

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 13, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 44—The International Education Act

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), that Bill 44, The International Education Act; Loi sur l'éducation internationale, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Selby: Today I am introducing a bill, the proposed International Education Act. This bill will be the first of its kind in Canada and offers greater protection to international students choosing Manitoba as a place to study. It establishes guidelines for educational providers and for those who recruit international students to ensure international students and potential students are treated fairly. And I recommend this bill to all members of the Legislature.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none—

PETITIONS

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

And these are the—this is the background to this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by D. Wutzke, R. Maltaiz, D. Bergson and many other Manitobans.

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

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

The provincial government did not consult with or notify the affected municipalities of this decision prior to the Throne Speech announcement on

November 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

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

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

Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. All—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 amalgamations with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition's signed by R. Goraluk, K. Goraluk, C. Koss and many more Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent Needs For and Alternatives To review of Manitoba

Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by G.A. Rempel, B. Wiens, D. Ronceray and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Highway 217 Bridge Repair

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

Individuals require numerous trips across the river each day to access schools, businesses and health-care facilities. The bridge closure causes daily undue hardship and inconvenience for residents due to the time requirements and higher transportation costs.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by N. Sabourin, M. Lavallée and M. Sabourin and many, many more fine Manitobans.

* (13:40)

Provincial Trunk Highways 16 and 5 North—Traffic Signals

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The junction of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north is an increasingly busy intersection which is used by motorists and pedestrians alike.

The Town of Neepawa has raised concerns with the Highway Traffic Board about safety levels at this intersection.

The Town of Neepawa has also passed a resolution requesting that Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation install traffic lights at this intersection in order to increase safety.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider making the installation of traffic lights at the intersection of PTH 16 and PTH 5 north a priority project in order to help protect the safety of the motorists and pedestrians who use it.

This petition is signed by B. Sumner, J. Fuglsang, N. Nicholson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by J. Seniuk, C. Longley, D. Longley and many others.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent Needs For and Alternatives To review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

This petition is signed by S. Bjornson, S. Jarvis, C. Tanasichuk and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Submitted on behalf of S. Warren, A. Hermann, L. Kuryk and thousands of other fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

Therefore, we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by G. McElroy, A. Steinebel, B. Hodgson and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by T. Stilwell, C. Cameron, D. Conolly and many other Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition's signed by M. Moffit, M. Vust and G. Tully. Thank you very much.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by D. Smeltz, F. Smeltz, E. Toms and many, many other fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by R. Palmer, M. Wharton, J. Wharton and many, many other Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

* (13:50)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by—signed by J. Levenec, L. Alexiuk, A. Klassen and many fine Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by J. McDonald, M. Spier, L. Hidri and many others.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none—

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Manitoba Day

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge Manitoba Day, which was this past Sunday, May 12th. It was the 143rd anniversary of the Province of Manitoba. There are—there were numerous displays and events that occurred yesterday and over the weekend in recognition of Manitoba Day throughout the province.

Three years ago, this Legislature recognized May 12th as Treaty Day. Earlier today, we again honoured the Manitoba treaties numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 10. The day commenced with a sunrise ceremony in Roseau River Anishinabe First Nation. The festivities continued in the Legislative Rotunda, beginning with an opening prayer by Elder Charlie Nelson, a song by Young Nation Drum Group, an overview of the pipe ceremony and water song by Elder Peter Atkinson and a water ceremony conducted by Sherry Copenance. We heard presentations from Swan Lake Chief Francine Meeches and Treaty Relations Commissioner of Manitoba Jamie Wilson. There was also an exchange of gifts among the three parties, symbolizing the general format of the treaty-making process.

The Treaty Advocacy Award was presented to Dennis White Bird, former Treaty Relations Commissioner for Manitoba. Dennis has shown great dedication to the fulfillment of the true spirit and intent of the treaty relationship and the education of both First Nation and non-First Nation youth.

Seven of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs Council of Elders were presented with the Queen Diamond Jubilee medals from the treaty commission of Manitoba. I congratulate these elders: Wayne Scott from Swan Lake, Harry Bone from Keeseekoowenin, James Cote from the Waywayseecappo First Nation, Elder William G. Lathlin from Opaskwayak, D'Arcy Linklater from Nisichawayasihk, Elder Joe Hyslop from Northlands Denesuline, and Doris Pratt from Sioux Valley.

Mr. Speaker, this government has previously honoured the Metis, the Inuit and First Nations people in the province of Manitoba. May 12th is a day we honour the treaties not only because we recognize that First Nations are the founders of this province but because the treaty relationship between First Nations and Canadians needs to be better understood and acknowledged.

The treaties have not become obsolete. Far from it, they are living documents that all Canadians need to recognize. Without the treaties between the Crown and First Nations, the growth and prosperity of this country would not have been possible. We are all treaty people regardless of status.

Many of the promises centre-to the treaties have yet to be fulfilled or widely understood. It is for that reason that we have been working with the treaty commission to have treaties as part of the education curriculum, just as we have put the residential school legacy in the school curriculum.

In the recent budget speech we also pledged to work with First Nations and the federal government on a new model to build and improve schools on reserves. Personally, I have been—I've had the honour to represent the east-side communities of Lake Winnipeg for nearly 20 years now. I have seen first-hand the poverty and other challenges many face in our province. The spirit and determination of our citizens despite these obstacles is what makes our province a great place to live.

That's why our government developed the east-side transportation initiative in partnership with 13 First Nations to build an all-weather road network on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. Similarly, we

have partnered with the Pimachiowin Aki First Nations to protect the largest intact boreal forest on the planet and are working with them on the UNESCO declaration as a World Heritage Site for that region.

Working in partnership with First Nations on hydro developments are a recognition that future developments will only occur with the participation of First Nations. We cannot go backwards to the paternalism of the past. The Wuskwatim partnership with Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation was the first partnership in Canada and is the model for the Keeyask and Conawapa projects.

First Nations across this country are rightly growing impatient waiting for the implementation of the treaties as was promised when they were signed over a hundred years ago. It is not acceptable in 2013 to accept the widespread poverty and lack of basic infrastructure to so many First Nation residents and what they have to live with.

Our government recognizes the value and importance of northern Manitoba and pledges itself to see the north truly achieve its dreams. That's why we've worked with First Nations on implementing TLE on partnerships, on hydro development, addressing the damages caused by past developments that excluded First Nations, the establishment and expansion of the University College of the North, putting dialysis renal units on reserves, the creation of the First People's Economic Growth Fund, building northern infrastructure and protecting the boreal forest by investing in a UNESCO World Heritage Site amongst other northern initiatives.

Fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, we are all treaty people, and we must work together to recognize and implement the treaties that are the foundation of this province and country.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark Manitoba Day, which took place yesterday. This year it coincided with another very important day, that of Mother's Day.

Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, Manitoba has a rich history that is deserving of an occasion such as this. We know that Manitoba's history is dynamic, our generosity unmatched and our spirit as Manitobans truly remarkable, but the true treasure of Manitoba lies in its people. The people of Manitoba were the first to admit women fully into the franchise. Winnipeg was the first city in Canada to establish a United Way chapter, and Manitoba's arts

and cultural scene is unmatched. These are just a few of the reasons why I'm proud to help mark Manitoba's 143rd birthday.

Mr. Speaker, people from all around the world come to Manitoba to experience the beauty, character and richness of our province. The Winnipeg Folk Festival is one of North America's largest outdoor folk music festivals. The Fringe Festival draws thousands of Manitobans and folks from around the world to the Exchange District every summer. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet is a truly unmatched ballet company not only in Canada but around the world. The Royal Canadian Mint mints coins for more than 60 countries as well. Spruce Woods Provincial Park is an international gem located right in our own backyard.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way since the Manitoba Act was given royal assent on May 12th, 1870, and we have much to be proud of. On behalf of all the members in this House, I would like to join in marking Manitoba's 143rd birthday, Manitoba Day.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I join others in the Legislature to celebrate the 143rd anniversary of Manitoba becoming a province. It is—we've come a long way since 1870 and a tremendous amount has been accomplished. We have a province with wonderful lakes like Lake Winnipeg. We have a city which is growing and a economic base which is diversified. And we need as Manitobans to sit back and just think carefully about who we are and what we as Manitobans have accomplished.

But Manitoba Day is also a day to recognize the partnership we have with people in the First Nations community. The Treaty Day treaties were very important when they were signed and they still are very, very important today. It was good to have the ceremonies over the noon hour.

And even as we look at what has been accomplished, it is important that we look at what we still have to do. As the minister has said—and I echo—that it is not acceptable in 2013 to accept that widespread poverty and lack of basic infrastructure that so many First Nations have. The poverty rates

are still far too high. We have 10,000 children in care. We have more than a thousand homes in northern Manitoba with no running water. We have our wonderful lake currently the most threatened lake in the planet.

And it is important that even as we remember how much has been done that we dedicate ourselves to address these tasks which still have to be accomplished. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, on a ministerial statement.

Flood Update—Ochre River

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): A ministerial statement, yes. I rise in the House today to provide an update on the extraordinary event that took place in the community of Ochre River over the weekend.

Strong winds caused a massive ice shift early Friday evening on Dauphin Lake resulting in ice pushing up upon Ochre Beach along the southwest shore of the lake in the rural municipality of Ochre River. A total of 27 properties were impacted by the ice rush.

The municipality needs to be commended for its role in managing the evacuation, securing the properties and preventing injuries. They continue to work today to clear ice away from the structures.

As we saw over the weekend, high winds can move broken or weakened ice around the lake. With much of the ice still in place on Manitoba's large lakes, there is the risk of ice pileup on windward shores.

The current weather forecast calls for a moderate southeasterly wind for this afternoon for much of southern Manitoba. This could result in a low risk of shoreline ice pileup on the windward shores of major lakes, including Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba, lake—pardon me, Dauphin Lake and Lake Winnipegosis.

Tomorrow afternoon, there is the probability of strong southwest winds which could shift to the northwest, creating a high risk of shoreline ice pileup on the windward shore of Lake Manitoba. There is moderate to high risk of shoreline ice pileup on windward shores of Lake Winnipeg and Dauphin Lake. And there is a moderate risk of shoreline ice pileup on the windward shores Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipegosis.

Residents are reminded to remain alert to weather conditions and to monitor news media for warnings.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I thank the minister for the update. We're pleased to hear the impact of the spring flooding has subsided, of course, and the devastation on Dauphin Lake and Ochre Beach where the fast-moving ice floes damaged cottages and homes along the lake. And, of course, also the folks on the east side of Lake Manitoba had some ice damage as well, and we certainly want to be watching that closely. And those that are still in repair of the damage from the flood of 2011, this is yet another frustration.

We hope the victims and the damage will be dealt with in a very quick manner. We'll also be watching the threat of ice and high winds on the shorelines of all Manitoba lakes and beaches as it continues to melt this spring, and certainly we want to commend those RMs has been impacted and those that are responsible for the quick assessment on these properties to be done in a very efficient manner as well. So with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for his statement. Like many other Manitobans, I was surprised and very concerned when I heard about the events on Dauphin Lake Friday night. It was a huge pileup of ice and damage to 27 homes, a number of them pretty much destroyed from what I can see. I think we're very fortunate there was no loss of life, and certainly I'd like to, along with others in the Legislature, extend concerns to those who have been so severely affected by this turn of events.

It is a caution in terms of what could still happen because there's a lot of ice yet to break up and quite substantial amounts of it, and so we clearly need to be on the lookout. That ice can be amazingly powerful when it gets moving and the huge chunks get blown by the wind, and this was really a demonstration of what can happen.

So, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the minister once again for his statement and update, and we hope this is the last big ice pileup, but we have a little bit let-yet to go and hope that things aren't any worse.

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 David Kaisaris, chair of the St. Norbert BIZ, Bob Roehle of St. Norbert BIZ and Judy Roehle, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

PST Increase NDP Election Promise

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on CJOB radio last week, the Premier admitted that he regretted making his no-tax-increase promise in the election of 2011. He went on to rationalize that he absolutely had to raise taxes, both last year and this year, by a record amount because things changed. So let's examine that. What really changed?

Mr. Speaker, the flood was long over. The costs had been estimated. The federal government covers 90 per cent of most of the claims. Not much unknown there: strike one.

Global economic downturn, three years in and the diverse Manitoba economy is chugging along doing better than predicted. No excuse there: strike two.

Premier was Finance minister for almost a decade, so he can't blame inexperience. That would, to me, Mr. Speaker, be strike three.

So what has really changed, apart from the Premier's position on his promise? Not much, except the change in his position.

So if he really wants forgiveness, Mr. Speaker, why not start off by making an apology to Manitobans for breaking his word?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I appreciate the question from the member opposite because, once again, it allows us to underline the difference between his approach to government—a thousand jobs lost, \$287 million cut, not to mention another equivalent amount of money in tax reductions. His approach is one that would put more Manitobans on the unemployment rolls at a time of great economic uncertainty.

Our approach, Mr. Speaker, is to find a way forward that grows the economy, provides infrastructure investments, including roads, including flood protection, including hospitals, including personal care homes and schools, those things that will allow Manitobans to take their place in our economy and prosper for many generations to come.

*(14:10)

Mr. Pallister: I didn't hear an apology there, Mr. Speaker. I think Manitobans realize that the Premier had a choice and he chose wrong and now he's asking Manitobans to accept his promise breaking.

But on the PST, quite frankly, he hasn't broken his promise quite yet. He's like an errant husband seeking advanced approval from his spouse for an affair that he's going to have later on. He's saying, forgive me, dear, I plan to break my vows in six weeks' time. So the MLA intends to break his word and in so doing break the laws of our Province in six weeks on July 1st.

Maybe he could save us the misrepresentation about our position and give us his position. Maybe he could save us the sanctimonious prattle about regret too, and maybe he could just do this: Maybe he could back off on a PST hike and just keep his word to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the commitment we made to Manitobans was we would continue to provide opportunities for young people to get an education in Manitoba, and we have done that. And we know the members opposite would've slashed all the education budgets by at least 1 per cent and shut down the building of schools.

The commitment we made to the people of Manitoba was to continue to invest in health care, which is why we've expanded the nursing program, which is why we've announced QuickCare clinics, which is why we've announced access centres and which is why we've provided rapid treatment for people with cancer and free cancer drugs.

