

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, July 23, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Before we proceed with routine proceedings, I would like to formally advise the House that there has been a change in the seating plan. A request has been received for the members for La Verendrye and Lac du Bonnet to each move over one seat respectively to their left. So, as of 1:30 today, the seating allocations have been changed in accordance with this request, and I just wanted to advise the House of that before we start our routine proceedings.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**Bill 213—The Settlement of International
Investment Disputes Act**

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I move, seconded by the MLA for Tuxedo, that Bill 213, The Settlement of International Investment Disputes Act; Loi sur le règlement des différends internationaux relatifs aux investissements, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: This bill is a complex bill but it is fairly simple in the way that we need to move along here. It is something that Canada needs to ratify. In order for that to happen, Manitoba needs to bring this legislation in. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none—

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

The reason for the petition is as follows:

The St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure, the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as

well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife in the region.

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas, including disruptions to local tourism, hunting and fishing operations, diminished economic and employment opportunities and the potential loss of the local store and decrease in property values.

Local residents and visitors alike want St. Ambroise provincial park to be reopened as soon as possible.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider repairing St. Ambroise provincial park and its access points to their pre-flood conditions so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

This petition is signed by K. Lee, D. Blanchette, R. Sampson 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.

**Reopen Beausejour's Employment
Manitoba Office**

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The RM of Brokenhead and the town of Beausejour are growing centres with a combined population of over 8,000.

(2) Employment Manitoba offices provide crucial career counselling, job search and training opportunities for local residents looking to advance their education.

(3) The recent closure of Employment Manitoba's Beausejour office will have negative consequences for the area's population who want to upgrade their skills and employment opportunities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to reopen Beausejour's Employment Manitoba office.

This petition is signed by A. Clark, L. Huth, C. Wadeliss and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by A. Pringle, L. Klassen, K. Brown and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): 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 this is signed by N. Fayle, K. Trout, B. Buchanan and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by N. Majury, J. Majury, J. Majury and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

* (13:40)

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

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

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

This petition—we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by M. Geladov, I. Geladov, A. Plis and many, many more Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of B. Prior, D. Feller, G. Kiriakidis and many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 56 children waiting for services. That number is

expected to exceed 70 children by September 2013 despite commitments to reduce the waiting list and provide timely access to services.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by A. Loeppky, L. Boutet, B. Stoesz and many, many other Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) The provincial government has adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA

services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as many—as any other Manitoban.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by C. Cairns, M. Pollen, S. Kearns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

And these—this is the background for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Petition is signed by A. Loeppky, L. Boutet, B. Stoesz and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

* (13:50)

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by D. Buhr, C. Buhr, T. Knutt and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by L. Ionita, C. Gosselin, Y. Gray and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by V. Carberry, T. Yosyk, P. Kolar and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by J. Sabourin, T. Dyck, G. Unger and many more fine Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) The provincial government had adopted a policy to eliminate ABA services in schools by grade 5 despite the fact that these children have been diagnosed with autism which still requires therapy. These children are being denied necessary ABA

services that will allow them access to the same educational opportunities as any other Manitoban.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (14:00)

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

And this petition is signed by K. Kaneski, D.J. Cline and B. Hofer and many, many others.

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

And the background to this petition is follows:

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

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

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

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

(5) Waiting lists and denial of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or

eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by L. Christensen, C. Schultz, G. Waddell and many, many more fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to table the annual report for 2011-2012 for the Manitoba Labour Board.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling reports? Seeing none—

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Miron and Mickey Blumental and Gabriella Cristiani.

And also, in the public gallery, we have with us today Bruce and Jane Bullied from Winnipeg and Mik Iulianella and Samantha Currie from Maple Ridge, BC, all of whom are the guests of the honourable Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism (Ms. Melnick).

On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases NDP Election Promise

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): My questions today centre on trust, Mr. Speaker.

The government promised in the last election campaign that it would not raise taxes, and when the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was asked about his intention to raise taxes, responded using the word—that it was nonsense, describing it as nonsense, and then followed within a few weeks, actually, with a proposal to actually broaden the amount of the PST and broaden taxes, knowing, of course, that the

subprime debacle and global uncertainty existed a long time in advance of that and wasn't likely to end soon, knowing the cost of flooding, knowing the federal cost-sharing arrangements well. And having been in office for over a decade at that point in time, he must have known the consequences of these things well in advance.

So my question for him today is: Why? For what reason would he make a promise to the people of Manitoba that he knew he would not keep?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, what we have seen across the globe is we have seen a slowing down of the economic recovery. That's why the federal government had a \$4-billion additional deficit last year that they didn't plan for. That's why economic forecasts are lower this year for all—everywhere in Canada and, indeed, around the world, and we've seen the American economy showing signs of life, but in a—not as rapidly as everybody would have hoped.

At the same time, about several weeks before the budget came out, we received a new report. The new report indicated we should spend up to a billion dollars on flood protection for the people of Lake St. Martin, Lake Manitoba and along the Assiniboine valley to Brandon and other parts of Manitoba, and we had to make a decision.

The decision was we needed to invest in infrastructure that would protect communities from flooding. We needed to do it at the time when the federal government was bringing their infrastructure program on stream.

So we made a decision to generate revenue for a 10-year period to protect Manitobans and to build our economy without threatening essential services like health care and education.

Mr. Pallister: And the fact remains the Premier made a promise that he knew full well he was not going to keep, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier went to the people of Manitoba and he asked for a mandate not to increase taxes, and he was given a mandate. And before the election he said, I trust Manitobans. I believe that leaving money with Manitobans is the right way to build. I trust Manitobans to build the province.

And after the election he flipped 180 degrees and he said, no, no, I don't trust you to build Manitoba anymore. In fact, I'm going to raise your taxes. In fact, I'm going to make it harder for you to

build the future of our province. And he broadened the PST, and its applications to Manitoba for essential items are many, and this erodes their spending power and their discretionary income's reduced as a result.

So I ask again: Why would the Premier make a promise to the people of Manitoba that he knew full well he would not keep? Why should Manitobans place trust in someone who does not trust them?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we increased tax deductions for Manitobans. The personal exemption has been increased last year, has been increased this year and, prior to last year, was increased for two years prior to that. We've increased that for individuals. We've increased the deduction for spouses, and we've increased the deduction for dependants. We've increased the property tax credit for senior citizens, and we've increased the threshold of the income upon which there is zero taxation for small businesses—the largest tax-free zone in the country—up to \$425,000.

Additional revenue generated through the PST will go to flood protection infrastructure in Manitoba to keep Manitobans safe. The billion dollars that we spent on Winnipeg and the Red River Valley has saved over \$35 billion of avoided costs through floods. That is a very worthwhile investment to keep Manitobans safe, and I can tell you the approach we've taken on putting infrastructure in place is being widely considered across the country as we speak.

Mr. Pallister: No government in this country has done more to erode the incomes of its citizens than that government across the way, and they've done it on the foundation of distrust, and they've created that foundation. They've created it, they've built it, and they've made sure that it was reinforced with every decision.

They flip-flopped on the PST increase, but they've run on the issue of upholding, as did the premier before, upholding the balanced budget, taxpayer protection and debt elimination act. So how did they do on the debt elimination part? Well, they haven't made a payment on the debt for years. How did they do on the balanced budget part? Well, they haven't balanced the budget for years. How did they do on the taxpayer protection part? They tore up the rights of Manitobans to vote on major tax increases. They broke all three; that's strike three in terms of trust, in terms of keeping your word.

Let me ask this Premier (Mr. Selinger) again: Why should the people of Manitoba trust him when he won't trust them?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite was a senior member in the Filmon government Cabinet, they had two sets of books. They had the operating budget; they had the summary budget buried at the end of volume 4.

They didn't tell people that the pension liability for schoolteachers and civil servants was growing every single year. They pretended that didn't exist. We've addressed that pension liability. Every teacher, every civil servant, their pension contribution is made by the employer. Every single paycheque now, that is reducing that liability in Manitoba.

We have put in place \$2,400 per family of tax reductions. Manitoba families and businesses have seen \$1.25 billion of tax reductions over the last 12 years, and we do an affordability index every year. Manitobans are among—the most affordable place to live in the country is Manitoba, and middle-income families, their affordability has increased compared to other jurisdictions because other jurisdictions are bringing in health-care premiums. Other jurisdictions are bringing in personal and corporate tax increases—

* (14:10)

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

Inflation Rate Fiscal Management

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, this Premier has no credibility. It's obvious that he would say anything to get elected.

According to Stats Canada, Manitoba now has the highest inflation rate in all of Canada. Manitobans are being forced to pay more and more for a number of things because of increased fees and taxes, and I think this Minister of Finance owes Manitobans an explanation.

Can he tell them why is he forcing Manitobans to pay for his broken promises and for his poor fiscal management?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Maybe the member for Charleswood should tell the whole story, Mr. Speaker. I mean, today we learned that Manitoba has some of the strongest retail sales taxes

in the whole—retail sales in the whole country. When it comes to inflation, I will take the word over Paul Ferley of the Royal Bank any day over the member for Charleswood. Mr. Ferley said there wasn't a problem in Manitoba. We're—because we in Manitoba, our growth in this province is above the average. In terms of wages, we're above the Canadian average again. It would be very—

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

Mrs. Driedger: I don't think the Minister of Finance knows what he's talking about.

The inflation rate, Mr. Speaker, the inflation rate rose twice as quickly in Manitoba as compared to the rest of Canada. This is not good news for Manitobans. It's the worst in Canada. So on Friday when the Minister of Finance was asked about it, he went into hiding rather than take any responsibility to explain this to Manitobans.

So I'll ask the Minister of Finance again: Why is he making Manitobans pay for his PST hike and for his poor financial management?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, she wants to quote Stats Canada, let's quote Stats Canada. It reports that Manitoba added 7,300 jobs, pushing the unemployment rate down in June. That pushed our unemployment rate down in June to 5 per cent, tied for the second lowest with our neighbours in Alberta. That's a pretty decent economic performance. We're tied for second lowest. We have the strongest monthly gain in employment amongst all the provinces.

She can doom and gloom all she likes. This side of the government's going to continue to build our economy rather than cut our economy like members opposite would do.

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, he's not going to grow the economy when it's costing people to spend more money here than anyplace else in Canada. The inflation rate's going up.

On Friday, the assistant chief economist with RBC in Toronto said, and I quote: Manitoba inflation really shot up in June, and the introduction of the PST increase will probably result in Manitoba continuing to outpace the country.

And that is not a good way of outpacing. It's going to cost people more here. We are going to see a squeeze on Manitobans who have to pay more for taxes and pay more in fees.

So I'll ask the Minister of Finance if he'll do the right thing today: Will he stop his PST hike?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, she's into an area that she knows well, and that's how not to grow an economy. What measures would slow down an economy is exactly what her leader, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), has been proposing to do in this session of the House. If members opposite want to slow an economy, they should cut health care like they've said they're going to do. They should cut education like they said they would do. I would suspect that taking \$550 million worth of cuts indiscriminately across the board would slow an economy.

That's not what we're going to do. We're going to take the revenue from the 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase to the PST and we're going to invest it in schools, we're going to invest it in hospitals, and we're going to invest it in the infrastructure that will grow our economy.

Hydro Development Projects Confidential Document Recovery

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, on October 18th, 2012, Manitoba Hydro sent a letter to various organizations in which it said, and I quote, Manitoba Hydro has confirmed that a highly sensitive internal document has been distributed to unauthorized sources outside the corporation. It goes on to say, as a result, a corporate decision has been made—reached that all top secret information that has been distributed to any First Nations or its members or advisers in relation to the Wuskwatim, Keeyask, Conawapa, Bipole III projects is required to return to Manitoba Hydro forthwith.

To the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: Have all the secret documents been returned?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, like any organization, Manitoba Hydro ought to have the opportunity to deal with its business and its business relationships.

I notice when the member who gets up every day—the member from the Tea Party who gets up every day and asks about particular communities—in fact, he even asked about a community yesterday

that's been under evacuation order. He stands up, and I said, come to my office, let's phone the chief and council of the community, let's talk about all of these allegations you're making in the House. He's refused. The offer's still there. Come on to my office; we'll talk to that community, we'll talk to the chief and council.

With respect to the business that Canada—Manitoba—if they were a private company, like the members opposite want, Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't get anything.

Mr. Schuler: In the same document Manitoba Hydro says, and I quote: All of the above are requested to be compiled with by the close of business on Tuesday, October 30th, 2012. Please send this information to my attention, says the writer.

I'd like to ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: These were considered top secret documents. Were they all returned?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we had five hours in Crown Corporations Committee where the member asked all of these questions. You know, but he spent his time on trying to be cute and being very political instead of asking questions like that. He can ask the president of Manitoba Hydro that question any time, and he'll be happy to answer it.

What I would like to talk about, Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Opposition wanted to go to a two-tier health-care system and members opposite wanting to privatize health care.

And I'd like—I like the fact the members want to talk about privatization of health care—of Hydro, because I want to talk about the advantages of having a Crown corporation versus having a private company. For example, when they privatized MTS, costs went up two or three times. Manitoba Hydro, a Crown corporation, has the lowest hydro rates in Canada.

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

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue and these are very serious questions.

The heading on the letter says, top secret information in relation to Wuskwatim, Keeyask, Conawapa and Bipole III. And it says, and I quote, that these letter—that these documents—Manitoba Hydro has confirmed that a highly sensitive internal document has been distributed to unauthorized

sources outside of the corporation. This relates to over \$20 billion worth of construction.

This is a very simple and a very serious question: Have those documents all been returned? Has Manitoba Hydro recovered all of those top secret documents?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I fail to understand why the member even cares, since they have pledged to cancel all the construction, to stop hydro development.

We want to build bipole for reliability; they want to stop bipole. We want to build Conawapa to have two and a half thousand 'kilom'-megawatts of power to provide for clean energy both for customers in the west and the east and the south; they want to cancel it. We have a \$20-billion capital plan to do with clean hydro; Saskatchewan has a \$15-billion plan to deal with coal. I'd take clean hydro over coal any day.

Why do they want to cancel those projects? Why do they not want to develop Manitoba Hydro? Why do they want to privatize Hydro? That's the questions that the members opposite should be concerned about.

Why would they care about the \$20 billion? They want to cancel it anyway. They've already said that.

