

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 22, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no bills—

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by R. Ricker, D. Hawker and B. Hawker and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by D. Fletcher, D. Watson, L. Schmidt and many, many other Manitobans.

Reopen Beausejour's Employment Manitoba Office

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

(2) Employment Manitoba offices provide crucial career counselling, job search and training

opportunities for local residents looking to advance their education.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by L. Urbanski, R. Braun, J. Brown and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by R. Uminga, E. Uminga, R. Uminga and many more concerned Manitobans-tobans.'

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (13:40)

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

And this petition is signed by W. Thompson, C. Whitford, A. Thompson and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by S. Swayze, T. Gies, E. Davidson and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by M. Hudeovic, N. Holmes, V. Popaj and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of B. Zurba, C. Zurba, R. Huffman and many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government broke a commitment to support families of children with a diagnosis of

autism spectrum disorder, including timely diagnosis and access to necessary treatment such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as ABA services.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by D. Reimer, B. Reimer, M. Pelland and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

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

And this is the background for this petition:

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

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by E.A. Reyes, E.S. Reyes, R.R. Cruz and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by E. Harms, C. Czarkowski, D. Czarkowski and thousands of other Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

* (13:50)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by N. Parker, J. Parker, D. Baum and many other fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by I. Krahn, D. Lavallee, M. Fiebelkorn and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by S. Ricketts, S. Mark, E. Bernard and many more fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by J. Malanchuk, B. Vedoya and D. Carriere and many others.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

* (14:00)

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by M. Tran, D. Nguyen and D. Menzies Irwin and many, many more fine Manitobans.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Committee of Supply

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): Mr. Chair, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted certain resolutions.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), that the report of the committee be received.

Mr. Speaker: It's been moved by the honourable member for the Interlake, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview, that the report of the committee be received. That agreed?

An Honourable Member: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of receiving the report will signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order, please. The question before the House is: Shall the report of the committee be received?

Division

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

Yea

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gaudreau, Howard, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Whitehead, Wiebe, Wight.

Nay

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 34, Nays 19.

Mr. Speaker: Report of the committee is carried.

Mr. Speaker: We have no guests to introduce today, so we'll proceed directly to—

ORAL QUESTIONS

Fiscal Management Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, it's a pretty bad manager that tries to scare their workers, Mr. Speaker, but that's exactly what the government's doing with its phony fiscal cliff arguments. And there are real people in this province who face real fiscal cliffs, and let's talk a little bit about them.

Cam's a senior. He lives on a fixed income. This government's tax hikes, their out-of-control spending have a damaging effect on Cam, and now inflation has reared its ugly head again as a consequence of this government's tax-happy strategies. It's the arch-enemy, of course, of seniors. Lower purchasing power for Cam makes his life very hard.

So I'd just like the Premier (Mr. Selinger) to acknowledge today in this House, if he wouldn't mind, that his fiscal cliff—although it is phony—his strategies of high tax and high spend are creating a very real fiscal cliff for the seniors of this province—acknowledge that.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, affordability is one of the things that has made Manitoba a great place to live. We have a bundle of services—hydroelectricity, home heating, auto insurance—that are the lowest in the country as we speak. They'd even be lower if the MTS was still a Crown corporation and we had the telephone rates under control here in Manitoba as well.

And for seniors that are experiencing the tragedy of cancer, they now have free drugs in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, something that members opposite voted against but has been a great comfort to those in the greatest need of care and treatment at a time when they're going through a very difficult disease.

Mr. Pallister: Well, it's a Premier with so little respect for seniors he doesn't want them to vote on his proposed tax hikes, Mr. Speaker.

Small-business owners are feeling the pinch too, and this fiscal cliff is not a phony thing for them, as phony as the government's is for itself.

Lori owns a hair salon. The PST hike, expansion of the PST, of course, last year hit her very hard, hit her business very hard, hit her customers hard too. Everything she needs she says costs more now, and now the government proposes to make it 8 per cent. Overheads are up, profits are down, there's less take-home pay for Manitobans and less discretionary income, so there's less business for Lori. She estimates about 25 per cent less. But she's forced to become a tax collector for the government, charge 8 per cent on a cut and colour and lay off her friends.

Mr. Speaker, so let me ask the Premier again: Does the Premier understand that his high-tax-and-spend policies are creating a very real fiscal cliff for people like Lori and small-business people across the province?

Mr. Selinger: Not only is Manitoba one of the most affordable places to live in Canada, as indicated by provincial budgets in other provinces such as Saskatchewan which ranked Manitoba as in the top two for affordability, but we have the second lowest unemployment rate in the country, Mr. Speaker. More Manitobans working and we have wages in Manitoba are growing faster than the rate of inflation.

Low unemployment, high participation rate, wages growing faster than the inflation rate and a growth rate in Manitoba above the Canadian average, that means Manitobans are doing well.

They're working and they're living in an affordable province.

Mr. Pallister: And the highest rate of exporting people from our province, the fastest growing tax burden on any citizen in the country is in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

And Joan is a mother of four and a civil servant, and I'd appreciate if the members would listen to Joan's story. She has four boys. They're all at home. Two of them are disabled. Now, when I talked to her she said her car registration's gone up, her gas has gone up, her hydro's gone up, her benefits have gone up, her house insurance has gone up, and now the government wants to tackle her again with a PST increase.

* (14:10)

And she faces tough decisions, every month she faces tough decisions. She told me she had to decide recently between shirts for the boys or some home repairs that had been waiting a long time to get done. She has to decide between band for one of her boys or not, hockey or not. And her four boys, none of them have ever seen a live Jets game, not one time.

So these are real people. These are real Manitobans. And this government's trying to frighten them, and they're trying to frighten Joan with being laid off.

Does the Premier understand that real people in this province are facing a real fiscal cliff?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I think I heard the Leader of the Opposition correctly when he said this individual who's struggling to make ends meet is a civil servant. How would that civil servant feel if she was laid off with across-the-board cuts, which the members opposite were promising.

Mr. Speaker, at a time when the Leader of the Opposition is calling for \$550 million of cuts in the public service, we're keeping people working to build a better Manitoba. We're building schools. We're building hospitals. We're building hydro. We're building roads, and we're building flood protection. We're doing it with the private sector where the majority of jobs are being created, but we're also protecting public services for people that need them and keep people working. Very different than the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to lay those folks off.

Mr. Pallister: It's a pretty poor management strategy, Mr. Speaker, that tries to scare labour.

And in particular, I don't worry too much about Joan because she's a very sharp and astute woman and she understands the government's phony arguments about the fiscal cliff, and also she's well on to the government's phony arguments about any projected layoffs. She also understands that our proposal for cost reduction is the same one that the government made just a year ago, and she's on to the government in every respect.

But I'll say this to the Premier (Mr. Selinger): If one civil servant believes him and is living in fear this summer because of their job, he should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition actually didn't put a question in his third set of comments, so it lets me put this on the record. When the recession came in Manitoba, like it did across the country, we made a commitment to a stimulus program which generated 29,000 additional jobs. We negotiated collective agreements which had some zeros in them but also provided job security to Manitoba civil servants.

When the Leader of the Opposition showed up, he said that we needed a chill in the public service. He said we needed tough love in the public service. He said we needed across-the-board, indiscriminate cuts in the public service. When he did that in the '90s, teachers lost their jobs, public servants lost their jobs, corrections workers lost their jobs, child welfare workers lost their jobs.

The lesson from the Leader of the Opposition is he hasn't learned anything from the '90s. He wants to do it all over again in the current era—unacceptable.

**Deputy Minister of Family Services
Civil Service Memo**

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): All of this from a government that lied before the last election and said they weren't going to raise the PST. How can anyone in Manitoba believe anything that they say?

Mr. Speaker, front-line civil servants received an email from the Deputy Minister of Family Services and Labour on Friday fear mongering that their pay might be at risk.

Did the minister direct her deputy to send this politically motivated email to try to create panic on the front lines of the civil service?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there was a politically motivated email from the Deputy Minister of Family Services and Labour to try to create panic among civil servants. It was directed by a government that lied before the last election and said they wouldn't raise the PST and they're now trying to ram that increase through without the legally required referendum.

Mr. Speaker, the memo stated that we will keep staff informed of any relevant information as much as possible.

Will they now provide the relevant information that they've misled civil servants and tried to create panic when no panic should exist?

Ms. Howard: I saw that email probably the same time everybody else in the department did when it was sent out. And, well, that is the truth, Mr. Speaker. And I assume that the deputy minister was responding to concerns that he had heard.

Here is the truth, Mr. Speaker. The week before last, the Leader of the Opposition said, don't worry, we're going to pass interim appropriate—we would never hold it up. Last week, we spent an entire week waiting for the leader—opposition to deign to show up for a vote. That's what we did last week. This week—then they said, oh, it'll only take an hour—it'll only take an hour. This week, he said, well, maybe when and if I get around to it and I decide the time is right, then we'll do it.

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: And, again, that—Mr. Speaker, that kind of an answer from a government that will lie and say anything to get elected before an election and then do exactly the opposite afterwards.

Mr. Speaker, this minister has no credibility. The minister—and these aren't my words, but these are words by the Winnipeg Free Press says the minister's attempt to cause a panic among the general public—and that would mean civil servants also—is as reliable as was the government's promise in the last election to never raise the PST.

Mr. Speaker, how widespread was this kind of email? Did it happen in every government department or was it isolated to the minister's department?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, we gave them an opportunity on Tuesday to deal with Interim Supply. We asked for leave to deal with it then. We gave

them opportunity on Wednesday to deal with Interim Supply. We asked for leave to deal with it then. We asked them on Thursday, would you like to stay late to deal with Interim Supply? Would you like to come in on Friday to deal with Interim Supply? They have said no to every opportunity to deal with this. And now they applaud.

If people in this province are afraid, that is who they're afraid of, Mr. Speaker, an opposition that would take a scorched-earth policy to everything the government does, attempt to shut down everything government does because they think it suits their political agenda.

They'll have another opportunity today, and we'll see what happens.

Inflation Rate Tax Increases

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is the conductor of the symphony, and she's the one that made the agreement, and we're the people that will honour them.

Statistics Canada has shown that this NDP government leads the nation in one thing: inflation. Manitoba has the highest year-over-year and month-over-month inflation in June. The NDP's high-tax policy is to blame, and yet they have to realize that they have not realized the economic hole that they're in.

Mr. Speaker, can this spenDP government confirm their high-tax policies are not only emptying Manitobans' wallets but is hurting the future of this province?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Once again, Mr. Speaker, this member couldn't be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, let's see what the—let's see what Paul Ferley of the Royal Bank had to say. He was in the Free Press this weekend as well, and he talked—he said, we're not flagging any major problem in Manitoba. You know why? Because growth in the province is also above average.

What's very clear, Mr. Speaker, is that Manitobans live in one of the most affordable provinces in the entire country. Manitobans have the—one of the lowest—second lowest unemployment rate. And our average—

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

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, let's hear what Manitobans have to say. Seventy-four per cent of Manitobans believe that the NDP lied to them before the last election.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, vehicle registration fees are up 30 per cent from last year without including the NDP's illegal PST hike. Manitobans are being used to fund this government and they're not getting value for their hard-earned money.

Mr. Speaker, when will this spenDP government start treating Manitobans with respect, call a referendum and let the people of this province decide Manitoba's future?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, when you look at our record and you see what we've done in one budget after the next, it's very clear that the member for Emerson is wrong when it comes to tax breaks. We—on—whether it's personal income tax, whether it's corporate income tax, whether it's small business tax, we have come through for Manitobans.

We have built the fundamentals to have the most—one of the most affordable provinces in the entire country. They voted against Budget 2013 which helps us maintain that status as one of the most affordable provinces in which to live. We bundled up hydro rates and home heating rates and Autopac rates, guaranteed in law they'd be the lowest in the country, and we came through on that for those very same Manitobans that this member for Emerson—

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, 81 per cent of Manitobans agree that the Manitoba government should reduce its spending before implementing a PST increase. Homeowner insurance is up 15 per cent at the same time as the PST is up 14 per cent.

The NDP and their high-tax policies have put Manitobans at a serious disadvantage. It's the spenDP government's illegal actions that have harmed Manitobans the most. Manitobans deserve a government that listens to them, not a government that sees them as a source of funding.

When will this spenDP government call a referendum, withdraw their illegal PST hike and let Manitobans decide their future?

Mr. Struthers: So given what the member for Emerson (Mr. Graydon) just said, all we've got wrong is the sequence. He's saying first we should cut, then we should bring the PST in.

We're not going to do the kind of cuts that the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) has said we should do. We're not going to lay off 700 nurses as he has suggested we should do. We're not going to lay off social workers in Family Services like he has said we're going do. We're not going to lay off teachers like the member for Fort Whyte has said we should do.

We're not going to do those kind of things because we want to build the economy. We want to protect services for Manitoba families, not do the kind of deep cuts that members opposite have said very clearly that they would do if they had their chance. That ain't going to happen.

Tataskweyak Cree Nation Sewer and Water Project Update

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, on October 4th, 2005, Manitoba Hydro cut a cheque to the tune of \$225,000 to the TCN First Nation for a much needed sewer and water project; September 7th, 2006, \$225,000 again, same TCN for much needed sewer and water project; September 6th, 2007, \$225,000 for a much needed sewer and water project.

