

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

Wednesday, August 21, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no bills, we'll move on to—

PETITIONS

St. Ambroise Beach Provincial Park

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The St. Ambroise provincial park was hard hit by the 2011 flood, resulting in the park's ongoing closure 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 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 B. Finney, D. Geisel and G. McCaughen, and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: In keeping with our rule 132(6), when petitions are read they are deemed by—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.

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) The 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 J. Adler, K. Swiderski, C. Ruest and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

(2) Through Bill 20, the provincial government wants to increase the retail sales tax, known as the

PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by S. Rempel, P. Klippenstein, J. Wiebe and many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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 member—pardon me—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 is signed by V. Sabiston, J. Wien, K. Petriew and many others.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by T. Haight, H. Sabad, H. Klassen and many fine Manitobans.

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.

* (13:40)

(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 I. Mullan, J. McIntyre, D. Davies 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 the window of 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 E. Burelle, G. Carriere, G. Sawatsky and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

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

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

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

(5) Municipalities deserve to be treated with respect. Any amalgamations should be voluntary in nature and led by the municipalities themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by J. Rozzi, P. Best, B. Campbell and many, many others, Mr. Speaker.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background for 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 D. De Sousa, D. Ross, G. Ohlson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Reopen Beausejour's Employment Manitoba Office

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

(3) The recent closure of Employment Manitoba's Beausejour office will have negative

consequences for the area's population who want to upgrade their skills and employment opportunities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by K. Pageot, D. Lafortune, L. Church and many, many other fine Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by G. Betkel, S. David, M. Bahde and many others—many other fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(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 to eliminate 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.

* (13:50)

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 T. Martin, E. Osudar, N. Jacobsen and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

(3) School learning services has its first ever waiting list which started with two children. The waiting list is projected to keep growing and to be in excess of 20 children by September of 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 to access the same educational opportunities as many 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 funding available to eliminate the current waiting list for ABA school-age services and fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

This petition is signed by L. Malliaris, T. Malliaris, M. Naturkactl and many more fine Manitobans.

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

(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, and, 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 R. Linsangoln, M. Pabluwan and O. Orr and many, many others.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To acknowledge that the increase in the PST will significantly encourage cross-border shopping and put additional strain on the retail sector,

especially for those businesses located close to the Manitoba provincial borders.

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

And this petition has been signed by J. Heppner, H. Elias and L. Friesen and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Services

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

And the background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Education consider making funding available to eliminate the current waiting lists in ABA school-age services and

fund ABA services for individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

This petition is signed by A. Voth, J. Sieg, S. Matheson and many more Manitobans.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Lunches with Love program: Scott Burton, Nathan Unrau, Crystal Burton, Penny Lipchen, Marvin Lipchen, Shannon Bircham, Jayden Bircham, who are the guests of the honourable member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger).

And also in the public gallery where we have with us today Mr. Martin Harder, the mayor of Winkler, and also—who is the guest of the honourable member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen).

And also in the public gallery we have with us today Mr. Darren Praznik, the former member for Lac du Bonnet, who is a guest of the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

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

*(14:00)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Flood Protection Costs

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the government's rationale for jacking up the PST continues to weaken. In the beginning, it was their new-found desire for flood protection. In fact, the first two pages of the budget speech contains no fewer than 18 different references to flooding, and it was almost as if the government was hoping we'd flood. And then the government started trumpeting the flood review report with a wish list total it frequently quoted, of \$1 billion. But the rationale falls apart.

Yesterday, the government admitted it had no intentions whatsoever of proceeding with the most expensive item on the wish list, which was the Holland Dam, half a billion dollars, and we know, as well, that the government is committed just to study the Lake Manitoba channel and has trumpeted the estimated costs at \$250 million, considerably higher than the AECOM analysis estimate of just two years ago.

Now, I have to ask the Premier: If the federal government is previously committed to covering half those costs of the channel at the north end of Lake Manitoba, wouldn't the actual cost be half as much?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. His facts are actually quite incorrect. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, we have said we're going to build the channel out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin. Studying it, it's doing the engineering work to actually build it. The commitment has been made. The emergency channel has already been constructed. We remain attentive to the federal government deciding whether or not they will cover it under the DFA program. We hope they will.

As we go forward, we will make that channel permanent as well and widen it to accommodate the additional flow out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin when we build the additional channel there as well. Early estimates are \$250 million. What's clear, Mr. Speaker, is we have a commitment to do it. Members opposite voted against it and do not want to do it.