*(14:20)

Hydro Development Projects Confidential Document Release

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I hope that the minister [*inaudible*] to compose himself enough to listen to the question, because it was a serious question.

In the letter that was sent from Manitoba Hydro which indicates that highly sensitive information about Wuskwatim, about Keeyask, Conawapa and bipole was released to unauthorized sources, it says the potential impact of the unauthorized release of this information are ultimately detrimental to both Manitoba Hydro and its First Nation partners in proceeding with the above projects. This release of this information was so detrimental that it could have scuttled \$20 billion worth of projects.

The member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) asked simply: Has the information been brought back to Hydro, and what could have been contained in the

information that it was serious enough to scuttle \$20 billion worth of projects, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): First off, the members, I think, are required by rules to table the letter. I would like the member to table that.

And secondly—excuse me, Mr. Speaker—secondly, as I recall, the last time I got a secret document—excuse me—as I recall, the last time I got a—well, I think I'll try next time.

Mr. Goertzen: Actually, that was the best answer we've gotten from the minister [*inaudible*]

I'm happy to table the letter for him. I can't believe he hasn't seen it himself, Mr. Speaker, as it comes from Manitoba Hydro.

And, Mr. Speaker, the Hydro letter says that top secret information was released to unauthorized sources, and the top secret information was so critical that it could have scuttled \$20 billion worth of projects. And the minister simply has no idea where the information is and where it's gone, whether it's come back.

And I want to ask him: What is so problematic about these projects that there's information out there that it could have scuttled \$20 billion of these projects?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a—you know, this is a letter that's gone to TCN. I believe the members have a—they ought to talk to either the community or Hydro with respect to the internal day-to-day workings of the corporation. You know, it's funny how members opposite say that we operate Hydro [*inaudible*] the minister's office. These are day-to-day matters that are handled by Hydro.

What I am concerned about is the future of Hydro and the fact that members opposite want to privatize it and don't want to proceed to develop Hydro into the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, I don't understand that the minister doesn't understand the severity of this. If he's disengaged, if he's not competent, whatever it is, he needs to take a look at this document.

What the document says is that there has been top secret information released from Manitoba Hydro to sources that shouldn't have received it, but just as importantly, the information that was released is so critical that it could have scuttled four projects, \$20 billion worth of projects.

Now, I don't know if there isn't enough of a business case, but what is it about these projects that there's information that exists within Hydro, or outside of Hydro, that it could scuttle all of these projects, \$20 billion worth of projects?

Can the minister tell us: Does he have any idea? Is he on the file, or is he completely incompetent, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Speaker, I seem to be losing my voice, but I will attempt—

An Honourable Member: You lost your mind some time ago.

Mr. Chomiak: I heard the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) said I lost my mind. I heard the member for—you know, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm sure all members recognize that the honourable minister is having some difficulties with his voice, and I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing both the question and the answer. So I'm asking for the co-operation and the respect of honourable members to give the minister the opportunity to answer in what we might consider to be a normal tone of voice in this place so that we might all be able to hear the answer.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a letter to TCN which has been raised by members opposite, saying that some information has been leaked and has the potential, if this is leaked, it could cause difficulty.

I assume that they've dealt with it as Hydro does with its own entity. It doesn't come through my office with respect to matters of day-to-day operations of the corporation. It's one of the first times members have asked a question about operations of the corporation.

And it's funny, Mr. Speaker, they want to cancel these projects. They attack these projects, and now they're concerned about the future. It's false crying from members opposite. It's their—they're trying to make a political issue out of a letter that's a daily matter that's concerned between Manitoba Hydro and TCN.

I wish they cared a much—as much about the future of Manitoba Hydro and its partnerships with First Nations as they try to pretend to be—care about Hydro in this House, Mr. Speaker.

Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry Review

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Over months of testimony at the public inquiry into Phoenix Sinclair's life, it has become clear that some staff did not fulfill their duty of care and should've been asked to account for their errors and learn from them.

In May 2006, then-minister of Family Services, member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), said, and I quote: The protection of the children are very important to this government, which is why we have reviews under way.

However, in contrast, what the minister said to the—what the minister said—we learned that the three reviews conducted in the wake of Phoenix Sinclair's death were kept secret. This is systemic of an NDP government that fights to keep its mistakes out of the public eye.

My question's to the Minister of Family Services: When did she learn of the decision by then-minister of Family Services, the member for Riel, that the findings, the criticisms and assessments were to be kept from the front-line workers and supervisors, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Certainly, since I became minister, one of the things that I have thought a lot about is what can we do in response to this inquiry, what could we do that would make lasting change in the system.

And, I think, as the inquiry completes its work and it's going to come forward with recommendations, certainly one of the things that we need to do is to build and renew a system of accountability within the system, to make sure that those processes are in place so that in those instances when things don't happen the way they should that there is an opportunity for staff to examine and learn from it. I think that will be one of the lasting legacies of this inquiry.

Certainly, in response to this horrible, tragic murder of this child, there were many, many changes in the system. There was increased staff. Those staff have better tools than they've ever had, and we'll continue to look to the inquiry—

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

**Child and Family Services
Child Welfare System**

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, many errors, some critical, were made in the handling of Phoenix Sinclair's file by Winnipeg Child and Family Services. And it's important to note that since devolution, the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency reports directly to the Minister of Family Services, not an outside agency.

The minister said yesterday, and I quote, "I think we've heard a lot about what needs to be improved in the system." Well, Mr. Speaker, this minister, directly responsible for Phoenix' care, knew of the inflicted horrors since her body was found in 2006. In 2006, all three child and—since 2006, all three CFS ministers remain consistently happy to be an observing bystander.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister prepared to live up to her responsibility to protect vulnerable children by committing to fundamental change in the child welfare system?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): One of the first things that I did after becoming minister was to read everything that was available to me on the murder of Phoenix Sinclair. And I have to tell you that reading the reports of that murder, the reports of the injury, the reports of the absolute contempt in which that child was held by the people who should've loved her and who killed her, that will never leave me, the feeling of reading those reports and knowing that in this job I hold a responsibility to not give in to despair, to not give in to cynicism but to think every day about how we can do a better job to protect children, not just in the child welfare system, Mr. Speaker, but in all of the communities in which we operate

If we want to find a way to do better by our kids, it's going to take each one of us in this Chamber doing better.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, this is not about the minister, it's about what she failed to do.

The inquiry was to examine the circumstances surrounding the death of Phoenix Sinclair, specifically what the child welfare system provided or did not provide under the child welfare act, what other circumstances directly related to the death of Phoenix and why Phoenix' death remained undiscovered for several months.

In trying to gather the facts leading up to this tragedy, the inquiry also had to deal with protocol wranglings that delayed the inquiry while the minister remained silent. She remained an observing spectator or bystander.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker, the child welfare system as it exists is a creature of this NDP government and is not working.

Will the minister admit that she is failing more than 10,000 children, most vulnerable children, in this province?

Ms. Howard: One of the things I've been very clear about is that I am not going to tell the commissioner of the inquiry how to do his job. It's important for him to carry out this inquiry; it's important for him to have the power and the authority to get the answers to the questions that he has been asked to answer.

As soon as this horrible tragedy happened, change started to happen within the system and that change continues to happen. We have seen an infusion of new positions who now are there working on the front lines to protect children. Those people have tools that they've never had before to make sure that they're assessing risk. We've put in place new laws and new protocols to help protect children.

But the change doesn't stop. That change must continue, and when this inquiry reports we will get more recommendations. We will take actions on those new recommendations and we will try every day to build the best kind of protections for children that we have—

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

**Municipal Amalgamation
Impact on Flood Recovery**

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, the municipalities of Edward, Cameron, Albert, Pipestone and Wallace have all been hard hit with severe flooding recently. These municipalities continue to work flat out to protect their citizens, their homes and rebuild flooded infrastructure.

My question to the local government—Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) is: Should these municipalities put aside these flood works and instead work on their amalgamation plan to meet the minister's December 1st deadline?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Of course, the comment that the member opposite made is nonsense. You know, these municipalities—well, Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2013 municipalities received an 8.5 per cent increase, \$30 million more.

Members opposite, who profess to be so supportive of rural municipalities, vote against every initiative, whether it's the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), housing. They vote against every single initiative for rural Manitoba, and I hope that's noted by rural Manitobans.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I guess we'll add the nonsense to the other comments like howling coyotes and insolent children, then.

Mr. Speaker, the RMs of Edward, Albert and Cameron are below the minister's threshold of a thousand residents for his forced amalgamation plans.

So will these municipalities be granted an exemption from the minister's self-imposed December 1st deadline, or do they put aside the flood work just to work on minister's agenda?

Mr. Lemieux: Many municipalities right now are certainly working with their neighbours, talking about amalgamations, trying to figure out where they want to be in five years, 10 years, 15 years down the road, and is something that we're very supportive of. And we have field consultants out there working with municipalities, working closely with them to ensure that any dilemmas they may be encountering—you know, we had the Rural Development Institute from Brandon come forward with a study. They reviewed municipalities in Manitoba and the threshold they were looking at was 3,000 people as the bare minimum and a \$130-million base as far as the taxation base.

Now, we're working with municipalities to ensure that whatever they're encountering with regard to challenges on amalgamations, our department—my department is working closely with them to ensure that these amalgamations go forward in a positive way.

Mr. Pedersen: So I take it from that answer, then, that they're to put aside their flood works and work on his amalgamation plans.

It's not a tough question. These municipalities are facing severe damage and they need to be

working on their municipalities, on the roads, on their local infrastructure for the safety of their residents.

But this minister now is telling these municipalities, put that all aside, work on the amalgamation on a bill that he can't even get on the tab—on the floor here.

Mr. Lemieux: We announced in Budget 2013 a \$21-million municipal road program. We've had many applications come in and, again, members opposite voted against it.

You know, with regard to voting for infrastructure, it's not rocket scientists. So you know, ground control to Mr. Tom, you know, to Major Tom, you know, the—you're out of touch with Manitobans, you're out of touch with rural Manitoba, you're out of touch—your fiscal policies are out of touch and, you know, they're going back many, many decades on where they want to be.

And, Mr. Speaker, we hear from municipalities every day, quite frankly, on municipal governments that want to move ahead in a for—in a very positive way, and we're supportive of them and we'll see that happen.

Youth Correctional Centres Children in Care

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Liberals have revealed in the last two weeks that far too many children who are in care do not complete high school. And for children in care in group homes, far too many are not even going to school. Not going to school is a sign of poor stewardship by their guardian, in this case, the NDP government.

Even worse, far too many children in care end up in Manitoba's youth correctional centres, which are essentially jails for youth.

I ask the Minister of Justice: What proportion of children in the Manitoba Youth Centre are children who are in care or who have been in care?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): You know, many children—children that are in care are not there for no reason. Unfortunately, they're there because of neglect by their parents. They're there because of abuse by their parents. They're there because of limitations, because of the families they come from.

And, certainly, when children come into the Manitoba Youth Centre or Agassiz Youth Centre, there's entire range of services provided. And, of course, the member should know that every child at MYC goes to school 12 months of the year.

Gang Activity

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister was not able to answer my question.

You know, the Auditor General has called repeatedly on the government to report performance outcomes, but it isn't. The Premier's (Mr. Selinger) government has guardianship of all these children but has no idea whether their stewardship is getting better or worse.

In talking to people who help inner-city youth I've learned that there are youth who have never had gang involvement before, but when they're sent to a Manitoba youth correctional centre like the Manitoba Youth Centre, they meet gang members and then they get involved in gangs.

I ask the minister: How many children with no evidence of previous gang involvement are sent to the Manitoba Youth Centre and subsequently become involved in gangs?

Mr. Swan: And I'll repeat what I said before, that when youth come into the Manitoba Youth Centre, the Agassiz Youth Centre, they're there for a reason. They're there because they've committed a crime which has posed a danger to themselves, to others in our community, and under the Youth Criminal Justice Act, when an individual's sent into a correctional centre they're given the best available care to try and deal with their issues.

And again, the first question that the member asked was about education, and, Mr. Speaker, as I've repeated, there are educational opportunities in our correctional centres and, again, those schools don't run a few months of the year; those schools run 12 months of the year.

And I can tell this House that individuals have actually graduated from high school. They've been put in routines. They've been able to get capacity which then provides them with a better opportunity when they return to our communities. The Youth Criminal Justice Act, of course, tells us that every youth who is sentenced has to spend a portion of their sentence in the community.

It'd be better if the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) would actually support the work of our probation services, support the work of—

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the minister's running the province's youth correctional centres which, under his watch, sadly, have become a farm team for gangs.

Mr. Speaker, a special report from the Children's Advocate's office says that detention at a youth justice criminal justice facility like the Manitoba Youth Centre, and I quote, is most disruptive to the continuity of helpful services for youth. Whatever good the services may have doing is often stamped out by halting them when the youth are in the justice system.

I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and I ask the minister: When will he recognize that troubled youth need to go to a place where the past traumas are addressed and the youth learn good behaviour instead of being sent to a farm team for gangs?

* (14:40)

Mr. Swan: Well, you know, the individuals working in the correctional system will be very, very distressed by the kind of comments the member for River Heights has just put on the record who's criticizing those who are working with some of our most disadvantaged youth.

I will talk about outcomes, Mr. Speaker. Now, soon there will be a report issued on crime and violent crime in Canada, and I expect that report will actually have a very, very good story to tell.

I will point out the Winnipeg Police Service has provided its CrimeStat statistics, and this year over last, what does it tell us in Winnipeg? Well, homicides, down 28 per cent; sexual assaults, down 17 per cent; commercial robberies, down 26 per cent; non-'commershnal' robberies, down 36 per cent; commercial break and enters, down 46 per cent; residential break and enters, down 16 per cent; other break and enters, down 12 per cent; attempted motor vehicle theft, down 8 per cent; actual motor vehicle theft, down 3 per cent; total crime—

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

Emergency Services Nurse-Managed Care

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Just for clarification from yesterday, the Minister of Health stated yesterday in QP, and I quote: "If an individual presents to an emergency room in need of an emergency doctor, there will be a call to 911 immediately." End quote.

A nurse has to call 911 from a hospital—911 from an emergency room? Really, Mr. Speaker?

