

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 25, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

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

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure and the loss of local access to Lake Manitoba, as 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 pre-flood conditions so the park can be reopened for the 2013 season or earlier if possible.

This petition is signed by W. Webb, A. Swayda, R.L. Biccum and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Provincial Road 433 Improvements

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Provincial Road 433, Cape Coppermine Road, in the rural municipality of Lac du Bonnet has seen an increase in traffic volume in recent years.

(2) New subdivisions have generated considerable population growth, and the area has seen a significant increase in tourism due to the popularity of the Granite Hills Golf Course.

(3) This population growth has generated an increased tax base in the rural municipality.

(4) Cape Coppermine Road was not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic it now accommodates.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Cape Coppermine Road can no longer adequately serve both area residents and tourists and as such consider making improvements to the road to reflect its current use.

This petition is signed by G. Gauthier, K. Fey, M. Adams 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 the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

The preschool waiting list for ABA services has reached its highest level ever with at least 56 children waiting for services. That number is expected to exceed 70 children by September 2013 despite commitments to reduce the wait 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 shall be denied access to or age out of eligibility for ABA services.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by A. Barber, S. Delorme, J. Galaugher and many more fine Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(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 T. Hedley, C. Styre, A. Dizon and many other fine Manitobans.

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 for children with autism.

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

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

Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or

eliminated from eligibility for ABA services if their need still exists.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by N. Talbot, B. Jones, A. Yerlitz 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 increase the retail sales tax, known as the PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by D. Stephansson, R. Cook, A. Zunigu and many others.

* (13:40)

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, 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.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by L. Regnier, E. Jaquet, M. Lusano and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of B. Anderson, B. Nash, R. Heppner and many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(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 a 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.

(5) 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, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by G. Lozano, M. De Guzman, J. Capistrano and many, many others.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): 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 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 in 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 require 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 the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by S. Bollegraf, C. Melenchuk, C. Doig and many others.

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

And this is the background 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 statement on autism services which notes the importance of early intervention for children with autism.

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

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

Waiting lists and denials of treatment are unacceptable. No child should be denied access to or age out of the 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 E. Eisbrenner, A. Eisbrenner, C. Szun and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): 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 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 December of 2013 despite commitments to reduce the wait 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.

* (13:50)

(5) 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. Dizor, C. Webster, M. Moreau and many, many other Manitobans.

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.

(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.

(5) 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.

Signed by P. Lachance, R. Perrier, R. Perrier and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): 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 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.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by K. McDougal, D. Clauthier, T. McCombs and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) 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 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 and many more children are expected to age out because of a lack of available treatment spaces.

(5) 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 J. Datuin, S. Bourbonners and R. Tiede and many, many more Manitobans.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): 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 such as applied behavioural analysis, also known as the ABA service.

The 'prov'—(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 other Manitobans.

(5) Waiting lists and denial 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 funds 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 B. Lumsden, L. Wiens, D. Chan and many, many more fine Manitobans.

* (14:00)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Eric MacIsaac, who is the nephew of the honourable Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade

(Mr. Bjornson). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government Spending Fiscal Commitments

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The government just can't seem to shake this spending addiction, Mr. Speaker, and it is a problem.

Since the NDP came to power, they've increased spending by approximately 5 per cent per year, which is far and away above the rate of economic growth of our province. And debt, just in the last four years or so, has increased by a very dangerous 50 per cent. So we've got a problem.

We know that the NDP's created the largest bureaucracy in Canada. The public knows that. The civil service knows that, and they also know that it's not sustainable as well.

And so did the government, apparently. A year ago in their budget speech they made three commitments. They said they would build a lean government, they would reduce the civil service by 200 positions and, thirdly, they would not impose additional tax increases.

Now, I guess I have to ask the Premier (Mr. Selinger): How did he do on those three major commitments of just a year ago?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, isn't that something? He gets up and talks about the civil service, and then yesterday and when he had a chance to support the civil service, he voted against them. You know, after the week before saying he wasn't going to stand in the way of all this, and now what did we see from him for a week and a half? Standing in the way of programming, of salaries for people doing the work. It's quite something coming from the member across. But that member across the way, he'll just make it up as he goes.

I would rather look at the words of the Moody's investment services group, Mr. services. What did they say about our economy? He says very clearly, Moody's does, we expect Manitoba will be at—able to achieve its targets given its track record of fiscal prudence and steady and stable growth in the economy. I'll take—

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

Mr. Pallister: It was the Finance Minister's budget speech within which these three commitments were made. So I'm disappointed the Finance Minister wouldn't remember that; it was just 16 months ago.

Did the government keep any of its promises? No, it did not. As far as lean government's concerned, their spending's up more than any other government in Canada year over year.

As far as the size of their civil service, did they lay off 200 people? No, they actually increased the size of the civil service by more than 400 positions. That's the largest increase in Canada and that's a big nose stretcher for this government.

And as far as the not increasing the taxes, we know what their—how much their commitment was worth. We know the price of their integrity and we know it's a 1 per cent PST hike or 14 per cent, from 7 to 8 per cent. Now, that total tax increase is massive for Manitobans. In just two budgets that's over half a billion dollars a year and that's the largest tax increase in Canada.

So this government's addicted to spending, Mr. Speaker, and rather than address the problem this year, they just upped the dose.

Mr. Struthers: Well, he's a big talker, Mr. Speaker, but, you know, I would still depend on the Moody's Investors Service for—to talk to people who know what they're talking about.

What else did Moody's say about the performance of this government? Well, they said the province of Manitobans' Aa1 rating reflects the province's high degree of financial flexibility, stabilizing debt burden and highly diversified economy.

That's not from somebody in this Chamber. That's not from somebody who desperately wants to be the premier of the province. That's from somebody outside of this Chamber, Moody's Investors Service. They released these on Tuesday. It's up to date, it's current, it's accurate, and I put a lot more faith—

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

Mr. Pallister: It might be up to date, but the Finance Minister isn't.

Raising taxes isn't a solution. Raising taxes may be a solution to that government's problems, but it's not a solution to the problems facing Manitobans in their homes or in their businesses. It's not a solution to the problems of seniors across our province. It's not a solution to anybody's problems, even though they may view it as such.

An addict's worst problem, of course, is not getting to step 1, and that means admitting you have a problem. And this government hasn't even gotten to step 1. They don't have a revenue problem, Mr. Speaker, they have a spending problem they refuse to admit they have.

And the projected own-source revenue growth over the next two years is over a billion dollars without the PST. So they just need an additional fix with the PST, I guess, because that's incredible revenue growth and that's a tribute to the diverse economy of this province and the people who are succeeding in spite of this government's damaging policy.

I'd like the minister to comment on that, if he wouldn't mind.

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, this government has brought forward a number of steps to control spending. We have reduced regional health authorities from 11 down to five, and the member from Fort Whyte complained about it. This government merged two Crown corporations, liquor and lotteries; this member for Fort Whyte whined about it. This government put forward plans to streamline regional offices all over Manitoba; this member from Fort Whyte whined about it.

He talks about solutions. His solution, very clearly, as he's put out, is to cut across the board, indiscriminately, \$550 million worth of services that Manitobans count on. Indiscriminate cuts across the board does not build an economy; it tears down an economy.

PST/Inflation Rate Impact on Small Business

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance clearly said in 2011 that there was no need to raise taxes.

Small businesses in this province are in trouble. The NDP has raised the PST illegally. Inflation is skyrocketing and, according to recent reports from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, small-business optimism is at its lowest level ever.

Almost every indicator, including employment plans and business health, are down month over month. This government is to blame.

When will this government admit that the illegal actions and harmful economic policies have put Manitobans at a disadvantage?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): I'm not sure if the member from Emerson remembers me or anybody else on this side of the House reminding him about the small-business tax that was there in 1999, which, as he will remember, was 8 per cent, and if he has kept up to date, he'll know that now it's at zero per cent.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, when you have a government that supports small business like that, as opposed to the no-growth '90s that the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) was part of, when you have a government that supports small business like that, you also have the luxury of having increased retail sales by 5.4 per cent last year over this year. So things are looking much better than what the member for—

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

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, what Manitobans are going to remember is that in 2011 there was a promise not to raise the PST and not to raise taxes. That's what will happen.

Employees can make a hundred dollars a week more in Saskatchewan. High inflation and high PST has led to one thing: businesses leaving the province. Small-business owners across the country are more optimistic while Manitobans continue in a downward spiral.

The spenDP still has the opportunity to restore a shred of confidence by reversing their illegal PST.

Will the government reverse the illegal PST increase? Let small businesses and the people of the province decide their future.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): What people—the people of Manitoba will remember, Mr. Speaker, is that that member for Emerson voted against every single budget that contained tax credits and tax breaks for Manitoba families.

It's quite the spectacle, Mr. Speaker, when Conservatives in this House applaud against a tax break for small businesses. Isn't that something?

Mr. Speaker, decision makers at places like IKEA don't go looking to Saskatchewan. They come looking to Manitoba and they decide to set up their establishments here in Manitoba. Business is growing—

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

* (14:10)

Referendum Request

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, every member on this side of the House will stand up for Manitobans, not stand on them.

Ninety-three per cent of small businesses believe that the government should call a referendum. Seventy-four per cent of the people in Manitoba believe the government lied to them. Eighty-one per cent of Manitobans think the government should reduce their own spending.

This government, however, believes that 37 MLAs know better than a hundred per cent of Manitobans. Arrogance and disrespect are more powerful than actually listening to Manitobans.

Will this government respect the rights of a hundred per cent of Manitobans, call a referendum? They still have that opportunity.

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday that member from Emerson had a chance to stand up with the people of Manitoba, stand up for programs that we fund. He had a chance to do that, and he blew it.

If members opposite don't want to believe StatsCan, if they don't want to believe Moody's, if they don't want to believe the Royal Bank, maybe they'll believe the Bank of Montreal, the Bank of Montreal who is forecasting a rate of growth at 2 per cent next year. The Bank of Montreal, the Conference Board of Canada says we're growing this economy because we have a balanced approach and we support services.

The best way to slow growth is to take the fort—member for Fort Whyte's advice and slow the economy by cutting indiscriminately across the board \$550 million—

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

**Manitoba Hydro
Confidential Document Recovery**

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Under this NDP government's watch, Manitoba Hydro released a top secret document.