Members opposite would've cut all those programs, Mr. Speaker. They would've cut all their—all those programs with their indiscriminate across-the-board cuts. That was not a promise they made in the election. They promised to run deficits to 2017-18 and to invest in health care. Why is the Leader of the Opposition retreating from his election promises?

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, the taxpayer protection act represents a form of marriage contract. It says to Manitobans that they have a say. They get a say in the relationship they have with their government partner, and the Premier is saying he doesn't respect that partnership. He's saying he's willing to break his word. He's willing to tear up the contract. The Premier is saying that his partner's feelings don't matter. He's saying that he can do whatever he wants. He wants to stay in the marriage, but he wants to be a bachelor at the same time. He wants it both ways. He wants a relationship with people he disrespects, disenfranchises with his actions. His old vows don't seem to matter much to him.

Now, on July 1st he says he wants to begin an affair, an affair with a new 8 per cent PST. He says it's only going to go on for 10 years, this affair, Mr. Speaker. But in two or three years when he comes back to his betrayed partner, the people of Manitoba, doesn't he realize that the locks may well be changed?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, such a tortured analogy.

It's—I am proud of the fact that we were the government that brought in equal benefits for people regardless of their sexual orientation when it comes to marriage, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad we treated all couples equally in the province of Manitoba when it comes to property rights. And I only hope the members opposite recognize the importance of ensuring people in Manitoba, regardless of their background, are treated fairly when they're in schools and they're not being bullied.

Mr. Speaker, at a time of economic uncertainty, at a time when we've received a report that says we need to invest another billion dollars on top of the \$1.2 billion we've already spent on flood protection in Manitoba, we owe Manitobans a program that will move the economy forward, that will protect Manitoba communities, that will educate young people to have opportunities in the economy for jobs that will attract and bring more people to Manitoba—

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

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

VLTs Additional Terminals

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Yes, Sir, yes. He owes Manitobans

more, Mr. Speaker. He owes them the truth about the reason he broke his promise, and that's something they have yet to hear from him.

I think the biggest addict to gambling in this province is the provincial government. That was a quote from the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh) a few years ago while he was in opposition, but things have changed.

Apparently the government is now planning to introduce 500 new VLTs. That's a—that brings to the total increase of 30 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

In August of 2007 the Manitoba gaming market study was tabled, and Manitoba has the greatest number of larger VLT sites in Canada, two thirds of them on First Nations. VLTs and casinos are 80 per cent of our gambling industry. The report concluded, Mr. Speaker, that we do not believe that the Winnipeg market area would be better served by the addition of more gambling sites. The report said that the market was saturated.

So my question for the Premier is simple: If that report was worth commissioning, it must be worth listening to. Why, then, is the NDP adding 500 more VLTs to this province?

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

The proposals put forward are going to modify the tiered commission structure in order to give more benefits to smaller sites, in rural Manitoba in particular, Mr. Speaker. No new sites will be added. Sites that are busy will have the opportunity to apply for additional machines and they will be judged on their merits.

We now have a full commitment to 2 per cent of net profits for responsible gaming activities, research, addictions treatment programs, those things that will protect Manitobans.

So we are restructuring our VLT program in order to protect Manitobans, allow for safe opportunities, and to ensure that rural Manitoba gets some additional benefits that the members opposite would not make available to them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, I realize that the government's desperate, and I realize that they are caught up now in the scourge of ribbon cuttings they have to do. But this is a new low. This is taking the ribbons off the gifts that kids should receive from their gambling addicted parents. That's what it's doing.

Other provinces across this country are reducing the scourge of what former Premier Doer called the crack cocaine of gambling. This Province goes in the wrong direction. Ontario prohibits VLTs totally outside of casinos. Maritime provinces are reducing the hours or the numbers or both. But the Manitoba spend, addicted to revenue hunting but not spending intelligently, thinks that they're winning, doesn't realize that their win, Mr. Speaker, comes at the expense of Manitobans and Manitoba children.

Now, they've set maximum loss limits. I understand \$3,000 a day can be lost, 168 hours a week maximum play, 720 hours a month. I've asked the Premier if he'd stop taking advantage of Manitoba gambling addicts by at least committing to lowering the 720—

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

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the changes that we're making in VLT policy increase the support to 2 per cent of net profits for all those programs that will assist people that may have any challenging difficulties with addictions related to gaming. That is a commitment that has never been made before by any government on behalf of its Crown corporation. And those resources will be invested in programs that will help people that want to reduce their interaction with any kind of gaming activity in Manitoba.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the commission structure will be modified to allow a higher commission structure to smaller site holders, primarily benefiting rural Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Let's get this clear here, Mr. Speaker. The government allows the maximum limit for gambling to be 720 hours a month. That's every hour, 24 hours a day, for a month. That's the maximum amount.

Now, the Province paid \$182,000 for a gaming study. The study said expanding gambling in Winnipeg was a bad idea. The government ignores the study, opens up and expands gambling. And we already had, before this, the highest number of VLTs and slots per capita in Canada and a 30 per cent increase under this government. Three times the use of BC, four times the use of Ontario.

I'll read you another quote, Mr. Speaker: Let us not kid ourselves. There are kids who are going hungry in this province. There are families breaking

up, marriages breaking up because of gambling addiction.

I agree. I agree with the Minister of Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh). This is a serious concern. It deserves to be dealt with intelligently, thoughtfully.

And I'm asking the Premier of the spendP party here, who is also the Premier of Manitoba, if he would stop preying on the addictions of our most vulnerable people.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should know that when he was in office, his commitment to addictions funding in '98-99, the last time he was in office, was \$14.4 million. Our commitment to addictions funding of treatment programs this year is \$34.6 million. It has gone up more than double. When the member opposite who is concerned about the negative impacts of gaming was in office, he actually was part of a government that cut funding to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba.

* (14:20)

We've increased our support to regional health authorities. We've increased our support to front-line services such as the Main Street Project. We've increased our support to the Health Sciences Centre. We've increased our support to the Rosaire addiction centre. We are working with the St. Raphael Wellness Centre. We have increased our support to Two Ten Recovery program.

These are all things that were never done before in Manitoba when the members opposite were in office and they want—

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

VLTs Additional Terminals

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, we don't need any lessons from a government that lied to the people in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans keep having to pay for NDP spending and mismanagement. Not only did this NDP government lie about not raising the PST, they're now sinking to another low and adding more VLT machines to try to siphon even more money away from Manitobans.

So I'd like to ask this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) to tell Manitobans: Why are they getting stuck having to pay for his overspending and his spending addiction?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it is rather interesting that the party of the 1990s that brought VLTs to the province without social responsibility—and that member was a part of that government, along with the Leader of the Opposition—that they would raise issues of this nature today.

I want to point out that there will be no new sites. This will be the first change, really, since 1996, Mr. Speaker. We put in a 2 per cent commitment to social responsibility.

And I could say, if Manitobans do not want video lottery terminals, I question why they're playing them, but I don't have to, Mr. Speaker, because that's what the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) said when she was a minister in government and brought in VLTs.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote back to this Minister of Water Stewardship, who said, let us not kid ourselves, there are kids who are going hungry in the—in this province. There are families that are breaking up, marriages that are breaking up because of gambling addiction.

That was then, Mr. Speaker. It seems that this minister seems to have a different view nowadays, but he doesn't seem to get it. Raising the PST is going to hurt everybody in this province, and adding VLTs is going to hurt the most vulnerable.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance to now admit that his spending addiction is going to cause a lot more pain for Manitobans.

Mr. Ashton: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, there are no new sites. We put in a historic change, a 2 per cent commitment to social responsibility.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that the VLT site holders throughout the province, particularly in smaller facilities, will actually be benefiting from changes in the commission structure. And, again, this will only be put in place in the sites where there is the demand for it.

And, of course, Mr. Speaker, I could say that people do ultimately make these decisions; no one is forcing any Manitoban to gamble in any way. But,

once again, I don't have to because that's what the member for River East said when she was minister and brought in VLTs in the 1990s.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would remind this government that they promised a moratorium on the expansion of VLTs, and yet we've seen a 30 per cent increase in the number of machines while they had their moratorium.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is so desperate for more money that they don't care who they hurt in their money grabs. They're even going to break the law in order to get that money. We've seen that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) has already broken the law and he won't resign because of it.

So I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance whether he would do the right thing today, obey the taxpayer protection law that is in place and hold a referendum on his PH-PST hike that is coming. Mr. Speaker, I would ask if he'd obey the law this time around.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Well, I want to point out again that when the members opposite brought in VLTs, it was no significant commitment to social responsibility, no requirement of 2 per cent, no requirement of anything. And it's a bit rich from the party that brought VLTs, Mr. Speaker, that didn't have a commitment to social responsibility to be talking about anything to do with the social side of gaming. Because you know what they did when they were in government? As the Premier just pointed out a few minutes ago, they brought in VLTs and they cut funding for AFM.

Ochre Beach Flood Compensation Plans

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): As most of us are aware, this past weekend the folks in Ochre Beach got hit by an ice storm. Homes and cottages were damaged, and some that were totally damaged would not be repaired. Besides a photo op for the member from Dauphin, many lives have been devastated.

Mr. Speaker, what is this government's plans for the folks at Ochre Beach?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member for Dauphin was in attendance at the community. He spent time with the reeve and local councillors and talked to people who were impacted by it. We've had the opportunity to go up there again this morning and listen again to Reeve Clinton Cleave and his good job that he has done out there, and he should be commended for that.

The people have had a very serious shock in that community. The ice, literally in a matter of minutes, came up from the lake with 60-kilometre-an-hour wind and literally moved right through the front door of some of these homes and the French doors and the windows right out the back door and destroyed some of these properties. And we're very grateful that people were alert enough—nobody lost their life, nobody was injured.

And, of course, we are supporting the people in the recovery effort and the disaster financial assistance people will be there tomorrow to meet with local residents to identify how the program can serve them.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Mother Nature is unpredictable. The ice event at Ochre Beach happened in a few minutes. Folks were caught off guard and had no way of preparing for such an event. In fact, thankfully it happened in the evening so we had no loss of lives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister: Will this government be taking action for these folks at Ochre Beach?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for accurately characterizing what happened. It was a unprecedented weather event that took place very rapidly over a couple of minutes.

One of the residents that I talked to this morning indicated to me that he went outside of his house, went up to look at the lake, saw the ice coming, and he just barely had enough time to get back into the house and ask his wife to get out of there as quickly as possible. And as they were leaving the house through the back door, the ice was coming through the front door. That's how quickly it happened, and you can still see ice out there, in some cases at a higher level than the housing itself, which has in many cases been destroyed.

So, of course, we will be there with disaster financial assistance and there will be a meeting tomorrow of the officials to meet with local residents. The local MLA has done a good job being in touch with them. I have to say that the reeve and his emergency measures committee have done an outstanding job again this year, as they did—

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

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, we have seen this government make promises before. In fact, the very Minister of Finance made many of those promises that were broken. In fact, this very minister in the flood of 2011 made promises that he had no intentions of keeping, giving false hope to hard-working Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister put on the record today that his government cannot be trusted no matter what they say?

Mr. Selinger: The disaster financial assistance guidelines in Manitoba are the most generous in Canada. A person can recover up to \$300,000 on the damage to their home, and over 95 per cent of those claims have been paid out from the 2011 experience. In addition to that, resources were made available for a range of programs for producers and other people that were on the lakes around Manitoba, programs that have never been cost-shared by the federal government.

The members opposite, what would their approach be? They were planning to make cuts to every budget in Manitoba this year. They were going to reduce the amount of disaster financial assistance available. That was their program. Tough love, that's what they're all about.

We're about providing support to people when they need it, Mr. Speaker.

St. Boniface Hospital Patient Wait Time

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, two weeks ago, shortly after lunch, a Winnipeg woman began to suffer symptoms of a stroke. Her husband recognized the signs and got her to St. B emergency room right away. She was initially assessed and then she proceeded to wait in the ER unattended to for the next five and a half hours even though she was suffering a stroke.

I ask this NDP Minister of Health: How could such a situation have been allowed to happen?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the member for the question. As is always the case, if he would be willing to, with the consent of the parties, to share particulars about a case, he has my commitment that I will investigate what happened.

Mr. Speaker, certainly, we do know at St. Boniface Hospital, we have a Cardiac Centre of Excellence. We have a variety of individuals that are working on cardiac issues and stroke in ways that have been considered the envy of the nation.

Triage happens by medical professionals and is done expertly. If, indeed something has gone wrong in this case, the member has my commitment to investigate and make remedy where possible.

* (14:30)

Mr. Friesen: I wonder if the minister's statement about this being the envy of the nation is of any consolation for the husband of this woman, who joins us today in the gallery.

This woman was exhibiting all the signs of a stroke: drooping face, slurred speech, throbbing headache. Her husband knew the signs. He saw the signs. He got her to ER and he shared the information with the triage nurse. Yet this woman was forced to wait and wait and wait five and a half hours without receiving treatment, missing the critical four-and-a-half-hour window for treatment for stroke.

When the woman's daughter finally came to the ER five and a half hours later to check on Mom, she was shocked at the lapse in care. The physician attending said someone clearly dropped the ball.

I ask this NDP minister: How could this woman who was clearly exhibiting stroke symptoms fall through the cracks and been made to wait five and half hours without receiving treatment?

Ms. Oswald: Again, I thank the member for more details. I will, of course, seek from him or from the family further details, because we want all of our individuals who are presenting to emergency rooms in whatever circumstances to get the best possible care.

If indeed we, through exploration with the regional health authority and St. Boniface Hospital, discover that the process was insufficient, we have entrenched in legislation in Manitoba a critical incident review procedure. This not only will serve as providing information to the family about why

this happened but will also serve to provide education for those that are working in the ER and in the hospital.

Certainly, as explained to me by the member now, it's clear that this was—

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

Mr. Friesen: I want to assure the minister that those details have been provided to her office by the family in way of a letter two weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, Dorothy Madden's death in ER in 2003 was supposed to make changes to the ER procedures. Brian Sinclair's death in 2008 was supposed to result in changes to ER procedures, but it is clear that no change has been made and the minister once again has dropped the ball.

This woman is now at home facing uncertainty, but her husband is here with us today in the public gallery, and I thank him for being here.