Government Priority

Mr. Pallister: Well, given the opportunity, I think we would have done it a hell of a long time ago, quite frankly.

Mr. Speaker: I'm sure the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition knows to choose—pick and choose his words very carefully. I'm asking for his co-operation to make sure that the language that's used in here is appropriate for the Chamber and the decorum that we have.

Mr. Pallister: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—a heck of a long time ago.

Now, the Premier has trumpeted this 35-to-1 benefit ratio for investing in flood protection. The fact of the matter is that that alleged fact must not be a new discovery for him. He must have understood that that benefit would have accrued to the people of Manitoba many, many years ago. This government's been in place for 13 years. The transfers have never been higher. The revenues have doubled. The Premier's had, over the course of his time as Finance Minister and Premier, more than \$130 billion to work with.

How much did he put in in that whole time, that first decade of the last 'centure'—of this millennium, how much did he put into the flood channel,

Mr. Speaker? Nothing. How much did he put in the Assiniboine River dikes? Nothing. Yet he increased his spinners' budget by 70 per cent. And now he demands that Manitobans pay him \$3 billion in PST hike. He claims it's for flood infrastructure, but that wasn't his priority for over a decade.

Why would Manitobans believe that it's his priority now?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the member says he would have done it if he would have had the opportunity. He had the opportunity in the 1990s. He did absolutely nothing in the 1990s. He walked away from his responsibilities as minister for Emergency Measures. He abandoned those responsibilities to run federally. He blew his opportunity, just as they did in 1978 when they had an opportunity to build the additional channel in the order of a single-digit million dollars, and they turned it down.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is this: We spent a billion dollars on protecting the Red River Valley and the city of Winnipeg. The member opposite said we should halt that project and not do it. We built it; they won't.

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): That's all he's got, Mr. Speaker, blatant falsehoods on the 'rhetor'—on the record, retro-rhetoric; misinformation repeated doesn't make it accurate. And the reality is that's all that Premier's got. He's a spendDP Premier with no acumen whatsoever, except he has the gift of spending other people's money and taking credit for it.

Now, half a billion dollars of broken-promise taxes add up. I was at the Canada Games last week, had the honour of meeting a lot of the athletes there. A young woman introduced me to her mother and father and her grandmother. I said, your grandfather is living? She said, yes, he is, but he couldn't come. She said, grandma and grandpa are concerned about their spending with all the tax increases in our province. Now, that is the real effect on real people, real families in this province that this tax-hike government is having.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier finally do the right thing and pull the plug on his asinine, unsupportable PST hike?

Mr. Speaker: I'm not sure what more I can say that I haven't already said with respect to the choice of

words of the Leader of the Official Opposition. We have a decorum in this Assembly that we have accepted, a long-established practice in this House, and I've asked honourable members of this House many, many times to pick and choose their words very, very carefully, in keeping with the history and the tradition of this place.

So the words the honourable member just used a few moments ago, I think, are beneath the dignity of this House. So I'm asking him—for him to please, please, in keeping with the decorum of this Assembly, pick and choose your words very carefully and to not to inflame the situation of this House. So I'm asking for that co-operation. I'm asking the honourable member if he will withdraw that word.

Mr. Pallister: Withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member.

The honourable First Minister, to respond to the question.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure the people of the Red River Valley appreciate the dikes that we've built around their communities. I'm sure the homeowners appreciate the fact that we've provided resources along with their own resources to build our homes 2 feet higher than the 1997 flood, and I know the people of Winnipeg appreciate the \$670 million that has been spent to build a floodway that gives one-in-700 protection—year protection to the people of the city of Winnipeg. This spring, we would have had a flood without that floodway having been improved. It's been dramatically improved.

I know the people north of Winnipeg appreciate the partnership we have with the local municipalities on the ice mitigation strategies, some of the best in the world, quite frankly, on breaking up ice and making sure that there's not flash floods in that part of the world.

And I know the people in Brandon appreciate the partnership we've had with them to provide one-in-300-year protection to homes, and they're further working on protecting the commercial areas of that community. And I know the people along the Assiniboine valley appreciate the money that we've put into diking along there, and we will continue to make investments in both the Assiniboine River valley, Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and provide long-term permanent protection. And I know

that that kind of investment will lead to an economic renaissance in the Interlake—

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

Point of Order

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Ms. Howard: I listened very carefully to your rulings and your direction to the House on parliamentary language and then I heard the Leader of the Opposition say a very unfortunate word that is decidedly unparliamentary that I won't repeat. I would ask—I believe that he was reflecting on your ruling that you just made which is clearly inappropriate and against the rules of this House and does not serve to let—to raise the tone of this House.

