road at the same time that upgrades are being undertaken on the junction of PTH 68 and PTH No. 5.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at Ste. Rose du Lac into a provincial road, and
(2) to request the Minister of Infrastructure and

Transportation to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at the same time that work is being done at the junction of PTH 68 and PTH No. 5.

This petition is signed by T. Racette, C. Racette, S. Houle and many, many other fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): 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 the legally required referendum.

An increase in 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 this petition is signed by S. Nemel, B. Lutz, H. Vanderley and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

(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 is signed by J. McMillan, M. Bell, M. Kepon and many, many other Manitobans.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): 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 not to raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by W. Gabrielle, M. Nykoliation, L. Nykoliation and many more fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations–Reversal

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, 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 the 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 G. Palmquist, J. Palmquist and D. Zeglinski and many more.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Referendum

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): 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.

(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 petition is signed by J. Grabb, W. Empson and N. Graydon and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Nothing wrong with M. Graydon.

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 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by M. Dueck, D. Giesbrecht, G. Born and many other Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): It's my pleasure to table the 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Housing and Community Development.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, we'll move on to ministerial statements. No ministerial statements?

I have no guests to introduce today, so we'll move right into—

ORAL QUESTIONS

Vote Tax Public Financing

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): [*inaudible*] Well, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) is somewhat ashamed of himself for accepting the vote tax, or at least he should be, at least based on the lack of response when we ask the questions about how much he's taking.

There are several reasons he won't come clean, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it's because he's putting his party ahead of Manitobans. It's also because it's another new tax and that is another broken promise for this Premier. In addition, he's paying himself with borrowed money, and it's quite probable NDP fundraising isn't going all that well. But the No. 1 reason I think that he won't come clean is because his political party is just too lazy to go out and earn its way by raising its own money.

I'd like the Premier today to overcome his shame and his embarrassment on this issue and just simply tell Manitobans how much Manitobans are going to be paying his lazy political party in vote tax.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Acting Premier): Certainly, before I answer, I want to say to those folks who are struggling with the impact of forest fires how much we are thinking of them and how important that issue is.

And I will say to the member opposite, on the issue of public financing, very clearly, I think, as has been stated in the past, we have a bill before the House right now that will reduce the amount of public financing to our political party; it would reduce it by 30 per cent. That cheque that was forwarded from Elections Manitoba, 30 per cent of that cheque, \$83,000, has been returned to Elections Manitoba.

We are proud that we were the party that banned union and corporate donations, a move that the opposition has never come on board with. We believe that it's important—

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

Mr. Pallister: The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the lazy political party opposite is accepting the vote tax subsidy, and they should not accept a subsidy that is not earned.

* (13:50)

There are three other reasons why the vote tax is a very bad idea. First of all, this is the most lavish subsidy system in English Canada. Secondly, it replaces democracy with bureaucracy. And thirdly, it replaces voluntary support with forcibly expropriated tax dollars.

And the Premier's embarrassment and shame are justified. The NDP vote tax is a subsidy for a lazy political party unwilling to earn its own money but certainly willing to overtax Manitobans.

So would the Premier agree to totally refund the undeserved vote tax subsidy and not raise the PST?

Ms. Howard: Certainly, the decision to raise the PST was a very difficult decision for this party and for this Cabinet. It's a difficult decision because we know that it is going to mean that families are going to have to pay more for the things that are important to them.

But, Mr. Speaker, we believe it was a responsible decision. We know that we need to fund things like schools and hospitals, daycare centres and roads, and we know that it's better to fund those things than to cut the services that Manitobans rely on. We don't want to have to fire nurses so we can build hospitals. We don't want to have to fire teachers so we can build schools.

So it was a difficult decision but a responsible decision. And it's a far better decision than the kind of deep cuts that the members opposite have advocated.

Mr. Pallister: Well, Manitobans aren't buying it. The party opposite claims it puts Manitoba families first, but clearly it puts itself first. *[interjection]* Yes, thank you. Thank you for acknowledging that.

You put yourselves first when you take a vote tax subsidy that you don't work for. From Elections Manitoba we've learned that this party is giving each of its MLAs an undeserved \$5,000 annual raise, tax free. Let's be clear. This is the party that promised not to raise taxes, broke that promise, took \$1,600 out of each and every Manitoba household and now puts itself at the front of the line and takes \$5,000 of undeserved money, making it harder for Manitobans and easier for itself in the process, taking money away from Manitobans and giving itself more money to mismanage.

Does this Premier realize that while he takes \$5,000 by not working for it, Manitoba families actually have to work for it first?

Ms. Howard: So I want to be clear about what the position of the members opposite is. They are entitled to over a million dollars in public subsidy as a result of the last election. They're entitled to that. They're entitled to keep that. But a party like the Liberal Party who did not achieve the 10 per cent threshold to get those rebates, they are not entitled to the \$60,000 under the public subsidy. That is the position of the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know—you know, last night we had a good committee meeting with Elections Manitoba. I know the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, had more important things to do than to attend all of that meeting, had to leave—first came in, tried to get the agenda around because he had important things to do, and then left to go photobomb the Icelandic consul, apparently. And so maybe he wasn't there for a full discussion of the things Elections Manitoba is doing to promote—

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

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Well, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the government that it was this NDP government that lied to Manitobans in the last election. So they have no credibility.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba businesses are very worried that they're going to be forced to collect a PST on July 1st and ignore the current legislation which says that a referendum must be held prior to raising taxes.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell all of these Manitoba businesses: Is he planning to give them all a get-out-of-jail-free card when he forces them to break the law on July 1st?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, Manitoba businesses work hard for the money that they get. They put in—business people, their families, put in long hours and they work hard. The last thing that those folks need is a member of the opposition to try to muddy the waters when it comes to what's going to happen on July 1st.

Mr. Speaker, very clearly, we have put out through the Department of Finance Taxation Division has put out a bulletin that's on our website. There's a phone number that business people can phone and talk to folks in the department to make sure that they understand completely what is happening with the PST on the 1st of July.

What they don't need, Mr. Speaker, is members opposite trying to play politics with this issue.

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance does not know what he's talking about.

Bill 20 will not be passed and proclaimed into law before July 1st. The existing legislation, which requires a referendum before raising the PST, will still be in full force.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to tell Manitobans why he won't respect and obey a law that is still going to be in full force on July 1st.

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the same Manitoba businesses that worked very hard for their

money today were the same businesses that worked hard for their money when she was in government when she used to nail them for 8 per cent. What we've done over the years is we've reduced that to zero per cent, the largest business tax-free zone in the country. So she—so for her to feign support for the Manitoba business person is quite rich.

Mr. Speaker, this is no different than when her government in 1993 moved forward in putting the PST on baby supplies. They put forward the legislation, the budget, they had it in place, and then they passed legislation—

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance does not know what he's talking about.

And a respectable, law-abiding government wouldn't ignore a law, but it appears that this government that has been around for far too long is arrogantly going to break the law on July 1st. I have to guess that that's what happens when you've got a government that is addicted to spending.

So I want to ask this NDP government: Will it come to its senses, obey the law and call a referendum before they raise the PST on July 1st?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, in that 1993 budget that the members opposite brought forward, it was delivered on April 6th. The taxes were raised as of May 1st. The enabling legislation did not receive royal assent until nearly three months later on July 27th.

Mr. Speaker, we put the bulletin out for businesses so that they know exactly where they stand. It couldn't be any more clear for businesses in Manitoba. Members opposite do nobody, including businesses—they will do nobody any favours by trying to muddy the waters purposely to cause confusion. It's very clear. Businesses know that.

PST Increase Impact on Business

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Well, Mr. Speaker, if he wanted to clear the waters he could hold a referendum.

Mr. Speaker, Nora's Diner in Gretna is the next five-star restaurant in Manitoba. Since 2009, Jeff and Kathy Dyck have created a successful business and have supported a community in the process. Seven families depend on Jeff and Kathy for their

livelihood. A 14 per cent increase in the PST, however, is driving their customers across the border. Five miles away shopping is cheaper, gas is cheaper, food is cheaper.

Mr. Speaker, why is it that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his spendP are putting Jeff and Kathy out of business?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, I'm glad the member opposite has referenced a hard-working business family in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, and we understand they work hard for their money. We understand Manitobans work hard for the earnings that they make.

We also understand that when people pay their taxes they want and they expect a government that's going to invest that money wisely into Manitoba, invest it into hospitals, invest it into schools, invest that money into roads. If—that's very clearly what we have indicated we're going to do, as opposed to members opposite, who would cut from health care, who would cut from education, who would not invest in roads and bridges and to things that matter in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, to our families.

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans inspect to see their money not invested in vote taxes.

Mr. Speaker, Frank Gibson owns Phoenix Woodwork. He came from Alberta to Manitoba to revive a failing business. That's a move he now calls, and I quote, the biggest mistake of my life. End quote. He is now strongly considering laying off 55 employees and moving back to Alberta where his business can be profitable.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier financing his political party with a vote tax while forcing Frank back to Alberta, taking 55 jobs with him?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would put Manitoba's hydro rates up against Alberta's rates any day of the year. I would put our high quality child care and our investments in child care up against any other province any day of the week. I'd put our post-secondary education expenses up against any other province any day of the week.

We have the third lowest provincial sales tax in the country. We have the second lowest tax on fuel

in the country. Mr. Speaker, we don't have health-care premiums.

We have a balanced approach to taking Manitoba's taxes and putting them towards the things that matter most to Manitoba families.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, 86 per cent of small businesses wouldn't recommend starting a business in this province. The reason is clear: the NDP want to put them out of business. A 14 per cent increase in the PST means less money going back into the community, less customers for the restaurant, more customers for the United States, more business owners leaving the province.

Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier call a referendum and let Manitobans decide on his PST nightmare?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, we committed to making sure that our province had the lowest bundle of home heating, Autopac and hydro rates, and we've done that. We are \$2,000 less than the national average and we are \$550 lower than the second place that was British Columbia.

We said we would do that. We said we'd do it on behalf of Manitoba families and on behalf of Manitoba businesses. It's working for Manitoba businesses, and we're going to continue to make sure it works on behalf of the people of Manitoba.

Housing Allowance Request for Increase

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, a recently launched contest called Manitoba's worst house is a sad reflection on the state of low-income housing in this province. The group behind this contest is called Make Poverty History and is using this as a platform to make a point about the low level of housing support through income assistance for this government.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government show real commitment to low-income Manitobans and raise the level of the housing allowance to 75 per cent of the market median rate?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): We've been showing support for Manitobans living in poverty since 1999 when we came back and we stopped the clawback of the national child tax benefit. We stopped it.

And as we made commitments to build more housing across this province, Mr. Speaker, we made

a commitment of 1,500 units of affordable and social housing. We are almost have that completed, and they voted against it. In Budget 2013 we made a further commitment for 500 affordable more housing units as well as 500 social housing units.

We're proud of our commitment. We'll continue to work with all of our stakeholders and make a difference for Manitobans.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, as Manitoba's largest landlord, Manitoba Housing is a virtual certainty to have a large number of nominees in the contest for worst house. Substantial dollars have been committed to refresh older Manitoba Housing properties, yet these facilities are still in a depressing state.

When will this government live up its to-commitments to offer safe, affordable housing?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I do not need a lecture from the members opposite who did nothing while they were in government.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'll tell them what we've done if they'd like to listen.

Mr. Speaker: I'm having difficulty hearing the answer to the question posed by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Let's do a comparison of records. Let's talk about the number of housing units that we have built, 1,500, plus a further commitment of another thousand affordable and social housing. How many did they build in the 1990s? Zero.

What we have done—and I must thank the member opposite for acknowledging the hard work that we've been doing to refresh our units. We have done it, alongside community members, providing employment and education. And I am proud of that.

Mr. Wishart: I'm glad the minister's prepared to stand behind her record, because the condition of their housing units certainly attributes to that.

Some poverty activists in the city have called Manitoba Housing Manitoba's biggest slum landlord. Contests like this one for the worst house draw more attention to the quality of housing in Manitoba.

Clearly, this government would rather spend taxpayer dollars on funding itself through the vote tax or more money for spin doctors to doctor the message.

When will this government commit to raising the housing allowance through income assistance to help Manitoba's low-income families access better housing?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: We are working alongside community members rebuilding communities. Yes, we're investing in the housing stock and we're proud of that. And while we're investing in that housing stock, we're providing local hiring, local purchasing, which is making an impact across the province.

I take offence to the members opposite who are suggesting that families live in slums. We are working diligently to improve the quality of housing, build stronger communities, and we're doing it along with the non-profit organizations and the private sector.

I was extremely proud in Budget 2013 when we announced the PST tax credit for home builders, and that was right from the private sector themselves, as we worked together with the rental round table. We are committed to building better and more housing, and along with our partners—

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Just prior to recognizing the honourable member for Midland, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Mel Johnson School five grade 5 students under the direction of Bonnie Monias. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton). On behalf of all honourable members, welcome here this afternoon.

Municipal Amalgamation Government Relations

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Well, the Minister of Local Government took his bullying message of forced amalgamation on the road last week, to the municipal June district meetings.

After delivering his insolent-children speech, he ran out the side door at the meetings rather than having a respectful dialogue with mayors and reeves.

Is this the minister's attempt at meaningful consultations?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): I was pleased to be invited to attend

AMM meetings throughout Manitoba, regional meetings. The conversation and dialogue was, I believe, respectful and also very informative. And we're certainly listening to municipalities. We always have been, Mr. Speaker.

And, indeed, when they ask through many, many resolutions at their convention needing better hospitals, better home care, personal care homes, better roads, better bridges, Mr. Speaker, in fact, we've increased the funding to municipalities by 8.5 per cent. Across Canada you see cuts or their budgets kept flat. Indeed, we are about approximately \$54 million ahead of where Saskatchewan is giving funding to their municipalities. We're very proud of that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pedersen: I'm glad the minister used respectful in his answer, because from the—a few of the municipal people that were at the meetings, they contain remarks such as: it doesn't matter what your residents want, you will amalgamate; or, you will do this, you don't want me to take my marker out and draw your new map. That's the message that municipal people are giving me.

So what part of respect does the minister not understand? And why does he continue his bullying message of his insolent children?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, there are many in the municipalities, of the 87 that are below the thousand threshold, that are spending, you know, approximately 40 per cent of their funding on administration.

And I'm really pleased to hear that the MLAs for Agassiz, Spruce Woods, Lakeside, Lac du Bonnet, Morden-Winkler, Emerson, Brandon—Brandon West, sorry, Arthur-Virden, Riding Mountain, St. Paul, La Verendrye, Portage la Prairie and Morris support one councillor representing 35 people in a lot of these municipalities. I'm really pleased to see they're on the record showing Manitobans that they're prepared to have one councillor representing 35 people, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:10)

You know, the horse and buggy party, Mr. Speaker, are out of touch with rural Manitoba. Rural Manitobans know it. The world is round; it's not flat—

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

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, if Saskatchewan held a referendum on amalgamations, perhaps this minister will do the same here for amalgamations.

Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to use the word dysfunctional. He continues to show disrespect. He continues to bully. He continues to call the municipalities insolent children. They seem to be the hallmarks of his comments.

So when will he drop the arrogance and at least attempt—at least attempt—to begin rebuilding the relationship with hard-working, balanced-budget, local municipalities?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, the government on this side and many ministers—it truly is a team effort, and with regard to funding and support for municipalities is multi-faceted through many, many different departments, whether it's Education, Housing, Health, and we are very, very proud of the funding and support that we provide municipalities.

He mentioned Saskatchewan, but Saskatchewan provides approximately \$50 million less than what we provide for municipalities. Mr. Speaker, 8.5, you know, per cent increase this year is nothing to sneeze at.

You know, as I mentioned repeatedly before, Mr. Speaker, that the party opposite, you know, they're stuck in the Dark Ages. It's time for them to wake up. You know, the days that when a grain wagon travelled to the nearest elevator and the boundaries were drawn like that, boundaries haven't changed for many of these municipalities for over a hundred years.

Mr. Speaker, we've worked closely with municipalities. Our legislation is asking them to talk to your neighbours, work with your—

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

Midwife Education Program Update

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, Mr. Speaker, it's graduation time again in Manitoba, and across the province students are completing their final coursework and receiving their diplomas, but not so much in Manitoba's midwifery program. This month the University College of the North will graduate one single student from its midwifery program and that, in fact, is the very first midwifery student to graduate since the program started seven years ago.

Mr. Speaker, since 2006 this NDP has spent millions on this program. Midwifery students have been moved around to three different university locations, and all of those efforts and investments now culminate in one single graduate.

Why has this Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) so thoroughly failed to grow the midwifery profession and establish midwifery as a vital component of community health?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): On this side of the House we believe that women and families deserve choice on how they would choose to give birth. We believe that if women want to choose to give birth in a—with a midwife or in a hospital that that should be their decision along with their health-care professional.

We also knew, Mr. Speaker, that when we built a midwife program from the ground up, there would be some challenges. We expected them, but on this side of the House we don't shy away from a challenge. Just because something is difficult doesn't mean we won't face it, but we know on that side of the House there were no midwives. There was no midwife program. In fact, they actually failed to enact their own legislation to bring forward midwives.

Here on this side of the House we're proud to see that our midwife program is still continuing. We have someone graduating and we have more and more midwives practising all the time. In fact, we have—

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

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this minister says that Manitobans deserve a choice. Might I suggest to her that one does not represent much of a choice.

The minister's approach in the south Winnipeg Birth Centre has also been a total disaster. Her Field of Dreams approach has been a disaster; she built it and they did not come. The minister opened this \$3.5-million facility with much fanfare, but she knew there would not be enough midwives to handle the demand for services.

As a matter of fact, the WRHA tells us they turn down 75 per cent of all requests for service—midwife services at that facility. Mr. Speaker, that's not to mention the fact that outside of Winnipeg, women who live outside are denied access to the system.

What explanation can the minister give to the fact that the number of practising midwives is so low in Manitoba and has even declined in the last year?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, he's wrong again.

I can let the member opposite know that, in fact, after the Birth Centre opened, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority recruited an additional 11 midwives, nine from Ontario, one from the United States and one returned from the Maritimes. So he's just making stuff up; it's evident every single day.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member that, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Manitoba has the most midwives per capita and the highest proportion of births attended by a midwife, 6.5 in Manitoba as opposed to 4.3 nationwide. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, the guy's just wrong.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, there are 45 funded positions for midwifery in this province. There were 40; there are now 36. Who's making stuff up?

This minister said that that facility could handle 500 births per year. In fact, there were 112 births at that centre in the first year alone, and, Mr. Speaker, besides that, we know that three out of four requests right now for midwifery services at that facility are turned down. And if you live in rural Manitoba, out of luck. Young families are paying the price for this NDP minister's midwife Manitoba mismanagement.

How long do Manitobans have to wait until she finally gets it right?

Ms. Oswald: I'll provide the member opposite with just a little more assistance. There are 54 funded midwife positions in Manitoba. There were zero, squat, diddly positions when the Progressive Conservatives were at the helm. They didn't even 'proclaim'—proclaim their own legislation because they didn't give a rip about midwives then; they don't give a rip about midwives now.

Do we know that Manitobans want greater access to midwives? Yes, they do. Do we know that they'll never get it under the Leader of the Opposition's scheme to have two-tier, American-style health care? No, they won't.

Kim Edwards Government Meeting

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry heard some of the most appalling situations with regard to children in care in this province. But there are still many more stories which were not heard and which still need to be heard. Many are stories of family trauma and unnecessary suffering.

Today we have, just in front of the Legislature, a woman, Kim Edwards, who feels so strongly about the need to improve Child and Family Services that she's been on a hunger strike for 27 days.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): What efforts will he make to ensure that all children and families who've been affected by Child and Family Services will have a chance to tell their stories and be heard?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I want to say to the member opposite that certainly the child welfare system—there are many heartbreaking stories, many children who find that in the family that they're born into, their parents are not able to care for them, and in some of the worst situations, their parents abuse them horribly. And so, occasionally, it is important, it is necessary, for that system to step in to take those children and to make sure that they are in a safe place.

Certainly, we've learned a lot from the Sinclair inquiry. We'll look forward to those recommendations coming out so we can continue to move forward.

I have met with Ms. Edwards. I went and spoke with her the first day that she was here, listened to what she had to say. Certainly, she has endured horrific loss as well.

We have, in this province, updated the way that we deal with deaths of children in care so that we have some of the—

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we have a Manitoban who is starving herself on our front lawn of our Legislature, calling out for the other families to be heard. Kim Edwards has camped out in a hunger strike on the lawn since May the 22nd.

She's called out to the Premier as he passed her on June the 3rd, asking why he's ignored her emails,

and yet he did not stop or respond. To date, the Premier has failed to respond and the Premier has failed to sit down with Kim Edwards and listen to her concerns.

I ask the government: Will the government provide assurances that the Premier will personally meet with Kim Edwards to hear her concerns that far too many children enter and remain within—

* (14:20)

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

Ms. Howard: As I said, on the first day that Ms. Edwards was here I went and spoke with her, listened to what she had to say. She was meeting with other families who have also gone through very difficult times in the child welfare system.

I know that she provided one of the few bright spots in Phoenix's tragic short life and loved her and cared for her, and I thank her for that. And I know that the loss that she has experienced I hope is a loss that none of us ever have to go through.

We have in this Legislature, under, certainly, the previous minister of Family Services, put in place for the first time ever a system whereby the Children's Advocate looks at every death of a child who is either in care, has experience with the child welfare system, and then in addition to that, the Ombudsman also looks at those cases to see how agencies are doing fulfilling those recommendations.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in 27 days has failed to meet with Kim Edwards—this is an emergency sitting, as we all know, and yet we have a NDP government which has dedicated itself to not listening to people. Even though the law requires the government to hold a referendum to listen to Manitobans, this government has refused to have that referendum, and now the Premier has refused to listen and to meet with Kim Edwards. He won't even—hasn't even talked to her. We can't even get a guarantee from the government that he will listen to her.

I ask the government: Will they provide a guarantee that the Premier will walk out the front door of this Legislature as soon as he can and meet with Kim Edwards and listen to her concerns?

Ms. Howard: As I've said to the member opposite, I met with Ms. Edwards the first day she was here. I know previous ministers of Family Services have met with her. She has been an advocate for children

who are in care. The loss that she experienced as one of the few people that loved and cared for Phoenix is something that I don't think any of us wish upon anyone.

We will continue to work diligently every day to improve the child welfare system. We have funded additional positions in that system. We have put in place better tools. We have funded foster families so that they can provide mentorship to each other so that they can provide loving homes, and we'll continue to do that, Mr. Speaker. We're dedicated to that. We look forward to the recommendations that Commissioner Hughes is going to put forward to help guide us how we can continue to strengthen.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Manitoba Hydro Development Plans (Saskatchewan)

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, the demand for our clean, renewable hydro energy is only growing.

Yesterday Manitoba hosted the Western Premiers' Conference and there was some important particular matters discussed. In particular, Saskatchewan Brad Wall Premier publicly announced his interest in working with—towards agreements to buy our clean, renewable hydro that we generate in partnership with our First Nations.

The Conservatives on the other side like to bash Manitoba and point to Saskatchewan as being better. It's obvious they like old CFL stadiums, not having an NHL team and spending \$16 billion on investing in dirty coal-fired power plants.

We know members opposite are against building hydro, but could the minister from Hydro please inform us of the development plans and the potential for 'saska'—a deal with Saskatchewan?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, it's important in government not to just be against everything but to stand for something, to have a vision for the future for our children. Our hydro is a future for our children. We're running out of power, and we're increasing our population because people are coming to Manitoba, and because of that we're building our hydroelectricity. It's going to reduce the cost of hydro to Manitobans and keep our hydro the lowest in the country, and at the same time it's going to help on the clean air and clean energy across the country and in the United States.

And, Mr. Speaker, yesterday Brad Wall came to town, and what did Premier Brad Wall have to say about Manitoba Hydro? Quote: We've just been talking to Manitoba in detail about what's possible. I think you're going to see some progress before the end of the summer. It makes a lot of sense. That's the Premier of Saskatchewan talking about the future of Hydro.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to getting to the honourable member for Agassiz, I just want to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have from Manitoba Finance 15 mining tax auditors from across Canada under the direction of Cindy Matazuski. This group is under the ministry of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

Foster Parents Government Relations

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, a foster parent in my constituency has emailed me with concerns about the treatment she has received from Child and Family Services. She says, and I quote, supervisors are making calls on the child's behalf and have never spent one second with the child. She goes on to say, meetings have been held and the foster parents have pretty much been called liars even though everything has been documented by the foster parents.

I ask the Minister of Family Services: Why does she condone this kind of treatment of foster parents?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I know, as the member opposite well knows, I cannot and will not breach the confidentiality of any child in the child welfare system or foster parents. That would be against the law, Mr. Speaker.

He may have already sent me the details of this. If he has, I thank him for that and we will speak after the question period and he can give me the names and I can endeavour to find information for him that I will then provide to him privately.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, foster parents are a positive component of CFS.

My constituent goes on to say, foster parents were wrong, CFS is right; the recommendations

made by therapists, well-known pediatricians are disregarded.

Does this minister condone this intimidation, this atmosphere of mistrust? They exist in the Family Services Department under her watch.

Ms. Howard: Well, as I've said to the member opposite, I'll be pleased to sit with him after question period concludes and get the confidential information from him, and then I will endeavour to provide him with an update. I think he knows, on other cases that we've worked together, that I will do that and I will follow up.

I will say that recently I had the opportunity to go and meet with the Manitoba Foster Family Network, an organization that saw its funding entirely wiped out when the members opposite were in power. We had good discussions about both the challenges of being a foster parent, of which there are many, but also we had a really good discussion about the inspiring moments that keep people committed to taking care of those kids.

So I will look forward to getting the information from the member opposite and bring him whatever information I can provide.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, my constituent goes on to say, and I quote, I am afraid of retaliation from CFS to foster parents; believe me when I say they can be bullies. End quote. She is afraid to have me to share her name for fear of having a much-loved child removed from her care.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell my constituent what her options are and how does she attain some resolution without fear of retaliation? When the child becomes the weapon, whose interests are served?

Ms. Howard: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have given my assurance to the member opposite, if he wishes to provide me with more information, that I can attempt to get some answers for him and ensure that there is some direct communication with that foster parent. Certainly I would take the claims that he's making very seriously.

But I am cautious, Mr. Speaker, because there have been times in this House—and he hasn't, but other members have put on the record things that turned out to be not true. Other members of this Chamber have asked me to interfere directly in criminal investigations where child abuse has been

alleged, where even charges have been laid. And I have said clearly that I will not do that.

But I will sit with him privately, he can give me whatever information he feels comfortable sharing and I will take that information and do my best to follow up on the concerns that he's raised.

Mr. Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

Order, please.

During oral questions on June 10th, 2013, the honourable Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) rose on a matter of contempt regarding actions he said occurred in the Kirkfield Park constituency involving the MLA for Kirkfield Park and a group of youth volunteer workers associated with the political party represented by the official opposition.

* (14:30)

He inserted—asserted that the interaction had intimidated the youth involved and had discouraged them from getting involved in the democratic process, which he contended was a reflection on the House. At the conclusion of his remarks, he moved, in quotations: that this matter regarding the undemocratic actions of the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) be referred to a committee of Legislative Affairs. End of quotations.

The honourable Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) also offered advice to the Chair on this matter. I took the matter under advisement in order to consult with the procedural authorities. I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair.

As noted, when this issue was raised, it is rare to see a matter raised as an issue of contempt in the House. There are individual protections for members that are provided by parliamentary privilege, such as freedom of speech, the freedom from arrest in civil actions, exemption from jury duty, exemption from being subpoenaed to attend court as a witness, and freedom from obstruction, interference, intimidation or molestation.

The House, as an institution, is protected by collective privileges, including the right to regulate its own internal affairs, the power to discipline, the right to provide for its proper constitution including the authority to maintain the attendance and service of members, the right to institute inquiries and to call

witnesses and demand papers, the right to administer oaths to witnesses appearing before it, and the right to publish papers without recourse to the courts relating to the content. These privileges provide the absolute immunity for members to do their parliamentary work while also providing the necessary means by which the House discharges its function.

Where contempt differs from privilege, according to page 62 of O'Brien and Bosc House of Commons Procedure and Practice, is that any conduct which offends the authority or dignity of the House, even though no breach of specific privilege may have been committed, may be referred to as contempt of the House.

Contempt may be an act or an admission. It does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member. It merely has to have the tendency to produce such results. Joseph Maingot states on page 225 of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada that contempt is more aptly described as an offence against the authority or dignity of the House.

As noted on page 82 of O'Brien and Bosc, the House can claim the right to punish as a contempt any action which, though not a breach of specific privileges, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions, obstructs or impedes any member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties, or is in offence against the authority and dignity of the House, such as obedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its members or its officers.

Given that contempt is not clearly defined in the same way as privilege is, I thought it would be helpful to share with the House a listing of the actions considered to be contempt as found on pages 70 and 71 of the 1999 report of the United Kingdom Joint Committee on Parliamentary Privilege. I do ask honourable members to bear with me as this is a lengthy list.