This family wants answers. They want to know how the minister could allow this situation to occur yet again, and why has the minister not responded yet to family's letter asking her for the answers that they so desperately seek?

Ms. Oswald: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and again the member has my commitment that I will follow up with the family, to be sure.

What I can say to the member, however, is that following the cardiac review, our cardiac program was consolidated to St. Boniface Hospital following the tragic circumstances of Brian Sinclair's death. There have been substantial changes made into our emergency room in terms of decreasing wait time, improving triage, but we know that this is an ongoing dynamic process that requires continuous investment.

Mr. Speaker, the member has my commitment, as does the family in the gallery today, that we will work with St. Boniface Hospital to discover what happened, why it happened and, indeed, to provide the family all the support that's possible.

Rural Health Services Obstetrics Closures

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, this family expected results and expected care when they attended the hospital, and they were failed.

It has been reported that the obstetric ward at the Portage la Prairie hospital has been forced to close due to shortage of nurses. Right now reports indicate that the obstetrics ward has been closed for a week. This issue is widespread, is occurring in many regions of the province, and the hospital of Portage la Prairie serves 50,000 regional residents.

Because of this minister's inability to properly staff rural hospitals, should local residents—and more specifically, expectant moms—in the region anticipate a permanent closure?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Speaker, certainly, we do know that the situation in Portage is in a temporary suspension, as the member cited. And I would want to be clear, so that she's not putting misinformation on the record, that the obstetrical unit, in concert with the nurses and the doctors at the hospital, are working on a temporary suspension—one week on, one week off—and they're working with their expectant moms to ensure that there's a birth plan in place.

I would agree with the member that we don't believe it's acceptable for there to be a suspension of obstetrics at the Portage hospital. That's why we're working with the hospital and the regional health authority to ensure that we can rebuild the obstetrical nurse complement so it can go back to full service, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, in rural Manitoba we have over 20 hospitals, personal—or ERs that are temporarily closed at this time, so I don't think that's any consolation to the people of Portage la Prairie.

Just last week I raised with this minister an occurrence of a woman being denied obstetrics at the Russell hospital. She was subsequently sent to Saskatchewan and was forced to deliver a baby on the highway. The minister said at that time, and I quote: If this case is as she has presented, that's not acceptable and we will do better than that. End quote. Well, Mr. Speaker, one week later we realize that she continues to provide shallow words of commitment.

Will this Minister of Health admit today that obstetric services in Manitoba is facing serious problems and is widespread?

Ms. Oswald: And again, I thank the member for the question and I can let the member know that in the circumstance of Portage we're working with the regional health authority on recruitment.

I did have an opportunity to speak with the mom in question concerning the Russell case and was able to learn facts from that case that, indeed, did not bear an exact resemblance to—as presented in the House.

And I would hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, that the Russell hospital obstetrical unit was closed by the Conservative government.

Mrs. Rowat: I believe that the minister has more than apology to make to this mom. She has apologies to make to a number of moms throughout the province who have been turned away by hospitals and have had babies on the highway.

Mr. Speaker, in Swan River intermittent closures of their obstetrics ward have been off-occurring since July 2010 due to a sortage of qualified health professionals. At least 10 times to date, expectant mothers have been forced to travel to Saskatchewan to deliver their babies. This minister has failed to address this serious problem.

This chatter about hiring more means absolutely nothing to the mom who delivered on a highway from Russell, and it means nothing to the moms in Portage who must now plan to travel to Winnipeg to deliver or the families in Swan River who don't know week to week whether obstetrics will even be available.

This minister has failed Manitoba families.

Ms. Oswald: Certainly, we know the regional health authority in Swan River is rebuilding a surgical program. We know that the obstetrics in Portage is temporarily suspending and we're working very hard to reopen it.

But, Mr. Speaker, this is the fundamental difference: We are fighting to keep obstetrical services open, while the members opposite closed 30 obstetrical services across Manitoba, including—and I hope I can get leave to get them all on the record—Russell, Boissevain, Grandview, Gladstone, Reston, Rock Lake, Crystal City, Pinawa, Rossburn, Wawanesa, Beausejour, Riverdale, Killarney, Birtle, Stonewall, Souris, Virden, Melita and Morris, every one closed permanently by the Conservatives. We're fighting to get them back open.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Infant Mortality Rates Provincial Comparisons

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the infant mortality rate is generally considered a good marker of the overall health of children. Sadly, Manitoba's infant mortality rates are extremely high. The Canadian average is about five deaths per 1,000, but in northern Manitoba it is much higher at 9.2 deaths per 1,000 live births. In inner-city neighbourhoods, it is also high.

I ask the Minister of Health: Can she give specific reasons why, after the NDP's 13 years in power, the health of children and the infant mortality rates in Manitoba are among the worst in Canada?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): We know that we want all moms and families and babies to have access to good care here in Manitoba, and we certainly know that part of our investment in ensuring that moms get the best possible attention during their pregnancy is that we've invested in the Prenatal Benefit, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we can provide additional financial assistance for healthy nutrition during pregnancy. We offer nutrition programs to expectant moms through Healthy Baby and our community support programs, and we also know that we have indeed seen, through the Public Health Agency of Canada study, improved access to midwives, improved access to family doctors, and we're going to continue on that journey.

* (14:40)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, when you average infant mortality rates across the country over the last three years, Manitoba has the worst infant mortality rate in Canada at 6.7 out of a hundred births.

I've called upon the NDP on numerous occasions to raise shelter rates for low-income Manitobans for years, and yet they've refused. They simply continue with ineffective policies, leaving children with poor nutrition and mothers with inadequate prenatal care.

I ask the Minister of Health: What new specific measures that are actually effective will she ensure that the NDP take this year to lower the infant mortality rates, particularly in northern communities and in inner Winnipeg?

Ms. Oswald: In addition to our investments in the Prenatal Benefit, our investments in the Healthy Baby program, the Public Health Agency indeed does report that, contrary to sounds from the members opposite, Manitoba actually has the lowest

proportion of mothers who do indeed have to travel to give birth at 22.2 per cent, below the national average of 25.

And more mothers, Mr. Speaker, are contacted at home by a health-care provider after the birth, 98.5 per cent in Manitoba versus 93 nationally, and this was sooner after discharge than the rest of Canada. So we're providing more follow-up faster and more prenatal care.

We have work to do. I concede this point, Mr. Speaker, but we're committed to do it.

Access to Clean Water Northern Manitoba Communities

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons for a high infant mortality rate, you know, is clearly because of poor housing conditions available with the meagre shelter rates this NDP government provides. One of the reasons is the fact that we've got more than a thousand homes in northern Manitoba without clean running water.

I ask the Minister of Health: What efforts has she made to ensure that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) allocated in this year's budget enough funds to retrofit homes in northern Manitoba so that more families can have clean running water?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Without a doubt, the member, as a pediatrician himself, knows that the social determinates of health play a hugely important role in the development of our children and, indeed, the health of our expectant moms. It's why we're investing in our Healthy Baby programs. It's why we have a committee like the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet that's looking not only at the nutrition but at physical fitness, at access to a family doctor, and ensuring that we provide even more health care through midwives, through physician assistants, through community mental health workers, a variety of circumstances in the north and, indeed, throughout Winnipeg.

As a nation, Mr. Speaker, we have more work to do. We just need to be committed to do it and not making—and not decide to make indiscriminate cuts to try to balance a budget.

Doctor Recruitment and Training Rural and Northern Manitoba

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, you know, I am proud to be part of a government that is hiring more family doctors and specialists and is committed that all Manitobans will have access to a

family doctor by 2015 in all corners of the province, including the north. To hire more doctors, you have to train more doctors, not cut medical school training as was done in 1990s.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health what steps this government has taken to train more doctors, especially in rural and northern Manitoba.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It was my great privilege to join the Premier last week to announce that we're making even more investments in our medical education program in Manitoba by supporting 15 more medical residencies and expanding our doctor recruitment initiatives. And, Mr. Speaker, these 15 residencies will include seven family medical residencies in rural Manitoba and eight specialist residencies, which will include emergency medicine, adolescent psychiatry, vascular surgery, internal medicine, and obstetrics and gynecology.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we know that when you make a decision to cut medical schools, it's a decision that hurts people for well beyond a decade, but we're investing. Kind of different from some other people in this House that I know.

Municipal Amalgamation Request to Withdraw Bill 33

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): And you should—the government should know that spin doctors don't count in that tally.

Mr. Speaker, the bullying continues. First, this NDP government avoided dealing with infrastructure needs and flood claims by demanding amalgamation of smaller municipalities. The minister called municipalities dysfunctional and misrepresented current legislation. All the while, he single-handedly destroyed a long-standing working relationship with the municipalities.

Will this minister finally show some respect to local governments, withdraw Bill 33 and begin to repair the damage this NDP government has done to municipalities?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Again, was evident today the Premier and, certainly on the weekend, the MLA for Dauphin, stood side by side by municipalities when they were faced with a tremendous challenge before them, with the ice coming forward and destroying many of their homes.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is just one example where this government stands beside municipal leaders and we're proud to do so.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, those municipalities face a real crisis. Amalgamation is not a crisis they should have to be facing right now.

Municipalities across this province speak of the arrogance and lack of respect shown by this NDP government. The minister says, don't worry about the details prior to signing amalgamation agreement.

Now the minister threatens consequences should municipalities not meet the extremely tight timelines set out by this NDP government.

Will the minister please explain what his definition of consequences is?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, you know, we're pleased this year to provide 8.5 per cent increase in funding and one of the most generous across Canada.

[inaudible] municipalities we believe in and we work hard with them and consult with them on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, and our government provides one of the most funding—most generous funding formulas in all of Canada, where you see right across Canada other provinces are cutting funding in municipalities.

And we're certainly proud to this budget which members opposite didn't support, but yet they think nothing of standing up and so-called professing to stand up for municipalities.

So we're very concerned about municipalities missing economic development opportunities in rural Manitoba, and there is a danger that they will miss those opportunities unless we work with them and side by—

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

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, disrespect, bullying, hidden agendas, now consequences.

Local municipal governments deserve to be treated with respect. No one, including municipalities, should be bullied the way this NDP government is doing. The minister's never really shown his real agenda to local governments and now

this minister threatens consequences. When municipalities are facing real crisis out there, all he wants to talk about is consequences.

Will this incompetent minister withdraw his bill and try to repair the damage his arrogant government has created with local governments?

Mr. Lemieux: Municipalities I've talked to are extremely nervous about the Leader of the Opposition, about the indiscriminate cuts. That's what they're concerned about and that's what they're worried about, because there really is a vision in Manitoba, the vision from the Leader of the Opposition, their vision of cutting teachers, cutting health-care workers.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in building Manitoba, building hydro, working with municipalities, building the infrastructure in this province that's needed. That's the vision we believe in.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Time for oral questions has expired.

*(14:50)

Speaker's Rulings

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Prior to routine proceedings on April 30, 2013, the honourable Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton) raised a matter of privilege regarding the actions of the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) and the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) in relation to a protest that had occurred the previous day at the site of the Portage Diversion water control structure on the Assiniboine River.

The minister claimed that these actions significantly interfered with his ability as a member of the Legislature and as a minister to provide clear direction to his staff. He concluded his remarks by moving, in quotations: That the House direct the member of—for Portage la Prairie and the Leader of the Official Opposition to apologize for their role in this serious incident. End of quotations.

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), the honourable Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) also offered

advice to the Chair. I took this matter under advisement in order to consult with the procedural authorities.

As members know, there are two conditions that must be satisfied in order for the matter raised to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege. First, the issue—was the issue raised at the earliest opportunity? Second, has it been demonstrated that the member's privileges have been breached in order to warrant putting the matter to the House?

Regarding the issue of timeliness, I am unsure whether or not the minister raised this matter in the House at the earliest opportunity. As I have stated in previous rulings, including one made May 8th, 2012, when raising such matters I would encourage members to clearly explain how they have met their requirement to timeliness, as this would greatly assist the Chair. On the second issue of whether sufficient advice—evidence has been provided, there are a number of considerations that must be taken into account.

I would first like to remind the House that when dealing with privilege the Speaker is only considering the procedural aspects of the situation raised. On page 224 of *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada*, second edition, Joseph Maingot advises that parliamentary privilege is concerned with the special rights of members not in their capacity as ministers, party leaders or whips, but strictly in their capacity as members in their parliamentary work. Claims that privilege has been violated relating to a member's role as a minister of the Crown are therefore not the basis for a prima facie case of privilege. This perspective has been supported in numerous Speakers' rulings in this House, including rulings from Speaker Rocan in 1988, 1992 and 1994; rulings from Speaker Hickeys in 2000, 2003, 2004 and 2005; and also in rulings I have delivered to this House in 2012. On page 222 of the same edition, Maingot also advises that in order for privileges of the House to have been breached, the activity in question must involve a proceeding of Parliament. This concept is supported by rulings from Speaker Rocan in 1998 and 1991, as well as rulings from Speaker Hickeys in 2003 and 2008.

While debate in the Legislative Chamber does constitute a proceeding of Parliament, events such as a protest do not fall within that purview.

Additionally, Beauchesne citation 31(3) advises that statements made outside the House by a member may not be used as the basis for a question of

privilege. Along the same lines, O'Brien and Bosc, on page 614 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, state that the Speaker has no authority to rule on statements made outside the House by one member against another. Rulings from five previous Manitoba Speakers consistently support the authorities on this point, confirming that comments made outside the Chamber cannot form the basis for a prima facie case of privilege. Speaker Walding ruled this way in 1983, as did Speaker Phillips in 1986 and 1987. Speaker Rocan made six—made similar rulings six times between 1988 and 1995, Speaker Dacquay once in 1995. Finally, Speaker Hickeys delivered a dozen rulings affirming this principle during his time in the Chair.

I believe it is also worth quoting for the House comments made by Speaker Parent in 1997 in a ruling on a case of privilege in the House—Canadian House of Commons, as I concur with his sentiment. Speaker Parent stated, quotations: The Chair is mindful of the multiple responsibilities, duties and constituency-related activities of all members and of the importance they play in the work of every Member of Parliament. However, my role as your Speaker is to consider only those matters that affect the parliamentary work of members. End of quotations.

In consideration of these facts, I would respectfully rule that a prima facie case of privilege has not been demonstrated and that the matter raised is not in order as a matter of privilege.

