

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, August 26, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills. Seeing none, we'll move on to—

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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 and Gretna, Emerson, Morris, Killarney, Sprague, Vita, Reston, Pierson, Miniota, McAuley and St. Malo, Tilston, Foxwarren and many others.

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

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.

The differential in tax rates causes 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 for those businesses located close to Manitoba's provincial borders.

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

This petition is signed by C. Doehl, M. Giesbrecht, D. Klassen and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Further petitions? Seeing none, we'll move on with the next order of business, which is—

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to table the Annual Basic Utility Bundle Cost Comparison for the year ended March 31st, 2013.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, we'll move on to—

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery. I'm assuming they'll be with us today, members of the North Winnipeg Nomads Football Club, and also in the public gallery we have with us Jeffrey Bannon, director of marketing for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers, all of whom are the guests of the honourable member for Burrows (Ms. Wight). On behalf of all honourable members, we welcome you here when you arrive.

Now, that concludes the introduction of guests, now move on to—

ORAL QUESTIONS

Deputy Premier Cabinet Responsibilities

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): We've learned the Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson) has described the work being done at the women's shelter, named Osborne House, as being caused by, quote, the ignorance of do-good white people. These comments are unacceptable and they are racial in nature.

Will the Premier show leadership on this important issue, do the right thing and remove the Deputy Premier from Cabinet today?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier has acknowledged the ill-chosen words that he has used. He has expressed his regret for that and apologized.

And this is an individual who all of us in the Chamber know has been a champion for issues of violence against Aboriginal women, starting with the Helen 'botty'—Helen Betty Osborne situation many years ago through the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, and, recently, the tremendous work he's done on missing and murdered Aboriginals across the country to push for a national inquiry on that very set of tragic circumstances for Aboriginal women across the country.

He's expressed his regret at those words. He continues to champion the cause of Aboriginal women that have been the victims of violence.

Mr. Pallister: This Premier's response, or lack of response, to describe it better, is unacceptable. The many people affected directly by these comments have made the comment that they feel that the member's apology is somewhat insincere, have described it as political posturing, and, unfortunately, the actions of the Deputy Premier support that thesis. As late as last Thursday, he defiantly defended his comments concerning the ignorance of do-good white people in an interview on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, and said, quote, ". . . because you and I know there are a lot of those types around." That is damaging damage control, and that is totally unacceptable as well.

Will the Premier do the right thing today and remove the Deputy Premier from his Cabinet duties?

Mr. Selinger: I answered the Leader of the Opposition's question and his first question; it's a repeat question.

The member has regretted the use of those words. He has apologized for putting those words out there, and he has acknowledged that. He, nonetheless, remains a champion for issues related to crimes and violence against the missing and murdered Aboriginal women. He has a long track record of serving this cause very nobly, not only in Manitoba but across the country, and he's providing national leadership on this issue, leadership that we all benefit from, not only in Manitoba but across the country.

Mr. Pallister: It's the leadership of the Premier that concerns me here, the lack thereof, the absence of leadership. These comments are disrespectful. They're beneath contempt. And the Premier has known of these comments for some time and he has taken no action, and then when they come to light he dodges the media; he's unavailable for comment, he runs, he hides, and now he has the opportunity to do something, to take some action, and he chooses to do nothing. It's deflection. That's not accountability. That smacks of cover-up.

Manitoba's a beautiful province. We have tremendous values here, and one of the things we do not accept is racism. We oppose it in all its forms—the Deputy Premier—in all its forms—in all its forms. And the Deputy Premier has made a racist comment and then he has defiantly defended that comment, and that is not Manitoba's values.

*(13:40)

And I ask the Premier again to do the right thing and reflect the values of the people of this province by removing the Deputy Premier from his responsibilities today.

Mr. Selinger: And, again, the Leader of the Opposition has asked a question. The member in question has regretted those comments. He has apologized for them. He continues to play a national leadership role on the question of missing and murdered Aboriginal women for which we all should be very grateful for the contribution he's made in that regard. He has a long history of advocating for people that have been the victims of violence, women in particular, inside of Manitoba and particularly Aboriginal women, starting with Helen Betty Osborne. So he has a lifetime of experience of responding to these issues in a very constructive way and he will continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, and unlike members opposite, when he finds that he has chosen some words

inappropriately he's willing to take the responsible action and apologize for them. We only wish we could see that kind of example on the other side of the House where it's constantly examples of denial and the use—the creative use of Beauchesne.

Deputy Premier Cabinet Responsibilities

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I have to say I'm so disappointed in what I'm hearing from this Premier today and, Mr. Speaker, twice this Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson) made racist comments, once in an email and, again, the other one in an interview with APTN. And—now we know that when the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) made homophobic comments a couple of weeks ago the Premier acted quickly and relieved him of his caucus responsibilities.

Our question is very simple for the Premier, Mr. Speaker: Will he do the same thing today and remove his Deputy Premier from his Cabinet responsibilities?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as we move into this era of dealing and upping the bar on our own behaviour, we all, first of all, have to acknowledge and take responsibility if we've made an error, and in all cases, on this side of the House, we have done that. We have not seen that on the other side of the House, unfortunately, when inappropriate comments have been put on the record. In the case of this particular individual, he was engaging in private communication. He has regretted the use and choice of his words in that private communication, but he continues to be a national leader on questions of missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Just recently at the Council of the Federation, all the premiers of Canada have supported the call for a national inquiry. This is a result of the chairpersonship of our Deputy Premier. With all the ministers, with respect to First Nations issues across the country, when they met they supported that national inquiry. Without that leadership we wouldn't be in the position where we are today where there's recognition that missing and murdered Aboriginal women deserve special attention to get to the root causes of that and require proper supports to avoid those kinds of situations anywhere in the country and this Deputy Premier has done a stellar job in that not only in Manitoba but across the country.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, the Premier acted quickly by removing the member for St. Norbert from his caucus duties as a result of his 'homophobic' comments a couple of weeks ago. We are simply asking if he will do the same thing for his Deputy Premier for making the racist comments that he did.

Will he do so today, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question which was posed in the member's first question. The member in question has regretted his comments and apologized for them. The member in question is a national leader on questions of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. He's provided leadership on that for many years, long before it was actually an issue in the media, long before it be—got the kind of attention it's now receiving across the country. That leadership is important to the people of Manitoba; that leadership is important to the people of Canada.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this is all very disappointing. It is unbecoming of a minister of the Crown or anyone for that matter to iterate such racist comments.

Will the Premier do the right thing today and relieve the Deputy Premier (Mr. Robinson) from his Cabinet responsibilities?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I've answered that question for the member and my answer remains the same, that when you have an individual that provides national leadership on issues of violence against Aboriginal women, in particular missing and murdered Aboriginal women, and a member that takes responsibility for inappropriate choice of words and comments he's made and apologizes for that, I think we have a responsibility to acknowledge the work he's done over the many decades he's served the public and to acknowledge that he's providing national leadership and to support that national leadership. That kind of support from all members of this Legislature would actually make lives safer for Aboriginal women no matter where they live in the country and that's an important issue that we need to continue to give our full attention to as we go forward.

Manitoba Hydro Route Selection Process

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, in the clean environment committee report on Bipole III the commission cited, and I quote: "The site

selection process was flawed by a combination of subjectivity, lack of clarity and false precision." Now the NDP are forcing Manitoba Hydro to repeat this process with two new transmission projects in southern Manitoba, just as they did on Bipole III.

Now, why is the government continuing to refuse to accept their own report to improve the site-selection process for Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I find it quite surprising that not only do members opposite oppose hydro expansion, but they oppose the fact that in southern parts of Manitoba where energy is required, there is a need for 230-kilovolt lines to be built.

And to that end, Hydro's put in notices for public meetings. They sent over 2,200 letters to affected individuals, and they've asked for comments with respect to those two lines that are going to go to communities like Steinbach that are expanding and require additional electricity, Mr. Speaker.

I find it passing strange that members opposite are opposed to dams, they're opposed to Bipole III, now they're opposed to expanding hydro anywhere in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker; that's not looking forward, that's looking backwards.

Mr. Pedersen: It's too bad the minister didn't realize what these projects were—really are. The—Manitoba Hydro tells me this is not to supply Steinbach. Maybe he should check his rural map.

Mr. Steinbach, again I quote—Mr. Speaker, pardon me—I again I quote directly from the clean environment committee report: The route selection—and I quote: "The route-selection process lacked transparency in many ways." End of quote.

Once again, just as in Bipole III, this government is using a process described by the Clean Environment Commission as flawed, lacking transparency and totally disrespectful of private landowners. Repeating failures does not make for success.

Why does this tired minister insist on repeating the same mistakes but expecting a different result?

Mr. Chomiak: No pun intended, Mr. Speaker, but I feel quite energized.

Mr. Speaker, the St. Vital-to-Letellier line in Steinbach-area station is an expansion that is required to meet the growing Manitoba load and as

such, is a regular expansion of the Manitoba Hydro transmission infrastructure.

Project drivers, load growth in the Letellier and outlying areas is a 230-kilovolt transmission line in services planned for 2016. Notification of open houses and a map to be posted in the Manitoba Co-operator. Project descriptions and details for public 'gagements' are on the MH—that's the Manitoba Hydro website. Mr. Speaker, 2,266 letters sent out to rural residents on August 7th and emails sent out to this—out a couple weeks ago regarding invitations to workshops.

And I believe the member opposite and one of his fellow members, who may or may not have land in that area, attended those workshops.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, I thought they were public meetings. I thought we would be able to attend these.

Now, I know the minister has consultation fatigue, and I know this government has—also has consultation fatigue, and this government continues to ignore their own clean environment committee recommendations.

When will the NDP finally be reined in? Why—when will they stop ruling Hydro on what Hydro is supposed to do? Learn from the clean environment report. In—when you engage farmers in the middle of harvest, how much consultation do you expect to get? And—but that's the arrogance of this government.

When will you allow Manitoba Hydro to engage in a true planning and consultation program process that earns the respect of landowners? Why won't they do—

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

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, this only shows the complete lack of consistency and viability on the part of members opposite. He attended an open house on hydro expansion and the alliance. And then he wants more information on it. And then he says, well, farmers were out on the field.

That's why it's on the website. That's why 2,200 letters were out. That's why there's a period of time before it has to happen.

And, you know what, Mr. Speaker? The only time in Manitoba history when any land was expropriated was when members opposite and the

Leader of the Opposition was sitting in Cabinet in the Filmon government, and they expropriated land for hydro, the only time in history. So members opposite ought to know better.

* (13:50)

Manitoba Hydro–Bipole III NFAT Review Request

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, what Manitobans find is they have a disrespectful NDP government that just won't listen. In fact, if they don't listen to this Legislature, why don't they listen to former NDP Premier Ed Schreyer, former NDP Cabinet minister Tim Sale and long-time NDP MLA Len Evans? All of them—all of them—have a concern where this minister and this government are going with Manitoba Hydro.

The question is: Why not put Bipole III to the NFAT where it can be properly discussed—both routes?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with the Honourable Ed Schreyer this weekend, and we're going out for supper pretty soon, so maybe I'll ask him at that time.

With respect to the Bipole III, as the member may be not aware, in 1997, there were 17 poles that were knocked down as a result of adverse weather. At the time, the government, of which the Leader of the Opposition was sitting around the Cabinet table before he quit to go to Ottawa, they had that option to build that line for security. That line is required for security. The members didn't do it. We're building it. It's for security reliability.

One of the best things we have in Manitoba is a hydro system that's reliable and is secure. And we have to ensure that security. That's why we're building that line. That's why it was before the electorate for two elections, and the electorate spoke very resoundingly on that issue.

Mr. Schuler: But the problem is the NDP are going on the west side, which is directly down tornado alley, which could then, once again, have the repeat of 1997. Mr. Speaker, Will Tishinski, former Hydro vice-president, a respected Hydro engineer here in Manitoba, he amongst others—Jim Collinson, Byron Williams and others—are concerned about where Manitoba's going with their hydro development and this NDP government.

The NFAT should be looking at the Bipole III line and looking at both routes. Why doesn't the minister do the right thing and put the Bipole III to the NFAT?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear from this line of questioning, and previous lines of questioning, that the members do not want to build hydro. The member did not want a hydro line through his own constituency. He complained about a line through his own constituency. The member from Carman got up and said, don't build a line in southern Manitoba to provide power to Steinbach because they need electricity. This isn't about Bipole III. This is about the Tories wanting to stop Hydro and privatize it, just like they did with MTS.

Mr. Schuler: Well, Mr. Speaker, if we were to listen to high-ranking officials of the NDP party who've been running ads saying it's actually the NDP that want to privatize Manitoba Hydro—and I'd also like to put on the record, it is the Progressive Conservative Party that founded Manitoba Hydro and has continued to build it.

In fact, former chair of the PUB Graham Lane, U of M engineer Garland Laliberte and even the Consumers Association of Manitoba are all concerned where this NDP government and this minister are taking Manitoba Hydro, and one of those big concerns has to do with Bipole III and the fact that it's going the wrong way. It is going down tornado alley.

Why doesn't the minister listen to Manitobans from one end of this province to another and put Bipole III to the NFAT where it can be properly looked at?

Mr. Chomiak: One of the very important things that we've done as a government, Mr. Speaker, is put the question of Keeyask and Conawapa and the related transmission to the NFAT, which is a need for alternatives, and we put that before an independent body to make a decision.

The members opposite have been consistent. They said, don't build Limestone. They called it lemonstone. We built it on time, below budget, and it's made \$7 billion for this province, and they were against it. And they turned down Conawapa when it was previously being built. Now, when we're trying to build hydro again for Manitobans, for western Canada, even Steven Fletcher says it's the best things to do. Brad Wall says it's the best thing to do. The

only people that are against building hydro are the diminishing members across the way.

**ER Services (Minnedosa)
Locum Services**

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Well, Mr. Speaker, an article in the August 16th edition of the Minnedosa Tribune indicates that at the end of August, the Minnedosa hospital will lose another doctor, leaving that community short on doctors once again. Now, all across Manitoba, communities are suffering with doctor shortages and ER closures, and now, Minnedosa joins that long list again.

As the end of August looms, can the minister indicate what her plan is to avoid a situation where residents are unable to get the health care that they need where they live? Is she making effective use of locums, for instance?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): I thank the honourable member for the question. As I've said on a number of occasions in past, we do certainly task our regional health authorities with very aggressive recruitment and retention of physicians. Certainly, we try to do everything that we can to provide our regional health authorities with the tools that they need in order to secure additional physician services. We, of course, have offered recruitment and retention grants. We've offered free tuition for those individuals that complete medical school and will go to underserved areas. We also want to work with them in ensuring that even more rural students make entry into medical school.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing our part. We're seeing net increases of doctors to rural Manitoba, but we acknowledge there's more to do.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, absent from the minister's comments was an actual commitment that they had recruited a doctor for the community of Minnedosa. This article—the article goes on to state that as the end of August looms, Prairie Mountain is trying to secure locum coverage for the community, however, they say there is not significant locum services available. Another doctor is leaving this community. The minister has no assurances that another doctor's on the way and there are no locums available.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba has seven doctors registered as locums and Saskatchewan has 82. Is that part of the problem?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, once again, I will say to members opposite that the regional health authority is working very hard not only on the prospect for locum services, but, indeed, for securing a doctor to make the region—that area of the region their permanent home.

I can say to members opposite, most definitely, that in every jurisdiction in Canada we know that recruitment to rural and remote areas is very challenging. We know that to be true. We also know, Mr. Speaker, from CIHI and certainly from our own College of Physicians and Surgeons, we can see that we have had a net increase of doctors every single year since taking office. That would be in stark contrast to a net decrease in virtually every year in the 1990s when members opposite had their hands on the wheel and cut spaces in medical school.