According to this report, the list includes interrupting or disturbing the proceedings of or engaging in other misconduct in the presence of the House or a committee; assaulting, threatening, obstructing or intimidating a member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee by way of statement, evidence or petition; deliberately publishing a false or misleading report of the proceedings of the House or a committee;

removing without authority papers belonging to the House; falsifying or altering any papers belonging to the House or formally submitted to a committee of the House; deliberately altering, suppressing, concealing or destroying a paper required to be produced for the House or a committee; without reasonable excuse, failing to attend before the House or a committee after being summoned to do so; without reasonable excuse, refusing to answer a question or provide information or produce papers formally required by the House or by a committee; interfering with or obstructing a person who's carrying out a lawful order of the House or a committee; bribing or attempting to bribe a member to influence the member's conduct in respect of proceedings of the House or a committee; intimidating, preventing or hindering a witness from giving evidence or giving evidence in full to the House or a committee; bribing or attempting to bribe a witness; assaulting, threatening or disadvantaging a member or a former member on account of the member's conduct in Parliament; and divulging or publishing the content of any report or evidence of a select committee before it has been reported to the House.

In addition, page 71 of the same report of the joint committee also considered the following types of conduct to constitute contempt in the case of members: accepting a bribe intended to influence a member's conduct in respect to proceedings of the House or a committee; acting in breach of any order of the House; and failing to fulfill any requirement of the House as declared in a code of conduct or otherwise relating to the possession, declaration or registration of financial interests or participation in debate or other proceedings.

It is clear from this list that, although not exhaustive, to be considered as contempt actions must be committed against the institution itself or against members. As with privilege, persons outside of the Legislature who are not staff conducting official business on behalf of the Legislature are not provided protection. By volunteering for a political party, the youth involved do not fall within the category of legislative staff.

In addition, from the description provided, it is not clear that the House has been obstructed or impeded in the performance of its functions, nor have the members of the House or House staff been impeded in the discharge of their duties. Nor am I convinced that the authority and dignity of the House have been compromised.

I must therefore advise the House that I am not convinced that an act of contempt has been committed, and I would therefore rule the motion out of order as contempt of the House.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): With respect, we challenge the ruling.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Official-honourable Government House Leader?

Recorded Vote

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I think it's important that we are clear in our support for your ruling. I request a recorded vote.

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

Order, please.

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

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Maguire, Mitchelson, Pallister, Pedersen, Schuler, Smook, Stefanson, Wishart.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 29, Nays 16.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

OCN Culture and Heritage Society Food Sovereignty Project

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, last week 125 fruit trees were planted in Opaskwayak Cree Nation. Peggy and Stan Wilson of OCN Culture Heritage Society organized the planting of the fruit trees as part of the Food Sovereignty Project. This project is encouraging community members to learn to grow, farm and eat healthy food. The centrally planted trees will be—will provide organically grown fruit for the community to access and enjoy.

Together, 60 community members, including adults, two school classes, as well as my own children and grandchildren joined together—dig holes, plant and water the trees. Many of the young people were proud to be learning how to plant and care for fruit trees while also growing fellowship of each other and connection to the new harvest. Some of the participants wrote their own names on the stakes that they put beside the trees, creating a special relationship with a tree and taking personal responsibility for the land and the gift it gives.

Mr. Speaker, we now have an orchard in OCN, and in a few years all members of the community, children and adults alike, will be able to walk through the rows of trees, picking the fruit and sharing in the happiness that the land brings.

The Food Sovereignty Project is important to our community. We are reviving the part of our culture where we relied on the land for sustenance and we are continuing our tradition of thanking the land for the gifts that it gives. As these trees take root, the hope is that so, too, will our understanding of each other and of healthy food.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Peggy and Stan Wilson of OCN Culture and Heritage Society for organizing and co-ordinating this event, Manitoba Hydro for sponsoring the Food Sovereignty Project and all those who came to help plant the trees. I encourage the entire community to participate in caring for and loving the trees in our new orchard.

Thank you.

Molson Street Twinning Project

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I rise today to speak to the building and renewal plans for northeast Winnipeg roads.

The Elmwood residents are pleased to know that in partnership with the City of Winnipeg, the Province is investing \$5 million in the Molson Street twinning project. Work will begin this summer and will reconstruct Molson and Panet Road between Munroe Avenue and Concordia Avenue. I was pleased to attend the announcement with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the members from Rossmere, Radisson and Concordia, and Dr. Thomas Turgeon of the Concordia Hip & Knee Institute.

Molson, a major thoroughfare in northeast Winnipeg, will become a much needed four-lane divided roadway and will include bike lanes in both directions. These upgrades will help with traffic flow and will be completed next year. Residents of the northeast quadrant will experience smoother and safer drives.

The funding for the Molson twinning project is a welcome announcement along with the \$14-million provincial investment in improving 47 other streets this year. Many additional streets that my neighbours and I travel often are also being upgraded. They are: Watt Street, Brazier Street, Dunrobin Avenue and Frasers Grove in Elmwood; Kildare Avenue and Walden Crescent in Transcona; and Irving—Grandview Street and Irving Place.

The changes to these residential and commercial areas are welcome improvements to our critical infrastructure. Manitoba families depend on safe and well-maintained roads. Our government is investing in projects like these throughout the Manitoba Building and Renewal Plan. The well-being of our residential communities and the businesses that serve them depend in part on enhancements made to the streets and roads that connect us.

Residents will also soon benefit from the work being done to twin Plessis Road and create an underpass.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that Budget 2013 doubles the level of provincial funding available to road—to repair residential streets. This amount is now \$14 million, up from \$7 million last year.

Northeast Winnipeg is a priority and I thank the Province for meeting our needs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further member statements? Seeing none—

ORDERS OF THE DAY*(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****House Business**

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Pursuant to rule 31(8), I'm announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum). The title of the resolution is "Senate of Canada".

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private member's resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, and the title of the resolution is the "Senate of Canada".

Ms. Howard: On further House business, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on June 25th, 2013, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report-Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations-dated March 2011, Section 1-Audit of the Pharmacare Program; Auditor General's Report-Annual Report to the Legislature-dated January 2013, Chapter 5-Manitoba eHealth Procurement of Contractors; Auditor General's Report-Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations-dated January 2013, Section 10-Pharmacare Program-Part 2, Section 11-Personal Care Homes Program, Section 12-Winnipeg Regional Health Authority-Administration of the Value-Added Policy. The witnesses for that meeting will be the Minister and Deputy Minister of Health.

I was also prepared today to announce a Public Accounts meeting to meet this week on Thursday, June 20th, but I've been informed that members of the opposition aren't prepared to meet that night, but we will go with the one that I have just announced on June 25th.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on June 25th, 2013, at 7 p.m., to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report-Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations-dated March 2011, Section 1-Audit of the Pharmacare Program; Auditor General's Report-Annual Report to the Legislature-dated January 2013, Chapter 5-

Manitoba eHealth Procurement of Contractors; Auditor General's Report-Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations-dated January 2013, Section 10-Pharmacare Program-Part 2, Section 11-Personal Care Homes Program, Section 12-Winnipeg Regional Health Authority-Administration of the Value-Added Policy. And the witnesses include the Minister and Deputy Minister of Health.

Ms. Howard: I would ask if you would canvass the House. I know there's a lot of interest in speaking this afternoon, and I would ask that you canvass the House. In my research I saw that the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) once spoke until 9 a.m. the next morning on the privatization of MTS. So I'd like you to canvass the House to see if there's leave that we not see the clock until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not see the clock 'til 9 a.m. tomorrow morning?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no. Leave has been denied.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I seek leave of the House for the government to call a referendum so that all Manitobans can have a vote on the PST.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

As Speaker, I'm obligated-leave has been requested to see if the-[*interjection*] I understand that I've been given some directions, which I will obviously take to heart. It's beyond the authority of the Speaker, apparently, to ask for what has been requested by the Official Opposition House Leader.

But I'd like to remind all honourable members-so I understand that from time to time, issues can become very intense in this place. I respect that. There's strongly held views. I am somewhat taken aback that the House would attempt, in different circumstances, to capture the Speaker in the middle of that intensity. And I'm asking, out of respect for the authority of the-and the position of the Chair to not capture the Speaker in that. I'll leave it to the House to decide the affairs of this place. My obligation, of course, is to enforce the rules and procedures and practices of this place, and I would-

I'm respectfully requesting that we not capture the Speaker during that part of the debate.

* (15:10)

Ms. Howard: Well, I guess we're willing to do whatever it takes as long as it's not after 5. So we'll ask you to call Bill 20.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: So we'll call Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), who has unlimited time.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Well, we'll see if they're still clapping in about seven or 10 days, Mr. Speaker.

I—first of all, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, and it's important, I think, to say, that I think all members of this House have great respect and confidence in you as Speaker. I want to put that on the record first.

I know that they say that brevity is a virtue, and this won't be a virtuoso speech if you use that as the particular benchmark, but I've never seen a government who's tried so hard to stop its own legislation from coming to the House for debate. What we saw was unprecedented; where we had the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) stand up in this House just a few minutes ago and call for a recorded vote to delay time, so they couldn't even have debate on their own bill. Now, I know this is a government that's lost control of this House. There's no doubt they have lost control of this House, the agenda of the House, how this House operates, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of other things, but I've never seen a Government House Leader stand up and try to filibuster their own legislation. It's unbelievable, but it speaks to how this government is out of control. They're out of control not just in terms of the House, but what they're doing to Manitobans. And we know what could—particularly with this bill, trying to increase the PST from 7 to 8 per cent when there are many other options, when there are many other things that they could do to protect Manitoba families.

And I intend to go through a number of things in the time that I have, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to discussing, for example, where we've been, to talk

about the reasoned amendment that was debated. I look forward to talking about the hoist motion that's been debated here in the Legislature. I know that I'd like to speak about how it's hard for this government to admit when they've made a mistake, and I'll be speaking about that in the time ahead. I look forward to reviewing the last—how they broke a promise in the last election. You know, I want to talk a bit about the history of referendums in Canada and in Manitoba and maybe in Europe, somewhat, because that is important to have the framework when we talk about the general principles around this bill and removing referendums. I look forward to talking about the rationale that the government put forward, the wrong rationale, on increasing the PST on hard-working Manitoba families; there'll be lots to talk about there. The government has talked about why they say they need a tax increase, and I look forward to debating in the days ahead why it is that that is not true. They put forward false expectations for Manitobans on how they could do other things. I look forward to talking about where savings could be found, other places, the negative impact of tax increases on Manitobans and Manitoba families. I look forward to talking about the human toll of tax increases. Many things to discuss over the next while.

But make no mistake—because I don't want this government to have the wrong impression, Mr. Speaker, you know, they seem to think that there's some sort of game going on here—we've been up front. We've been up front since the beginning. Since the government announced that they were going to bring forward a PST increase, we've been up front and said we will do everything we can to stall this legislation. We will do everything we can to fight Bill 20, which increases the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. There's been no hidden agendas on our side on this. We've made it real clear we're not going to do anything to speed this bill through.

So when the government—well, they were stalling their own bill earlier on today. I don't understand that. I still haven't figured that out. But, when the government talks about, well, we should sit this time or that time. The member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is saying it now. Maybe he missed the press release. You know, maybe he missed the newspaper articles. Maybe he missed the radio interviews. We're not actually trying to speed up Bill 20. We're actually trying to stop Bill 20.

I don't know what the government has a hard time understanding. I mean it's—we've made it

perfectly clear. We've not played too cute by half on this, Mr. Speaker. We've said clearly we will do everything as an opposition—it's a promise we made, and I think members should live by their promises. The government hasn't always lived by their promises. That's why we're here, talking about how they didn't live by their promises. But we live by a promise that we made, that we would do everything that we can to slow down the passage of this bill.

And I—there seems to still be some members—the member for Selkirk being one of them—who doesn't get it, who still thinks that this is some sort of other play here. I want to tell him—now, I know he probably, you know, lives in the grassy knoll and is looking for, you know, the second shooter, but I want to make it clear to him. There's no conspiracy here. There's no conspiracy. We're—no hidden agenda. We're making it clear that we're going to do everything we can to stop this bill from passing, and, I don't know, so maybe that—and maybe they can take that message back to their caucus because they don't seem to get it.

Now, they—some of them seemed to join the fight earlier today. Some of them seemed to be on our side and wanted to join the cause and join with us in trying to stop Bill 20 by calling for a vote to delay this, and I don't get it.

You know, they—one day they say it's an emergency session, and the next day, they say, oh, well, you know, we want to spend more time outside the House, so they ring the bells, Mr. Speaker. They've got to figure out what it is. Is it an emergency or is it not an emergency? They say it's an emergency, then they all run out of the House calling the bells.

Now, I'm not here to give them strategic advice. That's not my role, not my job, Mr. Speaker. But they might want to, you know, spend a bit of time this evening—in fact, we did them a favour by giving them more time later on this evening to sit down and try to figure some things out, because this is a government that's confused. This is a government that not only does not stand up for the priorities of Manitobans; this is a government that doesn't know how to run the House. I mean, I've never seen a situation where you go through two months of the Legislature and not one bill has passed in those two months. Now, a big part of that is because they called us back so late in the middle of April, and I've repeatedly said that that's ridiculous that a government who doesn't want to work earlier in the

year in this Legislature, who puts the chains on the doors of the Legislature until the middle of April and then says, oh, everything we have is a priority.

You know, the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), he was giving me the high-five sign there, you know. He says that everything we have is a priority, he said—everything that—every bill. You know, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was asked the question—not long ago in this House, he was asked the question, which of your bills is a priority. And what he said was, well, all of our bills are a priority—all of our bills. And yet, in the middle of April, they didn't seem to be a priority because he was off doing whatever he was doing, but he certainly wasn't working here in the Legislature. He wasn't allowing us to debate bills, Mr. Speaker, and go through that process, so I don't understand. You know, where's the emergency or where are the priorities of this government?

I expect—I'm not clairvoyant, Mr. Speaker, but I expect, at some point in the next little while, we're going to have the government stand up and say, oh, this bill hasn't passed and it's important. And, oh, this bill hasn't passed, and they'll name a bunch of bills. And why is it that those bills haven't proceeded? Because the government refuses to call them. Because the government doesn't know how to operate their own Legislature.

When you look at the priorities of this government, nearly 70 per cent of the time, when they were calling legislation after orders of the day, Mr. Speaker—after you called orders of the day, they called Bill 20 as their top priority. Nearly 70 per cent of the time, they called a bill to increase the PST as their No. 1—their top priority. That's not fathomable that they would say that they have anything that's a priority other than trying to raise the PST—yes, because that was their record. They're the ones who decide which bills get called in the afternoon. It's not me as an opposition leader. They didn't seem to want to call anything this afternoon. They wanted to ring the bells and delay the procedures for some reason. But when they've had the opportunity to call bills, they've called the PST tax increase; that's 70 per cent of the time. That's clearly been their priority, this particular bill.