I have another ruling for the House.

Order, please. During oral questions on April 30th, 2013, the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) raised a point of order regarding floor comments she attributed to the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell). She stated the comments were saying a particular issue under discussion was politics and it would—that it would win opportunities in south Winnipeg. The honourable Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) also spoke to the same point of order, and I took the comments under advisement in order to peruse Hansard. I thank both honourable members for their advice to the Chair.

I have reviewed Hansard for the words complained of on April 30th. However, they do not appear in Hansard. I would note, however, in speaking to the point of order, both the honourable member for Riding Mountain and the honourable Government House Leader debated the substance of

the issue in question rather than addressing procedure or a breach of the rules.

I would remind the House that a point of order is to be used to draw the Speaker's attention—to the Speaker's attention any departures from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language. A point of order should not be used to gain the floor to participate in the debate, as advised by O'Brien and Bosc in House of Commons Procedure and Practice on page 632; or to dispute the accuracy of facts, according to our rule 40; or, as our rule 58 advises, to clarify remarks which have been misquoted or misunderstood.

I would therefore respectfully rule that the remarks in question did not appear in Hansard and I am unable to rule on them.

Member statements. The honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Portage la Prairie, on a matter of privilege.

Mr. Wishart: I rise on a matter of privilege as this is my earliest opportunity following your earlier ruling on the matter of privilege from the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

As is the custom of this House, matters that touch on the ruling you just rendered must be held until that time, and that has been done. But, Mr. Speaker, my ability to do my job as MLA for Portage la Prairie has been impaired. As simple a matter as attending a legal protest to discuss the concerns of constituents now generates a reaction so extreme as to become completely out of proportion to the event.

I do not deny that I attended the protest. I would argue that I would be not doing my job had I not. Many of the people attending were my constituents, and most of them had been treated poorly by the compensation programs developed and delivered by this government.

The member for Thompson is no stranger to attending protests, several of which are a matter of public record and which did not end in peaceful manner, but rather deteriorated into violence and resulted in criminal charges. This protest is not—did—

has no result in criminal charges, and although charges have been considered, none have been laid.

The minister continues to pursue the victims of the 2011 flood yet again. He continues to revictimize the victims. But this over-the-top reaction of this government—of this minister and this government has put all our abilities to meet with such groups of protestors at risk. Other groups have already expressed concern to me that meeting with their MLA on issues at odds with this government's policies may lead to further overreaction by this government and more aggressive pursuit of victims.

The member for Thompson has been free with his accusations, both inside the House and out, that I or my party was involved with organizing this protest. There is no truth to this whatsoever. No evidence has been produced other than a few Twitter notes during the day of the event stating that it was happening—hardly burning evidence. In fact, on the day of protest I had driven into Winnipeg in the morning to attend to issues in the Legislature. However, I received a call from an organizer of the protest while en route, informing me of what would be happening that day. Once I attended to my business in the Legislature, I returned to my constituency early to speak to the protesters, as I had planned to return by 3 o'clock anyway to attend a funeral in the community.

* (15:00)

The member for Thompson has willingly continued his vendetta against these protestors, speaking out to the media, accusing them repeatedly of irresponsibility, recklessness and dangerous actions.

I believe it is this minister who has been irresponsible and reckless. These protestors repeatedly stated that the minister—that if the minister would agree to meet and discuss their concerns, they would be gone—he refused. This was a simple, very reasonable request, and yet has—and, as yet, he has not met with them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member for Thompson stated there was a clear indication that this was promoting a political agenda. This is absolutely 'asurd' and leaves us wondering if any group of protestors should be expecting this type of vindictive pursuit.

Mr. Speaker, I believe my ability to meet with groups in my constituency or with those that express a different view from this government has been

impaired. In fact, I believe that the member's action reflects badly on all MLAs and will do much to make people wary to speak openly and honestly with their duly elected representative.

For these reasons, I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that the House direct the member for Thompson to apologize to all victims of the 2011 flood and particularly to this group of protestors of my—protestors that are my constituents.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same matter of privilege.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, on the same matter of privilege.

First of all, I want to take the opportunity to speak about the timeliness of this matter of privilege. Clearly, this isn't the first opportunity the member's had to speak about this. The member chose not to speak about this when the original matter of privilege was raised. He had the opportunity then to put his arguments on the record—he didn't take that opportunity. This is clearly weeks after that opportunity.

Secondly, I want to say that I don't believe that you will find there's a prima facie case for this matter of privilege. I think what we are perhaps talking about is the matter of poor judgment of the member for Portage la Prairie. I think that we have been clear in our statements on this situation that what was in question is not people's right to protest. People have that right to protest, they avail themselves of that right frequently. But I think what we have been clear about is that the right to protest doesn't extend to the right to put other people's lives at risk in doing so, and that was the statement on this side of the House. And I think, frankly, Mr. Speaker, in any democratic country in the world, the principle that protesting to make a point should not equal hurting other people, is a well-accepted principle. The only people that don't seem to accept that principle are the opposition.

So, clearly, you know, we heard not only from the minister after this event, but people with expertise in the flood-control structure and in these issues that the actions of blocking that diversion, of stopping it from operating put the property and lives of communities downstream at risk and put the actual flood-control structures at risk—that is well documented.

The member for Portage may have exercised poor judgment on that day in the way that he chose

to represent his constituents, and we submit that he should still apologize for that.

But I believe the minister, in this case, has been exercising his full responsibilities and duties. This is not about people's right to protest, this is a be—this is about all of our rights to live in a community, in a province where we can expect each other to take care of each other, even when we fundamentally disagree.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: On the matter of privilege raised by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie—and I thank all honourable members for their advice on this matter of privilege—I'm going to take this matter under advisement, consult with the procedural authorities and I will bring back a ruling for the House.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Treaty Day

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, this morning and throughout the day we have come together at the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba on Treaty 1 land to celebrate treaties day in Manitoba. Today we honour treaties 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 and 10, which were signed by our ancestors between 1871 and 1906.

In 2010, the Legislature was united in the Chamber to celebrate treaty days for the first time. While treaties were nation-to-nation agreements with the Crown, the land which we shared is the very basis of this province, and I, for one, commend this government for recognizing this fact.

Treaties day is about education and building a deep understanding of our history and each of our roles within the treaty relationship. It is a time to remember and to thank all those who went before us who signed the treaties in the spirit of coexistence. It is also a time to think about the seven generations who will come after us and the importance of working together to ensure that all of our voices, teachings and rights are respected.

As the former chief of Opaskwayak Cree Nation, I know first-hand the importance of upholding our treaties. Our First Nation has become very successful over the past thirty years because we have stood together and worked to protect our rights and traditions. This coming July, OCN will host a Cree gathering to discuss protecting and upholding the treaties.

Mr. Speaker, we are all treaty people. For as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow, we are all treaty people, and we must continue to work together towards a great future for our children.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all the members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in thanking the elders, chiefs, drummers and presenters, and all those who joined in to celebrate the treaties in Manitoba.

Ekosani, miigwech, mahseecho, thank you.

Women's Resource Centre (Brandon)

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, and I—the Women's Resource Centre in Brandon provides valuable resources to families in the Brandon and Westman area. The centre's two counsellors provide counselling services to women and children that have been victims of domestic violence, as well as advocating for them in the community and assisting with legal issues.

Each month, an average of 500 women and children visit the centre for daily breakfast programs, counselling, free access to computers, job hunting assistance, free legal clinics and to get information about finding housing and daycare. They also run wellness programs for women, including yoga, stress management and health seminars. The most basic of services have been well used, such as the information and referral service helping over 1,200 clients and the child play area seeing 347 uses.

The Women's Resource Centre receives and appreciates the generous donations from their local citizens, volunteer organizations and businesses. The centre is a busy place and has recognized that there are many other families that could be helped, with additional funding for counsellors and other resources. Last year, they provided counselling services for close to 100 women, plus several to many children. They are particularly looking to expand their children's counselling services, as they are receiving more referrals than they have capacity for.

Furthermore, Brandon's populations—increase and becomes more diverse through immigration. More resources are needed to assist clients in other languages. The centre does respond to many families throughout the Westman region, and would like to enhance their service delivery to ensure more families receive the supports they need.

The Women's Resource Centre recently moved to 731 Princess Avenue in Brandon. Their new space is bright, welcoming and easy to access. So I'd like to, at this time, congratulate the Women's Resource Centre in Brandon for the work that they do and encourage them to continue to provide the services within the region. Thank you.

St. Norbert BIZ

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, there are numerous reasons why St. Norbert is one of the greatest places to live in Manitoba. 'Intregal' to the strength of our community is its successful business sector, and I'm pleased to inform the House that entrepreneurs in St. Norbert are now members of a business improvement zone. The St. Norbert BIZ, initiated by Brob—Bob Roehle almost 10 years ago in the making, the St. Norbert BIZ held its first meeting in January of 2012, where a board of directors was chosen, and Dave Kaisaris of the St. Norbert Hotel was elected president and chair.

The BIZ is supported by a slate of diverse, ambitious and dedicated people from all over St. Norbert. The board of directors includes treasurer Jean Guy Talbot of Talbot & Associates, secretary Sandy Charette of Assiniboine Credit Union, Sean O'Connell of Z—JZK Sales and Service Limited, and Ward Bruner of St. Norbert Marketplace. Also assisting the executive are the City of Winnipeg BIZ co-ordinator Martin Pasieczka; city councillor Justin Swandel; Norm Gousseau of Enterprises Riel; Janice Lukes, the special projects assistant of the sort—St. Norbert BIZ; and Bob Roehle, the not-for-profit community liaison president for the St. Norbert Foundation and chair—co-chair of the Group'Action St. Norbert. I am proud to assist this group as a representative from Manitoba.

The BIZ has undertaken many notable initiatives to benefit the entire community. By representing 20 business enterprises, it seeks to create cohesion and a sense of unity between members and to support one another in promoting culture, heritage and the history of St. Norbert. Last summer, the BIZ hired a Green Team to help develop an attractive physical environment for the neighbourhood. It was staffed by high school and university students, much to the benefit of entire community.

* (15:10)

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the BIZ for contributing so much to our community. Organizations like this help us work to create more

opportunities, preserve our shared heritage and make St. Norbert an even better place to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Keystone Cup

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Hockey is a sport that dominates the prairie way of life, from small towns to big cities and everywhere in between.

The community of St. Malo only has around a thousand people living in town, but from April 18th to the 21st the community became the centre of the Junior B hockey world.

Six teams from across the country made the trek to—for the 2013 Junior B western Canadian championship, otherwise known as the Keystone Cup. The Thunder Bay Northern Hawks, the Peguis Juniors, the Saskatoon Royals, the Okotoks Bisons, and the Richmond Sockeyes and the hometown St. Malo Warriors gave the community a tournament to remember and the fans something to cheer about all weekend long. In the end, it was the Richmond Sockeyes of British Columbia who captured the Keystone Cup, defeating Saskatoon in the final score of 5 to 2.

While the host team did not reach the medal round, they proved that they belonged in a tournament and the entire community turned out to support them. Around 2,000 volunteers were required to pull this tournament off and the community did not disappoint. Whether it was cleaning up litter, selling advertising or running the hospitality suite, everything was accomplished without a hitch and the community was able to show why it deserved to host this tournament. For a town of a thousand, getting 200 volunteers requires a massive effort, but the entire community pulled together and got it done.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to commend the community of St. Malo for an excellent job hosting the Keystone Cup. They have proved that small towns are capable of everything the big cities are and a whole lot more. Regardless of what you're trying to plan, volunteers are the most useful tool an event can have, and all of these volunteers should be congratulated on a job well done.

I would ask that all members of this House join me in congratulating the community of St. Malo and the St. Malo Warriors on a job well done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

James Ehnes

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, Brandon is privileged to be home to a vibrant cultural community. I'm proud to rise in the House today and recognize a distinguished born and raised Brandonite who has done us proud on the world stage. This past month, violinist James Ehnes was awarded a 2013 Juno Award for Classical Album of the Year, Large Ensemble or Soloist with Large Ensemble Accompaniment.

This is only the most recent of a long list of achievements, Mr. Speaker. James began studying violin at the age of 4 and was the youngest musician ever to win the first prize in strings at the Canadian Music Festival. Since then, he has performed in 30 countries on five continents. James has received many international awards, including a Grammy, a Gramophone, and seven Junos. He is a member of the Order of Canada and an honorary doctor of music and guest professor of violin at Brandon University's School of Music.

I am proud to know James's mother and father, Barbara and Alan, and pleased to add that it was a pleasure to watch Jimmy grow up in our downtown Rosser ward neighbourhood.

Thanks in no small part to our provincial investments in arts and culture, we are putting Manitoba on the map in the international music scene.

I invite all honourable members to join me in commending James Ehnes, a suburb—superb musician and a role model for young musicians across the world.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. Any grievances? Seeing none—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please resume debate on Bill 20.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Speaker: The government business will now resume debate on Bill 20 on the proposed motion of

the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), and the amendment thereto, standing in name of the honourable member for Agassiz, who has 23 minutes remaining.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): This is indeed one of the longest speeches I ever made. I started on May the 8th and it's now the, whatever, the 13th, I think. It's been more words than I ever thought I would put on the record in this House

So, as I started to say the other day—*[interjection]* Don't help me. As I started to say the other day, the—one of the excuses given for this 1 per cent increase on the provincial sales tax has been the excuse of providing infrastructure. And as I said before, there's been infrastructure programs, Canada-Manitoba infrastructure programs for many, many years—never required an extra tax put in place to meet their commitments.

So I don't really see why that's required now, but there's been a little sleight of hand go into this. They've inflated the infrastructure spending budget or made it look like it was quite a bit more than it actually is. What they've done is take the capital budget out of Health and the capital budget out of Education, moved them into Infrastructure and said the infrastructure's that much higher and they need this tax to fund it. But what they're doing is leaving a fund—a lot of funds—in Health and Education that haven't got a claim to them now. They say they'll justify every expenditure out of that account, but they're not justifying the money they left behind in those two departments.