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

Mr. Friesen: Again, Mr. Speaker, the minister has no response to the fact that we have seven locums registered in our province and 82 in the province of Saskatchewan. She's silent on that.

The CEO for the prairie region is quoted in this article as saying discussions will take place over the next weeks to determine what services can actually be maintained given the resources available and communication will happen after the fact.

Can the minister indicate today what cuts is she planning for Minnedosa as a result of these reduced resources and what's the communication that's taking place, or will that be communication like in the city of Altona where the only notification to the community was a sign on the door of the locked ER that said go somewhere else?

Ms. Oswald: Once again, I will say to the member that the regional health authority is working very aggressively in partnership with the faculty of medicine, in partnership with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, in partnership with Doctors Manitoba to endeavour to bring services to the community.

Once again I'll reiterate for the member, who doesn't seem to acknowledge that we are seeing a net increase every single year, this includes 562 net new doctors to Manitoba, 122 of whom are practising in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, again, I say to the member opposite, it seems curious to me that during an economic downturn under their watch, they chose to cut the spaces in medical school, smashing the window and now—

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

Applied Behaviour Analysis Treatment Government Priority

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): This government continues to fail Manitobans, especially those families of autistic children, many of whom are not eligible to receive the care and services they need. With the largest tax increase in a quarter of a century and a broken election promise to eliminate the wait-list for ABA therapy this government is failing Manitoba children.

Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Child and Family Services do the right thing and urge her colleagues to reject a vote tax and devote these dollars to treating children with autism?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Of course, any of us who are parents or grandparents in this Chamber know that we want our kids to have the best possible education, the best possible services that when they struggle we want to make sure that they—when they struggle we want to make sure that they're getting the help they need so that they can be successful, and that's why we have invested over \$30 million in services for families who are struggling with a diagnosis for autistic children and that those services are in the health-care system. They're in the school system and they're in our community partners and organizations, and we'll continue to invest that money because we think it's important to do so.

* (14:00)

Mr. Smook: Mr. Speaker, \$800,000 would provide ABA therapy for more than 12 children. This government's priorities are misplaced. Instead of treating kids with autism, the member from St. Norbert simply refers to us as using the autism community. The member from Interlake considers our petition to the government a waste of time.

Mr. Speaker, we are standing up for families of children with autism. Will the minister do the same and divert the vote tax to treat children with autism?

Ms. Howard: I would just remind the member opposite that earlier in this session he's been critical

of other people providing autism services in the province. He's been critical of people providing the autism outreach service, which happens also outside the city, which we have expanded on in budgets that they voted against.

He's been critical—many families rely on those services as well, Mr. Speaker. So our role as government is to put in place services to work with families, but also allow families to make the choice of the kind of services that they want their children to receive, and that means we're not focused on one kind of service over another. We do our best to fund services. We do our best to work with clinicians and families to provide them the kind of information so that they can make choices for their kids so their kids can have a bright future.

That's what we're invested in; that's what—

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

Mr. Smook: I am not the one who made the promise to families of children with autism to end the lines.

Mr. Speaker, experts note the importance of early intervention for children with autism. Many children are about to age out of this eligibility for the treatment, and this minister is sitting idly by. It's time to stand up for Manitoba families. Stop deflecting our questions and commit the vote tax to reducing the waiting lists for ABA services.

Will the minister make that commitment today?

Ms. Howard: But the member is the one who has stood up and backed his leader's call for deep cuts across the board in every department. Those kinds of cuts would actually reduce the funding available to families who are struggling with an autism diagnosis. Those cuts, Mr. Speaker, those would result in fewer services available. Those cuts would mean that this fall we would have to take children who are receiving service and remove them from those services.

What the members opposite have called for would mean that those people who are out in the field delivering autism outreach services, those civil servants, might not have a job this fall. The members opposite have a lot to account for.

Lake Winnipeg Phosphorus Reduction Timeline

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, last weekend, there were deserted beaches in areas of

Lake Winnipeg where there were extensive algal blooms or, as people call them, green monsters.

I table photos for the House, Mr. Speaker. After spending a weekend not being able to swim, Manitobans are wondering if this government has actually reduced the input of phosphorus by even 1 per cent of the 50 per cent that they promised.

Can the Premier finally provide us with a date that the 50 per cent reduction in phosphorus going into Lake Winnipeg will be achieved?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Well, I thank the member for the question because the phosphorus reduction strategy for Lake Winnipeg and, indeed, other bodies of water in Manitoba, is a very important part of the plan we put in place for a more sustainable province and a more sustainable agriculture and, of course, keeping our freshwater lakes in good shape.

The measures that have been taken are directed at both specific sources of phosphorus and nonspecific sources of phosphorus which come off the land. We know in the 2011 flood a lot more nutrients, including phosphorus, went into the lakes with the enormous amount of waters that were moving through this province at that time. We know that the phosphorus reduction plan has requirements for septic fields to be changed in Manitoba so they don't leak. We're making very significant infrastructure investments in sewer and water.

And all of these measures together, we believe, will make a difference going forward, Mr. Speaker.

City of Winnipeg Sewer System Phosphorus Reduction Timeline

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in August 2003, the government said it would have Lake Winnipeg well on the way to being cleaned up by 2006. But now, since then, in the 10 years, there have been endless delays in getting progress in terms of cleaning up Lake Winnipeg, including removing phosphorus from the city of Winnipeg sewage. On May the 30th of this year, the Premier had the gall to say that after 10 years he was still once more renegotiating.

Can the Premier tell us by what date the phosphorus will be fully removed from the city of Winnipeg sewage, or is he still renegotiating, renegotiating and renegotiating?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there has been very significant regulatory requirements as

well as investments in infrastructure for the City of Winnipeg. The West End treatment plant is now fully compliant. The South End treatment plant is under way as we speak and we've made contributions to that.

And the remaining challenge is the North End treatment plant for which the City of Winnipeg has to put a plan in front of us to show when they will have a full conversion there of the treatment of waste water in that facility. That plan they are asking for more time on. We obviously want them to get it done as effectively as possible. The Clean Environment Commission has weighed in on this as well and we have made a commitment to funding that.

But this is exactly the kinds of reasons that we need to invest in infrastructure in this province. It allows our lakes to stay clean. It allows our water to be healthy. It allows us to have a growing population without greater environmental risks to our community.

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

Water Management Strategy Sewage Lagoon (East Selkirk)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, but when will it be done—2050? Come on, the Premier's got to do better than this.

Mr. Speaker, there are concerns. We're looking at serious chemical contributions on top of phosphorus leaching into the Red River with the recently licensed sewage lagoon in East Selkirk. We know the Lake Winnipeg Foundation has said that the location and the nature of the lagoon is inappropriate. The mayor of St. Clements himself agrees that he would prefer a method of wetland filtration, but has indicated that it's beyond the municipality's budget.

With announcements left, right and centre about this government's spending, why is the Premier choosing to shortchange safety, health and the environment instead of putting improved water management strategies in place?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, improved water management strategies are being put in place. Improved protection for communities from flooding is being put in place. Improved investments in waste-water treatment is

being put in place with specific requirements to be able to reduce the amount of phosphorus that comes out of those plants and is—goes into our natural water waste, and that's very much a part of what we're doing for the future and very much what we're investing in in terms of our infrastructure program.

I do note that the member—the Leader of the Liberal Party and all the members of the opposition are opposed to resources which invest in those kinds of infrastructure improvements. They're opposed to legislation which reduces phosphorus off the land, and they're opposed to the kinds of things that will move Manitoba forward and have a growing economy, more people living in the province and a more sustainable economy with less pollution and clean waterways. And, you know, we have some of the finest lakes in the world. The Blue Flag award has been low—has been awarded twice in Manitoba for our beaches, and we only hope that we can keep them all clean and will keep them all clean going forward so people can enjoy them.

Eco-Reserves Southeastern Manitoba

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, our province is blessed with incredible natural beauty and ecological diversity. One area of this province that a growing number of Manitobans appreciate, and I myself know very well, is southeastern Manitoba which is home to unique species and natural landscapes.

Could the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship give this House details of our government's initiative that will ensure that these special places are protected from development for years to come and conserve them for future generations?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): Mr. Speaker, our government has very recently taken additional steps to recognize the varied and valued bounty and vast richness that resources in Manitoba have to offer. In southeastern Manitoba, we have just created Manitoba's newest eco-reserve at Holmgren Pines near Moose Lake, and, as well, we have expanded very significantly the Pocock Lake eco-reserves.

This is in addition, of course, to Manitoba now making it absolutely clear that there will be no peat mining in provincial parks by way of ensuring that there is a new classification, a back-country designation, for—in Hecla-Grindstone Provincial

Park, and that designation, by the way, is approximately the size of Birds Hill park. That is all part of our strategies.

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

High-Risk Sex Offender Case Concern

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, while the province tries to protect parks they fail to protect people in Manitoba. Winnipeg Police Service captured another high-risk sex offender last week, but not before he assaulted yet another victim, this time a 13-year-old girl. This individual has had several chances, and yet again his victims have had no chance.

* (14:10)

This Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) has failed to protect these victims, this one as young as 13 years of age. When will he act to ensure Manitobans are protected?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Acting Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I had the opportunity to practise criminal law in the 1980s, and it was quite frustrating in many instances, because a lot of the tools that have now been made available by the previous minister and the current minister are now available, tools like the safer community program that allows us to—that allowed Manitoba Justice to shut down more than 600 drug houses or prostitution centres, or the measures of taking—kicking the Hells Angels out of Manitoba essentially, Mr. Speaker, when they came in during the Tory years, and shutting them down as a result of legislation.

And there's been a number of tools that have been put in and I will continue to outline those tools to the member during the rest of the—my response, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, none of those tools succeeded in protecting these victims. This NDP government has a poor record on crime. We are the violent crime capital of Canada.

How can this minister possibly defend his inaction to the victims of this high-risk sex offender?

Mr. Chomiak: Another thing that occurred when I was practising criminal law, Mr. Speaker, is there was no Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit, but there is now a Criminal Organization and High Risk Offender Unit, because

it was established in October, two thousand and second, by the now-Minister of Conservation, that works with prosecutions, police and victim services, that provides intensive supervision for high-risk sex offenders. It means they have to report to probation officers, and there's intense observation on those people.

That was not in effect during the mean, lean, cutting, getting rid of people involved in corrections services during the '90s, Mr. Speaker, but it's been put in place by this government and is now in place by this government to deal with these issues.

Mr. Helwer: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the minister outlines his failure. That tool failed to protect this 13-year-old.

This high-risk sex offender has had several chances. What risk—what chance do his victims have? What chance do any of his future victims have?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, one of the issues, I suppose, that the probation services that deals with many of these offenders and releases these offenders, which is a federal government appointee, ought to consider is those kinds of issues.

When probation releases these people—they come out from the federal government probation services—that's looked after. But one thing that's looked after very well in this province is our high-risk offender program that was not in place during the mean, lean Tory years of the '90s. And that places—that is in effect, Mr. Speaker, and that's watching those offenders.

And members know, opposite, we put in innovative services that are looked at across the country for innovation and interdiction on gangs and on offences like this.

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

Provincial Economy Inflation Rate

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, for the second straight month, inflation is up in this province. We now have the highest inflation rate in the country, all thanks to this spenDP and the illegal PST hike. This economy is suffering from this spenDP mismanagement, and the government is oblivious to its own faults.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government start to try to grow this economy, or have they simply given up?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the member for Emerson would be interested in some facts. Let's start with the fact that our population has grown 1.2 per cent, year over year. That's the fourth consecutive 12-month period of population growth. You don't get that kind of increase in the population if you give up, Mr. Speaker, and we haven't.

We're more than ever committed to growing our economy. We're more than committed than ever to produce job numbers that are increasing, which we have done. We do that through public sector decision making and we do that in co-operation with the private sector, who, again, year over year, has contributed to a very strong rate of growth in terms of employment. It has produced one of the lowest levels of unemployment in the entire country. Mr. Speaker, 5.5 per cent compares very favourably to all the other provinces—

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

Mr. Graydon: It's clear, Mr. Speaker, that they're not in favour of consultation or they would have called a referendum.

Mr. Speaker, just the other day the Minister of Finance said that inflation wasn't going to grow and yet it is now the highest in Canada. We know he's reliable in one area; that area is being wrong.

This economy is suffering under this spenDP government's—taxes are going up; inflation is skyrocketing, optimism in the economy is dropping by the day.

Mr. Speaker, when will this minister listen to the people of this province, respect their opinions, or is he just afraid of being wrong again?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the member was watching at the beginning of question period when I tabled a report in this House confirming our commitment to have Manitoba—having the lowest bundle—the lowest bundle—which we committed to, of hydro rates, home heating and car insurance. I really hope he was playing—paying attention.

That shows that we are \$593 better than our nearest competitor, Mr. Speaker. That shows that we

are \$677 ahead of Saskatchewan. And that shows that we're \$4,935 ahead of Ontario. We're way ahead of the national average. In terms of affordability, on that bundle, we're No. 1.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

It's time for—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Northern Association of Community Councils

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, earlier this month, the northern association and community councils, NACC, hosted its 43rd Annual General Meeting and Trade Show here in Winnipeg.

I, along with my colleagues, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs (Mr. Rondeau), as well as the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), were pleased to have attended and to have had the opportunity hear the communities present and speak to the association. I wish the opposition would have taken it seriously and attended.

The NACC represents 56 northern and remote community councils and was the first association to incorporate both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in order to work together towards organizing, planning, developing their communities. The theme of this year's conference was Strong Communities, Stronger Future.

Mr. Speaker, we know that a great deal of our future as a prosperous province depends on the well-being and success of our people and our communities in the north. We want to ensure that people who live in northern Manitoba are able to fully benefit from the opportunities already available to them, and we want to encourage the creation of new opportunities.

At the annual general meeting, we discussed the new northern development strategy, Opportunities North, which is helping to plan for Manitoba's future. The principle guides this try—strategy are ensuring that economic development in the north benefits northerners, reflects northern community values, promotes economic diversity and environmental sustainability, reduces economic disparity, respects indigenous rights and helps to further the goal of reconciliation while also providing clarity for all those involved in the development process.

Mr. Speaker, the NACC represents communities throughout the Flin Flon and constituency, including

Herb Lake Landing, Brochet, Sherridon, South Indian Lake, Granville Lake and Nelson House and many more. It was great to have a chance to meet with some of these communities and hear their ideas and perspectives on how we can continue to develop and better our province.

Thank you for everyone who was involved, especially NACC president, Reg Meade; Eastern chairperson, Helgi Einarsson; Northern chairperson, Glen Flett; Western chairperson, Anne Lacquette. And I would also like to congratulate all the recipients of the years of service and service excellence awards.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

FIDWAM

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): This past Saturday was the 25th anniversary dinner celebrating the advocacy and hard work of the Filipino Domestic Workers' Association of Manitoba, also known as FIDWAM. It was a perfect opportunity to expand on the organization's role of support and advocacy, all the while making everyone feel welcome and part of a family.

Founded in 1988 as an affiliate organization of the Filipino Association of Manitoba, the idea of development of FIDWAM was the work of Virginia Guiang. The objective of FIDWAM was to protect, advocate and lobby government to recognize and grant rights to the growing number of Filipino women arriving in Manitoba who provided live-in care and domestic labour for Canadian families.

These women came to Manitoba in the hope of financially supporting their families back home, and it became evident that there was a need for help in addressing issues which these caregivers faced. These issues included working long hours, abusive employers, isolating conditions and the threat of deportation. FIDWAM was there to offer a family for those who had left it all behind and to provide the advocacy and empowerment necessary for those in need of support.