* (15:20)

Now, I want to go back and I want to review a little bit, Mr. Speaker, where we've been on this bill. This bill came before the Legislature the day after the budget—I think that was on April 17th—and since

that time, we have had many, many speakers. In fact, all of our members of our caucus—and I want to give credit to our caucus who's done a great job of speaking and trying to convince these members opposite and to talk to Manitobans about why this bill shouldn't pass, why the PST increase isn't necessary. Each one of our members of our caucus 'heither' have spoken here or spoken outside of the House and have rallied people about why it is that this bill shouldn't pass. And this has truly been a team effort as a caucus, and I'm very proud of each one of the members who have done that and taken up the cause and the challenge.

And it's not easy, in many ways, Mr. Speaker. I mean, there are various commitments that MLAs have, obviously, in their roles in their lives. And I know that members opposite who have made the sacrifice to be here longer than we often are in the Legislature, have done that willingly because they know that this is an important fight for Manitobans. And each of the members of this caucus have willingly took up that fight on behalf of their constituents and on behalf of Manitobans.

Not that it's easy, Mr. Speaker, because all of us, over the course of the summer, are going to be missing things that we might want to attend; we might be missing things that our constituents might want us to attend; we'll be missing some family things. And that's not easy on anybody, and we understand that. But it is a—important fight, and a fight that we are willing to take up for Manitoba families. So I want to commend each of the members of this side of the House who have taken that up without reservation.

Now, we talked, very early on, Mr. Speaker, about a reasoned amendment. And a—reasoned amendments are unusual things to come to this House. I think when—in my own research, I'd only seen the reasoned amendment brought forward once in 30 years, maybe twice in the history of this Legislature, but not very often, and I think you would agree with me on that. I haven't seen in the history of the time that I've been here and I don't know that any members have seen it in the history of time that they've been here, in terms of a reasoned amendment. It's a very unusual parliamentary procedure. It's a valid one, and one that we use to try to make a point.

And we already know and I believe that this bill is the longest debated bill in second reading in the history of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker—the longest

debated bill in the history of the Legislature at second reading. Now, members opposite can be proud of themselves for being part of history, but they can't be proud of themselves for the fact they—that they brought this on, that they have brought such a divisive bill to the Legislature, because Manitoba families are going to have to pay more because of what they did.

So we know that because these are extraordinary times in terms of what this government is doing with the legislation, we, as a caucus, decided that we would take extraordinary measures; that we would do something, and do many things that probably hadn't been done before and that were a surprise to the members opposite. And I don't make apologies for that, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we've used procedural tactics, if you want to use those terms, that haven't been employed in a long time. I don't think there's ever been bills that have had, sort of, reasoned amendments and a hoist put on at the same time, but we did that for a reason on Bill 20.

We did that because it is, in fact, an extraordinary situation. It is, in fact, something that is unusual and unprecedented, Mr. Speaker, and so we wanted to ensure that we would do all that we could with all the tools that we have. Now, an opposition doesn't always have—we certainly don't have all the tools of government. Obviously, the government has the majority, and if they persist and they don't listen and they're not willing to listen to Manitobans, they're going to do everything they can and, ultimately, in time, I suppose, they can ram this legislation through. It'll take some time, but, ultimately, they could.

Our job as an opposition is to give the government every opportunity to change their mind and to allow Manitobans every opportunity to come along with us to change their minds, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we've tried to do. We've tried to ensure that the government had that time, that they could speak to their constituents, they could speak to the Manitobans who are concerned about this bill. I would encourage the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), obviously, as the lead minister on this bill, to take that opportunity.

And so the effort that we have today and the effort that we had with the reasoned amendment and the hoist motion, Mr. Speaker, was simply that; to give the government more opportunity. Yes, it's a procedural thing that's well within the rules of our parliamentary system, in our British parliamentary

system, and so we used that and we employed that, and it hasn't been used, as I mentioned, very often. But in an extraordinary circumstance I think you do have to use extraordinary measures, and this was that.

And we did hear from Manitobans in the hundreds and the thousands, Mr. Speaker, who emailed us, who phoned us, who sent letters. I know that the members opposite, they won't stand up and say it, but they've been hearing the same thing. They've been getting letters and they've been getting emails and they've been getting of-personal conversations when they're off in their constituencies—they've been getting all of those things. And they won't speak about that in this House, but they exist and it's a reality that people are concerned, that Manitobans are upset about the PST increase and they're upset about it because they know that there are other things that the government should have looked at first.

And so we said to those Manitobans, we will do everything we can to fight for you. Now, I had somebody ask me earlier today, a member of our media, say, well, you know, ultimately the government is probably going to break the law it seems and on July 1st bring in the PST increase, and ultimately they're going to jam this through, so what is sort of the point?

Well, Mr. Speaker, it is always the right thing to do the right thing, and the right thing for us is to stand with Manitobans, to stand with those Manitobans who have said that they want us to try to stop this PST increase and to make sure the government understands that they're doing the wrong thing. We also believe that it is the right thing. It is always the right time to do the right thing.

So, ultimately, I can't stand here today, Mr. Speaker, and promise Manitobans that there'll be a particular outcome to this debate. I can't stand here and promise Manitobans that the government is going to change their mind or they're not going to break the law on July 1st. They seem—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) seems quite comfortable breaking the law on many different fronts. He's apparently got dozens of lawyers at his disposal, so he'll do what he wants to do, I suppose.

But what I can promise Manitobans is that we will stand up for them as we promised to do and do everything that we can on this legislation to try to not let it pass, because that's what they elected us to do. Now they didn't elect us to the government. Now

we—and in 2011 we all applied for jobs. I would argue that this government has a false mandate, a phony mandate, because they went out to Manitobans, knocked on doors, told them they weren't going to raise taxes, particularly the PST, and then have lied on both fronts, Mr. Speaker. But we all did apply for jobs and so ultimately Manitobans gave us the job as opposition, and they said as an opposition we want you to be a vigorous opposition. We want you to stand up for us when we think it's time and when there's a moment to stand up for us. And so we took up that challenge and together with our leader, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), we have said we'll take that challenge up and, ultimately, regardless of what happens with this bill, whether the government decides to back off—and I was hopeful when the government called the vote earlier today, that maybe they were reconsidering. Maybe they wanted some time to reconsider what they were going to do. You know, there's no other strategy that makes sense in terms of why they did it. The only thing that would make any sense is they decided to take some time and to reconsider because there was no strategic value for what they did, other than to show they've lost complete control of this House and maybe had they wanted to demonstrate that and they did, if that was what they were trying to demonstrate.

But we said to Manitobans, as an opposition we're going to do everything we can to not allow Bill 20 and the PST tax increase to pass. That's a promise that we made to Manitobans and that's why we've taken extraordinary measures in this House. Now, I know I've seen reported on television and the newspapers about hoist motions and reasoned amendments. I've never seen that reported before, Mr. Speaker, and it's probably not the most exciting reading sometimes for Manitobans and maybe some Manitobans are left sort of wondering what it's all about.

And for us what it's about is standing up for them, for using every measure that we can to try to get the government to change their mind on the PST tax increase. Will it be successful? At the end of the day, I can't promise that, but that wasn't our promise. Our promise to Manitobans is that we would do everything that we could within the rules of the opposition, and that is what we're doing. And that is why we're here today and using extraordinary measures like unlimited speaking time or reasoned amendments or hoist motions or other things that might come, Mr. Speaker, down the road.

But we are fulfilling our commitment. We are fulfilling our promise to Manitoba families that we'd stand up for them and that we would do the right thing for them because they are concerned, Mr. Speaker. So we brought forward the reasoned amendment that said that this bill should not pass into committee or into third reading because the government, during the prebudget consultation meetings, hadn't in fact disclosed the fact that they were going to raise the PST, and we thought that that was an important thing to do.

We thought that was an important thing to do, Mr. Speaker, because ultimately government needs to be transparent. Ultimately, government needs to be responsible to the people that they are elected to govern, and the prebudget consultation meetings that the government had—I have a list of them. They met in south Winnipeg, Fort Garry, Riverview, Fort Rouge. They met in Gimli. They met in the town of Niverville. They met in Flin Flon. They met in Swan River, in north Winnipeg, in Rossmere, Concordia and Brandon. They met in all of those communities and they had the opportunity. They had the opportunity to fully disclose to Manitobans what the government was going to do during the budget. That is what a prebudget consultation meeting is ultimately about. That is what you do at a prebudget consultation meeting is you tell the government what you're going to do.

* (15:30)

I see the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) was nodding his head; he's in agreement with me. So I would hope that he would go to his caucus, Mr. Speaker, and say to his caucus members that, in fact, that is not in fact what happened. That, in fact, what happened was the government went to these prebudget consultation meetings and never talked about whether or not they were going to raise the PST. They never talked about that; they never disclosed that. So it's one of the reasons that we brought forward that issue. It's one of the reasons that we brought forward the issue of the reasoned amendment, and why the government should have not allowed the bill to pass because they were not transparent with Manitobans; they were not forthcoming to Manitobans.

And, so, on this second reading, it's important to talk about the principle of transparency. Because when you look at the bill and its form, it talks about how the PST should be going forward and how they're going to take away the referendum. So it

really is about transparency, Mr. Speaker, it really is about transparency.

And they were not transparent with Manitobans during their prebudget consultation meetings. I would venture to say if you went to the people in south Winnipeg at Fort Garry-Riverview, Fort Rouge, at Fort Garry community club where they had the meeting on January 21st of this year, Mr. Speaker. If you went to Gimli to the Lakeview Resort—in fact, I had a chance to visit there not long ago and a nice place to visit.

On January 22nd they had a meeting there in Niverville, a great community that I had the opportunity to represent at one point, Mr. Speaker. On January 23rd of this year, there was a prebudget consultation meeting in Flin Flon at the city hall, the council chambers, and you could probably talk to the individual councillors in Flin Flon.

On January 28th of this year, there was a prebudget consultation meeting in Swan River, at the Westwood Inn, the Valley Room, on Monday, January 28th, 2013. The prebudget consultation meeting on Tuesday, January 29th, 2013, in north Winnipeg, Rossmere, Concordia at the Valley Gardens community club, Mr. Speaker. And of course there was one in Brandon at the Keystone Centre in—on January 30th, on a Wednesday of this year.

And all of those meetings would have one thing in common, Mr. Speaker; all of them would have one thing in common and that is at each of those meetings this government didn't talk about the PST increase. At each of these meetings they never revealed to Manitobans that there was going to be a PST increase. You could go to any of these communities and go to any of these clubs and talk to any of the people that were there.

And I think that they would all confirm that at that prebudget meeting there was no disclosure by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) about a potential increase to the PST. And that's about transparency and that's about being open and honest with Manitobans.

Had they done that, Mr. Speaker, had they said to Manitobans we're going to increase the PST, I think they know what the response would have been. I think they know that Manitobans would have said it's not a good idea, but we certainly want our referendum right; we certainly want to be able to have our voice heard.

In fact, I have a news clipping, Mr. Speaker, from one of the meetings. It talks about the meeting in Brandon and this is from the Brandon Sun on January 31st. And the government here—and this is actually a quote from the Minister for Finance—he says our approach has been to ensure that there are reasonable increases to revenue. He never talked about the PST increase. I don't think that Manitobans would consider a PST increase, a 14 per cent increase in the PST—7 to 8 per cent representing a 14 per cent increase—to be a reasonable increase in revenue.

And the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), he can stand up and he can correct the record if he wants but he is quoted as saying that. That's been the approach, Mr. Speaker, by the government. He said that at the prebudget consultation meeting that the approach of the government would be reasonable increases in revenue; never talking about a 250- or 260-million-dollar revenue take as a result of the increase of the PST and that might even be higher because they extended the PST to a number of different items last year.

And that's a whole another debate, Mr. Speaker. Maybe I'll have time to debate that in the days ahead because it does relate to this bill because it's a pattern. It's a pattern, a pattern of a government who make promises but then ultimately doesn't keep those promises.

So I would ask the Minister of Finance to go back and to look at the comments that he made at these prebudget consultation meetings, to look at the comments that he made at the—in Brandon, where he said when he told those people who were the fine folks of Brandon who were at that meeting, promised them, that their approach would be about reasonable increases to revenue. He didn't talk about the PST increase, probably the largest increase that a government could bring on its own citizens, certainly one of them, Mr. Speaker. It's the reason why there is that protection within the Manitoba balanced budget and taxpayer protection act. It's the reason why we have that protection within the act is because there are certain tax increases, whether it's the PST or corporate income taxes or personal income taxes that are considered to be larger and more difficult for the economy to bear than others. So why do they have protection for those particular bills?

Now, I will have at some point, Mr. Speaker, an opportunity—I have with me about a few thousand things that the PST applies to, and later on I'm going

to have an opportunity to highlight some of them. I just want to say that, you know, for the government as they have the time ahead, they can certainly look at the various things that the PST applies to, from computer software to clothing. Well, computer software is one and I know that many Manitobans would purchase computer software, a—clothing, jewellery, snack foods—I think I probably get hung up on that once in a while—prepared foods and beverages, automobiles, and I know there'd be lots of discussion about the impact on purchases of automobiles, furniture, building materials, equipment, tools, household appliances.

Now, we can get more specific, Mr. Speaker, when you look at different things. When you just look at clothing, for example, now we're getting more specific. When you look at clothing in particular, the PST applies to aprons and smocks. Now, I think I've told you in the past that I had the opportunity to work at a grocery store when I was a younger man than I am today, and all of those employees at the grocery stores and the companies will bear a higher cost on aprons and smocks, badges, crests and pins for club uniforms, hair accessories, handkerchiefs, watches, cufflinks, belt buckles, pins, name tags, purses, handbags, backpacks, fanny packs, wallets, shoe insoles, umbrellas, earplugs—now that might be something that people might want to buy around here some days—goggles, swim 'fims', bowling shoes, eye protectors. The list goes on, and I'm going to spend—I'm going to—*[interjection]* I will. I've got lots of time ahead. I'm being encouraged by my members to go through the thousands and thousands of things that apply to the PST and I'm going to do that in the days ahead. But I just wanted to give you a bit of a taste, you know, to leave you and keep you wanting more, and you'll have those—that opportunity in the days ahead.

But I wanted to return back to the point about the prebudget consultation meetings and how this government refused to divulge what they were going to do at those meetings, and it's worth looking back a little bit about the history of these prebudget consultation meetings and why they were important, Mr. Speaker. There are many things about why the prebudget consultation meetings were brought in. They were seen as a way to give a voice to Manitobans, give them an opportunity to come and speak directly to their government in advance and to hopefully have an influence on the decisions of the government when it came to budgetary and monetary

policy. That's what they were all about. You wanted to give people that voice. You wanted to give people that opportunity not just to give them a false sense that they were, in fact, being listened to, but a real sense, and I think that the government has done great harm in that. I think they missed this point on the prebudget consultation meetings themselves. They've devalued them.