Yesterday we learned, and I quote: Those who are authorized to receive such information include our chief, Hydro relations counsellors and certain designated TCN staff, elders and community members, and some of our advisers are also designated. Today we find out Byron Williams and the PUB also had access to these top secret documents. Clearly, everybody except for the minister has seen these documents.

I'd like to ask him: Can he assure Manitobans that these top secret documents have all been returned to Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, what I can assure Manitobans is that we continue to build our hydro. We will continue to have the lowest cost hydro in the country.

I can assure the member that if we continue to partner with First Nations, for the first time in maybe a hundred, a hundred and fifty years, we'll be able to share the benefits of economic development not just in the south but with our First Nation partners.

I can also assure the member that we will help build the Manitoba economy and keep Manitoba the most affordable province to live in the country. Thank you.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, 12 very serious questions and 12 very foolish answers.

I'd like to quote from Manitoba Hydro: It does pose a serious risk in terms of our competitors, Schneider said. It would allow even our existing partners to look at information on which we base our pricing and say either, we got a pretty good deal out of these guys, or, gee, there's money on the table, he said.

Mr. Speaker, these documents, and I read the list, are out there amongst a lot of individuals in the community.

I'd like to ask the minister a very simple and serious question: Can he assure Manitobans that all of those documents have been returned?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure all Manitobans that we will continue to build hydro.

Members opposite love to talk about Saskatchewan except when it comes to energy.

So when Saskatchewan's spending \$15 billion on coal and on nuclear and their rates are almost double what we have in Manitoba, they don't say a peep, because they know our plan to build Bipole III, which will provide for reliability, and our plan to provide 2,500 megawatts of power will provide jobs. It will provide clean power, and it'll provide power that we can sell to the United States. Power and water that would otherwise spill over the dams, we'll be able to make money on for all Manitobans into the future.

Mr. Schuler: Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, these answers pander only to his MLAs on his bench.

However, they are putting out there a lot of concern, and I'd like to read another quote from Manitoba Hydro: These current agreements that we have aren't cast in stone at the moment. They're term sheets, which means we have a commitment to do it, but there's also a number of stages where the deals could be cancelled, so they may try and get a better deal if they get these documents.

I would like to now ask the minister—it's the 15th attempt we've had to get him to answer this very serious question: Did he get these top secret documents back? Can he assure Manitobans of that?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, finally—finally—I think the member might be starting to understand.

Hydro has about \$9 billion of secure contracts to customers going forward. They also have, 'cumutively', \$29 billion in contracts that could be rolled over. That means those billions of dollars will go to build hydro and keep our rates the lowest in the country.

That's why we're going to keep Hydro. That's why we don't want to privatize it. That's why we don't want to balance the budget by privatizing Hydro, which is what the members opposite did with MTS. They privatized it. They used the money for operating expenses. And now our rates are one of the highest in the country.

We're going to use the—those deals, the firm contracts and the contracts that will roll over, to help finance going forward, which will keep our rates into the future the lowest in the country. They finally are starting to get it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Manitoba Crime Statistics Government Policies

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, another nonanswer from this minister who plans to sell Hydro; it's being obvious, Mr. Speaker.

You know, yesterday—they must learn how to not answer questions, Mr. Speaker, because yesterday I asked a question of the Minister of Justice, a serious question about evidence and the message that this government was sending to victims of crime, and the minister spouted off about statistics.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's look at some of those statistics. Homicides are up in Winnipeg, along with robberies, youth criminal justice offences. In fact, youth criminal justice offences were up more than 92 per cent in 2012 compared to the five-year average.

Will the Minister of Justice admit that the policies implemented by his government are a failure?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): It's a pleasure to talk about the work we're continuing to do with law enforcement and with communities large and small across Manitoba to build a safer province, because wherever people may live, they are entitled to safety in their homes and their communities and their playgrounds, their schoolyards.

And today's report that I believe the member was referring to, although I'm not sure how much of it he read, shows great progress towards that goal. And, of course, there's been a trend now for the last many years of decreased crime in the province of Manitoba. The violent crime severity index is down 5 per cent in Manitoba from 2011 to 2012; in fact, almost twice that much, 9 per cent, in the city of Winnipeg alone. Virtually every crime in Manitoba is down.

And credit for that has to go to our police—they're doing a great job—everyone involved in the justice system, but our communities as well, as we pursue a balanced approach of making our communities safer, not one-trick ponies like the members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Helwer: Well, yes, the minister must live in a different world, Mr. Speaker, because he's ignoring a very important fact, and that's the types of crime

Manitoba is leading the country in, and isn't that appalling?

Winnipeg remains one of the most dangerous cities in Canada in which to live. Manitoba's score on the violent crime severity index, which the minister referenced, a reflection of not only the types of crimes but the relative severity, was the highest in Canada.

The facts are clear, Mr. Speaker, maybe not to this minister, but these government's—this government's policies have failed Manitobans yet again. Will the minister stand in this House today and finally admit this?

Mr. Swan: I'm surprised the member from Brandon West wants to talk about Winnipeg because, of course, the statistics, which build on the stats we talked about just two days ago issued by the Winnipeg Police Service, the overall crime severity index is down in Winnipeg yet again, down another 5 per cent last year, which, in fact, tells us the crime rate in Winnipeg has dropped 35 per cent from 2007 to 2012. And, of course, the information on the city of Winnipeg Police Service CrimeStat shows that so far, 2013 over 2012 shows another 20 per cent drop in crime in the city of Winnipeg.

But that's not done alone on suppression; that's done in working with communities. So when the member for Children and Youth Opportunities talks in the community about early childhood development, that's making our community safer. When the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Ms. Irvin-Ross) talks about building communities and safer housing, that's building a safer community. And when the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) gets—

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

Mr. Helwer: The minister's rhetoric doesn't line up with the facts.

Youth criminal justice offences were up more than 92 per cent in 2012. Is this the type of thing he's talking about, the youth that he wants to see? Youth remand numbers were, again, the highest in the country, five times the national average. Manitoba's assault—major assault rate was near the highest in Canada. Do these measures sound like successes?

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the minister again: Will he admit that his policies have again failed Manitobans?

Mr. Swan: Obviously, for the member opposite, crime going down almost 50 per cent in Winnipeg means nothing, so let's talk about his own community.

In—this morning—the Brandon Sun, there is a story and the high—the headline, of course, is for Brandon: City's crime rate falls. There's been a drop across the board when it comes to the number of crimes reported in the first six months of 2013 compared to the same period in 2012: violent crime down 23 per cent, crimes against property down by 17 per cent. I know he knows nothing about Winnipeg; I thought he might know something about his own community.

But, Mr. Speaker, it's—of course, it's not enough to have no solutions on the other side. It's another thing to put forward mean-spirited, reckless cuts that result in fewer police officers, fewer correctional officers, fewer probation officers, and this Progressive Conservative opposition has voted against every additional resource we've added since forming—

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

Phoenix Sinclair Missing Documentation

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Mr. Speaker, on December 3rd, 2012, I asked the Family Services Minister when she first became aware of the case notes from Phoenix Sinclair's case file were missing. Her response was, and I quote, I find the fact that they're missing documentation extremely distressing. This is not the type of response a child-welfare minister should be making if she truly is engaged in her child safety responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, I'll ask one more time: When did this minister first become aware that the case notes from Phoenix's case file were missing?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Mr. Speaker, I think, as we've talked about before on this issue—I know we had several questions, a good discussion about it—the policies have changed greatly in terms of the keeping of records. Now, the standards that are in place today were the same standards that were brought in by members opposite when they were in government, but there's been advances in the policies and very clear that they—that no notes should be destroyed, that supervisors' notes should be destroyed.

I think we said, in reaction to learning that, the people in the Winnipeg Child and Family Services worked very closely with the counsel for the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry to try to find the information. That hasn't been successful.

I expect very much that there will be further recommendations on that, but we're not waiting for those recommendations. Those policies have changed and there's a much better process in place now to ensure that those records are kept.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, the minister has said many times, and I quote, one of the first things I did after becoming minister was to read everything that was available to me on the murder of Phoenix Sinclair.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister if there was anything in what she read on the Phoenix Sinclair's murder that disclosed the intent or action to shred or destroy Phoenix's case file documentation.

Ms. Howard: No, Mr. Speaker, there was nothing like that that I can recall reading.

What there was, Mr. Speaker, was an absolutely heart-wrenching account of the injuries to that child, a heart-wrenching account of the kind of neglect and abuse and contempt that she suffered throughout her life. There was in those accounts, also, a record of the people that loved her and cared for her, and I can't begin to imagine how difficult this time has been for them.

I know that I've been criticized for taking the time to read those documents; I thought it was important. I still think it's important that any minister who has that information available to them read it, understand what's happening so that they can work with their partners to take the actions required to make lasting change in the system, and that is what we're doing.

Mrs. Rowat: Mr. Speaker, Manitobans know that three Family Services ministers, including the current Minister of Family Services, all failed in their responsibility to ensure Phoenix's case notes were in a secure and protected place.

The current minister has said, and I quote: It would be my wish that all documentation was available, because the reason why we called the inquiry was to get the full story so that we can make changes that are necessary.

Well, Mr. Speaker, given the seriousness of the inquiry's need for full disclosure, will she agree that

because of her inability to protect Phoenix's case notes the inquiry and the commissioner did not get the full story?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I think, as we've said before, we have standards in place to ensure that documentation is kept. We've improved those standards. We've ensured that there are policies in place to make very clear. We've added to the information system so that the information is also captured electronically, and we continue to do that.

I do regret that that information wasn't available, but I have faith in Commissioner Hughes. I have faith in the process that has gone on for many months now, that continues on. I believe that we're going to get very useful information from that commission of inquiry.

I don't hold the cynicism that the 'minist'—that the member opposite has. I believe that everybody that came to that inquiry, that told their story, that revisited very painful and difficult times, has contributed to lasting change in the system.

We will take those recommendations and we will continue the change that has started with this government.