I'd like to ask the NDP member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak): How is this much needed sewer and water project working?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, the member has been asking if—the member's been asking several questions about a community that's—[interjection] Well, if they don't want to listen to the answer—[interjection] Well, that community is under evacuation order as we speak and there's a number of people, 700, in fact, that are being evacuated as we speak and the community is trying to deal with that situation as best they can.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the first cheque was written in 2005. I don't think the fire this year would have affected it.

In fact, there was another cheque written in June 20th, 2008, to the tune of \$3,251,394.90 for a sewer and water project for the TCN First Nation.

I'd like to ask the NDP member for Kildonan: Can he tell us how is that sewer and water project working? In fact, I'm sure it could be used in the case of a fire. How's it working?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, on December 14th, 2012, Grant Thornton, the auditor, did a review of the expenses and the books of TCN. It said, during our audit, quote, we noted the changes had been implemented to address material weaknesses identified in previous audits. But then went through to outline a number of accounting principles that dealt with the federal government to TCN, that dealt with other expenses in TCN and internal practices. It found no material breaches and it found—aside from the events that it had found in the audit for last year, that its accounts and its standing and its spending of its money, it's the responsibility of the community, and resources that were given to the community have been in order.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, in a community newspaper from TCN dated spring 2011, it states, and I quote, "Jack Braun of IPM estimates that the project will be completed by the end of September this year", meaning 2011. That would be the sewer and water project.

I'd like to ask the minister: How is it that over \$4 million was given to the TCN First Nation and there is no sewer and water project? It was supposed to be completed as of 2011. How could he be so incompetent? Four million dollars and no sewer and water project.

Why doesn't he get up and finally be responsible for what's going on there?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the TCN community has developed an agreement with Manitoba Hydro where Manitoba Hydro provides funds for certain community activities that are the responsibility of the community, and they get signed off onto that. And there's also the municipal-related decisions that are made by that particular community. There is an ongoing dispute in the community as to how funding's used and how it's not used. I know that most of these issues go back into the year 2000. In fact, the agreements started and were signed by a Tory government in the late 1990s when members opposite were in power, but they won't go that far back, will they?

We have dealt with—the auditor dealt with the issues. He gave the accounting procedures a good clean bill of health with respect to those issues, Mr. Speaker.

And as the member for Aboriginal affairs indicated, the only time they raise issues about First Nations is when they attack them.

Sexual Abuse Case Concern Child Safety Protocols

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Today the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry resumes. This inquiry is taking place on the heels of another scandal within the child and family system that has deeply affected a family who deserves better from this minister and her government.

We know that a young man told a probation officer that he lived in an incestuous family and that CFS was aware of sexual abuse and yet continued to do nothing.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know specifically what protocols were followed in this case, and will the minister acknowledge that she failed to ensure protocols for child safety were being followed?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Today, of course, the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry goes into its final submissions, and all of us who have followed that inquiry and followed the testimony, I think, have heard the pain involved for people who knew Phoenix, who cared for Phoenix.

I think we've heard a lot about what needs to be improved in the system and we've heard some of the improvements that have been made. And that inquiry will come to its conclusion, it will deliver its recommendations and we'll continue to work to improve the system every day.

The case that the member refers to, this horrible situation of sexual abuse that she talks about, we have said—and we continue to work with the southern authority to look at what happened in this situation to ensure that the agencies followed the law, which the law says clearly that people who know about abuse of a child need to report it. And we're going to continue to make sure—

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

Government Knowledge

Mrs. Rowat: The Winnipeg Child and Family Services worker employed under the umbrella of the southern authority saw that something wasn't right. She escorted the young man to the police and got him a psychiatric help. The local agency did not want to deal with it. She said, and I quote: I will express that they were reluctant even at the program manager level to address this case or co-operate with me or with any of this.

This is the latest in yet a series of CFS scandals under this government, and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry going on right now is a testament to that, Mr. Speaker.

The acting administrator of the 'sou'—of the authority is late—in late 2012 was the deputy minister. Did she not communicate with him on the operation he was sent to oversee? How could he not be aware of this tragic situation as it unravelled from the Child and Family Services into the courts, Mr. Speaker?

* (14:30)

Ms. Howard: I think one of the learnings from the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry will be that we need to do a much better job of talking to staff when there are allegations such as this, that we need to do a much better job of talking to staff when something goes wrong in the system, getting their—the benefit of their experience, understanding what happened and helping them to learn from situations where things don't go the way that they should.

And in this situation, that's why we asked the southern authority, as soon as I became aware of these allegations, to work with the agency, to work with the staff involved, to find out what's happened in this case so that we can find out what we need to do to make sure that the agency can live up to our expectations and the expectations of the law, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, this government is blatantly failing children. You cannot continually learn on the backs of dead children. They have to be working ahead of the system and protect the children that are in their care.

Mr. Speaker, this is a system of this—that this government created. This government implemented the oversight system, and the checks and balances that were supposed to ensure that children are protected were not followed. The system isn't

working. Vulnerable children are being failed by the secrecy, by the lack of accountability and the lack of transparency by this NDP government.

Will this minister finally admit that there are serious failings in her department and that these failures are harming children in care? Don't act after the fact. Act proactively. These children deserve it.

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, every child that dies, whether they're in care or not in care, every child that experiences abuse at the hands of the people should love them, every child is a tragedy. It is a tragedy that we can't even sometimes comprehend, and every child that dies in care is also not a political opportunity.

It is—when something like this happens, whether it's Phoenix Sinclair, whether it's the allegations that she's mentioning, our responsibility is to find out what happened. Our responsibility is to talk to the people involved and find out how we can improve the system and how we can prevent similar things from happening. That's what we're trying to do in this case.

They're very serious allegations. They deserve to be looked into. That's why we're acting to do that.

Mental Health Services Accessibility Barriers

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues raised this morning at the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry is the fact that it took months and months to get a psychiatric assessment for Phoenix's mother, Samantha Kematch, when her flat emotional affect towards Phoenix was noted shortly after birth.

Linda Burnside's 2012 report to the Children's Advocate notes, and I quote, the scarcity of mental health supports, outreach or treatment facilities and the limited availability of mental health resources in Manitoba are part of the problem. She also highlights the barriers to accessing mental health services.

I ask the Premier: When will he start investing in programs that are effective and reduce barriers to access instead of spending money in ways that aren't working?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Several resources have been dedicated to dealing with mental health issues both at the community level with programs like PACT, with additional resources and expansion of services available at Selkirk, with a new mental health court, first time ever delivered in the province of Manitoba. It's going very well. They work in

partnership with members of the health-care system, the WRHA, to make sure appropriate assessments are done and treatment and appropriate sentencing is—occurs.

We opened the new crisis prevention unit—first ever in Canada—system of emergency room treatment where people can come and get help with a social worker or get help with a psychologist or a nurse or a nurse practitioner or somebody specific to their needs. There's a team approach going on there. It's widely admired across the country.

We know that these issues are very significant and they need attention, and that's why we put resources to them, and we will continue to find 'innovoitive'—innovative ways to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Support for Children in Care

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, problem is it's not really happening. Two weeks ago, I brought up the problem that too many youth who have been abused when they were in care or before they were in care are not receiving the psychological help and counselling they need, and as a result their own lives deteriorated to the point where they have difficulties as adolescents and adults.

Now, Linda Burnside comments that governments need to realize that the costs they prioritize are exacerbated by the needs of people who were traumatized in childhood, did not have their traumas addressed and became struggling adults.

I ask the Premier: When will those who need the mental health services, and particularly those with child and family services issues, actually be able to get the service they need in a timely fashion?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the question is important.

We have, for example, tripled the funding we provide to non-profit mental health organizations. As I've indicated, we've opened up the crisis prevention unit.

We are doing things on the prevention side in the public schools. We have an exercise called PAX which teaches mental health and resiliency skills to young people from an early age, including conflict resolution. We have the Kennedy hockey player approach program that we do in the schools, teaching respect among young people and differences, and some of the biggest causes of mental health concerns are how people are treated in the schools.

We have Bill 18, which has been on the books for eight months. We only ask that the members of the opposition give all those people in the public that want to improve safety in schools, respect diversity and improve mental health have a chance to be heard, and let's debate the bill and make Manitoba an even better place to live.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the issue of children in Child and Family Services care is a pretty important one.

Phoenix Sinclair's biological father, Steve Sinclair, said he wasn't ready to be a parent, presumably, in part, because he had had a negative experience in Child and Family Services and he hadn't received adequate training in parenting as part of the counselling and support he should have received while he was in CFS care.

These children, like Steve, in CFS care, for whom the government is the guardian or effective parent, these children are wards of the state.

And I ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): Why it is—why is it that these children are receiving so little support in timely mental health services and guidance in learning how to parent when their need is so great?

Mr. Selinger: Again, Mr. Speaker, it's a good question.

We did have an issue at one point where young people reaching the age of 18 left the child welfare system with no follow-up supports. And there have been programs put in place to help people bridge into young adulthood, which is a very important part of life. They can get mental health supports; CMHA is involved in the project. They can get financial counselling support; Community Financial Counselling Services is involved in the project. They can get a variety of services from around the city.

And if they have—take on the responsibility of becoming a new parent, there are specific resources available to people that are young parents that used to be members of the child welfare system. So very specific resources have been identified for people that are in those kinds of circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

Whiteshell Provincial Park Modernization Initiatives

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, we all love summer in Manitoba. Yesterday, my friends and I headed to the Whiteshell Provincial

Park for a picnic, and there were thousands of other Manitobans enjoying that park. In fact, that park sees over 1.4 million visitors a year.

Can the Minister of Conservation please tell us about the record investment that our government is making in the Whiteshell Provincial Park and how these improvements to the park will benefit not only campers and cottagers but the environment as well?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I first of all want to say that I really appreciate the absence of the Speedo imagery this time.

But, certainly, the Whiteshell is our nearby boreal escape that's just, of course, down the Trans-Canada Highway. It really has it all. It has actually one third of the designated beaches of all the park system. It has the most places to stay of any park.

So we were very pleased on Friday to announce a refresh of the park, \$16.6 million by 2020 for the park for 28 modernization initiatives, including the completion of the upgrade to the town site, which has been described to me as nothing short of fantastic. But there'll be washroom and shower buildings and, of course, sewage treatments upgrades and drinking water upgrades as well, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Emergency Services (Pine Falls) Physician/Nurse Managed Care

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, Gail and Harry Radke are long-time residents of Victoria Beach. They sent the Minister of Health an email asking her to confirm or dismiss the rumour that Pine Falls Hospital's ER will only be open 17 days for the month of July.

Last week, Thursday, during question period, the Minister of Health said, and I quote: "If they do not have their family doctor, they can go to the Pine Falls ER, which will be under nurse-managed care for 11 days."

Mr. Speaker, what does this mean? What happens in an emergency situation if a physician is required?

* (14:40)

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

We have spoken about this subject prior to this, but I will reiterate for the member that, indeed, if an individual presents to an emergency room in need of

an emergency doctor, there will be a call to 911 immediately. If there are situations that nurses do not have within their scope of practice, then 911 would be called to ensure that the individual would receive the attention that they need from an emergency physician.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, on Thursday the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) also put on the record the fact that if people are in need of emergent care they should be calling 911.

I know the Minister of Health is a parent herself, as well as I am, and she knows that parents don't necessarily always call 911, Mr. Speaker, when their child breaks a bone or injures themselves; they take them directly to the hospital.

I would like to ask this Minister of Health to further clarify what specific days a physician will be available and what days the hospital in Pine Falls will be under the nurse-managed care, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Oswald: I would reiterate for the member that Pinawa and Beausejour have physician on-call shifts filled for the remainder of July and August, as I reported to the member earlier.

I would say very plainly, Mr. Speaker, if you are a parent and you have a young child who is in a health emergency, do not delay, call 911. If you have a question because it is not an emergency situation, you can call Health Links.

The regional health authority, Mr. Speaker, has also provided information to the community, as reported in publications as well as postings, to let individuals know where they can receive emergency care.

Mr. Ewasko: Seventeen emergency room closures, a reduction in services across Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. This is eroding Manitobans' confidence in acute care and when and where they need it.

Now, I know that the Minister of Health just alluded to the fact that the local regional health authority had published documents in, possibly, the local papers.

I'd like to know when that has been done, Mr. Speaker, because I know that there are many Manitobans across the province are absolutely losing their confidence in this minister's capabilities.

Ms. Oswald: I can say to the member very clearly that, indeed, all regional health authorities work hard

to communicate with their communities. They also work very hard on doctor recruitment.

But in an addition to that, Mr. Speaker, each one of our regional health authorities has significantly augmented EMS services. The workforce in Manitoba now is stronger than it has ever been before.

And I would hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, that in the case of emergency, Manitoba now has the STARS helicopter to come to trauma and emergency situations. I would also add that the members opposite have spent greater than 10 hours over the last two years criticizing that investment; one wonders why.

Rooming House Rehabilitation Program Program Update

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, recent 'dirk'-recent work done by the University of Manitoba's Institute of Urban Studies and the Spence Neighbourhood Association has highlighted the high number of rooming houses in some areas in win-within Winnipeg. Rooming houses provide a service in housing and fill a gap that has grown under this NDP government. The quality of this housing often leaves a lot to be desired.

This government has had a program for many years called the rooming house rehabilitation program. In six years, only three applications have been approved.