And I've made the point, I think, in this Legislature in the past about how they've devalued these meetings by being very limited in terms of who they ultimately invite, having pretty strict registration in terms of the—in fact, you know, I thought it was interesting, Mr. Speaker, when I looked at the list of the prebudget consultation meetings for 2013-2014. If you wanted to attend these meetings you were asked to phone to register. Now, if you wanted to attend the south Winnipeg, Fort Garry-Riverview, Fort Rouge meeting on January 21st you were supposed to phone an MLA's office in Fort Garry, the member for Fort Garry. If you wanted to attend that meeting you could also phone the MLA for Fort Rouge. They make you phone an MLA's office, which I think is a little concerning in some ways when you already set the stage that there's going to be a certain agenda, that there's going to be a certain expectation at that meeting. And I know the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) raises concerns about whether or not that would, in fact, you know, look partisan. Well, it does look partisan to me. It's right on the government website, though, but they ask for registrations to go through the MLAs' offices. It doesn't seem as open and as consultative as one might hope.

* (15:40)

For the meeting in Gimli on Tuesday, January 22nd, Mr. Speaker, if you wanted to attend that meeting, you were instructed to contact the MLA for Gimli, and to—I don't know—ask or I don't know if there was a pre-screening or if you had to somehow beg to come to the meeting, maybe you had to qualify, maybe they check the membership list. I don't know how it is that a person could—what kind of qualifications they had to have but they diminish the process.

When you look at the Wednesday, January 23rd, 2003, meeting in Niverville, Mr. Speaker, now, I think at the time—I could be wrong but I believe that the MLA at that time was still, for Niverville, was the member for Morris. She was still, I think, in office at that time and would have been—and so you

might have thought that her name would appear on this list, if the government was being non-partisan in terms of the prebudget consultation meetings. But, in fact, it was the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) that you had to phone to try to get to a budget consultation meeting in Niverville. Doesn't make a lot of sense to me.

If you look at the meeting on January 28th, in Flin Flon, if you wanted to attend that meeting in Flin Flon, you didn't register on a website necessarily; you had to call or contact the MLA for Flin Flon, the NDP MLA for Flin Flon, Mr. Speaker. A little strange, I think.

Now, when you look at Swan River, the meeting that was held on January 28th, 2013, instead of simply going to a website and registering your information, if it was even necessary—register, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that that would even be a necessity but I'm going to go with the assumption that it might be helpful. You had to call the MLA for Swan River—incidentally, an NDP MLA—and advise him that you were looking to attend.

If you wanted to attend the north Winnipeg, Rossmere-Concordia prebudget consultation meeting—now, there are a number of MLAs from different parties who, I suppose, if they found it necessary to list an MLA to register through, you could have listed MLAs from both political parties for this one and there are two MLAs listed in terms of registering, but they'd be the MLA for Concordia, the NDP MLA for Concordia, and the NDP MLA for Rossmere, Mr. Speaker, two NDP MLAs.

And then lastly, in Brandon, which we know is represented by two different parties, the fine MLA for Brandon West who does a great job of representing his constituents, and the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell), and I'll leave the editorial comments out on his representative abilities. But, if you were going to go to that meeting in Brandon on January 30th, you needed to call the MLA for Brandon East. And then there's another option but it's not calling the MLA for Brandon West, it's calling the western regional Cabinet office, Mr. Speaker.

And so, you know, here we have a government that so closely controls this process, so closely controls the prebudget consultation process that you have to call different MLAs in the governing party, whether it's the member for Dawson Trail, or—who doesn't even represent the riding where the meeting was held—or other government MLAs, Mr. Speaker,

and then they wonder why the process seems diminished. They wonder why people might not feel it's necessarily an open process. I can understand why people who are looking at the prebudget consultation meetings might think, well, maybe I have to have a certain view or maybe I'm expected to go with a certain mindset because I have to preregister with a member of the government who represents a particular party. It doesn't seem very open, it doesn't seem very transparent and ultimately that's what these prebudget meetings were intended to be.

So that is something that I hope the government, when we debate Bill 20 and it relates to Bill 20 through how we got here, in terms of the PST increase, because you had the prebudget consultation meetings leading up to the budget which ultimately led to Bill 20. You would want to have a system of process that is transparent, that is open, that would be inviting to Manitobans, where Manitobans would say, this is a process I want to be involved with. This is a process where if I came to it, not only would I get the straight goods but I'd be encouraged to give the straight goods. I'd get the straight information from the government, in terms of what they're planning or the different decision points they have, but I'd also be able to give the straight information. I wouldn't feel intimidated, Mr. Speaker, to give only a certain perspective, a certain world view on the economic affairs of the province. But they're not structured that way.

Now, I could spend some time but I guess I have the time, but I guess I could spend some time on where it is that they put these meetings in the province of Manitoba. And I've—I don't know if I've grieved on it, but I've certainly, you know, written articles about it and talked about it in the media that I'm concerned about where the location of these meetings have been in the past. They are predominantly in very heavily-weighted-to-NDP ridings, which I think in one way already sends a message.

And I know that my friends in the southern part of Manitoba will agree with me, that it's difficult to see a prebudget consultation meeting in their area, whether there's Morden-Winkler or in the city of Steinbach, where there's only been one, one prebudget consultation meeting in the city of Steinbach, the third largest city in Manitoba and one of the fastest-growing cities in the province of Manitoba and perhaps in the country of Canada. They've only had a one prebudget consultation

meeting in that city. And I hear some of my colleagues and my friends talk about how they've not had any in their community or in their region of Winnipeg which they represent. And one gets suspicious, one becomes a little bit jaded, and you start to wonder whether or not that is truly intended to draw only supporters of the government, Mr. Speaker. When you combine the fact that you are not only having these meetings in one part of the province, not well balanced in terms of the—who's representing them here in the Legislature, and you combine that with the fact that you have to register with the NDP MLA from that area, there is, of course, natural suspicion. You naturally begin to think, if you're a member of the public, that maybe my views, if they aren't exactly aligned with the government or even quite aligned with the government, might not be welcome at that particular meeting.

And so that is the reason why we raised the issue of the reasoned amendment—that lack of transparency, a government that doesn't want to ensure that all the facts are on the record. So you have meetings that are held predominantly in NDP ridings where you have to register through an NDP MLA and then when you come to that meeting, you aren't even told about the major thing that is actually happening in that budget. Now, I don't think that anybody—and the NDP tried; they tried hard to spin the budget, Mr. Speaker. I think they gave up after a couple of days because even with 192 communicators, you weren't getting very far. But they tried hard—they tried hard to spin this as something other than a budget that was clearly focused on a PST tax increase, but it didn't work.

I remember reading the article by the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux) in *The Carillon News*, an award-winning newspaper in my riding, a great newspaper. It used to be owned by the Rick Derksen family and then his father before him. Both owned *The Carillon*, the newspaper, a couple of other subsidiaries, I believe, and the printing company in Steinbach, Derksen Printers, Mr. Speaker—a great, great Manitoba company. It's now been purchased by the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and I'm glad to see that they continue on with a community focus in that newspaper.

But the member for Dawson Trail, he has an opportunity to write an article in that paper, as do I and as do our Member of Parliament for that particular region. And when the member for Dawson Trail put in his article entitled "Budget 2013

Highlights", Mr. Speaker, I read it with anticipation. I wanted to see what it was and how he would spin the PST tax increase. So I took the newspaper and I got my coffee and I sat down, wanting to see what the NDP member for Dawson Trail would say, and I read through it and point by point by point, and nothing about the PST tax increase.

So, well, I thought I must've missed it; I must've made a mistake. That happens sometimes. And so I went back—I went back to the top of the article, I checked the name—yes, it's the member for Dawson Trail. I can't name him in the House, but it's him. His picture's there, it's a good likeness of him, Mr. Speaker, in the paper, and it says the member for Dawson Trail, and I read it again. I read it a second time, I went through it point by point by point. Not a mention—not one mention about the PST tax increase—shocking.

And, you know, shocking until I saw the ads—the ads that ran on the television, in the radio, ads that ran in the newspapers, Mr. Speaker. And there was one thing about those ads that had a similarity to the article by the member for Dawson Trail and probably by articles by a number of different MLAs on the NDP side who have the opportunity to write correspondence in their local newspapers. And the similarity was this: nothing about the PST tax increase. Now, by that time—by the time the ads were already running on the newspaper or running in—on the radio or running on television, by now that was the major topic of everybody who was talking about the budget. When you went to the coffee shops, when you went to the local community centres, the Tim Hortons—some of my friends like Starbucks—and when you went to those places and—[interjection] I wouldn't mind one, actually—and you ended up talking to people about what was going on, they were talking about the PST.

*(15:50)

And I do know, Mr. Speaker, that historically in this House we have not had an awful lot of times when the government has done something that really got the attention of Manitobans. You know, Manitobans, I mean, they've got a lot of other things going on. They're busy people. They, of course, they're hard-working people. They like to spend time with their families. Some of them own—some of them like to go to sporting events. I do. In fact, I'm almost certain that my speech is actually going to be shorter than the time it took me to get to the last Bomber game. I need to end this speech sometime within the

next little while because it will take me a week to get to the next game, I think, so I got to get going for that. But they like—Manitobans are busy. They're doing a lot of different things and so they don't always engage in politics the way that we might want to, we might want them to as MLAs, because this is our lives. This is what we do and so we often spend time here under the dome and we have a feeling that what we are doing at this partic—any particular time is the most important thing in Manitoba. And we're often surprised, I think, when we go out into the community and it's not always exactly the top thing on everybody's mind. It might rank somewhere within their priorities, but it's not always the top thing.

So—but this was different. With the PST tax increase it was very different, because when we went out into the community on the weekends and in the evenings it is what people were talking about—it is what people were talking about. It was their No. 1 issue. They were concerned about what the government was doing with the PST tax increase, Mr. Speaker, and they wanted to talk to us as MLAs about that. They wanted to engage with us about that, and that was both gratifying and a little concerning, I'd say. Gratifying, of course, because as MLAs we want to engage with the people who elected us. We want to engage with other Manitobans and so we relish that opportunity. We think that's important for us to have that opportunity, but concerned because we knew that Manitobans were upset. Manitobans were very upset. They demonstrated it in a number of different ways. They demonstrated it on the front steps of the Legislature and they're going to do that again in a few days. They demonstrated it through emails and through phone calls and through letters, through stopping their MLA or even people who weren't their MLA on the steps of the Legislature and in the communities and expressing their concern. So that was a concern to us.

Now, going back to the point about the ads that ran in the newspapers and on the television and on the radio, Mr. Speaker. Despite the fact that this is what Manitobans are talking about, despite the fact that the government may have tried in the early days of the budget after they introduced it to try to not highlight the issue of the PST, in fact, not only not highlight it, but not even mention it in the ads. It is what Manitobans were engaged in. It is what they were talking about, and you couldn't get away from it, and yet the government didn't want to mention it

because they weren't even trying to defend something that they, I think, knew was not defensible. They knew that it wasn't defensible. By that time the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) had gotten the calls, the emails, his own community—and maybe I'll have time to read his local newspaper who read a—who wrote an editorial about the spending problems of this government, his own community newspaper. It had gone around. Manitobans were talking about it everywhere, and they saw the disconnect between what they knew to be a concern and what the government was trying to feed Manitobans, what the government was trying to say to Manitobans in those ads.

And it's a continuation. It's a pattern, Mr. Speaker. It's a pattern between the prebudget consultation meetings which took place in the communities that I've already identified, where the government didn't disclose that they were going to be increasing the PST—moving to the Legislature, where they surprised Manitobans on budget day with the announcement that they were going to increase the PST, and then turning around and writing their own articles or taking paid government advertising that didn't mention the PST. And all along what we see is a pattern of non-disclosure and the inability to defend something, the inability to defend something that truly is not defensible.

And that is why we're here today. That is why each of our members have spoken to this bill, and most of them three times on the hoist motion, on the reasoned amendment and on the—and now on second reading. And they'll get another opportunity at least, Mr. Speaker, to speak again at committee, possibly on amendments and on third reading. Who knows how many times they'll have?

And yet how many members of the government have stood up and spoken to this bill? Well, we heard the Minister of Finance, of course, stand up and speak about Bill 20. He had to because, I mean, he has to move the—he's got to move the motion; he's got to give a description of the bill. So he took whatever the department had prepared for him and he read those notes, but since then it's been silence—it's been silence from the members opposite, each of them, about Bill 20.

Now, at the end of the day, I think what the responsibility of the government is, is to get up and defend its actions. Now, they know already what we know, what everybody knows, that this is not a popular move; that this isn't something that

Manitobans approve. They—we get that, they know that, we know that Manitobans think there's a different way to do this, Mr. Speaker. But they have the opportunity to stand up and try to explain to Manitobans why it is—not only that they didn't keep their promise—and I'm going to get to that later in my remarks—but on this particular point, why it is that they won't stand up and defend the rationale for the PST increase.

Now, they could do that in a few different ways. The most obvious way would be to hold the referendum, which they're eliminating with this bill. That would be the most obvious way, and I want to talk a bit about referendums a little bit later on in my comments, but that would be the most obvious thing, Mr. Speaker, is to have a referendum to allow people a voice; to allow them to express their views through the most direct, democratic way they could. But this bill, Bill 20, removes that ability; it takes it away.

So then there's other opportunities, prebudget consultation meetings was one of them. They missed that opportunity—I've spoken about that. They didn't bring that forward in the meetings, Mr. Speaker. They didn't bring it forward to Manitobans to tell them what the rationale was. They missed that opportunity and I think they did it deliberately. I think they purposely didn't bring it forward, because they knew the backlash that would happen.

Well, here's a new opportunity. The Legislature, the place where democracy comes—it's been called the people's house in some times—where we, as legislators, as individuals who are—represent various areas and we come from different backgrounds. And we come to this place to not only just debate issues and to be in contradiction to each other or to argue with each other—that's sometimes what the view of democracy is, but it's a bit of a jaded view. We have a rep—a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to come here and defend the decisions that are made by—either individually, that we make as individual members, or that are made collectively by our party or that are made collectively by the government. And it's the government that's abdicated that responsibility on Bill 20 during the second reading debates.

Now, they'll have more opportunity, but it seems that this is a deliberate strategy. It's a deliberate strategy not to speak to this bill, not to stand up and defend the reasons, as bad as they may be, for increasing the PST. And I'll talk about some of the reasons that the government's given for raising the PST later on in my comments, Mr. Speaker, but it's a

missed opportunity again for them. It's a missed opportunity for them to come forward and say, these are the reasons why Bill 20 is something that we support, and presumably that they're going to vote for. We haven't gotten to any vote on this bill yet. We'll get to a second reading vote at some point. But they had that opportunity to come back to this Legislature and say, on behalf of my constituents—whether it's the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), who promised in the last election not to raise the PST—to stand up and say why it is that he was changing his decision, why he was changing his mind, why Bill 20 and the provisions within it and the general principles within Bill 20 were good and important for him.