Flooding (2011) Impact on Chris Rawluk

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Chris Rawluk from Rawluk's Fine Foods and TRU Hardware in Gypsumville has been trying to keep his business going to get back to maintain income levels that he was at before the loss of the flood in 2011, a business which he and his family has been running over the last 60 years.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Emergency Measures if he'll agree to work with Chris Rawluk to try and assist him in recovering the losses as a result of the flood of 2011.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, not only did we face unprecedented flooding, we put in place—in 2011 and continue to 2012—an unprecedented approach in terms of fighting the flood and unprecedented coverage, first through the disaster financial assistance program, which, of course, is a federal-provincial program, but also, I think, by last count we had nine separate programs that were put in place.

We continue to be engaged in discussions with the federal government, certainly the agricultural

side, because there are impacts that continue, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to assure the member opposite that we have put in place unprecedented coverage, and, in fact, by last count we're \$1.2 billion in terms of fighting that flood and in terms of compensation assistance, Mr. Speaker. So we have been there for the victims of the unprecedented flooding in 2011-2012.

Mr. Eichler: That's simply not true, Mr. Speaker. There's cracks in the system. There's flaws in the system. 'Oflious' not working.

Mr. Speaker, Rawluk's provides essential services to First Nations communities and the Gypsumville community, as well create a number of jobs in the area. Rawluk's needs a hand up from the flood of 2011, not a handout. The flood was not their fault, nor the fault of the community they service.

Mr. Speaker, we know how it is important for small communities to have businesses like Rawluk's to rely on.

So will the minister commit to find a solution to keep this business alive and part of the community of Gypsumville?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the key elements of our response to the 2011 flood has been the fact that we put in place two reports—one which deals with the regulatory issues for Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin. We put in place an overall flood report that came up with 126 recommendations. We agree with all 126.

And not only that, we put in place a budget that will finance and a plan that will start, Mr. Speaker, with a very significant initiative that will benefit Gypsumville, and that is to make permanent the Lake St. Martin outlet and to add an additional outlet from Lake Manitoba. That's \$250 million of commitment.

And we're going to be there, Mr. Speaker. We were there at—during the flood. We're also planning for the long-term future.

And I hope members opposite, including this member, will support that very significant initiative for that and many other committees, in fact.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, Chris Rawluk, who's with us today in the gallery, finds little to find that what this minister is saying that gives him no relief to find out whether or not this minister is going to assist him. He's missing the point.

I know the minister goes by this business on his way to his own community. He knows the importance of business in the community as well as the First Nations of which it serve is on the verge of 'collap' through no fault of their own. They are victims. Their communities are victims. They're asking for fairness and compensation so that they can stay in Gypsumville and provide these essential services.

Mr. Speaker, I ask one last time: Will the Minister of EMO ensure that the First Nations and the community of Gypsumville, he will do everything to keep this business afloat, and will he meet with Chris Rawluk today after question period and resolve this very important issue? Yes or no?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I remind the member opposite we put in place, in addition to the DFA program, very significant programming, stand-alone provincial funding.

*(14:30)

Now, I realize in the '97 flood there was a federal-provincial program, Mr. Speaker, that did deal with some losses in the Red River Valley. And I want to indicate we've continued to engage in discussions with the federal government; we're not blaming them, but we would welcome them coming to the table, including on some of the impacts on some of the agricultural producers in the area.

And, Mr. Speaker, in terms of any particular claims, there is an appeal process.

But I want to assure the member, and particularly for people in the—in that area, that part of the solution is not only dealing with the 2011 flood but being there in the future as well with the flood mitigation those communities lead—need. And we put in place a courageous budget that's making a tough decision that will finance that, and I hope the member opposite will, when he's talking to the residents of Gypsumville and other communities around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin, support that—

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

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Manitoba Association of Native FireFighters Mismanagement Allegations

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the safety of our children is paramount, but the allegations of gross misconduct on the part of individuals working for the Manitoba Association of Native FireFighters are of great concern for the safety of the children and families who were evacuated as a result of the flood of 2011.

Allegations of corruption in an agency entrusted with millions of taxpayers' dollars show poor oversight and lack of accountability by this NDP government. Indeed, the NDP government is responsible for the safety of the evacuee children and families that they flooded out of their homes two years ago.

I ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan): What actions is he going to take to deal with and to assess and to take action on these allegations?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite is aware that the federal government has jurisdiction in terms of First Nations. MANFF played a role in terms of those flood evacuations. I want to put it on the record, by the way, that MANFF continues to play an important role for forest fire evacuees. They actually have done an excellent job with Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, York Factory First Nation.

And, indeed, I want to stress our role as provincial government has been strictly in terms of EMO's involvement, in terms of some of the finances between Public Safety Canada and in terms of AANDC, which is the—again, the federal agency that is responsible. So these are questions that are actually really more appropriate to be asked in terms of the federal government, again.

We've also been there in terms of broader support for First Nations, including, as I mentioned in an earlier question, being there in terms—

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

Flood Evacuee Housing Payments

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, unless I'm mistaken or something's changed drastically, this government is responsible for justice and crime issues in this province, including Gimli and Misty Lake Lodge.

Mr. Speaker, some reprieve has been provided with the interim partial back payment to the owner of the Misty Lake Lodge and the Ashern hotel, but that payment only covered invoices up to April for Misty Lake Lodge and up to June for the Ashern hotel.

With allegations of this poor fiscal management by MANFF, an agency accountable to this government in terms of justice and other things, I ask: What is this government's plan to ensure that the continued payment is made on a timely manner to prevent further disruptions to the lives of people that this government flooded two years ago in the flood of 2011?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I'm surprised. The member opposite is a former member of Parliament; he's a former member of the Cabinet. He knows that MANFF has been engaged by AANDC, formerly known as INAC, the federal government, that all of the payments are by the federal government, recognizing that they have a fiduciary responsible to First Nations, and I want to stress again that if he has issues of concern they should probably be raised with the federal government.

And I want to indicate in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, that our Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) has actually been working with the federal government in terms of solutions, both in terms of housing and on other issues.

So again, Mr. Speaker, if he has any issues of concern or any matters involving the legal process he should make the federal government and AANDC aware of that. That's the way it works. They are accountable—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Misty Lake Lodge Flood Evacuees

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, you know, the problem here is this is the government who has been writing the cheques to MANFF. The money may have come from the federal government, but this government is the one which is writing the cheques to MANFF.

Mr. Speaker, there are many children in the gallery today who were evacuated from Little Saskatchewan more than two years ago, May 13th, 2011, because of the flood. They've been living in Misty Lake Lodge the last two years and going to school nearby in Gimli. They'd like to

be able to continue to stay there without being concerned about their safety.

I ask: What is the minister doing to ensure that those who want to stay in Misty Lake Lodge will be able to stay there safely and without further interruptions?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): Mr. Speaker, the member should know that when it comes to First Nations, not only does the federal government have fiduciary responsibility, the decision in terms of evacuation is a decision that's made by the First Nations themselves. It was administered by MANFF and, indeed, whether it's forest fires or in terms of flood, and I want to stress again to the member opposite that we as a Province, yes, we've been involved in terms of making sure the funding went from the one federal department to another federal department. We weren't going to abandon those First Nations evacuation—evacuees.

And the real issue here is making sure, again, there's long-term solutions. Our Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs has been a key part of getting a solution in terms of housing. We're also going to be there in terms of flood mitigation.

And I hope members—the member opposite will support the budget that's going to give protection to those people, Mr. Speaker, in the future, because that's what the real issue is.

After School Leaders Program Update

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): At the end of June, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting students from Churchill High School who are involved in the After School Leaders program. It's a program that was announced by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) last fall to give children an opportunity, not only inside the classroom but outside the classroom, to grow and develop.

I wonder if the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities could give the House an update on this excellent program.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I want to thank the member from Fort Garry-Riverview for taking the time to go celebrate with the students at Churchill High School.

I also want to thank the good folks at the Winnipeg Jets True North Foundation, under

leadership, of course, of Mark Chipman, for his support on this program, all our based-community-based organizations, the Winnipeg School Division, including Argyle, Children of the Earth, St. John's, Elmwood and Churchill high schools, Mr. Speaker.

Under our investments in After School Manitoba, we keep over 60,000 children and young people busy every summer, Mr. Speaker.

And for members opposite, I want them to know that those are the kinds of investments in how you build healthier, stronger and safer communities, Mr. Speaker.

Legal Proceedings Update

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, we know the NDP play pretty loose with the law. They often choose to ignore the law, and when they get caught, they are forced to amend the law.

The Broadway bullies keep forging ahead with their own agenda despite what Manitobans think. Mr. Speaker, sometimes these actions catch up with you.

Can the Minister of Finance tell the House how many lawsuits his NDP government are currently facing in the courts?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is very focused on growing our economy. This side of the House is very focused on investing in roads and bridges. This side of the House is very focused on investing in health care, investing in education.

That side of the House can focus on whatever it likes.

Mr. Cullen: For the minister's sake, there appears to be 12 suits filed against his government and his fellow ministers, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I know the minister has probably not been focused on all of the suits because he's been worried about only the suits which he's been named in. But he should be concerned as the Minister of Finance, because these suits will have a direct impact on his budget.

Can the minister tell the House how much he has budgeted for these lawsuits?

Mr. Struthers: Well, that's quite rich coming from the side of the House that rigged an election back in the 1990s and got caught. Mr. Speaker, Judge

Monnin was very clear about the actions of members across the way.

They can stand in their glass houses and throw rocks all they like, Mr. Speaker. We're going to maintain our focus on investing in health care, investing in education, investing in the things that grow our economy. We're not going to put in disrepute the services that Manitoba families count on, as they would do.

* (14:40)

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's clear that Manitobans have had enough of this NDP government and they're starting to fight back against the Broadway bullies; 12 lawsuits pending with a number of the ministers named in those suits.

We know the Minister of Finance is eager to have Bill 48 passed so he can have cash to pay his ongoing legal bills.

A simple question: How much in legal fees has he and his fellow ministers racked up to date?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to—I want to ensure Manitobans that on this side of the House we stand up for them. On this side of the House we're going to make sure that next week they have home care. We're going to make sure that next week they have daycare. We're going to make sure that next week there is funding going to hospitals and schools. We're going to make sure that next week there are forest firefighters, there are conservation officers, there are jail guards employed.