Now, you know, there's been any number of things going on since this House sat and we heard the budget and they proposed the 1 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax—an increase that I don't think is necessary at all. It's a government that's out of control on their spending, actually have a spending addiction and actually need to maybe look at the spending side of things a little bit too. And it may not be on the largest of things, but there's an awful lot of money being spent by this government that goes to absolutely non-common-sense sorts of places. And the one that comes to mind is our military attaché or military liaison, a former MLA who carried the job into civilian life and the funding for it. It's a job that was always done by a government backbencher, probably could still very easily be done by a government backbencher,

probably save a hundred thousand dollars just on that one item alone—probably more than a hundred thousand dollars. The second one is the size of Cabinet. When this government was formed, it was quite a bit smaller Cabinet. It seemed to function not too badly—as well as an NDP Cabinet ever does—but there's absolutely no need for 19 ministers of the Crown in this Province. And if you drop off the size of Cabinet, you drop off the extra salary, you drop off the—a lot of other expensive staff and so on—office expenses. So that's a place where there can be some considerable savings.

There's so many ways that this government has chose to waste money. My own hometown, there was a personal care home—there is a new personal care home there a couple of years—three years ago, but the old personal care home was built in the '60s—wonderful brick building. It just was not suitable for personal care anymore, so the town entertained—we do have some housing shortages, and they entertained a plan to try and turn—get a developer to turn this into housing. The Province, the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald), through the Health Department, actually stood in the way of this process happening. The RHA agreed, but then, when the opportunity arose, the Province felt they had a valuable building there that they could put out for tender. And I did at the time say to the minister, I don't think you'll get any tenders on it. But what it did was it slowed down the process to the point where we lost the developer. And after spending close to a million dollars over three and a half years on maintenance of the building or having the building sitting there, when we could have possibly spent that same kind of money and had it turned as an investment and had it turned into something that would be ongoing.

* (15:20)

Now, it's—I drive by and they're in the process of starting to tear it down, and I—it hurts a little bit. It bothers me to see that building. It was a good building, it's only 50 years old, you know. In lots of areas of the world they have buildings that are a thousand years old or 400 years old. Here's a 50-year-old building going into the dump, is basically what it's doing, and there's a lot of history in my family with that building. My dad was on the board when the building was built. My mom worked there when it first opened, and my dad later became the chair of that board. And I think he was maybe the chair of the board when the second part of that building was constructed in the early '70s.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So it's going to be gone. It's been a bit of a milestone on the side of the hill there in Neepawa, first building you see when you come in, but it's going to be gone and maybe we can get something there. But it's definitely a case where it's going to cost over a million dollars to tear it down, and the government, basically, in my view, wasted \$2 million there when if they were going to spend \$2 million, it would have enhanced that building and been able to turn it into something else.

You know, hear quite a bit these days about municipal amalgamation, and I've been contacted by a lot of municipalities because of my municipal background as a former president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. And it's a case where I think the carrot would work better than the stick, and, unfortunately, this government, at this time, has seen fit to roll out the stick and say to the municipalities, you must do this, and then talk about penalties to the municipalities if they don't do it—it's pretty heavy-handed.

These municipalities been around, many, for a hundred to a hundred and twenty-five years, and they functioned very, very well. They—there are the odd ones that have some problems from time to time, but as a rule, they function very, very well. And now we have a government saying, you must—you must amalgamate or we'll force it and we'll put penalties in place if you don't do it. Now, Lord knows what those penalties are because nobody will tell us.

I don't think you can cut grants to certain municipalities because that simply creates an unlevel playing field, although who knows? That's what they're trying with the Jockey Club, so, once again, another heavy-handed approach to something that's probably negotiable and could be solved a lot easier than coming down with the big stick.

You know, the municipalities—and as I said, I've heard from many of them, and it's creating anxiety on councils internally, but it's creating anxiety between different councils because some of them do have some disputes with some of their neighbours and not the best of working relationships.

But, overall, out across the province—and I know my own small municipality, the RM of Langford, has about 16 working agreements—16, 17 working agreements with Town of Neepawa and other municipalities, and those are out there all over the province—they're there.

It seems like the minister was surprised to find out that those are there, but that's just a fact of life. They're out there and these municipalities do cooperate with each other in many, many ways. Some share machinery, some share offices—there's so many different ways that they do it, so. You know, it's—and we've seen it now with the Jockey Club, too, where the Province goes in, says, we're going to make this happen. It doesn't matter—doesn't matter that you create \$50 million worth of economic activity in this province. Doesn't matter that you employ 500 people. We want your property and we're going to figure out a way to take it. And the minister is quoted as saying: I will fight this on the basis of schools and hospitals. And he said: I will win.

You know, that's the common argument they make, and it's starting to wear just a little bit thin.

We've seen so many things happening, especially in rural Manitoba, but—that are just unacceptable in a lot of ways, but they're going to happen, I guess, because that's what this government's doing and they have the power to do it.

Back in the '90s, that bad old Filmon government that the opposition likes to refer to, that I think was one of the finest governments this Province has ever had, did a thing called 'decentralization' of government offices. They decentralized a lot of government offices that are specific to rural Manitoba—for instance, conservation, agriculture, Crown lands—and it was a process that worked very well. Some of the people—some of the employees were not particularly happy at the time, but once they got moved—once they got settled in rural areas, they embraced the communities and were very comfortable with it. And now we've—on top of it all, it was more of an economic benefit for the province. And now that decentralization has almost been totally recentralized.

We have an Ag office—Neepawa is a thriving community, over 4,000 people, the hub of a fairly large trading centre. We have an Ag office that's closed, literally. Staff's been moved out of there, like MAFRI office that—there's been one there all my life and well before it, because I remember my dad talking about going into the ag office at one time, so way back.

So, you know, the Conservation office—I don't know who makes these decisions, but Conservation office there has a—had an office set up and they have a yard with all their equipment and all their various paraphernalia that Conservation officers are

responsible for. They've now decided to move them down the road half a mile to a different building. It appears that they're going to leave that office building sitting empty.

And now, instead of being able to just walk out into their equipment yard, their compound, now they have to climb into a vehicle and drive there every time they need to get something from that compound. And it just doesn't make any sense; takes more time and it's more costly. So those are the types of things that are going on.

You know, another thing that worries me somewhat out in rural Manitoba and probably should, in my case, because I've been watching how operations like Hutterite colonies are being treated and I'm really not very impressed. There's about—in my own constituency, there are about 20 Hutterite colonies; there's 19 or 20 right now. And some of the things that the provincial government has done for—this NDP government have done just really are fairly nonsensical. They should have picked up through the hog barn moratorium debate that the hog manure was not getting dumped into waterways as they so gleefully thought it was. And it's a valuable commodity that's been applied to fields at the right rates and so on, but a lot of the Hutterite colonies do have large hog barns, and the moratorium pretty well curtailed their hog business.

*(15:30)

Then—and now the next move that was made was the burning of coal was going to be banned. Quite a few of the colonies burn coal for their heat in the colony. So they're going to have to get alternative—as a fact, the colony just north of Neepawa spent over a quarter of a million dollars to put in natural gas and I didn't see the Province picking up any of those costs, but it was a cost that was forced by regulation in this province.

Now, we see the school tax rebate on farm property have a cap put on it which will also affect the colonies and, you know, the colonies don't ask for a lot from the Province. They actually prefer to be left alone and do their own thing and they don't ask for a lot, but this Province has given them a lot. It's given them a lot of headaches.

And what's happened with the hog industry in this province is almost criminal. With the suggestion that they're saving Lake Winnipeg they pretty well closed down the hog industry in this province with moratoriums on barns and with regulations on

smaller operations. And the hog industry was a huge industry in the province and it's now—

An Honourable Member: Bigger than Manitoba Hydro at one point.

Mr. Briese: Bigger than Manitoba Hydro at one point, the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler) tells me. And he's right. It was about, I think, 15 to 17 thousand jobs and somewhere around two billion dollars' worth of economy. That economic activity is now about half of that, about one billion dollars a year and sliding. Very critical, very important to my town, once again, we have HyLife Foods plant in Neepawa. It employs a—I was told just the other day just around 900 people now in a—at a town that has about 4,200 people population. So absolutely a significant employer in my community and they're starting to have problems sourcing hogs.

All this was done and a number of other things, supposedly, to improve Lake Winnipeg and we're seeing Lake Winnipeg continuing to deteriorate. They didn't put the emphasis on the actual things that were causing the problems in Lake Winnipeg, and still haven't and probably never will because the things that are really causing the problems are too expensive to fix and they're too expensive to government at the present time to fix. They want to do things, band-aid things that look good that people think they're doing something, but it has to be at the cost of someone else.

You know, the idea that they need this extra 1 per cent of provincial sales tax, it just beyond belief. They—when I talked earlier about the infrastructure, the infrastructure programs from the federal government aren't even going to roll until next year, but, obviously, they want to have a nest egg put away somewhere just in case it happens. But that's not what is going to happen. It'll be next year, for sure, before they're set up.

And another thing I should just mention while I'm talking about that is I had the opportunity to be involved in the Canada-Manitoba infrastructure programs for six years, and the last infrastructure program that came down the pipes, municipalities weren't allowed to sit on the selection committee and they weren't allowed to sit on the selection committee supposedly because of short time frames and they had to get this rolling and all that kind of stuff. But, you know, now there are going to be 10 year—there's going to be a 10-year program coming down the pipe and I think it's critical that at least for the community portion that municipalities

do be included. The AMM should be included in the selection process. They—excuse me—they should have never been taken out of it.

You know, another thing that was touched in the budget a little bit was the university funding. And I know what I'm going to be told is that we didn't cut our university funding as much as other provinces, but in reality there was a 5 per cent increase promised to the universities for three years—universities and post-secondary—and it was cut in half. So, once again, I don't expect you need an increase in the sales tax to pick up something that you're cutting in half. You're probably saving some money there. But they talk about big—larger cuts in other provinces, but we put the restrictions—or the NDP government put the restrictions on the university funding over the last 10 years by freezing tuitions. The—our universities began to fall behind, and that's why they came along finally and promised a 5 per cent increase for three years to try and catch our universities up to universities in other parts of Canada—universities and post-secondary. And that was what it was designed for, and now they came along again—the NDP came along—cut that in half, and kept them behind the eight ball and probably slipping further all the time.

I know there's many others that want to speak to this, so with those few words I think I'll pass it on to the next one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I do rise to put a few things on the record in regards to the amendment proposed by the member from Charleswood on the record in regards to Bill 20. And, as other members of this House have made it very clear, this bill is a bill that certainly is not something we're prepared to support, and thus the amendment brought forward by the member from Charleswood certainly is in order. And we certainly want to tell you the reasons why and—even though I'm not surprised the members opposite don't want to get up and have the debate on—in regards to this amendment. And I know that they feel that their bill is perfect. They've made it very clear that they're not going to be looking at amendments on anything; the bill the way it stands is a perfect bill. Every bill they bring forward in this House seems to be the perfect bill.

However, as I've also said in this House—and I stand to have it repeated back to me one day when we're in government and we bring legislation forward—there's not a monopoly on good ideas and

never should be a monopoly on good ideas. And, whenever governments bring forward legislation, whether it be on finances, on transportation, on agriculture, on a whole host of different ideas that come forward, consultation is something I speak about quite often in this House and something I believe in very, very dearly. And the best way to do that, of course, is to make sure that in fact that we do reach out to those folks and share ideas, share feedback that comes back as a result.

In fact, that leads me into the first part of consultation. I know that members opposite were invited out to the front steps here just a week ago Thursday and—about calling for a referendum on the PST hike. Unfortunately, members opposite decided not to partake in that and that's disappointing. I know the First Minister was 'inspired'—or invited to speak at that particular rally. There was—I don't know, I heard numbers from 300 to 500 to 700 people at that particular rally; I think there was well over 500. Being an auctioneer in the past, I have a pretty good indication for numbers, and I can tell you that it was pretty close to 500. So whether or not it's 499 or 550 or whatever, but I can tell you those people—in fact, the Speaker has ruled in this House that petitions that we read we can't use the word angry, and I totally agree the way the petitions are written they need to be followed to the rule, and I support the Speaker on that a hundred per cent, but I can tell you the fact of the matter is people are angry. People are very angry about the PST increase and not being able to have a referendum on it. In fact, the latest poll done by CFIB in regards to a referendum—in—500 Manitobans—done by Angus Reid, here they are, 74 per cent agreed the provincial government should hold a referendum before increasing the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. Out of the CFIB members surveyed, 93 per cent of the businesses, the active members felt there should've been a referendum or should be a referendum.

* (15:40)

There's still lots of time for this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, out of the—members that also were surveyed, there was four members—four members—that said there shouldn't be. So maybe there is some support out there for this PST increase. The clearest way for that to be very clear is to hold a referendum that's been called for by members opposite—us—and we feel that that decision is a decision that should have. In fact, there's legislation in place very clearly that states that before a PST tax increase is brought into this province that, in fact, it will be by

referendum. So we have to be very clear into that fact. In fact, what Bill 20 does is does away with that opportunity for a referendum.

But we have made it very clear in this House we're going to stay here. We're going to use every tool in our toolbox to ensure the fact that Bill 20 does not see the light of day before July 1st, and we think it's also very important to the fact that the Province not break the law. We are lawmakers in this building. We make decisions that affect each and every member in this House and all residents of Manitoba. So why are we—why are we as legislatures and the members from the government taking the opportunity to ram this down the throats of every Manitoban and not give them the opportunity—not give them the opportunity to put an X against or for a referendum? I think that speaks volume.

And I know that we've asked many times in this House—several members of this House have asked in this House—whether or not the First Minister is going to be at those hearings when Bill 20 does come up for debate, and we've yet to get a commitment out of the First Minister. If he truly wants to have those voices heard and him be able to respond to each of those presenters, and I believe now there's well over 170 of them that—I think last count was 175—but they want to make sure that the First Minister does, in fact, hear what they have to say. In fact, it was this very government back in 2011 during the election and they were asking about the PST hike increase and they said: nonsense—nonsense, Mr. Deputy Speaker. No, we're not going to raise tax. We're going to keep our word. We're going to make sure that we balance the books. More power to them. More power to them.