The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) had the opportunity to stand up in this House—not a shy guy usually, not a guy who is usually scared to stand up and speak his mind here in the Legislature, often talks about how important that is that we, as MLAs, represent our constituents and to do it strongly. He had the opportunity—many opportunities, and he continues to have the opportunity to stand up and to give justification for Bill 20.

The member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), I've seen, you know, various hand signals and head signals from him over the last little while on this speech. I'm not quite sure what all of them mean; I'm not sure he knows what all of them mean. But, you know, he had the opportunity—he had the opportunity to stand up and to tell the people of Selkirk why it is he was doing this.

* (16:00)

I had the opportunity to go to Selkirk, Mr. Speaker, not long ago. We had a nice meeting with a number of people in the community of Selkirk—you know, it was a few weeks back now—members of the business community and others within the fine community of Selkirk. And they were very concerned about what the government was doing financially, very concerned about the economic direction of the government. Those are the constituents of the member for Selkirk. And we might expect him to stand up and to defend those people.

In fact, after we had that opportunity, we went to the soup kitchen, Mr. Speaker, that is held in Selkirk. And I had an opportunity, years ago—again, when I was a younger man than I am today—to start up a food bank in the community of Steinbach. There was a group of us who became the inaugural board of the

Steinbach food bank; it's called South East Helping Hands. It was something that was important for me to be involved with. I was the president of the food bank for a number of years, served as their vice-president, as well, and it was a cause that was dear to my heart, because I know from my own family experience that there are just times when things happen that are beyond the control of family members, or of individuals that cause them, at the very least, temporarily, to be in financial distress.

And often these are working poor, as was the case for my own mother, and you needed to have something to bridge the gap. And, so, I got involved in starting up the food bank in Steinbach as a, sort of a payback, I suppose, for the community and for those who might also be—whose families might be going into similar situations that my family went through when I was younger.

But I had the—I say that because I had the opportunity to go to the food bank in Selkirk and I enjoyed meeting with some of the people who were running the food bank, and that was interesting, and I applaud those people because, I mean, they're volunteers and they're doing it on behalf of their community. They do it because they truly love those in the community who are struggling. So I enjoyed my conversations with them, but I had better conversations with some of the people who were using soup kitchen. And we got a chance to sit down and just to talk about a lot of different things. You'd talk about the family of some of the clients of the soup kitchen. They opened up about their life and how they had found themselves there, Mr. Speaker, and that was very meaningful for me. That was very touching for me, and I appreciated that opportunity to have that opportunity to meet with the people at the Selkirk Food Bank.

But it was interesting because even those individuals who would be in a different economic situation than most of us here in the Legislature, expressed concern, expressed concern about what the government was doing economically. And that might surprise people, but they were very engaged in the issues, very, very engaged in what was happening in the province of Manitoba. And I heard from many of them who expressed concern.

So I would hope that the member for Selkirk—on behalf of those who represented the Chamber at the meeting that we were at, on behalf of those who worked in the soup kitchen as volunteers, and on behalf of those patrons, too, Mr. Speaker, who were

there for the services provided by the soup kitchen—that he would stand up today and speak for them on Bill 20.

Now, he might say something that we don't agree with, and he might say something that isn't something we necessarily believe in, Mr. Speaker. But that's okay. I mean, that is still his responsibility. It's a democratic responsibility that he has, to stand in this House and talk about how his constituents are impacted and why he would defend this particular situation.

We had an opportunity to visit a number of folks in Gimli before this session started, Mr. Speaker, and to meet with them in their place of works, meet with some young people as well, and they expressed similar concern. They expressed similar concern about debt, about the deficit, about high taxes. All of these things are important and related to Bill 20, particularly on the side of taxes. And they said—and they expressed concern about where the government was going economically within the province of Manitoba. So it gives opportunity for the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) to stand up and to represent his constituents on this particular bill, to let them know at second reading how he feels about the principle of this bill—whether or not he supports it—the principle of higher taxation, the principle of taking away a referendum. He has that opportunity to stand up and to have his voice heard.

Now those were a couple of members who aren't representative of the city of Winnipeg, but there are many Winnipeg representatives on the NDP side, whether it's the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby), Mr. Speaker, or the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady); member for Riel (Ms. Melnick); the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald); St. Vital; St. Norbert. All of their constituents, I think, will be interested in what is going on.

If you would visit the farmers' market, I'm sure they'd be concerned about the increased level of taxation that is happening. Whether that impacts their input cost, Mr. Speaker, or whether it impacts their sales cost, they'd be concerned, and they would wonder what is the future for them in the province of Manitoba.

We heard from the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon), who today talked about some examples about businesses in the province of Manitoba concerned about the PST tax increase. We heard from very—Manitobans who own these businesses, very real Manitobans concerned about this, Mr.

Speaker, who express concern about it. And they ultimately, I think, are expressing concerns not only on their own behalf but really for all Manitobans, really for all Manitobans who feel the pain of this.

Oh, the businesses are one aspect of it, of course, an important aspect. They are the employers; they are the ones who drive, you know, the economic growth of this community, not the government, as they would often say. It's not the government who drives economic growth in the province of Manitoba; it's the employers. Those entrepreneurs, those risk takers, Mr. Speaker, who put their capital on the line, who invest in their ideas, who invest in the people who are in their businesses—they are the ones, ultimately, who are driving the economy.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And we heard the expressions of concern from the member for Emerson about the businesses who now regret, some of them, the businessmen at Manitoba—businessmen and women—regret coming to Manitoba from Alberta, Mr. Speaker. And that's sad to hear because we know that that is just a sampling, we know that for every person who shows their remarks in the newspaper, for example, that there are others who might not feel as confident of speaking out, or who might just vote with their feet, who might leave the province. That is something that we have great concern about.

And so we brought forward the reasoned amendment, Mr. Speaker, back several weeks ago because of that, because we weren't seeing that transparency from the government. We didn't see it in their ads, we didn't see it in their articles, we didn't see it in their own comments in the House. They still refuse to speak to this legislation.

But we continue to give them opportunity; we're generous people here on this side of the House. We want them to stand up and represent their constituents. Now if they don't, we will. We will when the rally for respect on Thursday, Mr. Speaker, when members of the public will come to the Legislature again during the day, take time out from their busy day. There are other things, of course; Manitobans would rather be doing than spending a—hopefully, a warm, summer afternoon on the steps of the Legislature protesting legislation. But they're going to come; they're going to come because they think it's important.

And they're going to come from all sorts of different ridings; they're not just going to be from

Conservative ridings. They're not just going to be representing one walk of life. They're not just going to be representing one particular viewpoint. I'm sure that many of the people at that rally will be people who never voted for the Conservatives in their life, Mr. Speaker, it might be the first time that they've ever attended a political rally. In fact, I know that there'll be people who will be the first time that they attended a political rally.

There'll be people, I'm sure, from Southdale and from St. Vital. There'll be people from Fort Garry; there'll be people from St. Norbert. There'll be people from Kirkfield Park, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, there'll be people from ridings that members on this side of the House represent as well.

But, ultimately, it's not about where they live, it's about who they are. They are Manitobans who come here expressing their frustration, just as the ones who came here for the rally several weeks ago were expressing their frustration and we'll see more who come here. And they're representative, they're representative of thousands of more people, Mr. Speaker, who are either unable to come to a rally at the Legislature for whatever reason; who are unwilling to come to the Legislature for whatever reason; or just simply are unable to, but they're 'representative.' Those who come will be representative of many, many more Manitobans.

*(16:10)

And it was for them that we brought forward that reasoned amendment, that unusual procedural ability, Mr. Speaker, here in the House. It was for them that we said we're going to do something extraordinary, something unusual.

Now we are sitting in what is supposed to be called an emergency or an extraordinary session. Again, it's difficult to know what the emergency is when the government stalls its own bill, Mr. Speaker, and they run out of the House, but that's the debate we've had. It certainly isn't extraordinary because it's not unusual for this government to mismanage the Legislature; we've seen that other times before. There's nothing extraordinary about that.

But we do know that these are unusual times. And it's an unusual time when there are several rallies that bring people to the Legislature, to express concern about legislation, Mr. Speaker. It's unusual to have hundreds of people sign up for committee. I haven't checked today.

I'm sure that our Clerk's office, who—I want to give them credit, Mr. Speaker. It's been a busy time

for them as well, the people in the Clerk's office, the Journals branch, the various offices here in the Legislature; it's been a busy time for them. When we have legislation that ties up this House, it impacts not just us as MLAs. Now we are the ones who are often identified in the newspapers or in the media reports, but we have a lot of staff here who are involved in the operation of this House, and it impacts them as well, and I want to give credit to them. They are sometimes the—I wouldn't want to say unwitting victims—but they are very much people who end up part of what happens between us as MLAs. And they've done a very good job of getting people lined up—signed up, for committee. And at some point we're going to have that committee on this particular bill, and we're going to hear Manitobans who are going to come to this building and who are going to speak about the PST tax increase.

Now I don't know which side every one of those presenters are going to fall on. I've not spoken to—I've not spoken personally to any of them, Mr. Speaker. I've had a number of them who've emailed me and who've had questions about when the committee might happen, and that sort of thing.

And I want to say—I want to emphasize that, of those who have contacted me, who are on that list of presenters, the 210 or so on this particular bill, they have unanimously said to me, keep up the good fight. They've not said, rush this committee through. They've not said, quickly put this committee on the agenda, we want to make a presentation before this, that or the other date, that's not been their message to me. Their message has been something completely different. Their message has been, keep on fighting; we appreciate what you're doing in the Legislature; we with—we're with you, we stand with you. And many of these individuals, from what I'm getting from the emails, from the messages, they're not political. They're not people who have run for politics or have volunteered for politics or necessarily been engaged in politics. They're average Manitobans who have decided, of their own accord, to come to the Legislature.

Now I've heard sometimes in past committee hearings, members of the government say disparaging things about people who came to the committee. I was very disappointed on the issue of the pork moratorium, where the hundreds of people who came to committee, representing farm families, who came representing Winnipeg residents as well, it wasn't just people from one particular area, I was very disappointed how the government treated those

individual presenters, Mr. Speaker. We had government members who turned their backs to the presenters, who were playing Brick Breaker, or other sort of games on their electronic devices, who tried to ram the committee through the night, who didn't want to hear these Manitobans present.

And that was a record, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, and I'll be corrected, I'm sure, if I'm wrong, but I think there was 268 or something like that, number of presenters who came to the Legislature on that particular bill. A record in the province of Manitoba, who wanted to speak on that. And this government disrespected them. This government—and they remarked to me, these individuals who came to committee, who on some days found the door locked or saw a closed sign on the door—and we resolved that issue, Mr. Speaker—but who came to this building to make a presentation, felt that they were disrespected by the NDP. Now I want to be clear, they didn't just feel disrespected because the government wasn't siding with their position. Oh, they didn't like the position of the government, don't get me wrong, but they felt disrespected because the government wasn't even listening.

So many of those presenters came to me after, and many of them were young people, Mr. Speaker, they weren't even people who could vote, and so this would have been their first impression of the democratic system, and they came to me during those committee presentations and they said, is this really how it is? It doesn't even look like the government is paying attention to us. In fact, it looks like they're going out of their way not to pay attention to us. That's what it looked like to those individuals who were at that committee, that set a record, for the number of presenters.

And so the 210 people who are signed up to speak to Bill 20, who are waiting for their opportunity but who are encouraging us to fight on this bill in the Legislature, they, I think, are hoping for something better, and I'm not sure what they're going to get. And I worry about what it is that they're going to find when they come to the Legislature committee. Are they going to find a government that's willing to listen? Are they going to find a government that will have their ears open and with an open mind to consider change or will they not?

And I'm obviously concerned that by the time these Manitobans, these 210 or how many eventually end up coming to committee, come to committee to

make their presentation that the government will have already put in their PST tax increase; that as the Manitobans who are coming to committee, as they're driving, you know, to the Legislature, when they stop to pick up a drink or a snack as they're coming in, that they'll already be paying that 8 per cent as they're coming into the Legislature to try to convince the government not to raise the PST because the law will still be at that time that you can't raise the PST without a referendum.

And I worry about what their view of democracy is going to be, and you can imagine a young person—and I think there will be young people who are going to come and present. You can imagine a young person who perhaps isn't even old enough to vote, and he comes to this committee for Bill 20, and he's already been paying the 8 per cent PST. And he shows up at committee, and the government turns its back on them as they did to those who came on the pork moratorium bill. The government members turned their back on them, and it's 2 in the morning and they're not listening and they're not awake. And a government—each member there who've already been breaking the law, who have been part of breaking a law, and that 16- or 17-year-old person, their first impression of democracy at 2 a.m. with government backbenchers and government ministers turning their back on those young people as they break the law and not listen to them, that concerns me.

That worries me, but they've done it before. I've seen them do it before. I've seen the different members do it before. I've seen the different members of the government do exactly that to young people, to impressionable people who might be just learning about the democratic system, and it concerns me. And it's one of the reasons we've done what we've done to raise the profile on this issue, to give the government time and opportunity to change their mind, to ensure that committees are run appropriately, respectfully, in a way that's democratic.

Even if you have a government that's already broken the law, that have already put in a tax increase with a bill that hasn't passed and broken the law in doing so, Mr. Speaker. Even that kind of a government, even those kind of representatives should know that to do that to Manitobans at a committee is wrong. And so it's one of the reasons why we're taking the tactics that we are taking, and I don't make apologies for that. I won't stand here in

the time that I end up speaking, and I won't apologize for what this caucus has done.

I'm proud of this caucus. I'm proud of what they've done. I'm proud that they've all stood up and I'm proud of our leader that he's taken the leadership on this to say this is wrong. It's fundamentally wrong for Manitobans. There are other ways the government could do this or other things that the government could do, Mr. Speaker.

So, yes, we brought in an unusual tactic in a reasoned amendment, but it was a reasonable thing to do, because we were doing it for Manitobans. We did it for the right reasons and we'll continue to do it for the right reasons. And what bothers me as much as anything is I know many of the members opposite on a somewhat personal level, and I know them individually and I know many of them don't feel good about what they're doing. And I know that many of them, if they could speak out, they might speak out against their own government, but they won't because the reins of control within the government are too strong, even though they would have discord and concern about what their own government is doing and they'd probably like to express that. And they probably express it at home or to their friends or to their family, but, ultimately, that's not good enough because they represent individuals who elected them.