How is this program helping rooming house residents when it is too difficult to use?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Minister of Housing and Community Development): Yes, Mr. Speaker, while respecting the licensing jurisdiction of the City of Winnipeg, when it comes to rooming houses we certainly recognize that there needs to be some greater attention to the needs of those who rely on this kind of accommodation. And I was very pleased to see that our Housing Minister is working across other divisional and departmental lines, looking to see how we can discover newer ways to help those residents.

But, as well, the member does raise the issue that there is funding available, and if there are applications that are made, we certainly would be prepared to work with those that are looking for ways to enhance the rooming house situation for tenants.

Rental Housing Improvement Program Program Update

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Well, Mr. Speaker, they've abandoned that program.

A set of recommendations from the Institute of Urban Studies on the quality of living in rooming houses was made 10 years ago. One of these was to create a targeted, government-funded program to assist owners improving properties. Now there is a new call for proposals out for a program called the Rental Housing Improvement Program—we changed the initials a little bit.

What makes this program any more likely to be successful than the last inaccessible program?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Minister of Housing and Community Development): Well, Mr. Speaker, yes, the program is available. It can be applied for.

And the fact that—well, the only—you know, I made some comment a couple of weeks ago in the House that the opposition was asking a question that was almost comedic and they should—and they missed the comedy festival. There still is time for them to apply for the fringe festival. We know that their right-wing tendencies will certainly qualify them.

But for Conservatives to ask questions about the status of housing in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, we have no lessons to learn from members opposite who killed—who killed—support for housing all across this province.

Shelter Allowance Request for Increase

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, maybe I should recommend this minister to the Fringe; he can do a really great sleight of hand.

Mr. Speaker, another of the recommendations from the report from the U of W Urban Studies was to increase the base shelter allowance from \$285 per month. The group End Poverty Now Manitoba supports a move to 75 per cent of the market median. We on this side of the House do as well. Increasing the base shelter allowance would help many Manitobans with housing problems.

Why can't this government support this move?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Acting Minister of Housing and Community Development): Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the notorious hallmarks of

Conservative administration under Mr. Filmon in this province was their cuts to those who were having a very hard time making ends meet. It was notorious year after year after year. They were so shameless they were doing it just before they went into an election; they thought maybe that would get them some support in some quarters. That was their approach.

With all—with the ALL Aboard poverty reduction approach, we're looking comprehensively at addressing the needs of low-income Manitobans.

But in addition, most recently, we've added an independent tenant advisor, Mr. Speaker, to assist those living in rooming houses that may have challenges in their daily living and deal with tenancies issues that arise from time to time.

And as well, I understand the City of Winnipeg now has enhanced their fire and bylaw inspections of rooming houses. We fully support—

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

Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Affordable Housing for Seniors in Brandon

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): After dedicating a lifetime to our province, Manitoba's seniors deserve to live in comfort while still being able to contribute to their communities.

I was pleased to represent the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross) in Brandon earlier this month at the official opening of a new co-op housing development that will provide accessible, affordable accommodation for Brandon seniors.

Led by the Western Manitoba Seniors Non-Profit Housing Co-operative, which I was privileged to help found, this development is located at 620 McDiarmid Drive and features 20 two-bedroom and 14 one-bedroom units. The co-op received \$2 million in funding through the Canada-Manitoba Affordable Housing Agreement, as well as funding from the City of Brandon. The co-op will also receive rent supplement assistance from the Province of Manitoba so that six of the units can be occupied on a rent/geared-to-income basis.

Mr. Speaker, this project will allow more Brandon seniors to live in suitable affordable

housing, giving them the opportunity to remain active in our community. Members can enjoy both the social support that comes with being part of a co-op community and the privacy and freedom of living in their own suite.

High-quality, inexpensive housing is vital for seniors across Manitoba, and I am proud to be part of a government that believes in investing in affordable housing. In Brandon, since coming to office, we have supported over 1,400 affordable and social housing units targeted to low-income working households and to people receiving employment and income assistance.

This historic record of support stands in stark contrast to the record of the Conservative opposition who have voted against every single penny invested and who have proposed cuts to all departments. This means cuts to services in Brandon that seniors count on, services like health care, home care and pharmacare.

An active, healthy, productive life starts with quality housing. I invite the Legislature to join me in celebrating the Western Manitoba Seniors Non-Profit Housing Co-operative for helping to ensure that Brandon seniors have what they need to make the most of their retirement years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Gladstone Age-Friendly Initiatives

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the community of Gladstone has dedicated itself to ensuring that it can support all of its residents, regardless of age. In 2008, Gladstone became one of the first communities in the province to join the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative designed to support seniors in leading active, socially engaged and independent lives that contribute to healthy aging.

The decision to become part of this initiative came at a time when the community was looking for a plan to redevelop and focus on the residents. The community became energized at the prospect, and soon new projects and events were developed all around the community.

* (14:50)

Gladstone has developed an age-friendly wellness trail with plans to extend the trail to promote further development in the community. Events such as their Let No One Be Alone event have truly promoted an active and tight-knit

community where seniors and non-seniors alike have come together to grow this initiative.

Other projects such as expanding housing options, special needs access to community buildings, boosting volunteerism and building a plan in case of emergencies, are all works in progress, but the community is truly seeing results.

Gladstone was placed in the running for an international award for the international federation of aging where there were—they were one of the few finalists from all around the world thanks to their let-there-be-no-one-alone project. In June, the mayor of Gladstone, Eileen Clarke, received the Age-Friendly Community Milestone award on behalf of community, honouring the community's efforts and achievements. The mayor has also been asked to give a presentation at Québec City later this year to discuss some of the highlights of the program.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all members of this House, I want to congratulate the community of Gladstone on all they have done to become age friendly, and I look forward to their continued success. The community of Gladstone has truly become innovators in creating an age-friendly environment for all residents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Community Gardening

Mr. Clarence Pettersen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, learning to grow local, sustainable food is an important skill for all 'communities'. Not only does learning to grow food teach us about food itself, it also builds partnerships between people while promoting care and responsibility.

Many communities in the Flin Flon constituency have been working to build garden beds and produce vegetables and fruits for their communities. Today I'd like to highlight Northlands First Nations, Brochet, Sherridon, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation, for their efforts and participation in gardening and composting workshops as well as food gathering initiatives they undertake.

Supporting local food self 'efficieny' activities in northern Manitoba is important to our government. Through funding from the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative, Food Matters Manitoba works with communities to develop plans and learn about sustainable food practices, garden initiatives, greenhouse projects, community food programs and food business development.

Gardening is an activity that has been important in northern and remote communities throughout history. Potatoes, turnips and heartier food gardens have been successful for hundreds of years in the northern regions and climates. Through reclaiming the knowledge of gardening, people can improve their nutrition and health.

Mr. Speaker, in contrast to the cost of purchasing produce in the north and the expense of shipping food to remote communities, growing food can be healthy and cost-effective alternative which also encourages self-sufficiency.

Younger generations can learn the skills and the importance of growing and eating healthy food. Youth who have never enjoyed vegetables before, now are excited about items like carrots and beans because of both the fresh taste and, more importantly, because of their role in the process. By planting and harvesting their own food, youth and adults alike become excited about gardening and then many start planning for next year's planting season.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all the communities throughout Manitoba who have organized and participated in community gardens and local food initiatives. Together we're making our communities healthier and greener, while also enjoying the fruits and veggies of our labour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro-Privatization

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I'd like to get up and send out a compliment to all the thousands of Manitobans who increasingly every week come forward and share their concerns about this NDP government and their plans with Manitoba Hydro.

In fact, we've been seeing individuals coming forward in the last week where high-ranking members of the NDP party have gone so far as to run advertising in local media, and one that says, and I quote: During the last provincial election, the NDP promised not to raise the PST.

It also promised Manitobans and the IBEW not to privatize Manitoba Hydro. It broke its promise and raised the PST. What makes the promise of not privatizing Manitoba Hydro any more credible? This is coming from high-ranking individuals within the NDP who are concerned with where the NDP is going with Manitoba Hydro.

In fact, if we look at the morning's newspapers, we even see headlines like: Losing faith, where individuals are losing faith in the way that our government currently is running Manitoba Hydro. And we know for a fact that in the last election members went door to door, canvassed their way through the entire election and indicated they would not raise taxes, No. 1, and not raise the PST, No. 2, and they found—and they proved to Manitobans—the NDP party proved that they were lying when they went door to door.

And now it is transferring over to Manitoba Hydro, where individuals are concerned that this NDP government has a hidden agenda in which they want to privatize Manitoba Hydro. And it's a Manitoba Hydro that was created, fostered and built under the Progressive Conservative Party, starting with Duff Roblin, and was further built and fostered by successive governments.

And now we have an NDP party, an NDP government, that has a hidden agenda where they want to privatize Manitoba Hydro, and we say shame on them, and thank you to all the Manitobans who are standing up for their Manitoba Hydro.

Manitoba High School Athletics Association

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): And now, after that ridiculous rant, I will talk about something positive.

Participating in sport is an extremely important exercise in every community around the world. Not only does living an active lifestyle lead to healthier lifestyles, it also leads to safer and more connected communities.

In 1962, a group of tenacious and dedicated individuals came together to set up a sporting organization that would focus on high school athletics. They called it Manitoba High School Athletics Association, MHSAA. MHSAA assists in running fair sporting events for high schools in Manitoba while advocating for the important role that high school athletics plays in young people's education.

High school sports play an important role in lives of students. Sport provides students with positive team experiences that can help our young people learn the skills and teamwork needed to participate in active and engaged in-society.

The MHSAA works to encourage all students to take part in a variety of high school sports and

also plans, supervises, administers 50 championship events right across the province that involves over 31,000 students and almost 3,000 volunteer teachers and community coaches. The MHSAA also provides awards and scholarships, including such honours as Athlete of the Week. The organization also provides student, coach and volunteer awards as well.

The association's work is made possible from grants from Sport Manitoba, through membership fees, bingos, gate receipts and corporate partnership. Over 22 per cent of MHSAA's revenues come from corporate partners. These important dollars are vital for play—helping pay for the costs of hosting championships, providing awards, medals, scholarships, coaches' clinics and more.

I would like to thank the Dairy Farmers of Manitoba, Manitoba credit unions, Boston Pizza, MTS, Subway and Manitoba Hydro for supporting Manitoba high school sports. Their commitment and desire to participate and support our student athletes help contribute to making our province a vibrant and healthy, active place to live and learn and play.

For 51 years the MHSAA has been essential to the student athletes with sport. I would ask that all members of the Legislative Assembly join me today thanking the MHSAA and their support for their dedication to helping provide sports opportunities for all children in Manitoba high schools.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. No grievances.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please resolve the House into Committee of Supply to deal with interim appropriations.

Mr. Speaker: The House will now resolve—order, please. The House will now resolve into the Committee of Supply to consider the resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you please take the Chair.

* (15:00)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Interim Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Tom Nevakshonoff): Order. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have before us, for our consideration, two resolutions respecting the Interim Supply bill.

The first resolution respecting operating expenditures for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$7,703,032,000, being 65 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set forth in part A (Operating Expenditure) of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

The second resolution respecting capital expenditures for Interim Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$556,556,000, being 80 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part B (Capital Investment) of the Estimates, be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2014.

Resolution agreed to.

That concludes the business currently before us.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered and adopted two resolutions respecting Interim Supply.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Family Services and Labour, that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, out of the Consolidated Fund, the sums of \$7,703,032,000, being 65 per cent of the total amount to be voted as set out in part A (Operating Expenditure), and \$556,556,000, being 80 per cent of

the total amount to be voted as set out in part B (Capital Investment) of the Estimates, laid before the House at the present session of the Legislature.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 48—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh), that Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013, be now read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 48—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), that Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013, be now read a second time and refer—and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

* (15:10)

Mr. Struthers: Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013 provides interim spending and commitment authority for the 2013-14 fiscal year, pending approval of the 2013 appropriation act.

The amount of part A, operating expenditure, spending authority requested is \$7,703,032,000. This authority represents 65 per cent of the total sums to be voted of \$11,850,818,000, as set out in part A, the estimates of operating expenditure, in the 2013-14 Manitoba estimates of expenditure.

The amount of capital investment authority requested is \$556,556,000. This authority represents 80 per cent of the total sums to be voted of \$695,695,000, as set out in part B, estimates for capital investment, in the 2013-14 Manitoba estimates of expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, the amount of future commitment authority included in this Interim Supply bill is \$445 million. This authority provides for the commitment of part A and part B expenditures to ensure completion of projects or fulfilling of contracts initiated but not completed during the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2014.

When Bill 48 reaches a committee stage, I can provide members with a more complete section-by-section analysis, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very unfortunate that the Legislature has to bail out this government again for its mismanagement. Certainly, we didn't need to reach the point where Interim Supply was needed. The NDP have had enough time and certainly had an ability, if they could find it, to have moved things forward a lot quicker than they have. But we certainly see that the NDP are floundering, they're disorganized and they have had absolutely no ability to manage this session or their budget. So instead what we see is an NDP government that is trying now to fear monger and cause panic.

Mr. Speaker, even in the Winnipeg Free Press editorial on the weekend, it was interesting to read that one of the paragraphs from one of the editorial statements was that the House—the NDP House leader's attempt to cause panic amongst the general public is as reliable as was the government's promise in the last election to never raise the PST. Certainly, you know, the Free Press isn't the only one that's picked up on this. A lot of people have picked up on this, the fact that the NDP are now trying to create fear and cause panic and create what they have termed a fiscal cliff.