But what do we see? No, the government reneged on that promise, and they made it very clear in the last budget that, in fact, that they were going to bring forward changes in the sales tax and raise it from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. In fact, AMM, the Winnipeg chamber, Manitoba business chambers all thought it was a great idea. In fact, they supported it. They supported it. Thought it was a novel idea. But where would the money go? That was the thing that they wanted to make very clear. So now, once they've been blindsided, they don't want it. They're saying, you misled us once again. Even I know the member from Gimli brought in—it was asked questions last Thursday on—in regards to new businesses come into Manitoba and some that didn't come, and the member stood up and said he's so proud of the fact that those businesses came here.

Well, you know what? Those businesses came here under faith and the goodness that they thought that this government actually was going to present to them was no PST increase. They made that commitment. They made that commitment, 2011. Those same businesses feel misled. I talked to a lot of those businesses.

In fact, I can tell you—I can tell you very clearly, on the weekend I had a number of places I was at and every conversation—every conversation—came back is, why did the government renege on their commitment not to raise the PST?

And we've been reading out these statements and literally there is thousands upon thousands upon thousands. So, you know, every individual that signs those petitions are going to make sure that they don't forget—they won't forget. In fact, what they're telling us very clearly is that if this government truly wants to hear from Manitobans, then we will have a referendum.

Call the referendum. We'll have a clear understanding about whether or not we have a mandate to go forward on this, or whether or not we don't, and that is the true and honest way to make sure.

And now since the—I started a little bit ago on the Winnipeg chamber, the Manitoba Business Council and the Manitoba chamber—all those organizations that were asking in good faith for an increase in infrastructure financing to make sure we fix a number of those roads, a number of those projects that comes under infrastructure.

But what did we see? What did we see when we looked at the budget? Actually, in infrastructure the line-by-line breakdown by this Province in their own budget was only increased by \$28 million. When you drill down a little more, there's actually \$80 million, but the rest of it is not there. So this becomes, now, a slush fund.

So the Manitoba chamber, Winnipeg chamber, the business council—these fine organizations that called for this 1 per cent increase feel misled, so they're saying hold the fort—hold the fort. If you truly want to do this, under your rules, then let's have a referendum.

That's not what we've seen. They decided—this government has decided to move forward with this Bill 20 to do away with any of that legislation. So, again, I want to remind members opposite that, in fact, what they're doing is something that is illegal,

something that has not been asked for by Manitobans, it's not what they agreed to support whenever they brought in this—ask for the 1 per cent in the PST.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we have seen time and time again whenever we do things like this, there's a consequence. And that consequence will be at—by all members opposite at the door in the next election, why did they break—make that promise? Why did they say they were not going to not raise the sales tax—they did.

And I know what the play—plan's going to be: well, the Winnipeg chamber asked for it; the Manitoba chamber asked for it. Well, I can tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the chamber members—those chamber people that did make the ask has also went out and said very clearly—very clearly—we did ask but not for the way the government rolled it out; they were misled. They made presentations to this government, and we know we've asked this question in the House, too: how serious is this government about the 1 per cent? And what groups, other than the ones we're talking about here, how many individuals went out and said, we want a 1 per cent increase in our sales tax?

Now, we've talked also in this House about people going to Saskatchewan, people going south of the border to do their shopping and major purchases. We know we're going to be impacted; we know a lot of those smaller ticket items that normally families have a hard time to meet from time to time won't be made. When you have the opportunity to have more disposable income, what better person to make that decision than the family that's involved? That is critical.

Government does not need to be the big brother, the big sister or the father or the mother or the aunt or the uncle that makes those decisions. Whenever we sit down in our household, we look at our budget on a month-to-month basis; we look at it a yearly basis; we look at it on a five-year term program; we look at it on a 20-year program. What can we afford; what can we sustain; what can we do with our extra income, which is limited—I'll be the first to admit it. We come from a very poor family and we know what it's like to make ends meet. And I think I've said this in the House before, too—I can tell you very clearly that whenever I grew up, we had flour sacks sewn together for our sheets and we had straw pillows. And I can tell you that it's—I know what it's like to be coming up through a tough life. And we

ate rabbit about every way you could ever hope to have rabbit: we fried it, we boiled it, we did every way we could. But, you know what? We did okay, we had a happy family.

And sometimes, whenever we get past the fact that whenever we don't look from within, sometimes we need to be reminded of the fact that we need to take another look and a sober second thought.

And that's why it's so important for this referendum. Because those hard-working Manitobans—those folks—and a lot—a lot of them have been impacted around Lake Manitoba. In fact, wasn't that many years ago Lake Winnipeg had a flood as well. A number of homes got hit, and I can tell you that those families have not gotten over the devastation of being financially ruined.

Through one reason or another—and yes, I said earlier today, Mother Nature has a tough way on us sometimes. But the flood of 2011 was a man-made flood, and we don't want to—make sure that there's not 'differation' here, because, in fact, the flood of 2011—there was promises made by the minister of Agriculture at the time, and those promises have been broken time and time again. And this is just another broken promise, but a severe one that brings in roughly \$199 million in 2013, about \$277 million in the years after, depending on the economy, on spending and so on.

*(15:50)

But the fact of the matter is when families have the opportunity to make the decision about how they want to spend the money, how they want to be able to make those decisions, based upon whatever they have available to them, they're going to make those decisions very carefully. And I know that whenever we do ours, we look at it and say, you know, it's not going to happen this year. Maybe the one I talked about earlier with our five-year program, maybe we'll have to extend that holiday or maybe there won't be a holiday or maybe we won't be able to get the boat or maybe we won't be able to expand our land base or maybe we won't be able to increase our herd size or perhaps we won't be able to build the barn this year. Maybe we won't be able to buy that new tractor or that new baler. And I know that many of the families that I talk to each and every day, they're reaching out and saying, can I afford this? Can I really make a difference in my operation to make that change? So those changes have to be result that's going to improve that family or that business or

that model that they're working under, and I know that every member on this House gets it on our side.

Whenever we make a commitment, we have to own up to that commitment. We can't buy that tractor and all of a sudden say, oh, well, we're going to raise our income, because we don't have any to raise. We don't have that opportunity to go to Manitobans and say, in our business, we can't go out and just say, give us another 1 per cent. In this case, as I said earlier, it's about \$277 million, a substantial amount of money.

And I'm very disappointed—very disappointed—that the government has not set in its sights about how this money is going to be spent. And I think that's the point that upsets folks the most is about this—and I called it a slush fund earlier and that's what it's appearing to be, on the pet projects that this government's decided they want to fund one way or another.

But truly it's not for infrastructure upgrades. It's for other projects that the government determines whether or not they want to build a school that was announced five other times or a hospital that was announced four other times. And I know the member from Selkirk, I put on the record the other day, said it was 12 times that the Selkirk hospital was announced, and he corrected me and said, no, it was only nine. So, unfortunately, still nine is way too many. I mean, an announcement is announcement. Either you feel good about it or you don't.

And I know many times, we like to hear the record over again. We want to hear the record play just one more time for old times' sake, and I can tell you that whenever you hear the record enough, you seem to think that maybe we're on the right track, or maybe—does that put a little doubt in your mind that maybe they're not going to build it? Or is it just an announcement saying, well, maybe we're going to do it? No, we'll wait. We'll just wait another year and then we'll make that announcement again. So then we'll do it one more other time, and so now, next thing you know, we have these announcements to become announcement of announcement. So, really, we got a government that you can't believe.

We have a government that puts out innuendoes in regards to different things that are going to happen. In fact, coming back to the flood of 2011, the Minister of Agriculture at the time, the member from Dauphin, said that we'd multi-level—multi-year flood compensation programs, and now he's saying, oh, it's the federal government's fault. Well, you

know what, if it's the federal government's fault, why would the federal government make the announcement and not the Minister of Agriculture?

The Minister of Agriculture knew very well—very well—what the guidelines were. If he didn't, then he's been in this Assembly asleep for however many years he's been here, because I certainly know the guidelines of what DFA covers and what it don't cover. It's available to every member in this House about what's covered, what's not covered. You can't go and start yelling, oh, Big Brother, federal government, bail me out. I overspoke. I should have not made that commitment.

Yes, he did one very good thing, too, and that's in regards to cottage coverage. Yes, they did cover a lot of cottages. Again, I would have as well if I was the member from Dauphin at the time, because what had happened was that people were flooded intentionally. This was a man-made flood. The government had a responsibility to own up to those responsibilities—responsibilities that they did make a commitment to, but, unfortunately, it didn't go far enough. It didn't go far enough, because what had happened, a lot of those values that were assessed was not a true assessment on the damage that was done. I got story after story, and I know the member from Interlake has a lot of those stories, too, where compensation was compromised. So a cottage that was worth 200,000, they might have got a hundred and forty. A cottage that was worth 90, maybe they got 60. A cottage worth 60, maybe they got 20.

So here's the real 'clux' of the problem. Whenever you put a statement out, whether it be on PST, whether it be on flood compensation, own up to that commitment. That commitment should be your bond, should be your word, and this is not what we've seen in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I find it upsetting. I find it wrong, and as a politician it gives all of us a back—a black eye. A responsible government would not do that. Whenever they say that we want to do whatever they decide they want to do, then they should do it. They should do it with a clear conscience, a clear guideline that whenever we make those commitments we're going to move forward on those commitments and we're going to make sure it happens.

Now, this extra money that the slush fund is going into—on the back of all Manitobans, unfortunately. Going back to 2012 budget, there was about \$180 million in increases there; 2013 we saw about another \$280 million. This works out for the

families, through the backdoor taxes, through the increased driver's licence fees, through the increase in other fees that this government's decided where they wanted to go with backdoor taxes. The only one they really been upfront on is the PST. The rest has been through back door on property taxes and insurance premiums, a number of host of other things.

But what we've seen is \$1,600 per family increase out of every Manitoban's family's back pocket that they're not going to see again, and it comes back to what I talked about earlier. It talks about disposable income. So what the government's saying, move aside, move aside, move aside. We have everything under control. And I know those members opposite are going to have to go the door in 2016 and they're going to say, I'm sorry, but elect me again and, you know, I promise to keep my word this time. Go to the flood victims and say, I promise to keep my word this time. Go to the people that they misled—they're saying they would not going to increase the PST and say, I'm sorry, I made a mistake.

Also, what we're going to have to do in the next election is go back and say to those same hard-working Manitobans, that guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? I goofed up and I will not do that again. I will make sure I keep my word next time. My word is my bond. So really is it? Really is it? Whenever we look at the true definition of what this government has done, what they have done to Manitobans, one thing they're good at is spending money. Anybody can spend money, yes, but is it going to the right causes?

And I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) stood up in the House the day of the budget and he said the Tories on the other side got up and they asked for \$120 million in infrastructure, 120 more that we don't have.

Well, guess what, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The answer is simple. It's about priorities. It's about where you want to spend your money. It's about where you want to be able to focus and say, this is really where it should.

So we have a small little group of people over there on that side of the House, small little group called the Treasury Board and they sit in their little room and they say: All right. We're going to spend some money here. We're going to spend some money there and at the end of the day it's going to get us all re-elected. So this is what we got to do; we got to

stand up for all Manitobans. We got to stand up and make sure that these are our priority.

The members opposite have no idea what they're talking about when they ask for that infrastructure. They're clued out—they're clued out. They don't have a clue about what they're asking for. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've done our homework. I know deep down in my heart whenever we ask—whenever we ask for infrastructure it's not at the expense of another project. It's about priorities. It's about determining where that money should be spent.

And they love to bring up the fact about tough love, that the Leader of the Opposition said it's about tough love. And that's about determining the priorities of where you want this province to grow, what businesses to invest in, what roads you want to invest in, what schools you want to invest in, what's the next project that we maybe want to be able to have a little growth in this province

We've got to look at also investing. Investing's another program—in fact, we brought it in in the 1990s, the MIOP program, that I think is a fabulous program. That's part of where maybe those priorities should be.

* (16:00)

But, whenever Treasury Board sits down, I can just have a bit of an idea about how it runs. Probably, the Minister of Finance comes in and says, this is my wish list for the day and I need Treasury Board to give me a rubber stamp and I'm good to go on it, but also while I'm there I got a better idea that's going to help us out here. And that's going to be we're going to get \$5 million out of the racetrack—forget the fact that it's a \$50-million business, it creates 500 jobs in the member from Assiniboia's own riding. He's been to all the meetings, he's been to all the events, and now he's all of a sudden disappeared. I wonder if—whether or not he had a vote at the Cabinet table on this thing, whether or not, in fact, that the member from Assiniboia was, in fact, making sure that they were there. Unfortunately, the member has not had the opportunity to stand up in the House and answer any questions or debate about whether or not this \$5-million cut is one that's going to be beneficial for the sustainability of the Assiniboia Downs.

I can tell you that the Jockey Club is focused. They are making sure that whatever their due diligence is and going to be done. In fact, I know the member from Dauphin is not too pleased with the

ruling that come down from Judge Dewar, because I know the fact of the matter is he made it very clear you cannot renege on a deal. Maybe we should tell the flood victims that; they cannot renege on a deal, but, unfortunately, they don't have the same court that ruled in their favour that the same minister got up and said we're going to save the \$5 million but he didn't know he was breaking the law. Same thing, he also didn't know he broke the law on the PST by not calling a referendum. He can raise taxes all he wants. There's no doubt about that. He's more than able to raise the taxes. Every member on that side of House is raising taxes. They're all voting for the fact that we want to increase the PST.

We're not going to let that happen without a fight, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What I'd like to do in closing is the fact that whenever governments make sure that whenever they bring in legislation changes, whether it be through budgetary items or through changes in legislation, they need to do their homework. They need to be ensured that in fact this has real credibility, this has the opportunity to make sure, that this is what's going to be for the betterment of all Manitobans.

In fact, I know that, you know, this has been 12 years, I guess—13 years since this government was elected—way too long—but I can tell you that whenever governments get too—in power too long and—Manitoba public is great at holding governments to account whether it be the Conservative government, whether it be the NDP government. In fact, I know back—going back to the Howard Pawley days, they were thrown out for a reason. They were thrown out for a reason. The Conservatives were thrown out for a reason. This NDP government will be thrown out for a reason. You cannot defeat governments. Governments defeat themselves.