We are not, like the members opposite, going to say that we would never get in the way of the government continuing to operate and then, to a one, standing yesterday to vote to shut down everything the government [inaudible]

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Before we get to members' statements, I believe the Official Opposition House Leader has some House business.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on approach to crime, brought forward by the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. Eichler).

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with rule 31(9), it has been announced that the private member's resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on approach to crime, sponsored by the honourable member for Lakeside.

Now, private—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Korean War Veterans Day

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, in the Manitoba Room across from this Chamber there is a book that contains the names of 516 Canadians who died in the Korean War. This is one of the five books of remembrance that commemorate Canadians who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country.

This Saturday marks Korean War Veterans Day, Mr. Speaker. On July 27th, the anniversary of the armistice, veterans, dignitaries and community members will gather at the Korea Veterans Association cenotaph at Brookside Cemetery for a candlelight service in honour of those Manitobans who fell while serving their country.

This year is of special significance as it marks 60 years since the guns fell silent on the Korean Peninsula. To honour the legacy of Korean War veterans, Veterans Affairs Canada has designated 2013 the Year of the Korean War Veteran. Throughout the year, Veterans Affairs Canada will undertake a number of initiatives to educate Canadians on a war that has often been referred to as the forgotten war.

The Korean War had tremendous historical significance. This was the first time in history that an international organization used a multinational force to stem aggression. More than 26,000 Canadian men and women in uniform served in the Korean War. Of those brave individuals, over 500 lost their lives and over 1,500 more were wounded upholding the values of the United Nations. Over 7,000 Canadians also served after the ceasefire as peacekeepers, and 60 years later, Canadians are now deployed across the world to maintain security and promote peace.

On this solemn occasion, it is important to remember that—what these men and women sacrificed for, Mr. Speaker. I invite all honourable members to join me in honouring those who gave

everything to protect the 'preace'—the peace and freedom that we enjoy today.

Thank you very much.

Thomas Osborn

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I am pleased to rise today to congratulate Thomas Osborn, who will be competing at the 2013 Deaflympics from July 26th to August 9th in Sofia, Bulgaria. Thomas is a competitive swimmer with the Manitoba Marlins Swim Club, as well as a student at Kelvin High School. His 25 hours a week of training are paying off, and he is looking forward to achieving great things in his swimming career.

The Deaflympics are sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee, and the summer and winter Deaflympics are among the fastest growing sporting events in the whole world. The Deaflympics have a long and rich history of promoting strong competition and excellence among deaf athletes. The first Summer Deaflympics was in 1924 in Paris, and 21 Summer Games have been held since. Winter Games were also added in 1949. Deaflympics are unique among IOC-sanctioned games because they are organized and run by members of the community they serve. An organization committed to excellence in sports as well as a social change, their work should be highly commended.

Thomas will be one of six swimmers on Team Canada for the international multisport games. His proud parents are travelling with him to Bulgaria and will be cheering him on as they have done through so many swim practices in the past.

Thomas has developed the ability to communicate through sign language, lip-reading and a cochlear implant. Lip-reading can be a little more difficult at the pool, and he's had to work extra hard to stay in communication with his teammates during training. That hard work has brought Thomas to where he is now, and we are excited to see him competing on such an exciting international stage.

Thomas will be competing in the 400-, 200-, 100- and 50-metre freestyle events as well as the 200-metre individual medley. Thomas Osborn is participating in the height of athletic competition. On behalf of all members, I want to wish him well in competition this coming week.

Congratulations, Thomas, and good luck.

The Living Prairie Museum

Hon. Jim Rondeau (Minister of Healthy Living, Seniors and Consumer Affairs): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is home to beautiful prairie lands with an array of wildlife and plants. Our province's natural beauty is available for all to see in a network of provincial parks, wildlife management areas and other natural lands. Recognizing the critical role that our ecology plays in the environment, economic and social well-being of Manitobans, conserving our natural environment is important to understanding our history and the future of our province.

Today, I rise to recognize the Living Prairie Museum found in Assiniboia. The Living Prairie Museum is 12-hectare, tall grass prairie preserve, home to 160 species of prairie plants and wildlife. Mandated to promote awareness and conservation of natural environments, the museum teaches the public all about prairie landscapes, ecosystems, species and, specifically, the tall grass prairie.

Prior to European settlement, tall grass prairie covered one million square kilometres in central North America. Recognizing that tall grass prairie was one of Canada's most endangered ecosystems, in 1968, a local subcommittee of the International Biological Program recommended setting aside 2795 Ness Avenue for the establishment of what is now the Living Prairie Museum.

The museum, Mr. Speaker, is conserving part of our natural heritage so Manitobans can enjoy and learn this endangered ecosystem. The on-site interpretive centre provides resources to students, teachers and the public who would like to learn more about the prairie history and ecology.

The centre also provides guided hikes, experiments, games, prairie samplings, relevant literature, children's books and more. The new shade structure and workshop was designed and built by local landscape, architecture and environmental design studio Plain Projects and will support the outdoor workshops and family picnics.

The museum is host to a number of activities and events throughout the spring and summer. Mr. Speaker, this Sunday, July 28, the Living Prairie Museum will be celebrating its annual Monarch Butterfly Festival which honours and celebrates the conservation of all butterflies. Through the day there's lots of things going on.

I invite all my colleagues there, and there's also interactivity day which I help participate and

sponsor. It's a great event, a great place, and I encourage all members to attend.

Legislative Session—Length

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mr. Speaker, today is July 25th. Five months from today is Christmas Day. Hence the Christmas tie myself and a few of my colleagues are wearing today.

Twenty years ago, my family and I attended a family reunion. It was called Christmas in July Cole Family Reunion. Now this is significant for many reasons. First of all, it was 1993 and we all know how the spenDP love to talk about the 1990s. Next, it was held in Saskatchewan, another favourite subject of this Assembly.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's really significant about today, July 25th, five months from Christmas, is that given the progress of this spenDP government, or lack of progress, in 15 weeks of this session, I wanted to get all members in the Christmas mood, because we're likely to be here 'til Christmas debating Bill 20 taking away Manitobans' right to vote on the 14 per cent illegal PST hike, which has already taken in excess of \$20 million from hard-working Manitobans' pockets.

Christmas will be a lot leaner for many Manitobans this year. Of course, if we get through Bill 20, there's still Bill 33, where the Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) has his pre-Christmas deadline of December 1st. At least we will still be here to see how his self-imposed deadline is working, and the minister'll be able to wear his Santa hat, all the while continuing to insult municipalities all in true Christmas spirit.

Of course, not all will be lost for the spenDP MLAs. They can do their Christmas shopping online in the US and have their purchases sent to one of the parcel depots in North Dakota, thus avoiding having to pay the illegal PST.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, I wish all members a merry Christmas in July and look forward to many more days of debate in the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon East.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Brandon Folk, Music and Art Festival

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, music and art lovers will gather in Brandon to enjoy music, spoken word, art, dance and more, Under the Trees at the Festival Park on the Keystone Centre grounds. The Brandon Folk, Music and Art Festival is back for its 29th year of showcasing artistic excellence in Manitoba.

First held in 1985 at Brandon University by the Brandon Folk, Music and Art Society, the Brandon Folk, Music and Art Festival has grown into a cultural institution in Manitoba. This is where people from across our province and beyond, can hear their favourite music and discover new artists in an intimate urban setting.

My family has been involved with the Brandon Folk, Music and Art Society since its inception, Mr. Speaker. I was a founding director 29 years ago, and my wife, Shandra MacNeill, is today the unpaid artistic director for this outstanding community non-profit organization. We are proud to see how the festival has developed into such an artistically important, diverse and innovative cultural event in Manitoba.

The Brandon Folk, Music and Art Society delivers year-round programming in a variety of artistic disciplines such as dance, music, theatre, spoken word and the visual arts, helping forge connections between artists and putting Brandon on the map of a—as a cultural hub in Manitoba.

This year's festival has a great lineup, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to performances by acclaimed Canadian artists including Hawksley Workman and Martha Wainwright, as well as by celebrated Manitoba artists like Imaginary Cities and Red Moon Road, and local favorites like Sebastian Owl and the Young Pixels. I also look forward to visiting the kids and family area, viewing the on-site art installations and sampling some great food. Music and—on behalf of the Province of Manitoba, I would like to thank the Brandon Folk, Music and Art Society for another year of great programming. I encourage all people who appreciate outstanding musicianship, creativity and a festive outdoor atmosphere to come out to Brandon this weekend for the 29th annual Brandon Folk, Music and Art Festival.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances? No grievances—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please continue the Interim Appropriations.

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READING

Mr. Speaker: To continue the debate on concurrence and third readings, Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013, standing in the name of the honourable member for Spruce Woods, who has seven minutes remaining.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Bill 48—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): And, thank you, the colleagues, for that great support, and certainly glad to carry on my debate on Bill 48.

Interesting—I was just reading Hansard from yesterday, and we talked about concurrence and third readings, and I noticed the Government House Leader got up and actually moved the motion on going into third reading. But the minister failed to make any comments about the bill. And I know she's—she did a lot of chirping from her seat yesterday, and she's doing some chirping from her seat again today.

But, you know, the minister, she had an opportunity—the Government House Leader had her opportunity yesterday to get up and speak. I know she's going to have some time today to get up and speak as well. Certainly, she does a lot of talk from her seat, a lot of chirping from her seat and here she's still chirping. So we're looking forward to see what the Government House Leader actually has to say about Bill 48.

And I'm sure the government should get up and talk about Bill 48, it's a \$7.7-billion piece of legislation that the government's bringing forward here, Mr. Speaker. Now, clearly, that's only 65 per cent of their entire budget that they've put forward. And you would think that maybe that would be enough for the entire government to run on for the rest of the year, but I would suggest the government's probably going to be back for more money over the next few months of their fiscal year to try to make sure the government still keeps on running.

But a \$7.7-billion piece of legislation, and they've got nothing to say about it. It's unbelievable what the government has—the fact that they put very little thoughts on the record, a lot of chirping from their seats for sure, but nothing on the record.

Mr. Speaker, when I closed my comments yesterday, it was—I talked about respect. And it's really about this government treating Manitobans with respect, and they're clearly not doing that and Manitobans are certainly fighting back against the bullies here on Broadway.

