

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 26—The Accessibility for Manitobans Act

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 26, The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Howard: I am exceptionally pleased today to be able to introduce Bill 26, The Accessibility for Manitobans Act. This historic bill moves us forward towards our goal of a fully accessible province.

As I introduce this bill today, I want to personally acknowledge and thank all the people who've worked very hard to get us to this point, including a number who have joined us today in the gallery. I want to thank the Accessibility Advisory Council, which includes people with disabilities and advocates, as well as representatives of the hotel, restaurant, retail industries and municipalities who have given their time and wisdom to the recommendations that serve as the basis for this bill. I also wish to acknowledge the representatives of Barrier-Free Manitoba, who, since 2008, have pushed us to go further and faster and who have promised to continue to do so. And, finally, thanks to the hundreds of members of the public who wrote and emailed supporting the call for this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill's purpose is to remove barriers by working with the public and private sectors to make proactive long-range plans that

enhance accessibility for everyone. This bill will lay out a framework for the development and implementation of accessibility standards that will improve the independence and social inclusion of Manitobans where they live, learn, work and play. While this bill alone will not eliminate every barrier, it is an important step in moving Manitoba towards full accessibility.

Nearly every Manitoban has a disability, knows someone with a disability or will acquire a disability as they age. By preventing new barriers and implementing long-term plans to remove existing ones, all Manitobans will benefit. The introduction of this bill will move our province towards the goal of an inclusive society and produce a lasting legacy which will make all Manitobans proud.

As I've worked with members of the community and members of this House to bring this legislation forward, I've been guided by the following quote from Helen Keller, and I just want to close with that: I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can do. Thank you.

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

And before we move on to the next order of business, I just want to remind our guests who are with us here this afternoon that there is to be no participation. That includes applause. So I ask for your co-operation, please.

Bill 29—The Land Surveyors and Related Amendments Act

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak), that Bill 29, The Land Surveyors and Related Amendments Act, now be read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Rondeau: Mr. Speaker, this bill will modernize the governing statute of the profession of land surveying in Manitoba. The current governing statute is rather outdated and dates back to 1881. This legislation is based on recent models for governance of professions in Manitoba. The new legislation is

also in compliance with the mobility provision in the Internal Trade Agreement and moves the profession forward. I highly recommend it.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none, we'll move on with—

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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 its wildlife in the region.

The park's closure is having a negative impact in many areas, including disruptions to the local tourism, hunting and fishing operations, diminished economic and employment opportunities and 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 condition so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

Signed by D. McKay, L. Allard and K. Stephens and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

The provincial government did not consult with nor notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

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

* (13:40)

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by G. Zimmer, P. Neuhofer, M. Nermberg and so many more Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Road 520 Renewal

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The rural municipalities of Lac du Bonnet and Alexander are experiencing record growth due especially to an increasing number of Manitobans retiring in cottage country.

The population in the RM of Lac du Bonnet grows exponentially in the summer months due to increased cottage use.

Due to population growth, Provincial Road 520 experiences heavy traffic, especially during the summer months.

PR 520 connects cottage country to the Pinawa Hospital and as such is frequently used by emergency medical services to transport patients.

PR 520 is in such poor condition that there are serious concerns about its safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To urge the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to recognize the serious safety concerns of Provincial Road 520 and to address its poor condition by prioritizing its renewal.

The petition is signed by N. Slessor, G. Safinuk, M. Wiese and hundreds of other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by B. Mitchell, W. Sunley, J. Young and many, many more fine Manitobans.

The Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Act—Amendments

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for the petition:

The Brandon Area Community Foundation Incorporated is a charitable foundation created by and for the people of Brandon and southwestern Manitoba, and incorporated as a special act corporation under The Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Act. The foundation was originally incorporated under the name of the Brandon Area Foundation Inc. but has subsequently been operating as the Brandon Area Community Foundation Inc. and is registered as such with the Companies Office.

To modernize its processes, the foundation seeks amendments to the act respecting the appointment and composition of the board and the manner in which audited financial statements are made available to the public.

The directors of the foundation have resolved that the Manitoba Legislative Assembly be petitioned as follows:

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to amend the act (1) to change the foundation's name to the Brandon Area Community Foundation Inc.; (2) to replace the process for appointment of the foundation's directors with the requirement that the directors be appointed or elected in accordance with the foundation's bylaws; (3) to change the minimum number of directors from nine to six; and (4) to replace the requirements to publish the auditor's report with the requirement to make the annual audit available to the public.

Signed by fellow Brandonites, friends and supporters of the community J. Millis, P.D. Sullivan and R. Swayze.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none—

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'd like to submit the Manitoba Health Supplementary

Information for Legislative Review for 2013-14, a blockbuster read if ever there was one.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Laura Schnellert and Dave Kron, who are the guests of the honourable member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady).

And also in the public gallery, we have with us today from St. James-Assiniboia International Student Program 15 grade 9 to 12 students under the direction of Ms. Alexandra Humphries. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Rondeau).

And also with us in the public gallery, we have with us today from Assiniboine Community College 29 college students under the direction of Ms. Linda Dustan Selinger. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Provincial Deficit Concerns

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, when this government came to power, the provincial debt was under \$14 billion, and now it's over \$30 billion, including about a half a billion additional this year alone. Yet our Premier seems unconcerned. He seems nonchalant. He seems oblivious to the problems associated with increased government debt.

This government's record is one of raising the debt by over a billion dollars a year throughout its term, and that's a considerable amount of money, which causes us to worry because of the fact that interest rates have been at historic lows through that period.

And so I—my question is simple for the Premier, if he would just answer it: Is he at all concerned about the high levels of government debt in Manitoba?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. spirit—Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, debt as a portion

of the Manitoba economy was about 32.3 per cent; we'll round it off at 32 per cent. Today, the debt is about 28 per cent of the provincial economy. When we came into office, the budget was spending 13.2 cents on the dollar to service the debt. In this budget, the cost of servicing the debt is about 6 cents on the dollar.

We are certainly—we are certainly—concerned about managing debt, which is why it's lower than when members opposite were in office as a portion of the economy, which is why it's costing less when members opposite were in office, and which is why when we do make investments we make investments in things that matter for Manitobans: roads, schools, personal care homes, flood protection, all the things the members opposite have said they would cut and would terminate and would not do for the benefit of Manitobans.

Mr. Pallister: I understand the Premier has a degree from the London School of Economics, but it's not in economics or mathematics, Mr. Speaker.

Government revenues and transfers from other governments have gone up during this term of office by 80 per cent—an 80 per cent increase. Combine that with interest rates on average less than half of what they were in the previous administration. And yet, in spite of that incredible advantage for Manitobans, this government doubled its spending and it doubled our provincial debt plus, Mr. Speaker. It's a runaway train to Debtville, and they just ripped up the taxpayer protection act, and that taxpayer protection act was the only thing left with any understanding of how to put on the brakes.

Every announcement this Premier makes, Mr. Speaker, is a promise paid for by a child who hasn't even had the chance to earn money yet in this province.

Does he believe that he deserves credit for spending the money of children?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased this morning to be with the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) and the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) and the MLA for Southdale, who was also with us—who's the person who is the Minister of Advanced Education—when we announced the Sage Creek school site and the fact that it will be built.

* (13:50)

And that school will be built in a neighbourhood when you go door to door all the families have

young children, many of them are preschoolers, and the No. 1 issue on the mind of the people in that neighbourhood in Sage Creek is: When will we have our new school? We now have a site. We've now initiated the planning process and partnership with Louis Riel School Division. The parents will be involved in that process, and they will have a new school. The commencement of construction will be in 2014.

This next generation of Manitobans will have schools under this government. Under the members opposite they would have no schools, they would have no daycare centres, they would have no streets in that neighbourhood, they'd have no buses for their children, they'd have no health care for their parents—

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

Mr. Pallister: [*inaudible*] aside, Mr. Speaker, what jeopardizes Manitobans' future is nothing more than the spendP. That's what's jeopardizing our future, because what it does is it causes debt servicing to grow as a department of government in size. It is now the fourth largest department of government, and if it keeps going the way it's going it'll be the third largest department within two years.

In '99, \$475 million to service the debt; today, over \$838 million. The Premier perhaps misread his briefing book and got it backwards last week when he claimed that debt service costs were lower now than they were then.

The fact of the matter is this Premier and his colleagues cannot get their spending under control in a time of the lowest interest rates in modern history.

So I've got to ask the Premier to explain to Manitobans why they shouldn't be afraid that he can't get his spending under control when interest rates start to rise.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this budget projects the Manitoba economy to be \$62 billion, just about double it was when members opposite were in office. And because the economy in Manitoba is so much larger than it was and because it's growing and because there's more Manitobans working than ever in the history of the province and the unemployment rate is the third lowest in Canada, we have been able to finance improvements to the—all the assets that Manitobans hold, the replacement value of all the assets held by the government of Manitoba, \$38 billion of assets: schools, hospitals, roads, personal care homes.

We're paying 6 cents on the dollar to service the debt. Those 6 cents on the dollar are locked in for many decades to come. They were paying over 13 cents on the dollar. Manitoba's better off. Manitoba's children are better off. Manitoba's seniors are better off. Manitoba's families are better off, and we're growing the economy.

Provincial Deficit Concerns

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Obviously, we get evidence again that this Premier does not understand economics. He's taking credit for interest rates, which is far, far, beyond the purview of any provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, we know this government lied to Manitobans in the last election about the PST increase. We know now that not 1 cent of that PST increase will go to pay down Manitoba's debt nor any interest on that debt. Manitoba's debt is out of control. It has more than doubled during the term of this spendP government. The NDP government does not care about Manitobans. They just want their wallets. They just want their money.

Mr. Speaker, how can Manitobans believe anything this government says? How high will they drive Manitoba's debt?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when the members opposite had their chance on this side of the House, they borrowed money and they racked up debt; they racked up deficit every year for a total debt. And then, if that wasn't enough, they paid over 13 cents on the dollar every year to finance that debt.

This government, in contrast to the irresponsible view of members opposite and the irresponsible actions of members opposite, this government has grown the economy, invested in assets that belong to the people of Manitoba. We're doing it—we're doing it—by spending 5.9 cents on the dollar to pay for that debt.

And, Mr. Speaker, every year this government puts money towards the debt to bring that debt down. You can look—

Mr. Speaker: Honourable member for Brandon West.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, you know, we get evidence that they don't understand 'bakit'—basic economics, taking credit for the interest rates where they have no input whatsoever.

You know, here we have the murder capital of Canada, high health-care wait times, highest taxes west of Québec. Isn't that something to be proud about? All under this NDP government's watch.

Debt levels have been driven to the highest levels ever by the dictatorial spenDP government. Manitobans will be paying for this government's mistakes well into the next generation and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, when will this spenDP government cut up their credit cards and start living within their means?

Mr. Struthers: This is the same member who stood in this House and extolled us, pleaded with us, begged us to put money into Victoria Avenue in Brandon. That costs money, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, maybe there's a tree in Brandon that he's going to pick the money off of. That probably doesn't exist.

This government made a commitment in his constituency to put money into infrastructure on Victoria Avenue. This government made a commitment. This government told Manitobans exactly how we're paying for it. We're coming through on our word to the people of Brandon, and I look forward to doing that some more.

Mr. Helwer: Yes, give up your wallets. Brandonites have given up their wallets for this NDP tax increase and that's what's financing Victoria Avenue. You're sucking it all out of there.

The spenDP wants your money, and they are taking it. They don't care how tough it is for Manitobans; they just want your money. And if you don't have enough, they'll just borrow it from others and from your children to pay the bill. The NDP government lie about tax increases. They break the law.

How can we trust anything they say, Mr. Speaker? Pay down the debt.

Mr. Struthers: Well, I'll be darned, Mr. Speaker. Finally, I think it's getting through to at least one member opposite. The increase that we talked about is going to infrastructure, and he just confirmed it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know that was a big step for the member for Brandon West, but I would ask him to do one more thing: sit down with his leader and convince him too that this money is going towards—every dollar is going towards infrastructure in our province to support Manitoba families, to

build infrastructure, to protect Manitoba families from flood. That's where the money's going. That's where every dollar goes, because we're—

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

Bill 20 July 1st Deadline

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Perhaps the Minister of Finance can sit down with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and convince him that debt is going to stifle the future of our children, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in a briefing that was held with the Minister of Finance on Bill 20, he stated that his government would be instructing retailers to collect the additional 1 per cent on PST beginning on Canada Day, whether Bill 20 was passed by then or not.

Does the Premier stand by the Minister of Finance that, regardless of whether or not Bill 20 is passed by July 1st, they're still going to be taking the money?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it's a long-standing practice, long-standing financial budgetary practice in this province, to do exactly what I outlined to the critic across the way. It's no different today than it was in 1993 when members opposite, on April 6th of 1993, introduced a budget that increased the PST on kids' clothing, feminine hygiene supplies, school supplies, baby supplies, safety clothing and equipment. They introduced that on April 6th to become effective on May 1st. Their budget didn't come into force until July 27th.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Finance will work with the businesses to make sure that they get—

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

Mr. Goertzen: This is a government that is doing everything that it can to usurp democracy.

First of all, it said that it's going to destroy the ability for Manitobans to have a referendum, to have its say, Mr. Speaker, on this tax increase. They've only let this Legislature sit for 10 days in 10 months before they finally came back here and then ripped up the balanced budget accountability act.

Now they're saying, regardless of what people say at committee—and the Premier encouraged people to come to a committee—regardless of what those

people say at committee, even if this bill isn't passed on July 1st, they're still going after the money.

Will the Premier finally show some respect for democracy and say he won't put in the PST increase unless the bill, Bill 20, has passed by Canada Day, Mr. Speaker?

* (14:00)

Mr. Struthers: Maybe the member from Steinbach didn't hear my first answer, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the member from Steinbach just thinks that he can get away with, you know, do as I say, not as I do. You know, that was ridiculous, what I just heard.

April 6th, this Conservative—the Conservative government of the day brought forward an increase to the PST on April 6th in their Budget 1993. It impacted kids' clothing, feminine hygiene supplies, school supplies, baby supplies, safety clothing and equipment, for heaven's sakes. They were supposed to be effective May 1st, Mr. Speaker, and they didn't pass their budget until July 27th.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they've got to take this more seriously. You got to do your homework. You got to come in here prepared.

Mr. Goertzen: You know, Mr. Speaker, more than a hundred people have signed up for committee on Bill 20. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) encouraged them to come and speak to Bill 20, and I'm sure by the time that bill finally comes to committee there'll be many, many more people who want to have their say. But they're coming with an expectation of democracy.

Now the Premier is saying that, I don't really care what goes on in that committee; even if that bill isn't passed by July 1st, on Canada Day, I'm still expecting you to pay.

I'm simply asking the Premier—he didn't live up to his word on the tax increase. He didn't live up to his word on the referendum. Can he try to live up to his word on this, respect the people who are going to come to committee, and say if the bill isn't passed on July 1st he won't go after them and take the taxes?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, nothing out of the ordinary will be done in the process of this budget than any other year that—anything else that's been accepted in practice over the years. This is a procedure that has been backed up by the courts over the years. So you can complain all you like about that, but this is exactly the way this budget unfolds every year. It was good back in 1993 when members

opposite stood up and nailed people for babies' clothing, kids' clothing and baby supplies.

Mr. Speaker, our—our approach on baby supplies is the opposite [*inaudible*] Budget 2013 rolls back the clock on baby supplies. Our budget—

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

Bill 20

July 1st Deadline

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it was a jaw-dropping moment yesterday during my briefing with the Finance Minister when I learned that the PST is going to go up on July 1st no matter what, even if Bill 20 which hikes the PST doesn't pass in the House. And we're talking here about legislation not passing even if tens of thousands of people sign a petition and even if hundreds of people come to committee to present and sit in a committee room into the middle of the night for two or three weeks at a time.

So can this Minister of Finance please tell us: Can he explain to the thousands of Manitobans why he is going to refuse to listen to them?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker, I'll be there to listen to everybody who wants to come to present at that hearing. We'll be there. We'll be listening. We'll be asking questions. We'll be conversing with Manitobans on the issue.

What I can inform—what I can guarantee Manitobans is that they will have the kind of stability in the budgeting process that has been there this year, 10 years ago, 20 years ago in 1993, when you folks yourselves did the very same thing that you're complaining about today.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about Bill 20. It is a legislative bill that is going to hike the PST in Manitoba.