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

I would say to the member opposite, as I have in numerous discussions in years past—or in months past, that, indeed, our regional health authorities are working very hard to recruit more physicians to rural and northern environments. It's challenging, there's no question about that. That is the case in every jurisdiction in Canada. We know, of course, that Manitoba has more family doctors in rural environments in every province west of New Brunswick; the member opposite rarely acknowledges that.

What I can say to the member once again is that the emergency room in question that we're speaking of at Pine Falls is under nurse-managed care for some days. People are welcome to present to the ER. They can get care from nurses. If indeed it—if it is outside the scope of practice of the nurses, the nurses will act accordingly, consult with the doctor on the phone, assist the family in calling 911, any of the above—

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

Emergency Services (Pine Falls) Physician Shortage

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I think there's going to be a waiting list at that—at the phone, Mr. Speaker, in that emergency room.

Mr. Speaker, on July 17th, 2013, a paid editorial by the new IEHA says, and I quote: In the Interlake-Eastern region, Pine Falls is one of the busiest EMS stations in the region. End quote.

So, Mr. Speaker, take an ambulance out of the queue to drive around the block and park? Is this the minister's answer to the doctor shortage in an area of the province whose population grows, at times, tenfold?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think our answer to improving services in rural Manitoba has been made very clear to Manitobans. What we're going to do is increase seats in medical school, not decrease them like the members opposite chose to do; what we're going to do is continue to invest in health capital infrastructure, not issue a press release and say, times are tough, we're cancelling all of our projects, like the members opposite did.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget alone, there was \$4.5 million to increase medical residencies and to ensure that we provide more in rural and northern Manitoba—residencies dedicated to emergency medicine. And what did the members opposite do? Chuckle and vote against it.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm begging the indulgence of the House. In an oversight on my part, I neglected to observe the honourable member for Maples being on his feet to ask his question, so I'm going to allow the honourable member for Maples to pose his question to the House.

Internationally Educated Professionals Workforce Integration Funding

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, we know that Manitoba is a great place to live and work. Every year, thousands of people move here to take advantage of the many opportunities our province has to offer, and many end up settling in my own constituency. At the same time, newcomers can face many challenges as they begin building their new lives here in Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy please inform the House on what our government is doing to make the transition to Manitoba easier for newcomers?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I know this is important to this member.

Yesterday we announced \$1.4 million in renewed funding to help internationally educated professionals build on their skills to find jobs in Manitoba. Previous investment of \$1.2 million saw an 87 per cent success rate for people finding work in their chosen career. This funding will focus on bridge training in high-demand areas such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, health and trades.

When new Canadians find their way to our province, to our communities and to our economy, well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we think they count.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Latin Fest

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I would like to rise today to recognize Winnipeg's first-ever Latin Fest held Saturday, July 20th at The Forks, Mr. Speaker.

The inaugural celebration of Latin culture in The Forks is not yet on Winnipeg's summer festival calendar, but I have no doubt that it soon will be. Latin Fest is a festival with an ambitious cause and a big heart. It's goal is to rally the Latin community to raise funds to build a Latin-Canadian cultural centre in Manitoba, the first of its kind in the province. Currently, there are approximately 7,000 members of the Latin community in Winnipeg and another 10,000 located across the province. A Latin-Canadian cultural centre would help bring this expanding community together.

Fabiola Marabotto is one member of the organizing committee who moved to Winnipeg from Mexico City 13 years ago. Her dream for the cultural centre is to be a place for Latin Canadians to share our culture and the things which connect us all. End quote.

On the day of the festival, many curious Manitobans stopped in to listen and check out the handful of tents and vendors. Those interested in the live performances attended the late afternoon and evening concerts on Scotiabank stage, Mr. Speaker.

The dream of the Latin-centric celebration in Manitoba has come up before, but it was difficult to find a common ground among the 40 Latin regions represented in Manitoba. That's when the organizers began to change their tune. Focusing on politics, sports and regional differences wasn't helping them get anywhere, so instead they brainstormed an event that would help celebrate their shared culture. All of Manitoba's landmark summer festivals had to start somewhere, and I am proud to see Latin Fest finally get off the ground and become an exciting new addition to our cultural calendar.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the organizers of

the Latin Fest on a successful first festival, and I wish them all the best in future years. Thank you.

Whiteshell Park Investment

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): –incredible provincial parks that showcase our province's natural beauty. One of the oldest and most beautiful is the Whiteshell Provincial Park. With more than 1.4 million visits each year, the Whiteshell is known for its beaches, fishing, golfing, hiking trails, camping and much more.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be part of a government that believes in investing in our parks. Last week the province—excuse me—this week we announced the largest investment in the Whiteshell's history, more than \$16 million will go to capital projects in the park. This historic investment is part of our parks strategy that will see more than \$100 million invested in park infrastructure by 2020, including \$4 million in Grand Beach and over \$20 million in Birds Hill Provincial Park.

Some of the—this year's projects will include: the redevelopment of the West Hawk townsite, upgrades to boat launches at McDougal's Landing, Dorothy and Star Lake, improvement to the roads at Falcon Lake and Big Whiteshell Lake, upgrades to the sewage lagoon at West Hawk Lake, a new wastewater treatment facility at West Hawk Lake, Falcon Lake and Brereton Lake.

Mr. Speaker, we believe it's critical that we preserve our natural heritage, something that the members opposite do not seem to recognize. Their proposal to slash \$550 million from the budget will mean irresponsible cuts to environmental programs that enhance parks, reduce pollution in our lakes and protect species at risk. This government will continue to invest in our valuable park system. It's important that members opposite don't share our vision.

Marsha Trinder

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I rise today to recognize a female entrepreneur whose business combines agriculture and education. Russell's Marsha Trinder, who raises Tennessee Walking Horses on her ranch in the Assiniboine valley, was named one of 30 finalists competing for the Manitoba Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

* (14:50)

Marsha and her partner, Cliff, have operated this well-known cattle and horse ranch in the Assiniboine valley near Russell since the 1970s. Since 1995, TW Ranch has specialized in breeding and training Tennessee Walking Horses. According to their website, we have a herd of commercial cattle—beef cattle and a horse herd of registered Tennessee Walking Horses that are trained as trail horses and used as working horses with the cattle. And I've seen them at the odd parade, Mr. Speaker.

Marsha worked off the farm in office positions from 1976 until 2000, when she went to part-time off the ranch and finally in 2006 became a full-time partner in the operation of TW Ranch, where she is a major part of the horse training operation.

They have a number of young women who spend an internship time at the ranch on a volunteer basis. The internships range in time from three months to one year, and in that time the interns learn how to train and start horses under a saddle, farrier work, cattle work and general ranch activities. The women come from as far away as Germany to experience ranch life first-hand and become familiar with the natural horsemanship program used to train horses. Additionally, they run clinics for other equine enthusiasts.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of the Manitoba Legislature, I would like to congratulate Marsha Trinder for being a finalist for the women—Manitoba Woman Entrepreneur of the Year Award and wish her continued success in her—to her—in her endeavours.

Congratulations, Marsha. You do great work.

Land-Based Education

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, our beautiful land is rich in history and knowledge. That is why I'm so pleased to rise today to recognize a professor from Opaskwayak Cree Nation who is teaching others about the land we call home. This summer, Dr. Alex Wilson taught two-week program exploring indigenous knowledge through land-based education.

Twenty-two students from British Columbia, Alberta, the Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Manitoba participated in the University of Saskatchewan's Land-Based Indigenous Education cohort, which took place at Bakers Narrows. The students are already certified teachers and educational administrators and are now working on their master's in education. After

completing the master's program, they will be able to return to their communities, enhancing their teaching and administrative duties through the land-based knowledge gained by taking part in this innovative program.

At Bakers Narrows, Dr. Alex Wilson was able to guide students and help them connect with local teachings and understandings. The two-week course focused on a holistic approach to education by going back to the land and learning from local elders. The students also spent time paddling along the river, learning about the waterways and the land, gaining wisdom from their natural environment.

At the end of their two weeks of study and qualitative learning, the students prepared a feast for the elders of the community to say thank you for the knowledge they shared. I was pleased to have been invited to join in the feast.

Mr. Speaker, by expanding the notion of the classroom to include returning to and learning from the land, the students are able to connect with their roots and learn the importance of protecting the environment. While many students are increasingly disconnected from their natural environment, these students are truly learning from theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank Dr. Alex Wilson and the instructors that accompanied her, Dr. Raven Sinclair and Renee Carrier, as well as the elders, community members and students who participated in this program, both by sharing and learning together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 50th Manitoba Stampede and Exhibition

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, every July, the community of Morris grows and comes alive with livestock, cowboys and the traditional carnival rides. The Manitoba Stampede and Exhibition celebrated its 50th year this past weekend as a community tradition dating back to 1964.

The original idea came from a man who moved to the community from Swan River who came to Morris to manage the liquor store, and the community of Morris rallied around the idea to hold a stampede in the community. The original country fair was struggling to attract people and the idea for the Manitoba Stampede was born.

Bruce McKenzie, the mayor, brought Harry Vold to Morris to get a better idea of the—of what a rodeo stock would cost, and Harry said forty

thousand. A deal was signed with a handshake—no paper—and Vold continues to supply the rodeo stock 50 years later.

With only \$200 to organize the event, the local agricultural society asked local residents for loans to help get it off the ground; 108 residents offered about a hundred dollars each with no guarantee of repayment. The local bank kicked in another \$25,000, and local contractors agreed to build a track on a promise they'd be paid only if the rodeo was a success.

The rodeo was a success and still lives on to this day as only one part of an increasingly large event. Since that time, the stampede has grown from a three-day event to a five day, and then has been scaled back, became a four-day event which includes bull riding, bronc busting, tie-down roping, bareback riding, as well as chuck chariot and chuck wagon racing. The community is able to attract over 30,000 over the four days, as well as a midway and several concerts to help make the event truly fun for the whole family. Producers from all around the province and country come to show their animals and I've been honoured to see several of my livestock win at the Manitoba Stampede.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the community of Morris, the organizers of the Manitoba Stampede on 50 years, and I wish them all the best in the next 50 years.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances—

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 The Pas (Mr. Whitehead). The title of the resolution is "Nutritional Experiments on Aboriginal People."

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that pursuant to rule 31(8), that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will there—be the one brought forward by the honourable member for The

Pas, and the title of the resolution is "Nutritional Experiments on Aboriginal People."

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, can we please continue with the Interim Supply process.

Mr. Speaker: We'll now—order, please. We'll now resume debate on Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013, standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland, who has 11 minutes remaining.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 48—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I certainly hope that all members of the government have had overnight to think about how they're going to spend \$7.7 billion. Perhaps, when I'm done my few minutes, they will get up and tell us how they are going to spend that \$7.7 billion, and I'm sure when they're up they will announce—they will tell everyone how—why they need a vote tax, that \$5,000 to each and every one of them that's going to go in a vote tax because they're either too lazy or too scared to go to the doors and ask people for their money to run their political party. Instead, they want to take the taxpayers money without asking them for that.

Perhaps when they're up and speaking they can talk about how hydro rates have gone up 8 per cent in the past year and no end in sight, 4 per cent, at least, for the next 20 years. And they'd—they would perhaps like to explain why they're going to go up that much and they can include in the 2 and a half cents per litre in the gas and—that went up last year, plus now the increase of the extra percentage point of the illegal PST that they imposed on July 1st of this year.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps when they're up and speaking they can talk about the expansion of the PST that they did a year ago, in their tax grab a year ago. How the impact on home, property, group life insurance that sales tax—7 per cent last year and 8 per cent now that it's costing home owners and how the home owners are going to have to find that additional money. The addition of the expansion of the PST on hair and spa services and personal services that are going to cost not only 7 per cent more, but now 8 per cent more as of this illegal tax PST rise on July 1st.

And it's a 14 per cent rise in the PST, I'm sure all government members will love to just jump up and tell us why this is justified and why they need it, how it's not going into an NDP slush fund instead.

Because at first it was for flood protection; then, no, no, that's not working. Infrastructure, oh, no, that's not going to work. Then it was for schools, that it should come out of the basic core expenses, and then they just re-announced projects anyway and then, now, we think it's probably for splash pads—so absolutely necessary infrastructure according to this government.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

* (15:00)

So they've—and jacked up all kinds of fees, including—everything; they jacked up fees on everything from birth certificates to death certificates. Gives a whole new meaning—this government gives a whole new meaning from cradle to grave. They've got you covered with fees. They're going to—they've increased campground rentals, fishing licences, environmental permits—no fee is safe. And there is actually a very long list of fee increases that they've done in the past year.

They've capped the farmland education rebate as—and that's a tax on farming, on the agricultural industry in this province. There is no sector that's safe from their taxation.

All this—we know we're the highest taxed province west of Québec, and getting higher all the time. In spite of all this we have record transfer payments from Ottawa, that the sugar daddy from Ottawa's been giving lots of money, and yet it's never enough for this government. They have to continue to raise fees and taxes in spite it record transfer payments received in the past, at least, 10 to 12 years.

All these fees and taxes are costing Manitoba families at least \$1,600. And that \$1,600 has to come from somewhere. Families don't have the luxury of taxing another segment of the population; they have to pay this. So they're—so this summer families all across Manitoba are deciding whether to—how they're going to pay this \$1,600. Are they going to—what are they—what will they do without? Will they do without a summer vacation? Will they do without a sports program? And traditionally a lot of those—either sports or child activities begin in the fall and the fall season begins; they will be making some serious decisions come in August because they know that—their budgets just can't handle this extra \$1,600.

And, you know, this Interim Supply bill is \$7.7 billion. It's almost unfathomable how much

money that is, and yet it's nothing to this government.

We hear here in question period today the Minister responsible for Hydro doesn't have a clue about \$20 billion worth of project files on \$20 billion worth of projects have gone missing; he hasn't a clue. Does it not register? Does he not realize that this is going to cost Manitoba Hydro and ultimately that costs all the taxpayers in Manitoba?

And it's the same minister that's wasting a billion dollars on the Bipole III, the circular route, the west route, and raising rates 8 per cent just in the past year. We know that this is not the end of the rate increases, that they're going to continue. This government just doesn't seem to understand that somebody has to pay this and that somebody is the Manitoba taxpayers.