And what this policy has become with this government is spend and tax, spend and tax, spend and tax. Unfortunately, you've got to the point where there's no more tax dollars to be received. People are leaving. Trained people that come to Manitoba to get their education are on the exodus. On the exodus out, they're going to provinces like Saskatchewan, going to provinces like Alberta, going to provinces like British Columbia where there's the New West Partnership. And I've talked about this as well. Where is Manitoba on the New West Partnership? They're out all on their own. Ontario won't take them. Alberta, Saskatchewan and BC won't take them. In fact, I can tell you very clearly that I had a great conversation just on Thursday last week out on

the front steps here; a nurse was here from Alberta and she was having difficulty. I know that members opposite saying that, oh, well, we're—we'll make sure all things happen. But you know what? She cannot get work. Her certification does not work in Manitoba—does not work in Manitoba. And what I can tell you that whenever we look at tradespeople—and I know a lot of businesses around Manitoba that are working and short of tradespeople because they're so hard to retain, but—whenever they do decide to make their fortune in Alberta or Saskatchewan and they come back that some of those trade skills are not up to Manitoba standards because they're not part of the New West Partnership Agreement. Unfortunately, what we need to do—and in fact I'll even give a kudos for the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) in regards to the trucking industry. One of those changes was done last fall through working in comprehension with the Manitoba Trucking Association, was something we'd been calling for quite some time. We're very pleased the fact that some of those regulations are moving forward.

But what we need to do is have a position at the table. What do we do with those relationships? Whenever we get together with our neighbours to the west, we need to be working on common ideas, common things that we need to be making sure that is going to make Manitoba grow and prosper. Maybe then—maybe then—we wouldn't be looking at a PST increase. Maybe then we'd have an opportunity to be able to stand up and say, we're making this province of Manitoba a better place to live. We're making Manitoba a place where we want to come home to, a place where our families want to stay and grow.

Whenever we make those choices for all Manitobans we want to make sure that they're done in a way that's going to be sustainable—and, in fact, I know my grandkids. I love them dearly and I don't know if they'll be staying in Manitoba. I hope for them, too, but they have to have the opportunities. They have to have the challenge, but if they don't have any income that's going to be disposable income that they can spend on their families and their needs, then they won't be staying. They will not be here.

Unfortunately, what we've done in Manitoba is done two things: we made us not competitive, and that's not good, that's not acceptable. What we've also done is made Manitoba a place where we have uncertainty. Whenever governments say, I will not raise the PST, and then turn around and do it, what

we see is truly misinformation that happens as governments, and they get arrogant. Unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has gotten arrogant. It's unfortunate, but it's time for them to go.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to stand in the House today and speak to the amendment that was put forward by my colleague, the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), and I will read the amendment. It says that all the words after the word that should be deleted and substituted with: This House declines to give second reading to Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), because this House has not received satisfactory ever—evidence or assurances that an increase in the retail sales tax was either considered or recommended at the government's prebudget consultation meetings.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think we on this side of the House have heard loudly and clearly from members of our constituencies and members of constituencies that are represented by government members of the House the betrayal that they feel as a result of being lied to by a party and a government in the last election campaign, that went out clearly and said we will not raise taxes. That was a guarantee that was given to the people of Manitoba, and they believed the government. And they were sorely disappointed not only this year with the increase in the PST that was announced in the budget, but last year also. And it maybe wasn't as a significant an increase, although it generated a significant amount of money last year. I believe it was about \$188 million in new revenue through taxation and through backdoor taxation and user fees that impacted hard-working Manitobans in their pocketbooks.

* (16:10)

But, to add insult to injury, again, this year the PST was increased from 7 per cent to 8 per cent, and, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are angry, they are enraged and they are saying, enough is enough. We work hard for the money that we have in our pockets as a result of the jobs and the activities that we undertake, and we want to ensure that we have the opportunity to spend that money in the way that we best see fit as Manitobans, as taxpayers. We don't want to see government time after time after time pick our pockets and tell us that they know better how to spend our hard-earned money than we know. That's

absolutely unacceptable, and we see, time after time and year after year, as this government has been in power now for 14 years, we see—

An Honourable Member: Woohoo.

Mrs. Mitchelson: And I know members on the government side of the House say, woohoo. Well, maybe they feel that way. That's not what my constituents are saying, and that's not what many of their constituencies are—constituents are telling us. Mr. Speaker, they're saying, we've had enough; we've had enough of a party that has become so arrogant and so out of touch with the thinking of working taxpaying Manitobans that they believe, first of all, that they're above the law, that they don't have to obey the laws of the land. And they are indicating to us that they no longer can believe anything that members of the NDP government say—anything that they tell them, because they say, they're a government, a party, that will lie to us and say anything to get elected, but we found out that they will do exactly the opposite once they get into power.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I've been around the Legislature for several years. I know the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) and I have probably—

An Honourable Member: Same day—same day.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well—the same day. We may—well, he took a bit of a hiatus and left us, but he has come back. Some may say that he seen the light, I don't know that, but, I, you know—and some may say that I've been around a little too long—I don't know that. Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, my constituents still have expressed some confidence in my ability to represent them, and so I'm very pleased that that has happened.

And I went—when I first started my political career, I was in opposition for two years and was—learned the ropes of the Legislature, and then we ended up in government for 11 years and now I've been back in opposition. So I've been on both sides of the House, and I understand what a beneficial role we all play as democratically elected members of this Legislature.

And democracy is all about give and take and it's all about, in some instances, working together. And there are many, many things that happen here in the Legislature that aren't controversial. There are many things that take place, many laws that are passed that we would all agree can benefit Manitobans, and we work together in a very positive way to accomplish

some of those things. And there are a few pieces of legislation and a few decisions or directions that any government takes that don't have the support of the majority or of all members of this Legislative Assembly, and those are the bills and the things that become very controversial and are talked about in the media and out in the general public.

And so, Mr. Acting Speaker, if I was to say that there's anything that I have—oh, I don't know if I would call it, really enjoy, but I would want to say that there are certain things in a democracy and in this Legislature that I know do happen. And there isn't any one government that does everything right or everything wrong. There are many things—and I have to say, and I have, from time to time, complimented the government, even though they are New Democrats and I don't always agree with their philosophy or their policy, but there are many, many things that they have done that I have commended them for because they've been the right things for the right reasons. And I believe that there were those that we worked with when we were in government on the opposition benches of the House that did commend us, too, for some of the things that we did right and we did wrong. But the nature of democracy is that we're going to be critical from time to time about certain principles and certain directions that governments with a different philosophy or a different point of view do have.

But I do want to say, in all of my years in the Legislature, I don't think I've ever seen as consistent—well—and I don't know how to say this, Mr. Acting Speaker—consistently have—I believe that the level of politics has deteriorated as a result of a government, again, that will lie and will say anything to get elected. And I don't recall politics being that way when I first got into this Legislature. I believe, and I did believe at that point in time, that being a politician was an honourable profession. I was a nurse by profession before I got into the Legislature, and I—some people say well, why would you move from nursing to politics? Well, there are a set of circumstances in our community—yes, that precipitated my run for political office. But the reality is that both of the professions that I've been involved in, both nursing and politics—being a politician—are service professions. We're there to serve the people in a very different manner, nursing to politics, but they are both service professions, and I take great pride in having tried to serve those that I looked after when I was a nurse and those in my constituency that I've tried to look after and meet

their needs as a politician. So I think they—and I felt that they were both very honourable professions.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, I've come to be a bit cynical about the whole political process, and it's just in the last number of years when I would never, ever consider going to anyone's door and lying to them and telling them that I could do something or I could accomplish something that I couldn't do, or that I did something that I really didn't do, or that I would promise to do something and then not follow through on it. And that's become the norm with the New Democratic government. The norm is for them to lie, to say anything, and try to convince Manitobans that what they say is the gospel truth. Well, we know it's nothing like the gospel truth when it comes to anything that is uttered by members of the government side of the House.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have great difficulty with that and I can understand why people become very cynical and why they don't even want to vote and exercise their democratic right, because they can't believe a word that this government is saying. So, when we listen to the promises and all of the things that the New Democratic Party and the government talks about today, that say—when they say what they're going to do, how can we, with any conscience, or how can they, with any credibility, expect Manitobans to believe anything that they say? And we have prime example where we've had the leader of the Province of Manitoba, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) in the last election campaign, stand up and say he would not raise taxes. As a matter of fact, he said it was nonsense, I believe, that he would even consider raising the PST when he was confronted by the media—pure nonsense.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Well, Mr. Speaker, what did we see? A year and a half—short year and half later, we've seen a government and a Premier who has broken that promise, a government that has lied to Manitobans time after time, and there's no credibility left. And no wonder, again, people are so cynical about politicians and what they stand for. And I know that those that believe in democracy certainly believed that they would have the opportunity to have a vote through referendum on any increase in major taxes, and one of those major taxes is the PST, the provincial tax sales tax. They believed that they were protected by legislation that is in place today.

* (16:20)

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister responsible for Seniors and Consumer Affairs has been quoted in the newspaper, just recently, as saying that the law is the law is the law. And I'm wondering whether he talked to any of his colleagues, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) specifically, when the Minister of Finance has brought in legislation that won't be passed before July the 1st that will require Manitobans to pay 8 per cent PST. Now, if the law is the law, until that law is changed and passed it is still the law. And today under law there is a requirement for a referendum and people should have the opportunity to have a say before the provincial sales tax is raised from 7 per cent to 8 per cent.

Now, if they'd done the honourable thing and brought in a piece of legislation to repeal the referendum and had that passed, then they would have the authority and the ability to raise the provincial sales tax. But did they do that, Mr. Speaker? No, they didn't do that. So, until that law is changed, like the Minister responsible for Seniors says, the law is the law is the law, and the sales tax cannot be raised until that legislation is repealed.

But, you know, this government doesn't really seem to care. They've lost touch completely with the residents in their communities and their constituencies, hard-working Manitobans, Manitobans that believe that they should have a say, that they have a law that protects them and that they should be able to vote to say yes or no to an increase in provincial sales tax. And I don't know what the government is afraid of, Mr. Speaker, because we hear the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Finance stand up day after day after day and talk about how wonderful the increase in the new revenue is going to be for government because they're going to be able to do all of these wonderful things. Well, they may believe it, and then they got lauded and lots of applause from members on the government side of the House.

But that's not selling out there in the general public. That's not selling to Manitobans who believe they've been betrayed, that they've had—they've been disenfranchised by a government that has become a dictatorship rather than a democracy. And in a democracy, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans have the right to be able to speak, to say and to vote on what they thought was a law that protected them. It's a sad day in Manitoba when we see the kind of antics that are being put forward by a government, again, who has been in power for so long that they believe that they

are a—they have the divine right to govern without following the law. And they ask Manitobans to follow the law and if they're—if they—if Manitobans break the law, there are consequences. Well, they should practice what they preach.

How can anyone with—how can they, with any credibility, expect Manitobans to believe them? And, Mr. Speaker, you know, I don't believe—we know that there weren't people in the public consultation process on the budget that support it, an increase in the PST. They weren't asking, they weren't begging for an increase in the PST.

And I would venture to guess that most of the backbenchers on the government side of the House weren't begging or asking for an increase in the PST. And I would venture to guess that most of the backbenchers on the government side of the House didn't know until the budget was introduced that the PST was going to be increased by 1 per cent. They were caught as off guard as all the—all other Manitobans were caught off guard. I'm sure—

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure it was discussed around the Cabinet table, and I'm not sure that every member of the Cabinet agreed that it was the right thing to do, because I think some of the members around the Cabinet table knew that an increase—a 1 per cent increase in the PST was going to harm their constituents, especially in those constituencies where there's limited income.

And we do know that an increase in the PST is going to hurt those on lower incomes more than it's going to hurt someone that is middle or high income. Mr. Speaker, it's going to be those poor, those are—that are living in poverty that are going to have the most difficulty adjusting to the increase in the PST.

So I would hope that there were some questions by some of the government ministers that would reflect some of the concerns that would be raised by their constituents.

But, you know, the Premier and the Minister of Finance, because of their insatiable desire to spend—to spend beyond their means, when they've had the largest increase in revenues and transfer payments from the federal government that have never been seen before in this province, and yet, that's not enough; that's not enough for them. They don't have a revenue problem; they've had more transfers from the federal government. They have a spending problem, and they can't get their spending under control.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we could not live in our houses—in our households if we continued to spend year after year after year more than we earn. At some point in time, the banks would be repossessing our houses. We would be broke; we would end up on the welfare rolls in the province of Manitoba. We could not sustain that kind of spending.

And yet we have a government that continues to spend out of control, continues to spend more than what they take in year after year, and yet they go to the taxpayers and ask them, without accountability for the money that they're spending—take more money out of taxpayers' pockets. At some point in time there just is not an unlimited amount of resource, and people are going to say in Manitoba, enough is enough; it's time for us to maybe leave and move to a province that can afford us more opportunity to work, to make a living and to keep more of our own money in our own pockets so that we can make the decisions on how best to spend our money.

We have many young families, Mr. Speaker—many that I talk to—who are really re-evaluating what they're doing living here in Manitoba when they've got a government who doesn't consider their best interests and put their best interests first. A government that would rather take the money and say, we know better how to spend your money than you do. That's not the kind of government Manitobans want to see.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to end up being more of have-not province year after year after year. And how can we, with any good conscience, go to the rest of Canada and say, give us more? Poor Manitoba—we can't manage. We can't manage with the 31 per cent transfer payments that we're getting from Ottawa today as a result of the generosity of all of you other provinces—give us more. That's not sustainable; the rest of Canada is going to say at some point in time, enough is enough, try to stand on your own two feet as a province—get your finances under control. We cannot continue to sustain a province that has people in charge at the helm that lie to Manitobans, will not tell the truth in order to get elected and continue to spend out of control without any measurement of any outcomes for the dollars that they're spending.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker, it's not sustainable. It's not a province that I'm proud to say I represent. I would like to be able to make a difference here. I would not support a budget that has been put forward by a

government who—I mean if they're lying about the promises that they've made, and if they will lie about that, what else are they lying about? How can we believe anything that they put in the budgetary documents of the province of Manitoba or where they say the money is going and what it's doing? We can't, with good conscience, believe a word that this government says. I don't know how they can stand up with any credibility in this Legislature and say that they're working in the best interests of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans need to be assured that their government is going to respect them, is going to make sure that they have the ability to manage their own resources in a way that Manitobans feel fit, and they don't believe that government at every turn should be gouging them, picking their pockets and taking more of their hard-earned money.