And, Mr. Speaker, this Finance Minister is indicating that no matter the debate we have in this House, no matter that thousands of people will sign a petition, no matter that maybe a thousand people might want to come to committee, and he's saying, oh, he's going to listen to them. What's he going to listen? He's already made up his mind; his department and he said yesterday this bill goes through July 1 no matter what.

Can this minister tell us: When did they become such a banana republic and stop listening to the people?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, first we have the spectacle of the Leader of the Opposition saying that Gary Filmon's government was the finest government ever in Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Finance, to complete his answer.

Mr. Struthers: And now we have the spectacle today of them—the Finance critic, the member for Charleswood, saying that the Gary Filmon government was a banana republic government, because this is what they did, this is what—the same process that they followed.

You know what the difference is between the two? The difference is you put the income—you put the PST on baby supplies; we took it off.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, this government is sounding more and more contemptuous of taxpayers every day.

They have now brought forward a piece of legislation that they say they're not going to, you know, allow a solid debate on. We're not going to have a good debate on here—in here about that bill. He's not going to allow taxpayers to have a say, because he's already made up his mind that that legislation goes through July 1st no matter what. He's not going to listen to thousands and thousands and thousands of Manitobans.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Finance: How could this government have become so contemptuous of taxpayers?

Mr. Speaker, this is really quite astounding. They are not listening to taxpayers and they are going to ram—

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

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the opportunity to putting our vision forward and comparing it to your vision any day of the week, with as many Manitobans as we can.

Mr. Speaker, not only did we take the PST off of baby supplies and other products that you folks as—saw to it to put on, but we're putting forward a plan, a Building and Renewal Plan that is focused on

improving infrastructure, flooding infrastructure, critical infrastructure like schools and hospitals and roads and bridges.

We're doing that in a straightforward way with Manitobans. We're telling them how we're going to pay for it, Mr. Speaker. We're coming clean.

We're not going to take the same approach as members opposite showed us last week in terms of deep—

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

Health Capital Projects Approval Process

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, the vision of this government is clear. It's a vision for more and more taxes to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans woke up today to learn that the priority list for future health projects is no longer a regional list, but it's been merged into the Minister of Health's office. That means decisions from now on about health capital projects will not be made in the community but by the minister and the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, what possible explanation can the minister provide to show why decision making about capital priorities is being stripped away from communities?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It is not.

Mr. Friesen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the minister—and maybe I need to inform her—yesterday the self-serving attitude of this government became very clear to Manitobans. The CEO for southern region said, and I quote: All of the needs are going to be rounded up provincially, with regional input. It won't be region by region.

Will the minister admit that decisions will now not be made on the basis of local health needs but on the basis of politics?

Ms. Oswald: I can inform the member that, indeed, through the amalgamation of regional health authorities, we did away with the former district health advisory councils as mandated by the Conservatives that were ineffective and, frankly, useless. And we've put in place local health involvement groups with the express purpose of having geographic representation in the region, of having cultural representation in the region and

having a real, authentic voice in developing not only health capital projects, Mr. Speaker, but other programs similar to the western cancer centre or the brand new CancerCare community hub in Morden-Winkler.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, I find it curious strange that this member would get up and talk about health capital projects when his government decided to freeze them.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, it's just more of the same, decision making being made at the top when those in the communities have questions that are not being answered.

Mr. Speaker, each area and each facility maintains a capital projects list. It only makes sense that decisions about capital needs are undertaken in the region and in the community. It is inappropriate and it is arrogant for these decisions to be made by the NDP.

Why is the minister grasping even more at an approach that smacks of top-down and dictatorial?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, I say respectfully, need look no further than his own fabulous community that is working together to build the new Tabor Home personal care home. When they brought their idea forward—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Ms. Oswald: I seem to have struck a nerve, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: We're doing pretty good, once again, for the most part, at start of question period, so I'm asking—encouraging honourable members to allow me to hear the answers and the questions that are posed in the House, please. If there was a breach of the rules, I'm sure you'd want me to rule on that. So give me the opportunity, please, to hear.

The honourable Minister of Health, to complete her answer.

Ms. Oswald: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The community worked very hard in developing a plan, to which the regional health authority and Manitoba Health listened. They amended that plan, to which the regional health authority and Manitoba Health listened.

We're moving through the tendering process. It's going to be an outstanding facility, that's going to be

led by members of the community, that's going to care for members of the community, and I would think that the member opposite would celebrate that rather than trying to cover up the fact that when they had their hands on the wheel, they said, we're not going to build anything because we—

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

Manitoba Taxpayers Democratic Rights

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And what we're seeing here in the province of Manitoba is democracy at its worst.

Mr. Speaker, every day in this House we hear of yet another minister use the heavy-hand, dictatorial approach of government, a government that's out of touch with hard-working Manitobans and communities. Whether it be municipal amalgamations, health capital projects or tax increases, this arrogant NDP government feels that it knows best.

Mr. Speaker, what gives this NDP government the right to strip decision-making powers and take democratic rights away from taxpayers?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I think, as we've said before in this House, the decision to raise the PST was a difficult decision, and it was made because when we looked at what we knew was coming for Manitoba, when we looked at the need to protect Manitobans from floods and the very real needs, as articulated by members of the opposition on day one of this session, to build roads, to build schools, to build hospitals and personal care homes, we knew that we had to make a choice there, and the choice that they had laid out last week was a choice to cut deeply into the things that Manitobans care about. That's not the choice that we will make, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchelson: But Manitoba taxpayers felt that they had some protection from this arrogant, heavy-handed NDP government. They thought that they would have a say, that they would have a vote, a law which is in place right now that gave them the democratic right to vote before any major taxes were increased.

Mr. Speaker, what makes this government think that in the dictatorship style that they're showing right now they can strip away the democratic right from hard-working Manitoba taxpayers?

Ms. Howard: I think, you know, when we look at the—this budget, when we look at the things that we are accomplishing through this budget, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) talked about removing a tax on baby supplies which are of critical need to young families, a move that we are reversing from the move that was taken by the members opposite.

When we look at the investments in this budget in health care and education, the things that Manitobans count on, the building of schools where Manitobans need them, as we heard about easier—earlier today, we know that this is a budget that, while it's difficult to make those hard decisions, we know that the decisions that we've made are better than the decisions that were made in the past to cut nurses, to lay off teachers, to cut funding to schools, to cut funding to families who need it.

These are difficult times and they require difficult choices, but they require the kind of leadership—

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have been deceived and they have been lied to by an arrogant, dictatorial government out of touch with reality and out of touch with Manitoba voters.

Mr. Speaker, this New Democratic Party recently removed the word socialism from their constitution. But based on their actions today and in this budget, taxpayers are asking the question: Did they replace socialism with communism?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

I'm pretty sure all members know that time in question period is very precious and limited, obviously, so I'd like to encourage all honourable members please control themselves a little bit so we might proceed through question period in an orderly fashion.

Ms. Howard: Well, earlier we were talking about 1993, but I swear it feels like 1953 in here, and I feel like I'm in front of the committee on un-American activities suddenly.

You know, to hear the member opposite extol the virtues of democracy when she sat around the Cabinet table at a time when the members opposite tried to rig an election, tried to steal the votes of Aboriginal Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, I take nothing

from what she says seriously on the cause of democracy.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Building Canada Fund Federal Funding Start Date

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Building Canada Fund is a federal fund which matches provincial dollars for infrastructure projects. The NDP have said that they must raise the PST by 1 per cent on July 1st so that they can pay for infrastructure that's required due to flooding, yet projects approved under the Building Canada Fund won't receive funding or start construction until 2014-2015.

I ask the Premier: Why is he hiking the PST by 1 per cent beginning July 1st this year to pay for flood-related and critical infrastructure when the federal funding which he wants to match doesn't arrive until 2014?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The answer is very simple: because people need flood protection now. Mr. Speaker, people need those roads rebuilt from the '11 flood right now; they need those roads this year.

This construction season is very important. We have a late spring, but we will have a construction season this spring, and we need to get on with the job. We need those new schools right now. We need that personal care homes and access centres for Manitobans in health care right now.

We have an urgent sense to move Manitoba forward, to protect them from floods right now.

Flooding Current Prevention Projects

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I'm pleased to hear that the Premier's so eager, but presuming that he wants to do it right now, he must have a list of flood-related provincial projects all ready to go. Right?

Will the Premier table, right now, his list of flood prevention projects?

* (14:20)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I was in Brandon three weeks ago. They are proceeding in Brandon;

they've been working diligently to protect homes in Brandon to a one-in-300-year level.

The member in Brandon West doesn't support that. He votes against that. The member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) is out there tossing sandbags and he's helping families be protected from floods.

We're protecting Manitoba communities this spring in partnership with local municipalities. We're building roads this spring. We're building dikes this spring, Mr. Speaker, and we're helping homeowners and cottage owners lift their homes up so they can be protected by flooding. Those are the commitments we made. They are proceeding this spring.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, last I heard, the Premier was out in Brandon promoting some sandbagging. I presume that he's talking a little bit more about sandbagging in Brandon.

But even if the Premier has decided to accelerate the timeline for the permanent dike to the end of this year, which is already, you know, almost a decade after it was first promised, that will only take a small part of the \$200 million that will be raised in the PST this year.

The fact is that for what's needed right now, if the Premier hasn't, you know, given us the \$200 million, I would ask the Premier: Why doesn't he delay his plan to raise the PST until 2014 when he actually will have the matching fund required, and that will give him more than enough time to have the referendum—

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

Mr. Selinger: Because the risk—the third major risk in five years in Manitoba for flooding is occurring this spring, and we are still rebuilding roads, we are still fortifying dikes, we are still moving forward on projects that will allow us to recover from 2011. This is very important that we continue to proceed along that path.

If the member from River Heights wants to delay those projects, let him tell Manitobans that. That is his choice.

Our choice is to move forward with what Manitobans told us were their priorities. They asked us for those roads now. They asked us for this flood protection now. They asked us for those critical pieces of infrastructure that would give their community security right now, and we're providing it, Mr. Speaker.

Apprenticeship Education Increased Training Spaces

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting dozens of young apprentices who are the future of this province's economy yesterday at Red River College. I was so excited to learn that even more of these Manitobans will be trained for highly skilled jobs, boosting our economy yet even more.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that while on their side of the House in tough times they cut nurses, doctors, health care, education, cut infrastructure, killed the economy, robbed from our children's futures, on our side of the House we train and build.

Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Trade and Training please inform us of the announcement he made yesterday?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I was very pleased indeed to be joined by the MLA for St. Norbert as well as the MLA for Tyndall Park and the minister of housing and economic development to announce a hundred more apprenticeship spaces to be [*inaudible*] in Manitoba.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that adds to an increase of 130 per cent of apprentices since 1999, an increase of 488 per cent in the high school apprenticeship program. That's because we not only need to train the heavy diesel mechanics that we talked about yesterday, the rail car technicians that we talked about yesterday, the power line technicians—because we are going to build hydro—that we talked about yesterday, but the carpenters, the plumbers and all the other tradesmen that will be building this province as we move forward.

Now, unlike members opposite, the regressive cut-services party, we're going to continue to invest in Manitoba, continue to invest in training, and we are going to build this province, and we'll do so with the people that we train here in the province of Manitoba.

Municipal Amalgamation 2014 Election

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, the heavy hand of this NDP government continues across all departments.

The Minister of Local Government has destroyed a great working relationship with municipalities across this province, even to the point

of calling them dysfunctional, trying to force amalgamation of those municipalities of less than a thousand residents.

Mr. Speaker, when will this NDP minister finally stop trying to force amalgamations to amalgamate prior to the 2014 municipal elections?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): It was indeed a pleasure for me last spring to go and meet with municipalities, meet with mayors and reeves and consult with them and work with them, as well as just a short time ago, as well as meeting the mayors and reeves.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a lot has changed in a hundred years since the boundaries were defined by how far a horse could carry a bushel of grain. In fact, some of the members opposite were there at the time.

But I just want to state that, you know, Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome—welcome—input from the municipalities. We work closely with them and will continue to do so.

PST Increase Impact on Municipalities

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, not only is this NDP minister—is disrespectful to municipalities, he now intends to put a further tax burden on local ratepayers by increasing the PST to 8 per cent. Last year alone—this PST raise last year that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) did cost municipalities \$764,000 just in their insurance program alone, never mind what their increase will do again this year.

Mr. Speaker, why is this NDP minister so insensitive to the costs his government continues to download onto municipalities who must then turn around and collect it from their local ratepayers?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Mr. Speaker, Budget 2013 is really focused on what matters to families, and municipalities have made it clear that they need support from senior levels of government, whether it be the federal government or the provincial government.

Between 2005 and 2013, Mr. Speaker, annual provincial funding support for municipalities has almost doubled, increased by \$200 million from \$215 million in 2005 to \$415 million in Budget 2013.

You know, Mr. Speaker, they walk into coffee shops all over Manitoba, strutting all over the place, talking about how we need infrastructure, how we need bridges, how we need flood protection. Well, let's see how they vote on this budget when we are actually delivering on it.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

4H–100 Year Anniversary

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at a ceremony in the Legislature, we celebrated a hundred years of 4-H in Manitoba and Canada by honouring many long-service 4-H leaders.

Mr. Speaker, 4-H began in 1913 in Roland, Manitoba, which you must know is in the constituency of Midland. The first clubs were known as the Boys and Girls Clubs and consisted of sewing, cooking, gardening and livestock clubs. Over the years, the 4-H movement has expanded to include many other projects such as woodworking, crafts, fashion, establishing a website, and now Create-a-Project, which enables a member to design a project around their own interests.

The 4-H clubs are well known for leadership training, public speaking training and community volunteerism. Of course, this would not be possible if it were not for the dedicated volunteer leaders and parents who assist 4-H'ers with completion of their projects.

Mr. Speaker, I first became a 4-H member in a Barnsley 4-H beef club, which is a couple of years ago, and showed my steer at the Carman fair. My wife, Dianne, completed many years of the garden club project with the Miami combined 4-H club, and we were both 4-H leaders over the years as our children participated in the program. This is a rewarding experience for us watching and learning with the members as they completed and displayed their projects each year.

I have also heard back—the comment back from many university people and employers of the immediate recognition young people get when the words 4-H member appears on their resumé.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to attend the national 4-H gala banquet on May 30th at the Fairmont Hotel here in town. I also invite everyone to Roland, Manitoba, to take part in the festivities on May 31st, Roland being the home of 4-H.

On behalf of all members in this House, I offer my congratulations to all 4-H members, leaders and parents on 100 years of outstanding service to their club, their community and their country, and wish them all the best in the next 100 years.

Laura Schnellert

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the efforts of Laura Schnellert and her team to raise awareness and funds for cerebral palsy.

Cerebral palsy actually encompasses several different types of disabilities that affect body movement and muscle co-ordination. CP can be mild or severe and can affect individuals in many ways.

* (14:30)

The Cerebral Palsy Association of Manitoba holds several events to raise awareness and funds to support people affected by CP. The World CP Challenge, which kicks off in September following World Cerebral Palsy Day, is a global race in which teams walk, run or cycle with pedometers. Their steps are tracked to make progress up a virtual mountain so that together the team climbs one of seven summits around the world. This September, Ms. Schnellert's team hiked the side of Mount Kilimanjaro by walking roughly 10,000 steps a day around their neighbourhood.

The Cerebral Palsy Association holds other events year round as well. In March, over 700 riders and volunteers came out to the association's 23rd annual stationary bike race at the Wellness Institute and biked a total of 9,270 kilometres to raise \$175,193 in support of the association. Ms. Schnellert and other members of her hard-working team were also involved in making the event such a success.

The work of these dedicated individuals involved with the Cerebral Palsy Association means that services, equipment and therapy can be provided to adults and children living with cerebral palsy, including Laura's daughter, Karen. As well, families can establish networks and receive emotional support while coping with cerebral palsy.

