

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, August 20, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: No bills. We'll move on to—

PETITIONS

Provincial Road 520 Renewal

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

This petition is signed by R. Herlick, G. Herlick, G. Pescovitch and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

And here are the reasons for this petition:

St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure and the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as one—as well as untold harm to the ecosystem and wildlife in the region.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by D. Toews, G. Toews and J. Talbot and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes

the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by D. Trudeau, W. Diaz-Rogers, M. Hamm and many, many more Manitobans.

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 J. Malleck, W. Delf, W. Watson and many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by K. Neustaeler, H. Neustaeler, L. Kehler and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Good afternoon, 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.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of W. Hubbard, J. Todd, L. Woods and many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The provincial government did not follow its own policy statement on autism services which notes

the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

* (13:40)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by J. Buffie, K. Olford, H. Neufeld and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Foxwarren, Roblin and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and the Minnesota retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

(3) The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition is signed by N. Aurarayon, M. Armstrong, B. Day and many, many others.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And this is the reason for this petition:

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

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

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

The provincial government policy of eliminating ABA services in schools by grade 5 has caused many children in Manitoba to age out of the window for this very effective ABA treatment because of lack of

access. Many more children are expected to age out because of a lack of available treatment spaces.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by R. Jaquet, B. Anderson, J. Jaquet and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Reopen Beausejour's Employment Manitoba Office

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:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by W. Kozyra, C. Wurch, K. Butterham and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the legislation-sorry-to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by H. Van Dorp, R. Loeb, T. Siki and many other fine Manitobans. Thank you.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by K. Gale, J. House, K. House and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (13:50)

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

This petition is signed by D. Lepine, S. Laramee, C. Romaniuk and many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by M. de Guzman, L.V. Bhowani, V. Mercier and many, many others.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba has a thriving and competitive retail environment in communities near its borders, including Bowsman, Swan River, Minitonas, Benito, Roblin, Russell, Binscarth, St-Lazare, Birtle, Elkhorn, Virden, Melita, Waskada, Boissevain, Deloraine, Cartwright, Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Manitou, Morden, Winkler, Plum Coulee, Altona, Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley, St. Malo, Tilston, Foxwarren and many others.

(2) Both the Saskatchewan PST rate and the North Dakota retail sales tax rate are 5 per cent, and the Minnesota retail sales tax rate is 6 per cent.

(3) The retail sales tax rate is 40 per cent cheaper in North Dakota and Saskatchewan and 25 per cent cheaper in Minnesota as compared to Manitoba.

(4) The differential in tax rates creates a disincentive for Manitoba consumers to shop locally to purchase their goods and services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector, especially those businesses located close to the Manitoba provincial borders.

(2) To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoba consumers can shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition has been signed by T. Derksen, E. Dick, R. Derksen and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by D. Perrin, B. Mansell, K. Brown and many other fine Manitobans.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Private Bills First Report

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Private Bills—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on PRIVATE BILLS presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on August 19, 2013 at 6:00 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration

- *Bill (No. 204) – The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act/Loi sur la Journée manitobaine de sensibilisation à la traite de personnes*
- *Bill (No. 209) – The Special Olympics Awareness Week Act/Loi sur la Semaine de sensibilisation aux Jeux Olympiques spéciaux*
- *Bill (No. 300) – The Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation « The Brandon Area Foundation »*
- *Bill (No. 301) – The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Fondation dénommée « The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba »*
- *Bill (No. 302) – Les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie Incorporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation Les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie*

Committee Membership

- *Ms. BLADY*
- *Mr. BRIESE*
- *Mr. CALDWELL*
- *Mr. DEWAR*
- *Mr. GRAYDON*
- *Mr. HELWER*
- *Mr. PETERSEN*
- *Mrs. ROWAT*

- *Mrs. STEFANSON*
- *Hon. Mr. SWAN*
- *Ms. WIGHT*

Your Committee elected Mr. PETERSEN as the Chairperson.

Your Committee elected Ms. DEWAR as the Vice-Chairperson.

Motions

Your Committee agreed to the following motions:

- *That this committee recommends that the fees paid with respect to Bill (No. 300) – The Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation « The Brandon Area Foundation », be refunded, less the cost of printing.*
- *That this committee recommends that the fees paid with respect to Bill (No. 301) – The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Fondation dénommée « The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba », be refunded, less the cost of printing.*
- *That this committee recommends that the fees paid with respect to Bill (No. 302) – Les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie Incorporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation Les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie, be refunded, less the cost of printing.*

Public Presentations

Your Committee heard the following presentation on Bill (No. 209) – The Special Olympics Awareness Week Act/Loi sur la Semaine de sensibilisation aux Jeux Olympiques spéciaux:

Simon Munday, Special Olympics Manitoba

Your Committee heard the following presentation on Bill (No. 301) – The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Fondation dénommée « The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba »:

Lawrence Cohen, Mark & Dorothy Danzker Perpetual Trust Fund

Bills Considered and Reported

- *Bill (No. 204) – The Manitoba Human Trafficking Awareness Day Act/Loi sur la Journée manitobaine de sensibilisation à la traite de personnes*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- *Bill (No. 209) – The Special Olympics Awareness Week Act/Loi sur la Semaine de sensibilisation aux Jeux Olympiques spéciaux*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- *Bill (No. 300) – The Brandon Area Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation « The Brandon Area Foundation »*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- *Bill (No. 301) – The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Fondation dénommée « The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba »*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

- *Bill (No. 302) – Les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie Incorporation Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation Les Franciscaines Missionnaires de Marie*

Your Committee agreed to report this Bill without amendment.

Mr. Pettersen: I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Any further committee reports?

Seeing none, we'll move on to tabling reports. Ministerial statements.

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 Darcy Ataman, founder and CEO from Make Music Matter, as well as his parents John and Clara Ataman, who are the guests of the honourable member for Riel (Ms. Melnick).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

Bill 47

NDP Cabinet Ministers

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, we've known for a while and Manitobans know that we have a big spending government with a big spending problem, but we're discovering also that it's a big tax problem for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. Nearly every Manitoban has been impacted. Seniors pay more for cuts and colours, homeowners more for their insurance, families pay more for back-to-school items and let's not forget for funerals now as well. So when the spendP is hungry for cash, look out. They'll go after everyone. But, well, wait a minute, not quite everybody because in Bill 47 the Premier has protected one special, elite group of Manitobans.

Could the Premier identify this group and could he tell this House why he believes they are so special?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is being suitably vague, but he does know that we've had an elimination of the tax for helmets for children and that that's been implemented now. He also knows that we increased the property tax credit for senior citizens in Manitoba to the highest level in the history of the province. We've also increased the threshold for small business to \$425,000, a rate of taxation that was 9 per cent when he was last in office and in Manitoba now it's zero per cent.

Mr. Pallister: The Premier gets zero for that answer and, speaking of vague, he should admit that this special, elite group—and I'll give him some hints on this, because if he doesn't already know, he'll know by the end of this question—has 20 people in it—that under the provisions of Bill 47 each of these special people will receive a \$7,000 increase.

Now, other groups in Manitoba don't get treated this way. Manitobans living with disabilities, for example, saw a rent allowance increase of \$240 a year; taxpayers got their basic personal exemption increased by \$250; minimum wage workers, \$400 increase. But this special, elite group didn't get that little bit of love; it got a lot of love. It got a \$7,000 raise.

Now, can the Premier now identify who this special, elite group of people is—his favourite group—and can he tell this House why he thinks they're so special?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the bill that the member's talking about is a bill that positions Manitoba to have a very low rate of unemployment in the country. It has the lowest corporate taxes in the modern decade in the country at 12 per cent–17 per cent when the members opposite were in office. It has entirely eliminated the corporate capital tax, which the members opposite didn't touch all the time they were there. It is now zero.

* (14:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, there is very significant resources in Bill 47 to grow the Manitoba economy, something the members opposite want to halt in its tracks. We're investing in the growth of Manitoba Hydro in the north: thousands of jobs for Manitobans—particularly northern Manitobans—clean, reliable energy for the future of this province.

The member opposite wants to stop the building of Manitoba Hydro when we know we'll need new power over the next 10 years. And we will not have to import power if we continue to build it and sell it for export.

So the bill has many very important resources in it, including maintaining our health-care services, funding for our education, funding to support families, including expanded daycare spots. There are many good measures—

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

Mr. Pallister: Well, the Premier's approach to building this province is to take a half a billion dollars out of the hands of the real builders of the province, Mr. Speaker. The working families of this province deserve better.

And, of course, the correct answer is NDP Cabinet ministers.

Now, you add to the million-dollar vote tax this government—which this government will also be paying itself; you've got a \$12,000-a-year special bonus for this favourite of this Premier, this group, foremost among the favoured, the most beloved, the most precious, the pet of this Premier.

In Animal Farm, George Orwell said all animals are equal but some animals are especially equal. This government obviously believes that there are first-class citizens—and they are those—and there's the rest of us, the second-class citizens.

Now, in this party, we believe in equality and equality of opportunity. The NDP clearly believes in inequality.

I want the Premier to tell this House: Is this why he reduces the incomes of the builders of this province—all other Manitobans—and increases the incomes of himself and his Cabinet colleagues?

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

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member's familiar with the story of Animal Farm because that's the story where some people fleece the public to put money—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: I just reminded the House yesterday in question period and again this morning to be a respectful workplace. I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable members.

Honourable First Minister, to continue with his answer.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what the Leader of the Opposition did when he privatized Manitoba Telephone System. He took the money—he took the money out of all the hands of all the ratepayers in Manitoba and he put it into the pockets of his personal friends and allies within the community. And that was a transfer of wealth from the public sector to the private sector.

We're doing exactly the opposite, Mr. Speaker. We're investing in hospitals, which benefit all Manitobans. We're investing in schools, which benefit the next generation and all generations with a well-educated population. We're investing in infrastructure, which protects communities from being flooded, something that has paid off for \$35 to \$1 with the investments in Winnipeg and the Red River Valley. That billion dollars has avoided \$35 billion in costs.

That's a budget for all of Manitobans, not the approach the Leader of the Opposition took when he was in office—

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

Provincial Economy Government Priority

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): We've seen the former Finance minister, the Premier of this

province, protect all of his colleagues in Crocus as well.

Mr. Speaker, the spenDP like numbers that they can agree with. So here are some numbers that they might not like as much. Unemployment is up 5.5 per cent. In June, wholesale trade is down 2.1 per cent and manufacturing sales numbers are down 2.6 per cent. Those are huge. Inflation is the highest in Canada at 2.7 per cent. Provincial sales tax is illegally up 14 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: Which nonsense, ridiculous ideas, are the spenDP going to use to try and spend—spin these numbers?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for Emerson for that question because it allows me a chance to point out that the very number he quoted puts us as the third lowest unemployment rate in the entire nation.

Mr. Speaker, if the honourable member for Emerson wants to talk numbers, over the last 12 months, Manitoba's private sector has added 14,000 positions, increasing by 3 per cent, compared to 1.7 per cent nationally.

What is it that the member for Emerson doesn't like about the private sector, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the last time I saw this much spin was from the tires of business owners leaving for Saskatchewan.

Here are the things that are looking up in Manitoba: taxes, debt and inflation—a have province with a have-not government. The things that are hurting Manitobans are the most—most are the growing in record numbers while the economy is being sacrificed and democracy is eroded by this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, over the next year, which is going to grow the most: taxes, debt, inflation or the NDP coffers paid for by the Manitoba taxpayers?

Mr. Struthers: Well, of course, the correct answer is none of the above, because the number that's going to increase the most is full-time jobs in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. On top of the 14,000 added by the private sector, we've added 9,100 additional full-time jobs in the past year. That's an increase of 1.8 per cent, compared to 1.1 per cent nationally. The common thread in all of this is that we're outdoing the Canadian average and we're doing it because we've got a government that invests in the people of

Manitoba and invests in roads and bridges and schools and hospitals, unlike members opposite who cut a—propose to cut a half a billion dollars out of health care and education—

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

Mr. Graydon: Then, Mr. Speaker, he's right. He's outdoing the rest of Canada by taking \$20,000 out of the vote tax. Rather than helping Manitobans, building a stronger economy, the spenDP has decided to take even more tax and fund their political party and their election campaigns. With unemployment up, inflation up, PST up and now the vote tax up, this government has placed the future of Manitoba way down on their priority list.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government look past their own political activities and self-interest and start putting Manitoba's future ahead of their own?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member today seems to be interested in numbers, so let's try a few more out. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) has made it very clear that they would cut deeply into health care—in excess of \$52 million, if he had his way. A number from this side of the House that I'd like to put on the table for the honourable member for Emerson is that over the last 12 months, over 7,300 patients have benefited from free cancer drugs. That's a real benefit for Manitoba families right across our province, and do you know what members opposite had the nerve to do? They refused to do it.