So I would just draw that to your attention and ask that you ensure that he abides by the rules of this House, not reflect on your rulings and does his best to maintain the decorum and tone in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Government House Leader, I'm going to reflect on the events of this question period and I'm going to review Hansard and I'm going to, obviously, if necessary, consult further with the House leaders, perhaps in a private meeting, because I thought I had a clear understanding with the House leaders here that we would conduct ourselves with a greater degree of dignity and respect in this Assembly. After all, this is all of our workplaces, and I want to ensure that we adhere to the highest level of standards that we possibly can in this place.

So I thank the honourable Government House Leader for the point of order. I must rule that there is no point of order, but I will indeed reflect on the events that have happened here today and that, if necessary, I'm going to consult with the House leaders further on this, how we might improve the situation here.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, the honourable member for Lakeside.

Cattle Enhancement Council Financial Update

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Since the Manitoba Cattle Enhancement Council has been collecting the

levy, MCEC has collected \$8 million from cattle producers. That is not counting the provincial share of matching dollars. In the last 2012 MCEC report, it showed just over \$535,000 in net assets, compared to \$7.6 million in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Agriculture: Where did the \$7.1 million go from 2011 to 2012?

* (14:10)

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives): On behalf of the Manitoba cattle producers and the organization for the last number of years, obviously, I want to acknowledge the fact of how important the beef industry is in the province of Manitoba. And being a beef producer for a lot of years, we realize the importance of sustaining a slaughter facility in the province of Manitoba, and being a cattle producer for a number of the years, I've witnessed it. I personally experienced the difficulties that we experienced in the BSE crisis, and we're still in the rebuilding stage. And, yes, a federal slaughter facility is a great attitude to the benefit of the beef industry in the province of Manitoba.

So I want to make sure that the member opposite, that is—was the start of the MCE organization being set up to look at opportunities to develop a business plan towards a slaughter facility in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, that doesn't answer where the \$7.1 million went from 2011 to 2012. In fact, in St. Boniface where there was supposed to be a processing plant built—and now an empty lot—yet this NDP government announced over and over again it was going to proceed with a new plan.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture if his government lacks confidence in increasing processing capacity in the province of Manitoba. Where's the \$7.1 million? There's nothing to show for it. Where's the \$7.1 million?

Mr. Kostyshyn: As I indicated earlier, when the MCEC organization was set up, and in the report they indicated that there was an investment made into a piece of property on the Marion Street towards moving forward of the—looking towards a federal slaughter facility.

But there also has to be recognition towards a partnership that was being developed with the federal government, with the cattle producers of the province of Manitoba and the provincial government.

But the MCEC were the agencies that were involved to develop a strong business plan towards a benefit for the Manitoba Beef Producers. As we all know, X and L beef, a large organization in Alberta, had some struggles. What we want to say today, and the MCEC has indicated, they want to put forward a good, solid business plan before they move through the difficulties the cattle industry is facing today. Thank you.

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

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, the minister just don't get it. It's a simple question. Where did the \$7.1 million go? It's not about other provinces. This is Manitoba cattle producers' money. And it's just like the cattle producers have been putting money in—putting money in—since BSE. This government has nothing to show for it?

Is this just another slush fund like the PST for the government—make announcements after announcement? They spend, spend—and nothing to show for it.

Where's the \$7.1 million? That's just the cattle producers' share.

Mr. Kostyshyn: I thank the honourable member from—Agriculture critic from the other side.

We are working on a business plan. The MCEC's working on a business plan and we can put together plans all in for—as I indicated in earlier commentary, there was a partnership between the federal, the Manitoba Beef Producers, the MCEC and the provincial government. Unfortunately, the federal government chose to withdraw \$10 million that was targeted towards the development of the Marion Street project, as we talked about earlier. And that is the challenges we face today when we were just in the last completion to make it bricks and mortar, this basically took—occurred.

That is a challenge that we faced. But today the challenge that we face is—the additional challenge that we face in the beef industry such as the community pastures, the research stations that we have in the province of Manitoba—we're here on behalf of the province of—

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

High-Risk Sex Offender Case Concern

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): The challenge, Mr. Speaker, is getting this minister to answer a simple question.