Well, the only fiscal cliff that is happening is of their own making and it is their own panic. They have been reassured by our leader that we are not going to allow anything to happen where there is funding that is withheld from civil servants or from needed programs. We have—Mr. Speaker, we've already had Interim Supply bills three times since 2000. We have always ensured that those bills pass at the right time and we have not created any situation that created any panic in this province.

The NDP are using this right now though to create a situation and create fear amongst civil servants and amongst the public that there is a fiscal cliff. There isn't one; it is their own panic and it is their own mismanagement. What we are trying to do is to ensure that this NDP gets as much time as they need to revisit the issue of the PST and come to their senses and withdraw the PST bill or else bring forward a referendum as they should have in the first place. And of—they could have avoided this whole mess if they followed the process, if they followed the law, if they kept their word, and this all could have been avoided. But, because of their own

mismangement and their lack of ability to look after an agenda, we are in this position now.

But, Mr. Speaker, nobody should really be surprised, because this is how the NDP have operated for years. In fact, it was interesting after the last election, and I ran into Michael Balagus in the hallway and I said, you know what, I think Manitobans are feeling quite offended by all the fear mongering that you brought forward in this last election. And he, at least, was truthful with me. He said, you know what, we're going for a fourth majority. What else can we do? We can't defend our record, so the only thing we have to go on is fear mongering. And that is exactly—that is exactly—what they are continuing to do, and that coming from the person that managed their campaign, Michael Balagus, who was their chief architect of the campaign, telling me that fear mongering is the only thing they have left.

And so why should we expect anything different? That is exactly what is happening right now, and this government is certainly going to maintain that, because he was right. They can't defend their record anymore. They've got too many holes in that record. They've got too many problems that have risen throughout the years. And this is where we're going to be now, from now until the next election, and in the election I suppose we're going to hear exactly the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has lost their way. Everything now is about partisanship. It is about politics and they really have forgot about good public policy. They have forgotten why they were elected in the first place, and now everything they do, every time they open their mouth it is all about partisan politics. And we're seeing a perfect example right now with this. Our party has assured this House leader and the NDP government that civil servants will be paid, that programs will not be put at jeopardy, that we will not be over their so-called fiscal cliff, which is something of their invention—it's their own panic—and that this interim bill will be passed on time and nothing will be put at jeopardy. But we will use this opportunity to try to get the government's attention one more time to have them revisit what they've done with the PST.

So, Mr. Speaker, they've had a lot of time to discuss and pass a budget. They could have brought us back in February. They could have brought us back in March, and, instead, they left this 'til mid-April and then they've spent most of their time

on something that they should've realized was going to create havoc in this province, and that was bringing forward a PST hike out of the blue. Nobody expected it. It has become very apparent from any discussions with the minister in Estimates that this wasn't something asked about in their budget consultations, and so the fact this government doesn't seem to understand that this would cause such havoc is really a bit surprising. Had they given much thought to this they certainly would have realized that hiking the PST in Manitoba after what they did in the last budget was going to cause a lot of grief for a lot of people. They should have expected debate that would go on, that that's the role of us in opposition. But instead what the government did is they waited until mid-April to bring in a budget that caught everybody off guard and is very offensive.

So, Mr. Speaker, they brought in a contentious budget. It showed poor planning. It showed that they have a very poor handle on priorities in Manitoba and they are now in a position where they are having to try to defend it. If they had just followed the rules and followed the law and followed the right processes we certainly wouldn't be here today. But, because they have done what they've done, we are here today. They have chosen to raise the PST, and particularly offensive to a lot of people in Manitoba is to gut the referendum requirement from the taxpayer protection act.

The NDP, we also note, has called Bill 20 a third of the time this House sat from April to July. So a third of their time has been spent just talking about Bill 20 which, certainly, had they put any thought to it, Mr. Speaker, they wouldn't be in the kind of pickle they're in, but it's a pickle of their own making. So the amount of time we've spent on Bill 20 is nearly three weeks of debate time that they have wasted on tax hikes and destroying democracy rather than working on the budget.

* (15:20)

A lot of people in Manitoba are very, very offended by the gutting of the taxpayer protection act because that was their one—one—tangible thing that would protect them from a government that is out of control with their spending. They wanted a taxpayer protection act and they wanted to be protected from a government that doesn't know when to stop spending. But instead what we've seen is NDP's true priorities, and they've gone ahead with tax hikes instead of fiscal accountability despite, over many, many years, that they were going to be fiscally

responsible. And we've obviously seen that that has been nothing but words and very, very far from what they actually have demonstrated in this province. I don't know how many elections—probably every one—they promised to keep the balanced budget act, and then in the last election the NDP government promised not to raise taxes.

So what we see right now is, you know, a government that has spent way more than what they're taking in. They can't meet their budgets. They're spending over every year. They don't want to work on their own political fundraising and they're bringing in a vote tax despite the pain that a lot of people are feeling, despite some of the businesses out there that are struggling because of this PST. We have seen a government that is willing to bring forward some legislation that'll give them a million dollars in a vote tax while there are businesses out there that are actually going under because of the PST hike.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that this NDP Premier (Mr. Selinger) was ranked the worst premier in Canada for fiscal management in 2012. He has proven that this government, under his watch, knows how to do two things, and that is raise taxes and rack up deficits.

Mr. Speaker, this budget brings in \$227 million in new taxes this year, and that is on top of \$184 million in new taxes last year. So between the two years, between the two budgets, Manitobans have seen the biggest tax hike in 25 years, and then ensuing in the year after that. So, combined with fee increases, this amounts to over \$500 million more per year in taxes that Manitobans have to pay.

That's a lot of money, and obviously this government wasn't listening when presenters came to talk on Bill 20. They spoke loudly. They spoke clearly. The majority of them that attended spoke against the PST hike, and obviously this government is choosing to ignore that. And, instead, now they're taking over half a billion dollars more a year in taxes that Manitobans have to pay. And most egregious, on top of that, I think, Mr. Speaker, was the Premier promising he would not raise taxes in the last election. People are very offended by that.

I can remember Gary Doer talking about election promises being a moral commitment to the public. Obviously, this new Premier doesn't seem to have that same level of understanding about moral commitments as Gary Doer did. And Gary Doer would never have raised the PST. He, at least, did

not have a tin ear. He was pragmatic, and Gary Doer would not have done what this government is doing right now. He'd have found some other way. He would not have broken the law in order to do this. I suspect if he was going to do it, he would have at least followed the rules and the law the way they were set out.

Instead, the Premier of today said in a news release of 2010-11 public accounts, they said in their five-year economic plan that it was on track to return the budget to balance by 2014 while protecting jobs and services without raising taxes. In fact, that was a Fact Check in the last election, Mr. Speaker.

And then 10 days after that, this Premier said, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that. We're ahead of schedule right now. And he said that on a CJOB leaders' debate on September 12th, 2011.

So what in the world was he talking about then during that election? Was he deliberately saying something that wasn't true, or is there a level of incompetence over there? What was it? You know, what did he mean when he made these comments?

And now, thank goodness, we have written records and Hansard, because this Premier has lost a lot of credibility and a lot of integrity. His promises are now worthless, and it's obvious that he and every one of those NDP MLAs on the other side cannot be trusted because they all made the same promise in the last election. So, you know, we really have to question why they would say what they did in the last election. I mean, is it a matter of saying anything just to win? And I suspect that that is probably what we've seen, which does show a huge lack of integrity by this government.

When the Premier was asked about specific tax increases like the PST, he even took it further and said, and I quote: Ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense. Everybody knows that. And that was said by this Premier on September 23rd, 2011.

So what in the world did that mean? What does this government mean when they're saying all of these things and then doing the opposite? That is what has offended people very, very much: that this NDP government lied to them several times through making these comments. They promised not to raise taxes and instead they have brought in the two largest tax increases in 26 years back to back.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP broke their promise when they said they weren't going to do it. They expanded the PST last year and then this year they've increased it by 1 point, a 14 per cent increase, and they even went further to put the PST on insurance products for homes, property and group life insurance. In fact, Manitoba's only one of three provinces to tax insurance. Now that really is a desperate move. It's like an addict scrounging around for their next fix, looking at where they can find more money, and then they zeroed in on things that are costing people a lot of money. So it's no wonder that Manitoba's inflation on insurance products was the highest in the country last year.

And, in fact, Stats Canada came out with a report on Friday, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) tries to stand in the House today and make reference to that as, you know, as nonsense, when, in fact, Stats Canada said that NDP taxes and fees are driving up prices in Manitoba. And it pointed out that Manitobans are spending more for booze, insurance and gasoline, and those are just some of the factors that have pushed the province to the top spot in the country for inflation. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, being No. 1 in this category simply means Manitobans' disposable incomes are shrinking. That was a no-brainer. They would've known that when they raised the PST and they would've known that when they expanded the PST. So for the minister to stand in the House today and answer in a ludicrous way is certainly not reflective of a good understanding of what his PST increases have caused. Inflation is up and they—that Stats Canada actually also singled out the primary reason Manitoba leads the nation in inflation this year and in the past few months is NDP tax policy, and that is what Stats Canada said. In fact, since February 2013 Manitoba has been the leading or second highest province in regards to monthly and yearly inflation, and it is becoming a trend. It's not just a one-off for one month. It is now showing over three months trend, and this is even before the PST kicks in. So it's certainly going to be interesting to watch what happens to the inflation rate over the next number of months once the—Stats Canada has time to look and see what the effect of that will be. And I think Manitobans are really becoming much more aware that they cannot afford this government any more.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know vehicle registration fees are up 30 per cent from last year, and what was the measurable value to Manitobans? Homeowners insurance is up 15 per cent since the NDP applied the

PST to it. Those are costing Manitobans a lot of money.

* (15:30)

And then they also went further and they expanded PST to personal services like manicures, pedicures and hairstyling. If the Minister of Finance had even listened in the public hearings, he would have seen that there are businesses that are actually suffering because of it. One business has lost 35 per cent of their business; another one has lost about 25 per cent of their business; another one has lost more. And I'm sure if they did an economic impact study on these businesses they would find that that PST expansion, and now increase, is having a particular hard hit against these services. No wonder a thousand women signed a petition last year, and we're starting to see that they knew what they were talking about. Their purses aren't going to take the hit, and, in fact, the businesses are what is going to suffer.

So, Mr. Speaker, the NDP even went further than just, you know, expanding and hiking the PST. They're even the break-breaking the law to increase it. And that is the one thing that many people that came to speak on Bill 20 found hugely offensive, and they're worried that there is now no taxpayer protection against this NDP government. And when we look at the hit that taxpayers in Manitoba—people that are buying things—are going to be hit with, they're going to be paying \$383.5 million more in PST due to the NDP's decision to break their taxation promise and expand the PST last year and increase it this year, and this is equating to over \$1,200 more in taxes per year for a family of four.

But the broken promises don't stop there, Mr. Speaker. They also jacked up other taxes. And, when we look at what they did with other taxes and fees, we're seeing gasoline and diesel fuel increasing. They also increased the tax by 3 cents per litre on agricultural fuels. They jacked up fees on everything from birth certificates, campground rentals, death certificates, fishing licences and environmental permits. No fee was safe from this government, and that has cost Manitobans \$114 million each year.

So the biggest fee increase was on vehicle registration fees. That is going to cost Manitobans \$17 million more a year. And then the NDP raised education property taxes on farmers by over \$6 million per year by changing the tax laws—this when farmers were promised no education property taxes by this government in the last election. And

then on top of that, Mr. Speaker, the NDP have increased hydro rates by 8 per cent in the last year. So this takes over a hundred million dollars more per year out of ratepayers' pockets. So that is another \$72 per year in hydro fees for the average household.

The NDP seem to be surprised when we bring forward the number of \$1,600. They shouldn't be surprised, because this is what they have done to Manitobans. That is the hit that Manitobans have taken because of what this government has done in the last two years. But, you know, it wasn't only just Hydro that's increasing its rates, the Crown corporations didn't stop there, as MPI hiked rates on auto insurance. Most people are going to pay \$50 more per year to insure their vehicles.

And then they also increased taxes on liquor prices, beer prices by 80 cents per litre on March 8th, bringing in another \$12.5 million in revenues for the spenDP. And it was interesting in Bill 20 hearings, there was one person that came in and he said, you know, in Manitoba you can't even drown your sorrows here based on these tax increases because it costs so much to drink here. And you know, that definitely is true, Mr. Speaker, people can't even drown their sorrows here because it costs too much. Then the NDP did the same thing to spirit prices on April 1st, raising the tax by an average 62 cents per litre. And that's going to take another \$4.4 million out of the pockets of Manitoba consumers. So Manitoba consumers are getting hit at many, many different levels.

So, all told, when you look at all the taxes that this government has increased and all the fees that they've increased over the last couple of years, it costs \$1,600 per family per year when you include all of that. So, if the NDP could put their math numbers together, they would see how much this is costing very, very ordinary Manitobans and how it is hurting Manitobans.

We heard from many people that came to speak at Bill 20, some very compelling arguments put forward by a lot of people as to how they could not afford to have this extra cost put on them. I still remember the man that was so upset, that he'd been fighting cancer. He was at home in bed. He did not look well and he got up out of his sick bed after being there for several weeks. He was so angry and he came here, and he came here late at night. He sat here for an evening, and he was so upset at what this government did that he felt he had to come and speak.