QuickCare Clinic (Selkirk) Nurse Managed Care

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, the sign on the door of the Selkirk QuickCare Clinic couldn't be clearer. There is no nurse practitioners for the next few days. Now, yesterday, the minister responded and said that's because of personal circumstances at that clinic. But I remind the minister that the Steinbach QuickCare Clinic also is experiencing nurse practitioner shortages, and that the public's being told that a nurse practitioner may or may not be there to help them, depending on the day and the time.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is advertising to Manitobans with a \$150,000 campaign that says that they can get appropriate care from a nurse practitioner at a QuickCare clinic. Is this a case of false advertising?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I'd like to thank the honourable member for amending his message from yesterday in insinuating that the Selkirk QuickCare Clinic was closed. Indeed, the QuickCare clinic is open, seeing patients. Registered nurses are seeing patients and providing excellent care. I've lost track, Mr. Speaker, of the number of times that members opposite have dismissed the qualifications of registered nurses out of hand. What I want to let the member know—because he's also a tad uppity about the advertising campaign—indeed, over 40,000 patients have been served at our four QuickCare clinics across Manitoba, getting excellent care—over 11,000 alone in Selkirk. Selkirk, the QuickCare clinic there, has been open well over 90 per cent of the time.

Mr. Friesen: I was clear yesterday when I tabled the photographs. I am clear today. What is clear to Manitobans—yes, the minister says that that clinic functions at 90 per cent capacity, but this week alone the clinic functions at only 60 per cent capacity. The community is getting mixed messages. The hours of the clinic aren't even posted on the clinic. There's a temporary sign that says, no nurse practitioner to serve you.

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, what is a community supposed to do to get the appropriate health care when and where they need it in Selkirk?

Ms. Oswald: Once again, I will let the member know that, indeed, the QuickCare clinic in Selkirk is open, registered nurses are providing care over the three days that he's cited. I'm also delighted to let the member know that we have recruited an additional nurse practitioner from out of province who will be starting this fall. In addition to that, there's a local-trained, primary care nurse who'll be completing her nurse practitioner training and will also be starting later in the fall.

Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite has to explain clear, he's not being clear.

Mr. Friesen: I remind the minister that the sign in the window of the QuickCare clinic says that RN care is available. And RNs work hard and they provide Manitobans with fantastic service. What RNs cannot do in the province of Manitoba is diagnose and prescribe treatment, like nurse practitioners can. So RNs cannot give you the amoxicillin for a strep throat. They can't give you that cortisone cream for your poison ivy. Is the real

message of the minister to Manitobans go first to the QuickCare clinic and then drive to ER? Mr. Speaker, that's expensive, it's inefficient, it's inappropriate in a province where many ERs are closed and many, many more like Selkirk are overflowing as a result.

Why has the minister so badly bungled this?

Ms. Oswald: Well, speaking of badly bungled, the member just got up and said that RNs can't provide treatment. Are you kidding me, Mr. Speaker? This whole line of question is a bit interesting. These are the individuals that, after we 'tabered'—tabled our budget, stood up and said that they would make \$550 million deep cuts directly, of course, into health care—directly into health care.

Mr. Speaker, this line of questioning reminds me a little bit of Colonel Sanders standing up, sharpening his axe and saying to the chickens, don't worry, it'll be okay.

Emergency Services (Pine Falls) Opening Hours

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Shame, Mr. Speaker, shame.

Mr. Speaker, on July 18th the Minister of Health said, and I quote: Pinawa and Beausejour have physician shifts filled for the remainder of July and August. The Pine Falls ER is working to have a full physician complement. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, Pine Falls ER is slated to be closed for 17 days in August. Can the Minister of Health tell us when the ER will be open again?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): The ER will be open, Mr. Speaker, under nurse-managed care. He may have heard me say this sometime before, the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen) may have heard me say this sometime before, but when they stand up in the House and they tell the members of the public that a facility that is open and providing care is not open, that doesn't help anybody.

Mr. Speaker, indeed, I will say to the member that when I spoke earlier, indeed, all of the physician shifts had been filled. Some circumstances have arisen in the life of a physician that they've had to amend that. I want to assure the member that the facility will be under nurse-managed care.

Emergency Services Rural Manitoba

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, just simply not true.

Unfortunately, the minister's plans for rural health care are not working. She promised there would be a full schedule of doctors for Pine Falls, Beausejour and Pinawa's ERs. When things came up and the physicians had to change their schedule, she didn't have a backup plan. Now, in the event of an emergency in Pine Falls, nurses assist patients in calling 911 from the ER. The Minister of Health needs to be more accountable; Manitobans deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: When will the minister admit that ER closures are a serious issue and commit to taking action?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, what I said very clearly in the House to the member was that if individuals present to an ER that is under nurse-managed care, it is very likely, certainly according to the statistical analysis done by the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, that they will get the care that they need from the registered nurse that can provide it.

If there are situations where the nurse has to consult with a physician, he or she will do exactly that. If the nurse uses his or her very excellent medical assessment and determines that, in fact, 911 needs to be called, they will do that. For the member to stand up and insinuate that that's all that they do, it's factually incorrect and completely disrespectful.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, the only disrespect I continue to hear from this minister is the fact of the incorrect truths or the incorrect statements she's putting on the record on a day-to-day basis.

We know that health care in this province is a very serious and growing problem. She continues to deflect our questions about rural ER closures by talking about the '90s. The fact is there are 18 ERs and counting that have been closed and are experiencing disrupted service in Manitoba right now.

When will the minister end the rhetoric and take action against the ER closures?

Ms. Oswald: I want to assure the member that I take this very seriously every single day, Mr. Speaker. It's why we committed to increasing the number of medical school spaces, not decreasing them. It's why we have committed to provide free medical school for those that will commit to serve in underserved areas in rural and northern Manitoba, and, as a result of those policies and others, we have seen a net increase of 562 doctors since taking office.

Further, Mr. Speaker, we know that it can be very challenging in any jurisdiction to recruit into rural environments, but in Manitoba, according to CIHI, we have the largest number of doctors serving in rural environments in the west, and we're going to continue to do everything we can to bring more.

Rural Health Care Services Physician Recruitment

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Well, Mr. Speaker, 18 ERs and counting closed under the NDP watch. I would suggest that many Manitobans have lost faith in this NDP government. Studies have shown this government ranks dead last in terms of accessibility to health-care services. In fact, communities such as Killarney are forced to recruit doctors on their own initiative and on their own dime. Clearly, the minister's not getting the job done.

Why is the NDP forcing local governments to 'recreate' doctors for their own communities, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Certainly, our 'regreal'-regional health authorities work in partnerships with towns and municipalities in order to recruit doctors to rural environments. The RHA has been working very closely with Mayor Pauls and city council to endeavour to bring doctors to that community.

There is a consultative, co-operative approach, Mr. Speaker. We are providing, as I said moments ago, free tuition to those individuals that want to serve in underserved communities. We're going to continue to incent doctors to work in environments by bringing services like community cancer programs outside of the city of Winnipeg—diagnostics, also.

It's not an easy job; I will concede that point openly, but we are committed to continue to work with towns to bring doctors to their communities.

Emergency On-Call Rotation

Mr. Cullen: We know we have 18 emergency rooms closed and many more sharing on-call, all under the NDP watch, Mr. Speaker. The Prairie Mountain Health region spring reporting indicated there'd be, and I quote, "significant concern regarding the sustainability of services along No. 3 Highway." Killarney and Boissevain still share on-call, even though Killarney has already 'cruited' another doctor.

There are new concerns. The emergency on-call rotation may now include Deloraine. This would be three communities sharing on-call with the possibility of patients having to travel over 90 kilometers to see an emergency room.

Will the minister confirm for us today that this is, in fact, the scenario that is being considered?

Ms. Oswald: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I will say to the member that the regional health authority, the one he cited in particular, works very closely with communities involved to come up with as many possible solutions when, indeed, physicians are in short supply. Every jurisdiction in the nation faces challenges in bringing doctors to rural environments.

We know that every jurisdiction in the nation faces this issue because a number of governments made decisions to lower the number of medical school seats available. This isn't something that gets solved overnight. You pay for a decade or more in trying to deal with that. Other jurisdictions have made the decision to close their rural hospitals outright. That is not a decision that we intend to make.

Health Care Services Government Record

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It's clearly a sign of a system in distress when communities have to recruit their own doctors.

Mr. Speaker, the system has been—become very fragile under the 14 years of NDP government. The NDP are clearly in crisis management in health care. Unfortunately, this all has a direct impact on many Manitobans, and Manitobans are quite tired of the NDP rhetoric. It's time for the NDP to take responsibility, instead of blaming everyone else.

* (14:20)

So when will the NDP actually take responsibility for the declining state of health care in Manitoba?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Well, Mr. Speaker, surely the member opposite is not suggesting even for a nanosecond that there should be a body, Manitoba Health or whomever, that works in isolation when it comes to recruiting doctors. Every community, every municipality, every corner of the province needs to work in partnership. It's a very competitive profession. Jurisdictions across the land are working to recruit doctors.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is we are absolutely committed to see a net increase of doctors working in Manitoba, just like we have every year since working—since being in office. Further, on top of that, we're also going to hire nurses, not fire them—3,000 net new since being in government, and we actually believe in the work they do.

Phoenix Sinclair Evidence Attorney General Responsibility

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): This Minister of Health had three opportunities to answer questions and all she did was show that she's a disinterested bystander watching rural health care go *[inaudible]*.

Mr. Speaker, in 2010, when asked about the status of the Phoenix Sinclair case, the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) stated, and I quote: There have already been two reviews done to make sure the evidence is there, to make sure that the work is preserved.

However, in 2012, from testimony at the inquiry, we learned that this was not true. Phoenix's case notes, as evidence, were shredded. This minister was misleading Manitobans and Phoenix Sinclair's family.

Will the 'minist'—will the Attorney General explain today why he deflected his responsibility to ensure all evidence was secure for the court case and the inquiry? It clearly looks like that this minister was playing political games in this 'legistor'—in Legislature, and with Phoenix's legacy.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I think, clearly, it's a matter for the record, that in the tragic murder of Phoenix Sinclair, there was a case that came before the courts. The people responsible for that murder were tried and they've been punished and they will continue to be punished, Mr. Speaker. Those things all happened. The Attorney General, of course, did nothing to interfere with that court case, would not do anything that, in any way, would prejudice the outcome of that court case.

As I've said before on the issue that the member raises, we follow the same standard, the same protocol, that was put in place by our predecessors. We have improved the policies in place to ensure that records are kept and we continue to work to improve that every day.

We've worked with the inquiry on this issue. We look forward to their recommendations and being able to continue to improve the system for families and kids.

**Phoenix Sinclair Case
Minister of Family Services**

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Phoenix Sinclair's murderers were tried and convicted without important evidence, but this government failed to keep safe.

In 2010, the minister of family service—the then-minister of Family Services, the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh), stated, and I quote: As a result of the reviews, the conclusion was that no child died as a direct result of the breakdown of the provision of child-welfare services in Manitoba.

From inquiry testimony in 2012, we now know that few, if any, child 'wearfare'—welfare staff involved in Phoenix's case were interviewed, not during the reviews, and worse, were not made aware of the recommendations from the reviews, a directive from a higher authority.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why he would make such a statement in this House based on his and—inactions, the safety and protection of the 9,000-plus kids in his care were being treated—

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): There have been tremendous work and tremendous improvements in the child-welfare system since the murder of Phoenix Sinclair. A lot of that work has come about as the result of reviews and recommendations. Some of that work has included training of front-line workers in which they've changed the way that they practice child welfare. And not only training, but then follow-up for that training, providing mentors to their—that staff so they can continue to change their practice. And part of what happens, Mr. Speaker, also, is that when there is something that happens in child welfare that doesn't go the way that it should, those mentors are available to talk to those workers, to make sure they can continue to improve their practice.

We have made some improvements. We will get more recommendations from this inquiry, and we'll continue to make those investments and improvements.

**Phoenix Sinclair Evidence
Government Response**

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stated, and I quote: We have fully committed to an inquiry, evidence has been collected, reports have been done.

We now know evidence was destroyed years ago and the damaging reports were not shared with child-welfare staff. This Premier and his Cabinet were, indeed, playing games with critical information on child safety to ensure their own political safety at the expense of the 9,000-plus children under their watch. Mr. Speaker, the Premier's lack of action demonstrated a lack of interest in the protection of vulnerable children.

Why was he and his ministers so reckless in their statements in this House?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): We have seen through the Hughes inquiry and in the reviews that came before, an unprecedented look at the child-welfare centre, a look that has been transparent and accountable, a look that has resulted in hundreds of recommendations, many of which are complete, many of which are still in progress, and we'll get more recommendations and we'll work on that.

What is the result, then? We now have a system where we have more people working on the front lines helping to protect families. They have new tools to do that work, they have more information, and they're better able to work with families to prevent crises.

Are we done? Absolutely not. There is much, much more to do, and we continue to work every day to make those investments, to make those improvements. The plans of the members opposite would be to stop that progress, make cuts and fire those front-line workers. That's not a path we're going to go down.

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

**Holland Dam
Construction Timeline**

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Finance Minister have said, day after day in this Chamber, that they plan to spend a billion dollars in terms of flood protection. This is for people on Lake St. Martin, Lake Manitoba. Money will be spent partly along the Assiniboine

River. Now, half of the billion dollars of the spending recommended in the report is a possible dam along the Assiniboine River, upstream of Portage la Prairie, near Holland.