Mr. Speaker, despite the obstacles that people living with CP face they still work hard to contribute to their communities, and that is why it is so important that the Cerebral Palsy Association and individuals like Ms. Schnellert make sure that people

with CP get the supports that they need to be active and engaged citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bullying

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak today on the topic of bullying. I believe all Manitobans would agree with me that bullying should not be tolerated. Most would agree there should be repercussions for those who continue to use tactics that would be considered bullying.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is showing classic bullying techniques. Firstly, they are forcing municipalities to amalgamate against their will and without any previous consultation on the issue. The NDP government is telling municipalities to sign now and work it out later. This government is also threatening legislation to force these amalgamations. Municipalities are clearly being bullied by this government.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we see the NDP are forcing Manitobans to pay for their fiscal incompetence. The NDP are targeting the taxpayers of Manitoba with their PST tax hike. This big, bad NDP government has their hands in the pockets of all Manitobans. The only defence taxpayers have to defend themselves from this NDP government is through a referendum under the balanced budget and taxpayer protection act, and now the NDP bullies are taking that right away.

Mr. Speaker, it is time the NDP bullies face repercussions from this constant bullying. Is it time to allow the voters of Manitoba the opportunity to deal with this NDP bully?

Thank you.

Keystone Centre

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, the Keystone Centre is the most significant community-driven, economic engine outside of the Perimeter Highway and the largest community centre in the province of Manitoba. The Keystone works daily to stimulate positive community development opportunities in western Manitoba and to contribute to the growth of the provincial economy.

For these reasons, I am especially proud to rise today and discuss the first rollout from the 2013 provincial budget—[interjection]—the recent announcement by the government to replace the Keystone Centre's roof. This \$4-million upgrade will

ensure that athletic courts, walkways and rental space will be protected from the elements and that the Keystone Centre will continue to thrive.

Since being built in the 1970s by the Schreyer government in partnership with the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba and the City of Brandon, the Keystone Centre has become a cornerstone of sport, agriculture, commercial trade and entertainment in Westman. It is home to the Brandon Wheat Kings, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, the Brandon Curling Club and much more.

Over the years, prestigious competitions such as the Memorial Cup, the World Curling Championships and the Canadian Arabian and Half-Arabian Championship Horse Show have been hosted at the centre, attracting visitors from across the province, across the nation and across the world.

It is crucial that we continue to invest in critical infrastructure like the Keystone Centre, Mr. Speaker, and both the Doer and Selinger governments have invested in the Keystone at historic levels. In addition to the upcoming roof upgrades announced in Budget 2013, much has already been done, including boiler, ramp and concourse renewal; developing the \$15-million Agricultural Centre of Excellence, which was derided by our opponents as building Cadillac barns; and developing private box seating for the Memorial Cup as well as for advancing corporate sponsorship and commercial opportunities.

I am proud that we're continuing to work with the Keystone Centre's dedicated staff and other partners to ensure that this cornerstone of the Westman region remains a key economic driver for the region and for our province.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to support the Keystone Centre and to invest in the future of western Manitoba through its ongoing development. Thank you.

PST Increase—Referendum

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the need for a referendum on the proposed increase in the provincial sales tax.

The current law mandates that such a referendum occurs. Good democracy and citizen participation in Manitoba requires a referendum. A government which doesn't hold a referendum puts at risk legislation which requires referenda for privatizing Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Public Insurance. Either we have a government which

believes in referendums and follows through on legislation, or we have a government which 'undermines' the need for referenda.

At the moment, we have a government which is undermining the need for referenda and, in so doing, is undermining the long-run ability to ensure that Manitoba Hydro is never privatized, as currently a referendum is needed before this happens. The Premier's (Mr. Selinger) dangerous and reckless act of abolishing the referendum in the case of PST is setting a dangerous precedent.

The Premier has said that one of the reasons there can't be a referendum is that it will be costly. The fact is that the Premier is talking about an increase in the provincial sales tax that will take about \$3 billion out of Manitobans' pockets over the next 10 years. Spending 0.3 per cent of this on a referendum to ensure that Manitobans actually support such an increase in the provincial sales tax is reasonable.

The Premier has also given as a reason for not having a referendum, the urgency of implementing the PST. First of all, there is time to have a 33-day referendum before mid-June, which is likely when Bill 20 will pass, if it does. Thus, a referendum is actually faster than the alternative procedure than he's chosen: introducing and passing Bill 20.

Furthermore, the failure of the Premier and his Finance Minister to produce an actual list of infrastructure projects to be completed this year with the \$200 million raised this year for the—by the increased PST, raises an important question as to whether the Premier's actually ready to proceed with the new \$200 million in infrastructure this year.

Indeed, since most infrastructure, including flood infrastructure, needs planning time and so on—

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: To resume the adjourn—the honourable Government House Leader.

House Business

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

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Government House Leader, on House business.

Ms. Howard: On House business, I'm announcing that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one announced in the fall, brought forward by the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), entitled "Rural CancerCare Hubs."

Mr. Speaker: For the information of members, has been announced that the private members' resolution to be considered next Tuesday will be the one announced in the fall, brought forward by the honourable member for Selkirk, entitled "Rural CancerCare Hubs."

BUDGET DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government, and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler), who has 16 minutes remaining.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I want to pick up where I left off just the other day. And what we heard today in the House is alarming, Mr. Speaker. I know that when we are elected to these positions that we take so seriously, and the government has the audacity to come into this House and present Bill 20 and not really want to hear what Manitobans have to say.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they say now that this legislation's going to come into effect July the 1st, irregardless of whether or not the bill has been passed, whether or not they have agreed that they want to hear the folks from Manitoba that work so very, very hard each and every day to make this province a better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, if they truly, truly wanted to hear Manitobans, they would make sure that this legislation does not come into effect on July the 1st. We are going to do whatever we have to do to ensure those voices are heard. We're going to still have people come to committee, even though this government does not want to really hear what they have to say; it's very unfortunate.

* (14:40)

And they come forward, time and time again, each and every day, about the motion we brought forward. They say, oh well, the Tories is cut and spend, cut and spend. Well, the first thing we offered

to cut, was scrap the vote tax—\$600,000 this government has agreed to take. So what do we save—a little—about a little cut like that? Can't be that hard to do. Maybe you should spend a little more time going out and raising your own money, instead of reaching into the taxpayer's pocket and taking money from taxpayers that never had a say in this vote tax.

Also about the senior servants' cut, \$9.2 million, Mr. Speaker, we went on to say that—put a hiring chill on the civil servants here in Manitoba after a full spending review.

Government advertising spending, another \$11 million. We know each and every day, when they put out a press release, it's going to be followed up: ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching. We're going to be out there ringing the bells. We're going to be out there tooting the horn, making sure Manitoba 'nuz'—knows what we're doing.

In fact, I know the member from Selkirk's so proud of the fact that he had his hospital announced 22 times—22 times, and it's still not built—still not built. You talk about a waste of money—a waste of money—and then the member from Interlake and the member from Selkirk goes in the media and says, yes, we're so proud—we're so proud—of the fact that we're raising the PST in Manitoba. We are so happy we stay with our government because that's the right thing to do.

And I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, I cannot be more disappointed in those two members. I know as backbenchers they don't have a say but they are going out now, standing right behind their First Minister, right behind the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), saying what a great job you did. Boy, oh boy, I just can't wait to get out there and defend it, saying we don't know what the projects are. We don't know what the projects are; they haven't told us. They said it's all going into infrastructure.

What we have found through the government's own information that was presented with the budget that, in fact, infrastructure's only up by 28 million. You dig through the fine print and look at the hospitals. The other services they've talked about adds up to around \$80 million, just in the 2 per cent sales tax alone. It's \$198 million for just the rest of this year, just the rest of this year. I find that appalling, Mr. Speaker.

What I'd like to do, just in closing here, is say the fact that Manitoba last year had the highest tax increase in 26 years: \$184 million. Now, what'd they

do? They had the audacity to come back in the House and say to those taxpayers, we never got enough, we never got enough, we want to spend more. We understand we need to spend more. You don't realize it yet, but we're going to look after your wallet.

So if it's really, truly that experience is that this government feels they have the mandate to have, then let's call the referendum,

Mr. Speaker, let's do it today.

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk on the budget. After following Mr. Eichler, I hope I can bring some clarity—

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

I just wish to caution the honourable member for Flin Flon that, when referencing members of the House, it's by their constituency names or ministers by their portfolio. I just caution the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Pettersen: I apologize—the honourable—or the member from Lakeside. I just say it was like listening to a Simpsons rerun; there was a lot of blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So I'd like to bring some clarity to the budget, and on behalf of northern people, we're for building infrastructure. We're for building schools and roads, Mr. Speaker. We're not the 'conservatives' who were going to can football stadiums, can MTS Centre, can Hydro. And let's not forget in the past all of you guys were on the side that—all these opposition members were the ones that voted against—or voted for getting rid of MTS. So let's not forget that.

Also, in this budget, it's a plan to protect families, business and economy against global uncertainty and repeated flooding. It is a balanced approach, focused on what matters to Manitoba people. The global economy is fragile, and recent flood reviews prepared by experts and released this month make it clear we need to act now. We can't have a \$12-million vote and wait 'til, you know, 'til the flood is over and damage is done. We need to act now.

Budget 2–13 protects families and business from continued economic and—uncertainty. That is important, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on April 22nd, in the Free Press, the Free Press talked about our budget and said that it was dynamic and hadn't been seen as a budget in

many, many, years. So I have to commend our Finance Minister for working as hard as he did on that; so thank you.

Going on, I'd like to say that on April 19th was the day of shock and awe, and all of us remember the Boston Marathon, but the shock and awe I'm referring to is like the emperor has no clothes. It's when the Leader of the Opposition stood up and give us his alternative to the budget, and that's where we could divide us from them. And, Mr. Speaker, that's where I guess you could say the love-in that happened on Saturday, the Gary Filmon love-in, happened and they seemed enthused by what they did in the past, in the '90s, saying it was one of the best governments that ever ran Manitoba. Well, I think there's a lot of people—I'm not just in this here House or Legislature—will agree that they disagree with that.

Mr. Pallister said that he was going to cut 1 per cent, and 1 per cent—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I've cautioned the honourable member for Flin Flon once. This will be the second time. Please refer your comments to the member by their constituency name or ministers by their portfolio. I am asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for Flin Flon.

The honourable member for Flin Flon has the floor.

Mr. Pettersen: I apologize.

The Leader of the Opposition said he was going to cut 1 per cent: \$52 million from health care which is 700 nurses; \$5 million from justice which is 60 correctional officers; \$16 million in education which is almost 200 teachers; \$11 million from family services which—135 social workers. Having looked at that, there is also the infrastructure jobs that wouldn't be created if we didn't go with this budget. We're talking possibly 20,000 people would be laid off from that area. You also have to realize that in the last flood there was 1,600 civil servants that worked on the flood. Let's lay them off, you know, and let—the flood would get out of hand

And then, of course, I keep on bringing up they want to have a referendum. I don't know if it's an actual referendum on the budget or is it actually to get rid of Hydro. Something that we'll have to look at.

Also, we have to realize that the minister from Thompson was clairvoyant and brought up some

things that were ahead of his time. And I have to also commend the honourable minister from Thompson for actually acknowledging one of our premiers from the Conservative side for building the ditch, Duff's Ditch, and I thought that's what this House is about is to recognize and to honour people that have done good jobs. So I thank that.

But I also have to acknowledge the opposition minister for standing up and basically saying, here's what I stand for. And like I said, he came out and said this is what we'll do if we get into power and that's the cuts. That's where Manitobans are going to feel it. Like I say, we'll still buy the cars. We'll still buy the house, but if you don't have a job you're not buying anything, and I think that's important to recognize that.

I also had a vision, or I'm clairvoyant, and it's about a cartoon that I think is going to be in the, either in the papers in the south, or in Steinbach, Brandon, could even be in the Sun. And it's a picture of Edward Scissorhands, but it's not Johnny Depp as Edward Scissorhands, Mr. Speaker. It's the Leader of the Opposition, and there he is, he's cutting up our budget, Budget 2013. And then at the bottom is a little man, a very little man with we are the champion shirt and he's sweeping up and he's saying, I should have ran as leader. I should have ran as leader.

*(14:50)

And, you know, maybe that will come out, maybe that will be a talk cartoon in the Sun. But, also, below that cartoon there's another one, and it's a meeting, it's a love-in—it's a love-in—for the former Premier of Manitoba, Mr. Filmon. And they're already thinking, and one thing about the Conservatives that they do is they think ahead of time, and they're thinking, maybe we should bring Gary back. You know, let's bring Gary back. And then they also came—the think tank got together and they said, let's change the name because people are finally seeing that, you know what, we're the same old party, we do the same things, cut—so let's change the name, and I'm thinking, my god, what is this new name going to be? What do you think the name's going to be?

An Honourable Member: What? What?

Mr. Pettersen: The Manitoba Party, you know. So I thought that was quite creative, actually. But, you know, having set this all aside, we can see that we have differences in our way we look at the budget. And the thing is we know it's a tough, tough thing for

us to stand here as politicians, MLAs on both sides of the House—we want best what's for Manitoba.

Of course, on my side of the House, we're thinking this is the best way to go, and I obviously am—are on that side. The other side is thinking, well, you know what; we have to have an alternative. But sometimes you have to recognize the truth; the truth will set you free.

And I think when you look at our budget and you look at the impact on fellow Manitobans, it's a budget for growth; it's a budget for families; and it's a budget not just for some people in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, it's a budget for all people: teachers, farmers, northerners, southerners—it's a budget that we can all live with.

And I have to commend the Premier (Mr. Selinger), I have to commend the Finance Minister for working really hard, putting this together and coming up with the most dynamic—the Free Press says, most dynamic budget in years.

So thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): It's an honour to be here today to put a few words on record for the 2013 budget. I'm proud to be here representing the constituents of La Verendrye, Mr. Speaker. This will be the second budget I've had the privilege to vote on. This one, like the last one, is an insult to the people of Manitoba.

I know I have the support of the constituents of La Verendrye to vote against this budget. Mr. Speaker, in the last few days, I've received emails, phone messages from the constituents of La Verendrye, the citizens of Manitoba, urging me not to support this budget, not to support these tax increases. They are a total shock that this Premier, this Finance Minister and the rest of the spendDP government, would bring in another budget that would have more tax increases than the budget of 2012.

The \$184-million tax grab and the \$114-million tax increase in fees was a 25-year high. This year's 2013 budget breaks last year's record of tax increases. The budget of 2013 takes another \$277 million out of the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, when you take the \$298 million in taxes and fees from last year, add another \$298 million that those same taxes and fees will bring in this year, put it together with what's in the 2013 budget, and it's coming up close to a billion

dollars—a billion dollars extra out of the pockets of Manitobans.

During the 2011 election the Premier stated, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have prosperity without any tax increases, and we will deliver on that; we're ahead of schedule right now.

How could the Premier make such a huge mistake, to be that far away from reality? Perhaps he should hire some financial experts and get rid of some of his spinners.

Mr. Speaker, coming from a business background, I know how important it is to have trust in your customers. You cannot be successful in business without this trust. Government is like business in many ways. I wonder how many of the members across campaign on no tax increase in the election of 2011. I wonder what those members would think if their favourite store advertised something they really wanted and really needed at a 75 per cent discount, but when they went to the store they were told it wasn't true; it was only designed to bring them in to the store so they could pay regular price. How many of the members across would be screaming: False advertising; we have to do something about this. This is what the people of Manitoba got in the last election: false advertising, a pile of lies.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite all campaigned on no tax increase. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) said, and I quote: Ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise that sales tax. That's total nonsense. Everybody knows that.

He raised—the people of Manitoba did not know that. He raised the PST after he said he wouldn't. Another spendP lie. This spendP government did nothing but lie to the people of Manitoba in the election of 2011, the budget of 2012 and now the budget of 2013. To add insult to injury, this NDP government plans to change the balanced budget act—fiscal management and taxpayer accountability act in order to raise the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, why will this NDP government not do the right thing and call a referendum? Let the people of Manitoba make this decision. How does the Premier expect the people of Manitoba to obey the law when he himself thinks he's above the law? Is the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) going to send all Manitobans a get-out-of-jail-free card or just to the NDP caucus? Are people allowed to break the

law they want any time they want after seeing the government do it? Is that okay? The Manitoba NDP are trying their hardest and using any excuse they can come up with to avoid a referendum in Manitoba. A referendum before they raised the HST on heating, the NDP in Nova Scotia demanded a referendum. The NDP is only democratic when it's convenient for them, which seems like never. Maybe the Premier can—and the rest of the NDP should take some advice from their family out east, do the right thing and call a referendum. Let the people of Manitoba decide.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Premier and the Finance Minister say how urgent it is to increase the PST as the building season is right around the corner and they need to get all these infrastructure projects started to help Manitoba's economy. They say there's no time for a referendum. Then I listened to one of the members across the way, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), and in her speech she said, and I quote: There have been many months of deliberation. There has been a lot of discussion and there has been a lot of effort put in by the Finance Minister, whose work I want to applaud today.