Most of these people had never spoken. A lot of them had never come to committee before. They were very, very upset by what the government was doing. Some of them said we're really scared. We've never done this, but we feel we have to do something. We know the government isn't going to listen to us because we know that the government has already increased the PST on July 1st. But they felt compelled that they couldn't just sit and do nothing. They knew the government wasn't going to listen to them, but they—and they knew they felt helpless, but they also said this was something that was so offensive to them they had to at least try.

So it was loud and clear what came through. Unfortunately, what became clear also was that this government really had no intention of listening to Manitobans. And I suppose if they did have an intention they might have done things right and had a referendum in the first place, or at least followed the law if they had had any respect for Manitobans. But they certainly have shown that that is not what is happening with this government.

So, Mr. Speaker, coming out of those 20—or Bill 20 hearings—we certainly saw that Manitobans are feeling crushed by unnecessary taxes. We certainly saw that they don't want any more. They're feeling quite overwhelmed and this government yet tries to talk about affordability. Well, what a lot of bunk because what this government doesn't talk about is the fact that Manitoba has the highest income taxes in Canada outside Québec. When you factor that in, it is not affordable. The NDP government always tries to talk about the Manitoba advantage; there isn't one anymore. When you look at everything across the board, Manitoba has lost its advantage and, in fact it, it has become a Manitoba disadvantage. We have the highest income taxes in Canada outside of Québec. Even people that make about \$8,800 a year have to pay taxes because of basic personal exemption is so inadequate here in Manitoba. And I just find that offensive that, you know, Saskatchewan you can make \$15,000 and then you pay taxes. Here you make \$8,800 and you're paying taxes. That is ridiculous. And no wonder we have such high rates of poverty in this province and the government really has to have a harder look at that.

So Manitoba is now going to be the worst in west for consumption taxes if the NDP does not reverse their PST actions. Yet, when you look at their news releases they've twisted it to talk about, you know, the PST being very similar to other

provinces. We compete in western Canada; that's who we need to compete with. We are the worst in the west for consumption taxes.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are going to stand here as long as is needed and we will fight the PST because it's the wrong thing for Manitoba. That increase in the PST is the wrong thing.

Revenue for this government has doubled since 2000, so there is enough money if they spent it properly. They have had more revenue than most governments could ever have dreamed of. The problem is they've squandered it. Transfer payments from Ottawa are \$1.6 billion higher now than in 2000, but the NDP keep complaining that is not enough. They say they need more. And, Mr. Speaker, when adjusted for inflation and population growth, Manitoba is getting over \$500 million more per year from the federal government now than in 2000. This government has had it better than many governments before it.

* (15:40)

And then, on top of all of that, despite the largesse from big brother in Ottawa—which actually comes from other provinces that are working very hard to rein in their own spending and it just flows through Ottawa—this government is taking advantage of other governments in other provinces. But they're also maxing out the provincial credit card because they still don't have enough money. They have doubled the provincial debt from \$13 billion to over \$30 billion now. They have dug such a debt hole in this province that it is going to be impossible any time soon for Manitoba to reach the potential it has because this government has hurt this province. And then on top of it, they've almost drained the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. By the time the next election comes around there is barely going to be any money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund because this government has taken it and they have spent it.

So simply put, Mr. Speaker, the NDP has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. If you look at all of their spending that is what it demonstrates. They need to learn to stay within their means. They need to learn to stick to their budgets instead of raising tax hikes to feed their addiction. And, certainly, if they were more careful with everything we wouldn't have to stand here today and try to have to bail them out.

So thank you for the opportunity for these few words.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Interesting that—interesting little piece of legislation here. Some big numbers in there, and surprising the government doesn't want to speak to it. I guess, you know, very—it's too bad they're frugal with their words, but not with their money, Mr. Speaker. You know, and here—I see here some interesting words in here. Responsible, that's an amazing word. To hear this government talk about responsibility, because they don't like to seem to take any responsibility for their actions. They like to blame everybody else.

And then we had the Minister of Labour trying to create fear over the last week of—about a fiscal cliff and this was going to happen in Manitoba. And I'm not really sure that she was clear on the concept of what a fiscal cliff is. In fact, you know, we heard a great deal about it in the—from the United States, what a fiscal cliff was, or that they were going to hit a fiscal cliff in the United States. The media seemed to love that term, that imagery. And, indeed, a fiscal cliff had to do with legislative requirements, Mr. Speaker, that were set forth in the US in their budget documents, and it had a deadline there. And they were talking about things that were going to happen on December 31st, 2012, things that were going to happen in the United States if they didn't come up with another agreement. And this was supposed to be an impetus to the government to get together and to talk to the various groups involved and to come up with a plan for the budget process there and to come up with a plan for the government.

And nobody ever thought that the government wouldn't come together in time to deal with what was then termed this fiscal cliff, because it had some severe things in the United States about, you know, payroll tax cuts, the end of payroll tax cuts that would look at increases there, tax—the end of tax breaks for businesses, changes to the minimum taxes and the rollback of some tax cuts. And these things would all happen on that particular date, changes because of the Obama health-care law that was going to come in. So taxes were going to increase there and then legislated spending cuts, and wouldn't that be something for this government to deal with, would be spending cuts. I know they don't like to talk about any of that.

Well, they are doing it now, Mr. Speaker. We see it time and time again. Every time you drive down a highway we have seen the cuts that this government has made to infrastructure. Every time

you wait in a health-care facility and you wait for hours on end, we see the cuts that this government has made to front-line services, and they're there. We've had, you know, the promises they made for hallway medicine and now we have highway medicine with children being born on the highway on the way to Saskatchewan and, you know, it just goes on and on and on.

But, indeed, Mr. Speaker, that was what the fiscal cliff was in terms of the US economy, and there was a big concern about the impact that the tax increases were going to be on the US economy, the burden on the US economy and the taxpayers, that that was going to be very damaging. And this was an unnecessary, self-inflicted burden on the economy as is this government's spending—unnecessary, self-inflicted, and that is what we see time and time again. We saw there—recently with the inflation rates that have come out now, highest inflation in the country. And how did we get there? From this government's tax increases and fee increases and the MPI registration fee, all of those things conspired together with this government to drive inflation to a high in the nation.

And now we have the PST increase, and what is that going to do for inflation over the next year? We know it's probably going to be dire.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So the fiscal cliff talked about immediate disaster at the end of this date, and, indeed, the minister across the way did try to scare people that that immediate disaster was imminent. Well, the only date that I heard referenced was the end of the month here, that the government had enough money to get through to that. And if you hadn't run deficits, you'd have plenty of money. But this government loves running deficits and they seem to do that.

But the other implication that comes with fiscal cliff, and that is something that is an American legislated problem there that they ran into, is the debt ceiling. And that is the bigger problem in the United States, is the debt ceiling, how much the government is able to borrow to issue bonds, and that's how they borrow money. The debt limit is certainly the amount that the US government or any government can borrow at any given time. Now, we did ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) a little while ago, you know, when you go to talk to the bond rating agencies in New York, how do those meetings go? Do they tell you, you know, that they're concerned? Do you get any idea that there are limits

set on your borrowing? And his answer was, no, no, no, we don't have any limits that we get. Nobody tells us that we should stop.

It's quite surprising that, you know, the US government has some limitations, some debt ceilings, but the government here doesn't seem to—they don't seem to be concerned about that debt at all, that they are funding everything through debt. And indeed it is a very damaging thing when the government spends more than it takes in, because a normal individual can't do that, but that's something that this government has done time and time again, and they try to create fear in the populace that it's Manitobans' fault. It's not this government's fault, in their eyes. They can't take—what was that word—responsibility; they need to take responsibility for their actions, but they're not able to do that. It's something that just seems to be beyond them. It must be—in their eyes, it must be Manitobans' fault, because, heaven forbid, the Manitobans don't have enough money to pay this government in taxes, because the government just keeps reaching into their pockets and grabbing more and more taxes. They seem to think that Manitobans have multiple pockets with multiple income and you can take some from this pocket, you can take some from that pocket to fund this program and that program, and it's just never ending.

But it is, and we heard that when we were in committee with Bill 20. You know, that is something that—I have never seen such anger from people coming to present at committee, and it was anger about quite a few things. But, when you boil it down, is anger about the government lying to Manitobans in the last election, the government promising that they would not raise taxes, that they would not raise the PST. And Manitobans, they look at it at a broader picture perhaps than this government does, because to a Manitoban it's not just taxes, it's not just PST, it's not just income tax; it's fees. Fees, in a normal Manitoban's point of view, are taxes as well, and when this government says that they're not going to raise taxes and then they raise fees, they think they're telling the truth, which is just not correct. A fee takes the money out of the Manitobans' pockets just the same as a tax will, and Manitobans seeing that—see that on equivalent levels so that when you raise the vehicle registration fee it's still a tax, and indeed it's a tax to a Manitoban that drives a vehicle because it comes not—it—and it doesn't go to MPI, that tax is—that tax, that fee is something goes directly into the government coffers. That \$35, I believe it was last

year, has nothing to do with MPI's revenue stream here. It doesn't make MPI better off. It goes directly into the government coffers for them to spend as they wish, and they do wish to spend it in a lot of different ways.

But that fee had an impact on our inflation rate. That fee had an impact on Manitobans, and, indeed, when we asked the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) last year in committee and during—in the House, you know, what does this fee apply to, he couldn't answer; he didn't know. So we asked it a couple more times, you know, what—this registration fee, which vehicles will it apply to? Well, we're not sure yet. We're still going through that process. How can you apply a fee and set a budget for it when you don't know what it applies to? You're just picking a number out of the air. Well, that may be, indeed, what they did.

* (15:50)

It turns out that the fee from the report that I got when I go through the list seems like it's pretty much every licensed vehicle, every licensed trailer, anything you drive, anything you pull in Manitoba you pay that additional fee for. And again, as we saw recently that fee went a long way to driving up inflation in Manitoba.

So other things we heard at committee, we heard the anger at this government lying to them about not raising fees, about not raising taxes. There was a betrayal there, a very honest betrayal. This—the people coming there felt betrayed by this government because they had been sold a bill of goods. They've been sold fear. They've been sold trepidation and they've been sold a promise that—it was ridiculous, I believe, was some of the words that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) used, saying that this government would raise taxes.

Well, what have we seen? We've seen fee and tax increases last year. We've seen PST increases this year, broadening the sales tax fee last year. So, if that's not lying by this government, then I don't know what it is, and, indeed, it is. The government and every individual NDP candidate that went at the door—went to the door and knocked on the doors, and spoke to Manitobans during the election and promised that they would not raise taxes, lied to Manitobans. And how do you feel about that? How would people feel about lying to Manitobans? I can't comprehend how members across the floor have any moral compass whatsoever anymore when they come across to Manitobans and say that and then just go

and raise taxes without feeling bad about it. They must—they must—have some repercussions there personally, when as an individual people lie to that extent.

You know, we had people at the committee hearings for Bill 20, like Walter Hill. He's a retired senior, lives in Whiteshell. And we heard the minister here talking about the great investments we're going to make in the Whiteshell. Well, Mr. Hill talked about being on OAS, CPP, his savings and he's now paying \$1,100—one thousand, one hundred dollars more than he paid two years ago because of the tax increases of this government, plus the PST that's going to hit him. Park service fees, he says are going up; \$1,200 to \$4,500, that's what it's going to be for him to be able to live there. Now he's on a fixed income. How is he going to be able to deal with this—doesn't know. And now you have a government talking about, well, this investment that they're going to make in the Whiteshell. Well, where's that money coming from? It's coming from those fees. We're going to take the money from you, this government says, and then you're going to thank us for investing it in your area. That's how this government hopes things are going to happen—without any consultation. No, we didn't talk to cottagers out there. We didn't talk to homeowners out there. We're just going to do this and you better be happy about it—you better be happy about it.

So, you know, a lot of other people talked about investment leaving Manitoba. They're afraid for their children. They're afraid for themselves because they don't know if they can sustain it here.

And very significant, I thought, when people were coming to the committee and talking about having to make choices in the grocery aisle, having to make choices about groceries, whether they could buy this brand of peanut butter or they had to buy the less expensive brand of peanut butter, and maybe their children might not like it. But that's all they could afford—having to make those choices in the grocery aisle because this government is increasing taxes on them. They're taking away their disposable income. So it's very sad when you hear those people talking about not being sure if they're going to have money left over at the end of the month.

So they have to make these decisions as they go along, as they go along buying groceries every week, or every couple weeks, that they have to make those types of decisions. Those are the types of the decisions that they hope the government would have

to make on—in their own. That the government will look at things and go, you know what? We can't afford to do that right now.

But how can this government make those decisions when, you know, I asked questions of the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) in Estimates about particular line items and—couldn't answer. The minister is asking why I don't ask him questions here. Well, when you can't ask questions in Estimates, what's the point of asking you questions in the House here? Because he's got all his staff there. And there was a particular line item that went up 14 per cent. Isn't that an interesting number? What went up—what else went up 14 per cent? That would be—let me think now—oh, the PST increase. The PST went up 14 per cent. From 7 per cent to 8 per cent is a 14 per cent increase. So this—14.3, I'm sorry. I'm corrected, it's even bigger. But—so this particular line item went up 14 per cent. Simple question. It's a fairly significant increase, much more than staff were getting for salary increases, although there were big salary increases in some of the budget items. And what's in that line item? What's in that \$2.9 million? Hmm. Consulted, consulted, thought, well, we don't know. You don't know? Okay. So we'll give them a day to think about it or so and we'll ask it again.