And we cannot continue on this, there is only so much money out there and people make decisions and we've—we all have seen the impact of this—the PST rise on our border communities, how the shopping has gone out of province whether it's to the west in Saskatchewan or whether it's south into North Dakota, Minnesota. It has a real impact and those numbers are going to show in Manitoba's economy, those—the loss of sales are going to show because it's going to hurt businesses.

Businesses are not going to be able to survive on this, and they're either going to close or scale back, having to let go employees. And that all has—it's the trickle-down effect, I believe, one of the presenters at Bill 20 talked about. It's the trickle-down effect, and she was talking about her own massage and spa business, if I remember correctly, how she had to lay off an employee and that business has dropped and she's had to make some real decisions, hard decisions, in order to—whether to continue the business or whether it will—whether she will be the next casualty in this economic slush fund that the NDP are trying to build for themselves.

And, you know—and also in question period I asked the minister about amalgamation versus flooding issues for those southwest communities that have been so hard hit by rains recently, and hard—harsh weather, and yet the minister seems oblivious to what's happening out there. And he tries to say that, well, he's got his teams of advisors out there advising on amalgamation. And while I would—I know Manitobans are very patient and very hospitable people, but send a bureaucrat into a community that's reeling from flooding and telling

them they have to work on amalgamation, I don't think that will go over very well.

So I—you know, the minister seems—it's unfortunate that the minister just doesn't seem to understand that there are pressing problems out there, and it's not the slush fund of the NDP that's the present—persistent problem for those local municipalities. It is their problem in that they are having to pay for it, but it's not something that they want to deal with right now.

They have infrastructure needs and there's local infrastructure. There's homes and businesses that were flooded. There's roads, a lot of local municipal roads that were washed out from these heavy rains and it's almost unbelievable the amount of rain that some of these communities have received, and yet here we have a minister that's totally oblivious to this.

Like, I realize that we're in here during the week, but, you know, maybe they could borrow the Minister of Health's (Ms. Oswald) telephone because when they're phoning from the emergency ward to phone for an ambulance, maybe he could get in on that line sometime and phone out to these municipalities and see what's really happening out there because, obviously, this government is so out of touch. They're so out of touch with what's happening in Manitoba, with the damage that they're creating to the Manitoba economy and the—we just have to step back and to see these government members not even willing to stand up and address a \$7.7-billion interim financing bill is shameful.

And I think that they should have to—they will be accountable to Manitobans. Manitobans will not forget about this. They're counting on Manitobans forgetting on this, and this is not going to happen because it's hurting their bottom lines in each and every home and each and every business across Manitoba.

And it's—Manitobans will not put up with the lies that the NDP put out there in the last election campaign. They talked about not raising tax. They called the PST rise nonsense, and then they turn around and raised the PST this year. They talked about not raising taxes. They raised fees and taxes last year. There is no—we're getting lots emails. I'm pretty sure that the members across are also hearing from their constituents and—about the damage that this government is causing to Manitoba and to Manitoba economy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this—just one final note, that there is not a spending problem—it's not a revenue problem, pardon me—it's not a revenue problem in this province. This government has a spending problem and they need to get their spending under control.

Thank you very much.

House Business

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Honourable Government House Leader, on House business?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, on House business.

Pursuant to rule—I have to redo the announcement I did earlier. I forgot—didn't say it correctly.

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 The Pas (Mr. Whitehead). The title of the resolution is "Nutritional Experiments on Aboriginal Peoples."

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Pursuant to rule 31 point eight, the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one put forward by the honourable member for The Pas. The title of the resolution is "Nutritional Experiments on Aboriginal Peoples."

Thank you very much.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Recognizing the honourable member for Carman. No, all right, honourable member from Morden-Winkler.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): I am pleased to have the ability to stand and speak on Bill 48 in this Interim Appropriation Act, and I thank the member from Midland for putting on the record some very important comments. I thought that he helped to really frame the debate and give us a better understanding of really what it is we're doing here today, what it is we're doing when we could be, as a legislative body and as legislators, doing something completely different.

*(15:10)

This government had choices. They could've called this session back much earlier this spring. They didn't do so. They waited and we saw other

jurisdictions, we saw other provinces come back into their legislative sessions.

We know this government complains all the time and says, oh, we can't do anything until we know what the feds are going to do with the budget. And yet other provincial governments go back into session, there is business to do, and then when the budget is delivered federally they react and they go forward. But not this government. This government waits in February, they wait in March, and finally in mid-April they haul themselves back into the Legislature and then they wonder why they can't get an adjournment in the middle of June when they're in the middle of pass-trying to pass one of the most egregious legislative items in the history of this province, one of the most offensive bills to Manitobans irrespective of your occupation or your demographics, your age and your income.

It is a bill that hits everyone, hits them hard, and Manitobans have been clear in the kind of feedback that they have provided to this government on Bill 20. They've been very clear in what they said to this government about the lack of consultation. They've been very clear about what they've said to this government in terms of the government saying one thing before the election of October 2011 and then completely capitulating, going in a completely other direction, doing a one-eighty and coming back and saying afterwards we said we wouldn't raise taxes, but guess what? We're raising taxes. And not only are we raising taxes, we're raising taxes spectacularly. We're going to raise the PST to 8 per cent, and yet nowhere in their campaign literature, nowhere at the doorstep, nowhere in the public debate, nowhere in the forums did they ever say they were going to do it, and what are we getting for this PST increase?

Well, I'm happy to have a little bit of time this afternoon to unpack that, as my colleagues have done, and talk a little bit about what it actually means to Manitobans and what it actually means to Manitobans who are living in my constituency and what it means to seniors, and what it means to businesses and what it means to students who are trying to pay, because unlike this government, those private individuals do not have an endless capacity to raise new revenue sources. Instead, at the end of the day, they are required to pay the bill. If they don't pay the bill and rack up credit card debt or line-of-credit debt, eventually there's a reckoning. Eventually the bank phones. Eventually the banker calls and says you cannot extend—we will not extend

your loan any farther. And yet today here we are with our Bill 48, and what's the government doing? Going back and saying, will you please extend our loan a little longer?

And I think that what the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) made clear as well is that absent in this debate is any discussion from these government members about actually driving down government spending, and yet it's so strange to think that a year ago that discussion was not absent. It's not like it's been absent the whole time, it's because they've done an about-face just one year ago, and I think I actually brought it with me today into the Chamber—oh, I did—I brought with me, focused on what matters most: Budget 2012. And it's almost absurd that there it is on page 2, on the second page there, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is calling on the government to achieve \$128 million of internal savings in the year, the equivalent of a 1 per cent reduction in program spending.

And so here he was one year ago, just one year ago, saying part of this equation, part of this reckoning—he actually called it restoring balance—what he said was that part of this great reckoning had to be that the government needed to acknowledge a need to drive down spending. And yet open up that budget, 2013 budget, and that budget is absent any expressions of interest from this government in actually driving down program spending.

And they've focused the debate and they've made it so narrow and so disingenuous so as to project the idea that any discussion—any discussion—about a government trying to achieve cost savings is absurd. They've basically said that there is no place in the discussions in this Chamber that there could be an entertaining of the idea that government could deliver services for less money. That's basically what the Minister of Finance's new budget says. While that was on the table one year ago—he didn't get there and he said, whoops, that one's going out the window. We're not going to do that anymore. As a matter of fact, now, for any party to say that savings could be achieved, that's reckless, and oh, that's dangerous. And yet—or you're insolent children, and yet talk to any other Finance minister in this country and they will tell you they're well on the way.

As a matter of fact, I went back today because the Minister of Finance has been talking about anything except driving down spending and actually achieving the elimination of the deficit in the province of Manitoba. And I went back to check how

many times he has specifically spoken about driving down the deficit to zero in the province of Manitoba, because I think at first he, of course, promised at the election that was going to happen in 2013, 2014. I think they said you could take it to the bank. They were ahead of schedule and then all of a sudden they came back, of course, in this budget document as of 2012, they said, whoops, missed by that much. And they said, we're going to get there, but it's going to be '14-15. We'll get there, but trust us. And now, all of a sudden the last number of months of debate in this Chamber—and I'm very confident we'll have more months of debate before this is all done—yet, all of a sudden his talking about driving the deficit to zero has been eliminated. The deficit hasn't been eliminated, but his conversation about it has, and we don't even have the minister on the record talking about eliminating the deficit. Instead, he gets cute and talks about things like trying to drive down the difference between revenues and expenditures, driving down the difference between those things. And that's just empty rhetoric and we all know that what he's saying is he is not about to get there.

So the government has presented Manitobans with a false choice. They've said you either take us and the one point increase, a 14.2 per cent across-the-board PST increase or you're not going to have anything. They've said you're not going to have infrastructure, you're not going to have flood mitigation, you're not going to have hospitals and schools. And yet, we know, when you look across Canada—you can look at the government of Saskatchewan; you can look at the government of Alberta; you can look at the government of BC, and all of these jurisdictions are still building hospitals. They're building schools. They're paving roads and they're dealing with flood mitigation. The only difference between these jurisdictions and ours is that they're not doing it on the backs of the taxpayers. They're not doing it as a government who feels that they have an endless capacity and an inexhaustible right to go back to the ratepayer and hike up the rate again. That's the difference between those governments and this one.

And it's not about stripe, because there are governments in this nation who aren't just PC governments who are focused on the bottom line and saying, we will not get there unless we also look at government spending. But this government, it's off the table. It's not part of the equation. They simply go back and say, this is simple. It's like that ratepayer going back to the bank and saying, this is very

simple. Just raise my line of credit, just increase my Visa limit and we will not have a problem again.

And, of course, what it shows—we would laugh at that because we understand how terribly short-sighted that would be in individual, impersonal finances. But apply the same model here, and we understand this is a party that does not understand the implications of their actions on the long-term viability of the economy of Manitoba. It's a reckless approach. It's a short-sighted approach. It is an approach that says, we're actually not encumbered with the struggle to match revenues to expenditures because we can just continue to find new revenues. And what we've seen as a result is that Manitoba continues to hemorrhage young people, workers who are moving to other jurisdictions.

We know when it comes to health care this minister often boasts about the amount of doctors that are practising in Manitoba, and we know even today we have the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko) bringing up yet another issue where doctor shortages are causing huge issues in rural Manitoba. We know that not only are we failing to keep young people, not only are we failing to keep newcomers to Canada in Manitoba, but we are also failing to keep even doctors and health-care workers, because the latest statistics are showing we've lost 2,200 doctors from Manitoba who were here at one time and left to practise somewhere else. And that statistic is actually captured from the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons, and I know the minister just loves to sit across the way and dispute any statistic that comes her way that she doesn't like. But she's going to have trouble that one because it actually comes from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and it's a bit of a quarrel for her to get into—with them.

*(15:20)

So we know we have huge challenges in this province. The challenges, though, are the ones that are posed by the—this government and posed by the continual governance of our province by this party. As a matter of fact, I brought in a report today that says much the same thing. There was an OECD economic surveys for Canada report from June 2012. So just one year ago the OECD issues a report that says that governments are driving down spending and it is incumbent on governments to drive down spending. *[interjection]* You know, I can hear the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) chirping across the way, and, indeed, we've heard him chirping most of the way about a chess match that he

was having with a pigeon, and there's only really one thing I could say about the prospect of the member for St. Norbert having a chess match with a pigeon, and that is, seems like a good fight, and I think that the result is in question. So that's what I would say about the pigeon analogy.

In any case, to go back to my subject. What I was saying is that provincial governments—according to this OECD study, provincial governments face a difficult task. And this study goes on to say that some face large structural deficits and still-rising net debt-to-GDP ratios. Add to that challenge the fact that this government, as the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) so aptly said today, leads the nation. And I know this government likes to say how much they lead the nation. Well, indeed, they do. Today we find out they lead the nation on inflation. And I think, for the second month in a row, Manitoba is leading the nation when it comes to inflationary increases.

And what's challenging about this new Statistics Canada data is that it doesn't even fully capture the effect of a PST increase to 8 per cent. And so the RBC senior analyst who is now reporting this largest increase, when we are able to fully capture this data, what will that full picture say about the prospects of this province under the leadership of this government? And, as a matter of fact, the last couple of days we've heard the members of the government chirping. They said, oh, what would you cut? What would you cut? If you think we should cut, what would you cut?

And yet it was their own budget from last year that was talking about making appropriate changes to the way services were being delivered. They were the ones who talked about cutting the civil service. In three years they were going to achieve savings of 600, a reduction in the civil service. And yet we see after one year, did they meet their target? No. Did they exceed it? No. Did they fail to meet it? You betcha. And not only did they fail to meet that target, they actually ended up hiring new civil servants, that the net analysis was that they hired more civil servants. And this is from the government that says they were going to achieve efficiencies. Wasn't a pledge that we made; it was a pledge that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) made. We would assume he had some backing in that room when he made the statement. We would assume there would be a few other guys and the other members around there who would say, all right, you know, we got your back on this, we'll do this thing.

And it just shows the extent to which they promise and then do not deliver it, that they talk and then do not follow through. And Manitobans have become increasingly wise to this kind of tactic. And so, even just yesterday, when we find out that the deputy minister for Family Services and Labour has directed an email to all the civil servants in that department, indicate—trying to incite anxiety, trying to create stress among workers by trying to puff something up, trying to take—to make a mountain out of a molehill, and say, oh, you should be afraid, you should all be very afraid; be afraid because we don't know what's going to happen in terms of this fiscal cliff that's coming up, and yet the government over there knows full well that the only fiscal cliff they've created is the one for the average working Manitoban. There is no tremendously bad situation here. It's of their own making. I just think it's deplorable that the deputy minister would write such an email, and I wonder if he was directed to do so. I also wonder if that same email was then sent out within other areas of government.

But in any case, coming back to what I was speaking about, we are now in our 15th straight week of uninterrupted session. We're in our fifth week of what the government calls the emergency session of the Legislature, and we know why we're here. We know why we're standing up for Manitobans. We believe it's the right thing to do and the overwhelming evidence at committee on Bill 20, the overwhelming evidence of correspondence arriving at our constituency offices and here in the caucus offices indicates that Manitobans are fed up, that they're unhappy with this style of leadership, that they are unhappy with the kind of—the failure of this government, the complete, the abject failure to simply say what you're going to do and then do it.