If the Premier was aware of the need to increase the PST months ago, why did he not call the Legislature back in February or March? We would have offered to help if they would have asked us. There would have been plenty of time for a referendum. Or was it in his plan to mislead the people of Manitoba?

*(15:00)

So the spendP has been discussing raising the PST for months. They have known about it for some time now, but only told Manitobans last Tuesday that they were breaking their promise; just another spendP lie. In the budget of 2012, the NDP laid the groundwork for the budget of 2013 by expanding the PST to include a number of items like home insurance. Now they want to increase the PST by 1 per cent. This is not just a 1 per cent increase. When you add 1 per cent to 7 per cent, that's really a 14 per cent increase in the money collected.

Mr. Speaker, small business plays an important role in Manitoba's economy. What the spendP is doing to small business in this budget is driving them out of business. The Premier has stated he has eliminated the tax on small business, but that's just another spendP lie. What he real—what he fails to realize is that with all the taxes and fee increases he has imposed on small business, the cost of doing

business is eating up all the profit; zero profit means zero tax anyways.

Mr. Speaker, part of the constituency of La Verendrye runs along the American border. Small business in those communities are having a hard time making ends meet. With the tax increase, the spenDP is increasing their cost of doing business. When this happens business may have to raise their selling price, making them less competitive. This government is encouraging customers to shop in the US where their dollar will buy more. One big vicious circle: the NDP is taxing the consumer so they have less to spend, forcing them to find the best deals they can, and these usually are in the US hurting local business.

Mr. Speaker, as the critic for Child and Youth Opportunities, they're important to me. The children and youth of this province are our most precious asset. They are our future. They are the ones that will be making decisions that—it will affect our lives as we age. They will be the government of tomorrow. We need to make sure that we provide them with all the tools they need to become our future leaders.

This budget has little to offer the children and youth of this province. What it does, it offers to cut programs. One such program is The Green Team. The Green Team program offers ages 15 to 29 a summer job or volunteer opportunity that enables Manitoba youth to be better prepared for the job market. This spenDP has decided to shut the door on applications this year by only allowing funding for those organizations that has had Green Team projects last year. This doesn't create opportunities for Manitoba's youth, and it certainly doesn't allow for a merit-based decision on which budgets get funding.

Mr. Speaker, in studying the budget, I noticed funding from programs was down, but wages and benefits were up. And, yes, I know, when I asked the question in Estimates as to why, I will get the following answer: we have contracts with staff and unions for wage increases and we must live up to our word. Our word is important. We have obligations. These are the words I could not agree with more: live up to your obligations and your promises.

I asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger), in the election of 2011, did he not enter into a contract with the people of Manitoba? Did he not enter into a contract with the voters of Manitoba? Did he not make them promises? Is it okay to honour contracts with friends, but not with the 1.2 million Manitobans? I asked the Premier, does he think

election results would have been the same if he told the truth?

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba remains the child poverty capital of Canada, a title our province has sadly held for the last five years; 54,000 children in Manitoba live in poverty. Manitoba's child poverty rate is six points higher than the Canadian average of 14.5 per cent. Sixty-eight per cent of Aboriginal children 6 and under are living in poverty in Manitoba. Between 2003 and 2009 nearly 40 per cent of Manitoba children lived in poverty for at least one year. The HungerCount 2012 report showed that over 63,482 Manitobans accessed food banks in the month of March alone, an increase of more than 56 per cent from March, 2008. Of the individuals that were helped, 47.6 per cent were children under 18, which is significantly higher than the 38 per cent national average.

What else has the NDP government done for the youth and children of this province? Since 2001, Manitoba has led the nation with the highest or second highest high school dropout rates. In 2010, Manitoba's high school dropout rate was at 11.4 per cent, second only to Québec at 11.7 per cent. According to Statistics Canada, Manitoba has among the lowest high school graduation rates in Canada. Manitoba's graduation rate in 2009-2010 was a mere 66.4 per cent. This was the lowest graduation rate amongst all provinces and well below the Canadian average of 78.3 per cent.

The NDP is being dishonest with Manitobans when it claimed in its budget that our graduation rate had increased 84 per cent. They omitted children attending high school in First Nations.

Our students are not measuring up and need more help with basics. In the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program, which measures the performance of grade 8 math students, science and reading, Manitoba ranked last amongst all Canadian provinces in science and reading, and second last in math.

The spenDP government created a new government department, Children and Youth Opportunities. Is the creation of this department an admission of failure, an admission that what they have done in the past was not working? This is a typical spenDP answer: If something is not working, throw more money at it. This Premier needs to realize it is not about how much money you spend, it is about how you spend it. But, with this spenDP

government, the bigger the numbers, the better it sounds.

Mr. Speaker, what else has the spenDP government done for the youth of this province? They are leaving them record debt—almost \$30 billion and growing. This government is not concerned about the future of our youth, only about themselves and their friends. Servicing Manitoba's debt is the fourth largest department in government. The cost of serving this debt is reaching \$1 billion annually. This NDP and—the NDP in this province have enjoyed record-low interest rates since they've been in power, and record federal government transfer payments. I ask the Premier: What will happen should interest rates go up just by 2 or 3 per cent? Will this mean the cost of servicing Manitoba's debt will increase by three or four hundred million? Will the Premier then increase the PST by another 1 per cent to cover this?

With Manitoba's population being only 1.2 million, a \$400-million tax increase just adds hardships to Manitobans. The youth of today deserve better than what this government is doing for them. With this budget, the spenDP have confirmed that their plan for Manitoba—tax and spend more, get less.

With this spenDP government, problems have only gotten worse. Manitoba now ranks at the bottom of the barrel in many social and economic indicators. Our Premier was ranked the worst premier in Canada for fiscal management. Manitoba has the highest tax—income tax rate in Canada, outside Québec. With this PST increase, Manitoba will be the worst in the west for consumption taxes.

Mr. Speaker, this government has come up with excuse after excuse for raising taxes, after they promised no tax increases. They are saying they need money for infrastructure—roads, bridges—which are in terrible shape. They need money for flood mitigation. Where have they been the last 13 years? How could they let it get this far?

* (15:10)

Budget 2012 increased taxes; this was to go to infrastructure. This money did not all go to infrastructure. According to Budget 2013, the capital infrastructure budget for highway and flood protection is only going up by \$28 million. That's only 14 per cent of this year's PST increase. So where's the rest going? Another spenDP untruth?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Finance Minister talk of uncertain economic times.

Would this be the reason the spenDP want to take over a million dollars in vote taxes from hard-working Manitobans to help pay their political operations? The NDP should be raising their own money. The spenDP is hiring more communicators to spin out excuses for poor physical management. They have increased the number of spinners by 60 per cent since 2000. Now, that cost Manitobans \$12.5 million per year.

Mr. Speaker, when economic times get tough any financial manager in this world will tell you the first thing you need to do is look at your spending. When you look at spending that does not mean you cut front-line people. It means you look at where the money is being wasted and where services are being duplicated.

You need to adjust your spending. It is this government's spending addiction that is the problem here. Manitobans should not be penalized for poor fiscal management by this spenDP government.

Mr. Speaker, although the tax increases are a major concern in this budget, my biggest concern is the government's credibility. Would the NDP have been elected if the voters knew what was coming for them? This government has totally misled and lied to Manitobans in the election of 2011, the budget of 2012, now the budget of 2013, but to add insult to injury the NDP are willing to take from Manitobans the taxpayer protection act. These are laws that were put in place to safeguard Manitoba families from governments like the NDP.

Under the balanced budget, debt repayment and taxpayer protection act, Manitobans have the democratic right to a referendum whenever a government wants to raise—raise major tax. The PST falls into this category. Mr. Speaker, what will this NDP government do in the budget of 2014 if Bill 20 passed? Will they bring in another 1 per cent PST increase to feed their spending addiction? This NDP government has every excuse as to why they won't call a referendum, but they are willing to take democratic rights away from the people of Manitoba. Is Manitoba a democracy or a dictatorship?

I know that the members opposite have been receiving emails and calls from constituents. I would ask them to listen to what their constituents are saying. I ask them to vote against this tax increase and support our amendment to this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I would like to open by saying how much of a pleasure it is to be back in the Chamber with you, with my colleagues, the table staff and everyone else that works so hard to make this Chamber and this Legislature run smoothly.

And I would also like to thank you for welcoming my family into the Speaker's Gallery last week when our boys had an in-service and wanted to come and visit to see what happens where I work. And they loved the building and the history and the stories of the construction of this edifice, and, of course, being young boys, looking for fossils in the limestone entertained them for a good part of the morning. *[interjection]* A couple, yes. They enjoyed being introduced to my colleagues and seeing the business of the Chamber. However, they were surprised by the dynamics of the Chamber. Let's just say I had to explain to them that the same rules that we employ around the dinner table and the degree of co-operative interaction we expect from them while they're playing are not necessarily part of the daily parliamentary interaction during question period. But, as a mom, it does make me proud that they were probably some of the best-behaved young men in the room on Friday, which is a fair accomplishment for the 4-to-9-year-old set when you're in a room full of grown-ups in suits.

So thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleagues for the warm welcome that you gave my family, and I look forward to being able to bring them and their friends here to the people's building to see what it takes to work for the people of this province even when the passion of what we all—the passion we all share for the job that we are doing. Well, let's just say it means our behaviours may be a little less refined than what our own mothers might expect of us.

But, speaking of behaviour, Mr. Speaker, it's been really interesting this past week to witness the responses to the budget put forward by my colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), because what I found most interesting is that so many have responded as if the choices in this budget were made lightly and quickly and without thought to consequences fiscal and political. And I can assure you, and assure my neighbours in Kirkfield Park, that these decisions were made after much thought, consideration and after having sought out the advice of Manitobans through prebudget consultation meetings and when each of us as MLAs would meet with those who we represent to seek their advice and

guidance about their priorities for both the short and the long term.

And one message that I heard consistently, from my neighbours in the past few months in the lead up to the budget and one that I brought back to the Minister of Finance was that we needed to find a way to protect those things that mattered most to them: that we must protect front-line health care delivery; that we must protect front-line education personnel and facilities; that we must protect people, homes and infrastructure from future flood damage; that we must ensure that post-secondary education remains affordable and accessible; that we must ensure continued investment in our road and highway infrastructure; that we must continue to invest in those services that ensure apprenticeships and training keep Manitobans employed and meeting our growing needs for skilled tradespeople; that we must ensure that we maintain the affordability of our province, something facilitated by the guarantee of the lowest combined rates for home heating, auto insurance and electricity rates; and that we must maintain our commitment to our children through continued investments in early childhood education and smaller classroom sizes for the K to 3 and sustained funding for all students in the province's schools; and that we must continue to build on previous legislation to ensure safe and supportive school environments for our students, environments where bullying is not an acceptable behaviour and where students are encouraged to create safe and inclusive spaces to grow and flourish.

Every person that brought these concerns to me knew that these would not be easy commitments to keep in light of our current economic and environmental predicament. But they asked that we continue to do what we have done over the past few years, asking that we would not balance the books at the expense of what mattered most to them as they recalled the difficulty of rebuilding after the hack-and-slash policies under members opposite, which my colleague so rightly identified as the regressive cut-services party. I have to thank him for that wonderful turn of phrase. My neighbours recognized that such practices were penny wise and pound foolish. They allowed for provincial books to move forward towards balance, but at the cost of unemployment, people fleeing the province, skyrocketing tuition rates, losses of nurses, doctors and teachers, and the loss of so many things that mattered to them. Mr. Speaker, when facing any economic or fiscal decision, regardless of whether it

is in good financial times or challenging ones, one must not be penny wise and pound foolish. In challenging times such as these it is most important as so much more is at stake and that the urge to cut for the sake of cutting and the sake of a nice neat balance sheet can make many forget the human consequences of such actions.

Members opposite, while their current leader was at the Cabinet table, made just those kinds of penny-wise, pound-foolish decisions that had harsh implications for all Manitobans and for my neighbours: cuts like those he is currently suggesting to health care, where we had ERs that closed their doors outside of daylight and weekday hours to which our beloved Grace had to do in the 1990s; cuts which fired 1,000 nurses including my own friends and family, and, Mr. Speaker, we all know that these kinds of cuts undermine the quality of health care available to Manitobans. They also made cuts that led to flies in the ERs, frozen foods on patients' plates and yet a really nice cheque in the pocket of Connie Curran; five years of an education budget frozen or cut to the point where we lost 700 teachers, undermining the quality of education available to our students and burning out the teachers that remained; 20 per cent cut to foster families meaning \$1,300 less for clothing, food and books to these vulnerable children; and, most disgusting of all, taking away the \$533 per month from single moms with the clawing back of the Universal Child Care Benefit.

* (15:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, when the leader of the regressive cut-services party talks about being an advocate for social justice and for poverty reduction and speaks of the importance of actions speaking louder than words, I believe that he might not have an understanding of the word irony and that he fails to recognize that maybe he should put down his political stones and move out of his multimillion-dollar glass house to gain even a smidgen of credibility in this regard.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure of the educational background of everyone on the other side of the Chamber, but I know that over here we have a few Ph.D.s, including degrees in history and economics. And as one of the folks with graduate degrees related to Canadian history and as someone who spent the better part of my adult life previous to entering this Chamber in lecture halls teaching about aspects of Canadian history and critiquing governmental policy, especially as it related to social

justice, I find both troubling and amusing the references to revisionist history by the Leader of the Opposition. As in my earlier observations on his behaviour and credibility, I would again caution the new member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) that he is going to incur great costs in replacing the windows of his multimillion-dollar glass house lest he put down his stones.

I would also suggest, Mr. Speaker, that in light of this and his apparent Ph.D. envy, which crops up every question period, that maybe my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) discuss with the presidents of our fine Manitoba universities the prospect of awarding an honorary doctorate in revisionist history to the Leader of the Opposition, as his statements in this Chamber clearly qualify for the oral defence component of the degree, but I'm guessing might—that Mike Brown might need to be credited for the written component.

Mr. Speaker, with this concern for accurate historical content, we—and context, we must remember that we are in challenging economic times where uncertainty is, in fact, the new normal. The economic uncertainty of the past few years has shown us that the light at the end of the tunnel of global economic recovery is an ever-moving target, as witnessed last week with the drastic downward movement of the gold standard and the ongoing fiscal crises being experienced elsewhere, especially in those places where governmental responses to this kind of crises were ones of cutting and austerity measures, similar to those ideas put forward this past week by the Leader of the Opposition.

Throughout Canada and around the world, Mr. Speaker, over the past few years we have seen entire sectors collapse, unemployment rise and even national economies collapse. Here in Manitoba the diversity of our economy and the investments made in the economic and social infrastructure under this government during a decade of economic prosperity kept us distanced from the harshest consequences.

This government having built up the fiscal stabilization account, which had been devastated by the previous Filmon government, had balanced budgets for a decade while saving and investing in a numb—in a manner that grew the economy, rebuilt our health care and education systems, filled the infrastructure gaps by members opposite and, again, rebuilt that fiscal stabilization account, an account that was part of the buffer that protected us.

And I cannot imagine what might have befallen us had we not been able to build it up from the sad state it was left in by members opposite, who gutted both the account and the provincial economy, all while selling off a Crown corporation, our own telephone system, all at the cost to Manitoba families of—for those things that mattered most to their daily lives.

And, while we did have a great deal of fiscal protection due to our investments of the past decade, Mr. Speaker, Mother Nature threw us her own curveballs simultaneous to the economic curveballs felt globally. Here we have seen flooding become more intense and more frequent. The consequences of the 1997 flood and the devastation caused by a lack of long-term vision and infrastructure investment by members opposite, including their current leader, meant that upon taking office this government began a substantial long-term investment in preventative measures to ensure the floodway would properly protect those along the Red River. Despite these preventative measures, changing climate patterns resulted in major flooding in 2009, 2011 and similarly are anticipated for this year. To have three major floods in a five-year window is unprecedented, especially in light of the fact that the flood of 2011 was the largest flood in recorded history and what was considered a one-in-a-millennium magnitude.