*(16:20)

It's not good enough to have that concern and that discord and to go to your family and to say: I'm concerned about what my own government is doing. It's not going to be good enough for Manitobans, for the Manitobans who elected them in their individual ridings. They will hold them to a higher standard, just as we, as an opposition, hold the government to a higher standard, and we will hold them to a higher standard in this debate. Their own constituents will hold them to a higher standard. Their own constituents are going to expect more of this government and the individual members.

And, ultimately, it's a collective, Mr. Speaker. It is a collective decision that this government is making, but the individual members will have to go and justify it to their constituents. And they didn't do it in their ads. They didn't even talk about the PST. They didn't do it in their writings. They didn't talk about it in their writings, and they've not done it in this House. They've not done it in this Legislature where the people sent them. The record will show, I suspect, by the time we get to the end of this debate,

whatever month that might be—I don't measure it in days or hours anymore; I measure it in months. But, whichever month we get to the end of this debate, I think the record will show that almost no New Democrats stood up and spoke to Bill 20.

We know, already, they didn't speak to the hoist motion. They didn't speak to the reasoned amendment. They're not speaking—I guess they'll have an opportunity, yet, but my guess is they're not going to speak to second reading. And my colleague from Tuxedo, you know, uses the term lazy socialist, and I think that there is truth in that, Mr. Speaker. I think there is truth in that.

But it goes deeper than that. It's not just about, you know, government members being lazy, although that's probably part of it. It's them not willing to stand up and speak the truth to their constituents, not having the courage to stand up and speak the truth to their constituents, not having the democratic responsibility to stand up and speak the truth to their constituents.

And that's not ultimately what we are going to be held accountable for. They will be held accountable to their own constituents. I think, in many ways, they already are. I know that they're getting those calls, they're getting the emails. I've had some—I've had conversations with members of the NDP party—I won't say whether they were elected or not, but people involved with the NDP party who have already said how much they're feeling it, who've already said how much concern they're getting from the public. How many of them have said that they are getting the kind of discord that we are hearing as an opposition. So they're hearing it as well, too. We know that. But it's not good enough for them to hear it. They have to respond.

Now, if the government members want to stand up individually, if they want to stand up and defend this decision, well they can do that. They had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, on this reading, on second reading. They have every opportunity to stand up in this House and to say why they think it's a good decision. But, Mr. Speaker, I don't think they can. I don't think they can because they can't find the rationale. They started off saying, you know, it was because of the flood that was coming, the flood that was going engulf Manitoba. I don't remember how many reports I heard about it. It was going to be worse than 2011 or close to 2011. You know, it was unbelievable how many different reports—we had the Minister responsible for Emergency Measures

standing up and giving flood reports and, you know, it was left to the Reeve of Morris—left to the Reeve of Morris to finally say: You know what? Like, I think you might be overreacting. Like, you might be just responding to the worst case scenario. That it might not—you might not be being realistic about it. But the government was trying to build a case for their PST tax increase.

I remember one day I opened up the newspaper, one of the newspapers—I think it was—it was one of the two newspapers, and they were announcing the opening of the flood preparation offices. And then two days later I saw a news release that they all got closed—two days later. I got a news release from the government predicting flooding at different levels. There was going to be a horrific flood. And then I think at 4 o'clock one day I was sitting have a Pepsi with a couple of my friends here in the Legislature, and I got on my Blackberry a message that said: The crest had passed. We'd missed it, Mr. Speaker. It was over. I was looking under my chair—you know, we couldn't believe it. I think it was only a couple days before we were hearing about this horrendous flood that was coming. Oh, we needed the PST. And then I get my Blackberry and, oh, the crest has passed. I couldn't believe it. But—

An Honourable Member: In the dark of the night.

Mr. Goertzen: But this is in the dark of the night, you know, the crest has passed and nobody even noticed it, you know, and that was it for the flood reports, you know, we didn't hear anything more after that. And so they went on to the next excuse, and this is ultimately the challenge that the government has. They're trying to defend the indefensible. They're trying to defend something that can't be defended and they know that, and that's the frustrating part is members opposite know it's not a defensible decision, and that's why they don't stand up and speak to it. But it's still their job as elected representatives; that's why people sent them here. Whether it's not defensible—or is defensible they have the opportunity, and I'd say they have more than the opportunity they have the responsibility to stand up in this House and to say what it is they believe. So after the excuse of the mystical flood which, you know, the crest passed in the dark of night, they didn't have much else and so they started to jump around a different excuse.

So I'm going to get to those in the time ahead, but I wanted to highlight simply the fact of why we brought forward our reasoned amendment. Why we

thought it was important to bring that forward. Why we wanted to speak about the issue of transparency and trust, and I've tried to outline here in my comments on second reading on this issue the general principle of transparency within this bill and how it's failed every step of the way, how in the prebudget consultation meetings, the ones that were held in south Winnipeg; in Gimli; in Niverville; in Flin Flon; in Swan River; in north Winnipeg and in Brandon, how at each one of those meetings there wasn't actual transparency because it was not brought forward about the PST increase.

I've talked, Mr. Speaker, about how the minister's own comments at the meeting in Brandon how he said that the government's approach would be towards reasonable increases in revenue and how that was misleading because no Manitobans would truly believe that a PST tax increase of 250 or more million dollar increase on taxes was a reasonable increase on revenue.

I spoke about the ads that the government ran at taxpayer expense and how they didn't talk at all in those ads about the PST increase. On the radio ads nothing, on the television nothing, in the newspapers there's nothing about the PST increase in those ads. My colleague mentions that that's false advertising. I think at one point there was a discussion about a bill or maybe it was even a private members' bill about truth in advertising the government advertised, and I've seen in other jurisdictions in Ontario where they'll have the Ombudsman actually look at ads and to determine whether or not that those ads are truthful or whether or not they're overly political. Now whether I'm suggesting that or not that's maybe a debate for another time, but, ultimately, there's a good question about, you know, what the government was trying to put forward in those ads they were trying to say something that wasn't representative.

Now, ultimately, now there's an argument about how valuable those ads are at any given budget, Mr. Speaker, but certainly these were, I would say, a waste of taxpayer money because the disconnect between what you're hearing in the coffee shop about the budget and what those ads were saying couldn't have been further apart. They were miles apart between those two issues, and I would say that whatever the cost of those ads the government wasted an awful lot of taxpayer money. Not as much as they wasted on a whole lot of other things but certainly, you know, every dollar of taxpayer money is important, and I would say to the government that

they missed a very good opportunity at that time because they missed it in the prebudget consultation meetings to stand up and to say something in those ads that would've tried to defend the indefensible. But I know why they didn't do it.

I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, on this particular point about the different members who had the opportunity to write in their local newspapers or write on their websites about the PST tax increase and to try to defend it. Now I should correct myself, I think I did say that not one member did talk about it. I think the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) actually sent out an email, and it was the most apologetic email I've ever seen. And I had a friend who forwarded the email to me and I could hardly believe what I was reading as the member for Wolseley went point by point through apologies in terms of why the government was raising the PST. He indicated that many people had emailed him and said that the government could find savings elsewhere and then he started to talk about why he didn't think the government could find savings elsewhere.

* (16:30)

He talked about how people had emailed him and said that the government had a spending problem and then he tried to explain away why the spendDP, in fact, didn't have a spending problem. He tried to—he said that many people had emailed him about why the government was taking away our referendum and then he tried to explain away why the government was taking away a referendum.

And the only truth, I think, in that entire email that the member for Wolseley sent out was that a lot of people had expressed to him concern, that a lot of people had emailed him and expressed concern. There was truth in that. But all the justifications fell short. They all fell short of what we would consider to be the truth here in the Legislature or in the public, because ultimately, you know, I—it doesn't matter to me so much about how people feel in here. You know, we sometimes get caught up in the debate and different sorts of debates and maybe spend a little bit too much time worrying about whether or not people believe what we're saying back and forth and what the parliamentary definition of truth or not truth is.

But what concerns me more is what people outside of this building feel and how they feel about their government because the trust in government is something that's important. Trust in government is

something that, when it's lost, it impacts not only the government of the day, although it probably impacts them more; it impacts all of us as legislators, you, me and every individual who is elected here. It impacts all of us and it doesn't impact us positively; it impacts us negatively. And I would say to the government that, when they do something that causes more mistrust among the public, they've made a mistake. They've made a grave mistake to this institution, to their own government, and it's something that they need simply to reconsider.

And I also then spend some time speaking about how these individual members haven't used the opportunity, not in the prebudget consultations, not in the ads, not in their own individual correspondence but also not in this Legislature to stand up and defend the decision.

Now, we did come back here late, in terms of the parliamentary schedule, we came back here on April 16th. I think it was about two months ago that we came back here for the spring session, so, you know, one could argue that maybe there wasn't a lot of time for the government to debate and so we corrected that. We made sure there was lots of time for the government to debate on Bill 20, to put their comments on the record on Bill 20. We made sure that nothing was—went through quickly and I was disappointed, you know, I've heard the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard), who—I heard no—I hold no personal animosity towards. You know, actually, we have, I think, very good and civil discussions about a number of different things, but I did hear her speak about how there were a number of important bills in the Legislature that were being held up because of Bill 20. She said that in the media and she has said that in other places, and it's unbelievable that the Government House Leader could even say that because she knows that in prioritizing bills that are going to be debated in the House, that she has called Bill 20 over and over and over again, at the expense of other bills that she might consider to be a priority.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And so it's beyond the pale that a Government House Leader could say that some bills are being put in jeopardy because her government has put them in jeopardy. And I think that Manitobans see through that; I think that Manitobans are very well aware of what we're fighting about here in the Legislature, about what we're fighting for in the Legislature. We've not made it a secret; we've been very open

about it. We are not playing any games about this. We said very clearly right from the beginning, we're going to fight Bill 20, and if the government feels that there are other bills that they would like to prioritize, well, then they should do that, but they haven't.

Seventy per cent of the time when the government has called bills, they've called this bill, Bill 20. Now, I'm happy to debate Bill 20; I'm happy to debate it for a long time. I've got lots to say about this bill. I've heard from a lot of Manitobans. I've heard from a lot of Manitobans who are concerned about what the government is doing. They've given me lots of ideas, probably some of them our Deputy Clerk would rule out of order if I tried to bring them to the Legislature, but Manitobans are engaged in this issue and they have sent me many, many ideas that they would like me to speak about and some of them I'll be able to use in the time ahead and some of them I probably won't be able to use just because of the rules of our Assembly. But they're engaged, they're fully engaged in this issue and they know what we're doing.

They know what we're doing. They know that we're fighting this bill as hard as we can, and they know that the government has mismanaged this process, that they have put themselves into this position. And part of that is through the management of the House, but part of it is simply because of when this House got recalled. Now, I don't put that all on the member for—my friend, the opposition House Leader. I don't know how the discussions happen. I suspect the Premier (Mr. Selinger) makes this decision ultimately about when the House is going to be recalled.

But I would say to the Premier, that if he believes that this is somehow an usual situation, I can tell him, if he persists on, as long as he's in government, calling this House back in mid-April, that this extraordinary session will become the norm, that we will be well into the summer for a long time, if we're going to continue to come back in mid-April. And I don't say that as a threat, because that is not helpful in any sort of discussion, but I say that is a warning. It's something that is the truth. If we continue to come back as a Legislature in the middle of April, then this extraordinary session is going to be the ordinary session, Mr. Speaker.

This is going to be a common practice, because when you look at what the government is asking us to do, even if there were not any controversial bills,

including Bill 20 as a controversial bill—but even if there were no controversial bills—and I'll—you know, I won't even try to define what that might be. But we ultimately came back on April 16th. There are eight days for a debate for a budget, so that takes you closer to the end of April. The Estimates process normally—if you'll proceed without interruption—would take three, maybe three and a half weeks. So now you're at the end of May or pretty close to the end of May. Opposition is granted three opposition days, which takes you essentially to the end of May. And then given our sessional rules or our—not—our rules of the House, we're to rise on the second Thursday of June, which leaves about 14 days or so on an average session if you're going to come back in the middle of April—leaves about 14 days to debate, on average, 40 to 45 bills.

Now, even if those bills aren't controversial, Mr. Speaker, even if there is general acceptance of those bills in the public—and there's always some controversial bills in every legislative session—but even if those bills were not overly controversial and in a hypothetical world, trying to pass 14 bills—or sorry, 40 bills or 45 bills in 14 days is extraordinary. And it doesn't allow the public an opportunity to learn about those bills; it doesn't allow the public an opportunity to reasonably come and speak to the bills. And I've heard the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) and members of the government talk about how much they value the committee process—maybe not the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) who's already said she's not going to listen to anybody in committee—but I do think that there are members opposite who do, in fact, value the system. But it's not valuable when you're going to—only within 14 days—try to push through 40 to 45 bills. It's not responsible for us, as an opposition, to act in that fashion and we're not going to act in that fashion. So, this is an unusual situation at this point, but it's going to be the norm if the government doesn't look at different ways to have the session sit.

And I'm open to those ideas, Mr. Speaker. We're caught up in Bill 20, obviously, now, and we'll continue because we think this is bad legislation. But I'm open to other ideas, in terms of having the House come back in February or dates that we could negotiate, and not to be here, necessarily, into the summer.

I've looked at the Saskatchewan calendar and I think their calendar sometimes seems more—in terms of their early dates in spring, it seems a bit more reasonable. We could have discussions about how

many sitting days there are. That might be different, Mr. Speaker.

I've looked at different parliaments who don't have the same congestion that we seem to run into.

Now, maybe that's a different usage of how things happen in the fall in the Legislature. We've sometimes had—I think in 2009, we were limited to eight days, I think, in the session, and we ended up having to go a little bit longer, because, of course, it takes eight days to pass the Throne Speech, and if anything happens within those eight days, you run into trouble and that was another example of the government not managing the House very well, Mr. Speaker. And we had to come back for another extraordinary session, because the government had bungled that up.

But I do think there are different ways to do things, and Bill 20 gives us that opportunity because it has caused such disruption in this House that it'll cause us to look at a number of different things that are extraneous, even, I think, to the tax increase.

Now, of course, the main thing is the main thing. And the main thing is about the government unnecessarily increasing taxes on Manitobans, increasing the PST from 7 to 8 per cent, putting a 14 per cent increase of the PST on Manitobans. That's the main thing and that's what we're going to fight on, Mr. Speaker, but I do hope it causes the government to reconsider how it is that they do things here in this House, and how it is that they do things here in this Assembly.

*(16:40)

So it's an opportunity, even though it comes, unfortunately, at the expense of Manitobans. And the best-case scenario, I think, would be if they would decide to not proceed with Bill 20, not put in the tax increase or call a referendum, and I accept either at this stage of the game, and then also learn from it in terms of the House operation.