Mr. Speaker, another high-risk sex offender was scheduled to be released last weekend. This individual has participated in several sex offender treatment programs while in prison, but is still considered a high risk to reoffend. This individual has had several chances; his victims have had no chance. This Minister of Justice has failed these—to protect these victims, some as young as 13 years of age.

When will he act to ensure that Manitobans are protected?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I can assure the member opposite and all members of this House, that where there is an appropriate case for Manitoba Justice to be able to move after somebody's jail term has expired to have further measures placed to guide that person in the community, that will be done. But that decision's made by Manitoba Justice. It's based on whether they believe they can meet a very high standard to obtain an order of that type.

So I can assure the member opposite that where there's appropriate cases, Manitoba Justice will move ahead and will do their best to convince a judge to make that order.

Mr. Helwer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the best isn't good enough for those victims. The NDP government has a poor record on crime, the violent crime capital of Canada.

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

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to realize there are a number of different situations when someone can be released into the community. But the first thing that the member needs to understand is where somebody has served their jail sentence or their prison time in a federal institution, they will be returned to the community. And, again, when we're aware of somebody coming out of a federal prison, that application will be seriously considered by Manitoba Justice and best efforts will be made to get an order that can deal with that person in the community. If someone's released from a provincial institution we can do that.

There are other situations where people have gone into a federal jail, have been released on parole. Manitoba Justice is actually not aware when those individuals are then to the end of their sentence, which makes it very difficult for Manitoba Justice to make an appropriate application.

And in some cases, of course, Manitoba Justice's hands are tied because the federal Parole Board has said that a person can be out in the community. It really takes away the ability of Manitoba Justice to seek that kind of order. I think it's important for the members opposite to understand that.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Helwer: It's obvious the minister's not aware of what's going on in Manitoba. This high-risk sex offender has had several chances.

What chances do his victims have? What chance do any of his future victims have?

Mr. Swan: The member opposite's supposed to be aware that the individuals who consider that evidence and make applications are provincial Crown attorneys. That's why this government has been adding Crown attorneys each and every year that we've been in power, to make sure that, where an appropriate case comes in and there is acceptable evidence to allow a Crown attorney to make that application, those resources are there.

I know members opposite have a different view. I know the Leader of the Opposition would cut Crown positions. He would cut funding from the Crown's office. Perhaps he'd be cutting a Crown attorney that was added in the city of Brandon. Perhaps the member for Brandon West should reflect on that, perhaps have a good discussion with his leader and perhaps think the next time he stands up and votes against more resources for police and Crown attorneys and votes against the things that we're doing to make this province safer, Mr. Speaker.

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

Manitoba Hydro–Bipole III NFAT Review Request

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Former NDP Premier Ed Schreyer, former NDP Cabinet minister Tim Sale and long-time NDP MLA Len Evans all have concerns about the way that the NDP is managing Manitoba Hydro. In fact, all Manitobans are concerned with the Bipole III route that goes

500 kilometres longer as compared to the east-side route.

I'd like to ask the minister responsible: Why not send Bipole III to the NFAT where it can be properly discussed and studied? Why won't he do that?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, the member may not be aware, but in 1997 there was a serious incident where the poles were down; 17 poles were down and the power was cut off to 70 per cent of Manitoba. At that time, it was decided that it was necessary for security purposes and reliability purposes—and, I might add, Manitoba Hydro has one of the best reliability services in the world—that it's—that a line be built, a line be built that is not close to the other lines as an alternative and as a security measure.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, not only is Manitoba Hydro doing that, but they're going to be able to provide supply and power so that not only will our rates stay the lowest in North America today, but they'll be the lowest in North America two years, three years, four years and 10 years out.

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

Mr. Schuler: Well, Mr. Speaker, former Hydro vice-president Will Tishinski; Jim Collinson, energy consultant; Byron Williams, are all concerned about the way Manitoba's NDP are managing Manitoba Hydro. In fact, the \$1 billion extra for the bipole line to go down the west side is a concern to all Manitobans.

We would like to ask this NDP minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: Will he not send the Bipole III route to the NFAT where it can be properly studied and it can be properly discussed?

* (14:20)

Mr. Chomiak: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, that the bipole is required for security. The member may know that there's been a bit of a controversy around North America with regard to transmission, with regard to pipelines, with regard to transmission. They had difficulty in Alberta getting a transmission line between Edmonton and Calgary, for heaven sakes, and that was a difficulty.