So, when members opposite critique or dismiss the role that flooding has played in the current fiscal environment, Mr. Speaker, it really speaks either to their lack of an understanding of the bigger picture or that they, too, are seeking graduate degrees in revisionist history, with minors in denial and deflection.

Mr. Speaker, the choices faced by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) in this budget were not easy ones and represent the ongoing adaptation to this ever-changing fiscal and ecological environment. It also represents continuity with last year's budget commitment, something that should remind Manitobans that this budget is part of a legacy of over a decade—well, first of all, a decade of balanced budgets and good times, and commitments kept over a decade to building and preserving what matters most to Manitobans.

Our last budget committed to finding responsible ways to save money and deliver front-line services more effectively. We reduced the number of RHAs, which members opposite had at 13 in their day. We

merged two Crown corporations. We didn't sell any off, like members opposite. We cut \$128 million from government spending by consolidating government offices and freezing or reducing the budgets of 10 departments, and we realized \$75 million through the sale of government assets, while committing to reducing the size of the civil service by 600 over a three-year period, and are actually ahead of schedule in reaching that goal. So to quote the Minister of Finance: We said it; we did it.

There, Mr. Speaker, our actions not only speaking louder than words but, more importantly, in congruence with those words.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans, and my neighbours in Kirkfield Park, can have faith in the decisions and commitments put forth in this year's budget, where we commit to freezing or reducing the budgets of 11 departments, expanding lean management practices to more departments to improve efficiency, extending the 20 per cent freeze on ministerial salaries, limiting overall departmental spending increases to 2.1 per cent, initiating program efficiency reviews and modernizing to provide better services at lower cost to the public purse. So you can see that we are maintaining our balanced approach, focused on what matters most to Manitobans, by protecting families, businesses and the economy against global uncertainty and certain flooding.

Other provinces, when facing their own budgetary decisions, are choosing to increase income taxes, business taxes and health premiums. Some have even imposed H—the HST while others have cut recklessly into core services. We have made more responsible choices, and our Building and Renewal Plan raises modest revenue in the fairest way possible, while accessing one-time, limited federal funding for necessary and urgent infrastructure investment.

As Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, I think one trait that we all share is our love of the opportunity to get better value for our dollar. Now, whether that's a sale, buying bulk or any other opportunity to get more bang for our buck, and the Building and Renewal Plan, and the ability to access federal money over the next 10 years, is just one such opportunity to do this. The projects that this money will support are infrastructure projects that we will need to invest in for the sake of protecting and preserving our current infrastructure investments and to continue ongoing projects.

We will have to spend the money for these things, regardless of where it comes from, Mr. Speaker. So to be able to access federal funding to defray these costs is an opportunity where we can't afford to leave the money on the table by not providing the matching funds to secure this much-needed infrastructure investment. To do so would be penny wise and pound foolish.

So, while it means a temporary increase in the PST, it will be to ensure that so many things that matter to Manitobans, and to my neighbours, are preserved. The immediate and long-term continued investment to protect Manitobans from flooding and the costs associated with this—consequences, keeping Manitobans working by building schools for growing communities, schools which include early education centres, to ensure a stable, continuous, supportive and accessible learning environment for all Manitoba students and continuing the work on building health-care facilities like access centres and QuickCare clinics that provide Manitobans with high-quality health care for each of us.

Mr. Speaker, to see our beloved Grace Hospital recognized as a national leader in health care in a recent survey means that we have made progress from the time when that ER was routinely closed, and that we must continue to make health-care investments through the Building and Renewal Plan because to do otherwise would be akin to asking my neighbours to give up the access centre, the ER and the MRI that we are working hard to deliver to west Winnipeg.

And, Mr. Speaker, I cannot ask my neighbours to give up these things when they have told me that these are the things that matter most to them.

* (15:30)

Mr. Speaker, Monday's announcement was another reflection of that commitment to health care, with the increase in the number of nurses that we will be training, and is welcome news to my neighbours, who value high-quality health care, and it stands in such stark contrast to the firing practices of members opposite.

So, Mr. Speaker, with so much accomplished and so much in progress, to stop now would not only delay the delivery of these priorities to my neighbours, but would also drive up the cost in the long term. To stop the construction of vital infrastructure and to leave the associated federal

funding on the table would be short-sighted and, again, penny wise and pound foolish.

Mr. Speaker, when I see the budgetary suggestions put forth by the Leader of the Opposition, it seems to me that he really did enjoy his time in the Filmon Cabinet and aspires to be like his old boss, as his suggestions bear a remarkable resemblance to the hack-and-slash policies that '90s Tories are infamous for. I would suggest that his economic perspective, much like his knowledge of video games, is rather dated. Just like the Pac-Man and the 8-bit world have been surpassed by MMORPGs, which is the acronym for massively multiplayer online role-playing games, for those that don't have a house full of boys to keep them updated on that technology, on that terminology—so, too, have the economic policies of austerity been replaced by new ways of handling economic downturns.

Now, some of us are familiar with these from, I guess you'd say, the hands-on practice and of witnessing the success and failures of various governments. But what was really interesting this—just this past month, Mr. Speaker, Thomas Herndon, a Ph.D. student in economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, turned economic theory on its head when he debunked a massively influential study by two Harvard professors named Carmen Rienhart and Kenneth Rogoff. Herndon found some hidden errors in Rienhart and Rogoff's data set, then calmly took the entire study out back and slaughtered it. Herndon's take down was an immediate sensation. It was cited by outgoing Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney and mentioned on CNBC and several other news outlets as proof that the pro-austerity movement is based, at least in part, on bogus math. So I might suggest that the Leader of the Opposition put down his Atari, put away his old pro-austerity reading list and put aside his other bad habits of the past and join this millennium.

And, in terms of his fiscal role models, I suggest he might try to aim higher. I could also get him and his colleagues the URL for the peer-reviewed journal that published the Herndon article, so they don't have to troll blogs for their research.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, members opposite have been using blogs for quotes to support their perspective, and I would like to offer a few comments from some Manitobans that see the value of the budget presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), but I must apologize because I am drawing from slightly more credible sources in

referencing, you know, some rather unknown people in our province, like, oh, I don't know, maybe Chris Lorenc, the president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association, who spoke about the budget saying that strong predictable funding for our roads and highways is critical to building a strong economy. These investments mean good jobs for thousands of Manitobans and they mean better local roads for families.

But, you know, I'd right—I'd also like to choose from a broader cross-section and, you know what, maybe it's just my naive assumption to think that someone with such a familiarity with infrastructure is not a lone voice in the mill—in the wilderness, but then I opened up the Free Press this weekend and found there were other Manitobans who got it. Now, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, I've never met Carl Radimer, but I do have to say, he has a way with words, and I quote: I'm appalled by the parade of self-interest and self-serving opposition politicians lining up to criticize a government facing a huge deficit for raising taxes. Get real—it's 1 cent on a dollar spent. Remember the penny? It's the coin we left on the counter or threw in a jar. If people don't want to pay taxes, they just have to tell the government which services they no longer want. End quote.

Well, if members opposite recall, Manitobans asked us to preserve what matters most, they have not asked us to reduce services. It is not an easy choice to ask people to increase their investment in our collective future, but Mr. Radimer understands the choices we are facing.

Now, Dan Cecchini is another Winnipeg resident that offered some insight to Free Press readers this weekend when he said, and I quote: Interesting how a government can be chastised for asking to pay for services people demand like education, health care, infrastructure and safety. Yet private industry can increase the cost of vehicles, food, electronics, which he refers to as foreign-made entertainment toys, gasoline, which he notes is reporting huge profits, and there is no public outcry. Worse, is that people will charge PST-related purchases on their credit card at 20 per cent interest and that's okay too. His closing line is what really gets me, though: I think the Manitoba government should spend the added revenue on adult education in common-sense economics. Enrolment by Conservative politicians is mandatory. So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say to my colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education

(Ms. Selby): Thank you for keeping tuition reasonable, and I'd like to ask if she could see which of our fine universities might be interested in taking up Mr. Cecchini's curriculum suggestion.

So I would like to close, Mr. Speaker, by mentioning some conversations that I actually had on Tuesday morning at my office with two of my Westwood neighbours. First, Mr. Hugh Gordon set up an appointment with me to address a variety of issues, and what I always love about meeting with Mr. Gordon is his thoughtfulness and respect for well-thought-out and broad-minded approaches to issues. He is one of the retired teachers in my neighbourhood and someone whose opinion and perspectives I respect. He and I must have spent nearly an hour in conversation where he expressed his appreciation for the work that was being done by this government on his behalf and the tough choices being made. He also expressed disappointment in arguments being presented against this budget and against our plan for the province that he felt were based in ideology and ignorance and that, as he put it, lack a reasonable discourse in those arguments.

He, too, made it into the Free Press on Monday, though, and on a different matter, but I did find it interesting that he referenced the Thomas Gray quote, "where ignorance is bliss, / 'Tis folly to be wise." And while I don't want to put words in Mr. Gordon's mouth, I will say that when I read that quote it made me think of what it might be like around the caucus table for members opposite.

But only moments after Mr. Gordon's departure Mr. Kirk Koppers popped in, and—as he often does just to say hi and to share his thoughts on current events. He took the time to let me know how—his perspective on the importance of investments in infrastructure and, especially, how it related to long-term flood prevention to protect Manitobans. He, too, appreciated the choices faced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and recognized the value of accessing the federal infrastructure funding rather than leaving it on the table in a short-sighted manner.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't need to go to blogs to seek validation for my support of this budget because my neighbours have told me they don't want penny-wise and pound-foolish behaviour. They don't want tough love and they don't want austerity, all of which would dismantle health care, education and infrastructure investments that matter the most to them. They want nurses; they want teachers; they

want the access centre and they want compassion and a balanced and reasonable approach to building our future. Today I recommit myself to doing exactly that kind of work in my support of this budget.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): It's my pleasure to rise to put a few words on the record in regards to the 2013 budget that's been brought down by the spenDP government. Mr. Speaker, the—I just want to say, as well, welcome to all of our clerks and personnel that help us operate the Legislature here on a regular basis and to our pages that will spend the next few months with us as well.

I want to say that I'm very disappointed in this budget to start with and will not be voting for it. There's a sound amendment brought forward by our leader of our opposition, the member from Fort Whyte. And, you know, I think that there was a comment made earlier that perhaps this budget would be like a lump of coal for Manitobans. Well, I would say they got the whole boxcar full rather than just a lump.

* (15:40)

Mr. Speaker, there's no planning, no long-term planning in this budget. There's no imagination used in trying to provide a better future for our youth in Manitoba and they will pay dearly for this budget in the future if this government doesn't make changes to it.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there are situations that arise and speeches that have been made by our—by the Premier (Mr. Selinger). I know that there's been speeches made by other premiers in our province as well, but there's a quote that I recall from the 2011 election campaign brought forward by this Premier, and it was from September 2nd of 2011, and I quote: Today's release of the 2010-11 Public Accounts shows that Greg Selinger's five-year economic plan is on track to return the budget to balance by 2014, protecting jobs and services without raising taxes. But that also—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The honourable member for Arthur-Virden, I'd like to caution him on the use of ministers by their portfolios or other members by their constituency names. So I ask for his co-operation.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I apologize for that use of the Premier's name instead of his constituency, even if it was in the quote.

He also went on to say, and I quote: Our five—our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver that. We're ahead of schedule right now.

Well, that's one of the biggest lies this province has ever seen. It is terrible that in the middle of a campaign all of his members campaigned on that hope. They campaigned on the fact that they were going to balance the books of this Province, that they were on time to do it and they would do it with no tax increases. Well, obviously, they didn't fulfill that promise, and by bringing in last year's budget, Mr. Speaker, they broke it even further by bringing in the largest tax increase in 25 years: \$184 million in taxes, \$114 million more in fees and charges to bring in one of the biggest increases—obviously, as I've indicated—the biggest increase in 25 years.

Mr. Speaker, they broadened out the PST before that in a number of areas. They broadened it out on building supplies and labour for the building of homes. That wasn't enough in the early years of this government so they brought it in and expanded it to lawyers, accountants and architects, and you know that if you're going to build anything they've put enough rules in place that you have to use a lawyer to sign the documents. You have to get a plan through—an architecture and you have to have an accountant to do the management of those programs. All of these professional fees—very capable people—but they can do it—they—what the government fails to realize is that they can take up residence in any other province. They're a very mobile part of our society and they can invest their talents in any province that they wish in their country or, other words—other areas around the world, for that matter.

So, having broadened out the PST, you would have thought that was enough. But last year, Mr. Speaker, in that budget they also brought it in and expanded it to property insurances and to haircuts and to a number of other areas that they—smaller areas that affect virtually all Manitobans. So all of a sudden we've got this extremely broadened out PST, still at 7 per cent, mind you, because they were afraid that they couldn't go higher.

Well, their inability to manage, Mr. Speaker, forced them into the position this year where they had to raise it to 8 per cent. They say they had to, didn't have a choice, have to do it right now. Well, there were lots of choices and our leader outlined those choices to them last week.

And when they chastise us for at least half of that area, Mr. Speaker, it was pointed out to them that it was from their own election promises: a 1 per cent efficiencies in government, \$120 million across the board. The co-chair of the NDP at that—in that election campaign is now sitting as the Minister of Labour (Ms. Howard) in this House, the House leader of the NDP, and she quite conveniently forgets that she was the co-chair that said they would have a 1 per cent efficiency in government. Must have forgot that, conveniently forgot that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that the minister here in—the Premier (Mr. Selinger), rather—in the past short while has indicated that anybody that would think that they would ever increase taxes—and I believe this was from that period at same period of time in 2011—that everybody knows we'd never increase taxes, and anybody that thinks we would, it would be nonsense. Well, we've seen a lot of nonsense in the last while in this House when you consider the amount that they have actually raised in this budget. The 1 per cent PST increase that they're bringing in to take Manitoba from a 7 per cent PST to eight increases the government's revenue in a full year to \$278 million when they get it fully implemented—and saying that it'll only last 10 years.

Well, you know, the experience nationally is that income taxes came in after the war as a temporary measure, Mr. Speaker, and I would say that there's only been a few governments in Canada that have had the tenacity and the vision to lower some of those taxes and, of course, I'm looking at the GST from the federal government.

An Honourable Member: Who did that?

Mr. Maguire: But I would say that the, you know, well, the member from Steinbach's wondering who did that. You know, and I would say—

An Honourable Member: Was it Stephen Harper?

Mr. Maguire: It was Stephen Harper, it was the Prime Minister of Canada, the Conservative Prime Minister of this country, a visionary, Mr. Speaker, in regards to being able to manage the situations of this country.

The government has indicated that they will move forward, that they need to do it right now. We have a billion dollars' worth of infrastructure that we have to build for flood mitigation. Well, I appreciate the minister from—of Transport the other day. He brought—took us to his office and he indicated that—he gave us a good briefing of the flood reports that

have come out, Mr. Speaker, and he indicated that there was a billion and there is a—mentioned a billion dollars in—of flood mitigation infrastructure in those documents.

But I indicate to him that none of its new. Most of it is 40, 50 years that it's been in the making and so I don't see the urgency right now, Mr. Speaker, because they've been in government for 14 years. And as pointed out many times in question period, outside of Progressive Conservative initiated projects they have indicated—it's indicated that they have spent 0.18 per cent of their budget on flood mitigation out of a \$140 billion worth of revenue that they've spent over this past 13 years. So, obviously, they don't even see the urgency in it themselves or they would have done more to have built it up. And they're not following even their own polling which shows that over 70 per cent of people think that in hiking the PST is a bad idea.