Taxpayers deserve more respect. They deserve respect from their government who will ensure that when there's a law in place that says they have a say and they have a vote on increases in taxation, that that will be respected. They've been lied to, Mr. Speaker. They've been told by—well, I would call it deceit, from a government that has become more of a dictatorship than it has a democracy, and it's a sad day for Manitoba when we see that kind of arrogance and that kind of sense that because they've been in government so long, they can do whatever they like. And Manitobans will just follow along like sheep and not question and not criticize.

Mr. Speaker, we know today that Manitobans are angry. They are telling us enough is enough. We have had enough of a government who doesn't put our best interests first. We have had enough of a government who dictates from on high and tells us that we are not good managers of our money, that they know best how to manage our money. They'll just take a little bit more from us, and they'll continue to take and to take.

That isn't sustainable. We know, quite frankly, that none of us can live our lives spending more than what we earn year after year after year without consequences. And the consequences are, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to be a have-not province forever, that's going to go cap in hand begging other provinces to support us, like a welfare state. And that's a sad day for Manitobans. And that's—it's a sad day for me, who has—was born and raised here in our province of Manitoba, and I will probably stay here for my—the remainder of my life.

But there are a lot of young people in the new generation today that are saying, the grass is greener other places. We have governments in other provinces that respect us and, really, you know, would provide a better opportunity for us to raise our families and to earn a living. Mr. Speaker, we will see more of our young people continue to exodus the province as a result of the policies that have been put in place by this government and the ill-conceived budget that, again, takes money out of the pockets of hard-working taxpayers, Manitobans, and puts it into the coffers of a government who doesn't respect the values of hard-working Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, it's a sad day for Manitoba, and I'm sure that I'll have many other opportunities to speak on Bill 20 as we continue this debate and this dialogue.

And, you know, many Manitobans are feeling the pinch already. They're not—they haven't even hit the increase in the PST. And so, Mr. Speaker, we will continue on this side of the House to work with Manitobans, to listen to Manitobans, to consult with Manitobans and hear first-hand what they have to say.

It's sad that, as we had a rally out on the front steps of the Legislature, we had disenfranchised Manitobans coming out to speak against the raise in the PST, that the government was afraid to come out and stand up and be held accountable for the decisions that they've made.

It's a sad day in Manitoba when people have—who have a democratic right to stand on the steps of the Legislature and express their point of view—and I want to tell you when we were in government we had protests on the front steps of the Legislature, and I want to tell you that our premier of the day made sure that we were out there whether they—and if they were unhappy with our government, we were there to listen to what they had to say, Mr. Speaker. And I can remember time where eggs were thrown at ministers of the government, but our ministers were there and they listened to Manitobans.

And these ministers scurried out the back door and weren't there to listen to Manitobans and try to explain or justify. And the reason is, Mr. Speaker, that they can't justify—they can't justify—to Manitobans why they betrayed them, why they lied to them during the last election campaign and did something completely different once they were elected. And we won't let this go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) for bringing such a well-thought-out amendment to this budget—or this Bill 20.

You see, and for a government to try and tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle—that was Winston Churchill. He knew what it was like to face adversity head on, not scurrying out the back door, as my colleague has just pointed out of the many, many members across floor that scurried out the back door. That wouldn't stand up in the House when they were asked, let alone face the people that elected them.

Mr. Speaker, there's been so many broken promises for many, many years. And there was a fellow that said: You can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. That day has come. That day is there today. They have fooled and fooled and fooled to protect themselves.

The NDP government purposely, purposely led the people and the ratepayers of Manitoba in the last election and in the election previous, but it's become more blatant. And it's like a young child. And I remember being a young child—it's a while ago—and when I found out that I could sneak into the house when my parents were out and I could find that brandy bottle and I could take out one ounce and I could replace that with water. Well, it got to the point where I wanted my friends to have one ounce because I was the type of guy that would share. And, all of a sudden, the bottle had only water. My dad was a fairly alert individual, and he knew that he hadn't filled the bottle up with water. So he approached me and my brother.

* (16:40)

Now my friends were gone; they were gone. And I knew that if I lied to my father that I would get a tanning, I knew I was going to get one anyway. But, if I lied, I would get one a lot worse.

And the NDP are set themselves up for a tanning. They will be tanned for the lies that they told in the last election process. They broke—well, they promised, they promised many things and to—first to get elected they promised to end hallway medicine. That was the lie of the decade; that's what

that was. It was the lie of the decade. What we have done now is we have put these surrounds in the hallway. We put some plug-ins in the hallway so that those that are waiting can watch TV. We've also changed a lot of it to highway medicine so that they're in an ambulance. The ERs in rural Manitoba are closed, 18 of them.

We've heard in this House just recently that health care hasn't got better in the province; it's got worse—it's got worse. We've got babies being born on the side of the highway and occasionally that can happen, Mr. Speaker. There's always a little bit that nature has an advantage over man's mind, but to be chased out of Manitoba in the dead of winter to another province and have a baby born on the side of the road is unconscionable, and it's happens more often than that this House really knows.

The next big story of the decade was we will keep the balanced budget act; we believe that is a right thing to do for Manitobans. And Premier Gary Doer stood in this House many times and said, I support that. And, when he realized that his backbenchers were about to commit mutiny and they were going to break that, he bailed. He left the province. He knew that it was cheaper to pay tax somewhere else than it was in this province.

We know that they promised many things in the flood of 2011. They promised ranchers that they would be fully reimbursed. They promised farmers that they would be fully reimbursed. They said to cottagers, we are there for you; we will stand beside you. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say the only time that they stood beside them was when they were making those announcements in front of a camera. When it came time to write the cheques, they weren't there. They weren't there in 2011. They weren't there in 2012, and this current Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), the member for Dauphin, is still not there.

He's finding ways to say, no, I didn't say that, or when I got the Jets' ticket I inadvertently misled the House. And then what he tried to do later, to raise some money, he attacked—he attacked the Jockey Club. Not only did he attack them for money and refused to give them what was theirs to begin with, what they had rightfully earned, he said, if you go against me—if you go against me, I'm a politician I will eat you up; that's what I will do. You don't know what I can do, and the people of Manitoba, the people of Winnipeg will support me. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there was one person—one person in Winnipeg with a little more power than the Minister

of Finance, and he had to point out to him that he had broke the law. And, when he stood there kind of sheepishly, kind of just shrinking a little saying, I don't think so, the judge said to him, sign here, sign the cheque; that's what you have to do today. You can sign the cheque. And then he stands up in the House and says the judge is on his side. Well, he is, he's on the side of democracy. Unfortunately, you weren't, sir.

Another broken promise, and it happened with the Minister of Agriculture, and it started some years ago. They said, when BSE hit Manitoba we're going to be there for the producers in Manitoba. We will be there for the beef men. We will be there for all of the people involved in the beef business in the province of Manitoba, and, Mr. Speaker, they weren't.

Why they worked away and they dribbled away, and I can recall at a huge meeting of twelve to fifteen hundred producers, all in dire straits, in a little village of St. Claude, and the minister of Agriculture at the time said: What can we do? I want you beef producers to come up and tell us what we can do.

And lots of fellows were losing their farms. Their families were breaking up from the stress, and it was a very, very emotional night. But I recall walking up to the mike and said to the minister, who was saying, oh, we'll give you this, and we'll give you that, I said: Keep your subsidies; keep your subsidies. We don't need them. Build us a slaughter plant in the province of Manitoba so that we can promote Manitoba beef. Keep those subsidies and give me shares in that plant and I'll buy more shares. But we'll have a beef industry and we'll have a slaughter plant in this province.

And we would have had that, and we could have had that had there been management in the NDP ranks. But there was no management. And, because I have been around for a while, I know how the beef industry and how the slaughter industry left this province, and it was under the auspices of this NDP party, because they didn't and would not support business or agriculture. They do not like agriculture in this province, even though it is one of the biggest economic engine drivers. Mr. Speaker, it's a shame the way they treat agriculture. They don't pay attention to where their money comes from, but there isn't one of them on that side of the House that's overweight. Not one of them.

The member of The Pas, he will understand this. He will understand what democracy is. Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a

sheep discussing what's for lunch. It has to be more than that. What it has to be is respect—respect for those that are paying the bills. You have to honour your commitments. When you say, I will not raise taxes, then you don't raise taxes.

And so the member from Riel, as she walked up and down the streets slowly, from door to door, and said in the last election: I will not raise taxes. And talking about the PST is strictly nonsense. It's nonsense, she says, as she went from door to door.

And then she wouldn't stand up in the House to go out and face the people that were on the front steps. Five hundred, by the guess of my good friend, the ex-auctioneer, and he's good with numbers. He can understand numbers. He was actually a businessman. He's got something over some of them on that side of the House.

But the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) misled the small businesses in her riding. She misled them one after the other. She misled Mr. Lakusta and his family. He went out and expanded his business. He expanded his business knowing, or thinking, that he had some stability and some security for the next four years that he wouldn't be taxed out of existence. So he rented more space beside him; he renovated that space; he hired more people. And the member from Riel wouldn't stand up in the House here to defend him.

Was she at the table? Do you think she was at the table when they discussed the PST increase? Do you think she was at the table when they discussed taxing women's haircuts and colours, for manicures? Do you think she was at the table then? If she wasn't at the table and she's getting minister's pay, should she have been at the table? Then shame on her for not being there to stand up for the small businesses like Mr. Lakusta's business. That's a shame.

*(16:50)

You see, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that giving money and power to the NDP government is like giving whisky and car keys to teenage boys. They're irresponsible. They spend money and they have a spending problem. It's not an income problem. They have a spending problem, and they have problems telling the truth with what they—what they're going to spend the money on. That's a serious, serious combination: when you're drunk with power and you have the ability just to change, and you think you have the ability to know what's best

for Manitobans, and, clearly, you don't know what's best for them.

Clearly, 500 of them were on the steps, on the front of the building, while the majority of you scurried out the back door. Not all of you, no, some stood in your office where you could view them and you could move the curtain and peek around the curtain. [*interjection*] That was on 200? It could have been. I haven't confirmed that, but we should check the pictures to see if that's true. But the majority, Mr. Speaker, scurried out the back door.

But speaking, speaking of some of the people that did stay, that peeked around the curtain—he made a solemn promise in this House in 2001 after he and a former member of the House, Oscar Lathlin, flew over the Shoal Lake. They flew over the Shoal Lake, and Oscar said to him, this is not a good situation, here. We have three lakes, but it's not a good situation. These lakes don't have an outlet, and they're growing. And all around the lakes were ranches, all around the lakes. And in 2001, the member for Thompson put on record in this House that it was a serious situation that had to be addressed. He told Harry Enns that that is a serious situation, and I will address that this summer in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, to this day, there's not an outlet that's sufficient to keep the lake level down. They are—it's a solid lake from one end to the other. Hundred-year-old ranches are under water. Fence posts are under water. Machinery is under water. This was a solemn promise made by this member from Thompson in this House—was to address that in 2001. How can we believe anything that the opposition—or there—the sitting government, here, says? They've made all kinds of different statements.

We've seen small businesses in the province—they're at a terrible disadvantage. In my own riding, Mr. Speaker, in my own riding, which spans the US border for about five different border crossings, every weekend, those are very, very busy. People aren't coming north to pay extra PST. They're not coming north to pay extra taxes. They're not coming north to buy gas. It's people going to the United States. And so all of my businesses that are in my riding—our convenience stores, our gas stations, our lumberyards—how do they compete when we keep taxing, taxing people out of the province?

And yes, we have one highway in the province that is in excellent condition, one highway out of the many, many highways there are. That's 75 highways

south, south to the border, helping people get out of the province to spend their money that they have left after they've taxed them so badly. The other one that is being upgraded, or has been, and perhaps my good colleague from Arthur-Virden can confirm, the one going west into Saskatchewan—has that been completed? *[interjection]* And is it a smooth highway? Is it a four-lane highway? Is it a highway that has a lot of traffic leaving on Friday? And does it have traffic coming back slowly on Sunday or on Monday morning? Zero traffic. That's where our young people are going; they're going to Saskatchewan. They're going there for a number of reasons. They're going there because their income tax is much lower, and the reason for that, or part of the reason and a big portion of that, is because of their personal exemption. That's one of them. That's one of the differences.

And we on this House and our leader from Fort Whyte and the leader of the PC Party and the next premier of this province has said, we will raise that personal exemption. We will give Manitobans the opportunity to be competitive. We will give them the opportunity to raise their families in Manitoba. We will give them the opportunity to raise their families in the communities in Manitoba. We'll give them the opportunity to have their babies in Manitoba. We will give them the opportunity for their seniors homes in Manitoba—not at the expense of all the taxpayers.

We have laid out a budget which would have saved this Province the 1 per cent GST. We were willing to honour the promise that they had made last year and they can't see it. It's because they're blind—financially blind and morally bankrupt.

Mr. Speaker, when you raise the taxes two years in a row, that's going to generate over a half a billion dollars, and you're going to run a deficit of a half a billion dollars and borrow \$2 billion, the people that are looking at you and at your credit rating will downgrade you for sure, because you are not a fiscal manager—not in the least. And don't try and sell to these people everyone's bank account in this

province. You have to understand—and the member from Dauphin, I don't think does—but any deficit is unpaid taxes. All the money he's borrowed is unpaid taxes and someone has to pay it.

And I'm just wondering if in a couple of years, he's not going to move to Medicine Hat like his colleague from Swan River. The member for Swan River said, hey, the lights are brighter in Saskatchewan and we should go there. That's where we should go. Everybody should go to Saskatchewan now. That's what the member said. Let's leave the province.

You see—and unlike the NDP, Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives don't believe that robbing Paul to pay Peter is a good thing. Robbing Paul to pay Peter is going to guarantee that you'll always have the support of Peter; that's what it's going to guarantee. You'll always have that support.

You see, the NDP government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases. If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it. That's what you're doing, but you're living on borrowed money—you're living on borrowed money.

One third of your budget comes from other people in Canada. These are hard-working Canadians that deserve the respect that they're not getting from this NDP government. What they are getting, though, however, is the young people from Manitoba. That's what the provinces next to us that are paying us one third of our budget—that's what they're getting is our young people. They're leaving this province for tax reasons and for wages. And what happens now is you have to import—you have companies here that have to import—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 13, 2013

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