So we could effectively do two positive things by having both this bill repealed or withdrawn from the Legislature and then also look at how we deal with this Legislature. And, ultimately, I think that would be to the benefit of all of us. I mean, all of us are invested in this. All of us who have families, all of us have commitments, all of us have constituency things that we like to be involved with, all of us have a role in this.

So it's not a partisan thing or a political thing. We get caught up in those things, and they're important. Bill 20 is certainly, I think, political and, in many ways, partisan; gives a different view of how we view the world. They are—they view high taxation as being sort of the cure to everything. We don't. We believe that you got to build an environment where businesses can thrive and succeed and build the economy and create jobs. So we have a difference of a world view there.

But, in terms of the Assembly itself, I do think we all have an important and invested interest in that, as do you, Mr. Speaker, also as our Speaker, and as someone who guides the debate here. And I said it earlier, and I want to repeat it as I get closer to the end of this—of my introductory comments, that, in fact, you guide this House well. And I think there are times where tactics are tactics, and they take place because there is a broader strategy that happens here in the Legislature, and opposition is provided with a limited number of tools, and we have to use those limited number of tools to ensure that our overall strategic objectives are met.

And I understand sometimes that isn't always a great thing for the Speaker to see in operation, but never, never think that that is a reflection on you, Mr. Speaker, because I know you have the confidence of all members of this House.

But, going back to my particular comments, Mr. Speaker, on this bill, so the purpose of this introduction on the reasoned amendment was about ensuring that the government understands that they have fallen short on transparency on Bill 20 and they have fallen short on transparency throughout the process. They've fallen short on transparency on the prebudget consultation meetings where they had seven opportunities to tell Manitobans at these meetings that they were going to raise the PST. They didn't do that. They fell short in their opportunity in their advertising to tell Manitobans why they were raising the PST in the radio, the television and the newspaper ads, and they didn't do it there either.

They have fallen short so far, Mr. Speaker, on the debate on Bill 20, not standing up, speaking on this bill for their constituents. I gather that, in the thought process of the NDP, they've hunkered down and they've decided: let's just try to ride it out; let's not speak to it; let's not let anybody say anything because they might say something off message; they might say something that isn't in the speaking notes; they might actually say something they believe; they

might actually say something that their constituents have told them, and, heaven forbid, you wouldn't want that to happen, so we're not going to let anybody speak to that.

And they've lacked that transparency. They've fallen short on that transparency. So that's why we brought forward the reasoned amendment, and it's why, I believe, almost every member of our caucus spoke to the reasoned amendment, why almost all of them tried to get the government to change their mind because of the lack of transparency, tried to get the government to understand that what they were doing was wrong for Manitobans.

It was our first opportunity to give the government another opportunity. It was our first opportunity to give them a second chance, if you will, to allow them to realize that things weren't going well when it came to the PST increase and that it wouldn't go well for Manitobans, that it wouldn't be good for Manitobans in the long run.

And so that's why we gave them that opportunity, and they didn't take it. So we gave them another opportunity. After we were done with the reasoned amendment, after the Speaker put the question to the floor, after the Speaker called all the members in for a vote and the reasoned amendment was defeated by the government, we thought that it would be wise to give the government another opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to give the opportunity for the government to change their mind by bringing in a hoist motion.

Now, the hoist motion that we brought forward, Mr. Speaker, it's not as unusual in our parliamentary practice as is the reasoned amendment. When I was researching the reasoned amendment, I think I mentioned earlier in my comments that I'd only seen it used in the Legislature possibly two times out of 30 years, and maybe less than that. It maybe have been two times in the history of the Legislature. It's not very common.

I think the hoist motions have been used more frequently, but they are still used infrequently. They're still not used all that often, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know if there's ever been a bill—I'm pretty sure there hasn't been, but I stand to be corrected on this; I'm not an expert on Manitoba parliamentary history—but I don't think that there's ever been a bill where both the hoist motion and a reasoned amendment have been applied to it at second reading, and probably never been a bill where a hoist motion and

a reasoned amendment have been applied to a bill at all.

I, you know, I went back and I looked. I think last time I brought this forward I had a number of the NDP members yelling about MTS and that debate, Mr. Speaker. So, I had the opportunity to go back and look at the MTS debate, and I was surprised by what I found when I looked at this. Now, I know that because a lot of the members who are elected today in the NDP party weren't actually here for the MTS debate, a lot of them were in other times in their lives, and so they are relying, I suppose, on stories from the members who were here. Maybe the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) or the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and I'm sure that as parties get together, where they're having treats or after session, they regale themselves of stories about the good old days, and I can imagine the member for Kildonan calling all the young MLAs together to talk about the MTS fight and how they fought on MTS.

And when I actually looked at the MTS debate, I was shocked at how little fight the government actually put up on MTS. You know, they put up so little a fight, you'd almost think that they were secretly in favour, Mr. Speaker, of the sale of MTS. I didn't see any hoist motions on the bill. I didn't see any reasoned amendments brought forward on the MTS debate. In fact, we had a number of—there were the number of government members who spoke on second reading on that bill, unlike this bill, where the government refuses to speak to it. And very few—I didn't even see the member for Kildonan, he didn't even speak to that bill on second reading. I was shocked. I was shocked at what a piddly effort the government actually put up on something that they said was such an affront to them.

But I guess, you know, the long-time veterans of the NDP caucus, they gather round, they say to the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard), come, let me tell you a story about how we fought this bill and what a monumental fight was. I can tell you that when this is done—in fact, I can probably tell you already—that far more people will have spoken for far longer and more time and put up more of a fight on this PST bill than anything that the NDP ever did—anything. And I can share this information, be happy to share the information about how little they spoke. In fact, they barely, you know, even had any amendments.

I don't know, you know, I guess it's just folklore. These stories grow over time the more you repeat it.

You know, you hear about this fight. I heard the member for—the Government House Leader today, asking for leave on an issue, talking about this monumental fight through the night.

Well, I mean, we did that on the, you know, on the pork moratorium bill, Mr. Speaker. That's nothing. With the fight that this caucus has put up on Bill 20 will dwarf anything that the NDP opposition ever did, and we're doing it because I think it is one of the greatest fights for Manitobans. It is one of the biggest things that Manitobans have ever been concerned about in politics. And I don't just mean long-time Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I've talked to a lot of new Canadians. I've a lot of, you know, Filipino families in my constituency. I know a lot of Filipino families in Winnipeg. We've made connections through those who are in Steinbach. And they've expressed concern to me. Now, they come from a different democratic system, obviously, than we do. And their governments, you know, I think it's reasonable to say, are more legally corrupt in how they do things. But they're losing faith in this government, and those new Canadians who come to Canada, they have great faith in government.

* (16:50)

And I've said to you, Mr. Speaker, that while I know that often some of our visitors are less than impressed with how things sometimes are, they would say that the Legislature is less than ideal during question period, those new Canadians are sometimes amazed at how we have the ability to debate openly and not worry about our lives frankly, because that's not the case in some of the countries they come from. And those new Canadians are saying to me that they're losing faith in this government, because they have a lot of similarities with the Manitobans who have been here longer than them.

They are hard-working new Canadians; they come here to build a better life for their family. They come here because they are looking for more opportunity for their family. They come here because they believe that this is a place that their family can put down roots and prosper. And, as they've seen the taxes go up—and I don't just mean on Bill 20. I am referring to Bill 20, but I don't mean just on Bill 20, Mr. Speaker. They've seen the taxes go up last year; they've seen it applied to more things. They've seen the PST go on to their insurance; they've seen the

PST be expanded to other products and other services. And they've expressed concern.

Those new Canadians have expressed concern because it deprives them of their opportunity to build the life for their families that they wanted to. It deprives them of the opportunity to do the things for their family that they'd hoped to when they came to Manitoba and when they came to Canada.

And I regret, Mr. Speaker, for those new Canadians when I have to speak to them, when I speak to them in different opportunities that I have, to tell them, I regret having to tell them that this is how their government is, because I can see the disappointment for them. I can see the disappointment in many of their eyes, in many of their expressions and the things that they say to me.

But, ultimately, the government has to justify that, they have to justify it to them as well, they have to justify it to those new Canadians and they're not able to do it. They're not able to do it because these new Canadians understand that it's the government that is spending beyond its means. They understand more than— well, they understand as much as any Manitobans do, Mr. Speaker, because they often, particularly in the early years that they are here, have a difficult time. They have a difficult time making times—ends meet. It can be challenging; you know, often they're at new jobs, a new country, new expectations, and that's tough. And so I worry for them, I feel for them.

So we brought forward a hoist motion to give the government an opportunity, a second chance, Mr. Speaker, within the context of the debate just on Bill 20, on second reading, a second chance, a second chance to do the right thing. We did it to give them more time to think about what it is that they were doing and how Manitobans had responded and reacted.

The hoist motion itself said that the legislation should be delayed, should be delayed for six months. Now I would have, you know, preferred that the legislation be revoked, Mr. Speaker; I would have preferred that the referendum be called. So it wasn't a perfect resolution, but it's within the context of the rules that we have.

And I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, we have limited rules. There are only so and so many things that we are able to do as an opposition and so you use the tools that we have. So the hoist motion, while perhaps imperfect because it didn't withdraw the bill

or didn't require that the referendum be called, it is what we could do. And we asked for the government to hoist the bill, to move the bill six months down the road.

And it would have given the opportunity for the government to go out and to speak to Manitobans. And maybe they have that opportunity now, Mr. Speaker; I mean, they can go out in the evenings, I suppose, and speak to Manitobans. But I think it would have given them a broader opportunity; it wouldn't have had to face the fight of Bill 20 within the Legislature, that would have been suspended for six months. They would have had that opportunity, then, to go and speak with Manitobans. Now they failed in that opportunity with the prebudget consultation meetings, and that's disappointing. So this gave them another opportunity.

And I think when I was speaking to the hoist motion I mentioned that this might be an opportunity for them to have postbudget meetings, Mr. Speaker, to go out to Manitobans after the fact, after they'd revealed their true agenda through the budget, through the PST increase, and given Manitobans the straight goods, the real goods, about what was happening with the budget because then it would have already been revealed.

So they would have had these postbudget meetings in the six months, and they could have heard from Manitobans. Not as good as a referendum, Mr. Speaker, not as good as a referendum. I'd obviously would have preferred to see a referendum take place, but, you know, that's what we had to offer in terms of legislative amendments. But, it would have been better.

It would have been better than what the government is doing now, trying to ram this bill through, and make no mistake, they've been trying to. Other than what happened earlier today, when they actually tried to delay their own bill, Mr. Speaker. But other than that strange and bizarre procedural tactic, they have been trying to ram this bill through the Legislature.

Well, this would have given them an opportunity. They could have hit the pause button during those six months, and gone out to Manitobans. And if they wanted to—if they want to try to justify the bill—because they don't want to try to justify it in the House, which I find concerning. They don't want to justify it in their ads, which has already been described possibly as false advertising. They don't want to justify it anywhere else.

But they could have taken those six months and gone out to Manitobans and said to them, what do you think? We've already brought forward a bill that would have a PST increase. We put the pause button on it, Mr. Speaker. They would have had lots of opportunity.

Lots of great things in Manitoba to do, during the six months. We might not be able to participate in them as much as we would have thought we might be able to, Mr. Speaker. But I looked online at some of the great things.

Winnipeg International Jazz Festival is happening June 13th to 22nd. So there would have still been time, had the hoist motion gone through, Mr. Speaker, for the government to go to that great festival, and the Manitobans who are there between the 20—the 13th and 22nd. And they could have spoken to the great jazz lovers of the province of Manitoba, and said at the festival, to those who went to listen to the jazz there, what do you think of us increasing the PST? You've heard the debate in the House, in the Legislature, you've seen it in the newspapers. So what do you think? Do you think it's a good idea or do you think it's a bad idea? It would have been a great opportunity. It would have had nice background music, you know, it would have been kind of relaxing, you know. They could have cleared their minds. I know that it's probably difficult.

I worry actually some—a little bit about the government and what's going through their minds. I got particularly concerned when they called a vote to delay their own bill today, Mr. Speaker. I really began to think that things weren't going well in the minds of the government. And, you know, I mean, we have compassion as individuals, even if we disagree with things politically, and between political parties. But I was genuinely concerned about the well-being of the members opposite when they—they're under stress. I get that, Mr. Speaker, I understand that. And so this would have been a great opportunity to head out to the jazz festival and to talk to people about that.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I also saw online the Red River Exhibition is happening from June 14th to the 23rd. It's on right now. Now I'm not much of a rides person myself.

I did, during the—last weekend, get out to Summer in the City. And I want to mention, the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Chief), who had his dance troop out there, who were speaking at—who

were dancing at Summer in the City. And he had invited myself and my son to come to his performance at Summer in the City, and I would have loved to have come. My son wasn't feeling well. He's been sick on and off the last little while and he wasn't able to come to the dance.

But they were going to dedicate a number to me, because apparently they think I do a lot of dancing in the Legislature, and so they, I think, labelled something, the—I can't say my own name, I suppose—but it was my name, and called it the jig. And they performed it at the Steinbach fair and apparently to great fanfare, and a number of constituents thought it was funny and they thought it was great. And that's wonderful.

And I'm sure that the member for Point Douglas had the opportunity to speak to a number of my constituents, who, if he was talking to them about politics, would have expressed concern about Bill 20, because I know I've been hearing my constituents say, keep fighting, that you're doing the right thing in the Legislature.

But he'd have the opportunity to head out to a festival like the Red River Ex and to meet a whole different group of Manitobans. Not the Manitobans who love jazz, but the Manitobans who love rides, and who love those sort of things that happen at the Red River Ex, and talk to them about whether or not they think the PST increase is a good idea.

Had they approved the hoist motion, Mr. Speaker, they would have a lot—plenty of time, or more time anyway, to go out to these festivals and to speak to individuals, and to ask them what they thought.

I notice that on June 22nd, the Manitoba Highland Gathering is happening. Scottish heritage is

celebrated with dance, pipe and drum competitions, heavy games of brawn, sheep shearing and herding, canoe and kayak races, clan booths, Scottish market, massed bands and the Scottish pub. Now I don't pretend to know what all of those things—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. When this matter—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for Steinbach will have unlimited time.

The hour being 5 p.m.—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

CORRIGENDA

On Monday, June 17, 2013, page 2422, second column, last paragraph, should have read:

And I am a great lover of democracy, and so I in no way would cast aspersions on the tactics of members opposite or the rules that exist at the Manitoba Legislature that afford members of the opposition to use them to their fullest extent.

On Monday, June 17, 2013, page 2430, first column, seventh paragraph, should have read:

Mr. Selinger: Now, on the North End sewage treatment plant, he needs to know that there's \$8 million in Budget 2013 for upgrading Winnipeg's wastewater treatment facilities, and the Province has provided over \$50 million in our one third commitment upgrading the city's sewage treatment plants.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

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