* (14:20)

Virginia originally sought out and invited four Filipino domestic workers to an initial meeting. By word of mouth, the very first meeting ended assembling a total of 13 women. By the next meeting, the number of attendees grew to 33. To this day, FIDWAM is still active within the community and has approximately a hundred active and inactive

members in Manitoba. Many positive changes have happened as a result of FIDWAM's advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, the theme of the evening was all about recognizing and honouring the work of these women and the work these women have done and continued to do. It was also a moment to reflect and appreciate family. The singing and dancing by the members of FIDWAM and their children was excellent and entertaining, and it reminded us all that we should all do what is necessary to provide our families with better futures so our children can reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this House to join me in—and rec—in recognizing and congratulating the hard work of FIDWAM and hope that the next 25 years continue to be a success for the organization.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Doug Mayer

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay respects to a great man in our community. On August 11, Doug Mayer passed away at the age of 62 years.

Doug Mayer dedicated his life to helping others. For 15 years, Doug worked at The Pas Friendship Centre as the soup kitchen co-ordinator. Doug was not only creative in his cuisine, he also wanted to ensure that those who accessed the soup kitchen were treated with respect and dignity.

In addition to his work as the soup kitchen co-ordinator, he would occasionally work as a night attendant at The Pas homeless shelter, Oscar's Place. Doug was also active in many of the friendship centre events including the annual general meeting, the open house, Canada Day float, seniors' merchandise bingo, as well as the annual children's Halloween party, the hamper drive, the Christmas feast and many other activities.

In his younger years, Doug was a competitive athlete. As a teen, he played baseball for The Pas legion, and I had the good fortune to play against his team and I can tell you those were hard-fought wins or losses. When you played against Doug, you knew you were up for a hard game.

Mr. Speaker, Doug was immensely proud of his brothers and sisters. He was the biggest fan of his brothers, Raymond and Kenny, when they were members of the Dauphin Kings Junior A hockey club, but he was proud of all his siblings.

His dedication and pride also shone through his work. Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to work with him on CN auxiliary crews. His enthusiasm and jokes got us through the most difficult days.

Mr. Speaker, Doug's commitment and desire to better the community, along with his great sense of humour, are part of the legacy he left behind. I would like to pay my respects to Doug's friends and especially his family. He was well respected and a well-known member of our community, and he will be missed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dood Cristall Family YMCA

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today in the Manitoba Legislature to congratulate the Dood Cristall Family YMCA on the opening of their new facility. I toured the new Y last Thursday evening and everyone there was very impressed with the new building. As I entered the building this morning, it was alive with activity as people tried out all that the new facility had to offer.

In 1998, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce was looking for a millennium project in Brandon. We thought that the YMCA might be a possible project, and when we spoke to the YMCA board, found that they had already started discussing renovating or rebuilding, so it looked like we were already on the same page.

Shortly after that, a group of eight individuals travelled to Edmonton to visit newly built YMCAs there and to start the planning process. Blair Filyk, Marty Snelling, Craig Senchuk, Lon Cullen, Larry Sloan, Barry Cullen, Guy Hewlko and myself were those eight people. Most of those people remained engaged in the new facility in some way.

We saw children from the daycare facility hanging on to a rope on the way to their daily swimming lessons. We all said, Brandon needs one of these. Today we have one.

I can recall sitting, waiting for a meeting to begin, and I was paging through a book on Brandon's history. It had an article about the Western Manitoba Centennial Auditorium, Brandon's centennial project from 1967. That project took 15 years to complete. I mentioned that to the chamber board, but most people seemed to think five years was a good target. Well, here we are, 15 years later, and the Dood Cristall Family YMCA opened this morning,

Monday, August 25th, at 5:45 a.m., I had my first swim in the pool, along with many others from Brandon and area.

The project had several challenges, but always seemed to find a way around them. We are very thankful for all of the financial support the Y received. The federal government, the provincial government of Manitoba and the City of Brandon all stepped forward with substantial contributions. A sincere thank you on behalf of the Dood Cristall Family YMCA.

The fundraising campaign was very successful in raising over \$5 million in private contributions. Ron and Don Kille put together a campaign cabinet that was able to engage donors and encourage them to donate at levels previously unseen in Brandon. It is significant that every member of the board of directors and every staff member donated to the campaign. There were large and small contributions—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We're already 40 seconds past the member's allowable time.

Is there leave of the House to allow the honourable member to quickly conclude his member statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There were large donations and small donations, but every one was significant and moved us along the road to where we are today. Every dollar that was donated, along with the three levels of government, showed a strong belief in the YMCA and what they do in Brandon. Thank you to all those donors.

Congratulations to Terry Parlow, board chair and the board of directors, Lon Cullen, CEO, and his staff, as well as the campaign cabinet. We are strengthening our core while building for the future in Brandon.

Markus Howell Field and the North Winnipeg Nomads

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, football is one of Canada's fastest growing youth sports. The North Winnipeg Nomads Football Club has been a key part of the lives of many youth since 1969. Young people growing up in our area have spent hours playing on the Nomads' field at Charlie Krupp Stadium, and many adults remember victories won and bumps and bruises earned in days gone by.

Recently, I attended the ceremony to rename the Nomads' main field after Winnipeg Blue Bombers

coach and player Markus Howell. Markus grew up very close to my house on Stella Avenue and could just run over the field that now bears his name.

He also began his career on that very field as a member of the Winnipeg Hawkeyes, where he developed his skills as an athlete before embarking on an 11-year career with the Canadian Football League. Markus has played with Winnipeg, Ottawa and Calgary and started his coaching career with the Bombers after his retirement.

Markus is a wonderful role model to the young people who now play on his namesake field and living proof that hard work really does pay off.

The renaming was a great event. Many Bomber team members came out to support the Nomads, whose program is flourishing under the leadership of the club's dedicated board, managers and coaches. With just under 500 players of all ages currently enrolled, the North Winnipeg Nomads are one of Canada's largest football clubs. Many, many more friends and family are also involved with the Nomads as volunteers.

Participation in sport is a great way for young people to learn teamwork and discipline, to stay fit and to have fun. I invite all members to join me in thanking the volunteers, the leaders, the role models and the players who have put their hearts and souls into the North Winnipeg Nomads for almost 45 years. To the young players who are in the gallery, I look forward to continuing to see you play on the Markus Howell Field.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements. And we'll now move on to grievances.

Seeing no grievances—

* (14:30)

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please call third reading debate of Bill 20.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Mr. Speaker: So now we call 'cur'—for concurrence and third readings, 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. Speaker: The honourable minister—honourable Government House Leader, pardon me.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), that Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur le financement du renouvellement des infrastructures et la gestion financière (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any debate?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the—honourable member for Spruce Woods.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) never fails to catch me by surprise. I was sure the minister would love to get up there and talk about Bill 20 and why he's got us in the situation we're in. I was hoping he would at least entertain some discussion on Bill 20 on third reading, and maybe he'll be waiting to hear what we have to say on third reading on Bill 20 and maybe he'll have some kind of a comeback for us from there.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I—here we are, we're finally getting to third reading on Bill 20. It's one of those bills that we keep hearing time after time from Manitobans that Manitobans just do not like what the NDP are proposing under Bill 20.

I had the opportunity to spend some time in Winnipeg over the course of the weekend. I had a chance to speak to some of my family members and also some other Manitobans that were out and about on the weekend, and, you know, the overall consensus was we sure don't like where the NDP are headed in Bill 20 and the increase in the provincial sales tax, Mr. Speaker.

You know, clearly, people were reading the papers, and that's good they're reading the papers. Here we are at the end of August, even before school

starts next week, people are still engaged in what's happening at the Legislature in Manitoba and, certainly, they probably will over the next day or two. I haven't seen so much media in the hallways here for quite some time, so, hopefully, they'll be picking up on some of our debate on Bill 20 as well, Mr. Speaker.

The—I—one of the big articles in the paper over the weekend was the inflation rate in Manitoba, and clearly that has an impact on all Manitobans. I think Manitobans are sensing that, too, when they're going out and purchasing their goods and services. Mr. Speaker, this week I know a lot of families will be going out and they will be shopping for school supplies, and we know that's certainly an important time of the year to get ready for school and making sure that we're ready, have the clothes in place for the kids and we have their supplies ready to go, as well. But, clearly, when they're going out shopping, they're going to recognize an increased burden on their pockets in terms of what they're going to have to pay for those school supplies this year, and certainly Manitoba families will have to make those tough decisions as they move forward in terms of where they're going to spend their hard-earned money.

So we certainly feel for where Manitobans are and Manitoba families are, and what the inflation rate numbers show us quite clearly that Winnipeg—in fact, Manitoba has the highest inflation rate across the Canada. In fact, the headline in the Winnipeg Sun this weekend was: We're No. 1.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're No. 1 again and not always in the right categories, and that's the unfortunate part of it, and clearly the inflation rate is rising fastest in Manitoba. And, you know, the experts—not just us saying it, but the experts are also saying that a—certainly a large part of the increase in inflation rate can be attributed back to government policies, and those policies have a direct bearing in terms of what the extra surcharges and fees will be in tops of man—in terms of Manitobans' pocketbooks. And clearly the provincial sales tax increase will have a dramatic bearing, as well.

Mr. Speaker, it's something that we have certainly seen increase over the last 14 years the NDP in government. They haven't found a tee—a—pardon me—a fee or a tax that they don't like, and that's the unfortunate part, and Manitobans are paying for that and we're seeing that in terms of the inflation numbers. Now, if you go back just a couple

of years ago where the NDP and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) promised Manitobans there'd be no increase in taxes and they were pretty adamant that there would be no increase in the provincial sales tax—in fact, the Premier said that fact was nonsense that there'd be an increase in provincial sales tax.

Well, just a few months later, the first budget back, the NDP clearly broadened the provincial sales tax on a lot of goods and services that Manitobans use, Mr. Speaker. And, certainly, that was a substantial hit to Manitoba taxpayers to the tune of at least \$180 million. And also at the same time they continued to jack up those little—I call them hidden taxes, all those fees that are attached to everything, you know, everything from birth certificates to death certificates and anything in between. We've seen increased fees attached to those.

And being in the insurance business at one time, the things that I notice are things like vehicle registration fees, Mr. Speaker, that are kind of quietly added in there in terms of the extra fees. I can remember a time when the vehicle registration was in the neighbourhood of, you know, \$35 just to register your vehicle on an annual basis. Well, I think we're \$154 or something, somewhere in that range under the watch of this government. So, certainly, they have been very impressive in coming up with ideas to get more money out of taxpayers' money through the various levies and fees and surcharges and now, of course, taxes.

Now, if we hone in on what's happening this year in terms of the provincial budget, which was brought in in April, clearly they have reneged on their promise, Mr. Speaker. They've completely reneged on their promise to Manitobans and they've increased the provincial sales tax, the 14 per cent or the one point that we've talked about. And Manitobans recognize that, and, certainly, they're upset with the approach the NDP have taken us in that regard. So, clearly, the inflation numbers, and these are July inflation numbers, speak specifically to the increase in the provincial sales tax, and there's no way that the government of the day, the NDP, can avoid the fact that their tax policies and their policies on levies and surcharges have a bearing on the rate of inflation in Manitoba. And this clearly speaks to what Manitobans have in terms of buying power with the money they have left.

Now, if our inflation is at 3 per cent in the July inflation relative to last year, Mr. Speaker, a 3 per cent inflation rate, whereas across Canada the

average was 1.3 per cent, so that is significantly more than double the Canadian average is what we're finding in Manitoba. So, when Manitobans go out this week to purchase their goods for their school, for their children going to school, they will have found that their dollars will—actually don't go as far as they did last year, and that's certainly troubling.

And also they will also find not only that their buying power has been eroded by inflation to the tune of 3 per cent, but they will also find that there will be additional taxes levied on those goods that they're purchasing for school, Mr. Speaker. So, certainly, the NDP have taken a couple of bites out of Manitoba taxpayers in terms of those various taxes and levies.

And the other thing that really—we talk about purchasing power, Mr. Speaker. We have to remember about the income tax side of things as well, because when you go shopping it's about the money you have left in your pocket after you paid your income taxes. And we know that we are one of the highest taxed provinces in—across this country. So we're starting kind of behind the eight ball anyway because the government has already kept the highest—almost the highest percentage of any province in their own coffers. They haven't actually allowed us to keep that much money. And that's the part of the problem that we have. So we've got less take-home pay than most other Canadians have. And then, to be double-whammied with the highest inflation in Canada really erodes what we're—in terms of what we're making as Manitobans. So it's really a double whammy that's coming to roost here. And it will certainly be interesting to see how these statistics move forward as we go into the future in terms of inflation rates here in Manitoba.

But that was an issue, certainly, that Manitobans were certainly cognizant of over the weekend, and I'm sure they will be more cognizant as we go further down the road. And you know what? When you can compare all the provinces, I think the next highest province in terms of inflation rate was Prince Edward Island at 2.3 per cent. Alberta was 2.2. Our neighbours just to the west in Saskatchewan was only at 1.6 per cent.

* (14:40)

Mr. Speaker, maybe we should speak about Saskatchewan and speak about some of our neighbours that we're doing business with and, unfortunately, I think Manitobans are more and more looking to our neighbours, whether they be to the

west or to the south, in terms of buying opportunities. When the NDP have—actually, as of July 1st now they have increased the provincial sales tax to 8 per cent, and we can get into the debate about that being illegal. It's certainly immoral by my perception on it, but I would believe it's probably illegal as well. But, anyway, that's what they've done. They've gone to the 8 per cent provincial sales tax as of July 1st. So what they're doing by increasing the provincial sales tax, they're taking additional \$5 million a week out of the hands and out of the pockets of Manitoba taxpayers. So it is a substantial amount of money and Manitobans are recognizing that, and they're really recognizing the differences in the provincial sales tax between Manitoba and Saskatchewan. There's a substantial difference there, and I would hope that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) when he's having discussions with some of his constituents who live along the Saskatchewan border—I would expect a lot of the constituents and, in particular, the business people, should be raising the concern with the Minister of Finance that there is a—now a fairly substantial difference between the provincial sales tax across those borders.

And I hope the minister will take light of that and understand that there is repercussions to this. You know, we talked about the repercussions of the increase in inflation, but I think the other significant repercussion will be driving Manitoba consumers out of the province to go to other jurisdictions to shop.

Just as an example, I was at an event in Wawanesa on Friday night, and it was a great community fundraising event. They were raising money for a lot of different projects and infrastructure needs within the community, and it was certainly a well-attended event, and the spirit of volunteerism and community pride were certainly evident and it was a very successful fundraising event that night. And I had a chance to talk to a number of people that evening about the topic of the increase in provincial sales tax and it was—and it wasn't me that was bringing it up. It was the public that recognized the NDP had increased the provincial sales tax. And we got talking about all the implications of that increase in sales tax, and one couple I talked to had just taken a—kind of a summer vacation just before harvest. They were down south, North Dakota, had a drive around to see what things looked like there and also, of course, did a little bit of shopping while they were down there, taking advantage of the difference in the sales tax. And the comment made to me was quite striking. They said

they couldn't believe the number of Manitoba cars in the parking lots at the shopping malls. Now, this is an unfortunate, I believe, an unfortunate sideline of what happens when you increase taxes here in Manitoba. You drive some of that business further south or to the west and it's very unfortunate. In fact, the comment that they made to me was there was eight cars in the line and out of those eight cars, seven of those cars were from Manitoba. So, obviously, there's a significant amount of business being—taking place in jurisdictions outside of Manitoba, where our Manitoba people are out there visiting and taking advantage of the difference in the provincial sales tax.

Now, it appears the NDP are going to push the Bill 20 through at whatever cost it takes. You know, I've referenced in my speeches here it's the Broadway bullies, and the Broadway bullies are clearly not listening to what Manitobans say. We had committee here a few weeks ago and, you know, for the most part Manitobans were certainly opposed to the increase in the provincial sales tax. And I know the NDP will be trying to spin their way out of it that this money was needed.