And it must be with great uncomfortability that some of the new members sit across the way there, and they're the ones who went to the door. They're the ones who were sold a bill of goods by the people in that inner circle, in that inner sanctum, those ones at Cabinet who would have known where the conversation was going to go post-election, and yet some of those new members—and I know I'm a new member of this Legislature, and, indeed, I'm looking at some of the newer members around here on my side of the aisle and—like the newest member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler)—and, anyways, it has to put them in a tremendously uncomfortable position every single weekend, every single weeknight when they're home or in their constituency, because there is no

way that they are receiving any message from voters across this province other than what are you guys doing.

I get emails from NDP supporters who say, I have supported the NDP for the last time, and I can tell you, I'm relatively new around here, but I can tell you I didn't get emails like that in the first three months of being elected. I sure get them now.

As a matter of fact, I had a woman come in for a meeting a number of weeks ago and indicated that her husband was a card-carrying member of the NDP party for years and years, and in their household it's always been this kind of split vote. She votes and he votes and they split it down the middle and they call it even, and I guess it's just been a little bit of an ongoing friendly quarrel within their marriage in their household. And she chuckled and she smiled and she said: The quarrel's over. He finally begrudgingly admitted he's never voting NDP again *[inaudible]*

And, you know, it was interesting to read on the weekend in the Free Press that there was an editorial there that basically said the same thing we were saying about the attempt of this government to change the channel, to quickly flip to a new channel, to see something shiny over there and tell people, oh, don't look here. Don't talk about this PST increase. Instead, be afraid of the fiscal cliff. And the Free Press came back and said that the House ministers attempt to cause a panic among the general public was about as reliable as the government's promise in the last election to never raise the PST. As a matter of fact, that same editorial went on to basically say that the Conservatives, in short, were doing their job as an opposition: holding the government to account and ensuring that the public's widespread-widespread-dissatisfaction with the tax increase receives a thorough hearing.

And so even though we understand and I would agree, I thought it was—I got a chuckle out of the fact that the editorial concluded by saying that while the Tories might be driving the government around the bend, they certainly aren't driving anyone over a fiscal cliff. Like I said, the fiscal cliff is the one that has been created by this government. It's the fiscal cliff that Manitobans now have to deal with.

And you know what? We have to keep in mind that all of these things are being done despite the fact that there are protections in our province unique-unique-legislative provisions that would guard against exactly this kind of reckless and unilateral

decision by a government to increase the tax rate, a major tax rate without consultation.

And, you know, I've read the bill. I've read Bill 20. I'm not sure that all those members on the other side could say the same, that they've actually read the bill from start to finish. And I think it is deplorable to me that the bill purports to not be a permanent tax increase, that instead it says—you can just see them weaseling around in the background saying how could we write this in such a way to squeeze around the margins, to get around what the taxpayer protection act says, and all of a sudden someone says, I got it, we'll call it a nine-year, 364-day temporary tax interim measure. And I never lose an opportunity to go back into my constituency and tell that to voters, because nothing makes them so offended as that because it lacks any kind of integrity.

* (15:30)

This is a permanent tax increase that you are hoisting on Manitobans and it is inappropriate and it is ill-advised, and the business community and the anti-poverty groups, and families and university groups and industry owners stand united, and with one voice they say, rethink it. Do—have a do over on the PST increase. But this government has said, no, not going to do it. We will boldly go where no one has gone before, and we are going to go there and increase this tax because, well, be—we know—we know why. Because when a government cannot, year after year, match revenues to expenditures, when year after year they post a structural deficit of five or six hundred million dollars even when the flood costs are subtracted from the equation, we know that there is only one thing left for them to do. And that is to find new money, and preferably other people's money. And that's exactly what the government has done in this case.

But the fact is they are going around those provisions of the taxpayer protection act, and, you know, it's so interesting to me that this same government, members of this government, stood up and, oh, they hollered and they whined. And the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) last year got up and he says, you know, with regard to the Wheat Board, oh, why would the federal government not hold the referendum? So—and I think it's just—what a complete disconnect, that one year ago they stand in their place—and actually, as a matter of fact, the member, the minister for Hydro whose constituency is—*[interjection]* Kildonan, the member

for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), about only two years ago in June, he stood in this Chamber one afternoon and he said they had a choice. They chose in their caucus to make a motion—not about the flood, not about the Wheat Board, they had a choice—which is more than they're offering farmers on the Wheat Board; they're not allowing them a choice. It's the most undemocratic bunch of people that I've ever seen. They're very undemocratic. That was from a member of that government only two years ago. I cannot understand. How he must squirm every time this Premier (Mr. Selinger) or this Finance Minister gets up and talks about wiggling around the taxpayer protection act.

But you know I only have a little bit—amount of time left and I do want to put some comments on the record. I've had business owners contact me from my constituency saying things—David Dunseath, who's the owner of a Canadian Tire in Winkler, contacted me to say that it's imperative that this government respect the province's current balanced budget legislation clearly stating that an increase to the PST can only be done following a referendum. And he's concerned with how the proposed tax increase will make—well, now it's not a proposed tax increase anymore, it's a realized tax increase—but will make our already uncompetitive tax framework even more unattractive.

And I've received so many more similar pieces of correspondence from members of my constituency who are speaking out, coming out to meetings, coming out to rallies, writing to the Premier, writing to the Finance Minister, contacting their own MLAs when they happen to be members of the NDP party. And I know just about a month or two ago, actually, Steve McLellan, who's the CEO for the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, said that the government of Manitoba's decision to raise the PST was going to cause Manitobans to look westward to prosper and—or even to keep their financial heads above water.

I actually think it was only a few weeks ago the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) said that if the lights were so bright in Saskatchewan, perhaps that's where people should go. And indeed I can report to that member that more and more, that is where Manitobans are going—packing up and going. I cannot tell you the number of businesses that come from Morden and Winkler who now have operations in Yorkton and in Saskatoon. And they keep shrugging their shoulders and say, if we simply don't have the economy here, we will go and work there.

And we're working hard to try to entice those businesses and those industries—carpenters and tradespersons and journeymen—who are going over there to say, that's where the work is. The tax is lower, I can earn a better wage, the jobs are there.

But I know that these NDP members, they don't want to hear those kinds of reports. They don't want to hear. That's why that even the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) has said when people come to committee, she's not concerned about hearing them. She's going like a freight train in one direction. Any voice that does not line up with her own rhetoric, she's not interested in hearing those voices. And you know what? Right now, what I'm saying to these members is there's still time to heed the voices of Manitobans on this. We're not out of session. That means there's still time for them to reverse this thing, to stop this train wreck and to actually go back on this PST and right size it for Manitoba, because this supersizing of the PST is not going to accomplish what the Premier, what the Finance Minister and what these other members say it's going to do.

I wanted to just put a couple other comments on the record. I remember last year when the government expanded the RST and they generated an additional \$184 million in revenues. I had a gentleman, I actually had a number of people contact me and say, do you know what this means to the average family? But I had one guy contact my office who I thought had done the work, and he's a finance guy. So he crunched all the numbers for what it meant—this is a year ago, not this year, but a year ago in 2012. He crunched the numbers on that \$184 million in additional revenue and found out that for his family it was going to cost them about, let's see, where was his final number on this? It was, I think, a \$1,500 for his household alone. Now, with this year's PST increase and another \$214 million coming into government coffers, I think it's around there. It—actually, I think it's more. I think it's even more than that. We know that it's amounting to \$1,600 per family of four in a single year.

We know that in the course of one government's mandate these two taxes will amount to \$2 billion additional. Figure that out, it's about 20 per cent of an annual budget for the province of Manitoba. This is historic. It is unprecedented and it is also unprecedented and historic in terms of the stark reaction, the bold reaction of Manitobans to it, in their opposition to it and in their calls for the government to actually reverse its course of action.

We know they're breaking the law to do it, we know its offensive to Manitobans. We know that they're refusing to listen to Manitobans.

I heard presenter after presenter at public committee come into this place, take the time and take the effort and prepare some really insightful comments and deliver them. And I heard this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) come back with the most sharply partisan kinds of comments, just leading comments, trying to lead them along as if he hadn't heard a word that they said, and I thought, what a missed opportunity. My only consolation was that I understood that those presenters did not buy those kinds of tactics for a minute. They understood when they were being respected. They understood when they were being disrespected. That is the same as Manitoba ratepayers because Manitoba ratepayers understand when they are being respected and they understand when they are being disrespected, and there is no disrespect that compares with this kind of increase of the PST and it's going to felt across the economy.

We have stood in lockstep with anti-poverty groups. We have stood in lockstep with education groups. We have stood in lockstep with industry and business officials who are saying it will have a negative and long-term effect on the economy. It doesn't bode well for the future of Manitoba.

So in the short time I have left, I just want to sum up. I know there's so much left to say, but I'll leave it to some of other of my colleagues to talk about the individual areas in which these things happen.

I mean, I'll leave you with the comments of Allan Schellenberg [*phonetic*]. Allan Schellenberg [*phonetic*] is a semi-retired gentleman who, with his wife, sells crafts and he's a woodworker and they sell vegetables at a farmers market, and I bumped into them at a trade fair about four months ago. I said you know, I just love seeing you at these trade fairs. You're just such an energetic couple and you come to all these things. And Allan [*phonetic*] looked at me with sad eyes and he says, you know, he says, I would so much rather be visiting my grandchildren. I would so much rather be hanging out at the friendship centre, but at my age and with these taxes I am forced to keep working.

For the sake of the Allan Schellenbergs [*phonetic*] and all the other Manitobans it's not too late, and I call on this government to think twice and set back the clock on the PST.

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): The Chair recognizes the honourable member for St. Paul.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I wish to thank this Legislature for the opportunity to address Bill 18, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013–

An Honourable Member: It's Bill 48.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (15:40)

Mr. Schuler: Oh, that's right. It's Bill 48 because of this supposed fiscal cliff that they've created for themselves. That's right. Bill 18 is the bill that they've been talking about calling but never quite seem to get around to. It's always something else but other pieces of legislation. In fact, it's very interesting that we have a bill in front of this House called Bill 48 and it deals with an awful lot of money, and the other day the Minister of Finance, the only individual on that side of the House to get up and speak, spoke approximately eight minutes, or, if you will, a billion dollars a minute. But, if you think that was a rip-off for the taxpayers, you should actually see what the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member for St. Boniface, what did you get for his speech? Actually, you got nothing for \$7.7 billion; not a word on the record.

In fact, this bill will appropriate \$7,703,032,000, and the best we can get—the best we can get is a little bit more than seven minutes for the Minister of Finance, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), and the Premier—nowhere to be seen on speaking on this piece of legislation. It tells you how far this government has dropped in its approach and its respect to the province of Manitoba.

We had the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), I understand the House leader of the NDP, finally getting to the point where she thought that she would use the public service as a means to try to play politics, created a false fiscal cliff argument, which was nonsense, and didn't call Bill 48; in fact, called all kinds of other things and delayed its entry until this week. And, then, when they introduce it, they don't speak to it. There are 36 members on that side of the House that have the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation and not one of them gets up, other than the pithy seven and a half minutes from the member for Dauphin, the Minister of Finance. That's how little they respect the taxpayer. That's how little they care about the finances of this province. And it is telling and it is worrying when Manitobans find out that not one New Democrat got

up other than the billion-dollar-a-minute member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). Not one of them got up—not a minister, not a premier, not a backbencher, not one of them got up and spoke on why it is that this bill should or shouldn't go forward for \$7.7 billion.

We have in front of us a very troubling time in this province, in this Legislature, the likes of which haven't been seen for a long time. We haven't seen this kind of a tax grab—in fact, two years running, in potentially the last 25 years. We're still hoping that the NDP will reverse themselves, so I say potentially. But we suspect this will go through, and this is something that hasn't happened before in the province of Manitoba in over 25 years. But the genesis of the problem, the crisis that we are facing in the province of Manitoba goes back to the 1999 campaign where the NDP candidates went door to door and got elected on a commitment, and I'd like to read it right from the New Democratic Party brochure in which it says: Today's NDP will keep balanced budget legislation and hold taxes down. It goes on to say: Today's NDP will balance the budget, continue paying down the debt without raising people's taxes.

That's what they ran on in 1999. They also, in 1999, committed a little bit of election shenanigans. We know it was the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan). She has yet to apologize to this House. We know that it was the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) and it was another member who's no longer in this Chamber. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member for St. Boniface, insisted that he get a letter absolving himself of any responsibility of election fraud, and I know the member for St. Vital got one of those letters as well. The only problem is, when asked to produce the letter, they had conveniently shred those letters which, by the way, is something that is a pattern within that government. But what's interesting is the individual who was co-chairing that campaign—one of those individuals who was pulling all the strings and making sure that the NDP got elected in that '99 campaign was the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). He's the one who actually had to get his colleagues a letter absolving his colleagues from any election shenanigans—absolving them of the fact that they had done something illegal.

But, in that election campaign, there was a commitment to keep balanced-budget legislation, to keep the taxpayer protection act in its entirety and keep it in place. That's where the NDP committed their first lie. That's where the genesis of the problem

from today comes from. Not just did they run on that campaign—on that promise in 2000—in 1999. They ran on it in 2003, they ran on it in 2007, and they ran on it in 2011, and each time saying we want to leave you rest assured that we will keep our commitment to not raise—and I'll quote directly: We'll keep balanced-budget legislation and hold taxes down without raising people's taxes.

What happened after the 2011 campaign—well, actually, it was during the 2011 campaign—pardon me—you had 57 NDP candidates going door to door and they—probably some of them naively within themselves believed that what they were running on was the truth, and they went door to door—knocked on door to door. The member for Tyndall—he was one of them. He said I want you to know we will keep our promise to hold the taxpayer protection act up as a model piece of legislation in this country. He said that they would not raise taxes. In fact, he followed his Premier's words and said there would not be a PST increase.

All 57 of them ran on that commitment, and they misled the public. The NDP candidates—each and every one of them—misled their public. They lied to the voters. And they came into this House and the first thing that happened—the 37 that got elected—that got elected—those 37 candidates that got elected on the NDP side got elected based on a lie. And they came into this Chamber, and the first thing the NDP did was brought in a budget which raised taxes. They broke their first commitment.

This year they did something else. They decided to raise the PST, which they had said they wouldn't do. They broke their word for the second time.

And then, when they found out to raise the PST, they actually had to go back and gut the taxpayer protection act, including the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) who ran on that. They then gutted the taxpayer protection act by taking away the referendum that people had counted on being there and protecting them. And that's the third lie that came out of the NDP campaign in the 2011, and that's the third strike. There were three of them.