Clearly, we know we've got the NDP with 12 lawsuits on the go. We know there's going to be certainly some implications to that, certainly, fiscally. And I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) will want to get this Interim Supply budget passed, so he can play—pay his legal bills, Mr. Speaker, because they're—certainly been mounting up over the last several months. And then he is certainly the minister of tax and spend, and we know he can tax Manitobans and we know he can spend money. But we're simply asking, when is he going to draw the line? When's there going to be some common sense? And when is he going to put some long-term plans in place to stop the bleeding here in Manitoba?

Even with his increase in the provincial sales tax, the broadening of the sales tax last year, he still is going to have a \$500-million deficit, Mr. Speaker, so, clearly, challenges lay ahead for the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by quoting from an article in the Brandon Sun that appeared, by Kerry Auriat. He's obviously a long-time Brandon resident and always concerned about what's going on in Manitoba and what the government's doing. I'm just going to quote a few lines from him, because I think it really sums up what Manitobans are thinking about the situation the NDP have got us in.

And I quote: Not only has the Selinger government blown—Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry. I will change that—the Premier (Mr. Selinger)—I will retract that. Not only has the Premier and his government blown the good fortune entrusted to it by the Gary Filmon Tories. It has spent our province into such a hole that we never get out. He goes on to say: We should not forget the record amounts of transfer payments that have flooded into Manitoba coffers during the NDP's term. Successive Liberal and Conservative federal governments have poured a ton of cash into Manitoba, and still our government has figured out a way to spend too much. Manitobans

need to understand a basic truism. We can't blame anyone else for getting us into this terrible state, and no one else is going to bail us out. This is a made-in-Manitoba disaster, and we need innovative solutions to a decade-old NDP spending problem.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I do want to speak about the Interim Supply and what the effect possibly can be on hard-working Manitobans. We know that, very clearly, when we first started this session on April the 16th, we looked back at the budget that was brought forward by this government, and, of course, they said there wasn't enough time for a referendum in order to go to the people and hear what they have to say.

Well, here's what I can say that the RM of Bifrost had to say about the PST increase on their particular municipality. I know the member from Interlake will be tickled to death at these numbers that he so much supports this tax increase, because as members from that community, you're going to be interested with the increase in the PST alone from last year and this year on their taxes and on their equipment that they bought is \$16,965.01. That's just one RM, and that is on the PST increase whereby they had no say, no consultation, no impact as far as what they're going to be able to do in their budget. They're just told to raise the money, balance the budget, live within their means—something this government cannot seem to want to do, but yet they can pass that on to others.

In fact, I know that my member from River East is getting choked up on these numbers as well, and I certainly don't blame her. I know yesterday the minister of mines and resources got choked up on a couple of questions as well, and we certainly know this is a very touchy matter, and we know that it's important that we have discussion. And I know that the government members on that side say they never hear anybody wanting to talk about what the PST's going to have and what impact it might have.

In fact, I know a letter that was copied to me from Mr. Rob Anderson [*phonetic*] and it goes on to say: Mr. Selinger, I can't help but feel sincere disappointment on the party's performance this term. You made several campaign statements claiming you would not raise taxes. Then, almost immediately, you raised several taxes. Little more than a year after these same claims, you've raised the PST in spite of laws—protect Manitobans from this without proper public consultation. I find it hard to wrap my head

around what you overturned the law to—established to protect us. You're directly—you're doing this directly for the purpose of taking even a larger share of our herd—hard-earned money. Abusing your power to suit your agenda by abolishing a law you found inconvenient is hardly better than breaking it yourself.

* (15:00)

To the minister—First Minister: You are stealing from Manitobans; that's what it boils down to. Clearly, it's not enough that if we're already amongst the highly taxed citizens in the country, a pill that will not be hard to swallow, if you follow our increased taxes, acts result in improved well-being and better services compared to other parts of the country. Sadly, I don't see this as the case, at least not for the middle class.

Last paragraph—as a young parent trying to establish a family, I wonder how much more tax burden we can bear before considering alternatives to Manitoba as a place to call home.

Sincerely, Rob Anderson [*phonetic*]

Mr. Speaker, I think this is very significant of what most Manitobans are saying in regard to the PST increase. We know that also today the Canadian Federation of Independent Business put out a press release. I'm sure the government has a copy of this. If not, I certainly will share with them what it does say. It says: a release to the latest Business Barometer index which shows small business optimism in Manitoba declined for the fourth consecutive month, going from 58.9 in June to 58.0 in July, well below—well below the national average of 64.2. While most of the country saw improving optimism, Manitoba continued this downward spiral, which obviously is not good news, said the vice-president.

Agribusiness, in fact, we are seeing decline in almost every indicator, including employment plans, and a number of small businesses report in the state of their business health as good, and small business are increasing concern over taxes and regulation, which is really not surprising given the PST hike earlier this month. So we certainly—we know the impact. In fact, we've had several questions we've brought forward for this government to reconsider and call a referendum in regards to Bill 20. We've made it very clear that, you know, we heard from the people of Manitoba and those people made it very clear that they want to see a referendum held on this particular issue.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And we know that members opposite campaigned on the fact they wouldn't raise the PST. In fact, they went out and said it was nonsense. Every member did, and one of the first thing they do when they come back in the session this spring was raise the PST, broke that promise and then they broke another commitment that whereby all Manitobans would have a say in regards to a vote on a referendum. We feel that's very important.

Now members opposite can do what they want, but we certainly know that they will be hearing—and I've already read into the record two issues that's been brought forward to our attention, three counting the municipality, because they know how important it is for people to want to have their say. In fact, whenever we look at calling this session back—and we've been asking time and time again for session to come back early—and April the 16th is certainly too late. We want to ensure that whenever the government wants to bring forward a budget, we have time to debate it. In fact, we looked at the number of days from the budget from the time we were called back April the 16th, and they—we now are debating 48 bills of which we would've had 10 days—10 days to debate those bills, which is significantly not enough. We know that in just the presentations alone we have at least—at least close to 70 hours of committee hearings of whereby we're going to hear presentations on a various number of bills, a various number of bills.

In fact, we have debated on Bill 18. We've been waiting for them to call that bill. They haven't called that either. Their priority, of course, is to deal with Bill 20, so they can force this PST increase on Manitobans without that referendum. We want to debate that bill. We want to debate Bill 33 on the forced amalgamation bill from the municipalities, and we know that there's push back from a larger number of municipalities in regards to that. And, in fact, I brought those forward. The member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) has brought them forward. We had a number of members share information, which is so important in order to make sure that the timelines are right in order to fit the guidelines so that those municipalities will be able to get their plans in place. Some are very efficient. Some are very, very efficient at managing the business of the municipalities, and one of those is Victoria Beach. That's a very significant one. Riverton—the Town of Riverton is a very efficient RM, and I know the member from Gimli is very much aware of the fact

that they've contacted him, they've expressed concerns. The Village of Dunnottar is another one whereby, you know, they don't have that magic threshold of a thousand, but in the summertime they do. They're very well managed. I know the member from Gimli supports them, believes in them, but I believe that they need to be able to listen to what these municipalities have to say.

We'd be more than happy to debate that bill with the government, hear both sides of the story, listen to proposed amendments. We know that we have a number of things we would like to discuss once we have the opportunity for that to happen, and, of course, that comes back to what I was starting to say at the beginning, just a little bit ago, whenever we were talking about when session should start.

So we need to ensure that, whenever we call this House back and when the government decides we're going to call it back—we have an end date as we know, which we have a little bit of control on in regards to that aspect, but clearly it's up to the government to call us back and give us enough time to debate those issues that they know. I mean, legislation just doesn't happen overnight. We know that, whenever their staff brings stuff forward to them in order to be implemented, to have that discussion, we think that it's very important for those things to happen.

In fact, I want to talk about the fact of the education tax which—on farmland, which was another promise made by this government in 2011. They said that all farmland education tax would be removed by this government. What did we see? What did we see in Budget 2013? We saw a cut to that very promise. Instead of moving forward on that, we now see a cap of \$5,000 on education tax on farmland. What else did we see? We saw a deadline of March 31st of the following year whereby they would have to apply for that educational tax rebate, that's if they had the money to pay their taxes. And I can sure tell you we know from history that those folks up in the RM of Bifrost—and we talked about it a little earlier—a number of those farmers up there never had the money to pay. They didn't have the income to sustain themselves, to sustain the taxes, so, therefore, if they weren't able to pay them under this new policy, they wouldn't be able to claim the tax back because they didn't have the money to pay the tax in the first place. And also—[interjection] That's right, they're in Interlake, is where Bifrost is for those that have trouble remembering where it's at. But I can also tell you that a number of the farmers have made it very

clear that this is going to be another hardship on them. And what's the government going to save, \$6.2 million; \$6.2 million is what the anticipated cost is.

Well, I've been the Ag critic for a while. I took a bit of a leave from that and other members did a great job on that file, but I remember going back and asking about the cost, the cost to administer the educational tax portion on farmland. It's almost a million dollars to administer the tax collected and the refund back to every one of those farmers and producers. So what happens? We have a bureaucracy whereby we're creating some jobs, big government jobs, so now all those that were doing the work before, that work still hasn't gone away. So, really, what they're trying to do is have a blanket policy that's going to fit everything and it certainly don't. What they should have did was keep their promise which they made in that election of 2011.

And I know that, whenever we're talking about priorities in 'fiscal' accountability, we have made it very clear, very clear that this government does not need 192 spin doctors. In fact, if you cut those numbers, the \$6.2 million, the \$12 million they're spending on the spin doctors, 192 spin doctors. Half of that is \$6 million. Guess what? Do away with half your communication staff; you'll be able to pay the education taxes on farmland like you promised. Real simple deal. This is not rocket science to be able to figure out where you can actually have 'fiscal' and financial restraint. Work on those numbers.

*(15:10)

Also as—also the critic for MIT, we talked about cost overrun on projects. Cost overrun on projects worked out to roughly, on three projects alone, was \$54.8 million in cost overruns. What can we do about that? What can we do about cost overruns? Well, there's lots you can do about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What you can do is look at rolling tenders whereby that those tenders would be honoured and held for the following year. We've seen a number of projects that has had to be—then been retendered the following year. And of course, we know darn well they're going to go up. We haven't seen any of them go down.