I ask the Premier: Does his plan to spend a billion dollars on flood protection mean that he's decided to go ahead with the dam along the Assiniboine River near Holland, yes or no?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I thank the member for the question. The member knows full well that the initial commitment was \$250 million to build an additional channel out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin to make the existing emergency channel a permanent channel, which includes some re-engineering to widen its capacity to take the additional water out of Lake Manitoba. And that engineering is the priority right now because that will allow both Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin to reduce the amount of water during times of excessive flows and prevent flooding in those communities. That's the priority that we're focusing on at the moment.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, as all members here know well, the Premier has stood up, day after day, and said he's got to raise the PST because he's been recommended to spend a billion dollars of new flood prevention infrastructure. Half of that billion is on the Holland Dam. If the Premier doesn't intend to build it, then the estimated flood prevention costs are only \$500 million instead of a billion. The Premier says that for the next 10 years he's collecting flood prevention infrastructure money with the PST increase.

I ask the Premier: Does he intend to build the Holland Dam in the next 10 years?

Mr. Selinger: We've clearly identified and announced that the first major commitment on flood protection is the \$250 million for Lake Manitoba to have an additional outlet and Lake St. Martin to broaden and make permanent the emergency channel that was built in the 2011 experience. We are also fortifying the dikes along the Assiniboine River. We're working with the City of Brandon to strengthen flood protection in that community, which has made tremendous progress, including additional protection this year. Those are the priorities as we go forward. We also will use—we've made it very clear—that PST money to do things like roads, to do things like water treatment plants and sewage projects in Manitoba, to do other projects that will build our capacity to educate our young children in Manitoba

and to look after our senior citizens, and we'll do it over a 10-year period of time along with the federal infrastructure money so we can fully leverage those resources.

The members opposite voted against all that. In fact, they said they would actually cut money from capital spending in Manitoba and not protect communities—

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

The honourable member for River Heights, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Gerrard: Day after day in this Chamber, the Premier has said that he has to raise the PST because he needs a billion dollars for flood prevention infrastructure. Half of that billion dollars is a dam near Holland, and yet the Premier won't even tell us whether he's going to build or not build this dam at Holland.

* (14:30)

If the Premier isn't sure whether he's going to build it, why is the Premier planning to raise half a billion dollars for flood prevention infrastructure when he's not even sure that he's going to build the dam?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the leader of the 'opposish'—the Liberal Party for his question. We made the quarter-of-a-billion-dollar commitment, the engineering work is starting on that; that is the priority because those communities along Lake St. Martin took the single biggest hit in the history of the province in terms of what happened to their ability to live in those areas safely.

Many of those people are still not yet at home, and we know from recent federal reports that there were challenges in meeting the needs of those communities. Those communities are now being provided with opportunities to be on higher land. We are looking at the emergency channel becoming a permanent channel, and that we are going to proceed with. We are going to have the additional outlet out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin, and I can tell the member opposite, when I've talked to the producers out there, people that live in that area, they see that promise as a godsend. It will give them certainty. It will allow for economic renewal in the Interlake. It'll allow for more opportunities for people in the Interlake to make investments. That is the priority; we're proceeding on it.

We're also using the resource to match the federal infrastructure program, which has a much wider set of criteria, to allow us to build those facilities which will improve the quality—

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

I keep hearing someone in the Chamber here calling time, and I want to indicate to the House that there is a set of procedures that I follow in this House as Speaker and that members are permitted 45 seconds to ask their questions and ministers are allowed 45 seconds to respond. Leaders of recognized parties are allowed one minute each. So I just want to indicate that for the House so that we don't keep hearing the—some individual in here calling time.

Now, the honourable member for Rossmere has a question.

Heritage Life Personal Care Home Opening (Niverville)

Ms. Erna Braun (Rossmere): Seniors built this province and we all owe it to them to ensure that when the time comes they have the care they need and the living options they want.

In fact, earlier this week a report came out from the Canadian Medical Association advocating for a wide range of care options for our seniors. I know home care is being expanded and doctor and nurse practitioner house calls for seniors are making a comeback with new hospital home teams, but for some seniors living at home is no longer a safe choice and a move to a personal care home is their only option.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health about our plan to continue to promote safe, high-quality care for seniors.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): It was my great honour today to be in Niverville to celebrate the opening of the Heritage Life Personal Care Home. It was a wonderful event, Mr. Speaker, attended by many members of the community who have provided so generously to the project. Manitoba Health, of course, has provided funds for the project and, indeed, will provide \$5 million in ongoing operating.

It's an 80-bed personal care home, a net increase of 38 beds for the region. It'll include a 20-bed special-care unit, Mr. Speaker. It will be an excellent

environment for our loved ones who are living with Alzheimer's and dementia.

It was a great day, Mr. Speaker—

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

Keeyask Community Centre Update

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): And that personal care home was paid for by all private money, and they're trying to take credit for it—shame on them.

Two weeks ago, August 6th, 2013, the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro said, and I quote from Hansard, "And I believe there's a groundbreaking ceremony", and he went on to say, "to come up in the next two weeks", in reference to the Keeyask Centre. It's two weeks later, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: Where is the Keeyask Centre?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): As the member should be aware of, right now, the Manitoba Hydro and the TCN First Nation entered an agreement in order to develop a—Keeyask Centre, Mr. Speaker, and the responsibility has gone to the chief and council in order to develop that.

I spoke with the chief yesterday on the phone and he said that they're looking soon at a groundbreaking. He also reminded us that a community had been evacuated because of forest fires several weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, and he's advised me that the plans are still on to do an opening of the Keeyask Centre.

CEC Report—Bipole III Licensing Recommendations

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): The CEC, Clean Environment Commission, recently brought down its report on Bipole III. Within the report are licensing recommendations for the Minister of Conservation.

I ask the Minister of Conservation: Is he bound by all the licensing recommendations within that report?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I—it is unfortunate that members opposite do not approve of the building of a bipole which is necessary for the security of the hydroelectric

supply, not only Manitoba, for the many locations that we provide power to. It's clean, green energy.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that the number of greenhouse gas emissions from Keeyask over a hundred years—it'll take a hundred years for the greenhouse gas emissions to equalize just one year of running a combined cycle natural gas converter.

Members opposite have no understanding at all of the environment and the consequences and the importance of having that security line providing the security for Manitoba Hydro so the power can be provided to Manitobans.

Line Placement Recommendations

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, this a \$3.8-billion project that this government's projecting to build. They shouldn't be guessing at this.

On page 75, contained within the licensing recommendations, are changes for the proposed Bipole III route. And I can actually take the minister to that particular spot where this is, because one of the recommendations moves a line 1 mile north of where the initial proposed route is.

Has the minister endorsed this change of route? Where are we? Stop guessing. Tell us where this thing is going.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the CEC report that brought down the 68 conditions—the most stringent conditions ever for a licence in the history of Manitoba—had talked about consulting—consultant fatigue; there was so many consultations with respect to the line.

As it came down, with respect to some of the allocations, information came before the CEC with respect to things like wildlife, things like the environment, things like private property, Mr. Speaker, that could be affected by the particular site and movement of the line. And the CEC recommended and that the consultations take place with respect to where that line goes. And that will occur, as per the conditions in the licence.

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

It's time for—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Darcy Ataman

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, there are some people in our communities who go above and beyond to make the world a better place. Darcy Ataman is one of those awe-inspiring people.

Darcy Ataman is the founder and CEO of Make Music Matter, a charitable organization based out of Winnipeg and Toronto which uses music to connect and engage youth in Rwamagana, Rwanda, and in Bukavu, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Beginning his career as a music producer, Darcy operated his own recording studio in Winnipeg's downtown. His work received several Juno nominations and in 2006, Darcy worked with well-known musicians to write and record the original Song for Africa for Toronto's International Aids Conference. From this blossomed Make Music Matter.

Make Music Matter's Music Enrichment Program educates and helps enrich the lives of youth affected by conflict and poverty. Music becomes not only a positive and therapeutic outlet, but also a tool for social change. By raising awareness on a number of development issues, including HIV/AIDS, children's rights and violence against women, youth are able to work toward overcoming hardships and building a better future for themselves and their families.

Music created by youth participants and local musicians is professionally recorded and used as an educator's—educational tool, which is distributed to the community and through local radio stations, ensuring the accessibility of messages for social change where they count most.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in thanking Darcy Ataman for working to enrich and improve the lives of children and youth in some of the world's most challenging environments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:40)

John McLean

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say a few words about the passing of John, also known as Jack McLean, a cherished member of the Portage la Prairie community who passed away recently at the age of 92 years.

John was from a long line of John McLeans who first arrived in Portage la Prairie in 1862, who were the first new settlers in the area to begin farming. McLean was raised and lived all his life in Portage and leaves a legacy of John McLeans to continue the family name. As a boy, John and his siblings were raised on one of the original McLean homesteads in the southwest area of Portage.

When the Second World War was declared, John joined the Royal Canadian Air Force and was stationed in Gander, Newfoundland. After the Second World War he brought his wife, Isabelle, to Portage, and they started a small radio repair business, McLean's Radio.

In 1953 with the advent of television, his business adjusted to the new technology and became the first television sales and repair shop in the Portage and the first in the area to provide this new entertainment forum. There was a forest of television antennas that sprouted in the Portage skyline for signals which beamed from Winnipeg. John had a large crew of employees providing the labour to allow Portage to witness the likes of Ed Sullivan, Hockey Night in Canada. John also had a lifelong love of motorcycles and for a time sold Harley Davidson motorcycles and Whizzer bicycles.

In the mid-1970s, John decided that he would pass the torch of his beloved electronics to his sons, Jack and Tom, who carried on the business under the name McLean Electronics. McLean, then not ready to retire, went to work for the Portage School Division working with electronics and also drove a school bus for many years.

John was a prominent member of Portage and its service clubs as he felt that Portage would always be a home for him and his family. He took great pride in the fact that he was from such a long line of McLeans in the area and passed that pride on to his children.

Mr. Speaker, as a fellow member of the Portage community, I am honoured to inform the House about John McLean. John was a man of the community and worked hard to help Portage la Prairie prosper. He will be deeply missed.

Flin Flon Indian-Metis Friendship Centre

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, by connecting with our neighbours and sharing our stories, we not only learn about our common interests, desires and needs, but we contribute to a stronger social fabric in our community and in Manitoba.

Friendship centres play pivotal roles in our community by providing a place to gather, share our stories, promote Aboriginal cultural and teachings which can help to enhance quality of life.

The Flin Flon Indian-Metis Friendship Centre has been an important part of our community since it first opened its doors in 1966. Beginning as a friendship centre and a hostel, the centre has evolved into a multi-complex facility and is now home to a restaurant, handicraft outlet and sells traditional Aboriginal crafts, as well as administration offices and assembly hall. Also, on a veer from this, they also make the second best cinnamon buns, I think, in the world.

The friendship centre—[interjection] Yes, I won't let my wife know. The friendship centre also hosts a Lighthouses program. This community-based, crime prevention program aims to help youth development with their self-esteem and confidence through positive skill-building activities.

This year, Mr. Speaker, the Flin Flon friendship centre was awarded the Certificate of Excellence by the National Association of Friendship Centres. This award recognizes two friendship centres in each province and territory across Canada. In Manitoba the friendship centres in Dauphin and Flin Flon were recognized at the annual general meeting held this past July. Accepting the award on behalf of the Flin Flon Indian-Metis Friendship Centre was President Don McKenzie.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating the Flin Flon Indian-Metis Friendship Centre's staff, volunteers and board members for their dedication to making Flin Flon a more connected community where all people can flourish. Thank you.

Shelby Gillies

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, Shelby Gillies of Neepawa is only 16 years old, but she's already a national champion. This year Shelby and her partner, Tyson Salmon of Stonewall, are the

national champions in team roping, having competed in the Canadian high school rodeo finals in Nanton, Alberta.

Shelby is relatively new to horses, having received her first horse at 8 years old when her grandma won the horse in a raffle in Neepawa. She couldn't stay away from her horse and shortly thereafter her father moved the family out to the country so Shelby could ride the horse without disrupting traffic in town.

Once that horse passed away, her new horse, nicknamed Pete, brought her much success in rodeo competitions throughout the province. Her grandma purchased Pete, and when she passed away from cancer, Pete was Shelby's greatest companion. Sadly, Pete passed away this past spring, and Shelby and her family purchased her newest horse, Kinney.

Shelby and Kinney have only worked together for one month prior to the national high school rodeos finals, and along with her partner, Tyson Salmon, they were able to finish first out of 24 teams competing. Shelby was the team's header, who is in charge of roping the horns of the steer, while her partner, Tyson, ties the legs and completes the rope. Shelby and Tyson were the only pair to complete all three ties over the week, completing them in a total of 11.4 seconds.

Shelby hopes to turn her love of rodeo into a professional career, and she hopes to continue winning scholarships and one day go to a rodeo college. Her love of horses has already led to much success, and she hopes for even more in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Shelby, her partner, Tyson, and her horse, Kinney, on their national championship victory. I wish them the best of luck in the future.

St. Jean Closure

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, six months ago, the NDP got out their dynamite and blew up the bridge in St. Jean Baptiste. This happened with very little notice, with no planning, and the government does what it does best, talks a lot about—without saying anything important.

In the last six months, we've seen the community start to shut down. The grocery store has been divested by Co-op and will soon close its doors, as it's losing customers day by day. Expansion projects have been halted and plans to move elsewhere are

being drawn up. There are serious questions about the continued enrollment in the school, with bus rides up to an hour each way; many parents just aren't interested in having their kids wake up at 6 o'clock every morning to go to school.