They actually misled the public. *[interjection]* The member for St. Norbert is chirping from his seat. He wants to speak, but his whip, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), won't let him up—won't let him speak. He's got lots to say but has no right to say it. He has been whipped into silence when it comes to having an open microphone. He has to sit with his tail between his legs and be quiet and say nothing.

He can say nothing—and he should. It's a \$7.7-billion bill, and the member for St. Norbert—

* (15:50)

The Acting Speaker (Rob Altemeyer): Order. Order. Order. I'd just advise all honourable members choose their words closely. The specific phrase, tail between one's legs, is probably approaching the unparliamentary level. Just 'oshering'—issuing a caution to all honourable members.

Recognizing the member for St. Paul, to continue his speech.

Mr. Schuler: And we would like to encourage the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) to get up and speak to this. We think that as a member of this Legislature, it's his right, and I say to the NDP House leader, who sits right across from me, is looking at me right now, I'm actually lobbying for the member for St. Norbert that she give him the right to get up and speak to this important piece of legislation. It is going to flow \$7.7 billion, and the only thing the member for St. Norbert can do is sit in his seat and chirp. That's the best he can do. And he can chirp at me, and he can chirp at my colleagues, and he can chirp and chirp and chirp, but he can't get up and speak to the bill.

How disgraceful. Not just did NDP candidates run on the three big lies in the last election campaign: (1) not to raise taxes; (2) not to raise the PST; (3) not to gut the taxpayer protection act and get rid of the referendum; not just that, but the member for St. Norbert now has to suffer the humiliation of being whipped and forced to stay in his seat and the only thing he can do is chirp. He can chirp and chirp, but that's it. So we would like to give him that opportunity. In fact, in about 18 minutes, he will have that opportunity.

We have the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). Now, there is a individual, the member for Dauphin, who is a contradiction in terms. When it comes to referendums for others, he is an advocate. In fact, I would like to quote from Hansard, June 13, 2011. These are the Minister of Finance, the minister who gave us the billion-dollar-a-minute speech, this comes from him. And he says: "For crying out loud, Madam Acting Speaker, the Prime Minister of this country offered Canadians an opportunity to vote on the name of his cat. They voted on the name of his cat. Why can't that same Prime Minister let farmers vote on their economic future? What's the difference?"

How about Manitobans having the right to vote on their economic future? And, you know what is even more hypocritical from the member from Dauphin? He actually gave \$80,000—he actually gave \$80,000—for a failed 'refren'—it didn't even happen, but he—I wonder if he asked for his \$80,000 back. But he was then minister of Agriculture. He gave them \$80,000 to have a referendum. But, when it came for him to stand up for Manitobans, nothing. All of a sudden that wasn't worthy.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Now, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton)—member for Thompson—who makes up for quality with volume—we love his speeches—he got up the other day and he said, you know, it was Fargo. Fargo put in a tax and paid just like us, paying for mitigation of flooding, you know, a tax. You know, we should do just like them. We're going to do just like them.

What he forgot to mention is Fargo also had a referendum. *[interjection]* Yes, yes. See, that is the duplicitousness of this NDP. They had a referendum. You're right. We should do just like Fargo: propose the tax, give the people the right to vote in a referendum.

We heard the Premier (Mr. Selinger) today in question period talking about how popular it is. We know that the whip of the NDP, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), she gets up and talks, how popular all this is, so popular that she whips every one of her members, including the one in St. Norbert, that they don't get up and say a thing on the record. That's how popular it is. She whips them all into line, so they don't have an opportunity to speak. But the Premier gets up and talks about how popular this is. It's so popular that they don't want to have a referendum because they're scared that it might be so overwhelming in favour of it. That's why.

You know, what are they scared of? What possibly could frighten 37 New Democrats? What could frighten them that they can't hold their referendum? *[interjection]* They are scared of losing. That's right. And the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) pegged it. He just said, and he has to—you know, I'd feel bad. The member for Brandon East got elected in 1999, and, you know, he was—he is now the former future of his party. He was viewed as being one of the leadership contenders when Premier Doer was going to step down. He was one of the pooh-bahs of his party, and now the member for Fort Rouge, the whip of the NDP, has actually got him to

the point the only thing he can do is chirp from his seat. And I would encourage him, rather than sitting there and chirp, chirp, chirp, why doesn't he get up and speak? It's a \$7.7-billion bill, and the member for Brandon East, the best he can do is chirp from his seat.

You know, maybe we should thank the House leader, the whip of the NDP, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), the Minister of Labour—we should thank her. At least she lets them chirp; at least they have that much. But you know, I would encourage them. This is substantial legislation—substantial legislation—and, you know, perhaps one of them—perhaps one of them—will get up, maybe a minister can get up and show the strength of character and cast aside the whip and say, no, I want to speak on this piece of legislation. That's what we would like to have. We would like to have a debate on this.

In fact, I—you know, the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), the member said—[interjection] It's like having someone on my shoulder continuously chirping in my ear, Mr. Speaker. I can—I'm not too sure what he's saying, but I can hear him chirping the whole time. And we would like to beg the member for Fort Rouge, we'd like to beg the Minister of Labour, please let the member for St. Norbert up. Let him have his speech. Free the member for St. Norbert. Today of all days, let him go. He's already up flying with the pigeons. Now, he's been chirping about pigeons and playing games with pigeons. We're not too sure what that is, but you know what, maybe he should go on the record and explain some of this. But we would like to see the member for St. Norbert, rather than whipped in his seat and not being able to give a speech, we would like to see him move from chirping to actually addressing this important bill. That's what we would like.

But let's go back to the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). The member for Dauphin said—and this is about referendums—here it goes: How could you be against having farmers vote on an issue? How can you even stand in this Legislature and talk about what you call is a vote tax and not stand up for farmers' right to vote on their economic future? How can you do that? How can you be so hypocritical, said the great defender, the member for Dauphin, of referendums. And then we fast-forward, Mr. Speaker, a year later, and I want to confirm that—2011—I stand to be corrected; two years later. Two years later, the great defender of referendums, the best we can get out of him is a

billion-dollar-a-minute speech. That's the best we can get, and after that you get silence for your \$7.7 billion. No referendum, no nothing. The great defender, two years ago, of anything touching, anything coming close to a referendum.

And we know that the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) loves referendums as long as it's for everybody else except for Manitobans. Wants to have the same thing everybody else has except for a referendum, which is good for everybody else except for Manitobans.

So we know that the member for Dauphin, the billion-dollar-a-minute speech-giver, we know that he has in fact, been condemned, Mr. Speaker, by his own words. And I quote from Hansard, June 13th, 2011, he said, "How can you do that?" Meaning not allow a referendum. "How can you be so hypocritical?" And that is actually on page 2,796, if anybody wants to go and make sure that I'm reading from the right Hansard, June 13th, 2011.

* (16:00)

And he goes on to say, "It is almost beyond words how hypocritical, how phony, how ridiculous the position of members opposite is. Why don't you grow a backbone and stand up for Manitobans? Do that." Now, I would suggest to members opposite, the backbenchers of the NDP, why don't you take the advice from the member from Dauphin? The member from Dauphin is calling out to you, he's calling out to the member for St. Norbert, the chirper of this Legislature, the grise éminence of chirpers, he's calling out from his June 13th, 2011 speech, and he says, "Why don't you grow a backbone and stand up for Manitobans?" Why don't you, at least, get up and speak to a \$7.7-billion bill? That's the least you could do. The member for Dauphin calls out. But I know, I know, I know that this bill, I know that this bill is troubling for these members, Bill 48 is troubling and we know that. We know that that's a troubling bill for them. It is, first of all, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard) created that bogus fiscal cliff. How unfortunate, how unfortunate.

You know she asks me all kinds of questions. Mr. Speaker, in eight minutes and 6 seconds she, too, can get up and give a speech. You know, she can speak. You know, maybe she should stop whipping herself and get up and speak. You know, they have been reduced down to a 36-member caucus of chirpers. Get up and speak. Other than the billion-dollar-a-minute speech we got from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), we've heard

nothing. We've heard absolutely nothing from them on Bill 48. And the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) gave advice to the backbench, and he said, and I think he was already then thinking of Bill 48, he was almost clairvoyant when he was speaking, he was calling out to each and every one of them, including the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), and including the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), and the member for Tyndall Park (Mr. Marcelino), the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). I believe—I believe the member for Dauphin was calling out to them and crying out to them and saying, why don't you grow a backbone and stand up for Manitobans? The least you could do is speak a little bit about Bill 48 and the least you could do is stand up for a referendum and the least you could do is stand up for the taxpayer protection act.

Perhaps the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) who has been very genteel, sitting in her seat, not saying much, maybe the member for Kirkfield Park would like to get up in 6 and a half minutes or so and put her thoughts on the record about Bill 48, which has an expenditure of \$7.7 billion. Perhaps she would like the opportunity. Perhaps she would like to speak after the member for St. Norbert who is so gung-ho but can't get out of his seat because the member for Fort Rouge won't allow him to speak. Maybe she should take the opportunity. But in either case, we know that—the member for Assiniboine—nothing on Bill 48, member for Radisson (Mr. Jha)—nothing on Bill 48, member for Southdale (Ms. Selby)—not a word, member for Riel (Ms. Melnick)—not a word, member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), Fort Richmond, Rossmere, Dauphin, Dawson Trail, Gimli and the list goes on and on. All 36 members refuse to get out of their seat, refuse to get out of their seat and put some comments on the record.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, the clairvoyant Minister of Finance, when he was speaking back in 2011 was already looking at what was going to happen at Bill 48. He said to the backbench, he said, "Why don't you grow a backbone and stand up for Manitobans?" And then he went on to say, "Take some political advice from me, at the very least." And he was speaking to each and every one of the backbenchers. He was speaking to Cabinet ministers, saying, the least you could do is grow a backbone and stand up for your constituents. It's the least you could do. And, you know, Mr. Speaker, he was right. He was right in admonishing his backbenchers. He

was right in admonishing the backbench of the NDP, that they should be getting up.

This bill—all members have a vested interest. That's what we were sent for, Mr. Speaker, to speak to matters that are important to all Manitobans, and \$7.7 billion is not to be trifled with. This is a massive, massive money bill. It is of epic proportions. None of us, in reality, can even understand what \$7.7 billion would really look like in reality. In dollar bills, I suspect it would fill this Chamber. And yet not one of the NDP, not one of them, will get up and speak to this.

Now, I wonder—I wonder if the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who has been struggling, we understand, if he would get up and speak to Bill 48. You know, he loves to deal in billions. In fact, we know he's right now talking about \$20 billion for Manitoba Hydro and all kinds of stuff, and we find out that its NDP high-ranking insiders are warning Manitobans he's got a hidden agenda to sell Manitoba Hydro. And maybe he should get up on Bill 48 and explain to us, explain to us, what his hidden agenda is. We know that there are now voices coming out of the NDP from the inner sanctum that are saying the NDP are going to sell Manitoba Hydro. And we saw today that there are documents that have been leaked and floating out there that might have something untoward to say about four projects. Not too sure what they are. We haven't had an opportunity to view them. The Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, the member for Kildonan, hasn't got a clue what's going on Manitoba Hydro.

Although, if you go back to the original Manitoba Hydro act, and I happen to have pulled that out of Hansard, it is very clear, very clear, that the minister is responsible for Manitoba Hydro. Yet we have a minister, the member for Kildonan, who seems to not care. He seems to be out of his league. He seems to be tired of the position he's in. Why doesn't he get up on Bill 48? Perhaps he should take off the chains, take off the seatbelt off of his seat and get up and tell Manitobans what his hidden agenda is for privatizing Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker. It's about time he answered that, because we know, in the last election, we know that the NDP went around, and the NDP party went around, lied about their opponents, what they were going to do, and also lied about what they were going to do. And that is one of the most shameful leftovers of that particular election.

So Bill 48, very important document, spends an awful lot of money. A lot of Manitobans are looking that we be good stewards of this money, that it be held with a trust and that it be taken care of in the best way possible, and all's what we get is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) with his billion-dollar-a-minute speech and then we have nothing but members sit on the backbenches and chirp and chirp, but that's the best we can get out of them. We need—we need—individuals to get up and speak on Bill 48.

The member for forty—the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) says about Bill 48, he says, it's like a clown. I don't know if he's speaking about his minister or if he's speaking about the bill. But this is a very serious issue. And the member for Concordia, whose former member used to take these issues far more serious than he ever did, and at least the former member for Concordia would have gotten up and spoken to this bill. And this individual is a pale comparison when compared to the former member, Gary Doer. This member is supposed to fill the shoes of Gary Doer and hasn't even come close. He should take the opportunity, as should the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), as should the member for St. 'tombit'—Thompson, the big lover, the big lover of referendums for everybody else but Manitoba. Instead of chirping from his seat, he also should get up and put some thoughts on the record, instead of sitting whipped in his seat. Thank you very much.

* (16:10)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It is a privilege to be able to speak to this bill on Interim Supply, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate perhaps that it hasn't been able to pass sooner, but that's up to the government. And that is because the government has brought in such detrimental legislation to the province of Manitoba that as the—as a responsible opposition, it's our job that citizens of Manitoba know the detrimental impacts that this legislation will bring forward.

And it's not just this bill. There are other bills that the government has brought forward on Manitoba with no consultation, and I think that it's incumbent upon the government to do more—to spend more time with Manitobans before they pass these kinds of legislation. Now I'll get to some of the other bills in a moment, but this particular Interim Supply bill, as my colleague from St. Paul put so ably on the record just a few moments ago, is that it is a

\$7.7-billion, almost \$8-billion request of funding, Mr. Speaker, for an interim supply so that the government can continue to operate.

Now I know they thought they could be out of here on June 13th at the official time that we had agreed to rise and the processes that we've agreed upon before in this Legislature. But that was before such a piece of legislation as Bill 20, the PST bill, came into being with no consultation on behalf of Manitobans. There was no warning. The government just dropped this on the people of Manitoba with no consultation. In fact, worse than that, Mr. Speaker, the consultation that they had with Manitobans was during an election campaign in the middle of it, and I'd just like to quote a few quotes from the Premier (Mr. Selinger) at that time.