In fact, the other thing we could do, a very novel idea, is get rid of the union dues on contracts. I mean, that's another cost, another cost that, guess what, that goes to the taxpayer, that goes to the taxpayer. I mean, on the—just on the dues alone, that works out to, on the Floodway, it was around 82—

\$83 million. That's a substantial amount of money. Now where does that money go? A lot of them weren't already union members. A lot of them were contractors that never had union dues, that certainly didn't feel they needed them. So they made very sure that they had to have enough in their contract to cover those costs. There's still only one taxpayer at the end of the day. We know that very clear.

And we talked about what the impact was supposed to be on the PST increase. And what we saw clearly from this government, when you look at the MIT budget, there's an increase of roughly around \$20 million overall. But what the government has done is spun this around, that it's an infrastructure fund that's going to help build their slush fund, is really what it boils down to. Pet projects—pet projects that, whenever they decide they want to announce—these have already been announced before—and they're going to reannounce those again, reannounce them again. But, really, they're not fooling the public—they're not fooling the public for a minute. In fact, the media's already picked up on this many a time, and they understand it; they get it, that you have to be honest with those people of which you're entrusted to represent.

And what's very important, that whenever we do these things, that we do it with the—in fact, one of the letters I read a little earlier, they said if we could see—if we could see the justification for the PST increase, a lot of people would have a little easier time trying to make ends meet. Some just won't be able to. Some will not be able to. It's had an impact, as I said, on RMs. It's had impact on lower income people. It's had an impact on families, which is very important, our next generation whereby we want to retain those folks to stay in the province of Manitoba. I know I have my grandkids and I'd dearly love to have them stay here and raise their family. But it's getting to the point where they're having to make choices as well. We all have to make choices. But is a—is it for a reason that's going to benefit all Manitobans? And that's what Manitobans are asking us to do, to stand up and make sure that this government is held to account.

And I know that whenever we look back in the budget of 2012, and we saw the increase in the gas tax and the government said that would be focused only on infrastructure. Well, we look back—look back at the numbers, look back at the numbers, it's very clear, there was a \$10-million increase. A 2-and-a-half-cent litre—per litre increase raised over \$90 million. There you go again, something wrong

with the math. It's not adding up. So, yes, maybe it is going for infrastructure. But we know darn well, the general revenues, there is no way you can pull that money out and say it's designated exactly for a particular project. We know it. They know it. And the public knows it. And this government will be held to account for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The increase in registration fees: they increased by \$35—\$35. What does that mean for Manitobans? Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$17 million per year. And whenever we look at these fees, these backdoor fees that are going to impact each and every one of us, these people in Manitoba that have worked so hard to make ends meet and make this province a better place to live, they just—they're in awe. They're in awe. We have not seen—we have not seen the results that this government has promised, the result of the changes and the fees that's been passed on to them.

In fact, the 8 per cent increase in hydro rates, what does this do? That's a hundred million dollars more per year out of ratepayers' pockets. This is significant. That means that out of the \$72 per year for hydro fees on the average household. Now, you do the PST, the gas increase, the hydro rates, the vehicle tax, this is close to, very close to, maybe exceeding, a half a billion dollars. That is substantial.

Now, this is money that is being claimed by this government. They have a better knowledge of how they want to spend it than what the families do. We certainly believe that there's measures that can be taken whereby we give families more opportunity to decide where that money wants to be spent and how they want to spend it and buy what they need and provide for their families.

And the other thing, just right before the budget came in, what did we see the government did? They put an increase in taxes on liquor. Beer prices went up 80 cents per litre on March the 8th. What does this bring in to the province of Manitoba? Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$12.5 million in revenue. This is significant. Again, people have to pay that. Hardworking Manitobans have to pay that.

What did they do on the—on spirits? Well, they went up 62 cents per litre. What does that work out to? Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$4.4 million out of the pockets of Manitoba consumers. All these fees cost Manitobans' families a significant amount of money, and we know that any time that—and, you know, I've talked about this before—one of my previous careers that I'm very proud of, and that was when I was the administrator of the Interlake School Division, and

we know—we know very clearly that whenever we don't fund education to the level of what it needs, is that is another backload of taxes onto—[interjection] Oh, I know it very well—I know it very well. I can follow—I can follow exactly what this government has done, because I can tell you it's another way, another backload tax onto hardworking Manitobans. We know that very clearly.

And also we know—we also know that whenever we're talking about this so-called credit card of the provincial government, whenever we're looking to spending, in fact, we saw what happened in Detroit. We see a city that is now to the point of bankruptcy. In fact, they've applied for bankruptcy. We do not need that for our children. We do not need that for our grandchildren. We don't need that for the next generation of Manitobans.

We want to ensure that whenever the next generation comes forward, they're going to be able to live in Manitoba, affordable Manitoba, a Manitoba we can be proud of, a Manitoba that we can go to each and every day and make sure that their voice is heard and let Manitobans have a say on where their tax dollars are going to be spent.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to put a few words on the record to Bill 48, and I guess I'll start that by just suggesting how we've got to this situation we are in the province of Manitoba. And I think the way to do that is through, maybe, address each and every minister on the other side of the House.

We have a Premier (Mr. Selinger) who doesn't feel it's important to honour the commitments he's made to Manitobans. He made commitments like: We will balance the budget. We will not raise taxes, no. Increasing the PST is nonsense. And we will balance the budget by 2014. We, in Manitoba, are just sailing along fine. We are doing a good job.

Those are the words of the Premier of this province as he went door to door in 2011. And it was not long after we found that he had changed his mind. Or was the NDP government lying to Manitobans? We don't know for sure, but we have a pretty good idea that that's what the case was.

We have a Finance Minister who believes that tax hikes and spending hikes are the only way to get out of a ballooning deficit. He believes that if he stands in a bucket and he grabs a handle that he can

lift himself up, but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that's not true.

And so what did he do? He rushed out and he tried to short-change individuals that had money coming to them from this government, Like the Jockey Club, for instance. And it took a judge to tell him that he had to write the cheque. Understand, even if you're the minister, the only thing you can do is change the law; you can't break the law.

And he continues. He continues until the point where people fight back. The Jockey Club says to him quite clearly: You're wrong, Mr. Minister. You're wrong in what you're doing, and we're going to go to the court system to deal with that. So, in doing so, they have to hire an army—an army of lawyers to defend themselves when they know very well they're in the wrong.

* (15:20)

We have a Health Minister who has stood in this House so many times and said, we know there's more to do, we're working diligently. But I want to say to you that when that Health Minister became part of the government of the day, that all of the ERs in rural Manitoba, or anywhere in Manitoba for that matter, were open. I would suggest to that minister today that she shouldn't work so hard, she shouldn't be so diligent, because she's effectively closed 18 of them. That's not what Manitobans expect from a government. They expect service. They expect that front-line service that was promised to them just before 2011, just before the election when the NDP government would say anything to hang onto power.

So, please, if you can, Mr. Deputy Speaker, pass on to the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) not to be so diligent; just take a break, take a holiday, let the ERs get opened again, because she hasn't been helping.

We have a Minister of Conservation who says that the flood has cost so much money. But the fact is he hasn't dealt with the issues at all. He hasn't dealt with the issues in southwestern Manitoba recently. He hasn't dealt with the issues from back in 2011. And he doesn't understand what those issues are because he's trapped by the cement circle around the city of Winnipeg.

We have a Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard) who allowed the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry to get lost in procedural wrangling and went on far, far too long. And rather than

actually standing up for a system that desperately needs help, she says we can't find the records, we don't know what happened. And since then, she has made many, many other statements that haven't really endeared themselves to Manitoba public, not at all. When she says, well, we're opposed to accessibility, we're opposed to that. She voted against that in this very House not that long ago.

We also have a Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) that under her watch has allowed Manitoba children to rank among the lowest in key subjects in Canada, and they continue to do that.

But just recently—just recently, we found out that she actually supports cyberbullying. She voted against a comprehensive bill that was put forward by the member of Steinbach, and the minister did not support the bill. She voted against it as did all of her colleagues, every one of them to the soul voted against it, supporting cyberbullying. That's what they did, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They voted against something that would stop cyberbullying. They gave it no opportunity; they just voted against it. They're in favour of it. That's what they are, they are in favour of that.

We have the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) who has allowed greenhouses to sit dormant for three years—three years. They cost over a million dollars and has never been taken to the site that it's supposed to be at—*[interjection]* And, of course, you wouldn't know because you're a backbencher, but, at the same time, that's a fact. It's still sitting—it's still sitting in Ontario, it's there for the Aboriginal people and has never been taken and put up.

Those types of greenhouses can operate in this province year-round. And we have prototypes here that are doing that, they're supplying food to individuals here, fresh food as well as employment. But, no, they haven't done that. That's an initiative that they've said, oh, yes, we'll grow gardens. Well, you can only grow them for a month or two in northern Manitoba. But the greenhouse could operate year-round. That's mismanagement, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have a Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), who going into 2013 and has still not given proper assistance to those that have—affected by the 2011 flood. And still in the middle of 2013, we have many, many outstanding claims, as we heard today in this very Chamber, where an individual's business has been ravished,

decimated, and he's trying everything he can to keep that business there, when the people who have been for over two years get an opportunity to move back to the communities that they were forced out of by a man-made flood by this very government—this very government—that says they're there for the people, have not—have not—and I stress not—those—to have those people back in their houses.

And, in fact, what we heard today was, as well in this House, that some of these have been out of their home and moved 21 times in two years. Others—the children are going to school in Gimli and are faced with the possibility of being yanked out of that school, and they have no idea of where they're going to go. They don't have a place to go at this point. Their parents don't know where they're going to go.

That is gross mismanagement. And we wonder where the money goes. Well, we know that it's being wasted.

We have a Minister of Local Government (Mr. Lemieux) who's completely out of touch with the needs of the city of Winnipeg, of the AMM and the municipalities and the towns of this province, to the point of calling them insolent children. In fact, we've even had one member—one member—of this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that said, they are delinquent.