But the question comes back to NDP management, and I think we should maybe reflect a little bit and why—why it is we've got to the position we're at where we have to go back to the taxpayers and ask for more money? Really, what is at the heart of this?

Well, we've had 14 years of NDP government. You know, we had a—at that time a—the provincial budget was about \$6 billion. Well, if you fast-forward 14 years, that provincial budget is now, oh, about \$12 billion. So, in effect, they've doubled the budget of the Province of Manitoba in 14 short years. That's way above the rate of inflation and certainly way above the rate of inflation even factoring in any increase in population we've had.

So clearly they've doubled the provincial budget, but the other frightening thing to me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that they also doubled the debt of the Province of Manitoba. At the time when the NDP took over, the provincial debt was about \$13 billion. Now, as a result of this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and his budget—his proposed budget this year, he also now proposes a debt to be \$30 billion by the end of this fiscal year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have had some pretty positive economic times over the last 14 years, and I would expect we've had some of the best

opportunities for growth in Manitoba as any other jurisdiction in the—across the country. So I'm wondering why it is we've been able to not only double the budget—the amount of money that we spend each year in the province—but we've also been able to effectively double the debt of the Province. And I think what it does is it speaks to fiscal management or, in this case, I would suggest the lack of fiscal management in terms of the NDP. And we've had—as you know, we've had record transfers from the federal government and from our cousins across this great country. We are viewed and we are a have-not province, quite frankly, because we do rely on those transfers from other provinces through the federal government, and that's very unfortunate.

We would hope that the government would propose a plan to move us forward, Mr. Speaker, to try to make some growth in the economy. But I suggest to you that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) single-handedly believes that he is the only one that can move this province forward and create any kind of economic opportunities. I would suggest to you the Minister of Finance forgets his biggest asset here is the business community and, in fact, Manitobans themselves. Manitobans themselves, if they're given the ability to grow the economy, they will grow the economy. That, I believe, is what it's about.

The NDP have the mentality that they think they know better than Manitobans in how to spend Manitobans' money. Now, I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have had a pretty dismal record when it comes to increasing the productivity here in the province of Manitoba. There's tremendous room for opportunity. In fact, I think what you'll find—and you can look this up in the records—in terms of out-migration—I know we've got a very positive immigration program and with thanks to the former Conservative—Provincial Nominee Program under a previous Progressive Conservative government; it's been very successful. But the important number to me to look at is the out-migration, how many people are actually moving out of the province. And that to me is troubling, because we are finding people moving out of the province.

And we should have a vision. We should be putting forward a vision as legislators in terms of signalling to our youth, we want you to stay in Manitoba. We want you to stay and raise your families here. We want you to stay and work in Manitoba and we will do whatever we can to make sure that you stay here in Manitoba, build your

families, build—help build the economy, Mr. Speaker. But Manitobans are not getting that fuzzy, warm feeling from the NDP government. They are getting a feeling, and the feeling is, I'm going to start walking with my feet and move to other jurisdictions. That is the feeling that Manitobans are getting, and we see it more and more all the time.

And I'm sure the Minister of Finance, when he goes home on the weekends and he takes a drive over to Roblin and Grandview and Gilbert Plains, he's probably going to find people are saying the same thing: Boy, our people are looking for opportunities elsewhere, so they have an opportunity to keep more of their money in their own pockets. They don't want to have the Minister of Finance reaching into their pockets more and more each and every year to take away all their hard-earned living income. So, Mr. Speaker, certainly, I think it's about priorities and—it's about priorities.

*(14:50)

Now, we've heard the barrage of announcements by the NDP over the last several months. I have lost track, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, of how many announcements the NDP have put out.

But I would suggest, by now, almost every corner in Winnipeg should have a splash park. That seems to be the going thing these days. I know—and now they're even booking splash parks, Mr. Speaker, into next year. You know, it's not that we're going to build a splash park in your neighbourhood this year, we're going to make a promise to build you one even next year. But we should warn Manitobans, too, when they've heard about those promises. We should warn Manitobans when they've heard about NDP promises because they broke their word before. They've broke their word before and that is something that Winnipeggers better be on the lookout for when they get promised these fancy splash parks. But that seems to be the government priorities; it's about cutting ribbons and making announcements, and, you know, that's really what it's all about.

Meanwhile, we look around the province, our infrastructure is crumbling, it's getting worse by the day. Health care seems to be deteriorating more and more as we go forward. You know, I look in my communities—I look in my communities in terms of what's transpired. You know, people always talk to me about the infrastructure. They talk about the roads that need improvement, Mr. Speaker. They talk about, for instance, two bridges in my communities

that were washed out during the flood and the NDP have not taken any steps to even address those two particular pieces of infrastructure. And I would hope that the government would have a serious look at it because in that case they could get 90 per cent funding under the disaster financial assistance program if they were to replace those bridges. Now, I don't know why any prudent government wouldn't look at 10-cent dollars for an investment. I mean, that's a substantial saving. I would hope the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) will have a good close look at that and I'm hoping the minister has a look at his infrastructure programs.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we thought infrastructure is very important too. In fact, we even proposed an amendment to Bill 20 dealing in—two amendments, in fact—dealing specifically with infrastructure requirements. We felt that there should be a list in the budget, should be in the list, in the budget what the Minister of Finance was going to spend on infrastructure. I know they've talked about infrastructure. They're big talkers about infrastructure. But let's put this in writing and tell Manitobans where they're going to spend the money on infrastructure. I think that's pretty important.

And then, just to follow up—we thought this was a good amendment. Let's have a follow up, a bit of an audit in terms of where the government's actually spending their money, Mr. Speaker. So put a list together, do an audit the subsequent year just so we know as Manitobans where the money is being spent. If you're going to taxpayers to ask for more money and saying it's going to be allocated to infrastructure, well, the proof is in the pudding; put it in writing and show Manitobans exactly where that money is going to. So I was somewhat surprised, not completely, but somewhat surprised that the Minister of Finance and his colleagues decided not to vote for that particular amendment, either one of those amendments, and they are just going to push ahead on the existing Bill 20 as it says—as it reads now and it's very unfortunate.

And that's part of the issue that Manitobans raised too. What Bill 20 does, Mr. Speaker, it takes away Manitobans' right to vote on major tax increases such as the provincial sales tax. That is the second shoe to drop in this bill. Clearly, the first bill is the increase itself, whether or not that it was warranted or not, because we do have questions about the management and the priorities of the NDP government. But the second part of this legislation

was taking away their right to vote on that legislation on the increase in the sales tax.

So what they've done, they've initiated the tax on July 1st, whether Manitobans wanted it or not, whether it was legal or not and whether it was immoral because they said they weren't going to do it. They've done that to the tune of \$5 million a week and I believe Manitobans have the right to be upset at that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I talked about the, you know, the increase in taxes and the broadening of the provincial sales tax on a lot of goods and services, and I talked about all the surcharges and the fees and all those things that they've put up over the last number of years. And it's interesting their priority. Their priorities are all about getting more money out of Manitobans pockets. If the NDP would spend as much time trying to figure out how to better manage government, I think we would all be better off—all be better off.

I—I'm—I actually challenge the Minister of Finance. You know, he's going to collect close to \$200 million this year on the increased—on the increase alone, Mr. Speaker, on the provincial sales tax.

I would challenge the Minister of Finance and his department to come up with some ways to save \$200 million within his department—not just his department, all the departments across the board. It's really about running government more efficiently. And we would suggest the government should be looking inwardly to see if they can save money, if there's some way to run a government more efficiently so that we're still providing the services that Manitobans come to expect, but we can do it in a more efficient manner. And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker—through you to the minister—that that's what Manitoba taxpayers are asking as well, and I think it's incumbent upon us as legislators to have a look in the mirror to see if there's a way to do that.

You know, the unfortunate part about our increase in debt, and I mention this from time to time, but the unfortunate part is, we're leaving that legacy of debt for not just us and our children but probably our grandchildren as well. The debt always has to be pay as we go. There has to be interest payments on the debt, and it's very unfortunate that with this increase in debt also comes along a substantial increase in interest payments, Mr. Speaker.

Now the provincial government itself is paying about \$800 million a year in interest costs, and Manitoba Hydro, they're—they also have interest costs they are forced to pay, something to the tune of about \$400 million. So we've got \$1.2 billion of debt-servicing costs, and those are costs—that's money, Mr. Speaker, that's money going out that can't be used for anything else. It can't be used for infrastructure, it can't be used for health care and it can't be used for education, and that's unfortunate.

Now the NDP, I think, have taken a short-sighted view to how they govern, Mr. Speaker. All they want to do is govern for today and for the next election. They haven't taken the long-term view on what's best for the people of Manitoba, for the province of Manitoba. I believe that's fundamentally the difference between the NDP and how a Conservative government would manage. It's really about long-term planning on how we're going to do the best for Manitobans, for the people in Manitobans, and not just based on short-term political gains.

Now we know they're good at making their announcements. They've got 192—and probably counting—communicators over there spinning their thought of the day, Mr. Speaker, trying to get the message out to Manitobans that this—whatever we're doing—is in their best interest. But we, certainly in opposition, want to make sure that we try to get the facts of the matter out in terms of the fiscal management of the Province, and it is very alarming in terms of where we're headed in terms of debt and where we're headed in terms of our debt-servicing costs.

Mr. Speaker, we know the NDP priority is about making sure that their political party is being looked after. We've got a new vote tax that's being implemented, you know, probably \$800,000, maybe a million dollars, going to go to help fund the NDP political party, and I don't believe that's a priority that Manitobans have. I believe Manitobans would suggest to the NDP that they should be out there raising their own money to look after their own political party. Clearly, there's election expense rebates already that are in process to look after political parties during campaigns. Most Manitobans, I would think, would agree that that's probably enough for political parties; we shouldn't be funding political parties on an annual basis to help them operate their own political parties. And, if you're going to be a lazy political party, I guess that's what

you do; you ask Manitoba taxpayers for that money to run their own political party.

And, clearly, if you put two and two together, Mr. Speaker, you're going to see the NDP going to the taxpayers again for more money, and that's really a sign of what they're doing here in terms of increasing the provincial sales tax.

* (15:00)

Now people are certainly upset about that, Mr. Speaker, but they're also upset about the way the Broadway bullies have gone about it in terms of not allowing them a say on what they're going to do in terms of taking away their ability to vote on the increase on any substantial taxes, and that's really what also has Manitobans really upset about Bill 20.

And, Mr. Speaker, certainly look forward to continued debate on this particular legislation. We know it's been called numerous times here by the government, and clearly this is the priority for the NDP government. We don't think it's a priority for Manitobans. That's why we've been here this long—to fight against Bill 20 and the premise behind Bill 20 and the premise behind what the NDP are trying to do here in Manitoba.

Thank you very much for that opportunity.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, I—like the member from Spruce Woods, I'm waiting for the debate, and apparently the government has nothing good to say any more about this so they're not speaking to it, which is sad, Mr. Speaker. You would think they would want to support their own legislation by putting a few words on the record when it comes around to third reading, but apparently that's no longer necessary. They've—they're out there doing their ribbon cuttings and other things, and that's all they think is necessary for Manitobans in this regard.

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, we've talked many times in this House about what we heard from Manitobans in the committee debates and other things. We certainly heard from Manitobans that they were very upset with the NDP government because the NDP went out and each and every member, each and every candidate, went out in the last election and talked to Manitobans and promised that they would not raise PST. And each and every one of them went out there and that's what they told Manitobans. So we had Manitobans coming to the committee and they were upset about that, that this NDP government promised Manitobans that there

would be no PST increase, and they've broken that promise. And it is very disappointing to see that impact, the people that came to committee and spoke about the difficult decisions that they are being forced to make by this government. And now, as we get into the school year, we know that that's becoming even more apparent.

And the other thing that we really heard from Manitobans at committee hearings with this bill was that they were betrayed, because Manitobans believed that they are protected from the excesses of government like this PST increase. This is an excess increase. Manitobans believed they were protected from government. They believed that, if a government had to bring in a PST increase like this government has, 14.3 per cent increase the PST, they believed that—Manitobans believe they are protected by a referendum. And they believe that if a government was audacious enough to think that they were going to increase the sales tax, well, that government would have to come back to Manitobans and ask Manitobans to vote on that.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And that's what the government's trying to take away here, the right and the responsibility of Manitobans to vote on a PST increase. It's very disappointing to see this and, of course, retroactively they're trying to do this, and Manitobans are even more upset by that action.

So the disappointment out there is something that I run into every day when I'm out talking to Manitobans. I'm quite sure the NDP members find this at well—as well, that they hear from people that are not happy with the broadening of the sales tax last year. And, while that was a large tax increase, the largest we've seen in Manitoba in a generation, this, again, is yet a larger tax increase, all the while running a deficit. And, when you look at where those numbers are going, we go through the Estimates committee and the ministers can't answer and their staff try to answer the questions about what that money is going to be used for, but we don't seem to get a reasonable answer. They're not even sure what is contained in the line item and why it might have gone up 14 per cent year over year. They can't tell us.

So, if you can't look at a line item and find out what is in that line item, there's no way that you can manage a budget. And I know some of the government ministers have said, well, they don't really pay attention to budget. It's all about the children, and that's the most important part. Well—

and how's their record on that? Poor. How many children in care? How many children have died in care? And we look at the crime stats—again, not good numbers. We look at the sexual offenders that are out there and the 13-year-olds that we've recently heard that have been assaulted, and this government is powerless to stop that. They like to think that they can, but, again, we see time and time and again that they're not able to deal with it.

So with this bill we see that people now are getting ready for the school year. They're out there. They're buying school supplies, and certainly not all of them are subject to provincial sales tax. But the ones that are have gone up 14.3 per cent and last year some of them went up 7 per cent because they were not subject to sales tax, and now they are.

And one of those things that became subject to tax last year was insurance, and you might think, well, where would that have an impact in this whole situation in schools? All the schools have insurance. The school teams have insurance, and when a coach goes and puts together his plan for the season, he plans out the tournaments that they're going to. He plans out the travel expense—and I know certainly first-hand from this in Brandon because in order to find competition that are—that's outside of Brandon—because there's the three high schools there, two of them are AAAA and one of them is AAA—in order to find competition at that level you have to travel to Winnipeg. So those teams are travelling pretty much every weekend except for one or two weekends that you might get some Winnipeg teams to come out to Brandon. Certainly, there's competition for those teams in the rural areas, but because of the designations we have, the AAAA and AAA, we know that the teams that they're going to face are in Winnipeg. So you want to be able to have some experience playing against those teams and you have to travel to Winnipeg to do that. Well, as part of that budget that that coach puts together now they have to deal with sales tax on the insurance, insurance on renting vehicles because they have to rent the vans to get people here, insurance on—accident insurance. All kinds of things that go into that factor, and that's on school teams.

And it's also in the arts. It's in music. It's in dance because those competitions happen outside of our community as well and sometimes we have to travel to those. And we see it again in things like Festival of the Arts. When Festival of the Arts in Brandon—the Brandon Festival of the Arts goes out, they ask for donations and they do that and they have

some tremendous donors that come back year after year long past their child being involved in that festival, and they also get donations sometimes of facilities where they hold the festival. Sometimes they have to pay for those facilities, but sometimes they're donated. But, in either case, all those facilities now have to pay tax on their insurance so it costs those facilities more to operate. Their donation, if it is a donation to the Festival of the Arts, costs them more. And, if they're asking for compensation from the festival, well, they're going to have to look at their bottom line and figure out we might have to ask for more money from the Festival of the Arts in order to rent this facility, and isn't that sad? Isn't that a sad impact on the arts in Manitoba, all from this government from across the floor that they decided they're going to tax the arts? A very sad situation to watch.