Mr. Speaker, in September of 2011, the Premier said that the—today's release of the 2010-2011 Public Accounts shows that the member from St. Boniface five-year economic plan is on track to return to the budget to balance by 2014 while protecting jobs and services without raising taxes. Well, the gutting of the taxpayer protection and balanced budget legislation that's been done by this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and his government, his Premier, has certainly brought huge ramifications across the province of Manitoba. Citizens are very aware across this province of the dictatorial attitude that was presented in that budget by this government and, as each day goes on in this Chamber, the government—the citizens of Manitoba become more aware of it and they are telling us—when I have the opportunity to get home on weekends and do the fine work of an MLA in their area, which is the fun part of the summer, going to the fairs and speaking with people, looking at the events. I've had three centennial farm presentations in the last two weeks as well. It's a privilege to be there and to listen to these people and to represent them here in this Chamber in spite of the impacts of flooding and hail and tornados and those sorts of things that have run across most or a good deal of the constituency that I represent at this time. But, as I go out and speak to those people one on one or in groups, they are telling me to stay here and keep up the good fight against this NDP government's rise in PST to 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, they indicated that it was bad enough that the insurance went from zero to 7 per cent last year on things like insurance for property, life insurance and other insurance mechanisms. They said that on top of the fact that labour had been—had the PST put on it for home

building back in the early 2000s, that, in spite of the fact that the government decided that they needed to raise the PST on architectural work, accountants' and lawyers' fees. And, when you add these three specific areas together, Manitobans felt that that was surely the last that they would see, last year when the insurance rates and haircuts and gasoline and everything else went up under this government's rule, under their ineptitude, that was surely the last. But the last straw for a lot of these citizens of Manitoba was the increase of 1 more per cent PST on all of the 'bradening' out of the breadth of this PST.

Now, Mr. Speaker, 700 and—\$7.7 billion is a huge amount of money, but there's \$556 million, I believe it is, in capital spending in this Interim Supply bill as well. And yet there's no explanation as to what it's going to be used for.

Now I know the government has said we need the 1 per cent PST for flood mitigation but, you know, Mr. Speaker—and when we looked into it, they'd spent 0.18 per cent of \$140 billion over the last 13 years on flood mitigation. So there was certainly Chicken Little there. They were trying to scare Manitobans or make them believe that they would do something, when, in fact, they haven't spent any money, really, in proportion to their overall budget, if it was really a priority, in their 14 years.

Now, certainly they've spent some money, Mr. Speaker—0.18 per cent is not nothing. But the members from the government side know full well that it has not been a priority for them in the past number of years. And, if it was a priority now, why haven't they got some of these projects on the go?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have two major bridges in my own constituency. One has a one-lane bridge over it for a bypass, after being there for two years. And we can't even get a detail on the report from the government on what happened to the bridge that was there, the one that is still there in the Hartney area, on 21 Highway.

And, of course, we know that the one on Coulter was—in that vicinity—was washed away, and so it has to be replaced, and it was being replaced. But it will—*[interjection]*

I'll believe it when I see it, Mr. Speaker. The government was quite certain that it would be replaced by this November, but, of course, they said that about both bridges last fall. And they haven't begun the work on the one on 21 Highway, and we

have yet to see much action since the spring runoff in Waskada-Coulter area, either. These are necessary pieces of infrastructure, to an industry that's bringing at least \$25 million in royalties and fees back to this government every year in the oil industry.

So I guess when we look at the overall budget and want to look at the types of PST that have been broadened out and raised in the past, I want to go back to the government's favourite project, and that is the hydro projects, Mr. Speaker. We've just seen the Clean Environment Commission come down with its decision to allow a licence for the government to go ahead and build the line that will carry transmission from the north, for the new dams at Keeyask and Conawapa. But that's a \$20-billion—\$21-billion project.

Manitobans were concerned about the lines circling Manitoba in the first place, Mr. Speaker, but now they're even more concerned about the fact that there may not be a market for it. And I believe—I just happen to have a here a copy of the Free Press from July 22nd, which would be this Monday—that would be yesterday—in regards to Bipole III still could benefit all. But Mr. Collinson—Jim Collinson, who is a management consultant specializing in the complexities surrounding energy, economy and environmental issues, who worked at the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for two terms—feels that this line is certainly in question, in regards to future markets. Mr. Collinson indicated that the markets in the United States may not be as lucrative as what the government felt—feels that the market was 30 years ago. Certainly, it's not what it was 30 years ago when Hydro was beginning to look at what its future developments would be in the north.

And so there's no shame in being able to relook at and change and—a project, Mr. Speaker, because market has changed and we know that there's a plethora of gas, and now with the Bakken field in North Dakota—North Dakota being the fastest-growing state in the US, has the cheapest gas of anywhere in North America virtually. And this government is still—believes that they're going to be able to export power into neighbouring states of North Dakota. When the cost of construction of these power systems run about 10 cents or 10 and a half cents a kilowatt hour, just for the construction, and another 3 to 3 and a half cents, totalling about 14 cents a kilowatt hour in transmission fees—3 and half cents in transmission for a total cost of about 14. What are they selling it for now? Well, it's being sold at levels around—

* (16:20)

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

Sorry, I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), but it appears that there's a friendship and a bond developing by several members of the Assembly. And they want to have a very private conversation, and I would encourage that, in fact. But I—all I ask is that they have that conversation in the loge to my right or to my left or perhaps in another place in the building so that I might be able to hear the honourable member for Arthur-Virden making his comments with respect to Bill 48.

So I'm encouraging the honourable members to keep the level down a little bit and, if they wish to have a private conversation, to take it somewhere else.

I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, but I want to have the chance to hear him quite clearly.

Mr. Maguire: Well, that's all right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sense the same camaraderie behind me as well, so I'm pleased that you were able to bring some of the government members to order in regards to their enthusiasm for debating this bill.

As the colleague from, as my colleagues on this side of the House have spoken many times about the floor, Mr. Speaker, that's here, I really offer the time. I mean, if there's a member from the government that would like to speak right now to this bill, I would obviously give them the floor and allow them to go ahead and do that.

But, you know, probably in about 18 or 19 minutes they might get the opportunity to do that again as my colleague from St. Paul had indicated earlier.

I don't know whether the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), who I hear now, wants to speak to this bill as an example, Mr. Speaker. Maybe she knows why there's, why they're trying to export power for 4 cents when it costs 14 to build it, I don't know. Maybe the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) can answer that question.

I have commented once on one quote that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) used during that debate back in 2011. But he also had another one in that particular time, 10 days later. And he said that our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll

deliver on that. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, didn't say that; he just said will. We're ahead of schedule right now. He did say that; that was part of his quote as well.

And, of course, we know that that was on a CJOB leaders debate on September the 12th, 2011, and Manitobans were inclined to believe him because, you know, when a premier states that he's going to balance the books and do it in a five-year plan, he's got something going for him. They felt that they could trust him.

Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could have been more the truth when this party that is in power now lied to the citizens of Manitoba since subsequently we know that because here we are 18 months later, 20 months later, and we know that this government has picked \$1,600 out of every family of four's pockets in tax increases that they've had alone.

It's about \$500 million—\$550 million. And yet, they've still got a \$518-million deficit on the books this year, followed by a billion last year.

But, and even, you know, the government likes to talk about the fact that, well, we had a flood, and, yes, we did have a flood, Mr. Speaker. But even the Auditor General indicated that it was about 300-and-some million of that deficit was partly due to the flood. That leaves about \$700 million last year that had, that was not from the flood, that was just from the unmanageability of this government to look after taxpayers' money here in the province of Manitoba.

And so, Mr. Speaker, when you add another \$518 million this year on top of that, you know, it's a 1.2—somewhere in that area—billion-dollar shortfall that this government hasn't accounted for. Now that's only in two years.

Mr. Speaker, the 1 per cent PST hike will pick up \$278 million a year roughly in that area, when they get a full year of collecting this fee, with this new tax. So it will take a lot of years to make up for that \$1.2-billion shortfall that this government has overspent already since they promised they wouldn't raise taxes.

Probably one of the most, I guess, detrimental quotes that I could provide on the record here, Mr. Speaker, from the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was what the Premier said in—the NDP Premier said on September the 23rd, 2011, and that was when he said that it's ridiculous—it's a—it's ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise the sales tax. He even

specifically said the sales tax, and I go on to quote: That's total nonsense. Everybody knows that.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it bears to be said many times that this government cannot be trusted with these kinds of election platform promises. And then they come forward and raid people's pockets as they have. I mean, we've even got a Finance Minister that has tried to interfere with the Jockey Club's operations and the Red River Ex board and the ongoings of Assiniboia Downs. Even the judge indicated that he'd broken the law.

And so, you know, we know that the Premier has had clear misunderstandings with his own party in regards to the events of the financing of the election back in 2000 or 1999, Mr. Speaker, with the 13 members that were—that the government side played with their forms and returns at that time for the election. So it's disconcerting that the government continues to put forth these wrongful statements—I guess, if you will—these lies about the fact that they think they can balance the budget on time and without taking any more money, do it by 2014 which is next spring. I don't—they've already indicated that they've backed off of that—won't be able to balance the books. That's in spite of one of the biggest tax increases in Manitoba's history along with the biggest transfer payments that the government has ever seen—any government in Manitoba's history has ever seen—with the lowest interest rates.

Mr. Speaker, there isn't anybody that wouldn't want to have a free credit card with 2 per cent interest rates or 4 per cent interest rates instead of 18 or 20—whatever they charge for overdue fees, but this government isn't—doesn't seem to be in tune with the fact that there is an accountability process down the road that you have to pay these debts at some point.

And so that's why we're debating this Interim Supply bill, Mr. Speaker. It's an opportunity for the government to still reconsider pulling Bill 20, the PST increase bill, so that Manitobans won't be stung by the kind of, I guess you could say, dictatorial approach that the government has put forward, that they won't be stung by having this further money than the 1,600 that's already been sucked out of their pockets by this government taken away down the road before the next election happens in Manitoba as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess I wanted to say that the government has used quite a few tactics here to try

and scare Manitobans as well—you know, that we're debating an Interim Supply here—bill here that last week I heard the House leader say was just that we have to. We're in dire straits as a government. We've got to pass the Interim Supply bill right now, because we may not be able to pay civil servants in Manitoba, you know, in July—at the end of July and August. Well, then she said, well, now, you know, we have enough money to make it through the July 26th period, which is this Friday. And, of course, now she said, as long as we pass this bill by Thursday, the 25th this week, they should be able to meet their payments in August.

Mr. Speaker, what government, working on a four-year—four-month warrant from the previous year's budget during this particular time, couldn't manage their affairs better than that? And so I just—I put that out there as a rhetorical question, because this government has proven many times that they can't do that. But every time that they've come to this edge, we've helped them out by making sure that Manitobans have been able to be paid—and we will. That's clear.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say again that we are debating this bill because Manitobans tell us it's important. It's important to put on the record that this \$7.7 billion needs to be spent very accountably. And they are very concerned about the fact that they don't want to see it wasted, as has been done by some previous processes that the government has done.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is a great deal of apprehension among the citizens of Manitoba today when we're talking about Bill 20.

* (16:30)

There's also a great deal of apprehension amongst people in the rural parts of Manitoba over Bill 33. When they're dealing with a crop and seeding and all of the—now and some of them dealing with the concerns on flooding, they're supposed to be dealing with, you know, amalgamation issues in their areas. And we'll have more opportunities to speak to that bill later.

But also, Mr. Speaker, the government doesn't seem to want to bring forward Bill 214 to discuss the bullying—cyberbullying either in this House. And so we—we're quite concerned about the fact that they may not care about youth in our schools and youth programs around the province as much as they originally tried to let on to Manitobans. It's unfortunate that, you know, we have to bail this

government out for its mismanagement time and time again.

My colleague, I know, from Midland here, indicated earlier that the government doesn't have a revenue problem. I've pointed that out in the lowest interest rates, the highest transfer payments, the taxation that this government has increased on specific areas. There's been some small help for certain areas. They can't go on forever at the rates that they had but, you know, it's—if you're giving on one hand and taking it back with the other, that's called a clawback.

And certainly that's what's been happening in this House for a number of years and it's—even at that, the government has not been able to balance its own books without the large, large increase in the PST that is equivalent to that \$278 million that I've referred to earlier.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that when we look at the tax increases in this government's process, I want to say that this is one of the largest tax increases in the last 26 years. The second one was just last year, and so that's a pretty bad track record when you've got to bring in two of the largest tax increases back to back in Manitoba's history. It's breaking their promise on a whole host of areas. The \$107-million increase last year in the PST, combined with the—well, I think it was actually \$184 million that they brought in, in new taxation last year—doesn't auger well for Manitobans.

The fees have gone up on so many other areas that this government has looked at as well. I know that they are—they have not been able to—I'll give you probably one example, and that's the huge increases in taxation for a lot of cottage owners across the province. Now, a lot of them say that we don't mind; we know that maybe we've had some breaks, but to do it all at once, to put up our taxation, some have told me, as much as eight or nine times what they were paying before in a year and a half or two years, is just unacceptable for these people.

Mr. Speaker, this, on top of the fact that, in particular, the case of the Whiteshell cottage owners association, they won a court case back in '06, that the government should present them with a budget, a plan of where the money would be spent in the Whiteshell park before they would allow taxes to go up. Well, they've asked for that, and they don't mind it if they canoe where the money was going. But here, again, the government has been deceptive. They haven't even supplied them with the fact—with

that budgetary need, even after the government has lost the case through—in the courts.

This seems pretty—well, Mr. Speaker, I'd be ashamed of that if I was the minister in charge of that area and lost the court case and still hadn't come up with the numbers for these people, and then go out and tax them to six times what they normally have been paying. That just doesn't seem right, and I think that all of—the bottom line here is—what I'm trying to get at—is that all the people are asking for is accountability of where the money's going to be spent. And I think that certainly is all that these cottage owners are asking for, across—not just in the Whiteshell, but other areas of the province, as well.