We've been able and we have to have a line that goes for reliability, that goes for security, that goes through a developed area and the same time will preserve the wishes of people on the east side. And

we'll be able to have a World Heritage Site and we'll be able to have a park that'll stand there forever. There'll be a contiguous boreal forest that is recognized as one of the lungs of the universe. We'll be able to have both secure power and proper conservation.

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

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro wanted to go on the east side so that we could have secure power, and it's the NDP who are going on the west side which is directly down tornado alley. It is not for secure reasons that they're doing it. In fact, former chair of PUB, Graham Lane, U of M engineer, Garland Laliberte, the Consumers' Association of Canada are all concerned about the way the NDP is managing Manitoba Hydro.

Why is the Bipole III line going the west side route which is 25 per cent less efficient? Isn't it time that the Bipole III route go to the NFAT where it can be properly debated?

Mr. Chomiak: You know, Mr. Speaker, since I've been in the House, the members have never gotten over the '99 election loss.

And now, Mr. Speaker, in the 2007 election and the 2011 election, the bipole issue was right on the agenda. It was talked about on the doorstep. It was one of the major issues in the campaign and Manitobans understood that. And that was an issue of two elections and, I dare say, the public spoke. And, you know, members opposite have the habit of attacking Hydro on a daily basis.

What does an unbiased observer say? Manitoba Hydro produces some of the cheapest and most environmentally friendly power on the planet. Who said that? Steven Fletcher in the Edmonton Journal—or how about someone else, Mr. Speaker? A fellow by the name of Brad Wall, quote: We're talking to Manitoba in a deal—about a deal that's possible. I think we're going to see some progress before the end of summer.

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

Hydro Transmission Lines Public Consultations

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): This is also the government that promised no new taxes in the last election also.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I asked a question about the CEC report on Bipole III, the member for—Kildonan complained about consultation fatigue. Manitoba Hydro is currently holding two open—holding open houses regarding two new transmission lines in southern Manitoba.

Now, when the minister admits to consultation fatigue, are these open houses just a publicity stunt by this government?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): No, thanking—no, the contrary. It's not like a Tory convention where things are closed off and leaders are chosen unanimously in one-horse races.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, it was not myself that said consultation fatigue. It was quoted in the CEC report that had taken place. In addition, Hydro is—has understood—members opposite don't, but there's a hundred thousand more people in this province than there was 10 years ago. There's more demands on power, and in areas like Steinbach and southern Manitoba, they need more electricity. Part of the reasons for these lines—in fact, the reason for these two lines is to provide power to those regions of the province.

Are members saying they don't want to have transmission lines to that part of the province for people who require the power, because that would be consistent with their message?

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

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, there's still many issues outstanding from the CEC report on Bipole III, and now the spenDP is forcing Manitoba Hydro to move ahead on more transmission projects before even dealing with the CEC report, but the minister is complaining about consultation fatigue. I understand that.

So will the minister actually listen to Manitobans about their concerns or, given his ministerial fatigue, has the NDP already decided what Manitoba Hydro will be forced to do next?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I wish they would sit down in caucus and talk about priorities. Do they want power to go to places like Steinbach, Winkler and Morden and southern Manitoba? They require additional power and additional resources. That's what these two lines are about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if members opposite—they're against everything that Hydro does. I mean, I've now seen they've gone from the—they've gone to ridiculous heights by saying Manitoba Hydro should not be having public hearings with people in the area, shouldn't have sent out 2,200 letters to people in the area talking about transmission lines that'll go along, in most of the cases, existing thoroughfares to have additional power to expanding needs in that part of the province. No wonder they didn't build anything when they were government.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, it's our duty as the opposition party to protect Manitoba Hydro from this NDP party.

Manitoba Hydro doesn't belong to the spendP. If the minister is too tired to listen to Manitobans, get out of the way and let someone else do it.

Are these public hearings, on these southern transmission lines, are they just a feel-good exercise with the NDP already having decided what Manitoba shall do, as decreed by the spendP?

When is the consultation going to happen with Manitobans, not within the NDP party?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the—Manitoba Hydro is a Crown corporation and makes corporate decisions.

It wasn't that long ago when they were criticizing—when the members opposite were criticizing Manitoba Hydro for not hooking up in the oil patch fast enough. And they said you couldn't get Manitoba Hydro to put those lines in fast enough, Mr. Speaker. Now they're saying, oh, you shouldn't be putting lines in.