The government came out and held a community meeting. The minister, however, was missing in action. He refused to meet with the community, sending out engineers, the same ones that his Premier (Mr. Selinger) refuted the very next day. For months, the community has asked for a meeting with the minister, and he keeps shredding the letter. He won't listen.

This government has the—had the audacity to minimize the potential emergencies on the other side of the river, saying that it could be serviced from other areas. This is NDP code for: it may take a half an hour for an ambulance to come in an emergency, and the emergency room may not be open when you get there.

Mr. Speaker, this government had done nothing for Manitoba, and they decided to blow up the bridges, to close emergency rooms and to raise the PST illegally. They don't understand what happens outside this building. They don't understand that respect is something that is earned from the people of Manitoba, not purchased with ribbon cuttings and false promises. This government is the most disrespectful government in—this province has ever had, and the people of St. Jean have had enough. They want a bridge, not false hopes and not tax increases.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. No grievances—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

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

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

* * *

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, would you please resume report stage on amendments to Bill 20.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resume report stage on Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko),

THAT Bill 20 be amended in Clause 4(3) by striking out clause (a) of the proposed subsection 3(2.1) of The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West, seconded by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet,

THAT Bill 20 be amended in Clause 4(3) by striking out clause—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. The amendment is in order.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, pleased to rise again to discuss amendments to Bill 20, as we continue to try to make it work a little bit better, but the government is resisting some of our best efforts, here, and here is an opportunity for them to do things a little bit better, because indeed, when you read this section, here, it is too cute by half.

* (14:50)

It is one of those areas that—it's kind of how I remember programming computers. You know, it was, if this happens, then that will happen. If it doesn't happen, then this other thing will happen. And, if that doesn't happen again, then we'll reroute it back to the top.

And it's really—when you read it, it's a little bit circular reasoning here, but trying to get away with things that the public wants to make sure are in force. And, indeed, a lot of those things have to do with transfer payments with Manitoba Hydro and in the things that they can do to try to mask and hide their

very activities and the things that they plan to do without the public really being aware of what's going on. So it's a bit of bait and a switch program here.

And in most cities—I'd imagine in Winnipeg those games are illegal. Those are games of chance, and in this regard they are regulated by Manitoba Lotteries, I would imagine, and street vendors can't—they can't play those games here. I've often seen them in other cities and I'm sure they happen here. I was in New York one time where I did see the street vendors doing this type of thing. And, as soon as the police walked along, 'boof', they were down the road and that's kind of what this government is doing here. So it's a bit of a bait and switch here. And they want the public to pay attention to this area. But if that's not working well for them, then we'll just kind of ignore that and we'll move it along. The numbers will make them look in a different area, will make them look a little bit better.

And it won't be what the government has said in the past where they lied at the doors to Manitobans about raising the PST in this regard because they put in legislation—I guess, then, that would no longer be a lie. It would be an actual fact the way that things are done in Manitoba, because we know that this government went door to door. They're—every candidate in the NDP went door to door, and they promised Manitobans in the election that they would not raise the PST. And, you know, Manitobans like to believe things and they believed the government. They believed that this government would stand by their promise. They believed this government would not raise the PST and, lo and behold, what happened? Not only did they broaden the sales tax last year so that Manitobans paid—had to pay tax on many things that were in prior not taxable, but this year we're going to raise the PST by 14.3 per cent.

So, in this clause here, again, they're trying to hide things from Manitobans, and sometimes they're very good at that, you know. And I have to give this government credit; they're very good at hiding information from Manitobans and that is not a good thing to be. When Manitobans want information, they try to access it, and the government says no, or they try to access it and the government says, well, we'll give you some of it, but we'll give you a lot of pages that are whited out. So you won't really see what the report is. So this government is exceptional, I think, in Canada in hiding information from Manitobans and this particular section will give them the opportunity to do that even more so.

And for too long they have interfered in a lot of areas in Crown corporations, and we do see that they rated Manitoba Hydro—and put Hydro in the poor house so that Manitoba Hydro now has to go to the markets to borrow money for their expansions rather than using the money that they might have had internally because that money was taken out and spent. And what do we have to show for it, Mr. Speaker? We have failing infrastructure, poor roads that have deteriorated over the life of this government.

We have health care that—you find a Manitoban that's happy about the wait times that are in the emergency rooms—if they can find an emergency room that is open or a QuickCare clinic that is open that indeed has nurse practitioners. Wouldn't that be something novel? It's quite surprising when the minister stands up in this House—the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) stands up and she's pleased that a QuickCare clinic is open 90 per cent of the time that it's supposed to be open. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think I would have a very successful business if I was happy that we scheduled a time that we are going to be open and we hit that target 90 per cent of the time. I don't think my customers would be very happy and I know they would go somewhere else. But in Manitoba where else do you go? Well, if the QuickCare clinic's not open, I guess you have to go down the street to the emergency room; hopefully, you're healthy enough to make it there or someone can drive you, or if you're waiting for the bus, I guess you have to wait for the next bus to go to the emergency room and then you find out if the emergency room's open or not. And if that's not open, well, perhaps there's somebody there that will help you to dial 911.

And as we learned—you know, Mr. Speaker, that's a good question: Is the 911 service always available in various areas? I know that in areas where—of the province where a lot of companies operate, the 911 service you may not have access to it. If you do 'nile'—dial 911, you might be routed to Brandon or to Winnipeg and you have to explain to them where you are if you're calling by cellphone. You know, it's a little bit better now for GPS tracking. But, still, if it is a critical time when you're calling 911, you want that operator to know where you are because when you're dialing 911, this is not something that people do lightly.

And I'm really quite surprised by the minister recommending that people would do that because my—when I was raised, you dialed 911 when there

was a severe emergency, when there was something that you couldn't handle yourself, when you needed additional help, then you called 911. It's not when you're waiting in the QuickCare clinic or the emergency room thinking you might need help. Those were—those are not the times maybe that you might call 911. So you don't want to overload the circuits of 911 by fraudulent calls, by calls that may not be emergency, and I know those are the decisions that people make.

But, anyway, Mr. Speaker, we do know that this government has, as I would say, played fast and loose with the dollars that bring—that come in. We know that they have great difficulty balancing budgets. We know that they have run deficits for a number of years; in fact, I think there's only one year that they didn't run a deficit. And then they play the games with the legislation and how to make it look like they're balancing the budget because they'll take money from here and they'll make it look better over there and that's what they're trying to do with this clause, moving the money around.

And, in fact, when you do that in the private sector, you get charged for it. It's called fraud. But here, they're going to make it legal so that things will all look rosy to Manitobans. And I know that they like to have those rosy—rose-coloured glasses. They must get a special discount on them. I'm not sure. I would think you'd pay PST on them and especially now so that there's been the increase of 14.3 per cent, you'll pay more for those rose-coloured glasses.

So, it's very sad to watch the way that this government is moving in the—in this method, that they are trying to make it look better for Manitobans in the way that they're handling Manitobans' money. And they have to go back to those Manitobans in the next election and they have to tell them that, well, yes, I know that last time each and every one of our candidates came out and lied to you at the door, said they weren't going to raise the PST and, you know, we raised it. I know we did that and we told you we weren't going to, and it's raised because of infrastructure programs that we announced years ago before the election. But those were already paid for, Mr. Speaker, and committed in that budget. Hmm, well, we've got some more announcements to make down the road, so it's to pay for those. Well, but those announcements were already made or they're projected to be budgeted for years down the road.

So where's the money going, Mr. Speaker? Follow the money, and that's the question here, is it's

making this more difficult for Manitobans to follow the money.

So I would encourage the minister to take out that section, to make it clear to Manitobans and I know Manitobans want to hear clarity from the minister and I'm sure he wants to be clear with Manitobans. He would not want to say anything that might lead them down the path, as happened in the last election. So, we want to make sure that Manitobans can truly understand the direction that the government is going here and where their finances are being used because the government deeps—dips deep into their pockets and takes it for purposes that we don't always see where it's going.

So thank you, Mr. Speaker. I imagine there are others that want to speak on this so I will allow them the opportunity to do so. Thank you.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): You know, Mr. Speaker, the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) really ought to give the people of Manitoba more credit than what he just did.

My experience, as an MLA, has taught me that the people of Manitoba take democracy and elections and our process very serious. He may think that the people of Manitoba can be duped at any—at a moment's notice, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe that, whether it be an election and the tough questions they ask and the demands that they make, whether it be when we present a Throne Speech or a budget in this House. I've found that Manitobans take a lot of time to analyze, ask the tough questions and press their case to all 57 of us in this Legislature. So I really wish the members opposite would treat Manitobans with more respect than just to write them off like that.

* (15:00)

When I looked at this amendment, Mr. Speaker, I thought to myself, well, what are our friends across the way up to with this amendment? Is this something that's worth considering, as we've considered all these amendments? And I looked at what they were proposing. And I thought first, you know—first of all, I thought, well, this reflects the usual kind of anti-Crown corporation approach that members opposite have—specifically anti-Hydro approach that members opposite have been—you know, they've been beating that drum for quite a long time. It dates back over decades. When they had actual opportunities, when they were in government,

to build Hydro and to expand Hydro, connect northern power dams with southern markets with transmission lines—bipole lines, what did they do? Well, quite frankly, they blew it over and over again. And they propose again today in the House in 2013 to blow it again—to mortgage off the future of my son's generation and the generations of others—the generations that I know the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) so well represents in this House.

Mr. Speaker, hydro is really our future oil and gas. It's the future of our province. There's a huge opportunity awaiting us there, if we're brave enough—if we're wise enough, as legislators, to take that opportunity. And clearly, the members opposite won't take that step; they're too timid on this issue.

That leads me, along with many Manitobans—you know, the member for Brandon West thinks Manitobans were—have been duped in the past. Manitobans understand how important Hydro is. Manitobans understand that they have a government right now, here today in 2013, who will continue to invest in Hydro to keep rates low, to ensure markets so that we can sell—export into. The official Leader of the Opposition has said he doesn't even want to sell into an export market. He has said further that he wants to have market rates in this province.

And, you know, if you don't build Hydro, you will end up with market rates, because in 2022, we will be forced, if we don't expand, if we don't build—in 2022, we will be forced to import power to this province at whatever rate the market demands of the people of Manitoba. So, Mr. Speaker, it's very short-sighted—the member's view—that we shouldn't build Manitoba Hydro.

Mr. Speaker, I said earlier that it was—it's been a position of theirs for decades. Well, the members opposite cancelled the Conawapa project. We are moving forward with the Conawapa project. Members opposite opposed Limestone at a cost of \$1.4 billion, that supported \$6 billion in sales for Manitobans. That keeps our prices—that keeps our hydro rates amongst the lowest on the continent. It makes good sense to invest in the—in our future and in Hydro's future.

Mr. Speaker, they do not have the courage to address the bipole issue. They take the easy road on that one—an easy road that will not produce the kind of results that we need to make sure that we can ensure that northern—those northern dams, that

generate the power, send that power to our markets. And the markets are there.

What we've proposed in Bill 20 are some common sense changes to what constitutes a balanced budget. You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't think this amendment is a reflection of the bad attitude that members opposite have towards Manitoba Hydro. I don't think that at all. I think it's more fundamental than that, because what we've said in this section that the—that this amendment refers to is we have said very clearly that if federal transfer payments fall dramatically—and we have seen, whether they like to admit it or not, whether they want to stand up for their federal cousins or stand up for Manitobans is up to them, but whether they like it or not, transfer payments have fallen and will continue to fall, especially—specifically in terms of the Canada Health Transfer. That's leaving all provinces—except Alberta, I will add—but all provinces in a bad situation. And that's not in the control of any province, including ours.

It also says that if a Crown agency suffer losses that are beyond the government's control—and they are—that should not force the government of the day into cutting deeply into services.

Ah, Mr. Speaker, there's the rub. That's what this amendment is about. Members opposite believe that if you can withdraw what it says here about Hydro, if you can withdraw what it says about transfers from Ottawa, you will leave a revenue problem with the Province that would only be say—that would only be filled by doing deep cuts.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's a fact. It's in—on—it's in black and white. It's on the record. Members opposite, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) has said over and over that they will do cuts, \$550 million; that's over half a billion dollars in cuts, indiscriminately, across the board, to health care and to education, to infrastructure, to those plans that we have to build roads and bridges and schools and hospitals. That's what this amendment is about.

This is amendment designed to further straitjacket any further government into not raising revenue or not dealing with Crown corporations or federal governments. It's a straitjacket with a—directly focused on cutting the things that matter most to Manitobans. That's what this amendment is about. That's why we won't be supporting it.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): It's a pleasure to put some words on the record with regard to an amendment that we put forward with regard to Bill 20. And I think that this is a common-sense amendment, and I believe that what we're looking for is the government to quit playing politics with our Crown corporations and actually start working within their budget to maintain services within our province.

Mr. Speaker, my husband works for Manitoba Hydro, and, you know, it is a joke that this government talks about how they care about Manitoba Hydro and the staff that work at Manitoba Hydro. Like, they know that this government has been turning a blind eye to the people that are working in those—in Manitoba Hydro in the areas of lines and also within the offices. We see less and less staff in the areas that are requiring front-line services. We have people waiting three weeks to receive services from Manitoba Hydro because there just are not enough staff out there to provide those services.

So I find it rather odd that the member for Dauphin's (Mr. Struthers) talking about Manitoba Hydro being the Crown corporation for them, and when I see personally how this government is actually dismantling Manitoba Hydro and actually working against the people that are trying to keep Manitoba Hydro afloat and doing the services that they know are important to Manitobans.