Is that going to have an effect on Manitobans? Well, it is because people need to make some tough decisions in Manitoba now. They need—we heard in Bill 20 committee people that are saying now when I go into the grocery store because the buying power of my dollar has diminished with this tax increase I don't have as many dollars to go around they told us. So I—those individuals have less money to spend on groceries. Now they have to make the tough decision for their families. Are they're able to afford the healthier, more expensive food, or do they have to look down their budget and see which of the things they're going to have to leave off, which of the items they have to spend less on, which of the items do they have to clip their coupons a little tighter and make sure that they have them all available?

* (15:10)

So those are the tough decisions that this government is forcing on Manitobans, and if you have fewer dollars to go around, again, you have fewer dollars to help your children in the other things that broaden their education: in the sports, in the arts, the music, the dance and other activities that they take part in. All of those things broaden our population and broaden their education. That has a negative impact on our children as they're growing up if they're not able to enter into some of those things. They won't have that experience. They, of course, are limited on how they do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's all part of your education. You can't learn everything from your school system. Much of what you learn is also interaction with people out in the community and in the activities in which you partake. And, if you're limited in that—in what you're

able to be involved in, of course, that reduces your education.

So you may be going forward, Mr. Speaker—Deputy Speaker, and as you go through your education, you have to compete with people. And when you graduate from high school, you have to compete with people for positions in university. You have to compete with people for positions in medical school and law school or wherever else, or in a job that you think you might go. And if that—if you're competing with an individual that has been able to have a more well-rounded education with an impact of what they can participate in, you're behind that person, because it all comes down to what you—how you developed as an individual and what you have been involved in as you've grown up.

So we have some people—many people in Manitoba—that now, because of this government, have to make those difficult decisions. This government, are they making the difficult decisions? Well, they've got announcements that were funded years ago that they're reannouncing. And people like announcements. They like to see new things, no doubt. But we have deficits and we have tax increases that are funding those things. Yes, it's nice to see new things built, certainly it is, but at what cost to the individual?

So it's very disappointing to see this government moving along. They failed, time and again, to consult with Manitobans. I attended some of the public consultations that the Finance Minister undertook, and no discussion about tax increases. He thought fee increases were a really good idea, and that's one of the things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the average Manitoban, they don't differentiate between fees like the \$35 vehicle registration fee that occurred last year; they don't differentiate between fees and sales tax increases. They just know that they have to pay more money to the government for fewer services, and they know that they have less money available themselves—than to spend on themselves and their families.

So it's disappointing that this government feels that they know best how to spend Manitobans' money. They've evidenced that very poorly in the past. And while there are fabulous projects out there, and I spoke about some today, there are projects where they are tremendously over budget and not able to manage the budget. Those are the types of things that the government needs to take a look at and say, how is it possible that this government was

over budget by a hundred per cent? How is that possible?

What else could they have used that money for? Health care, perhaps. We have a health-care system that we hear from Manitobans, time and time again, the health-care system in—is in disarray. The people that work in the system are all very well-meaning, very intent on providing the best service, but even they are disappointed with the system. And it is that system that is causing part of the problems, when we have closures of emergency rooms—18, I believe, in rural Manitoba at last count—all under this NDP government. Those emergency rooms were all open when they started government.

When they started government, they promised Manitobans they were going to get rid of hallway medicine. That hasn't happened—just the way they counted the patients. And now we not only have hallway medicine—and we still do, because I have been in the health-care system and seen those patients in the hallway. And, when I've gone back and visited the next day, they're still in the hallway, and that's where they spent their entire time in hospital until they went through their surgery and then, perhaps, they had a room made available to recover in, or perhaps not. But now, we not only have hallway medicine, we've heard the stories of highway medicine where people are turned away from our emergency facilities because there may or may not be a doctor available, there may or may not be a nurse practitioner, and there may be other nurses there that can't provide the service that's necessary, so they tell the people, go on down the road. Go down the road to Saskatchewan, and I think maybe they can take care of you or someplace else—anywhere—but we can't help you here in Manitoba, so you better start driving.

How would you feel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you were on the other end of that conversation? What would your emotions be when you needed emergency services and were told the Manitoba government cannot provide those services for you here? Go somewhere else. That's a pretty sad statement, when we see the deficits that this government is running and when we see this sales tax increase being made without a referendum, without the ability of Manitobans to choose.

And, as I've said before many times, if this government truly believed that they needed this sales tax increase, they should be able to prove that to Manitobans. They should go out and they should

convince them of that, because, obviously, they've convinced themselves, but so far they can't sell it to Manitobans other than through the many, many ribbon cuttings that may or may not be funded from this sales tax increase or future deficits. They should be able to convince each and every Manitoban, or at least a majority of them, that the sales tax is necessary in the NDP government's eyes, but they've failed to do so and they don't trust that they can convince Manitobans of that. They don't trust that they can convince Manitobans that there is a need for this sales tax increase, so they're not willing to allow Manitobans to vote in a referendum, as is their legal right at this point. Manitobans have the legal right to a vote in a referendum on any sales tax increase, and that is what this government is trying to take away.

You know, we saw some veterans come and speak to Bill 20, and while they're passionate—they were very passionate, they were—they did not wear their experience as a veteran on their sleeve. They talked about it; it was part of their being. Those people stood up for our right to vote in Manitoba in elections and in referenda. They stood up for our right to make sure that we were free to do so, and this government is taking—wanting to take away that right from Manitobans. Those veterans were disappointed in the government and in their attempts to take away that right. Something so basic, they thought, that Manitobans, indeed, had was that right to vote, that right to vote on this government's actions, and now the government seeks to take that vote away.

So what else do we know about the government? Well, we know that they've broken their promises time and again, and they're promising that much of this money is going to go to infrastructure, but then they have a strange definition of infrastructure and when it's going to happen. Is it this year, next year, the year after? So we'll just kind of smooth all those things out together and not be certain which and when and what is happening or where it's happening. We'll make an announcement, they think, and people really won't pay attention. They'll think they're going to get a school gym, and it might, indeed, happen five, two, six years later. Who knows? Who knows when it's going to happen?

* (15:20)

But they look back—we look back and we see—what had the government said? They had said, today's release of the 2010-2011 Public Accounts shows that Greg Selinger's five-year economic plan

is on track to return the budget to balance by 2014, while protecting jobs and services without raising taxes. End quote. Hmm, is that really going to happen? Let's look at that. The five-year economic plan is on track. Well, no, it's no longer on track, because deficits are larger than projected. And is it going to return the budget to balance by 2014? Hmm, no, no, that's not going to happen. Is it going to protect jobs and services? Hmm, that's a good question. How do people feel that—about that in the RHA restructuring? I don't know. Something this government thought was necessary. Lots of people that have been let go in the RHAs, so their jobs are not protected, and what about services? Well, I've talked about services, the services that are no longer there.

And then we look at infrastructure. Let's try to find a road that you can drive on from end to end without being at risk from that road, and it's this government's inability to make sure infrastructure is maintained at the level necessary. We've seen other jurisdictions that are able to do it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but this government can't, and so we have portions of road that might be repaired and right beside another portion that is falling apart and is dangerous to drive on.

And then the last part here without raising taxes. Well, we know that—I just don't know how much more, you know, we can really comment about that one, but, time and again, we see not only did the PST—was it broadened last year, and it's applied to many things that it never used to be applied to in Manitoba, but now this year the sales tax has increased by 14.3 per cent.

So if you didn't pay tax on insurance a couple of years ago, you look at that increase now, it's up from zero to 8 per cent you have to pay on that now, part of people's budget that they never had to deal with before. Part of budgets—of entities that deal with the government, are partly funded by the government and now have to pay the government more.

I spoke about the Brandon YMCA this morning, the Dood Cristall Family YMCA that opened its doors this morning; that sales tax broadening and that sales tax increase has an impact on their budgets. They break even; they strive hard to do it. Some of it is through fundraising, but now they're getting to have a tougher time because this government has cost them more money.

And those are the things that I think the government fails to see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the

impact of the government not just on individuals but on entities and how those entities now have to find more money to fund this government's addiction to spending, and we know they're addicted to spending, we can see it time and again in how they're not able to manage their budgets.

And then we see the reports—Manitoba inflation, highest in Canada last time around, this time around once again. We're No. 1 on inflation in Manitoba. And what does inflation do? It means that it costs Manitobans more money to live here, that this government is having a direct impact on that. The PST increase, due to it, mostly, Manitoba's inflation rate rose higher than any other project—province in July—3 per cent.

Manitobans could have had the right to vote on that, they still do, but this government plans to take that away, and they're trying with this bill to take away Manitobans' right to vote on that issue, to take away Manitobans' basic right here to vote.

So, again, sad to watch the deterioration of this government and their spending addiction. Can they help themselves? Well, that's a good question. You know, first of all, they have to recognize that they have that problem and, then, somehow, they have to deal with it. But, if they don't know what the line items are in a budget, how are you going to deal with that? That's how you control budgets.

And it may mean, indeed, by budgeting well that you have more money available for the important things to this government, because they're important things to Manitobans. We know health care is important to Manitobans. We know that education is important to Manitobans. But, when you look at the manner in which those services are applied in Manitoba, we see cuts to health care in Manitoba from this government because the services aren't available any more that we thought—think are necessary, that Manitobans have come to expect.

In education they cut funding to the universities, made a deal with them—and I guess we should come to expect that of this government that if you have a deal with this government, don't expect that they're going to follow through on it, because they do for a year or two and then decide, you know what? They're not going to follow that deal anymore, and that what's they did with the universities. They tried to give them funding that was reliable, was consistent, and now that funding has changed. So the universities have had to go and make the tough decisions that this government is not willing to do.

They've had to go internally and look at what can they cut? What can universities cut? What is that impact going to be on university students in Manitoba? What impact is that going to be on staff, professors, employees of the university? How is that going to impact them? We know that there are going to be some—going to be some courses that may not be available because that professor's contract, term contract, may not have been renewed so those courses are no longer available. So that student now, instead of spending four years at an institution in Manitoba may have to spend five, or perhaps they'll have to travel outside of the province to find that course that they need in order to finish their degree. Those are the impacts of these cuts that this government has brought forward all the while increasing taxes and fees on Manitobans.

And they pretend that they're doing fabulous, fabulous things, but they make some announcements about highways and then we go out and we look at the highway and, boy, we just see how much it's deteriorated.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've talked about Highway 10 and the number of years I've driven up and down that highway, and over the years it's been a fairly consistent highway through a variety of governments. I knew where all the hills were; I knew where I had to downshift; I knew which gears I needed to hit on the way up in order to make it to the top of the hill; I knew where the curves were, and slowly over the last 12 years—maybe not so slowly—that highway has deteriorated because this NDP government has not kept up with the basic maintenance every year.

They like the big projects; they like to cut down some hills or repave sections here and there and say look what we're doing. But then you drive off of that section and you can hardly make it down the rest of the road and, indeed, the concern to me is not just about people that live in that area that have to travel it every day, but it's a little more personal for me because I have a daughter who lives in Boissevain that travels that highway regularly, a son-in-law and their family that they do travel No. 10 Highway and the other highways in that area quite regularly, and I as a parent am concerned for their safety because of the failure of this NDP government to maintain our highways.

And it's not just family. You know, I've spoken about business in the past here and we have many staff that have to travel that highway regularly as

well, sometimes with equipment, sometimes hauling product, sometimes travelling with their families. They are at risk. This government has put those people at risk because of the lack of investment in real infrastructure. The number of bridges that are out in that area and have not been replaced, the number of bridges that are down to one lane now—I used to think when I went to a small community if you saw a traffic light in that community it meant that community is growing, it's thriving, they need a light to control traffic. But now in Manitoba we don't do that. Now in Manitoba we do it on bridges because there's only one lane available to get across that river now. That's what a highway traffic light means in Manitoba now. It doesn't mean the community is thriving. The community may, indeed, be thriving, but it's thriving in spite of this government. So these are the dangerous things we see, the danger to life and limb from this government that they are putting Manitobans at risk because of their lack of maintenance on our highways and of our infrastructure.

* (15:30)

So it is disappointing to see this government attempting again to move ahead with Bill 20, taking away Manitobans' basic right to vote on an increase in a sales tax that may not be sustainable for Manitobans. We know that Manitobans are making some very difficult decisions every year with their money, and they're wishing that this government could make some of those decisions as well, not to reduce services—as the government promised they would maintain the services and they failed to do so—but to make sure that Manitobans' money is used efficiently and effectively in the manner in which Manitobans see fit.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know there are many others that wish to speak to this particular stage of this bill, so I'll allow them to continue.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Before recognizing the next speaker, I just want to advise the House. The member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), in his speech, was reading from an article and he used the name of the honourable First Minister when reading from a text. I took a moment to confer with the Clerk's assistant to be sure about the ruling, and I was correct in that it is under no circumstances proper to use the name of an individual. We are to refer to each other by our

constituency names or ministers by their portfolios. So that's just some advice I want to pass on to all members of the Legislature.

On that note, the member for Midland.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'll certainly keep that in mind in my remarks today.

The—speaking of Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act, it's unfortunate that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) doesn't want to speak to his own bill on third reading after there was a number of amendments that we brought forward. There was a number of—a large number of presentations at public committee. You would think through all of that advice that the Minister of Finance would have picked up something that he could have used in this bill to improve it, but, alas, it seems like his mind was made up and is more concerned about collecting more tax revenue out of Manitobans than he is about building a stronger province.

So we have to deal with that, and under the current bill, the balanced budget, debt repayment and taxpayers' protection act, Manitobans have the democratic right to a referendum whenever a government decides to raise a major tax. And, of course, the PST falls under the category of major tax.

And the priorities of this government are certainly very visible. They are not interested in listening to Manitobans. They are far more concerned with lining their own pockets. On one hand they'll—they demand the right for a vote tax to line each of their pockets with \$5,000 per year rather than risk going out to the door, to knock on doors and ask for that financial support. And, when they're asking for that financial support, I would imagine they would probably get some ideas on where—how Manitobans feel about the taxes and the fees that have been increased, that have been imposed on them in the last number of years.

And so the NDP seems to think that they'll take the easy route out and they'll just tax everyone to pay for their own election campaign come next time. And Manitobans—while Manitobans are very forgiving, they're not forgetful. And, in spite of what this NDP government likes to think, they're not going to forget about this because each year it just becomes more difficult for families to cope financially when you have taxes and fees increasing every year, and certainly we're at that time of year right now when

school is about to start next week. The—I was talking to my granddaughter last week and I asked her if she was excited about school starting, and, well, she didn't really express a lot of enthusiasm. I think deep down she was somewhat excited about going back to school—

An Honourable Member: How old is she?

Mr. Pedersen: Heading into grade 5 this year. So this is a—every year is a big step for them, and, of course, her mother is also out there shopping for school supplies and seeing the—as this government wants to continue to raise taxes, it's costing her more for those school supplies, any of the extracurricular activities that they're going to—that her children will be partaking in. It's going to cost them more because of this government, whether it's direct taxing or whether it's indirect, because even things like insurance costs for teams, they're going to have to pay that 8 per cent, now, PST on insurance claims or on insurance coverage for those teams. And so it has a large impact on all Manitobans and it affects everyone.

And, you know, the spend just seems to have no respect, no regard for the impact that these taxes have on Manitobans, as Manitobans' budgets and their households budgets or their business budgets, there's only so much money. They can't just turn around and collect more like this government seems to think it can. And so they have to make decisions as to how they're going to pay for those bills that come across the kitchen table each and every month.

The taxpayer protection laws are there right now to safeguard Manitoba families against—from governments like this NDP. And so what does this government do? They just want to repeal legislation so that they're able to continue to their tax-happy ways; I guess that's the best way of putting it.

And, furthermore, it's not only the tax increases but it's the way that they go about doing it and how they tried to spin it as they were going to—what they would use this increased revenue from. And all this revenue—and the PST revenue is, of course, without a referendum, which Manitobans expect to be able to partake in, and they have that right under the current legislation. And this bill has not passed yet, so it's not too late yet for the government to call a referendum and to put the question out there to Manitobans as to whether they do favour an increase in the PST. And if the NDP are that confident that Manitobans will buy into it, then put it out there to a referendum.