What's in that line item? Hmm, we'll have to get back to you, we don't know. So that's an indication that this government can't manage a budget. If you don't know what's in that line item, when you're going along month to month or you're hitting the three-month threshold, the six-month threshold, you need to be able to look at those line items of what you've spent and say, okay, we are over budget on that line item, we have to look how we're going to manage that budget through the rest of the year. But this government doesn't even know what's in those line items, so there's no way that they can manage a budget.

And then we had the Minister of Labour in there—and Child and Family Services—speaking to the motions and talking about—you know, I don't have her exact words here, but essentially she said her budgets were not really important to her, they're just there. So you throw your finance people under the bus apparently, because they spend a lot of time creating these budgets and they want to make sure that the numbers are correct and that everything is going to fit. And you have a large staff in the finance department and each—in each department dealing with the finances, and the minister said, meh, you

know what, budgets really aren't important. It's about the children.

Well, how's that been working? How's that been working for Child and Family Services? Highest number of children in care ever. Phoenix Sinclair murdered by her parents. There was another child—what was his name now—Guimond? Murdered. Gage Guimond, that's the word—that's the name there. And then we have this recent event that we have become aware of, where an individual went to ask for help and he was turned away from Child and Family Services.

So how's that working for you, if it's about the children but we have all these problems with Child and Family Services? So, obviously, that's not working well either. It's very, very sad to watch, you know, and it's just—where else are we going to go on this? Well, we've seen increases in hydro rates. We've seen a government that is fear mongering here.

They threaten people that Hydro would be sold. Well, now look at what's happening here. The IBEW's expressing concerns that this government's going to sell Hydro, and, indeed, they have a project where Hydro International is over in Nigeria. And when I saw that news item last year, I was—I thought this has got to be one of those emails you get on the Internet trying to sell you an investment, but, no, this is—indeed, this is for real. The government is over there through Hydro International, helping them privatize hydro over there. Well, is this perhaps just a dry run for what they're planning to do here? Well, let's experiment in another country and then see how it works out and then they can bring it back to Manitoba and they can put it in place here.

And that, indeed, what the IBEW seems to be afraid of, that this government is setting up Hydro for privatization. And, you know, they just—is that what they're planning to do? Well, they try to deny it, but it's not just us that are bringing it up.

And this government talks about investments in education, but they do like to break agreements, and we've seen that as recent as last week. They tried to break an agreement in this House with the opposition. They had an agreement, signed off on it; yes, that's all fine. But first day in, Monday, tried to break it, and that's what they did with universities. Had a funding agreement—great. Universities weren't happy with the amount but they said, you know what, we know that there's stable funding into this period of time. So what did the government do?

Well, they went and cut that in half. Didn't consult—didn't consult—didn't talk to them. Just said, no, you're getting less. Great—great—the universities plan for those amount of money, government cuts it in half, and what happens? Well, they have to lay off professors. They have to limit programs. Students that are now going into universities are saying, you know what? I can't graduate in that period of time because that professor's not there anymore. They had to lay him off, or her off, and now, my program's not available. So it's going to take those students longer.

* (16:00)

And isn't that a sad statement in education for a government that tries to present that they are proponents of it and, again, we saw in the university strike at Brandon University—who won that strike? Nobody won that strike. Who was damaged the most were the students. The students were damaged the most. This government talks about supporting students, and what happens? Throw them under the bus. No, it's going to take you longer to get your degree. We don't care that you lost that education. This government doesn't care about students at all because they just left them out there high and dry, time after time, not just once—not just once. It would be interesting if it was just once—more than once. How many strikes have there been there that this government has been involved in? Isn't that interesting? Isn't that interesting? Yes, it is, to see how.

But, you know, we can look in other departments of this government and how this government fails to manage its money. We can look in the Crown corporations. We see—what was going to happen last year? In MPI they raised the vehicle registration fees and, again, they—that was something that was done, no consultation, just done. But it goes directly into the government's central coffers. MPI has to collect it. And then what happened last year? Well, they were talking about doing something with MPI money. What was that now? Was—they weren't going to finance universities. No, they floated that boat before and it sank.

So let's see now. Oh, yes, they were going to fund road infrastructure. They were going to make Manitoba's roads safer. Does that mean Manitoba's roads aren't safe now? That's a possibility. I thought it was the responsibility of MIT and, indeed, when you look at the particular vision statements for MPI or the vision statements for MIT, MIT is responsible for road infrastructure, not MPI. But they were going

to finance that. So they floated that boat out there and—just to try to see how that was going to go, and then what happened? Well, they lost money. They lost a great deal of money, some of it in the financial markets. They didn't make as much money in the financial markets as they did the year before. So they didn't have as good a bottom line and they lost money. So how are you going to invest in infrastructure when you don't have any money? Well, and the minister flip-flopped on that decision; so we're not going to do that now because we lost money.

And then they released the quarterly report here for May 31st, 2013, and, huh? They lost money again. Apparently, they're still having trouble in the bond markets. Is that—because the bond markets have to do with the debt ceiling. That is all tied together—not our debt ceiling, the US debt ceiling. But they did lose some money in the bond markets. So, obviously, they're struggling in that area of investments, and they lost some money in some other areas to, you know, to the tune of, well, \$33 million—but, again, \$34 million.

In this—in the—I know that's a total loss of 27 and change for this government. I know it's not much money when we look at this particular bill and the amount of dollars that are involved there that this government doesn't even want to seem to speak to. It's not enough money for them to spend any time speaking to, which is pretty sad. But, yes, MPI reports a \$33.9-million loss. Very sad to watch when this organization thought they had enough money to put into infrastructure, but, apparently, they don't now. So they're not going to do it.

Well, you know, when your decisions are driven by your financial results as opposed to plans, that's a sad thing. Your plans should involve being successful in your financial results. But, when you have a government that doesn't know what's in their line items, how are they going to follow a budget? Very, very sad.

You know, I've spoken to a number of people about the PST increase—or they've spoken to me, and people, as I've said, are very angry—and they still are angry. This government may think that that has gone past, but it's still there. We talk about people in the service industry, people in the service sector that have seen their fees and their taxes increase a tremendous amount over the last couple of years, and this PST increase is going to damage it even more. Some of them when they look at their numbers, they

look at what's the total amount that I have to write a cheque for to this government for fees, for taxes, all the way through their business. And, some of them, it's increased 30 to 50 per cent. Over \$200,000 is how much it's gone up.

So what does that do to a small business? It means that they have to make some very tough decisions—tough decisions that this government is not willing to make. So when your taxes go up that much, you have to make some tough decisions. You have to look at, can I maintain the same level of staff or do I have to lay off staff in order to pay those increased taxes? So if you—but if you lay off staff, that's—means that you can't provide all the services to your customers that you used to provide, and then it means some of those people are going to leave. They're not going to come back, so your income is reduced and then you still have to pay the taxes. So it's a very dangerous place to get into, because it's imposed by this government.

Well, what else could you do? Well, you could increase prices. So let's think about what happens if you do that. You don't change staffing, you increase prices. But maybe the competitor doesn't, maybe the province next door doesn't, so then your customers look at you and go, well, your price has gone up, so if it's a hotel, I'm only going to stay at your hotel one night instead of two. Or I'm going to go to a hotel next door, because I think they offer better value, like Saskatchewan. So that's what happens. So then your revenue declines again, and then you have some more decisions you have to make. Can you offer the same amount of services? Can you have the same amount of staff? How do you pay that staff when you have to pay this government the increased fees and taxes? Those are the tough decisions that this government is forcing on small business in Manitoba, driving away customers to other businesses in other provinces, and it's a microcosm of the bigger picture, but this government just doesn't seem to understand that.

So it all comes back down to what this government does or does not do. We asked in MPI a year and a bit ago—a year and three months or so, I asked the CEO, you know, the government is talking about it being tough times, they're talking about restraint. Has there been any message of restraint to Manitoba Public Insurance? And she looked at me with a mystified look and said, well, no—no, there's been no message of restraint. And we see how that has paid off: a loss last year and a loss in the first quarter here. You know, when we look at quarter to

quarter, it's even worse, because last year in the first quarter MPI made \$30 million and this year they lost \$33 million, so that's a pretty big swing. And this is a government Crown corporation that was not given any message of restraint.

So was that message out there in any other departments? Doesn't seem to be, because they don't know how to measure dollars and cents, they don't know what's in their line items. But this—these tax increases drive inflation for every Manitoban. The PST increases, the fee increases drive inflation up for every Manitoban, take more out of their pockets. Some of it goes to this government, some of it flows through, but in the end people have less money to spend, and we heard about those individuals that are making those conscious decisions in the supermarket aisle—supermarket aisle, of how to feed their children. *[interjection]* Now—and I hear some heckling: well, they don't have to pay PST on food. They don't get it; it's a finite dollar that consumers have, and when you pay PST on other things, you have to make those tough decisions in the supermarket aisle, and that is what people spoke about in the Bill 20 hearings, knowing that they only had this amount of money to spend so they had to reduce because the government was taking more of it and, as a result, they had to less to spend on themselves and their children. Isn't that a sad statement—very sad to listen to.

But, again, this government doesn't seem to listen to people. You know, they talk about—what was that phrase they used about some of the presenters? Let me think now. There was a derogatory phrase, it was something about howling wolves.

An Honourable Member: Coyotes.

* (16:10)

Mr. Helwer: Howling coyotes, that was it. Wolves would be more aggressive even, so 'highling'—howling coyotes—derogatory statements about people that came to present at committee. And you may have been there that night. In fact, I—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think you probably were. My aunt was one of those 'highling'—howling coyotes, and I thought she did a very good job, but, yes, she was offended—yes, she was offended by that statement. Did it make her back away? No, indeed, it's made her even more enraged by what this government is doing, and I think we'll probably see her back when we get to Bill 33 debate because that is something

that's going to have an impact on how she lives in her world.

So it's very disappointing when we see a government that uses the word like responsible, but isn't able to take any responsibility for their own actions, indeed, tries to create fear amongst Manitobans, and Manitobans aren't buying it anymore. They're not buying it.

When the government talks about this fiscal cliff that they really don't even seem to know what a fiscal cliff is, so I've tried to talk a little bit about that and create fear in Manitobans.

And then in, just as that news clip is done there's an ad out there that, well, you know what? It's Parks Day today and there's no admission to provincial parks. It's obvious that the government doesn't get that dichotomy, doesn't get that conflict that they're complaining about not having any money and, then, the next point, they're giving it away.

So it just, they don't understand. They just don't understand why that's a problem—*[interjection]* And it's obvious listening to the laughter that I'm not going to teach them about that problem today, so someone else will have to take that up.

Thank you.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'm pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record with respect to Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013.

And you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just a little slow. I was looking around the room to see if members opposite were going to get up and speak to this bill and, of course, I believe they've all been muzzled to say anything.

If this is such an important bill for this Legislature, as it's—as members opposite have talked about it in the media and they've stated what an important bill this is. I would hope that members opposite would at least stand up in this Manitoba Legislature and at least speak about this bill and the importance of it. Perhaps—perhaps—maybe some of us would change our mind. Perhaps, you know, they could sway us in one direction.

But, you know, I believe the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and others have muzzled members opposite. I was waiting. I was thinking maybe the member from Kirkfield Park was going to get up from her chair and talk about the importance of this bill, the

appropriation act. But, you know, she was hesitant to stand up in her place and speak about her views and speak on behalf of her constituents in the Manitoba Legislature with respect to this Interim Supply bill. But for some reason she didn't get up.

And it reminds me of another bill that members opposite really didn't speak to, and that was Bill 20. Now, that bill was called several times in this House and members opposite refused to get up and speak about that and speak about the tax increase that this will be—that will be implemented—excuse me—that will be implemented. And, you know, they refused to stand up for their constituents then and they're refusing to stand up now.

It's very important in the Legislature that when it comes to pieces of legislation like this, when members opposite are working to ensure that these legislations are passed through as quickly as possible, but it's very important that members opposite stand in their place and let Manitobans, let their constituents know where they stand. But all too often it seems that members opposite have been muzzled. So I didn't see the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) getting out of her seat to put a few words on the record with respect to this bill. It makes me wonder, do they really believe that this is a very important bill.

And, you know, I also—I was looking and wondering if the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) would get up and speak on behalf of his constituents. Where does he stand on this bill? If he's silent, maybe he thinks that this is an important bill—this is not an important bill to be passed in the Manitoba Legislature.

You know, and I looked and I looked for the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), of course, didn't get up out of his seat either. And I thought, you know, maybe the member for Gimli would stand up and speak out on behalf of his constituents and let everyone know where he stands on this piece of legislation. But, of course, he sits silent, and I think it's too bad that he obviously doesn't see this as a very important bill.

And, you know, then I look across, and the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick) didn't stand up and, you know, I wonder why she wouldn't be standing up on behalf of her constituents, letting her constituents know where she stands on this piece of legislation. I think it's very unfortunate that they try and paint this as a very important piece of legislation, yet they put

only one member up, the Minister of Finance, to speak on this important piece of legislation. And I think that's very unfortunate, and, you know, the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) had the opportunity to get up as well and she is refusing to get up and speak on this piece of legislation, and I think her constituents would want to know where she stands on this piece of legislation. Is she for it? Maybe she's afraid to say anything about it, because she's not standing up and letting Manitobans know where she stands on this. So the only person was the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) who stood up and spoke on this bill.