So, Mr. Speaker, I don't need a lesson from the member for Dauphin on Manitoba Hydro. I live and breathe that, and I see exactly what this government is doing to Manitoba Hydro, and I'm so disappointed that he would put misinformation on the record with regard to what they believe is in the best interests of Manitoba.

He mentioned Limestone, Mr. Speaker. Well, we finished it. We, the Conservative government, had finished it on time and on budget. So, you know, when they talk about projects being completed, I think they need to reflect on what is happening out there and how we often have to come in and clean up their mess. They just don't get it.

With regard to bipole, like, I had a meeting in Minnedosa when we were looking at the three options for bipole lines. I had people from the constituency of Dauphin at my meeting upset because their member wasn't going to host a meeting.

So they came to the meeting in Minnedosa because they felt that that was going to be their opportunity, only opportunity, to provide input into what was happening with regard to the lines.

So, again, we don't need any, you know, direction from this government on how to manage Crown corporations; we have seen how poorly they have done that over the last 10 to 15 years, Mr. Speaker.

So what we're wanting to see, Mr. Speaker, is less political interference with Crown corporations. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) himself has admitted when he was the minister 'ress'-of Finance that he was politically involved or his—it was a political motivation to have the bipole line go down the west side. He admitted it. He said it in the House. So we know that the political interference is causing or is having a direct impact on Manitoba Hydro's business. We know that this government has increased liquor, beer, wine prices to inflate the huge profits of Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries. They can't let anybody make a profit. They can't let anybody have a nest egg; they have to rob them blind every chance they get.

* (15:10)

We see that with the school division. When they told school divisions that they have to reduce their budget, that they weren't allowed to have money on reserve, which was really to be used for an incident if they needed a new bus or if they found out they needed more special service—

An Honourable Member: Contingency.

Mrs. Rowat: Exactly, contingency funds for when they would need them, Mr. Speaker, and we find that now school divisions are facing a number of costs coming—going forward and again this government made them spend their contingency funds, so they don't understand the significance of that.

They've tried to make MPI pay for infrastructure projects to backfill their reductions on spending on highways, Mr. Speaker, and there was a 15 per cent reduction in highway maintenance and upkeep. I've talked to highway guys on the highways quite often as we're waiting for—to get through, you know, some paving or if there was some work being done with regards to the flooding and, you know, I've heard it over and over again that they're running out of money and they're concerned because Manitobans are asking for infrastructure to be completed and

they're being told there's only so much money. Especially with Highway 83, for example, when they were doing that repair and the municipality was having to accommodate people that are travelling from Russell to Roblin in that area, they were told that—commuters—they were being told that they would have to continue to use the municipal roads, but the municipality was not receiving any money and what Highways were telling them was that—I'm sorry we have no money, they cut our budget so we are not able to help provide the additional upkeep of those roads.

So, when they talk about drastic cuts, Mr. Speaker, we're seeing those cuts at the expense of the safety of roadways in our province. So, you know, that is very—I think that's very clear and this amendment, you know, clearly states that Manitobans own the Crown corporations. We want our Crown corporations to be healthy. We want them to provide the services that they're supposed to provide for our communities and for our residents, and I believe that when you have a government that politically interferes, such as the Premier has done with Hydro, you're going to continue to see corporations bail out government's political agenda then you're not going to have very strong corporations.

So I believe that this amendment speaks to the need to protect our Crown corporations, to have government, you know, work within their means to balance the budget and to ensure that Manitobans are receiving the services that they're entitled to. We are not seeing the services that Manitobans deserve. We have hospitals that are closing or are on the verge of closing. We have in Minnedosa an issue of trying to find locum doctors to help keep that facility open. If Minnedosa's hospital closes, Mr. Speaker, and we have a very warm summer there's lots of people in the Riding Mountain park and in the smaller lakes around the area who will then have to travel to Brandon for care, and that's not quality care that's not ensuring every Manitoban has equal access to care.

We are in a situation in so many communities within our province who are looking for some leadership from this government with regard to how they're managing Manitoba's dollars, and they talk about, you know, being proud to do ribbon cuttings. Well, you know, I believe that that's fine but what you should also be thinking about is ensuring that Manitobans are receiving services across the board

that are equal, not having individuals from different—just depending on where you live and the services that you will receive, Mr. Speaker.

So I believe what this amendment will do is provide some assurances for the Crown corporations that the government will stay out of their business and not politically interfere in what they're trying to do. So I support this amendment and I think it's a great, great move forward.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I appreciate the opportunity to stand in support of this amendment and I wish the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) had been a little bit more open-minded about really digging in and understanding what this amendment was all about.

Really what we want to do with this amendment is to protect Crown corporations from getting their pockets picked by this Minister of Finance and by this government. And that is the genesis behind the amendment we are making to this legislation. We have seen now where this government has taken a taxpayer protection legislation and pretty much gutted it so now that ordinary Manitobans do not have any protection as taxpayers from what this government is doing. And what we wanted to see with this particular amendment is that this government would allow some semblance of protection for Crown corporations here in Manitoba. We know that the NDP's track record over several NDP governments has certainly been to use Crown corporations in a way that they aren't set up to be, and we certainly have concerns about what this government is doing with Hydro. We've seen that with the political interference that is going on at that level.

But it's not just Hydro where we are seeing government interference with Crown corporations. We are seeing it with some of the other Crowns as well, and I think that gives pause to everybody to have some concern about what this government is doing and how they want to manipulate the—you know, the resources that those Crowns have and how the government might want to take advantage of it for their purposes. And that's not how the Crowns were set up. Crowns are to be arm's-length from government, and governments are not to be manipulating and politically interfering with Crowns.

But we certainly have seen a blatant—blatant—political interference occurring when it came to Bipole III. And that certainly is of huge concern to

all of us, because all of the experts that are out there within Hydro have basically indicated that the NDP's micromanagement of Bipole III and forcing it down the wrong side of the province is not what Hydro wanted and that this government has basically gone against the experts at Hydro who had indicated that this was not a good route for the bipole line to go.

And so we're actually really quite concerned as to what the political interference with Hydro is going to cause in this province. We saw, I believe it was in '03, where the government decided that they were going to take over \$200 million out of Hydro to use for their own piggy bank, and Hydro did not have the money. Hydro had to borrow that money, and then when you add up all the interest costs on that, Hydro was in the tank for almost half a million dollars—or, sorry, half a billion dollars, because Hydro didn't have the money. But this government felt that they could take what they wanted. They raided Hydro and they left Hydro in a precarious position. And we've seen over the years how Hydro has not been in the most stable of positions over a number of years.

And so, you know, it is some concern for us that this government doesn't seem to have a—the courage to address Bipole III with the public. They don't want to have any of the reviews that are going on actually look at Bipole III and what that is going to lead to in Manitoba. They're preventing everybody from having a look at the ramifications of putting Bipole III on the wrong side of Manitoba. So, certainly, when it comes to Crown corporations and Hydro in particular, we do have great concern.

Also, I—you know, I think it wasn't that long ago where the government even tried to take money from MPI to pay for infrastructure projects to backfill their reduction in spending. And we found out in Estimates that the government certainly has not spent all of their budgeted money for infrastructure projects. That came out in Estimates that there were millions and millions of dollars that had been budgeted but weren't spent, and then the government turns around and they're saying well, we need to raise the PST to pay for infrastructure. Well, if infrastructure was so important, why did they lapse so much money out of the infrastructure budget? And they did, and then they are going out trying to get MPI to pay for infrastructure projects when they haven't even followed through on their own budget spending on highways. So it was only with a backlash from the public that they backed away from using MPI as their piggy bank.

* (15:20)

So we're seeing a track record now with the NDP government that is not good for Crown corporations in Manitoba. And we want to be sure that this government doesn't ruin Crown corporations in Manitoba, or destabilize them, or bankrupt them, as they could very well do with their decisions in Hydro. And there are lots of people out there that are actually, you know, saying that we need to worry about the possibility that a wrong decision by this government now could actually bankrupt Manitoba Hydro.

You know, we've heard the words, American-Americanize Manitoba Hydro. And, you know, this government is taking some steps that could very well weaken that Crown corporation. And then they'll say, well, that is our gold, that is our oil, that's Manitoba's advantage. It could become Manitoba's disadvantage the way this NDP government is mismanaging it.

So we are concerned about corporations. We know that Crown corporations are owned by Manitobans and they are there to provide basic services to Manitobans at a reasonable cost. They aren't there for the NDP to politically interfere in them and to use them for their piggy bank.

Now, also we saw in the last budget, too, where the NDP have increased liquor, beer and wine prices and are taking huge profits out of that. You know, as one person who came to speak at committee on Bill 20, he said that beer costs so much more in Manitoba now that he can't even drown his sorrows here, because he can't afford to go out and buy it. And, when you look at the cost of beer in other provinces, it's much lower than what it is in Manitoba. And this guy was really upset because, he said, well, darn it now, I don't even have enough money in my pocket to go out and buy liquor to drown my sorrows.

And, you know, this government is looking at every Crown corporation and finding ways at-picking away at them so that they can drain more and more money from Crown corporations. So we are concerned, Mr. Speaker. We are concerned with what this government is doing.

And I also just wanted to mention one other thing, because we do have to worry, and I know some people have indicated some concerns with the amount of federal transfers that are coming into Manitoba. And we certainly know that one third of Manitoba's budget is made up of money that comes

from federal transfers, and money that comes from taxpayers in other provinces, through the federal government to Manitoba.

And this government not only are taking advantage of all those other taxpayers in other provinces, they're taking advantage of our Crown corporations here, and we are concerned about that, Mr. Speaker, and we don't want this government to create harm for these Crown corporations. We want them to be strong and to deliver good services that they were meant to, at reasonable prices for Manitobans. But that's not going to happen if this government keeps doing what they're doing. We saw with hydro, in one year, an 8 per cent increase, and Hydro indicating that that is only going to grow more and more each year.

The one thing that did come up the other day, though, with the Hydro statement, where they had some kind of a profit of \$90 million, does beg the question of why this government is increasing the PST to say they need more money for infrastructure. And, when we see Hydro asking for an increase, we're also wondering, well, why are they asking for an increase if they've got all this surplus left over at the end of the year.

So the numbers here are all starting to add up and starting to point in a direction that we are seeing some very serious mismanagement by this NDP government when it comes to Crown corporations, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to stand and put a few words on the record for this—on this amendment to Bill 20.

Mr. Speaker, our Crown corporations—we view these Crown corporations as the jewels of the province. And they've certainly, time and time again, they've either been taken advantage of or, more appropriately, have tried to have taken advantage of these Crown corporations, and it seems like they'll try anything to do that.

We've—we know that there's been a lot of money that has been wasted—shall we say?—wasted on the presentations of—and the possibly of moving the bipole to the west side of the province rather than the east side of the province. And to what benefit was that? It's to no benefit, other than some ideological thoughts of the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the

province. We might say, though, that it is going to cause a lot of expense, unnecessary expense, to the ratepayers in the province of Manitoba. It has been reflected in the largest increase of 8 per cent in the last year and a projection of 3.5 per cent for the next 25 years or 20 years to pay this 20 dollar–\$20-billion bill with no return on this money. Certainly, the PUB has made it clear that there's really not a financial case to be made right now to be building a lot of the building that's being proposed by this government.

And this clause in here indicates that they would be able to access any of the money that—or use Manitoba Hydro or the MPI to access extra money to balance the books. But balancing the books hasn't been one of their big issues. It's not one of their main goals. And I'll just refer to 2009, when they deferred the debt payment to 2012, or 2010 when they deferred that debt payment to 2013. Balancing the books wasn't important at that time.

And, in fact, we had the Premier of the province and many of the members of the NDP go door to door saying the Province was in excellent shape—that there wasn't a problem, that they were going to balance the books by 2014. That was simple to do. We were in good shape. There was absolutely no need to raise taxes, no need to raise the PST. In fact, that was ridiculous or nonsense that that would take place. And they convinced Manitobans of that.

But it all—at the same time, they knew full well that they had deferred the debt payments from 2009 and 2010. And so, when they tried to fudge the numbers in 2011 and convince Manitobans—and won the election by convincing them—the NDP party went door to door lying to the people of Manitoba and ended up winning the election doing that—barely winning it—well, maybe a little bit more than barely winning it—but at the same time not being truthful to the people at their doors.

And now they have to pay for the mismanagement that has been going on, not just one year, two years, three years. We've had the lowest—the lowest—interest rates that Canada has seen for many, many years. We've had the highest transfers from federal—from the federal government for many, many years, and it's continued. We're living well beyond our means when 40 per cent of our income comes from our neighbouring provinces—well beyond our means, and not dealing with the debt at the same time, not looking the debt in the eye and saying: Look, we have to deal with this. We have to put this debt to rest; and, instead of having 40 or

50 or 60 cents on every dollar going to pay down debt, before we can do anything productive, anything useful in the province, we should be and are forced to pay a certain amount of the debt.

So in 2012, what happened—2012, well, they had ran out of projects. They'd ran out of project money, so they couldn't use public money from the Crown corporations to create employment. So what did they do? They broadened the PST. They broadened the PST on many, many, many projects—or many, many different products, from hair colouring to home insurance. They raised the vehicle registration.