And many of the groups that have asked in the past for specified infrastructure funding, such as the AMM, the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Manitoba Business Council, Heavy Construction Association, they've all stated that this PST increase, without a referendum, is not what they were asking for.

And, furthermore, they know that they're not getting a piece—anything at all out of this increased revenue. In fact, they are going to see less revenue going into infrastructure. And while we know that the daily ribbon cuttings happen, the feel-good, happy ribbon cuttings that the ministers partake in each and every day, that this is not helping the basic infrastructure, the roads, the sewer, the water, the conditions that exist all across Manitoba and that need fundamental changes, and this government is not addressing those.

Instead, they're looking at it as a tax—this tax increase as a tax grab. And it's creating the NDP slush fund, and that's shameful by this—by these ministers, by this government. There's no accountability at all. And, of course, once they do away with the taxpayer protection act, what's to stop them from raising sales taxes each and every year? As—they have a spending problem. They don't have a revenue problem. And, of course, they're—they've already said in the—before the last election, in the run-up to the 2011 election, they weren't going to raise the sales tax. They were asked that directly. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) called it nonsense. And right after the election, in the past—in the two years following that election, we've seen the biggest tax increases in 25 years in this province, including fees and all sorts of revenue sources and, now, the PST.

So they didn't consult with Manitobans. They weren't truthful with Manitobans about their real intent. They didn't consult with Manitobans about the PST—raise in the PST or the revenue—or the charges—surcharges that they put on so many other fees, and the broadening of the PST to things like home insurance and that type of thing. That they just—it's become almost like an epidemic with this government, that they don't listen. They don't consult.

* (15:40)

You know, we have other pieces of legislation before the Legislature now. Bill 33, the municipal amalgamation, the forced amalgamation bill, and we know that the minister didn't consult with the municipalities on that. He didn't even consult with

the AMM on that. In fact, they learned about it on the eve of their annual general meeting last year that this was—that—not that—should they do it this is what is going to happen, and we certainly had an interesting debate on that bill in the past while.

The minister's been somewhat negative to municipalities and, you know, as—and as the story goes on, you know, one of his favourite stories was that there is a municipality out there with 35 residents per councillor. It turns out that that municipality, which I knew all along, but I—you know, they made the paper a couple of weeks ago here. They were featured in the Free Press as one of the most prosperous communities: the town, the metropolis of Waskada with the oil revenue that's been there and the generosity of a former resident that lived in that community, and it's what communities—small-town communities are all about. But here is Waskada becoming the whipping boy of the minister, and it turns out—like so many other issues that have happened—it turns out that once you know the facts they're not at all like what the minister is trying to portray. So we have—so why would anybody believe anything on this—that this government says, because if they can raise the PST illegally now, what's to stop them from doing it each and every year?

We know that there is no cost control on that side. There's no accountability. There's no results-based spending out there. It's only—the only results-based spending they have is how many headlines they can get from their 'hunner'—with their 192 communicators, and we know that that's not a way to build a province, the way to build a strong economy. Manitobans build the economy, not this government. This government seems to think that they are the builder of the economy in Manitoba, and that's not the case. In fact, if there was a business run like this government it would've been broke a long time ago because they continue to run deficits on an annual basis. They continue to run up debt on the long-term basis and they're not even paying back any debt, and no business can run like that and this government is certainly living proof that it's not financially viable to do that.

So we know that their promises that they make about where this tax money is going to be spent is not going to be fulfilled. It's, you know, we know that from their—the way they operate, whatever they say it's probably going to be the exact opposite. So when they decide to raise the PST this year and if they say, well, no, this is only for a 10-year period.

We know that that's not right. They're going to continue to raise the PST each and every year and, you know, the expansion of the PST in itself to things like insurance, it is costing homeowners hundreds of dollars more because of their insurance—because of the PST on insurance. And this is—you just think about this. It's each and every home that you drive by, each and every business you drive by, each and every piece of property in this country—in this province is being taxed now by the PST on their insurance. And, you know, even things like Bipole III, landowners are going to have to carry extra liability insurance on their farm insurance or on their land insurance, liability insurance. So now they're going to have to pay PST on that as well.

So it—there is no end in sight in terms of where this is going to cost, and with the increase in the PST we know that it's costing Manitobans, that this PST is taking \$5 million a week out of the Manitoba economy, and where is it going? There is no accountability for where this money is going other than we know that it's going into an NDP slush fund, into the feel-good, make-you-feel-happy campaign fund. And, you know, there's a reason why they have a 192 spinners out there that it's just taking them that many to try and spread this good-news story that they're trying to take \$5 million out of your money, out of your pocket, and spending it to good use, because they don't have confidence in Manitobans. This NDP government has no confidence in Manitobans that they know how to spend their own money. This government thinks that they know best how to spend your money, and that's a sad commentary that comes from people without any business experience.

We know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is not accountable for this money that he is continuing to take out of everybody's pockets, \$1,600 a year out of a family's pocket. Where is it coming—where is that \$1,600 going to come from for a family of four? You know, and—but the minister doesn't seem to care. He is not at all concerned about that. As long as—his only concern is that the money continues to come.

An Honourable Member: Keep the money flowing.

Mr. Pedersen: That's—keep the money flowing. And you know, the—one of the things in business is that cash flow is always critical to a business, and that is the one business acumen that this Minister of Finance has managed to pick up. It's cash flow—that cash flowing in is critical to him. Doesn't care where

it comes from, doesn't care how it hurts families, doesn't care where—in fact, I don't even know if he cares where it gets spent. As long as it just keeps flowing through his fingers, then the Minister of Finance seems to wear that smile and it's, you know, and that's—I'm sure that if he feels proud of that, good for him. I don't think that that's a record that—I know that's a record that I would not like to have.

I know that last week, he was reminding us that he took the sales tax off of bicycle helmets. Really good. Charge tax on the bicycle but take the tax off the helmet. So you've got however many hundred dollars for a bike, and you're going to take it off the \$15 helmet. You've—it's only this government that can think that that's a good deal. In fact, the extra 1 per cent on that, of PST on that bicycle, probably more than accounts for the PST they're missing on a bicycle helmet. So he's—maybe I don't give him enough credit. Maybe he is really capable of devising how to get more money out of Manitobans while making it look like he's actually thrifty. It's—good for him.

But for sure, you know, this—our inflation rate is up now. We know that this is—the finances of this province are starting to be—take hold in terms of our inflation rate going up, because of the increase in the sales tax, that inflation rate is up to 3 per cent. And, you know, it's important to many people, and particularly seniors that are living on a fixed income that are depending on their savings to just put a little extra into their pockets every month and so they can retire and live in—with some dignity. But, with an inflation rate of 3 per cent, a lot of those seniors are actually seeing a net loss to their income each and every year now and we've only begun to see the beginning of the increases in the sales tax.

And now, of course, when the government put out the news, or brought in a budget and said they were going to raise the PST by 1 per cent, of course, it was to go—it was to pay for the flood. Well, then the flood didn't happen. Thank goodness, the flood didn't happen. So they decided to keep the 1 per cent and so then it was going to go for infrastructure. Hmm, how did that go? Well, so then they—we've now figured out that they spent less than one half of 1 per cent on flood mitigation in all the years that they've been in government. So flood mitigation is not important to them. We understand that. The dollar figures show that that's not important.

* (15:50)

So they moved on, then. This wasn't getting it, so—and then it was to go for—well, let's see, it was to go for roads and bridges, but they cut the budget on that this year. So they have increased revenue, but they're spending less on roads and bridges. The new bridge program in this province seems to be, make it into a one-lane bridge with traffic lights on it. So that seems to be how they—or else blow the bridge up, as my good friend from Emerson will certainly tell you about the St. Jean bridge, so that's one way of taking care of infrastructure.

But then they—you know, the sad part about this and the really sad part about this is that we still have millions and millions of dollars' worth of claims from the 2011 flood. We have a lot of people—we have over 2,000 people still not in their homes, that were flooded out from that man-made flood—from the NDP-made flood. They continue to raise taxes and yet we have flood claims that are outstanding, and that is shameful to have flood claims that are outstanding.

And there was the recent flooding in Calgary and High River, and I was told that, you know, much of that area—now, there still is some area in—within High River and right along the river in Calgary that's still suffering a lot of flood damage, but a lot of that flood damage has been cleaned up already. And yet here we are, two years out in Manitoba and hundreds of claims out there, 2,000 people still displaced from their homes, and this government—it's not a lack of money. It's never a lack of money that this government has, because they continue to tax more and more. Their revenues continue to rise every year, and yet they blame everybody and everything from Mother Nature to the federal government to the opposition to everybody else—to Manitobans themselves—why they can't solve the—or solve these flood claims, why they can't get people back in their homes from the—who were flooded out in 2011. And it's—you know, it just—it's unfortunate that this government takes such a narrow view of admitting to what they have done to Manitobans and how they refuse to take ownership of that and solve it.

So they, you know—and when they broadened the PST, another one of their claims was it was to build new flood protection. But then—and that was after—that was the excuse after they were caught at not doing any flood preparation in the last number of—or since they came into government—or very little, and yet now they said that it's for new flood protection, but there's no shovel-ready projects, and yet the money's flowing in. Where is the money

going, if it's not going to go into that? They have not done the required engineering and environmental work to do—and then, any projects they have, they've, oh—or that they have—talk about, they grossly inflate the costs of it so that there is no way that it's going to cost that much money even if they were to do it, and they're not doing them anyway, so perhaps it doesn't matter how much. But the—what really does matter is that they continue to tax, they continue to spend, and it's not—the money is not being accounted for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this—we know that the PST is not going towards transportation infrastructure. Their—the capital spending is going up by \$28 million, but that's only 14 per cent of this year's PST increase—of this year's alone. So they're taking it, and the mayor of Winnipeg actually had it right when he called the PST increase an NDP spin, an illusion.

So it's obvious PST is not going for flood protection, it's not going for infrastructure. Where's it going? That's what we continue to ask. Where's this money going?

Well, we know it's going into a million dollars in vote taxes to pay for their political operations. That's—for their political operations, they've—have seen it being too difficult. Whether it's too difficult, whether it's too lazy or whether they're afraid of getting a no at the door, they've decided that rather than go to the door and ask their supporters for financial contributions, they've decided, no, we're not going to do that. We'll just increase taxes and we'll take it from the taxpayer. So each and every one of these NDP members is now going to take \$5,000 a year in a vote tax to finance their next campaign, and that's from hard-working Manitobans. That's from Manitoba families.

And they have another place that they're spending money is on their communicators. They've got 192 spinners out there to try and spin their way out of their poor fiscal management that they've increased the number of spinners by 60 per cent since the year 2000. It costs Manitobans 12 and a half million dollars a year in their salary alone, over a million dollars a month for that group of spinners out there to try and sell that message, those feel-good messages that the government puts out on a daily basis. We know that that's not good—tax money is not being spent well with that.

We know that this—they're spending it—they're putting this money into their own slush funds. They're too—as we work our way towards the next

election they'll—they will have money that they—then they will try to say that they're balancing the budget because they've got all this revenue there. But in the meantime, they—we know that they're not able to balance the budget. They're taking in—last year alone they took in an extra \$500 million and yet they continue to run a \$500-million annual deficit. The only thing that changed is the amount of revenue coming in. So they spent that much extra money and yet we don't—we're not seeing anything structurally built in this province other than promises from this government about how they will spend it.

But they're not—they have no idea of how to balance a budget. First they said they were going to balance the budget a couple of years ago and that—well, that one sort of drifted by. And we're not—we know that they ran a \$500-million deficit last year. I would not be surprised at all to see it increase—that annual budget increase—deficit in the budget increase again this year because they have no idea how to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 2003 they raided Manitoba Hydro for \$203 million to balance the government's books, can't do that anymore. They'd pretty well bankrupt Manitoba Hydro, and on their road to Americanization of Hydro they will—there certainly isn't going to be any profits. Manitoba Hydro just released its financials last week and it's not looking very good there. And there's certainly—this—it's going to take the spin doctors a lot of massaging to work that message out to make it show that Manitoba Hydro can even actually begin to show any kind of a profit in the years to come given the debt load that this government wants to load it up with. And based on outdated market forecasts, based on a changing energy market that they have—we know now that they will not be able—that's one thing they can count on for sure that they will not be able to raid Manitoba Hydro's budget—balance because there won't be a net balance in there. There's going to be a lot of red ink within hydro. In the meantime they continue to raise the rates on Manitobans. That's how it costs Manitoba households more money each and every year as they do this.

And all this debt that they continue to pile up on Manitoba—the annual deficits at a time when 'rec'—interest rates are record lows, many of the government members will probably not remember the high interest rates of the early 1980s. I was reminiscing with a family this past weekend. The fellow had actually passed away, and I was visiting with his family. And he and I had both started

farming about the same time and it was right in time for those 22 per cent interest rates, and we talked about how it had been difficult those years because of the cost of interest.

And yet we see this government now with this massive debt they've built up in this province with record-low interest rates, and when those interest rates go up—and they will go up. There's—interest rates have—they—actually, I think we're getting into a record period of low interest rates right now. And that's—the longer it stays down, perhaps the harder it will come up.

* (16:00)

But it's not a question of if interest rates go up. It's a question of when and it's—and the really big question is how much will those interest rates go up. And that's going to cause a severe strain on our economy because debt interest has to be paid.

We know that the NDP are not—they're not even paying back, making debt repayments these years. They seem to be so short of cash that they're not even repaying any debt, so we know that the interest just continues to build on these and when interest rates go up, it is going to be really hard for Manitoba to pay the interest rate—pay the interest bill, never mind try and repay some of the capital that has been borrowed by this government. So, you know, that we just—we need to take a look back. This bill is a step in the wrong direction. It's allowing the government to spend even more money, to borrow even more money, at a time when they have no accountability for how they're spending their money. There's—this is probably the prelude to even further tax increases in the years to come, because we know that in spite of record revenues over the last number of years they continue to raise taxes, they continue to broaden the fees that they're collecting from Manitobans. And when you do that, when you—at a time when you have record revenues and at a same time as you have record deficits—

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

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I am pleased to stand and put some comments on the record in opposition to Bill 20. And, you know, I was hoping beyond hope that someone, anyone on the government side of the House would stand in their place today and try to defend the 1 per cent increase in the PST and the removal of people's democratic right to vote when that major tax increase was put in place.

I thought maybe—maybe—someone on the government side would have the courage to stand up and justify to Manitobans why their Premier (Mr. Selinger) betrayed them in the last election. Now, I believe that they hung on every word that the member for St. Boniface, the Leader of the NDP party, said during the last election campaign, because I believe they would have thought that that was policy, that he would only articulate the proof—the truth and the policy and the platform that they would put forward during the election. And the member for St. Boniface, the Leader of the NDP party at the time, said, read my lips, no increase in the PST, that's nonsense.

Well, I believe that the reason members on the government side of the House don't have the courage to stand up is that they feel betrayed and there's no way that they can justify that breach of trust that they had with the electorate in the province of Manitoba and the voters who took them for their word, because their word should be their bond. People should be able to believe and trust, and I think that what has happened as a result of the promises that have been broken and the lies that this government told during the last election have really tainted politicians of all political stripes.

And I would say that the comments that the member for St. Boniface, the Leader of the NDP party and the then-Premier of the province, made were a betrayal of trust and they were, in fact, words that no one on his side of the House, I don't think, ever would have believed that he would go back on his word, and he did. Now, that to me is not leadership. That's very weak leadership when you can't stand up and defend and live up to the words that you have said publicly.