Mr. Speaker, what other fees have we seen? Well, there's been vehicle registration increases, about \$17 million worth to families across this province. There's been a fuel tax increase of 2 and half cents last year and 3 cents a litre on agricultural fuels as well. There's been a \$6 million a year in changing the tax laws. They've picked up \$75 million from selling the land titles circumstance, and I dare say that there's been, you know—that's only equivalent to about three years of royalties that they picked up in the oil industry. So I don't know what they felt they gained from that, but I guess we'll see if there's been some more efficiencies in that area. And I only in—question that because it hasn't happened when the government has amalgamated things in the past. And I'm talking about our hospital processes and certainly the education amalgamation of school divisions in the province of Manitoba. That ended up costing money, and now we're finding that the amalgamation of the health system is costing tens of millions of dollars, as well, unlike the 30—or the \$30 million that the government said they would save, over 10 years, albeit, but we're finding that it's cost a good deal more than that already and we're only into the second or third year of—or second year of it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this is a—that I referred to Hydro earlier, and I want to go back to say that all of this whole area of increases in the infrastructure for Hydro is, you know, all of the experts are trying to tell the government not to proceed in this manner, not to proceed with a 30-year plan without reviewing it again. Even their own Public Utilities Board has said that they need to increase—or to put a hold on all of their capital infrastructure projects until they review them all. But the fact that the government has gone ahead with a four—with an 8 per cent increase in hydro rates this

year, and 4 per cent a year for the next 20 years, is quite damning to the future of this province.

And many people will say, well, we need to keep the hydro rates low, and we do, to attract business and keep citizens here in this province. But let me tell you, we find out, as well, that having, I guess, tax rates that are competitive with our neighbouring provinces, is certainly something that is on the minds of businesses when they come to locate in Manitoba. Now, maybe the government's agenda is to have all jobs in Manitoba produced and managed and under the thumb of the government in this province, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that small business is still in charge of some 80 per cent of this—of the economy of Manitoba and has a great impact on the job creation in this province, something this government should never lose track of.

And I know that having these taxes hoisted upon people that are here is one thing, Mr. Speaker, because they do live here. They have families here. They run businesses here. Whether they're in the government or outside of the government in private sectors, we all like Manitoba. There's a great opportunity here. We cannot waste that opportunity, and we can never take it for granted because people have choices. And as much as this government tries to deny them of those choices, they have choices on where they locate, where their children go after they're educated and what the families do with regards to their mobility once family members have left the province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to put on the record that many citizens find themselves looking at the types of businesses that are here. I know first-hand because we're so close to the Saskatchewan border out in the Virden area, in the Pipestone area, Reston, Pierson, all of the communities along the Manitoba border, Miniota, McAuley, that, in my constituency, at least, that it's pretty detrimental to the travelling public when they can go across the border into Saskatchewan, and they do travel across the border every day because it's—the oil industry is so mobile. They don't—they act like the government—like the border isn't there when it comes to their purchasing opportunities.

And, you know, they need a lot of safety equipment in that industry. And it's not just clothing and boots and hard hats, it's a lot of other things that they need for equipment and other areas as well. And we see lots of Alberta licence plates in our communities. We see lots of Saskatchewan plates

there. And, you know, this government tries to tell us all the time that licensing those vehicles is cheaper in Manitoba. Well, why are we seeing those if that was the case?

Mr. Speaker, we've got situations where people can pick up small items, certainly, if they're buying a truck, as I've said before, and moving it to Manitoba, licensing it here, they will have to pay the increased PST as well. But many don't have to, and they're making those decisions and travelling out of province to do it, never mind to the US, when we're so close to Minot.

*(16:40)

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that other fees have gone up, as well, and liquor and beer and wine, in this province. And the government was embarrassed about that. They didn't want to put it in the budget, so they did it a month before the budget came down, so that people would have a time to forget that.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by saying that I think it's irresponsible of the government to move forward with the PST increase that they have in Bill 20, and I urge them once more to consider withdrawing that bill, to withdraw it on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba so that we can continue to enjoy and build and have the economy built by our local citizens in our local communities and citizens and cities that are across this fine province.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for River Heights, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my left where we have Myrna Phillips, the former member for Wolseley and former Speaker of this House, as our guest here this afternoon—behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk for a little bit about the Interim Supply and the need for this week of debate on the 'interbrim' supply measure and a little bit about the fiscal cliff because there's been quite a bit of attention in the newspaper recently to the presence of a fiscal cliff.

I think it's important to start out by pointing out that if the government hadn't panicked and decided that it needed an emergency sitting, then we wouldn't

even be talking about a fiscal cliff because under the conditions where there wasn't an emergency sitting and we had—we're—come back in September, then what would happen is that there is a process set out very carefully in Manitoba laws where the government can use for obtaining the warrants that it needs to—for these expenditures. And the process when the Legislature is not sitting is for the government to issue two orders-in-council, Cabinet decisions. The first is to request that the Lieutenant Governor sign a special warrant, and the second order-in-council is signed by the Lieutenant Governor to actually authorize the spending.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And because the whole fiscal cliff scenario would have been totally unnecessary if the Legislature weren't sitting, if the NDP hadn't called and panicked and called this emergency sitting, they could've avoided this fiscal cliff.

You know, I worked in the 1990s with Jean Chrétien in the federal Cabinet. And, if it had been Jean Chrétien, then he would've said, fellows, there's no emergency. There's no emergency. Relax. Go home and have a good summer. We'll come back in September. We'll complete the business of the legislature in its regular time. And in the interim, we'll have some discussions with the opposition and have a little bit more organized—a fall sitting—than we're having at the moment.

And the job would get done without all the panic and the fiscal cliffing and all that's happening at the moment. It's something that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) might learn if he were ever faced with a similar situation again.

An Honourable Member: Different rules.

Mr. Gerrard: Those are our rules, that you can avoid a fiscal cliff very easily by not calling this emergency session and by not panicking. And so it's wise to remember that and keep your cool sometimes, Mr. Finance Minister and Mr. Premier.

One of the things, of course, that we are dealing with this afternoon in this is the spending and the spending patterns of the NDP. And, if the NDP had shown good fiscal management over the last 14 years, then I think it's not all that likely that we would have been in this sort of a situation, where they would have had to raise the PST and where they would have had to be talking about a fiscal cliff and worrying about having to have the money to pay

people who work so hard on behalf of this government.

And if we look carefully—again, one of the things that I learned when I was in Ottawa with Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, that one of the important things to do is to set your budget for expenditures at the beginning of the year, and then make sure you actually meet what you plan in terms of expenditures at the end of the year. But it's something that the NDP have never actually learned. I have a graph here showing the overexpenditures over their budgeted plan for expenditures each year. And, in fact, in the 13 years for which we have record when the NDP set the budget, and each year they failed to meet their expenditure target, and each year they spent more than they had indicated they would. One year, it was close. It was only \$4 million over, but if you take that aside, 10 out of the 13 years, it was over a hundred million overexpenditure compared to what the expenditure budget was the last year.

And, of course, the current Minister of Finance and his budgeting is no exception. For the 2012-2013 year, he set the budget for expenditures and he came in \$130 million over his expenditures that had been planned. And interestingly enough, the cumulative overexpenditures under the 14 years of the NDP add up to close to \$3 billion.

You know, now, even if they had overexpended a little bit every once in a while but come pretty close, you know, even if they'd been a billion dollars in overexpenditures, they would have still saved something like \$2 billion, and think where that would put us today in their budget, that there would not be a need for this PST and the NDP could, you know, continue to talk about themselves as fairly good fiscal managers.

But, sadly, where we are at the moment that didn't happen. The NDP overspent their expenditures by close to \$3 billion and now we have a big budget deficit. We have a PST rise being pushed through by the NDP and we're in a situation where everybody sees the NDP for what they are, rather poor fiscal managers, sad to say. And, you know, there could be, under some conditions, you know, good reasons to raise PST.

You know, I think if we look to Saskatchewan next door, we can actually see an example where when Janice MacKinnon was the Finance minister, she raised the PST by a point. I can't remember whether it was 7 to 8 per cent or it may have been 8

to 9 per cent, but that raising the PST was done in a very, very dire fiscal situation where Saskatchewan was on the verge of going bankrupt. And at the same time as Janice McKinnon, who interestingly was an NDP Finance minister, brought in the increase in PST, she actually also brought in a number of changes to the way the government of Saskatchewan spent. And, indeed, many credit that as a turning point in Saskatchewan, of course, which now has a PST of 5 per cent and is in really, what most people would agree, is pretty fair financial shape compared to where we are with the big budget deficits under the NDP government in Manitoba, which has continued to spend and spend and increase the PST without using this as a defining turning point to get the fiscal house in order, but rather just as an excuse to continue to spend.

Now the second problem is this: that when you are spending more and more money, you need to be very careful that that spending is actually going to useful, meaningful and effective measures. You know, we've all learned in this Legislature, as I pointed out in question period not very long ago, and when it comes to a variety of programs, let's start with the Healthy Baby program. That this Healthy Baby program wasn't actually getting to more than three quarters of those who are most in need. In other words, it was only reaching about a quarter of people who should have been reached by this program. And the sad part about that is that, as Evelyn Forget has pointed out, and very eloquently in a forum in Calgary, when you look at people who are in the lowest income in Manitoba, in the lowest income bracket that, in fact, the parameters around how they're doing, their health is getting worse, their situation in many different parameters is getting worse.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And, as Evelyn Forget pointed out, there's something wrong in the way that the NDP are approaching helping those on low income because it's not very effective and the, of course, star program is the Healthy Baby program, and that wasn't reaching most of the people who it should have been reaching over the last—I think it's been operating under the NDP for something like 13 years, since 2000–12 years, since 2001.

But beyond that, the NDP have indicated, this government has indicated that they want to raise the PST and that all the new revenue that's generated by

this tax is going to go to infrastructure. Well, when we look very carefully at the Minister of Finance's own book on the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, it's very easy to see on the revenue side, there's the \$200 million this year for the—coming in. The Finance Minister, I can see, is eagerly smiling and grabbing that money coming in.

But the problem is, on the other side, that when you look very carefully at capital expenditures, that capital expenditures are not going up this year \$200 million from last year, that the Estimates show the expenditures are very close to last year. And so people are scratching their heads, trying to figure out what the Finance Minister is doing, what kind of a trick is this. The money is coming in, but it's not going out where it should be, and that's one of the reasons why the credibility of this government and the lack of support for this government, and the—for the increase in the PST, is rather widespread. The government initially told us that this was going to primarily flood infrastructure. And, of course, in Estimates I've been asking very carefully, department by department, you know, who's spending what this year on flood infrastructure. And the problem is that, so far, there doesn't seem to be very much being spent this year. So we have \$200 million in new revenue and, in terms of flood infrastructure expenditure this year, it actually looks like it's very little. In fact, it's been very hard to find a clear number from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), and, hopefully, one of these days he will come forward with that number.

We know that there is a potential, for example, to spend some money on the dike, the permanent dike around Brandon. But the people in Brandon aren't committed to completing that until the end of 2014 so we still don't know to what extent they're actually going to spend money this year. And, in fact, there's been a little bit of a debate because, as we found out recently, that this proposal that has come forward from the City of Brandon may not actually protect or will probably flood over 1st Street and that the way it's designed there is a concern that the bridge, which is just east of Brandon, may act a little bit like a—you know, to—holding back water and cause more flooding.

And so, you know, I think that these issues clearly have to be settled, exactly what level the provincial government will accept; will it accept only a 100-year flood, or a 300-year-flood level and will that be for only parts of Brandon or all of Brandon? I mean, these are important issues that still need to be

resolved before one can start spending significant amount of money, even building in Brandon.

And the dollars in Brandon certainly aren't going to take \$200 million this year. So we've been looking around for other places. And, of course, the government has been discussing the channel from Lake Manitoba to Lake St. Martin, but I think that that's quite a number of years away, and although there's a little bit of discussion and talk, that from everything that we've seen so far, there doesn't seem to be going to be any construction this year. There could be some work along the Assiniboine River; the government is doing some consulting, but my understanding that that plan is still not all that far along, and there's some work with landowners and others in order to get that plan to the point where there's actually going to be money spent. So we're still looking for and aware that \$200 million is going to be spent this year on flood infrastructure because it doesn't look like that that's the case, that's where that \$200 million is going.

So the Finance Minister will have a few days left in this session, perhaps a month left in this session, perhaps two months left in this session, in order to enlighten us about the facts of the situation. In fact, you know, it may be that the session will still be going when the construction season ends and we can find out what the actual number is. But, whatever that may be—case, in due course we will be waiting for information and enlightenment from the Finance Minister as to the flood infrastructure projects that are actually going to be delivered and spent on this year.

I think the other areas before, you know, one has actually a rationale or reason to increase the PST, you should have better fiscal management or demonstrated good fiscal management, you should demonstrate where the money is actually going and, of course, there should be a referendum. A referendum is a vital part of the democratic process. It's legally required and, probably, in this case, more than in any other case where a referendum has been proposed in Manitoba, there's a legitimate reason for doing it. In part, because the government was so eloquent in their insistence during the last election that they would never raise the PST and now they've, of course, changed their mind, that this is a good thing to consult people and let—have people have an input. But it's also—would give the government a

better opportunity to explain just exactly what they're doing, and maybe the government could actually explain, you know, more clearly to people outside this Chamber than they've done so far in explaining within this Chamber. You know, it would give the government a chance. It would certainly provide a much more legitimate basis for raising the PST, if they went to the people with a referendum and got support for it. But it would appear that that's not where the government intends to go.

I was—I held in my constituency a forum dealing with the PST increase and dealing with the situation of those who are poor, of students, of those on low incomes, those who are seniors and, you know, there was general agreement, of course, some debate that, in fact, those who are on lower incomes are proportionately more affected. In fact, one of the people who was eloquent on this subject was Martina Richter, who's the general manager at Agape Table, who sees people who are on low incomes day by day and sees how's they're doing.

Another person was Muriel Koscielny, who's a senior, who's been an activist for many years. She was concerned that when you increase the PST and you increase hydro rates that you've got a tax on increases that, in fact, you multiply the impact of the PST much greater than the 1 per cent itself.

Sid Frankel, who's a renowned professor at the social work department at the University of Manitoba, talked very significantly about how regressive this tax was on those who are on low income. And he talked about how the NDP government, you know, in spite of rhetoric to the contrary, have actually neglected those who are on low income and that people who are on low income have done poorly.

I mean, even the support for the shelter allowance for those on income assistance has not risen, even though there's 140 and more organizations who are calling for this kind of support as one of the necessary—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) will have 11 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, July 23, 2013

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