But, you know, if it's such an important piece of legislation to members opposite, if it was so important—I think we need to go back to when, you know, the members opposite had the opportunity, call session back earlier than what they did. They chose not to call us back into session until mid-April, and they had the opportunity to call us back earlier and they didn't. And so now they're trying to fear monger with Manitobans and fear monger with civil servants and try and say that—and they're trying to spin that—their way out of this mess that they—this boondoggle that they've gotten themselves into. They had the opportunity to call us back earlier and give us a chance to have real debate here in the Manitoba Legislature, and now they're just trying to ram through all pieces of legislation because of their incredible mismanagement of the legislative process in this Manitoba Legislature.

I think, quite frankly, members opposite have made a mockery of the democratic process in this province. It is incredibly—it is not democratic to bring pieces of legislation through in the dark of night and expect that, you know, they're all just going to pass without debate. That's what we're here to do; we're here to stand up for our constituents and to talk about the importance of democracy. Now, I know members opposite are a little concerned—they don't really care about democracy. We know that they have stripped Manitobans of their democratic right when it comes to calling a referendum—the required referendum by law, I might add—in the Manitoba Legislature. They should have called a referendum, but they're not concerned about democracy. They don't care about democracy. And, you know, I saw and I sat in on the Bill 20 debate in committee and I heard from Manitoban after Manitoban after Manitoban who is very concerned about the antidemocratic approach by this NDP government when it comes to running our province.

They have been so disrespectful to Manitobans in this province, and I think it's really unfortunate. And, you know, I know at the beginning of the committee process, you know, members opposite were sitting on their BlackBerrys, as many of them are doing now, and they're not paying attention to the debate in this Legislature. And I think it's unfortunate. Now, it's one thing to do it when I'm speaking; okay, I understand that, because members opposite don't really want to listen to what I have to say. Well, that's fine, but what about when, you know, Manitobans are coming to the Manitoba Legislature to speak out—and many of them don't do this very often. It's very difficult to make the decision to come down to the Legislature and speak out about something, and as—and they believe so strongly—not only in the wrong decision of this NDP government to raise the PST by 14 points—or 14 per cent, by one point, to 8 per cent. You know, they're really concerned about the approach that this government has taken, the antidemocratic approach this government has taken with respect to the process in this bill.

* (16:20)

And I think it's really unfortunate. We had members of the business community; we had, you know, members, you know, who can barely afford to make ends meet now on a day-to-day basis who came down and told their incredible stories about their families and the impact that this PST increase is going to have on their families. And members opposite really didn't seem to care too much and they didn't listen to it. And it does take me back to the original way that this PST increase was brought about when the budget was initially introduced. I know the member—the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) went around to various areas of our province, and I know that he was engaged in what he called a prebudget consultation process. We know he went around to different places, but nowhere in those prebudget consultation meetings did it ever mention anything in his fancy slide presentation, anything about increasing the PST. And I still ask today because he still has refused to answer the question.

Why did he not—when he knew that he was intending on increasing the PST, why did he not throw that out as an option for Manitobans, just to see then, even in the prebudget consultation meetings, what they thought about it? Well, I think they didn't bring it up then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they knew what Manitobans, who were attending these meetings, would say. He knew that

they would be opposed to this increase in the PST, and I think he would know as well that they would be very disturbed, especially with a process that has taken place with respect to the way this NDP conducts itself and conducted itself with respect to the increase in the PST and how they came about it.

And I think that's really unfortunate now. And Manitobans, again, came out to committee and we heard from them, and we heard why they are opposed to this and the heart-wrenching stories as to why they're opposed. And they—and we heard from them that they don't want this PST increase, and especially the way this government has gone about it. They called on this government, time and time again, presentation after presentation, to do the right thing and to call for a referendum.

Yet the government, once again, refuses to listen to Manitobans. And I think it's a sign of a very desperate government who is resorting now to taking democratic rights away from people in our province in order to suit their own political agenda.

They have a spending problem. It's a spending problem that they have had for a very long time, and now it's catching up with them. But it's not only catching up with them where they have to make the desperate decisions that they are making to raise the PST—there is another alternative. They can look, and I brought forward a bill in the Manitoba Legislature called The Results-Based Budgeting Act, and it's a very good piece of legislation.

I don't know why members opposite are refusing to support the piece of legislation, because you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all it asks is for a review of all government programs, and that—in that review, find out, because we know that many of those programs are not working for the Manitobans that they were originally set up to work for. We know that they're not working.

So, if programs are not working, then they should get rid of the programs. And, if programs are working, then let's—then they should be capitalizing on those programs. But, until members opposite get their head out of the sand and realize the importance of reviewing all of the government programs, they'll never understand where they could actually save some money. And I think that they're just afraid, because and it—maybe it's just that they're opposed to finding ways of saving money. Maybe that's why they're making the decisions that they're making by raising the PST, by expanding it last year and then raising it this year in the highest tax increase in 25,

26 years in this province. Of course, the last largest one was under Howard Pawley, another NDP premier.

And it seems to be that the NDP government is so afraid to find ways to save, to rein in their spending, because we know Manitobans have to do that in their own households. They've told us that. They told us that at committee on Bill 20. They told us time and time again, you know: Why is the government calling on us to reign in our spending and to balancing our own books, saying that we have to balance our own books and not increase our own debt when they are doing the same? And then when they don't—when they—they're doing that, and now they're taking more money out of the pockets of hard-working Manitobans. It doesn't make sense.

It's very important for this government to set an example in this province, and they should be setting an example for Manitobans and showing Manitobans the right way of doing this. But, instead, what they're saying is that, you know what? It's okay to run up debt in your own household; it's okay to run a deficit on an annual basis in our province and in your own households. And what will end up happening, in the end, is that person will be forced out of their home, you know, but this government doesn't seem to understand that. They're setting an incredibly bad example.

So I think it's unfortunate that we're now in a position in this Manitoba Legislature—not only are members not getting up and speaking on this piece of legislation, it's unfortunate that the Legislature now has to bail out this government again for their incredible mismanagement of the issues in this province. The NDP have absolutely no ability to manage this session or their budget, so they try and fear monger and cause panic among Manitobans, which I think is incredibly unfortunate.

Now there was plenty of time to discuss—and I go back to what I said earlier—but there's been plenty of time to discuss and pass a budget before the scheduled summer rise of the Legislature, but the NDP chose not to that. They could have, as I said earlier, brought us back earlier in session. They didn't have to wait until mid-April to bring us back into session. So I think, you know, it would have—if they had called us back earlier, it would have given us the opportunity to have an honest debate here in the Manitoba Legislature, to go through the proper process and procedures of the Legislature instead of

just ramming through legislation because it suits their own political agenda.

So, instead, they chose to raise the PST and to gut the referendum requirement from the taxpayer protection act. That seemed to be their priority for this session. The NDP called Bill 20 a third of the time this House sat between April and July. So clearly their priority was to call a bill that calls for an increase in the PST and that calls for a gutting of the referendum requirement, and that was their priority in the Manitoba Legislature and that's their priority of this session.

So that's nearly three weeks of debate, time the NDP wasted on tax hikes and destroying democracy in our province rather than working on the budget that was their priority. That shows you where the NDP's true priorities are—tax hikes instead of fiscal accountability. It's no wonder the Premier (Mr. Selinger) was ranked the worst premier in Canada for fiscal management in 2012.

The NDP only know how to do two things: to raise taxes, to rack up deficits. I'd say they know more than just that, they know how to drive our Province into the ground and I would suggest that they are very good at increasing the debt in our Province. And they have the fiscal situation and a policy that is causing inflation to rise in our province, and by raising the PST it's going to cause an even further problem when it comes to inflation. We're already dead last, and we're going to be continuing in that direction.

And it's incredibly unfortunate for all the hard-working people in this province that are running their day-to-day lives in an honest and efficient way. They're managing their own budgets in their household. They're not spending beyond their knee-means, yet they have a government that wants to pick their pockets because they can't get their own spending under control.

The budget brings in about \$227 in new taxes this year, and this is on top of the \$184 million in new taxes from last year. So you combine this with the fee increases, and that amounts to over \$500 million more per year in the taxes that Manitobans have to pay.

So, you know, half a billion dollars in new taxes, when the Premier promised in the last election he would not raise taxes, is deplorable. And I want to go back to quote the Premier, what he said during the last election. The Premier of this province stood

before Manitobans and said, I quote: Today's release of the 2010-11 public accounts shows that Greg 'Selin'-oh—shows that the Premier's five-year economic plan is on track to return the budget to balance by 2014 while projecting jobs and services without raising taxes. Now, that was the Premier of the promise.

* (16:30)

And, if that wasn't enough, he confirmed this policy 10 days later. He said, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that. We're ahead of schedule right now.

And that was the Premier of our province on a CJOB leaders' debate during the last election on September 12th, 2011. I think it's very unfortunate that the Premier has chosen to mislead Manitobans in such an incredible way.

And I, you know, when the Premier was asked about specific tax increases like the PST, he said, and I quote, he said, ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense. Everybody knows that.

And that was the Premier on September 23rd, 2011. That's what he said.

The NDP lied to Manitobans. They promised not to raise taxes, and instead they have brought in the two largest tax increases back to back in 26 years. Again, the previous government who also brought in the largest tax increase in our province was the former NDP Premier Howard Pawley.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, Mr. Speaker, the NDP broke their promise when they decided to expand the PST last year. They put the PST on insurance products for your home, property and group life insurance. Manitoba is only one of three provinces to tax insurance.

And I'd like to just go back to the last election because it wasn't just the Premier who was out spreading this kind of propaganda, I—it was also every single member of the 37 members of the NDP caucus, who also went out door to door, and they ran on saying that they would not increase the PST for Manitobans. And, of course, you know, and I go back to the member from St. Norbert, of course, who went door to door in his riding, and he told them, you know, oh, yes, we will not—absolutely, we will not raise taxes in—at all after the next election. We—no—

make no tax increases in our province, is what he said door to door in his riding.

And, you know, he should be ashamed because I don't even think he's gotten up and spoken on this PST increase in this House. I don't think he's spoken on it in the public. I don't think he's really let his constituents know why he is part of a government that chose to lie to Manitobans in the last election when they chose—when the NDP Premier (Mr. Selinger) and Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and all members opposite chose after the election to break their promise to Manitobans by increasing the PST and expanding the PST because, of course, we know that that's a tax increase as well. So, if it wasn't bad enough last year, they also chose to expand the PST, thereby raising more taxes from hard-working Manitobans.

And, you know, this year they choose to increase the PST itself. And we know, of course, from members of the public who have come forward to the Manitoba Legislature to speak on the Bill 20 and to speak out about what their feelings are—we know that the majority of those people, the vast majority of those people, were adamantly opposed to this PST increase. They were opposed to—and especially, I think they were opposed to the egregious way and the process that this government chose to take for raising the PST and for that decision to break their promise from the last election.

And we know, I mean, also, the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) went door to door, and she talked to her constituents in the last election. And, of course, her Premier had just been on the radio saying: Oh, that's nonsense; we won't be raising the PST. We won't be raising the PST at all on Manitobans. We won't be raising any taxes. No new taxes, he said. It's just nonsense, he said, that the opposition would say such a thing.

Well, of course, the opposition ended up being right in this case, Mr. Speaker, and we knew that the NDP would, at the time, and I believe our leader at the time even suggested that they were going to raise the PST, and he kept saying that it's nonsense. And so I know the member for Kirkfield Park went door to door in her riding, and she spoke to her constituents and she reiterated what her Premier said, that, oh, it's nonsense, we won't be raising your taxes.

So the people of Kirkfield Park supported her on that basis. That was a promise that she made to them in the last election. And it's a promise that she has

broken to her constituents. And I think it's extremely unfortunate. We have not really heard her stand up and say whether—why she did that, why she broke her promise. She hasn't stood up and apologized to her constituents for breaking her promise to them in the last election, and I think that's extremely unfortunate.

And I think there's also, of course, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), who also went door to door in her constituency and she also promised and reiterated what the Premier said, that this was, in fact, nonsense that they would be raising the—any kind of taxes after the last election, Mr. Speaker. And so she broke her promise to her constituents, and she has yet to stand up in the Legislature or outside the Legislature and indicate and apologize to her constituents for breaking her promise in the last election.

And I think that's unfortunate, and I encourage her to get up and take the opportunity in debating this bill today to stand up and say—and speak to this bill, but also to speak and apologize to the many constituents that she broke their promise to—in fact, all of her constituents she broke a promise to by raising taxes after the last election when they promised not to.

So, Mr. Speaker, and, of course, we've got the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) as well, who has also—he went out in the last election and he reiterated what his Premier said, that this was nothing but nonsense that they were going to raise the PST. And I just think it's really unfortunate, because he knew at the time that he was probably going to be breaking the promise, okay, and he was going out and reiterating—or maybe he just trusted his Premier, that his Premier was going to keep his word and the Minister of Finance was going to keep his word. But what's unfortunate is that he went out in the last election and he said, you know, to Manitobans that they would not raise taxes, that it was nothing but nonsense, and reiterated those words spoken by his Premier.

And, of course, the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) did the same thing. She went door to door in her riding, and I haven't seen her stand up and apologize to her constituents for breaking her promise in the last election, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's the right thing to do. There's still time and there's still an opportunity in this Manitoba Legislature to apologize. There's still opportunity for them to reverse their decision and to call for a referendum,

because—but, you know, they know it's the right thing to do. They—I just can't figure out why they're not doing it.