And so, I guess, you know, it's with, I guess, just—I'm thunderstruck by the idea of—spellbound, I guess, by the lack of direction that this government has. And particularly, coming from the member for Dauphin, our new Finance Minister, he's been around. This is his second—or second budget speech, I believe, and, you know, and I actually felt that he had some vision, Mr. Speaker, until he brought both of these in. Of course, I should have known that his record on forcing people to accept, you know, issues with hog moratoriums, sewage ejectors, and without consultation of—with—from anyone. And, even though he had consultations on the hog moratorium, biggest committee in Manitoba's history, never changed one word. So I wouldn't hold out—if I was a Manitoban thinking the government will come to their senses right now, I would say not. It's not the purview of this minister to have made those changes in the past and I doubt that he will in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just refer to the flooding for a moment. You know, today we've seen a report, you know, in regards to the urgency and it will still—there will still be flooding. There will be rivers that are outside their banks before this spring is over. But I just want to say that if we're doing this because of urgency right now because the Premier keeps saying we don't want to lose a year of construction season, well, I would say that if they haven't got the tenders out for a lot of the projects that are on the go right now then they've probably lost it already. I know of bridges that are being built, some roads that need repair. This government needs this money so that they can pay bills that they've

already got. That's probably what they're doing with it.

I would say that, you know, one of those things—I had an opportunity to drive to the border myself on Saturday and I looked at the snow south of Winnipeg. And, Mr. Speaker, if we don't get any more snow and if we don't get rain on top of it, the snow that's between Winnipeg—that I saw between Winnipeg and Pembina, North Dakota, last Saturday the—wouldn't be enough to fill the Red River if it melted at the rate that it's been melting. It's been soaking in. There were bare fields there some places and no water laying around, none in the rivers, none in the creeks.

* (15:50)

Mr. Speaker, I have said it in my earlier comments that there will be flooding on some of these rivers, and we will see water coming from Fargo because those people, unfortunately, got close to two feet of snow a week and a half ago. But I just got a report today, showing from the Fargo Forum newspaper, that indicates that the flooding has already been reduced by a two-foot level in the city of Fargo. So that, we hope, will take away some of the urgency of the need in this—in the Red River basin, although, as I say, we always have to be cautious.

In other areas, Mr. Speaker, I would say that the snowfall in southeast Saskatchewan and central eastern Saskatchewan is going to be—is more than there is here, and it will flow down the Assiniboine, down the Souris and through the Qu'Appelle, and we look for better management of those flows than we've seen in the past from this government. Their forecasting has been inept in the past, and I guess one of the things that concerns a lot of the people in those areas this year is even—they wanted it managed, they wanted it controlled, but now they've taken it down so far that even fish are dying in the Shellmouth, in the Lake of the Prairies.

And I think that that's a situation, Mr. Speaker—I'm not a hydrologist and I'm not a biologist, but I know that if they'd have waited until there was a thousand or 1,500 cubic feet at least melting and coming in, then they could have opened the conduit and let that much out. Right now, there's 330 cubic feet per second coming into the Shellmouth basin and it's a hundred going out. They've taken it down to 1,383 feet above sea level instead of the 1,386 they've normally had. It was 1,396 last year. It goes over the dam at 1,408.5.

There's a great deal of area there to manage this flood as it comes forward, if it—if the—from spring runoff. We look forward to being managed better than it has. I would say that farmers are telling me in those areas, and citizens, that a lot of the snow is melting and soaking into the ground, Mr. Speaker, very little frost there this winter in spite of some areas that we've heard more earlier.

I just wanted to say that we would hope that the Shellmouth is managed much better this year than it was in the past three. Young farmers that I know of have bought land in 2010 and have never taken a penny off of that land yet. Flooded in 2010, flooded in 2011 and a larger flood, albeit—but the worst-case scenario was last year, Mr. Speaker, when all of their investment—some cases over \$250 an acre—was in that 40,000 acres of land in the valley and it was lost to a flood that occurred at the end of June.

Most—and the minister has indicated there was artificial flooding in that area, Mr. Speaker, and I guess, you know, we want to look at it and say that the Shellmouth compensation act, dam compensation act, was put in place to protect them. They indicate to us that it is actually a hindrance to them getting compensation. We know that there's some—the minister's study showed that there was a week-long period in there, where there was some artificial flooding, and I guess they missed the boat completely as far as the local people are telling me because if they'd have let some of that water out in the spring, or soon as it started raining, and moved it down the river earlier, there wouldn't have—you could have spread out the flow of the water and not had the disaster that they had last year. And I think that's one of the things that needs to be considered, as we move forward in this whole program.

Mr. Speaker, I only raise this whole issue because, you know, it—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'd like to draw the attention of our guests that are with us here this afternoon, there are to be no photographs taken of the Chamber while we're sitting, so I ask for your co-operation.

Mr. Maguire: I just wanted to say as well that, you know, as I said earlier, I'm not a hydrologist or a botanist or biologist but, you know, I get up every day and I look at the weather channels that we have available—all citizens can see them—and we've only had a handful of days that it got over zero all spring. Fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe we're to get to 5 degrees tomorrow. That will be the latest that we've reached

5C in 145 years of records. And so that's the lateness of the spring. We can see that in our forecasting as we get up and do our—go about our daily lives every day, as we move forward, and yet we've allowed—you know, so therefore, if it's not thawing you don't get any water coming in the lakes and rivers—that's my point in this whole dissertation in regards to risk of flood management.

And the Premier (Mr. Selinger) says that we've got the third major risk of flooding in five years, right now, Mr. Speaker. Well, right now, he's also indicated that it won't get to Winnipeg and the Red River for at least three weeks, at least the middle of May, and so we'll see what gets here. I hope that he's—that—I hope we're all wrong and that we don't have the major flooding that's been predicted, but we will see.

Mr. Speaker, as I look around the region and see infrastructure needs and in bridges over the Souris River, at Coulter and Hartney, and Highway 10 from the Peace Gardens to No. 2 east, on Highway 21 from the US border to Deloraine, again, around Hamiota to the north, No. 3 in the Pearson area, along the Saskatchewan border—as I look after the movement of traffic around our region with the oil industry and the agricultural industry, I see a great shortage of infrastructure and a great hurt there.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

It is unfortunate that they are not going to receive the benefits that they thought they would get. Those who had asked the government for a 1 per cent increase to go to infrastructure have been sold the idea that they got the 1 per cent increase. But now they're starting to find out that it's not going to their infrastructure projects, it's going to the pet projects of this provincial government and not to roads and bridges, Mr. Speaker, very—or Mr. Deputy Speaker—it's actually very, very small portion of that that's going to—of that \$278 million that'll end up in actual road infrastructure.

So I want to move forward as well. This government has no vision. They wanted to take the vote tax; they've indicated they will. We will not, Mr. Speaker. That's a clear difference between—Deputy Speaker—clear difference in our parties. We believe that you need to work to raise funds from those who support you for administration of our political parties, and the NDP do not believe that. They believe that they should just be able to take it out of general revenue, out of general taxation and

rob Manitobans of those dollars so that they can run their own party, and that's a clear difference and it'll continue to be there as we move forward.

Also, the difference is we would continue to discuss issues of importance with the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. The municipalities around this province and not force them to amalgamate, as many of my colleagues indicated is taking place presently. I have attended two of those meetings of—on a large scale, and apart from the AMM meeting—the annual general meeting here in the city in November, and it's disheartening to see the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux), the member from Dawson Trail, stand up in this House, stand up in front of people at public meetings and force them to amalgamate. Demand that they're going to buckle under his dictatorship and force them to amalgamate with their neighbours. And as many have indicated to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that even if we could agree with our neighbours on these issues, the time frame to do so, by next June, before the 2014 municipal elections, is just not there, when they're worried about flooding; when they're worried about the debt of the province; when they're worried about the fact they haven't been compensated for the flood claims that they put in, many of them, for the 2011 flood, yet, and we're all—we're well into 2013.

These are poor planning on behalf of a provincial government that just uses excuses to continue to move forward in the easy way out, and that is on the backs of Manitoba taxpayers. They have not been able to make sound decisions, and I'll give you another example—I guess I would say that we've got a situation where I feel that we have to protect Manitoba Hydro from the NDP. We can't let them break it, Mr. Speaker, because—Deputy Speaker—because, you know, a lot of people were concerned throughout Manitoba about the extra billion, billion four that they're going to build for taking the west-side line around the west side, around by The Pas, around Riding Mountain, down through St. Claude and across some of the best agricultural land in southern Manitoba, most productive land, to bring it back up to the east side to ship power to our American neighbours. But that power line is only one.

* (16:00)

Now, Mr. Speaker, we've got a change in demographic or a change in economics in energy across North America and perhaps around the world

from the new findings of shale gas, from the new oil exploration taking place even by our neighbours to the south, in our own province in the southwest part of Manitoba as well on a smaller scale but still large for our southwest region, the importance of it. Energy prices aren't what they were. They aren't what the 30-year Hydro plan indicated would be there in order to move forward with this plan.

But the NDP have not changed. They have forced Hydro to build down the wrong side of the province, down the west side as opposed to a straighter line down the east side, and the costs of the overall projects now is over \$20 billion. We clearly want them to step back, take a second, sober look, as the Public Utilities Board has demanded of the government, Mr. Speaker. The Public Utilities Board has asked the government to put all capital projects before them to be reviewed before they move forward. Just makes sense that you would do that, to take a look at it, because a 30-year plan, as we all know in business, everyone would take a look at wanting a more clear plan and updated once in a while, maybe even every couple of years. But this government hasn't taken that. They buried their head in the sand, bulldozed forward with the idea that they would just bring this project to fruition and we just want them to step back and take a second, sober look at it.

Mr. Speaker, take another look at the fact that the Americans—that we're exporting power to the Americans for 3 and a half cents when the new costs of production in the north are 14; that's a big loss. We know we have to look forward for the future. Then let's step back for some time and look at the types of energy that's being developed in—by our neighbours and the needs of the Americans if that's where we're going to continue to do it. We need power in Manitoba to move forward, but the projections are that we have power for a number of years, perhaps a decade or two. But we need reliable power for ourselves, but when you are looking at the levels that the NDP are looking at then it's a major export cost if you can't have solid contracts to bring it to pay for itself.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to remark that the debt of the Province has gone from \$13 billion to \$30 billion over the last 14 years. When I was first elected in '99 it was \$13 billion. I even put out an information piece to my constituents a short time ago indicating that it was \$27 billion. By the time we get this budget included it will be near or over \$30 billion. That's on top of a—that actually is

increasing the debt of the Province by a billion dollars every year.

The deficit last year was a billion dollars. The Auditor General even indicated that a good deal of that was not from the flood, that it was from overspending and mismanagement by the NDP and they don't even try to defend that.

Mr. Speaker, this year citizens of Manitoba have seen that the—in this budget that we will have a debt—a deficit, rather, of \$518 million this year. And if you take the fact that the PST will only be for three quarters of a year this year, \$198 million roughly, it would end up being over \$700 million in true deficit if they hadn't of brought the PST in. That's why they brought—partly why they brought it: to hide the fact that of their mismanagement, to prove to Manitobans that they're doing better than they—than Manitobans even know they are so that it's a shell game. They're trying to fool Manitobans with their own money and I would say they're not doing a very good job of it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the forced amalgamation of municipalities around Manitoba, as I indicated earlier, is not something that's—that is very—that honours or respects the activities of these local citizens and is something that I think is worth mentioning again. There are a number of citizens around Manitoba that have indicated that there are huge shortfalls in this budget. I see one here I'd quote from: a member of a farm organization in Manitoba that said that the—since the 2011 flood it's been a perennial problem and it's really a pain for a lot of people. And he was talking about the bridge on 21 Highway near Hartney that is still only a one-lane and it's been two years, and all that's happened is that there's a one-lane detour there. And this is not something that's going to allow for the enhancement of the economy in that local area, even though everyone there wants a new bridge. They know that it could be—that it should have been done by now, and that there's an opportunity to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close by saying that there are positive options that have been put forward by our leader and by our party. Three of them that I could start with is—that I'll just mention is, one that I've already talked about. The difference is we would not take the vote tax. Manitoba citizens need to be—are telling us that they feel that this is a regressive way of funding administration for political parties in this province.

We have also put forward the support for low-income earners. To increase their rental—housing

portion, or funds, from the \$285, roughly, that the NDP have left there and throughout their reign, if you will. Rental costs have changed in Manitoba. The average one-bedroom apartment now costs \$704, and we have indicated we would raise the rental allowance to three-quarters of that for these low-income learners, therefore leaving more money for food for those folks, and the people in the—I was going to say industry or business. But it's unfortunate, the people that are supplying the food in food banks indicate that taking this measure would be a great step forward in taking—reducing the number of people that actually need food banks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think that's something that all citizens could vote for unanimously, even our members across the floor.

Mr. Speaker, the third area that I want to mention is that we would increase the basic personal exemption by \$2,000. The \$250 done in this budget hardly keeps up with inflation. It raises it to \$10,600 under our objective, and we've got a situation where that is just bringing it up to the Canadian average. But it would take 18,000 people off of the tax rolls in Manitoba, and allow those people to have more funds to invest back into our—their families, their homes and in the Manitoba economy.

It's just a difference of opinion between us and this government as to how to do that. But the mathematics indicates that they'd be better off with an increase in basic personal exemption than the route that this government is—of the magnitude of this—that this government's going.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest benefactors, of course, of an increased basic personal exemption are seniors on fixed incomes, students and the poorest of our society. Those are probably three of those levels that—young families as well, with beginning family members are a fourth area that are the large recipients and the large benefactors of a basic personal exemption increase of this significance.

And so I will close, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I will be certainly supporting the amendments brought forward by my leader and voting against the government's program. Because—and I want to close by saying that all the citizens of Arthur-Virden have—certainly, it's my pleasure to be able to represent them in this House, and I look forward to continuing to be able to represent them as the great sports teams and persons in—of acting abilities, and we have some tremendous volunteers from this region of Manitoba.

And, as we move forward to try and make Manitoba more prosperous and a better home for all of their families, I just want to say that I urge everyone in this House to vote against the government's Throne Speech and for the amendment brought forward by the opposition leader in this House. Thank you.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I wasn't expecting such a round of applause when I stood up, Mr. Speaker, but thank you very much to the members opposite.

I do want to say, though, I thank all members of the Chamber and the House. Of course, I think most people know I had a bit of an unfortunate incident, and I did get support from not only my own caucus, but everyone in the Chamber and, of course, I want to thank all members of the House for the support that—for me, and, of course, for my family, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:10)

I, of course, stand very proud to support Budget 2013, a budget that protects families from the flood, makes major investments into infrastructure, into roads, schools, hospitals, personal care homes, Mr. Speaker. It builds our economy. It stimulates our economy, creates thousands of jobs, invests in services that matter most to Manitoba families: teachers, nurses, social workers.

Often I've heard a lot of cynicism from members across. We've got to hear things on—we get to hear words like poverty and some of the challenges and some of the hardship, and it's always interesting when they bring it up, that they're very good at talking about hardships and cynicism. But I'd like to give some perspectives on it.

You know, poverty is a very complex issue, Mr. Speaker, and as somebody who understands it from a very personal level, as someone who understands it from building a career working with young people and families dealing with it and, of course, someone who now proudly represents an area that often struggles with the challenges around low socio-economics, I'm very proud. And I'd like to put some words on the record by how we're actually supporting young people, how we're supporting families, how we're maximizing the potential of young people.

And where does it start? Well, it starts even before they're born. That's why we make major investments, up to—close to 4,000 women who are pregnant get the prenatal benefit, a benefit that not

only provides them information around nutrition, but gives them the financial means to be able to go and provide that. Now, one of the things that we do is we make sure that we research it. We collect data. We evaluate it, and here's what we know: that these 4,000–up to 4,000 women who get this benefit, their babies are often born at a healthy baby weight. There's less preterm births and increases breastfeeding which, of course, has not only economic values but, of course, health values. So that's one benefit.

A second benefit that I think we've heard a lot about is the National Child Benefit. In fact, we put an end to the clawback and put up to \$48 million back into the pockets of low-income families. We also have the Manitoba child benefit that's another additional \$3 million, Mr. Speaker. And so when you talk about poverty we understand how important it is to make sure that we are reinvesting that.

Now, when we talk about these benefits, particularly the National Child Benefit, not only did we end that clawback, but we maintained all the services and increased the programs to support these families, Mr. Speaker. But it doesn't stop there with the benefits. We want to make sure that we have a wrap-around approach, that we want to make sure that these families that have these children that might be dealing with the struggles of poverty, that they're getting supports. We have the Healthy Baby community support program, the Families First home visiting program.