And, while we—when we talk about the vehicle registration, at one time that that was the responsibility of the government, but they offloaded that onto the insurance company, onto MPI. And, when they did that, they did that at a loss. Or MPI said, well, we'll do that for \$20 million. Even though it was costing the government at that time \$25 million to administer it, they said, we will do it for \$20 million. And the reason was the technology that they would be employing, that MPI would be employing, would be easily—easily take care of that shortfall—that \$5-million shortfall.

* (15:30)

Well, Mr. Speaker, that shortfall now has grown and grown and grown. And the vehicle registration is up and it's costing our insurance company, and so that when it does that, it costs every producer in the province, every person that has a vehicle. And we have to keep in mind that a lot of people have to drive to get to work. They don't all live within the cement circle that encircles this city. They live outside of that cement circle. There isn't bus service; there's not a taxi service. You can't bicycle to work from St. Pierre to Winnipeg, so you need to have your vehicle. The vehicle registration goes up. These are on things that we have to have.

They raised the gas prices to improve our roads, but at the same time, we haven't seen any improvement on the roads south of Winnipeg. In fact, we have companies that are south of Winnipeg now that do that type of work that are working in Saskatchewan because there's no work in Manitoba.

But the amendment, Mr. Speaker, the amendment here that has been brought forward is to protect our Crown corporations, to protect our Crown jewels from the thievery that could possibly go on without us seeing it, without the public seeing

it, with the sleight of hand that does take place here. And we have seen that. We've seen it in removing red tape, for example.

I'll just give you a small example that really adds up to a lot of money. Every company in the province of Manitoba has to remit the PST. And if they remit on a monthly basis and it's below \$3,000 that they're remitting, they are paid \$50 to do that. However, the government said to them, we are going to streamline this. You don't have to remit every month; you can remit every three months. That is streamlining it. No question about that.

However, what they failed to tell them was that if you're over that \$3,000, you don't get that \$50. So for small businesses, \$50 a month to do that paperwork—it's—it is something. It's not big money but it's \$600 a year. So one person is working a couple hours at that and it did pay for some; it did help offset it.

What happened, though, is when the people switched over to that—when they switched over to that quarterly, the Province collected \$35 million by not paying out the \$50 to these individuals on a monthly basis. Mr. Speaker, that's a hidden tax. And how do most Manitobans get to find these? They don't get to find them; they're busy making a living.

And so when it happens within our Crown corporations with this type of a clause in here—when that happens in our Crown corporations, how do we expect our—the people in Manitoba, the working class, how do we expect them to find these types of hidden taxes or the ways that they raise our taxes or raise our cost of living?

And, when you start raising the hydro bill by 3.5 per cent a year minimum for the next 20 years, that adds up to a lot. And it gets tripled and magnified as each and every person passes that on because that's what a business has to do. They work on profit; they work on a profit margin. But that margin has got so terribly small that we're forcing some of these people out of business.

So these are just some of the things that have—that are some of the main reasons that this government should be looking at this amendment and passing this amendment.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is the amendment on Bill 20.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Yes, on division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: So we'll now proceed with the next amendment to Bill 20.

Mr. Helwer: I move, seconded by the MLA for Tuxedo,

*THAT Bill 20 be amended in Clause 4(3) by adding the following after clause (b) and before the sentence that follows it in the proposed subsection (3)2.1 of **The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act:***

For the purpose of clause (a), Manitoba Hydro is excluded unless all capital projects of \$350 million or more approved in the fiscal year for which this calculation is applied have undergone a Needs For and Alternatives To (NFAT) review.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Brandon West, seconded by the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson),

THAT Bill 20 be amended in Clause 4(3) by adding the following after clause (b) and before—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. The amendment is in order.

Mr. Helwer: So, I am pleased to rise to speak to this amendment to Bill 20, and since the minister and the government didn't seem fit—see fit to accept our last amendment, perhaps they'll accept this one as a portion of the last amendment.

And, indeed, it talks to the need for Manitoba Hydro being clear and concise and going out and talking to the public about what they plan to do. The NFAT assessment, the needs-for-and-alternatives-to review is something that we have requested, that many Manitobans have requested, and this government has been resistant to making sure that everything out there is all above board and that the public has an opportunity to comment on it, Mr. Speaker.

Indeed, over the past year or so, two years, I have had many people come to me from various walks of life talking about Manitoba Hydro's plans for bipole. And they're concerned about not only bipole but also the dams that are projected to be built. Their concern comes from the fact that the government is not listening anymore. And these are people that tended to be supporters of the NDP government. They tended to go out and campaign for them, support them, donate to them. But the problem was that the government wasn't listening to them anymore.

So, if the supporters of the government are coming to me as an opposition member, then there must be something wrong in the process, that the government is feeling that they know the best, they know what would be the best for all Manitobans. And they know what would be best for Manitoba Hydro, ignoring that Manitoba Hydro has a board, ignoring that Manitoba Hydro is subject to the Public Utilities Board, ignoring that Manitoba, indeed, is subject to The Environment Act. And the government is then assuming that they know best what would be best for Manitobans and for Manitoba Hydro.

So these are some of the concerns that Manitobans were bringing forward to us, that the government wasn't listening to them anymore, so you, as the opposition, have to do something about it. And we tried to bring that forward to the government, and, of course, no big surprise, they didn't want to listen to us, either. They are disconnected from Manitobans and proceeding on a

basis that is very risky for Manitoba. They are looking at things that they have not properly assessed in the whole picture of things.

So you need to look at all of these dams and the Bipole III line and look at them as a total project, as opposed to just little pieces of them. All the little pieces are very important, and they're not small pieces, Mr. Speaker. They are large borrowings for the Province of Manitoba. But you have to look at them all together and make sure that they make sense for Manitoba Hydro, they make sense for Manitobans in this time where commodity prices are changing, where we have very low natural gas prices, and we're not sure when that's going to change.

We know that this is a unique period in time where natural gas prices are low in North America. And certainly, they are a commodity. It is a commodity and it does fluctuate. But, at this point, there have been several plans on the books for 'expanded'—expanded nitrogen plants in North America to use up some of that excess natural gas. There have been plans on the books for generation of electricity from natural gas, and we see those all over North America, that those plans are coming forward. Some of those will come from—to fruition. That is, indeed, true that not every one of those plants will be built. And those companies will decide if it makes sense to do that or not.

So, as natural gas is then taken up in its supply, we will probably see the price wide—rise. But no one's going to predict that business cycle, Mr. Speaker. No one's going to predict that swing. There are people that make their living at that, and I hope that this government isn't one that tries to do so.

* (15:40)

We do see that they lost some considerable money in the hedge mark—hedging the dollar in the last year, and, obviously, that's not something that they are doing well at. So—but there are people that do well predicting swings in commodity markets and hedge funds and that type of thing, but it is not something that you want to bet the bank on as a government. It is not something that you want to make sure that you have as your core, is predicting swings in the natural gas market. But it is very important that we do pay attention to that gas market for Manitoba Hydro's plans going forward because it will have an impact on when things make sense and it will have an impact on whether it makes sense to construct those dams. And that is analysis that needs

to be going forward because it's all driven on what is the cost of electricity, and not just in Manitoba but in North America.

And, indeed, of course, there is also the question of Bipole III and which side of the province it should go down, where it's safest so that it's not in tornado alley, where will it interfere with wildlife the least, where will it interfere with landowners the least. And then, of course, we have environmental concerns, not just in terms of the line and what we're going to do for the boreal forest but also for contamination of farmland. And it's something that's been brought to the attention of this government and I know that they really don't have a clear idea on how that process would go forward.

You know, when you move from one acre to another, from one section to another, from one landowner to another, when you're working on that land it has become necessary to clean your equipment. We do it with all of our sprayers. When we complete the application in a field that sprayer pulls over to the side, they have water tanks on, they wash down that sprayer so that everything off of that sprayer stays in that field. Only then do they move down the road to the next field. And that is a hint of the type of things you need to do to make sure that you decontaminate equipment.

And, indeed, it has happened for years gone by, many, many years you would see the harvesting crews come and they would go through, they would finish harvesting one area of land and then they would have to clean out the combines to make sure that they didn't take any seeds, possible weed or wheat or anything else that they were taking onto the next farm. Even on the same farm, the same farmer did not want to move any contamination from one field to another even if it be weed seeds because that's something that they maybe weren't dealing with in that other field or volunteer crops that are brought forward. So you want to make sure in that regard, Mr. Speaker, that all of those particular pieces of equipment are clean when they move from one field to another.

And that's the type of thing we're talking about, the crews that are not only looking at land and are also making sure that it fits in the line for Hydro, not only that they make sure that their equipment is clean going from one field to the next, but also when we go to drill-test holes, in that regard, that that equipment is clean from one property to the next so you're not carrying forward any fungus or any other

diseases from field to field. So those are all things that this government needs to pay attention to, and they're not. Like many other things in this particular bill, you know, they try to make things look better for Manitobans.

We know that as they've gone forward from election to election, they try to muddy the waters. And I must say that I am disappointed that each and every one of those NDP candidates that knocked on doors in the last election, came forward with the line from the government that they would not raise the PST, they came forward with fears and trepidation for many Manitobans, and then we see now in this last budget that this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) presented, indeed they did raise the PST by 14.3 per cent even when they told Manitobans that they would not. And so it's very disappointing, and we certainly saw that at committee that people were concerned that they had been lied to by this government, they had lost faith in this government because now the government wants to take away their ability to vote on the PST increase. They want to take away Manitobans' rights and, again, they are betrayed. They feel betrayed by this government.

So some disappointment there, certainly for Manitobans and, of course, this government will have to deal with that, but in here we want to make sure that they make sure that they are doing the right thing for Manitoba Hydro and that Manitobans will be well represented by Hydro going forward.

It is, indeed, important part of the Manitoba economy. It is not the only part by any means, but it is an important part, and we want to make sure that it will be there and it will be viable for years to come, because we need to see it as a part of our economy. We need to make sure that it is a viable portion of the government entity and that it continues as a viable Crown corporation, so that it is not run into the ground by this government, either through borrowing or through drawing excess—what they might see as excess money—or profits out of the corporation to pay for this other—this government's failed opportunities.

So I know there are others that wish to speak on this area, Mr. Speaker, so I'll allow them time to get up and make sure that their voice is heard. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): It is, indeed, a pleasure to be speaking to this motion.

I would defer to other members of this House. If the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) wanted to speak, I would be more than happy to sit down and let him have his opportunity to put some words on the record.

But, until then, I do want to address some of the issues that this motion speaks to. And it really does come down to, from a government that's very heavy-handed, very heavy-fisted. We've heard a lot of comments put on the record today about the fact that the NDP party went door to door in the last campaign, canvassing on a commitment not to raise taxes. And that was the first commitment that they made, that no taxes would be raised, and we know that was the first promise that was broken.

Then they made a secondary commitment, and that was not to raise the PST. And each and every one of the New Democratic NDP candidates went door to door and made that commitment. And basically it was, read my lips, no new taxes, including a PST increase. And the PST increase was a second commitment that was broken. Not just did they raise taxes in the first year, but then they went on and broke their second commitment by not raising the PST.

And that in itself troubles a lot of people, and that is very problematic for individuals to take. But Manitobans, by and large, are understanding. I think they're very forgiving. I mean, they obviously are very forgiving; they re-elected this NDP government in 2011. I think what troubles Manitobans more than not just the breaking of two commitments is a fact that their right to a referendum is being taken away. And Manitobans are troubled by that. Not just the fact that the New Democrats broke their word on raising taxes, but they also broke their word on a referendum.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I travel around, I hear a lot of individuals who are prepared to be semi-understanding. They say, well, you know, maybe the government is in trouble, and perhaps with all of their spending they need more money. You know, that, probably most electors would understand. What they don't understand is the fact that a party that actually has democrat in its name would take away the right to vote.

And so it is that we see with Manitoba Hydro, and this amendment actually addresses that. This amendment talks about the NFAT, needs for and alternatives to. And we find out that, although there was a commitment made to start with, that the NFAT

would be something that all Manitobans could participate in, that it would be all-inclusive, would look at all angles, and would, in fact, come back with certain recommendations. What Manitobans are saddened and disenheartened to hear is that, in fact, the NFAT isn't a true, all-encompassing, if you will, discovery, discussion, debate—look at all the kinds of facets that are involved with Manitoba Hydro going forward. Basically, the NFAT is supposed to be a road map. It's supposed to be a blueprint where Manitoba Hydro's going to go in the next 10 to 15 years.

The only problem is that under this NDP a lot of the highways on that road map won't be there. A lot of the pathways, a lot of the ways to get from point A to point B, will no longer be in that road map, because they're not allowed to be part of the NFAT.

*(15:50)

For instance, Bipole III. And yes, we have debated that issue over a lot of years. And, Mr. Speaker, it is a big project and it is a contentious project. I don't think there is a single individual in this Chamber who can actually comprehend a \$3.8-billion hydro line. The numbers are so staggering that I think most of us, when we look in our accounts, you know, maybe we have a couple-hundred-thousand-dollar mortgage debt, we have a little bit on our charge cards, you know. We have, you know, things that we owe. Certainly, when my children view me, they view me as the walking instant teller machine and we're constantly opening up our wallet, but we're always talking about \$20 and \$20 and \$20 and \$20, right? We're always talking, you know, those kinds of amounts, and we understand those kinds of denominations.