Oh, but perhaps—maybe it's because they know how people would vote in that referendum. They know that Manitobans would—and the Manitobans, certainly, that we saw at committee and the Manitobans that we're hearing from all across the city and province who are adamantly opposed to this PST increase and adamantly opposed to the way the NDP is stripping Manitobans of their right to a referendum that currently exists under these laws, the laws of our Province, the laws that this NDP government is breaking time and time again.

I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is in a little bit of trouble and he'll have his day, I guess, in court, Mr. Speaker, on several issues, but, you know, I think it's unfortunate that they've stripped Manitobans of their democratic right to have a say when it comes to this PST increase.

So, Mr. Speaker, and, of course, we had the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald) also did the same thing. She went out door to door in her riding and she promised not to raise taxes. She said it was nonsense that we were spreading such propaganda, is what she said. And, you know, it turned out not to be propaganda; it turned out to be the truth, that they did raise the taxes. And they knew that they would be raising those taxes. And I think it's unfortunate when a government goes out and says one thing during an election, as this NDP government did, and they promised not to raise taxes, and then they turn around and did exactly that.

But, you know, I just want to take a moment, Mr. Speaker. I want to encourage other members, certainly members opposite, to get up and put a few words on the record. I know they've been muzzled by their party, because they've been—they—and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and maybe the Minister of Finance and others from Cabinet. I know that members in the backbenches of this government, you know, they should have a say in this and all—and the PST increase and the way this government is going about stripping Manitobans of their democratic right. And they should be able to have a say, they should not be muzzled, they should not be forced to sit in their seats, because I think that it's important for Manitobans to understand where they're coming from with respect to this.

* (16:40)

Manitobans need to know and want to know why this government chose to break their election promise not to raise taxes. And I think it should come from members opposite themselves. If you're not going to apologize—if they're not going to apologize to the people within their constituencies, then perhaps they could just explain why they broke their promise and why they're choosing to go about doing this in such an egregious way as to strip Manitobans of their democratic right to have a say in this. I would encourage members opposite to stand in their place and to either apologize or explain why they broke their promises to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP didn't just increase taxes; well, many of the tax increases they did and certainly on the PST came in many different forms. They increased the categories of these tax increases to include insurance products for your home. They now include property insurance. They include things like group life insurance. There's hydro increases. We know the hydro rates have gone up 8 per cent in Manitoba last year, and, you know, we know that the PST has also spread out into areas, you know, of hair styling and manicures and pedicures, which, we know, primarily hits women the hardest. And we know that there's other fees that have been increased as well by this NDP government: increased fees on birth certificates, campground rentals, death certificates, veterinary diagnostic services—

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

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Interim Supply Bill 48, it is unfortunate that members opposite choose not to stand up and explain what they're doing here. With no debate, no explanation, they expect this House to quietly pass \$7.7 billion worth of spending, and that's unfortunate because we know it would certainly be interesting to hear them explain how they're going to spend this because we know, when they raised the PST, first it was for flood mitigation. Then, when that story didn't work, then it changed to infrastructure; and then, when that story didn't work, it was schools, but, oh, gee, they'd already announced all those schools already. Now we're down to daycares and splash pads and re-announcements on those. So we're certainly interested in knowing where this government actually intends to spend \$7.7 billion, and that's on the cash side plus another \$556 million in capital investment. And I guess they just expect Manitobans to accept this—and Manitobans are not accepting this.

This is—this \$7.7 billion is \$6,000 per man, woman and child in the province, and that's a lot of tax money. And that's a lot of money for families to have to come up with, and yet there's no explanation of this, and, you know, they could have done this—if they could manage a lemonade stand, which they can't, but if they could even manage a lemonade stand, they would've had us back earlier in the Legislature. They had time to recall the Legislature earlier. We could've been here. We could've been debating this. We would have found out sooner that they wanted to raise the PST. They could've had a—they could've even had time for a referendum before July 1st if they had brought it in—brought in the announcement there, and there was time for it. Obviously, they knew they were going to do this, but they chose to hide this from Manitobans.

So, obviously, Manitobans are upset. They're feeling very distrustful of this government because there was no mention of this. And, as some of my colleagues have outlined, you know, back in the election campaign in 2011, there was no talk about raising taxes. There was no talk about raising the PST. In fact, the premier of the day called that nonsense, that he would not raise the PST, that he would not raise taxes.

I remember being at a debate, in fact, it was at the high school over in St. Vital where the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), the member for Seine River (Ms. Oswald), the member from St. Vital were all there speaking to high school students. It was really—it was almost amusing. If it wasn't so sad, it would've been amusing, because they kept talking about the '90s, and we're talking about high school students that were born about that time. So the—yes, I wasn't sure whether it was an election campaign or whether it was supposed to be a history lesson, but their history is a little bit off.

So they—but all through that debate—and the member from Riel is chirping again—all through that debate, not once did she mention she was going to raise taxes—not once. And not once did they go out there and say, we're going to raise the PST. In fact, nonsense—nonsense, we're not going to raise. And, if you lie to high school students, my goodness, where will this government go next—if they lie to high school students. So we know that that was not part [*inaudible*].

They didn't mention the fact that they were going to raise car registrations, which probably would have been a big factor to those high school

students, as they all look forward to either having a vehicle now or owning a vehicle shortly and licensing that vehicle. They would not have been very happy those high school students to know that they would have to pay more for their car registrations.

Their parents would certainly not be enthused about having to pay PST on their home and business insurance, which is a huge hit to families and businesses. They would have certainly—and I know those high school students who are driving now and would soon be driving—they would not be at all impressed about having to pay another 2 and a half cents in gas tax, plus now the PST rise, which has made the price of gas go up even more. They would not have been impressed with that.

Now their parents also—I don't imagine too many high school students are paying the hydro bills in their houses, but they'll certainly hear their parents talking about the hydro rates going up by 8 per cent, and with no end in sight with this one at all—no end in sight for that one.

And, certainly, haircuts and spa services—I think probably some of those high school students would have been hit by the PST on that one. But there was no mention in that debate about those costs that we're going to—that they had secretly planned to raise, and that's—

And so, when the members opposite were going door to door and they weren't mentioning this, were they—I always—I have this vision of them going to the door, and with their fingers crossed behind their backs, saying we're not going to raise taxes. Is that what they did, or did they actually just not tell the truth when they were going door to door?

So, Mr. Speaker, this is—it speaks volumes about this government. It's the arrogance that they have. They expect to bring in an Interim Supply bill—the sky is falling act, I think is what it's called—and they want just to have this passed with no debate on it. We would look forward to them putting some debate on the record. We would look forward to their comments of why this is needed and why they failed to have their regular supplies motions passed, rather than needing this Interim Supply.

And, certainly, you know, we still have time. I'm sure that my colleagues would gladly let these—let members opposite stand up and speak to this. So we'll look to see—maybe overnight—if they have a chance to think about it overnight, they'll come back.

We can even supply them notes if they're short on notes. But then, with a 192 communicators, they're never really short of notes that could come out. And we'll, you know, we won't worry about the accuracy from the 192, seeing how they're a little lacking in experience but not in volume. So we'll let them do that.

So, you know, we've had lots of time to discuss Bill 20, and yet this—here we are with an Interim Supply bill.

They want to raise—or they have raised the PST as of July 1st. They still want to get Bill 20 passed so that they can retroactively withdraw the referendum requirement, in spite of the fact that they're already—have implemented the tax.

So it's important that we have this debate in this House. That's what the Chamber is meant for, and we should have debate from all sides.

And we know that they promised not to raise taxes. We know that it's costing, at least, minimum, \$1,600 per family. And yet, on top of that, when they were going door to door and they didn't talk about these tax increases that they were planning on implementing, yet—

They also didn't talk about their vote tax—that they were going to implement a vote tax, that they were going to take \$5,000 each. Each sitting MLA—NDP MLA will take \$5,000 out of the pockets of Manitobans—not once but every year.

* (16:50)

Apparently, they're either too afraid to go out and ask for money to run their political party, to run their campaigns. They've become—or they're just plain lazy. And they figure they're entitled to this money now, and they're going to run their campaigns on the backs of the taxpayers. And that is, that shows how low this government has got in that they have absolutely no credibility at all; they're afraid to go out there. I'm sure that, when they go back to their home constituencies, they're hearing from their constituents about how unhappy they are about the sales tax increase, about the taxes and fee increases.

And they're probably even hearing about Bipole III these days because it made the news last week with the Clean Environment Commission. And, of course, the Clean Environment Commission approved the project with some minor changes; they had no choice. When you narrow the parameters of the study to as narrow as what they had, they had to,

they're—when you ask for the results that you want, you will get the results that you ask for. That's all there is to it.

There should have been an NFAT study included; the Bipole III line should have been included in an NFAT and a full and comprehensive NFAT to include Conawapa, Keeyask and Bipole III. But, no, they refused to do that.

They should have allowed the Clean Environment Commission to study west side versus east side, instead of just taking the circular route of the west side only. If you're going to do a review, you should do a full and fair examination of all the options out there.

So we have, when you have this Interim Supply at \$7.7 billion and then you're going to have a hydro route that's going to cost an extra billion dollars, and that, of course, is before they even start because we know with Wuskwatim dam that started out at \$800 million—a huge number, but dams do cost money so that—but it starts out at \$800 million; it ends up at \$1.6 billion and counting. And it's losing money each and every day, each and every year, and it will for a number of years to come.

So now we're into this Bipole III. It—the original numbers it's going to cost a billion dollars extra; that's before construction and now we know their history, Hydro's history of projects, and it, how cost overruns go. We know that the route is 25 per cent less efficient than an east-side alternative.

So we've got higher line losses. You have 500 kilometres extra, so you know that's where the extra construction costs are coming in. You know you are going to have higher maintenance costs on an extra 500 kilometres, and maintenance is a large issue for any project because it's one thing to build something but then you have to maintain it, even if it is virtual recreation centres or whatever. They're apparently—you still need money to maintain virtual rec centres out there.

So this is—we're still concerned about this; this is, this Interim Appropriation Act is just another sign of a government that has no control over its spending. It's—they don't have a revenue problem, and we've seen this. The revenues have gone up astronomically in the last number of years, and yet they continue to spend that and more. In spite of having, bringing in \$227 million in new taxes this year, \$184 million in taxes last year; you know, and getting over \$500 million more per year we still are running a 500-and-some million-dollar deficit. They're still not

even close to balancing the budget; it's not going to happen this year or any year, any time soon.

And, on top of that, they're continuing to borrow another \$3 billion in our—our debt costs are going to soar astronomically when interest rates go up, and they always have. They will again, and it's going to cost Manitobans. And Manitobans will pay the price for this, not the NDP government; it'll be Manitobans that pay the price for this.

So there is no foresight; there's no looking ahead to where Manitoba should be. We're not an island. They—this government has done very well at controlling everything including business within Manitoba, but we're not an island, and we have to compete with outside businesses, with outside provinces, with outside states and countries. So it's costing Manitobans jobs, and we know that from businesses that have moved and are contemplating moving.

Our young people we all have, my family included, we have young people that are living in other provinces, and, when you compare the tax rates, it's very difficult to give them incentive to move back here, because the bottom line is families need money to function each and every day, each and every year. And they don't have the luxury that this government does, that they can't just go out and tax someone else. Families have to make their own money, and they have to be very prudent as to how they spend their own money. So, unlike this government, which always, always just spends more money and then turns around and, when they run out of money, they turn around and just add taxes.

So we know that this is—this Interim Appropriation Act is the—going to give this government ability to go out and not only cover essential services, and that's what needs to be done. There are many Manitobans who rely on government through various programs for their—for money from the government and we certainly agree with that. There's—we have a lot of hard-working civil servants in this province that we certainly support and we want to see be able to do their jobs, but, unfortunately, this government is hampering that by building their—by their controls that they've put in place and so, you know, to go out there and cry wolf about a fiscal cliff and then trying to instill fear in Manitobans is really poor.

When you have this kind of money around and yet you still—you so badly manage that you feel that you have to go out and create fear. And it doesn't

stop there, because it goes back and it hurts families each and every day. There is only one taxpayer, and they're feeling this. We know that the spenDP have jacked up fees. As I said before, the 2 and a half cents on the litre on gas and diesel fuel, 3 cents per litre on agricultural foods.

You know, our agricultural industry is doing well, but they don't need a taxing government that does not account for the money that they spend. And they've jacked up fees on everything from birth certificates, campground rentals, death certificates, fishing licences, environmental permits. You know, that really is from birth to death this government, and after death, this government is taxing you, and so no fee is safe from this spenDP government.

So we know that—they know where they're at—we know where this government is at in terms of how they're spending money, but there's no accountability for it.

What we keep asking is put some accountability, and that's where, if the members opposite were really truthful to Manitoba, they would stand up in this Chamber and they would say: This is why we need this money. This is where this money's going to be spent— instead of hiding, instead of sitting down, because they can't hide from their constituents. Their constituents will still tell them what they—what their constituents are feeling and what they think about tax increases and the increase to the sales tax, increase to the property taxes that this government has done.

The hydro rates going up by 8 per cent, just last year—we know that hydro rates are going to go up every—each and every year for the next 20 years, and they're—this fixation that this government has on spending money; it's going to come at the cost to Manitoba taxpayers.

They continue to talk about Hydro about selling power into the US, but they're selling it at a loss right now on the cash market, that they refuse to go back and look at the realities of the market. They—you know, and I understand that. With no market experience, with no business experience, I can see that, but it's unfortunate that they've seen fit to even muzzle a Crown corporation—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) will have 11 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 22, 2013

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