Now, what do these kinds of programs do? Well, one of the things it does is it builds self-confidence and self-esteem of new parents. And I could tell you, as a new parent living in Winnipeg's North End, a nurse came, asked us questions, collected data—because, of course, we want to make sure that we're targeting these resources where it's going to make the biggest difference. But when she was done we asked her a bunch of questions. As a new father, I got to ask a bunch of questions. She told me about the services and resources that are available out there. Of course, that improves access to a lot of these services and resources, and it provides a network of support for some of our most vulnerable families, Mr. Speaker.

One of the other things that we do, of course, is we put a lot of emphasis on what's called the early development instrument, the EDI, because we want to make sure that we're investing in young people, because we understand the best way to get out of

poverty is education, Mr. Speaker. So we make investments in that. We bring together schools and parents and caregivers, community people, and we want to try to find out how—if young people are actually ready and where their gaps are. And so by doing that we're making those investments and we can fill in those gaps and make sure young people have the literacy, the language, the numeracy skills that it takes before they actually into school.

Those kinds of investments are investing in the potential of young people, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this budget represents. We bring—we have 26 parent-child coalitions structured all throughout the province of Manitoba. You know, we bring together an incredible amount of people to maximize the services and resources of this. We want to make sure that the information is getting out to people. We want to make sure that we're maximizing the expertise and the experience of individual people in their communities. We want to make sure if there's gaps, that we're filling those gaps.

And, you know, one of the things that—one of the first things I got to do as a minister, I got to travel up to the north–northeastern part of Manitoba where—the member from LaVerendrye was there, the member from Lac du Bonnet was there, and we did leadership forums and we talked and used the parent-child coalition and we heard about this. And we not only presented all the wonderful things and these investments are making for children's lives, but we talked about our challenges, and we sat together.

So the very investments that we're making, Mr. Speaker, they support members opposite as well. So, you know, they can be as cynical as they want, but, at the end of the day, they are seeing the potential first-hand, because I got to sit with them at the leadership forum. You know, one of the first announcements I got to do was on the Abecedarian Approach, and I stood before—I got to stand here before and talk about the Abecedarian Approach, and there was a little guy there—his name was Charlie. Charlie's a young boy on social assistance, and he was sitting there, he was counting: one, two, three. Well, my son is two years old, and I couldn't believe this little guy was already counting. This is a young boy whose mom dealt with major trauma in her life, and this is a young boy on social assistance and because we made this investment, the first of a kind in the country, with 40 years of research done, it improved this little guy's literacy skills; his language skills; his numeracy skills. So when he actually goes to school, he's going to be at the same level as my

son whose parents have five university degrees. That is the kinds of investments we're making in Budget 2013; that is the kind of investment that we're incredibly proud of.

Now, I know that every leading economist talks about—if you talk about the importance of early childhood development, every dollar that we put in, we get a \$17 return on it. Now, talking about potential, Mr. Speaker, I've got to tell you, I know members opposite don't like to hear about the 1990s, and I got to be honest with you, I don't like talking about the 1990s either, because I was a guy growing up in Winnipeg's North End—our friendship centre's doors were closed; the funding was cut. You know, the local YMCA programs were being cut.

I don't like talking about those kinds of things, Mr. Speaker. I like to talk about how we maximize the potential of children, youth and families in our communities, and that's why I'm very proud to support this budget. I'm—I proudly support the idea of the announcement we got to do with True North Sports & Entertainment, the Winnipeg Jets foundation, on the After School Leaders program, a signature partner. I was very proud to announce the After School Network; that's a \$12-million commitment to young people between ages of 7 years old, 29 years old, brings together hundreds of organizations all throughout the province including those Aboriginal organizations in northern Manitoba that were cut. And I know they were cut, because when I travelled to northern Manitoba they told me they were cut in the '90s. Now, not only are they cut now, they're thriving and doing incredibly well.

But what's unique about this network is one of the things that we do is we don't only invest with these organizations, but a lot of these investments has generated incredible support from other funders. Often the Province of Manitoba is at the table first. We open the doors first; we invest in young people first; and then you start seeing other funders come in, other governments coming forward. You start to see organizations like the United Way, The Winnipeg Foundation, to the tune of—when I travelled the province and I got to talk about and listen to what Manitobans had to say, that directly and indirectly 60,000 young people are busy every single summer in the province of Manitoba; 60,000 young people involved in enrichment programs from the ages of 6 years old all the way up to mid-20s—summer employment to enrichment programs to children's play programs, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, one program, the Lighthouses program—there's 71 in the province of Manitoba. There's been over 1.4 million visits. Often these were places that were closed, the doors weren't open. We opened the doors to a lot of these community centres, these schools. We opened them up. Now they're hubs of activities. What do you see there? You see incredible structure built in there for young people. You see young people that are busy building all sorts of skills, Mr. Speaker, on leadership, great supervision, strong role models, strong mentorship. And once again, these Lighthouses has generated an incredible amount of funds from the private sector and other levels of government.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to give one example of what I'm talking about in the face of hardship, how a budget like this can maximize the potential of young people. My colleague, the member from Lac du Bonnet, he stood in the House and he proudly recognized three of his constituents that inspired a nation. They were called Sagkeeng's Finest—three young men. In the face of hardship they dance, they perform. Now they're travelling all throughout the province. They won Canada's Got Talent.

The nineteen nine—in the 1990s that wasn't possible, because there wasn't cultural programs. Those enrichment programs weren't there. So, when you make investments like that and you see three young men like that not only become ambassadors and role models for Manitoba, but you start to understand that, without question, that's how you maximize the potential of them and the pride that you see in those communities, Mr. Speaker. And all of us were proud of Sagkeeng's Finest.

* (16:20)

As I travel the province—I think I've done three or four tours already—I make sure that I travel all throughout the province. I was down in Morden; I got to see a phenomenal recreation centre. Up in Thompson; a regional community centre. In the—Parkland regional complex in Dauphin. Of course we see—right now we see a—kind of a big hole at the University of Winnipeg where their new field house is going to be. But record investments into recreation facilities, Mr. Speaker. That becomes vitally important because that's where young people and families can make major contributions, build skills, have a great place to have a—build a strong sense of belonging.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we heard the commitment that our government's made about growing our workforce by 75,000 jobs 2020. Of course, we know that young people have a major role to play in that. I want to mention a few programs. But I want to talk about how popular, how effective and how many of our programs for young people have become the envy in the country, the investments we make around work experience, career exploration, record investments. There was a young girl, her name's Grace. She's a new Canadian student who came into Winnipeg, was struggling to find a job, got connected through our Bright Futures program, got a job at the University of Winnipeg, became an ambassador for not only inner-city of Winnipeg but, you know, a role model for her younger sisters and brothers

And one of the things that we've been able to do in government, we have been able to improve these programs year after year after year, and how do we do that? Well, we listen to what our partners have to say. We listen to what young people have to say. We make sure other funders because we draw in a lot and generate a lot of support from other funders, and then when it's time expand programs we make sure we expand them in a very good way that's going to maximize those resources, Mr. Speaker.

I want to give one example, I know a member opposite talked a little bit about The Green Team program. Well I'd like to without question put some words on the record about The Green Team program, Mr. Speaker, because this is a program that is the envy of other provinces. An amazing program we fund—just that one program alone nearly funds close to 500 organizations with our Green Team program.

That is close to 1,100 jobs for youth every single summer. This is only one youth program, just the one, over—close to 1,100. From 2000 to 2012 over 15,000 young people have been touched by that one program, 15,000; that's a big difference between cuts that we saw.

But, look, we're also—this budget is also making major investments into: young people as it relates to mentorship and apprenticeship, lots of jobs created there; cultural programs so young people who have an interest in culture can work and build careers in that; sport and recreation programs; the arts; multimedia. Very, very proud program, Mr. Speaker, and anytime that I can stand up and talk about our Green Team program in this House I'll proudly do it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about one program, the Bright Futures program, and a concept that we coined—or that I've been able to coin—as a tap on the shoulder. It's a—the idea of a tap on a shoulder is sometimes we know that we want to make sure that post-secondary is accessible to everyone and we want to give young kids a tap on their shoulder say post-secondary is for you. With our investments we are removing those barriers that maybe hinder that participation. We're making sure we're making investments in bursaries and scholarships, making sure that young people are getting the academic support and the mentorship support they need. Young people that need summer employment, employment opportunities to do that, we're making record investments in there. So I'm very, very proud of the investments we're making to maximize the potential of children and young people in the province.

I do want to say for the record that I am a minister who leads the FASD file once again. It's a file and an issue that affects me and members of my family personally. So I am very proud to be able to say the comprehensive strategy we have, the major investment of over \$13 million that invests into prevention, education, diagnostics, support services, research, Mr. Speaker.

But I got to just recently be part of a poster campaign with North Point Douglas Women's Centre, the Aboriginal Health and Wellness, students from the University of Manitoba that got women themselves doing a poster campaign that we're seeing all throughout the province now that is a prevention measure. Young—women who have actually been touched personally by FASD and their families are now taking a proactive approach, you know, inspiring the community to take advantage, maximizing the potential and skills and experience of all people, Mr. Speaker.

I got to hear this phenomenal speaker, this young man, he—this event that we got to put on in partnership, it was called Awesome Me Living with FASD. This is a young guy that told his story. He talked to over 200 high school students that were affected and their caregivers affected by FASD. He inspired them. He made sure that, you know, although they struggle with that there's still hope, there's still potential, there's still possibility, Mr. Speaker. There was no cynicism and any of that kind of stuff. The investments we make we're showing people that things can get better and things will get

better. Those are the kinds of investments we're making.

I got to hear some very powerful stories on our InSight mentorship program, from women dealing with some of the most traumatic situations in their life. And I got to hear their stories and there were tears involved, but I got to tell you, I was very, very inspired to listen to these stories.

So, Mr. Speaker, I got to say that I, of course, I'm very proud to support this budget, a budget that protects families from the flood, that makes major investments in infrastructure, continues to invest in our roads and our schools and our hospitals, our personal care homes. It builds our economy, it stimulates our economy, it creates jobs, invests in the services that matter most to Manitoba families. And, of course, I support a budget that's going to maximize the potential of our children, youth and families, particularly the ones that struggle with hardship and challenge. So I'm very proud to support Budget 2013 and put some words on the record. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to speak on the budget. I'll echo some of the comments from my colleagues, both on this side of the House and the other side of the House, welcoming back our pages and the Clerk's office and the staff, table staff, who do a great job. I always am sort of reluctant to welcome everybody back, not because they don't do a good job, but we sit so infrequently and then every time there's these massive gaps in between our session. It's like we haven't seen anybody for months, because we haven't seen anybody for months, because the House hasn't sit so frequently under this particular government.

So—but I do welcome them back, and it's not—certainly not their fault that the session isn't sitting very often. In fact, I think I quoted during question period that we sat for 10 days in 10 months, which isn't very reflective of democracy, and I'm sure that it would disappoint Manitobans, but I digress.

Onto the issues of the budget, typically when I speak to the budget, Mr. Speaker, I speak about monetary issues because the budget is, of course, focused on issues of monetary policy for the government. But I think this budget is more about trust, and a broken trust, than it is about money and monetary policy because we remember that this is a government that ran on a number of promises, and each one of the members who got elected to the

Legislature, the members opposite, ran on a collective promise and that was to not raise taxes. We all remember various times throughout the last campaign where the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and members of his caucus made that promise publicly, that—said to Manitobans that, if elected, they wouldn't raise taxes and the people wouldn't have to pay more.

The Premier said that his five-year economic plan not only was on schedule but was ahead of schedule, Mr. Acting Speaker. And so Manitobans relied on that commitment and ultimately we all rely on the trust of our constituents, on the trust of our voters, on the trusts of all of those who we propose to represent here in the Legislature. Being an MLA, being an elected official, whether it's a city councillor or a Member of Parliament, is ultimately about trust and confidence, the trust and confidence that people put in you, not only when you're running for election but then when you're fulfilling your role as a member of the Legislature or a Member of Parliament or a city councillor.

And, fundamentally, each of these New Democratic MLAs have broken that trust, and in doing so, Mr. Speaker, they've hurt all of us as elected officials because they have damaged the trust that people have in their representatives. But, in particular, these MLAs who went door to door, and I'm sure that all of them during the campaign went door to door, and didn't run on a tax increase, and certainly didn't run on a PST increase, broke a trust, broke a trust between them and their voters, broke a trust between them and their constituents. And this budget is the fruition of that broken trust.

And I know that members opposite—I heard the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) quote people, and, of course, she's not quoting a lot—an awful lot of constituents, but I know that she and others are getting emails and phone calls, concerned about the provincial sales tax, the retail sales tax, in its technical name, going up by 1 per cent. I know that they're getting those calls. I know that each of them are getting those calls and emails, and when people are emailing and when they're phoning, they are expressing frustration, of course, about the costs but, fundamentally, they're expressing frustration about a breach of trust, that the Premier broke his promise by saying that he wouldn't increase taxes, that each of these MLAs who ran in their constituents broke their promise to their constituents that they wouldn't increase taxes, that each of them now has broken a trust between them and their constituents.

* (16:30)

And that's a difficult thing to repair, Mr. Speaker. We've heard a variety of different excuses from the MLAs on the other side in terms of why it is that they lied to Manitobans, why they broke that trust with Manitobans. And in none of those excuses are playing particularly well in the media because, ultimately, people expect that you are going to adhere to what you say.

And it wasn't that long ago, Mr. Speaker. I mean, if in fact the government is concerned about the economic times and, you know, the budget-prebudget meetings had slides and graphs. It didn't give any indication that Manitoba was in trouble. I remember one of the slides said, you know, strong and stable growth. The Finance Minister was trying to say how everything was well.

But now after the budget, Mr. Speaker, they come and they talk about tough economic times. Well, the tough economic times are self-created by the NDP government. They are the ones who don't want to take the necessary steps to look internally for their own savings, even though they promised that last year within their own budget.

So they've broken a trust with Manitobans and with those who have voted them in their ridings, whether that was in Dawson Trail, Southdale, Kirkfield Park or any of the other ridings, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP ran and won in. And they broke the trust on the taxes, but they've also now gone further than that and broken the trust on the referendum, because what Manitobans certainly expected from the taxpayer accountability act is that there would be, if there was ever going to be a PST increase, a referendum and they relied on that. And maybe these members thought that Manitobans wouldn't care. Maybe they didn't expect the kind of feedback they'd get from Manitobans. But Manitobans, I think, are ultimately fair individuals.

They are fair people and they relied on the fact that there was legislation. It wasn't new legislation. It wasn't here for just a year or two. It's been here since the mid-1990s, that if there was ever going to be an increase in the RST or the PST, that there would be—and a couple of other major tax measures—that there would be an ability for people to have a vote on that, to have a voice on that increase. So not only did the members opposite break a trust between them and their constituents on the increase of the PST, but they've also broken a trust on giving them a voice,

giving them a say in whether or not that increase is coming.

I've been surprised, but pleasantly so because I think it's important that Manitobans recognize this, that on almost every email that I've gotten—and I've gotten hundreds, Mr. Speaker, on this particular issue—almost all of them also reference the referendum issue. They are concerned and they are upset that the PST is going up. That's a monetary issue for them and their family and they recognize that as a hardship. But they also recognize that there's an undemocratic portion to this. They recognize that they were entitled to something in law that they're not getting because this government is changing the law.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And not only are Manitobans, I think, fair, but they also expect that people will follow the rule of law, Mr. Speaker, and they especially expect that the government will follow that rule of law. And I've heard many people email me and give their own sort of antidotes in terms of whether they got a speeding ticket or whether they did something else that would run afoul of the law, that they wouldn't simply be able to change the law to get out of that situation.

And so they're quite angry, Mr. Speaker, and I know that Manitobans don't always get angry, that that's not always the nature of our province. But I think that the government misjudged and misunderstood what the reaction to this would be not just because Manitobans are paying more, although that is important, but more specifically because they're taking away a democratic right that they have to have a voice through a referendum on the PST increase.

And I think that all these members would do well to reconsider this position. They might still believe that it's necessary to have the PST increase, and I would differ with them on that. I think that they could easily find ways to eliminate government waste and spending that's of low priority, Mr. Speaker, within the government. But they might not agree with that, but they could take it to the people. If they actually believe what they're saying they can simply take it to a referendum.