We also heard him say that the people that were presenting to Bill 20—and many of these people came and presented in very, very unfavourable conditions. It was hot, it was stuffy; there was no air conditioning, and the people sat for five, six hours to make presentations while the minister—we saw the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway)—or for Kildonan sit and playing with his BlackBerry. But the Minister of Local Government referred to them as howling coyotes. How disgraceful. How disrespectful. How disrespectful can he get? But I'm sure he can still do worse because he's not addressing the issue at all. He didn't have a plan when he made the announcement, and now he's trying to find his way and flop around, but he doesn't know where he's going.

We have a Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism (Ms. Melnick) who was handed a Provincial Nominee Program that was working excellently, and then, rather than facilitate the program that worked, siphoned off the money off the top and ran it into the ground. That's unfortunate. And then the minister wants to use the bureaucracy for political gain. It was terrible.

We have a Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade (Mr. Bjornson) who in a job market that desperately needs apprentices—desperately—refuses—refuses—to give the go-ahead for the expansion of the art training centre at Red River College. He refuses to deal with the situation in a professional way. He is delinquent in his duties as well, and, when I voted on his budget of \$1.08 for his wages, I felt that he was grossly overpaid.

We have an Attorney General (Mr. Swan) who allows dangerous offenders to walk free and runs a department that will not appeal soft sentences for hard criminals. That is terrible. That's terrible, and he should be ashamed of himself.

We have a Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) who decided that a Winnipeg Jets game was more efficient use of her time than standing up for the university students and the universities that needed the help.

We have a Minister of Housing who's allowed her properties in her department to degrade more and more every day and has refused to step in and fix those properties, and she knows very well which properties I'm referring to. Instead, she just makes announcements while existing facilities spiral into complete disrepair.

We have a Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak) who decides that major hydro projects that benefit not a single Manitoba is an efficient use of his time, and yet he can't answer a question that's been directed to him on his portfolio on hydro. And he's been asked 14 questions and hasn't been able to do it.

While the minister of 'culturidge' and heritage and tourism that—apparently asleep at the switch and rarely makes an announcement that benefits anyone.

* (15:30)

We have a Minister of Agriculture that has yet to make a coherent decision for the farmers of Manitoba and flip-flops on things like the slaughter facilities. He also just didn't stand up—didn't stand up when they were deciding their budget. He didn't stand up for the farmers. They had promised that they would remove the school taxes on farmland, and what has he done? [*interjection*] He hasn't done that. No, he didn't stand up for farmers at all. And, at one time, he was a farmer, but he forgot that when he got elected who it was that elected him. He forgot and he left his principles on the outside of this building. He

did not bring them inside the building with him, and that's unfortunate.

We have a Minister of Healthy Living that believes the only way to help those with addictions is to cut services and programs—closed down for two, three, four weeks in the middle of summer when that's really important to have it. That's what the minister has done.

And so we can understand fully why it's difficult and almost impossible for this government to ever balance the books. We understand that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what we also see is that the spenDP will get up and howl that all that debt is an investment in the future, but it's not. One out of every \$4 in new debt is wasted on general debt. General debt is simply for money spent on programs years ago for wasteful operations.

And one of those wasteful operations—I might point out—is going to fund none other than a lazy, lazy political party's operations. It's called a vote tax. And then the other thing that's really causing a big issue for—to balance a budget or to even operate in the province is the bloated advertising budgets with the 192 spinners. We need doctors; we don't need spin doctors. We need doctors in this province.

General debt doesn't invest in the future. It doesn't invest in infrastructure, it doesn't invest in universities, it doesn't invest in hospitals or schools. It simply robs our children, because the spenDP has to pay for past government's wasteful operating spendings. And that past government is the NDP themselves, because, when they took over, there was money in the rainy-day fund, the budget was balanced, and that's why there was an act made in 1995 which allowed—or did not allow the government to not balance the books. It did not allow parties like the spenDP to pile on more useless debt. Governments were required to pay back the overspending of the past spenDP governments. It was an investment in the future—that particular bill.

But the spenDP took a different road. In 2009, it eliminated the debt repayment requirements for three years. So they pushed that out into the future and there was a reason for that. There was a reason. They were trying to fool the people of Manitoba. Then, in 2010, the spenDP eliminated it further—pushed it out three more years. And this year, the debt repayment was moved back to 2016. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that you cannot keep pushing your debt away. It's not a credit card. This—if they had a credit card, they would've been out of business a year ago.

In 2012, instead of repaying \$880 million in debt, the NDP added \$400 million. The spendP will add another \$500 million this year with the current debt-or deficit.

Over the NDP's term in office, general debt has gone up by a huge, huge two and half billion. And, under the taxpayer protection act, that should've gone down one and a half billion. The spendP will never, never get out of debt. There's no question about that.

They've tried to paper over their structural deficit for years. In 2003, they raided Manitoba Hydro for \$203 million to balance the government books. In other years, they expanded the PST to new services to try and make revenues match expenditures, and that year was 2012. That was breaking a promise that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) made to all Manitobans. Not only the Premier made them promises, but each and every NDP MLA went from door to door to door making the promise—each and every one of them—and, in the end, they knew full well that they would never keep that promise.

And I don't know for sure, but perhaps I can ask some of my colleagues if a broken promise is a lie. So it would appear that it is. A broken promise is a lie. When these tricks stopped working in 2008, the spendP simply changed the balanced budget legislation instead of changing their habits. But it wasn't enough to stop the red ink for even one year, so the next year, in 2009, they eliminated the debt repayment, and I went through that once. There's no point in going through it again.

Fast forward three years and the spendP still can't stop spending. They promised to balance the budget by 2014. Guess what? It vowed to do this in the 2011 election. The Premier and his cronies broke that promise by bringing in Bill 20 to push back the requirements to balance until 2016.

And today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're being faced with a perceived fiscal crisis. It's been caused by the mismanagement of every one of the NDP MLAs that went door to door to door saying, we will not do this and we will not do that, knowing full well that they weren't going to keep their promise. They knew full well that the Premier would not keep his promise to balance the books by 2014, and it doesn't stop there. Under Bill 20, it will be impossible for the government to balance their books.

First, they will use all kinds of excuses, and we referred to that. And I'm sure that you'll agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's called a blame game. First, they

will blame the federal government despite seeing record federal transfer payments increases. The spendP think it's not enough.

They've increased 79 per cent since 2000. Over the last 13 years the increases have averaged 4.9 per cent a year. They've gone from \$1.9 billion in 2000 to \$3.5 billion today, but that's not enough for this spendP government. So it created Bill 20 that allows the NDP to run deficits if the federal funding falls below a certain level.

So what they've actually said is, we're not capable of running this province. We're not capable of doing anything that we promise, so we've got to cover our backsides if things go the other way. Instead of trying to build a positive relationship with the federal government, they've been poking them in the eye every opportunity they've had. And, to make it worse, they put salt on their finger to poke them in the eye. The spendP is playing politics and blaming them for the NDP's fiscal mess. This isn't right and it's building a wall that will hurt all Manitobans in the long run.

They also lay the blame for the deficits on the very same Crown corporations that a mere five years ago were their saviour from the budget deficits. They had taken—perhaps you can help me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I think it was \$203 million out of Manitoba Hydro. They forced Manitoba Hydro to borrow that money to try and balance their budget. But today they're trying to force Manitoba Hydro into \$21 billion in capital assets on an export power gamble, and we know—we know—that the current situation today that there is no market, there is zero market for export power.

We also know that we're being used as a battery for Wisconsin's windmills and North Dakota, and if they would just look at what the Auditor General said in Ontario, they have lost \$2 billion since they started looking at wind power and exporting power to the United States. And that's in a mere five years, \$2 billion, \$200 million average a year. That's horrible, but that's exactly what the Auditor General of Ontario has said.

So, instead of adjusting their course, the spendP is using illusions to cover over its financial mess, and true to form, they're jacking up rates every year in hydro, 8 and a half per cent in one year and creating a surcharge on Bipole III.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that the NDP need to curtail their spending, learn how to

budget and live within their means. Thank you very much.

* (15:40)

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I am pleased to have the opportunity to join many of my colleagues on the opposition side of the House in putting some comments on the record about Bill 48, the Interim Supply motion and bill that is before the House today, and indicate quite clearly that Manitobans and civil servants aren't fooled. They're not fooled by the rhetoric that comes from the government side of the House when they talk about fiscal cliff and fear mongering and all of those things that would indicate that we don't support civil servants and we don't support Manitobans and programming in Manitoba and that we would try to somehow deny the ability for anyone to be paid or any programs to continue.

That's, if I can say, absolute nonsense, and I would hope that my definition of nonsense has a little more credibility than the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) definition of nonsense when he, before the last election in 2011, said, in regards to questions around raising the PST, that it was absolute nonsense, that his government would never do that. That was an election commitment, an election promise, that they went to the electorate on back in 2011. And each and every member on the government side of the House and all of their candidates went to the doors, knocked on people's doors. They all collectively lied to Manitobans when they indicated they would not raise the PST.

Well, what did they do? They got elected into office with a new mandate and they proceeded in the very first year after that election victory to expand the PST to several services that didn't have PST before. So that was a 7 per cent increase in many areas that affect and impact Manitobans and their bottom line. When it comes to house insurance and all of the other things that they expanded the PST to, Manitobans had to dig a little deeper into their pockets. And there was no requirement for a referendum under law because they didn't raise the PST across the board. And the law today on the books indicates that a referendum should be called before there's an increase in the PST, in the percentage of PST. And that is law still today.

But, I guess, to add insult to injury from last year's budget, we have a government, again, that lied to Manitobans and raised the PST. Now, I believe, in all honesty, that many members on the government

side of the House didn't have a clue what was happening until the budget was delivered in this House. They may have been given a heads-up half an hour before the budget was delivered, but I would say every member in the backbenches on the government side of the House didn't have a clue what was happening. And they were asked to stand up like trained seals and support a government initiative that they knew nothing about, that they had no input into, and, obviously, none of their constituents had input into.

And I think it's shameful that we have, to a person, members on the government side of the House that would stand in their places and support an initiative when they deceived and they lied to their constituents during the last election. And Manitobans are rightly so outraged. And we saw that as people came forward to speak on Bill 20, when they looked at illegally removing the referendum and people's democratic rights to vote on an increase in the PST.