But, when we talk billions of dollars, I mean, who can actually conceptually understand those massive amounts of money, and that's why when you have an NFAT and you get together professionals who would lay out alternatives, who would lay out a blueprint, who would lay out a map, if you will, of different ways to get to the same point, that then there would be a clear idea that there would be a clear pathway of where we want to go with Manitoba Hydro. And it's been said over and over again by myself and probably all 56 other members of this Legislature, Manitoba Hydro should be the economic oil patch driver of other areas; that's what it should be for Manitoba.

But we can't just go into this. We can't go into it blindly, recklessly or just politically driven,

and we think it's important that an NFAT be all-encompassing, that it be including all facets including the Bipole III and not restricting it to going down one side or the other. It should look, as in a road map, at all roads, all highways, all ways of getting from point A to point B. And I'd like to thank the member from Brandon West for putting together this motion and putting it forward.

I think it's important that, even in a small way, although it's only 10 minutes that I'm allowed today to speak on this, that at least we put some debate on the record that we want to protect Manitobans, and, Mr. Speaker, what the NDP is talking about is risking up to 20 to 30 billion dollars of Manitoba Hydro money and going forward on a hydro construction project, and I'm not too sure Manitobans are necessarily opposed to it, and I'm not too sure they're necessarily in support of it. What they would like to know is, is there a healthy debate? Is it going to be discussed? Is the best interest of the ratepayer and the taxpayer of Manitoba going to be considered as we go forward? Basically, what Manitobans want is to make sure if we go down this path that the best route is going to be taken whatever it is that we do. And we know that there is approximately \$10 billion of retrofit that has to happen, because when we're going to be developing those kinds of hydro dams, even our transformers and our infrastructure has to be upgraded. So it's not just the \$20 billion in new construction; it's probably another \$10 billion also on top of that for retrofitting so they can handle this kind of power and electricity. To try and do it by politics, by trying to do it by spin, by trying to do it by ranting and raving when questions are asked in the House, all of those things demean the debate and demean the process.

And I'd like to thank the member from Brandon East-West for the fact that he brought this forward. In fact, we would love to see the member for Brandon West get up and speak on this as well.

An Honourable Member: East.

Mr. Schuler: Brandon East. Mr. Speaker, I am getting my east and west confused, and I apologize to the House. East is east and west is west, and I would encourage all members in this House to get up. It's important that we have an NFAT that looks at all facets of Manitoba Hydro including Bipole through-three, including all the hydro dams, including probably even the retrofits because that's all going to be something that Manitoba ratepayers and Manitoba taxpayers are going to have to

shoulder. So let's have a fulsome, a complete discussion, and I'd like to thank the member for the fact that he brought this motion forward.

I know that we all love our Manitoba Hydro. I know here on the Progressive Conservative side of the House it is our party that initially created Manitoba Hydro. We appreciate what Duff Roblin has done for this province, not just creating Manitoba Hydro, the floodway and many other things, our modern education system, amongst other things, and we want to see a strong, public, dynamic Manitoba Hydro for the hydro ratepayers and for the taxpayers of Manitoba. And we would encourage the House to look at this motion, speak to it, and pass it when it comes to a vote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, on division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Mr. Speaker: All right. Then we'll call the next amendment to Bill 20.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger),

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing the heading for Part I with "REFERENDUM ELIMINATION".

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo, seconded by the honourable member for Charleswood,

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing the heading for Part I with "REFERENDUM ELIMINATION".

The amendment is in order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to bring forward this amendment to Bill 20 in debate of this bill in the Manitoba Legislature. And I want to thank the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) for seconding this motion today.

Mr. Speaker, of course I believe that referendum elimination is a much more appropriate headline for Part I of this Bill 20. The current Part I that the NDP has put forward in this bill states, and I quote: Funding for Manitoba Building and Renewal. We know that that is not at all what this section is about, Part I. We know that, of course, referendum elimination is much more appropriate to what they are doing to Manitobans. We heard at committee from several Manitobans who were very disturbed by this NDP government's—they—taking away their right to vote on the PST increase, which is required under the current laws of this province, and we know that members at committee—we received emails from people in—all across our province on this, from veterans, from seniors, from those people who just—who have—from new Canadians, those people who respect our right to vote and who have fought hard for our right to vote, and those who have come from countries who don't have that right to vote. And these are all the people that we are hearing from coming forward and talking about the importance of respecting their democratic way of life in our province.

And so I think it's unfortunate that members opposite have agreed to bring forward this bill, and in particular this section that clearly calls for the elimination of a referendum and doing away with the right to vote for those new Canadian citizens, for those citizens, our veterans in our province, who have worked so hard and fought so hard for our democratic way of life, and, indeed, for all of those Manitobans as well, and all of us who respect our democratic way of life.

Now, I know members opposite don't like democracy. Each and every day they stand up with—and they go out into our community and they dictate

to Manitobans what they think is right for them, because they—this NDP government believes that they know better what's right for Manitobans than Manitobans know for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

And so I think that's the most unfortunate part about all of this, is that Manitobans are, I think, starting to—but I think Manitobans are starting to realize what this NDP government is all about, and it is a dictatorial government that believes they know—government knows best. The NDP party knows best how to manage people's lives and how to dictate those—those very important things like a PST increase. They believe they know what's best for Manitobans that Manitobans don't know for themselves.

* (16:00)

And I suspect that members opposite, the reason that they're taking away the democratic right for Manitobans to vote on this very important legislation, the very important PST increase, I suspect they're taking that away, Mr. Speaker, because they know exactly how Manitobans would vote on that. And I believe that even they would understand that Manitobans are not in favour of an NDP party taking away their democratic right to vote.

I can recall countless numbers of presenters at committee coming forward with their unbelievable stories about fighting in wars, about moving to this country and the reason why they and their families, whether it's their ancestors or themselves or their parents or aunts and uncles, moved from other countries to this great province of ours, this great country of ours, and the reasons behind that because they moved from countries where they didn't have this right, Mr. Speaker. They didn't have the right to vote, and this is a very important aspect of what—of why they moved here. And so to now take away that right, which this NDP government is doing, is just so unfathomable to them. They don't understand why the NDP government would do that.

They could understand some of the countries that they came from, why they took—why they don't have a right to vote in some of those countries, but they made a choice. They made a choice to move to a country where it's supposed to be democratic, where, when the laws that are written today are written in such a way that gives them a right to vote by way of a referendum, that they believe that the government should live up to the laws of that province. But, unfortunately, this government doesn't

want to live up to their own laws, and when they don't want to live up to their own laws, when they believe that they can't because they believe that they know what's best for Manitobans, what they do is that they change the law.

And we know that members opposite have brought forward many changes to the balanced budget legislation over the years, Mr. Speaker. As a matter of fact, it's been five or six times that they've opened at least, since they opened the balanced budget legislation, since they came to power in 1999, and each time, they did so with not what's in the best interest of Manitobans, but they did so with what's in the best interest of the NDP political party of this province. And I think that is what Manitobans have a serious problem with.

And the trust factor is starting to diminish with this NDP government because Manitobans are starting to realize that this NDP government is not looking out for what's in the best interest of all Manitobans. They are more concerned about what is in the best interest of their own political party, and we'd even argue, what is in the best interest of Cabinet ministers opposite.

And so, we on this side of the House are very concerned about some of the changes that this government is making, that the government is, in effect, breaking the law, breaking the existing laws of this province which call for a referendum when it comes to provincial sales tax, retail sales tax increase in this province. But members opposite, because they believe and they know that if it did go to a referendum, that they would probably lose that referendum. Manitobans would not vote in favour of a PST increase. We know from people that came out to committee, many people who came out to committee, why they are opposed to a PST increase.

Set aside just the referendum side of it, and let's talk about the PST increase itself and the kinds of negative effects it has on Manitobans. We heard from many families that came forward. We've received emails from families and people, individuals in our province who have indicated the kind of hardship this places on families in Manitoba, that parents will have to make a decision along with their children whether or not one child is able to play soccer or another child is able to play hockey. And these are the kinds of decisions that families in Manitoba are having to sit down at the kitchen table and have discussions with their children about. They have to sit down and make the tough decisions

within their own households. And that is being forced upon these families by this NDP government.

Rather than this NDP government actually making the tough decisions themselves, sitting around perhaps their own Cabinet table, sitting around their own caucus table and coming up with ways to save money for Manitobans, they are forcing those decisions onto the families in our province, making the families make those choices, whether or not one child is able to play soccer and another one hockey or football. Something has to give in order to balance the books within people's—individuals' households, Mr. Speaker, and we know that families are very responsible in our province.

We know that parents and families will make those decisions, what's in the best interest of their family, and the best interest is not to run deficits in their own household. It's not to rack up the debt in their bank, in their—rack up their own debts in their households, Mr. Speaker. They know that they have to make the tough decisions, and those tough decisions, unfortunately, are being forced upon them by this NDP government. It's also affected and had a negative impact on seniors, on low-income Manitobans. It's driving business out of this province. We see the kinds of negative impacts that have already taken place as a result of this bill coming forward and this PST increase.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage members opposite to support this amendment, and if they're not going to support it, please get up today and let's have a debate about this. Please tell me why you're not going to support this.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm certainly disappointed that no one on that side of the House seems to be the least bit interested in speaking to these amendments. This amendment put forward by the member from Tuxedo is certainly a good amendment. It actually goes out and titles the bill what it really is, referendum elimination.

They—you know, I was raised to have some respect for the law. I was raised to believe in a democratic society.

An Honourable Member: There's a story behind that.

Mr. Briese: There's quite a few stories behind that, but I don't think we'll tell them all here today. But, you know, the law of the day, the law that's in place

here right now, says that there will be a referendum if there—required to raise the provincial sales tax. This government has saw fit to ignore that law, to say, there's one law for the people, there's another law for us, and to go ahead and raise the PST by 1 per cent on July 1st and have been collecting it ever since.

I stopped at a restaurant just on the outskirts of the city the other day for breakfast, and, as I was walking up to the till to pay my bill, I took a look at my bill. And I said to the lady that was looking after the till, I said, you know, the PST is almost double the GST on this bill. And she said, well, you can thank our NDP government for that. She had no idea who I was. She'd never seen me before, but that was her response. You can thank our NDP government for that, and she was not very happy about it. And that's the response I'm seeing over and over again out there from people in all walks of life.

They're disgusted. They feel that this increase in PST has made the province uncompetitive, but more so, they're very upset at the fact that the NDP is actually breaking the law by putting this in place. The law clearly calls for a referendum, so why not call the bill the referendum elimination? That's precisely what it is. Don't dress it up. Don't make it look prettier than it is. Call it what it really is.

The impacts of this PST—and I listened to—I listen fairly closely to some of the things that are said in this House, and sometimes I don't listen to it all but I listen to quite a bit of it pretty well. And I hear the Minister for Local Government, for instance, get up and talk about, oh, we've raised the amount of money going to municipal government by whatever his number is, 8 per cent or something. It's totally erroneous. They may have raised it, but they clawed it all back. They started clawing it back in 2002 by raising—putting—placing PST on some municipal services, such as engineering and other services, and took—clawed money back from the municipalities that way. In '04, they expanded it to legal, accounting and a number of other—many other services to municipalities.

And then in 2012, they went out and put it on things like insurance and a number of other services that municipalities use. And then in 2013, as of now, they've raised all those former raises—they've added another 14 per cent on top—1 per cent increase in the PST. And when you do the math on that, start thinking about what really happened here, it doesn't

matter what the increase is to the municipalities; it's all being clawed back.

In addition to that, they've clawed back on vehicle registrations. Municipalities have vehicles; some of them have a lot of vehicles, and their vehicle registration fees went up. Their licences on waterworks and lagoons and waste disposals all went up. In—when the bottom line is looked at here, I expect the provincial government has a—the NDP government has a net gain out of the municipalities, even though they claim they've raised the money that is actually going to the municipality grants.

Another segment of the population that is near and dear to my heart is the agricultural community, and the hits of the increased PST and now the overall increase by another 1 per cent that agricultural—the farmers, the ranchers—have taken is far greater than any other individuals in this province. I had one farmer tell me last year—and he's not a huge farmer—he said last year's increases cost him \$3,000, and he said this year was far better. He felt a lot better about this year because it was only costing him about another \$1,200 extra.

But there he is with \$4,000 extra costs per year because of the tax increases this Province has placed on him. And, really, he doesn't dictate the—dictate his markets. He's stuck with that. That's \$4,000 that went out of his pocket to a greedy government that has no idea how to control their spending, but that farmer has to control his spending because of what this government's taking—what it's doing.

They've used all sorts of interesting things on this PST increase to try to justify it. They want to talk about it being for infrastructure, and then they say hospitals, schools and personal-care homes are now infrastructure. They used to be in capital budgets in the Health Department and the Education Department, but now they're in the capital—or in the infrastructure column. And the minister says he'll be accountable at the end of the year. He'll give you his list of hospitals and schools and PCHs, and he'll be accountable for the extra PST. He'll tell you exactly where every cent of it went.

But what he really did was free up that \$275 million back in the capital projects in those other two departments. You're looking for a slush fund; there it is. It's in Health and Education now because they moved the capital projects out of those departments into infrastructure and claimed that they're going to spend the PST on it. So that may well be true. They're going to spend the PST on it.

That's fine, but account for the \$275 million you freed up back in those other two departments. And they're not doing that, and that is the slush fund that they have developed.