And all of these members, or at least most of them, stood up in the summer of 2011 and talked about the need for a referendum on the Canadian Wheat Board. We have many quotes of members who were quite passionate. I remember the member

for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) put on some very, very strong words about how it was incredibly important to the protection of democracy that there would actually be a referendum on the Wheat Board. He went so far as to say that it was the height of an undemocratic exercise not to have a referendum, and yet he has remained silent now, Mr. Speaker, when he has the power and the authority.

This is a government that went as far as to write a cheque from the taxpayers of Manitoba for \$80,000 to send to a lobby group in Alberta that would lobby for a referendum. And yet here the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his Cabinet and his members all have the ability to call for a referendum within their own jurisdiction, within their own provincial powers, and they choose not to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And I think that that is something that Manitobans are very much attuned to. They understand that there's not only hypocrisy from the government, but there was an expectation that they would have that right. And I truly believe that this government has misjudged Manitobans, and I think that they are now seeing the response from Manitobans, and I would ask them to reconsider. The budget hasn't passed. There's going to be lots of legislative time over the next number of weeks for them to change their minds and to have a referendum and to have that democratic exercise, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure why they don't want to go to the people. Well, actually, I do. I do know why they don't want to go, because they know what the response would be. They know the answer would be no. Because when they went to the prebudget meetings that they held prior to the budget, there wasn't a single Manitoban, I would venture to say, that was suggesting that they increase the PST. So they know full well that, if they would go to a referendum, the answer would be no. But because the answer would be no, Mr. Speaker, isn't any excuse not to follow the law.

We also heard today that the government—not only are they being undemocratic in terms of not keeping their promise, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the increase to the taxes. And being undemocratic might not fall into the existing law that requires a referendum before the PST goes up. They've also indicated now that regardless of whether Bill 20, which implements the PST increase, is passed by July 1st, by Canada Day, they are going to go ahead and start collecting the tax.

Now, this is particularly egregious in the fact that we have a referendum law that's being taken away, so we're taking away the voice from individuals that they've come to expect because that's been in law for many years. But compounding that now is the fact that the government is saying, regardless of what people say at committee, regardless of what happens in any other kind of democratic exercise, whether it's a petition or rally or anything else that people may become involved with, this government isn't going to listen, and they're going to collect the tax and expect retailers to collect the tax as of July 'firth,' whether that legislation is passed or not. And I find that particularly offensive in the context of this debate.

You know, this is a beautiful building that the people of Manitoba over the years have furnished us with; it's a great place to have receptions; it's a great place to meet people; it's a great place to hand out awards. But it's more than that; it's a democratic House, Mr. Speaker. It's a place where people come and expect that their voice, through us, through the 57 of those of us who are lucky enough to be elected to represent them, are going to express their view and who are going to follow the democratic process.

But that's difficult to do, I'd say, Mr. Speaker, when we have a government who has already indicated that, regardless of the outcome of committees, regardless of the outcome of the legislative process that's going to happen and unfold here over the next several weeks, that they are still going to start collecting the tax as of July 1st.

So, ultimately, Mr. Speaker, while the budget is about finances and dollars, it's more about trust. It's about our trust that's been broken between the people of Manitoba and these New Democratic MLAs, and then they will have to go back in the summer, whenever this House adjourns, and they're able to spend more time within their constituencies and explain to people why it is that they broke that trust.

And I know they have floated a number of different suggestions here, but I'd say to you, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans will understand that this is a government that didn't try very hard to find savings. It's a government that didn't try very hard to get their own fiscal House in order; their track record proves it. And they will, ultimately, I think, believe that there was a trust that was broken between these MLAs and their constituents.

And I would not be here to give advice to the members opposite, but I certainly want to give them

an opportunity, an opportunity to change their mind, an opportunity to listen to the many constituents who are phoning their constituency offices, and sending emails, and those who might appear here in the Legislature at committee and in other ways.

I am going to conclude my comments with that, Mr. Speaker. Although I do want to also note for the record that we do have an exciting thing happening in the community of Steinbach and the southeast region that the Steinbach Pistons will be playing in British Columbia in the Western Cup, and I know that all members will wish the Steinbach Pistons well as they represent Manitoba in that championship with the hope that they will qualify to go on to the Canada Cup, which will be held, I believe, in Ontario.

So I want to commend the community which has supported the hockey team, the new ownership group which has come around the hockey team, and I know that all Manitobans and the members of the Legislature will also come around and support the Steinbach Pistons as they represent Manitoba in that hockey championship.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:40)

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to put in a few words in support of the budget which my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) announced last week.

Before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you, as well as the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Patricia Chaychuk, and her team. With yours and their support, order is preserved in this Chamber. We don't know what mayhem could happen at this Chamber without you. I also wish to thank the interns and the pages for their valuable presence and support to us members of this Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want to thank the constituents of Logan for their trust and support. I take seriously the trust they have bestowed in me, and I fully realize I serve at their pleasure. Budget 2013 is a critical test to this trust. I have received both support as well as criticisms, and I thank my constituents for their honesty. In the days ahead, I will endeavour to communicate with them and reason with them the merits of Budget 2013.

Mr. Speaker, life is about making decisions, some easier to do while others will require long agonizing time. Decisions made on Budget 2013 were well thought out and were arrived at after considering many options that will redound to the benefit and well-being for Manitobans in general.

Faced with many challenges, chief of which is global economic uncertainty and the multiple issues provincially, hard decisions have to be made. George Washington Carver, who started his life as a slave but worked hard and became an educator, horticulturist and chemist, once said: "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life you will have been all of this." End of quote.

Mr. Speaker, I fully believe Budget 2013 embodies the aforesaid. Budget 2013 has plans on building a better Manitoba for today and the long term by focusing on the things that matter most to families. Budget 2013 in a new Building and Renewal Plan will protect families, businesses and Manitoba's economy against increasingly frequent flooding and the global economic uncertainty. This budget is about protecting Manitobans and their economy against this uncertainties but not at the expense of the services families count on.

Mr. Speaker, I will respectfully convey to my constituents in Logan that Budget 2013's Building and Renewal Plan will make record investments in provincial highways and bridges and will provide the City of Winnipeg and municipalities across the province with new revenue to improve municipal streets and roads. This new investments will mean better roads and good jobs, relied on by businesses to move goods that will stimulate and keep our economy growing.

Mr. Speaker, I will share with my constituents that Budget 2013 will see better and more affordable rental housing options for families with a creation of a new tax credit to support private sector rental housing construction, and new investments by the provincial government to build 1,000 new rental housing units. Budget 2013 includes the plan to build 1,000 new rental housing units over the next three years, including 500 affordable housing units and 500 social housing units. This new units will add to the Manitoba government's HOMEWorks! program already under way to develop 300–3,000, I'm sorry,

3,000 new affordable and social housing units by 2014.

Mr. Speaker, I will also be able to convey to my constituents of Logan that Budget 2013's emphasis on creating more opportunities through training and jobs. This weekend my office has organized our second job fair after the enormous success of the job fair we hosted last year, and that job fair last year saw almost 800 people in attendance and this people had the chance to meet and talk with a dozen diverse businesses and organizations. This year's job fair is coming up in a few days on Saturday, April 27, at Hugh J. Macdonald School. We will have over a dozen businesses and organizations that will be there to answer questions and be a direct point of contact for many job seekers, such as the Manitoba Hydro, Manitoba Lotteries and Liquor, Manitoba Civil Service Commission, Standard Aero, Russell Inn, Asessippi Ski Resort, Dodge dealership of Steinbach, several construction companies and many others.

Our constituency office organized the job fair because the Logan constituency, like many areas in Manitoba, has welcomed many new highly skilled Manitobans who are looking for employment, looking to upgrade their skills or just want to know more about various training opportunities Manitoba has to offer. That is why I was so excited yesterday when my colleague the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) announced how Budget 2013 would be creating more opportunities for training by continuing to expand their apprenticeship system and by creating over 100 new apprenticeship training seats to give more Manitobans the opportunity to become journeypersons. We are developing a plan that will help by adding 75,000 people to our workforce by 2020, and this will require resources to support training and apprenticeships. Budget 2013 focuses on what matters most: investing in our people to grow the economy and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, another investment in Budget 2013 that I will tell my constituents is that it will help train more nurses to meet the growing demand for health care across the province. I have personally witnessed—just a sec, not yet, just a sec. Okay.

I have personally witnessed how caring and compassionate Manitoba's home-care workers were when my mother-in-law was cared for at home prior to being moved to Riverview Palliative Care. Hearing accounts of home-care services from friends in other provinces, I can honestly say we have the

best home-care system in Canada. I have witnessed that medicines were regularly home delivered already arranged in order of intake, and now cancer drugs is at no cost to patients here in Manitoba, and, yes, there's no surcharge on Medicare here in Manitoba. We are the first in the country to provide free cancer drugs to patients.

We are also the first to enact The Defibrillator Public Access Act what were—it will require automated external defibrillators or AEDs to be installed in high-traffic places, such as gyms, arenas, community centres, golf courses, schools and airports. By the way, Mr. Speaker, our government has provided one million to Manitoba Heart and Stroke Foundation to install 1,000 AEDs to public places. Just recently, we received a report that an installed defibrillator at a gym was credited in saving the life of an adult in the audience.

* (16:50)

Mr. Speaker, I will gladly tell my constituents the—that Budget 2013 continues to fight for better drug prices for Manitobans. Lower drug prices negotiated by the Manitoba government will save Manitoba families 3.7 million a year and save taxpayers 2.5 million annually as well. Likewise, the addition of 81 new drugs to the provincial Pharmacare formulary will lower prescription drug costs and provide more choice and significant savings to families dealing with medical conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, depression and HIV.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot thank enough the leaders of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, the forerunner of the now NDP, for their vision and tenacity in fighting for universal health care in Canada, along with many other social programs that we enjoy today like old age pension, labour and employment laws, children's allowance, among others.

In the old country where I came from, poor people who cannot afford the high cost of hospitalization in the event of illness has no course but to die unattended, medically. Years ago, have learned, after my first cousin's husband died, that he fell from a coconut tree. He had fractured bones and some internal organs damaged because he was urinating blood. They cannot afford to bring him to a doctor, how much more to a hospital. For weeks before he died he was crying in pain. He was a farmer and used to pain and hard work, but that was too much pain for him to bear. That scenario will never happened in Manitoba: that a man will be

deprived of needed medical care because he was poor.

Mr. Speaker, have you noticed when you attend musical events at the Manitoba Centennial Concert Hall how enthusiastic and joyful people were before and after the show? Recently, I went to see the opera *Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi. I arrived at the concert hall early, and it was heartening thing to see well-dressed older folks coming by cars or by rented buses. I bet in their earlier years they were already accustomed to these kinds of performances and they want to continue enjoying this things as long as they can, or it could also be that for some of them, much as they wanted to watch this presentations then, that they had to forego that desire because there were more pressing expenditures to consider. And now, in their twilight years, when family obligations are finished, they can now enjoy what they missed earlier in life.

Mr. Speaker, opera, symphony, chamber music, ballet, theatre, film, visual arts and many more are a part of our vibrant cultural community which adds to the quality of life we have in Manitoba. The vibrancy and richness in Manitoba communities did not come as happenstance. First, Manitoba is home to many talented and passionate artists. Secondly, there is intentional desire by our government to support our artists and the cultural institutions that allow them to thrive, express their artistic abilities and compete in the world stage.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with you what Budget 2013 and the past budgets of our government have accomplished to the arts, culture, heritage and tourism-related projects in Manitoba. First, the Manitoba's film and video production credit has helped to create a strong film and television industry here in Manitoba. My department is committed to work and use Manitoba's vibrant film and television industry to maximize opportunities for Manitoba workers, be it film crew, directors, editors, writers or performers to work and thrive in their home province. Besides maximizing the use of Manitoba workers, the film and video industry has been able to make full use of our diverse locations. I know that I'm always amazed when watching a TV film show made in Manitoba, what some of our famous landmarks fill in for. For instance, just this winter, Manitoba Film & Music invited me to watch a bit of the filming of a Samuel L. Jackson movie that was being filmed right here at the Legislative Assembly. I'm anticipating seeing this movie and finding our-finding out exactly what this beautiful heritage building was masquerading as for that movie.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, what makes productions like the one I just mentioned possible is Manitoba's competitive economic incentives. The film industry development has been a key priority for this government since 1999. We have increased the tax credit to 45 per cent in 2005, making it one of the best in Canada, and, in 2012, added accommodations as an eligible expense. Our government is pleased to support the Film and Video Production Tax Credit, and Budget 2013 has extended the Film and Video Production Tax Credit to 2016. The overall tax credit totalling 65 per cent enhances our film industry's ability to compete on the world stage and maintain Manitoba's position as one of Canada's leading production centres. Our province has played host to 51 film, television and web-based media productions that generated over \$70 million in direct economic activity, the vast majority of which directly affect-benefit Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, another exciting thing happening in this province is the creation of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. We are proud to be home of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. This iconic architectural masterpiece, set to open in 2014, is Canada's first national museum located outside of Ottawa and will draw thousands of Canadians and international tourists to Manitoba. CMHR will put Winnipeg on the map with other international attractions. It is supported by all three levels of government and the private sector which continues to take the lead on this noble cause. The CMHR is mandated to explore the subject of human rights with special but not exclusive reference to Canada in order to enhance the public's understanding of human rights and to promote respect for others and to encourage reflection and dialogue. The Canadian Museum for Human Rights creates synergy with other efforts to place Winnipeg on the map as a tourist destination.

Also, CMHR will have a great economic impact for the province. It will create up to 250 jobs and boost tourism by attracting national and international visitors. The associated spinoff benefits will create up to \$58 million GDP in economic activity and raise the profile of our province.

Mr. Speaker, next year, 2014, is going to be a very busy year for arts and culture lovers. Besides the opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, the Juno Awards are coming to Winnipeg. The 2014 Juno Awards will be in Winnipeg next April, and they're just another tourism draw for the province. I think most Winnipeggers remember that

in 2005 Manitoba hosted the Juno Awards to great success, and I'm sure next year will be no different.

Mr. Speaker, 2014 is going to be the Year of Music, and it will stretch out the Juno celebration across the province for the whole year. The Year of Music will provide meaningful links between music events and festivals across the province that will create community excitement and raise awareness about the importance of music education. Besides the Juno Awards, Winnipeg will also host the 2014 Winnipeg BreakOut West music festival and the Western Canadian Music Awards. Hosting the Junos will expose Manitobans to a wide range of Canada's acclaimed music scene, enhance provincial music education initiatives, and provide networking and promotional opportunities for Manitoba musicians, industry professionals, and Aboriginal artists and

entrepreneurs. It will provide national media exposure for Winnipeg and Manitoba.

While on the topic of music, Mr. Speaker, would you like to relive your exciting teen years by watching Paul McCartney this summer at the new Investors Group stadium, which, by the way, its building was supported by our government, despite strong oppositions by members across the way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. Marcelino) will have 10 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

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Manitoba Taxpayers Mitchelson; Howard	711
Bill 26–The Accessibility for Manitobans Act Howard	703	Building Canada Fund Gerrard; Selinger	712
Bill 29–The Land Surveyors and Related Amendments Act Rondeau	703	Flooding Gerrard; Selinger	712
Petitions		Apprenticeship Education Gaudreau; Bjornson	713
St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park Wishart	704	Municipal Amalgamation Pedersen; Lemieux	713
Municipal Amalgamations–Reversal Rowat	704	PST Increase Pedersen; Lemieux	714
Pedersen	705	Members' Statements	
Provincial Road 520 Renewal Ewasko	704	4H–100 Year Anniversary Pedersen	714
The Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Act–Amendments Caldwell	705	Laura Schnellert Blady	715
Tabling of Reports		Bullying Cullen	715
Health, Supplementary Information for Legislative Review–Departmental Expenditure Estimates, 2013-2014 Oswald	705	Keystone Centre Caldwell	715
Oral Questions		PST Increase–Referendum Gerrard	716
Provincial Deficit Pallister; Selinger	706	ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Helwer; Struthers	707	GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Bill 20		Budget Debate (Sixth Day of Debate)	
Goertzen; Struthers	708	Eichler	717
Driedger; Struthers	709	Pettersen	718
Health Capital Projects		Smook	719
Friesen; Oswald	710	Blady	723
		Maguire	728
		Chief	733
		Goertzen	737
		F. Marcelino	740

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