I know for a fact that Gary Doer would not have done that. I believe that he was a man that spoke his word and lived up to his commitment. And I know that there were times when the government under the leadership of Gary Doer made an announcement and there was public outrage. And the premier then, Gary Doer, had the courage to stand up and to say, I made a mistake. Manitobans don't want us to go in this direction and I'm going to change my mind. Now, there's no weakness in leadership when you can admit that you've made a mistake and change your mind. I believe the present Premier (Mr. Selinger) today has gone against the principles that underlie honesty and integrity in this province and in this Legislature and what Manitobans and taxpaying Manitobans should expect from their politicians.

And it's a sad day in Manitoba when no one on the government side of the House will stand up and defend their leader. Their leader made statements. He broke promises that he made during the last election campaign, and no one—no one on the government side has the courage to stand up. They're hiding their heads in shame because they know what they did was wrong. You don't say one thing before an election to get elected and another after the election, and it wasn't two years after the election. It was one year after the election when he said there would be no new taxes. that they expanded the PST to many, many more services. And the year after that, to add insult to injury, they increased the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. You're looking at a total take out of Manitoba taxpayers' pockets of \$500 million a year, half a billion dollars a year that hard-working taxpayers are having to shell out to feed this government's spending addiction. And there is something very wrong with a government that moves in that direction, that says one thing before an election to get votes and does complete about-face after the election. So it's no wonder that no one in government has the nerve to stand in their place and to defend this piece of legislation.

And none of them could defend the indefensible at committee when Manitobans came out en masse to comment on the arrogance and the dishonesty of a government that betrayed them during the last election campaign, and many of those people were ordinary individuals. I have never seen committee hearings like the ones we saw on Bill 20 where Manitobans came forward, not orchestrated by any political party, but came forward on their own because they said they had had enough. They felt betrayed. They felt lied to and they wanted our committee, their legislators, to know how voters were feeling about the decisions that this government had made to raise the PST. And many of them had personal stories to tell, that said that they were going to have to make some difficult choices, some difficult decisions around how they were going to provide the limited resources that they had as a result of this PST increase to the situation surrounding them and their family and the circumstances that they were in. One man said they were going to have to choose between child care and sporting activities for his children because of the increase in the taxation that they were experiencing from a party that said they weren't going to raise taxes before the last election. He said they were going—having to look at pulling their kids out of one school and putting them into another school so they could be closer to

their grandmother because they would no longer be able to afford child care and provide registration for hockey and other sporting activities, or piano lessons that their children might want to take and they might want to have for their children. Those are difficult choices.

*(16:10)

And, you know, we look at a government that is sitting across the way, and they're not making any difficult choices because they're saying, we don't have to. If we want to spend more money, all we have to do is go to those suckers, those taxpayers out there, and take more from them. We have that ability from on high to dictate what's best for them and we have the ability to tell them that we know better how to spend their money, that they really don't know how to spend the money that they earn. We know better, just give it to us and we'll spend it. We don't have to worry about reducing anything or looking at budgeting or managing our expenses because we have an unlimited source of revenue. We'll just run out to the taxpayers and grab more out of their pockets.

Well, Manitobans are saying, enough is enough. We are tired—we are tired of government telling us, dictating to us from on high. We've got a government that's become so arrogant and out of touch with hard-working Manitobans that they don't have a clue what Manitobans are really thinking. They went out with supposed public consultations before the budget—budget consultations, to listen to Manitobans, to hear what they had to say. Nowhere in those government consultations did they mention the option of raising the PST by one percentage point. Nowhere did they have that as one of the questions or one of the issues for debate or discussion. I don't believe that anyone that was at those public consultations made the recommendation to government that they should raise the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. So Manitobans were caught off guard, they were lulled into a false sense of security when the government didn't indicate there was any intention to raise the PST.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think that many MLAs on the government side of the House were caught off guard on budget day by the increase in the PST because I don't believe that they were consulted either. I don't believe that they had the discussion around their caucus table about what they should do to try to generate more revenue or to pick people's pockets any more. I don't think that discussion was

ever had. I believe that backbenchers on the government side of the House had no clue that this was going to be announced in the Budget Address and that they were going to have to defend it, especially after the leadership, their own leader, said he would never do that, he wouldn't raise taxes, that the idea of even raising taxes was nonsense. Well, we know that's the furthest thing from the truth. And, you know, maybe, just maybe, members of Cabinet had that discussion. Maybe around the Cabinet table there was that discussion, although that isn't always the case because not always does every Cabinet minister know exactly where the changes are going to be in every government department, but they may have had that discussion.

But none of them have stood up and defended it and said that, you know, they were the ones that championed the cause—pick people's pockets one more time. We're government; we can dictate, we can tell Manitobans what best for is—what's best for them, and they'll just believe us. Well, that's not the case. And it, again, is important to note that nobody on the government side of the House will stand in their place and defend this as the right thing to do, will say to Manitobans that we really made this decision in your best interests. I'd like to hear them say that out at the doorstep to individuals who are having difficulty making ends meet. I'd like that to say—them to say that to the people that they represent who can't figure out how they are going to make ends meet.

It's really, really unfortunate that we have had to spend as much time as we've had to, trying to give the government a chance—just one more chance to say, look, we made a mistake. We made a mistake and we will take a step back. We will say, let's forgo the PST increase until we have a chance to get out there to talk to Manitobans, to convince them that it's the right thing to do, and then we'll give them the opportunity to vote yea or nay, to say, yes, we believe that you really need this money.

They've indicated that they need it for absolutely everything. One day, it's flood protection. The next day, it's infrastructure. The next day, it's a splash pad. The next day, it's hospital capital—Health capital. They're all over the map trying to justify why again Manitobans need to reach deeper into their pockets, to take their hard-earned money and give it to government—a government who believes that they know best. I mean, there is an arrogance on the government side of the House that is absolutely

unbelievable, and Manitobans are not going to tolerate a government that continues to lie to them, to manipulate and to tell them that they know what's best.

We know that they didn't listen to Manitobans through the public consultation process on the budget. We asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger) whether he was going to show up at any committee meetings to listen to Manitobans that had registered with their legitimate concerns about the raise in the PST. They were, I would say, 90 per cent opposed to the increase in the PST.

But, you know, the Premier didn't show up for one public hearing. He didn't listen to one Manitoban that came forward at those meetings and indicated—told very personal stories about how it was going to impact them and their family. But did he care? No, he slipped out the back door or the front door, wherever he went to escape those people, and to me that says volumes about the Premier's agenda, about this government's agenda and where they're headed. And Manitobans will not forget.

How many members of the government side of the House went door to door in the last election campaign and told people that they were not going to raise taxes, that that was their party's policy, that that was their party's position? How many went door to door and said that, and how many said many other things? I know in my community they were out knocking on doors in seniors' apartment blocks and saying to seniors, oh, you know, don't elect those big, bad Conservatives. If you do, you're going to see your rents go sky-high as a result, because the Conservatives are going to raise your rents.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Well, what's happening in River East constituency? What's happening in Rossmere constituency today, and I would venture to guess many other constituencies? Rents are going sky-high. They're increasing by 10 to 12 per cent in some of our seniors' blocks—seniors who are on a fixed income. Now, Mr. Speaker, I would venture to guess that maybe the NDP should've said, keep us in office, elect us and you'll see your rents go sky-high, because that's exactly what is happening. They would say anything at all in those seniors' blocks to seniors to scare them to think that the Conservatives were going to be the ones that took the money out of their pockets. But it's under an NDP administration that seniors are seeing their rents increase 10 to

12 per cent, and on top of that they're having to pay an increase in the PST on their insurance, their contents insurance, on their vehicle registration, on many, many other things. And they do not see that same increase in their revenue coming in.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker, we have a government that has lost touch. They've lost touch with Manitobans, Manitobans who have worked hard, who have built this province and this country. Those immigrants that came in the first wave of immigrants—immigrant—of immigration that settled in our province of Manitoba and worked hard, many, many of them came with just the shirts on their back. They came from war-torn countries; they came from concentration camps; they came from areas of—where people were persecuted. They fled to Canada for a better life and a better way, and they worked hard.

There was no government support at that time for individuals to come here; they worked hard. Many of them became very successful business people. Many out in northeast Winnipeg became very successful as a result of that hard work and effort. And no one handed anything to them. They worked long, hard days, started businesses out of their own homes and, Mr. Speaker, became very successful.

Mr. Speaker, they did it on their own. When we see the waves of immigration coming today to our province and to our country that are so needed, they come here for a better way of life. They're coming, in some instances, from oppressed countries where they don't have democracy, where they don't have the ability to have a say. And they're coming here because they believe that we are a democracy; that we respect individuals, we respect people's rights and we expect—and they expect to be listened to and they don't want to be dictated to.

What we are seeing today is very unfortunate because we are seeing a betrayal of those people, those people that have come here, that have helped to build our province. And we see a government that is completely turning their backs on people and saying, you know, we know better, we can dictate and you will listen. We will take money out of your pockets; we'll take away your democratic right to vote, as is in legislation, as is in law today.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's rather unfortunate because that paints a pretty negative picture of politicians. And I know we're not sort of at the top of

the scale when it comes to professions that are well respected, and it makes me feel even worse. I've been elected for many, many years, and I like to believe that I've been elected by the people in River East constituency because I've worked hard on their behalf. But I have also been pretty truthful and honest with them; I've never gone door to door and lied to them about what I might do or I could do.

Mr. Speaker, and it's unfortunate because I think I was talking to my family and to my daughter after the last election, and I said I have never seen an election before that has been so dishonest, where there have been so many lies. And it really made me almost embarrassed to think that I was a politician today and to be able to stand with any pride and say that I'm a politician that represents my constituency, because I believe that my word is my bond.

And so, when you have people going door to door and not telling the truth, not being open and upfront and honest with people, Mr. Speaker, then—and placing the fear of God in people that if, you know, if you elect someone else, they're the big, bad boogeyman that's going to ruin your life and ruin your livelihood—well, I would venture to guess that we have a government today that is ruining people's lives and ruining their livelihood.

Mr. Speaker, and it's unfortunate, it's extremely unfortunate that we have stooped to that level and we—when you have the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province of Manitoba showing the lack of leadership that he has shown when we've had leaders that have been much stronger in the past, when we have—and I'm sure that members on the government side of the House, too, are reflecting back now on the strong leadership. They may not have always agreed with Gary Doer and his leadership style, but he was a strong leader. And I do know that many of them today that were elected and served under Gary Doer will see a completely about—a very big difference in the way they are being led today, and that's unfortunate.

And I know that maybe that's one of the reasons why we don't see a lot of engagement by members on the government side of the House in standing up to put their comments on the record. I believe they're having a lot of difficulty trying to defend the indefensible, and that's sad commentary. But we will, as an opposition party, continue to stand up for those Manitobans who felt they were betrayed in the last election or who were betrayed in the last election.

We will continue to remind them that we're not all the same. We are very different, and we will not compromise our principles and we will not lie to Manitobans to try to get their vote. Mr. Speaker, that's unconscionable. It's below what members of this Legislature should expect of themselves, and I would hope that a few over there might have some second thoughts and maybe someone would have the courage to stand up and say, you know, maybe we should rethink the direction that we're heading. Maybe, just maybe, we should open the dialogue to Manitobans and find out what they feel.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that many in my constituency and in surrounding constituencies—I've had members, strong card-carrying members of the New Democratic Party that are acquaintances of mine that have—and we always have the ability to rise above politics and treat each other as human beings. And we tend to joke from time to time about our political preferences, but I have had some card-carrying members of the New Democratic Party say to me, well, I've had a chance to talk to my NDP MLA and rake him or her over the coals for the kinds of decisions that they're making today. So this is what we're hearing from strong New Democrats who are seeing that this government is making mistakes, and sometimes that comes with being in government for too long that you lose touch. You lose touch with ordinary Manitobans because you don't—you aren't as connected and you're not really listening to what they have to say.

You know, government is not easy. Sometimes there are tough decisions that need to be made. You can't be all things to all people, and we have a government today that believes that they can be all things to all people. Just give us a bit more of your money and we can do everything for everyone. Mr. Speaker, that's not the way governments should operate. Government should listen to the people. They should allow that democratic opportunity for people to come forward to express their point of view and to vote, exercise their democratic right. And what we are seeing here in this Legislature today is very unfortunate. It is unfortunate that we believe—and I guess I'm saying that collective we, but it would be the government that believes that they're above that kind of consultation, that kind of meaningful dialogue that listens to what people have to say and, from time to time, will admit that they are wrong.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker, I would say today that this government is wrong. They have moved in the wrong direction when they have taxed people to the max, and we have never seen the kind of huge tax increases in the history, I think, of this province as we've seen in the last two years. Well, we may have seen it once before under a New Democratic government, and I think that was maybe the government of Howard Pawley. And I was around in those days too. How could I forget the 1988 election when the Pawley government fell after just two years of government, and one of the reasons was, again, that they didn't tell the truth to Manitobans. They kept MPI rates artificially low. Those were in the days when MPI rates were set around the Cabinet table, and they kept them artificially low before the election and then jacked them way up after the election. There was major public outcry, and, as a result, that government fell after only two years and a Conservative government took over.

So, Mr. Speaker, it seems that we're getting, sort of, it's a *déjà vu* kind of thing, where we're seeing full circle an arrogant government that doesn't tell the truth to Manitobans, and, as a result, Manitobans lose faith in that government. It looks like we have gone full circle. We're back to the '80s, the late '80s, when—I mean, I know that members of government like to go back to the '90s; well, let's go back to the '80s and have a little bit of a history lesson because I think that if some of the members of government looked at those days, saw what happened under the Pawley administration and saw what happened to Howard Pawley, they would have some second thoughts about what they're doing today. They may reverse their decision; they may apologize to Manitobans; they may give them a chance to vote in a referendum.

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

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to this very important bill. This bill will have one of the biggest impacts on Manitoba and on Manitoba's history for many, many years to come. And under the balanced budget, debt repayment and taxpayer protection act, Manitobans had the democratic right to a referendum whenever a government wants to raise a major tax, and the PST falls into that category.

Let's just examine part of that paragraph, Mr. Speaker.

Democratic right: How did we get these democratic rights? Where do those rights come from, Mr. Speaker? And when we think back to the Great War—and some members in here will remember that; of course, I don't, but there's probably one or two that do. At any rate, history told the tale very well. That we fought—we fought the socialism, we fought communism, and we fought Marxism for the freedom—for the freedom to do the things that we do today. And so that freedom doesn't give us the right to break laws. It doesn't give us the right to break the balanced budget, debt repayment, and taxpayer protection act.

And, Mr. Speaker, in my family, in my mother's family, there were 10 children, and eight of them went to war. In my dad's family, four were born and three of them went to war. Fortunately, they all came back. They all came back alive, but they came back knowing what they had fought for. They fought for democracy, and this bill, breaking this law, is not from democracy. This is totally opposite to democracy. Actually, what it is, it's arrogance. It's arrogance on the part of this particular government. This government has felt that they can do as they please; they can say as they please.

The government figures that they can go out and they can lie—they can lie—going door to door before an election, saying we will not raise taxes; we will not raise the PST. That's ridiculous. That's nonsense. But each and every member went door to door, misleading the ratepayers and the constituents in their constituency, making them believe that there would be no PST increase, that there would be no tax increase. And as soon as the election was over, they broke the promises. They started breaking the promises by broadening the PST, and they continued to break the promises then by trying to break this law, the PST, by raising the PST on all products, including the ones they broadened the PST on.

And so, upon questioning in the House here from many of our members on this side, what we got was a lot of rhetoric. I have to say it wasn't good rhetoric; it was just rhetoric. But, at the same time, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) says we have consulted—[*interjection*] That's close to being that, yes.