They also talk a great deal about flood compensation and the costs of flood compensation and, once again, it's a myth. They have no projects ready to go this year, none in this year, none ready to go. They're collecting the money anyhow. It just—it's just a total untruth, when they talk about they're going to use this for flood mitigation. They're not. It's not being used. It's just money being taken in to feed a spending habit.

So I'll go back to the original amendment here: referendum elimination. Name the bill referendum elimination. Call the bill what it actually is, because this is a bill that takes away the democratic right of the citizens of Manitoba to vote on an increase in a tax, to follow the legislation in the province that says there must be a vote on that increase of tax and ride roughshod over it, start collecting it on the 1st of July of this year—start collecting it, contrary to the law of the province. That's just unacceptable, and I support this amendment totally.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on the amendment?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed with the next amendment in report stage of Bill 20.

Mrs. Stefanson: I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler),

*THAT Bill 20 be amended in Clause 4(3), by striking out everything that follows clause (a) in the proposed subsection 3(2.1) of **The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act.***

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo, seconded by the honourable member for Lakeside,

*THAT Bill 20 be amended in clause 4(3) by striking out everything that follows clause (a) in the proposed subsection 3(2.1) of **The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act.***

The amendment is in order.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I do—I am disappointed that members opposite are not supporting these amendments because we do believe that this, in fact, makes these—this piece of legislation stronger.

And, at least, Mr. Speaker, what they could do—and I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) has been up the odd time to speak to these bills—but I would—or to these amendments—and I would just hope that we could have some debate here in the Legislature. I think Manitobans want to know if members opposite, members of the government, do not support these amendments—I think they deserve to know why. And so I encourage members opposite to get up and speak to these amendments.

This amendment, Mr. Speaker, of course, we know that the NDP government has already voted against our amendment to eliminate the use of Crown corporations to balance their books. And I believe that amendment was brought forward by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), and I want to thank him for that.

Unfortunately, members opposite voted against that because they need to—they'll leave no stone left unturned in this province—any place that they can possibly find money to make themselves look better by trying to balance the books they will do that. And

that is, of course, what they're trying to do with the even further changes that they're making to the balanced budget act. And so I think it's unfortunate.

But I know they voted against that; that's in the past. We won't go back on that, Mr. Speaker, but they do have an opportunity to vote in favour of this amendment. And I hope they will consider supporting this amendment because it essentially calls on the NDP to balance their books without relying on the record increases in transfer payments from the federal government. It requires them to take responsibility for their own actions and expenditures in this province and not blame the federal government.

And so I think—I would encourage members opposite that if they are—if they want to be responsible for their own actions—and I believe that they do, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that they—there is a willingness to take responsibility for their own actions—well now is the chance for them to stand in their place and to vote for this amendment. So I encourage members opposite to support this.

While in government, Mr. Speaker, transfer payments have doubled from what they were in 2000 and when this government was first elected in 1999. The NDP now receive \$1.6 billion per year more than when they formed government.

* (16:20)

And, you know, if that's not enough, Mr. Speaker, I'd—apparently they need more, they again will leave no stone left unturned in this province before they—until they find every last penny they can.

The fact is that transfers are \$550 million larger than they were in 2000 when adjusted for population growth and inflation, which is what their clause is talking about in this bill. So half a billion dollars annually more from this—from—solely from the federal government, when you take into consideration the population growth and inflation in new funding, and they still can't balance their books or provide services in a timely manner. And so, of course, trying to blame the federal government for their own mismanagement is cowardly. We know it's not right, and it's time that the NDP accept responsibility for their mistakes and move on. And we encourage members opposite to, of course, support this, and—so we can move on.

Mr. Speaker, again, we heard from countless numbers of people that came forward at committee. We've heard from hundreds and thousands of

Manitobans who have come forward by way of email or letters to us, and they've talked to us about their concern about this PST increase and about their concern and the way that this government has gone about this PST increase by stripping Manitobans of their democratic right to vote on this PST increase.

We know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) went around the province with his so-called—quote, unquote—consultation process that took place. We also know that the presentation that he made at those consultation meetings, nowhere in those—in that presentation did it mention anything about a PST increase. And we know that if he did, 'mani'—if he did, Mr. Speaker, that Manitobans would have spoken out at those meetings. They would have asked questions about that. They would have expressed their concern at those consultation meetings. The Minister of Finance had an opportunity at that time to bring forward this for real discussion and for real consultation, but he chose not to. And I believe he chose not to because the decision was already made before he went out and did these so-called—quote, unquote—consultation meetings.

I also think that the Minister of Finance was very afraid, Mr. Speaker, of what he might hear from Manitobans with respect to a PST increase. Well, now, having stripped Manitobans of their right in the consultation process, they've now brought this bill forward and they've stripped their rights by taking away their right to vote in a referendum. So we know the members opposite are good at stripping rights away from Manitobans, but we suggest that it's still not too late for members opposite to listen to Manitobans.

We know, again, that Manitobans came forward at committee. We heard from families, from individuals, from seniors, from low-income Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. We heard from business owners. We heard from people from all walks of life in our province. And we heard the reasons why each, with their own individual reason why, they are opposed to this PST increase, and many of those people because they simply can't afford it. And I've already spoken in my last amendment about families having to make—sit down and make a tough decision at the dining-room table, at the kitchen table, trying to decide what they are going to eliminate in the way of sports activities, or perhaps it's music lessons. But Manitoban families are having to make the tough decisions at their kitchen tables while this government is not making the tough decisions

around the Cabinet table, around their caucus table, where those decisions should be made and not be forced on the backs of hard-working Manitobans.

So I think it's—again, Mr. Speaker, I think if the Minister of Finance had not been so determined to eliminate the consultation process that took place with respect to a PST increase prior to bringing this legislation forward, prior to bringing his budget forward, had those consultations taken place in a real way on this PST increase prior to the NDP bringing forward this budget and this bill, I believe, and if 'mani'—if the NDP had actually listened during those consultation meetings, I think they would have heard from Manitobans loud and clear why they are opposed to a PST increase.

And—but of course, they took away their right to be consulted at those meetings because, of course, it was never part of the presentation that the Minister of Finance brought forward in those consultation meetings. They also stripped Manitobans of their right to vote on this by way of a referendum, which, of course, we all know is the existing legislation in our province, Mr. Speaker.

So it's unfortunate because I know the members opposite, many of them sat on the committee and they heard from those Manitobans and they heard the heart-wrenching stories about how this is going to have a negative impact on their families and on their businesses in this province. And I know they were there and listening to these heart-wrenching stories, and they had an opportunity after that, Mr. Speaker, to reverse their decision.

Well, it's still not too late. We're still in this Manitoba Legislature, and we are still here debating this because this is where Manitobans want us to be because this is—we on this side of the House are acting in the best interest of Manitobans while members opposite are simply acting in their own political best interest. And Manitobans, I believe, are starting to see through that. They're starting to see that we are prepared to do what it takes to be here to fight this PST increase, to fight this NDP government's wont to strip Manitobans of their democratic rights in this province to have a vote on this PST increase, which is their democratic right. It is the existing law in this province.

But we're prepared to do what it takes, and I think Manitobans are seeing that, Mr. Speaker, and I think what they're also seeing is a government here that seems to be more concerned about their own

political interest, the interest of their own caucus members, the interest of their own Cabinet ministers rather than doing what's in the interests of their constituents and, indeed, of all Manitobans.

So I am hoping, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite will take the time to debate this legislation, that they will take the time—or this amendment, and I hope that they will see that this is a very good amendment and that they have an opportunity to do the right thing today and to support us on this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Struthers: You know, I do appreciate the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) bringing forward this amendment today. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to say very clearly, it's quite disappointing to see the member for Tuxedo make certain assumptions about the motivations of us or anybody else in this House. The assumption I always make is that, whether you're on this side of the House or that side of the House, your motivations are for the best for Manitobans, whether you're the member for Tuxedo or the member for Dauphin.

I want to assure my friend from Tuxedo that people on this side of the House are in this political arena for all the right reasons, just as I believe she is. And I also think it was quite unfortunate that she would use the word coward to describe anything that has to do with decision makings in this House. *[interjection]* Maybe the member for Steinbach's (Mr. Goertzen) right; maybe they can think of stronger words than that, but I'll leave that up to the member for Steinbach and to others on the other side of the House, and, certainly, every member of this House, to choose their words very carefully when they talk about members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, maybe I can be helpful for the member for Tuxedo, the honourable member for Tuxedo. It seems to me that we've had a couple of amendments that are quite alike in terms of the balanced budget legislation and some of the very common-sense changes that we're making to the balanced budget act, this one, particularly, in terms of the federal cuts and federal transfers. This isn't the first time this afternoon that we've dealt with this issue. We dealt with it last time in co-ordination with Crown corporations. But this specifically talks about changes to the balanced budget legislation given the federal cuts that we've seen in the last little while.

I think some progress for members opposite have been made because they did not get up this time

and try to argue that the federal government hasn't made cuts. I think that's progress for members opposite. They've actually, I think, recognized that the federal government has offloaded onto, not just the province of Manitoba, but other provinces, most recently changes to the Canada Food Inspection Agency, a whole host of other cuts. I'm glad that they did not try to, this time, to get up and defend those cuts, which they usually do.

* (16:30)

Also, Mr. Speaker, I think there's an understanding seeping in across the way in terms of what actually does happen with federal transfers from the federal government to the provincial level of government, including Manitoba. Manitobans, the Manitoba taxpayer that we represent in this House, every Manitoban in every region of our province, contributes to the pot of money that the federal government then transfers to the other level of government. And every province receives from that pot of money.

Alberta receives—and, you know, their—14 per cent of their budget is reliant on the revenues through transfers. Manitoba is in the middle of that pack, at 31 per cent reliance on the amount of money we get through the transfers. And I want to repeat, Manitobans contribute to that pot of money which is then redistributed to other provinces, including Alberta. The province at the other extreme of that, to the tune of 43 per cent, I believe, in reliance, is Prince Edward Island. And they receive, just like Manitoba, just like Alberta, Prince Edward Island contributes to the pot of money that is redistributed through transfers from Ottawa. Every province contributes; every province receives.

Knowing that fact, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand why members opposite seem to think that we shouldn't collect that money. It seems to me that, in the next election, maybe members opposite will have a platform that says, we're going to give back the money that Manitoba receives through the health transfer act, through the social transfer, and through equalization. We're just going to give that money back to Ottawa, that 31 per cent, that they seem to think we're too reliant on, and that's fair comment.

The reliance of Manitoba has decreased over the time that we've been in government, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. If we can, we are more than willing to do our share to make sure that we make decisions that does reduce that reliance.

But members opposite need to understand, that the positions that they take, and that the positions that they have taken, in terms of transfers, runs counter to what has been set up for generations in Canada, which is enshrined in our Constitution, Mr. Speaker.

Our Constitution says very clearly, that no matter where you live in this country, no matter what region it is, no matter what your economic circumstance, you are entitled, as a Canadian citizen, to reasonable services, comparable services, for comparable levels of taxation, than any—every other region in Canada. Comparable levels of services for comparable levels of taxation—it's a tenet of our country. It's what we used to build our nation, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite speak against that.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we have seen, over the last number of years with this current government in Ottawa, a stepping back of their responsibilities when it comes to transfers. At one time, about 50 per cent of health-care funding in our country was funded by the federal government—Liberals, Conservatives. This government has come along and has begun stepping back from that commitment—from that responsibility. They've reduced that from 50 per cent down to 20 per cent. Given the—given what they've announced in terms of the Canada Health Transfer, that that erosion will continue into the future 'til we're at about a 10 or 11 per cent rate, which is a lot less than what historically the federal governments have contributed.

Now my thinking is that we need to stand up for Manitoba on that. We need to forget that it's the Conservatives or the Liberals or the NDP. We need to remember what the Constitution says. We need to remember that our job here is not to protect our political friends in Ottawa. Our job here is make sure that Manitoba citizens who rely on health care, who rely—whose families rely on health care, receive comparable levels of service for comparable levels of taxation, just as the Constitution says we can rely on. That is at risk with members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we think we put some very common sense rules in place, common sense changes to the balanced budget act. I—as I said earlier, on that—on the other amendment, we are not going to allow an amendment from the Conservative opposition to straitjacket any government into only looking at cuts to services rather than looking at revenue, rather than looking at transfers from

Ottawa. We've got to make sure those transfers from Ottawa are fair. We can't allow ourselves to simply straitjacket our budgetary process so that all the government can do is turn and cut health care and cut education. That's quite coincidental because that's exactly what the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Pallister) has said he would do, \$550 million, over a half a billion dollars indiscriminate cuts right across the board, including health care and including education, some of the very sectors that transfers are—have historically been in place to address in this province and in every other province in the country.

So we're not going to support an amendment that straitjackets the government into this. We're going to continue to invest in Manitoba families. We're going to continue invest in the schools and hospitals and roads and bridges that we said we would. Bill 20 ensures in law that it does; the Auditor General will make sure through public accounts that that level of accountability is there.

And so, Mr. Speaker, our one-cent-on-the-dollar increase is reasonable and gets the revenue necessary in order to make sure that we can meet those infrastructure needs, so we will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment will please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Could you summon the members for a recorded vote?

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

* (17:00)

Order, please. The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 18, Nays 29.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

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

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<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>