And I have, in my many years here in the Legislature, never been at a set of committee hearings around a piece of legislation where as many ordinary people, unsolicited, came forward and expressed their disdain for a government that lied to them during the last election and took away their democratic right to a referendum before the sales tax was increased. And I wasn't the only one that commented on that. There were many members of the media that were there listening to these people that reported on what they said that had the very same feeling.

And we know that many pieces of legislation that come before committee and that are passed in this House, if they're controversial, people are extremely polarized, but very often the presentations before committee are somewhat orchestrated by the political parties. And I can say without a doubt that there were many people that came forward without any orchestration because they were completely disgusted with the direction that government was taking.

And I thought maybe that it was just us here in the Legislature, but I found out at committee that there were people right throughout the province, a lot in the city of Winnipeg and a lot in seats that members of the government side of the House represent that felt disenfranchised, that felt disgusted with the direction. And they felt betrayed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and they're not going to forget that. And they're not going to forget it every time they go

to the till and have to pay that extra percentage point on absolutely everything that they buy that's included in the PST.

So I don't think anyone on the government side of the House should be proud or should look with any sense of satisfaction that they've done the right things for the taxpayers in the province of Manitoba.

And we are debating this bill today, and I might say that we might not even need to be here in the Legislature today if it hadn't been for the extreme mismanagement of a government that waited until the middle of April to come back into session with a budget, fully expecting that we were just going to lie down and let them move ahead and betray Manitobans in the way they did with this budget.

Well, I think they were somewhat surprised, on the government side, and I still think there's a lot of very hard feelings that they are still sitting here today, and we are holding them to account for the decisions that they have made.

And while I hear members on the government side of the House being somewhat critical of the comment that I'm making, but I'm not the only one, and we are not the only people in Manitoba, that are making these kinds of comments and looking at the government as being very heavy-handed. And well, just let me read from an editorial in the Winnipeg Free Press. And I think that this says it all because they say, and this is, I mean, they don't take their comments lightly when they make comments in the editorial in the Free Press. And they say: Everybody knows that the—and I'll have to say NDP government because I can't use the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) name—is violating balanced budget law in order to ram through a PST increase that it denounced as ridiculous in order to win the last election.

Now those aren't our words. Those are the words of people that are in touch with Manitobans and the public and reflect a lot of Manitobans' views.

And they go—and the editorial goes on to say: And everyone knows Conservative tactics are tying up the Legislature in order to bring attention to the skulduggery.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

And that's what they're calling this PST increase and the lack of a referendum and disenfranchising Manitobans. They are calling it skulduggery. Not my words, Mr. Speaker, but the Free Press's words.

Equally, it goes on to say, Everybody knows the NDP House leader is being disingenuous by claiming the Province is facing a fiscal cliff because the Tories—of the Tories' refusal to either approve the budget or pass the Interim Supply measure to ensure the Province can pay its civil servants when its existing spending authority expires at the end of the month.

And the editorial goes on to say that this House leader's attempt to cause a panic among the general public is as reliable as was the government's promise in the last election to never raise the PST.

* (15:50)

And it says, the Tory leader said last week his party will allow an interim spending bill to be passed before the deadline, but he had no intention of making life easier for the NDP. The Conservatives, in other words, are doing their job as the official opposition; holding the government accountable and ensuring the public's widespread dissatisfaction with the tax increase receives a thorough hearing. And the last line in the editorial is: The Tories may be driving the NDP around the bend, but there's no danger of anyone falling over a fiscal cliff.

So, Mr. Speaker, the government and the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) can say the sky is falling and that we are holding things up. They have a majority in this Legislature. They have a majority. And they have the ability to manage the affairs of the Legislature much better than they have been. They didn't have to wait 'til the middle of April to come back. They could have come back here in February. They could have come back in February, brought in a budget, had debate about that budget. They could have even gone through a referendum and given Manitobans the say—the democratic say, that they have today under law.

But, Mr. Speaker, they chose—they chose to do different. They chose to disenfranchise, to disregard, to disrespect, to betray Manitoba taxpayers and tell them, we will dictate from on high what's best for you. You need to dig deeper into your pockets and take more money out and give it to us because we best know how to manage your money. You don't know how to look after your money, but we do, trust us. Trust us because we would never lie. We would never lie to you and tell you one thing and do another. Oh, no, we would never do that.

But what did they do? They betrayed Manitobans. They lied to Manitobans before the last

election, and, Mr. Speaker, now they are going to have to suffer some of the consequences as Manitobans show the outrage that they have and the disappointment that they have for the way they have been treated by this government.

And I know that—I'm just going to also read into the record today, and it's an email that I received today, and I think many of us, as probably all members of the Legislature received today. And I would hope that members on the government side of the House would take the time to read the email too. But just in case they don't read the email, I thought maybe I should read it into the record.

And it says: Legislators, it's becoming more and more obvious to the electorate that our current government must go. This government is now resorting to scare tactics, trying to get us to believe that if their current budget is not passed, the government will run out of money. Who do they think the electorate is? If they can pass a temporary funding order in the spring, they can do it now. As far as this taxpayer and many more are concerned, our current government is like the school bully that is used to getting its own way, and when it does not, they will do anything to achieve their goals. They still have not learned, when you break the law by trying to pass legislation that is illegal, increasing the PST, changing the agreement with Assiniboia Downs, the electorate will not stand for it. This government is continuing to spend taxpayer money in order to stay in power.

The true debt of our province is unknown, but from what we have been able to find out, and this is only if no more debt is added to our grandkids—is added, our grandkids will still be paying off our current debt.

Lately, different departments of our government have announced funding for different projects. But from what we have seen in the media, a lot of these projects were completed months if not years before. The funding for these projects has already been announced before. Does the current government think the electorate is unable to read? As I said before, when individuals believe it is their right to govern and no matter what the electorate says, they will do what they want. This party of elitist must go and be replaced with individuals who respect and will listen to the electorate.

Wanting for the next election. This is something that everyone received and I hope members on the government side of the House will listen to what

Manitobans are saying. And I know that there seems to be a lot of concern that we're dragging the Legislature out, that it's unnecessary to be sitting here, that we should just let the government go about their merry way and do whatever they want to do; dictate from on high what will happen and nobody should oppose; everyone should just be happy and accept what this government tells them they should be doing. Well, that isn't the case.

Manitobans are smarter than the government gives them credit for. The electorate and the civil service are smarter than what the government gives them credit for. They can't try to spin their way out of the situation that they've got themselves into, and, you know, I honestly believe that if Gary Doer was still the leader of the government, still the premier in the province of Manitoba, we wouldn't see ourselves in the situation that we're in today. I believe that he would have had a better pulse on the sense of what Manitobans really want. And he wouldn't have gone down this path. And I know that Gary Doer, from time to time, had to make some choices and decisions. There were some announcements that were made that weren't terribly positive in the public domain, and what did Gary Doer do? He changed his mind. Now some of us may call that a flip-flop, and we probably did and took advantage of that. But, you know, Manitobans gave him credit for listening to what they had to say, realizing that he may have made a mistake and he changed his mind.

But we're not seeing it under the new leadership with this government. We are seeing a whole different mentality, and members of the government side of the House are being dragged along and dragged down by a ship that has lost its captain, a ship that is floundering in the wilderness, and they don't appear to know where they want to go or who they want to support or who they want to look after. And, you know, it's a sad day in Manitoba when we see a government that is so out of touch with Manitobans and Manitoba taxpayers that they can't see what they're doing. They can't see the harm that they're causing to ordinary Manitobans that are having to dig deeper into their pockets. People on low incomes or fixed incomes that are going to have pay more as a result of this government's decisions.

Manitobans are going to have difficulty making ends meet. What about those that are living in poverty? They are the ones that are going to be hit the hardest, and they are the ones that this government depends on for their votes and for their election victories. These people have long memories,

and they have long memories, especially when it hits them in their own pockets.

And we're not going to let Manitobans forget what this government has done to them. We are not going to let them forget the arrogance of a government that has been in power for so long that they believe that they can do absolutely anything and Manitobans will just willingly go along with them. There's an arrogance that comes with many years of governing; there's an arrogance that comes from people who have lost touch with reality. They have lost touch with the people that elected them and sent them here. They have lost touch with those people that they promised one thing to and do the completely opposite after they're elected.

* (16:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, Manitobans will not forget, and we will continue to hold this government here in the Legislature, because every day that we stay here and represent Manitobans and ask questions about the increase in the PST and the breaking of the law and the taking away of the democratic right of Manitobans to have a vote or a say before the 'PS' is increased, that gives members of the government one more opportunity to change their minds, to have that second thought and think: Have I done the right thing, or should we wait? Should we just hang on, should we call a referendum, should we see what Manitobans really have to say about the direction that we are taking this Province?

And, Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether the government will listen or not, but every day that we stay here gives us one more day and one more opportunity to convince this government that they have made the wrong decision for Manitobans.

And we will continue to debate these issues. We will continue to make sure that Manitobans hear what we are saying. We will continue to have Manitobans know that they do have a voice here in the Legislature, and that is the voice that all of us on this side of the House can provide for them when they come to us with the issues and the concerns that they have over the direction that government is taking. We will be there to support them, to be on their side, and to ensure that their voices will be heard here in the Legislature.

So I want to ask the government—I look to all members of the government, those that represent seats in the city of Winnipeg that have constituents that will be harmed in a significant way, individuals

in their community that will see less income, not more; individuals that may lose their jobs as a result of a downturn in the economy because businesses are no longer going to want to stay here. Mr. Speaker, we're going to support and we're going to stand up for those individuals and we're going to ensure that they don't forget the heavy-handed arrogance and the lack of democracy that has been shown by members of this government who have lost touch with reality, have lost touch with the taxpayers of Manitoba. And it's a sad day for Manitoba. We want them to know that we will be here when they have been abandoned by the New Democratic government.

Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is third reading of Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed please 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): Mr. Speaker, could you summon the members for a recorded vote.

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

Order, please.

* (17:00)

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 48, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2013.

Division

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

Yeas

Allan, Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Crothers, Dewar, Gerrard, Howard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Robinson, Rondeau, Saran, Selby, Struthers, Swan, Wiebe, Wight.

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 31, Nays 18.

Mr. Speaker: Declare the motion carried.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, July 25, 2013

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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