But the minister has said many times in this House that he consulted; he consulted with all Manitobans. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you—I can tell you—truthfully and honestly and factually that he did not contact and consult with all of Manitobans,

and quite the opposite in fact. He talked to a couple of people I assured—I'm sure that he did, but, at the same time, at no time did he mention that he was going to raise the PST prior to the budget. No time did he do that. And, with personal invitations to a small constituency of Emerson, basically a swing riding in this province, and he would not—he would not—come down and have his troop come with him. He would've been fully protected. We could've even got an armed guard to look over him to make sure that he wouldn't get in any trouble. I would organize everything for him. And he refused to come.

Now it—this just reeks of arrogance. And, you know, with this arrogance comes disrespect. It manifests so many things, but disrespect is certainly one of them. And it's been shown many times since we've been in the House here in this session, there's a huge disrespect for Manitobans, and it starts with the Premier (Mr. Selinger). The Premier of this province has no respect for the Manitobans. There was a large, large group of people that wanted to speak at committee to this bill. Many, many people came, and the Premier not once set foot in that committee room. Not once did he come and hear what the people of Manitoba were saying. He didn't come to see how much passion there was from all walks of life that presented at committee.

And so perhaps he's going to read Hansard. And I hope that he can read and comprehend at the same time, Mr. Speaker. So I'll just give him a little bit of a history lesson from committee.

Shaun Horan has become a successful businessman in this province after coming from humble beginnings. He presented to committee and shared his thoughts about the NDP's illegal tax grab. See, he could see that there's one word that fits this government perfectly: addicts. They're all addicts. They're addicted to other people's money. He didn't say that they were investing it; he just said they were addicted to it. And, Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister had nothing to say to that.

Shaun went on to say that from his humble beginnings, his mother raised him and his two brothers on just \$11,000 a year after his father had passed away. She knew the value of a dollar and the value of spending it on essentials. Essentials is a word that isn't in the NDP government's dictionary; it's not there. This government, however, does not—they're stealing Shaun's money to feed their spending addiction, thanks to an illegal 14 per cent PS—increase in the PST.

And the minister still had no response when Shaun was making his presentation. Shaun also outlined that there's two different types of people in this—in our society: the takers and the makers. Shaun and his company are the makers who build this province. They're the people that employ people. He is an individual that employs people. He provides for every one of his employees with an income that's suitable to raise a family, own a home, buy a car, travel, buy his groceries and everything else in the city of Winnipeg. And what did this government do to him? They raised his house insurance. They taxed the very things that's necessary for the survival of his family.

So, as he pointed out, the NDP are the takers who steal money from Shaun to feed their addiction. The NDP's illegal 14 per cent increase in the PST takes money from all Manitobans to feed this massive addiction. Unfortunately, we can confirm, at this time, after years of deceit, that they're taking money out of Manitobans' pockets just to feed their spending addiction, Mr. Speaker.

* (16:40)

The Premier was lost in action. He wasn't there. He was missing in action, for sure. He didn't hear anything that Shaun had put on the record, and so I'm speaking for Shaun and many, many more like him.

And one—another person, for example, is Jake Bergén, who believes in democracy. He and the rest of the presenters all believe that they had the democratic right to a referendum. Jake made it clear yesterday that he believes the NDP hates democracy and would rather take away the rights of Manitoba and break the law at will. And it's obvious—it's quite obvious that Jake was absolutely right. That's what they plan on doing, and they have for some time, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier is illegally collecting \$5 million a week. But the plans he has for this money—hmm, we really have no idea what they are. They started out being for flood, but the flood never happened. Then it started out being for infrastructure; we found out that, whoa, the infrastructure budget has been cut. Oh, well, then, we're going to do hospitals and we're going to take the money out of the Jockey Club to build hospitals and open more ERs. We can't manage—manage the ERs that we have today. We don't have doctors in this province; it's been pointed out time and time again in this very Chamber.

But Jake Bergen owns a coffee shop and follows the law each and every day. He also pays his employees a wage that allows them to raise a family, own a car, have a house, do all of the things that we expect all of Manitobans to do. However, if he's late—now remember, Mr. Speaker, I said that he's not paid to collect the PST—however, if he's one day late with that money, he is fined 10 per cent of what is owing. That's huge. That's huge, and yet, this NDP government had no problem saying, look, we need this money to fight floods; we need this money for many, many things. What they didn't say to the people of Manitoba, to the hard-working people of this province is, we need that money to fund our morally and financially bankrupt political party. They never said a word about the vote tax that they were going to give themselves, that they were going to take a million dollars out of the economy to fund this morally and financially bankrupt party.

But, again, as I pointed out earlier, Mr. Speaker, the Premier was missing in action. He wasn't at that hearing that Jake Bergen was at. And then following that, Selena Bieber, a small-business owner, presented to committee, and she was upset about the integrity—the lack of integrity of this government. And, in her view, the government lied. And she was very forthright when she said that. She looked the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) in the eye and said, your government has lied. You've lied to all of us in Manitoba. But the government's lack of integrity has been—become clear and, again, it was pointed out that their vote tax to fund political operations and their illegal PST hike.

Mr. Speaker, after hearing from all the presenters, would the NDP admit today that they've made a big mistake? Will they say that? Will they vote against this? Will the backbenchers that did—knew nothing, and I give them credit that they knew nothing about the big NDP government lie that the increase in the PST was coming or that taxes would go up. But 93 per cent of small businesses agree that Manitoba government should hold a referendum—93 per cent of small businesses. That's the economic driver of this province. That's what—that's the backbone. That's the backbone of our province. And, when I look across the way, I don't see many—in fact, I don't see any that have ever, ever had to make a paycheque to an employee to support a family to—have a business. So they wouldn't understand.

They don't understand business, and it's clear the biggest business in Manitoba is government and they

have doubled the debt. They have doubled the debt, and we don't have anything to show for it. That's shameful. Selena Bieber went on to say that the government's actions speak louder than words, words that they have yet to live up to. They raised the PST to 14 per cent illegally, voted themselves \$5,000 to fund a morally bankrupt political party, and so on, with these raised taxes. But nothing—nothing that was essential. Essential is important, Mr. Speaker.

Selena, like many other Manitobans, is ready to fight and will not back down from this government or their illegal actions. She says the government lied to Manitoba first by raising the PST when they said they wouldn't, and now adding insult to injury, by adding \$5,000 per member vote tax on top of that, Mr. Speaker. And, I might say, and I will add, that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) again was missing in action when Selena presented at committee.

And, Mr. Speaker, Canada Day is a day that all Manitobans celebrate; all Manitobans celebrate Canada Day and for good reason. We have, supposedly, democracy in Canada, and I believe we do in most provinces. In Manitoba, it's become questionable.

But the people in Arborg, they couldn't join the Premier on Canada Day celebrating. They're now paying additional 14 per cent illegal NDP tax grab. The Premier decided to break the law, and the businesses in Arborg, like Vidir, Pro-Fab, and Diemo are forced to pay an illegal PST hike, Mr. Speaker.

At the same time it's been clear, and made clear, by the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), that those companies have been asking for way too much, and it's their own fault that they've been developed in the wrong place. That's a terrible comment to have made by the member that's representing them. He's not doing the job that he should have been doing, and he certainly shouldn't have been representing them by voting for the PST hike. If he had the opportunity, prior to the last election, he should have been there fighting for these companies that hire over 500 people—500 great people. And out of those 500 great people I would suggest that there's probably another 20 or 30 that have smaller businesses. They're very industrious individuals who pay taxes, huge amount of taxes, and yet they're being punished—they're being punished—by the PST—the illegal PST hike, by the broadening of the PST itself—or the—it—the insurance—the broadening of the PST on insurance and many other different products that they use.

But at the same time, the Premier and his Finance Minister decided to break the law, and now the people in Roblin, including Gerald Stuart, are forced to pay an illegal PST hike. The Premier wouldn't listen to the people in Roblin, and it's clear that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) didn't listen to the people in Roblin either.

So, on Canada Day, it wasn't a day to celebrate everything in this country, because on July 1st is when the PST was to come into effect. And that particular day what the companies had to do was sit down with their computers, and their cash registers, and adjust them to cover this PST hike. And it's not just a simple thing that you sit down at the computer and you push one button, and everything is magically done. No, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more to that. And many of the businesses, even though they are small businesses, they had to hire someone for eight to 10 hours on Canada Day, to change their computers over. It wasn't a day to celebrate in Manitoba at all.

And it made Manitoba less competitive, there's no question about that, with the highest PST in western Canada. But, again, Mr. Speaker, when these individuals made their presentations to committee, the Premier was missing in action.

I will say that the Minister for Finance (Mr. Struthers) was there; yes, he was. But, at the same time, he promised—he went door to door in Roblin. He promised Gerald Stuart, the owner of Home Hardware in Roblin, that there was no tax increase, there was no PST increase. And Gerald says his business will be unable to grow, with fewer customers, and the town will have a hard time retaining people, with lower taxes just a few kilometres away.

* (16:50)

But it was clear, after the fact, that the member for Dauphin was not about to listen. So Roblin chamber of commerce was not consulted either on this PST increase. They were promised in 2011 that there would be no new taxes. You see, and the minister stood up in this House and said: I have consulted with Manitobans. I've consulted with them; I've explained to them why we need the PST; and they've all agreed. Well, that's not true. That's not true at all.

Gerald was promised no new taxes as business will be unable to grow and his customers are leaving for Saskatchewan, each and every day. And we have

said to the minister, you know, it's not too late; you could change your mind. Huh, I doubt that that's going to happen. The Roblin chamber of commerce has yet to be consulted with the NDP's plan to raise the PST. Their MLA, the member for Dauphin, has yet to consult with them. Now we're quite a ways past the fact now that they have to collect it, they are collecting it, even though it's an illegal law. They broke the law and forcing—they're forcing small businesses to collect this. The minister still has not—he has not consulted with his constituents, and just across the border, 10 minutes away, the PST is 38 per cent lower and shoppers are leaving the community. How do you expect—how do you expect—people like Gerald Stuart or the grocery stores or the car dealers, the automotive repairs—how do you expect those companies to grow with that type of an attitude? That type of an attitude is arrogance. That's the only word that you can describe—use to describe it.

And, Mr. Speaker, recreation activities are the backbone of small communities. That's the glue that holds the communities together. It gives them a reason to participate with each other, to mix and mingle in their small communities, and volunteers donate time and energy to ensure that these activities continue at a minimal cost. The communities of Arborg and Bifrost have had their skies—those costs skyrocket, thanks to the spenDP. A 14 per cent increase in the PST equals almost \$17,000 more in costs this year alone. That's huge. That's huge for a small community like Arborg. And we keep in mind what the member for the Interlake said about the businesses in Arborg, that they developed in the wrong place. He has no respect for the businesses, and now he has no respect for the recreation activities or for the volunteers, the volunteer Manitobans in Arborg.

An Honourable Member: He's a liar.

Mr. Graydon: He has no respect for these individuals, and if he's going to sit in his seat and chirp and continue to call me a liar, I wish the Speaker would hear him.

Why is the spenDP trying to shut down recreation activities in Manitoba with its illegal tax grab? Call a referendum; that's what we have said many, many times. The communities of Arborg and Bifrost will have to pay almost \$600 more in hydro, almost \$200 more in natural gas, and, thanks to the PST being applied to insurance, they will now pay a whopping \$3,453.79 in insurance in the coming year.

And yet the member for the Interlake continues to say, they developed in the wrong place. These companies that are in Arborg area developed in the wrong place. He has no respect for the recreation activities; he's got no respect for the businesses that have developed there. They're the businesses that have hired so many people. No, Sir, Mr. Speaker, the spend tax grab equals almost \$17,000 that will not go to recreation activities in the community of Arborg and Bifrost.

Why are they trying to shut down recreation activities? Do they not like these activities that keep young people busy, that keep them engaged in the community, that draws people to their communities? It's clear that they have no respect for the people in that community. Certainly, the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) doesn't have any. Activities such as Ukrainian dancing, minor hockey, summer day camps and curling will be threatened, will be threatened by this very 14 per cent increase in the PST. And the community will now have to pay almost \$17,000 more in PST than last year, making it harder for this community to run these worthwhile activities as the member, as the member for the Interlake says it's too bad they developed in the wrong place, it's too bad they live in the wrong place. We'll just take their money, but we'll give them nothing. We'll give them nothing, no respect; he has no respect for the recreational activities in Arborg and nor for the companies or the people that live there. That's shameful. That's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

And just an example of how far the NDP have pushed people, how far they have pushed them, Mr. Speaker, after they went door to door and the NDP government lied to the people of Manitoba, they have made many, many, many announcements to try and offset this. But what one of the things they did is they pressed one of their employees—Sean Roberts, a government employee with Manitoba Liquor Mart, explains now that he's in a position where he has to defend his government's decision to raise the illegal PST on hard-working Manitobans.

This government's illegal actions are affecting their employees, and each and every one of them now have to defend the fact that this government lied. Sean Roberts is one of these employees who has to defend his—this decision to each and every taxpayer he comes into contact with. And you would think, with 192 communicators, Mr. Speaker, that they wouldn't have to force front-line workers like Sean to do this type of thing—that he has to defend this illegal PST hike.

Mr. Roberts wrote—is actually a paid advertisement which is bought and paid for out of government's illegal-actions account. The NDP is now employing front-line government employees to defend their illegal actions. This is on top the 192 communicators which are also being used to defend even more illegal actions.

They have an opportunity to do the right thing, Mr. Speaker. They've had that opportunity time and time again. But, no, they continue on this path of destruction, this path of destruction that will cost our children and our grandchildren for many, many years to come.

See the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and his government are 'avoiding' a referendum because they're afraid to face the people of Manitoba. And, quite frankly, I can't blame them. I can't blame them for being afraid to go out and meet the people face to face. I can understand the member for the Interlake not wanting to go to Arborg and face the people there, after all of the things that he has said and done, after he went door to door misleading the people on a tax hike, misleading them on a PST, and then saying to the businesses that employ over 500 people, saying, it's your own fault, you developed in the wrong place, you shouldn't have done that, and then raising the PST—the PST on the recreation in the community, Mr. Speaker.

I can understand why that particular member will not go to that community to campaign again, where he cannot go to the doors and knock on the door and say, hi, I'm here and I need some money to run my campaign. Do you know what they'll do? This is what you'll hear at the door; the door will be slamming in his face, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what'll happen, and that's exactly why he needs that \$5,000 every year. He needs that \$5,000 every year to fund a campaign because he can't go to the door; him and 36 others cannot go to that front door because their government lied to Manitobans.

We have small-business owners like Dwayne Marling of the Canadian restaurant and food association—calls this a triple whammy. He says that they're being hit by all side—from all sides by this government. Businesses are starting to look at other provinces like Saskatchewan to relocate. And, of course, the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn) says: That's a good idea; the lights are brighter in Saskatchewan. Just go to Saskatchewan. He doesn't need people to vote against him. He wants the people that are raising the money, the people that are

creating the jobs—he wants to see them leave the province. That's arrogance. That's arrogance, Mr. Speaker.

* (17:00)

In a survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, 86 per cent of small-business owners are opposed to the PST hike to pay for NDP spending addiction.

And, Mr. Speaker, you'll have to—you'll notice that I've said—

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

Just prior to adjournment, again under the heading of celebrating our youth, I just want to indicate to members of the House that our two pages that are with us here this afternoon, this is their last day with us in the Assembly.

Of course, Austin Ames—I know I've had the opportunity and pleasure of introducing his family who has been here and, of course, Austin is going back to finish his grade 12 at Ravenscourt. His interest is in international affairs and foreign affairs, and we wish him well in his future and his—whatever his career and educational opportunities will be.

And also for Connor Boyd, who I've mentioned in this House before, was quite successful in his track-and-field endeavours, and we've had opportunity to celebrate that in past. And, of course, maybe one day we will see him in Olympic activities representing our country, and we would look forward to that. And he's going to be returning to the Churchill High School to complete his grade 12.

And we wish them both well in their future education and career opportunities.

And on, of course—the hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, August 26, 2013

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