It is very clear there's a clear contrast in this province, Mr. Speaker, between the do nothing, no build, hate Hydro, privatize it like MTS, or the let's build Hydro, let's provide resources for all Manitobans, let's provide jobs, let's provide a future for our children on this side of the House. It's very clear.

Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park Maintenance Services

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): The lights might go out under this minister.

But cottage owners in Hecla/Grindstone park have told us that this year the cuts to the park's operating budget means that park employees do not—don't even have enough money for gas to mow the road shoulders, the ditches, the park green spaces.

The 18-kilometre-long Black Wolf Trail, which has only been open for three years, has deadfall and waist-high grass.

Mr. Speaker, this government has increased cottage fees and park fees, but no maintenance has been done to Hecla.

The 'minist'—will the minister tell us when he intends to bring Hecla/Grindstone back to an acceptable level of repair and why is it more important to each NDP coffer—why is it more important that each—to pad each NDP coffer with \$5,000 vote tax or \$7,000 extra special fees for his special friends, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship): I think the member opposite may not have recognized that the Province has just enunciated a new park strategy. And part of that, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that we make investments in areas in our parks that are very important to Manitobans and to our visitors.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I hear questions now from the critic asking us to spend even more. We're committed to spending and investing \$100 million to refresh the provincial parks of Manitoba, and I can assure this House that, in fact, maintenance is happening at Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, you can hardly do it with the cuts to his budget in this area.

This NDP government is a tax-and-spend government. No one knows that better than these cottage owners in Manitoba provincial parks. Cottage fees—service fees in Hecla Provincial Park are expected to rise by 613 per cent. Falcon Lake is expected to rise by 118 per cent and Paint Lake fees by 317 per cent, yet cottage owners aren't getting better services. Mr. Speaker, the spendP government is taxing them more for the same services. This is deplorable and truly represents the fiscal mismanagement of the NDP.

Can the minister explain why he's increasing these fees when he's had no intention in his mismanagement for providing even regular park services?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, you can just see the lack of co-ordination in their effort. You know, it's important, I think, for the opposition to sit down and put together a strategy, not just a tactic. The member gets up and he says, you know, this is

the cut-and-spend government, and I'm just thinking, now, maybe they should get at least one approach that kind of works for them. Like, maybe just take either cut or spend.

* (14:30)

We're willing to entertain them in this House, but, Mr. Speaker, if we're the cut-and-spend government, I'll tell you one thing, we're going to look for efficiencies where we can. We want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in our parks. We want to make sure that we naturalize areas in our parks. We want to make sure that our maintenance is going to areas that are a priority to Manitobans, and we will spend in investing in the future of parks in Manitoba—

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

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, this is coming directly from cottage owners and parks in Manitoba.

And if poorly kept green spaces weren't bad enough, cottage owners in Hecla—grandstone have said that garbage huts in the park are not emptied regularly and—but are often filled to the brim with waste before any action to empty them, Mr. Speaker.

Cottage owners have expressed their concerns about this situation. They want Manitobans' parks to remain pristine, Mr. Speaker, and healthy so they can be enjoyed by others.

The question is: Why doesn't the NDP—why isn't the minister at least cutting grass—park grass, Mr. Speaker—or is the NDP minister waiting for Manitobans to cut his grass?

Mr. Mackintosh: I know when he talked about cuts he was about—it was about cutting grass. I kind of missed that, Mr. Speaker.

I just to want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that members in this House appreciate that, in fact, we are bound and determined to make sure that maintenance of our provincial parks maintains a high standard. We also know that we have to make long-term investments in our parks.

And, indeed, one of the investments that we have made in Hecla/Grindstone in particular, Mr. Speaker, is almost a half a million dollars to make sure that never again—in the future of this province—will peat be mined in a provincial park. We have delivered that at Hecla/Grindstone Provincial Park. And we're continuing to make other investments in

that very important park, at the same time address the need to ensure that there is funding fairness when it comes to park cottagers.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Holland Dam Construction Government Intent

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on August 14th, the Finance Minister said, and I quote, we received a report from an independent group—a report on flood protection that said as a result of the flood that happened in 2011 that we needed to invest a billion dollars—in excess of a billion dollars—in flood mitigation projects to protect Manitoba families. And we take that very seriously. End of quote.

Yesterday, the list of priorities the Premier provided did not include the Holland Dam, which represents \$500 million—or half of this investment that the Finance Minister himself stressed.

I ask the Premier: Has he eliminated the Holland Dam from consideration?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we had this question yesterday and what we said was—is that as a result of the independent reports that recommended up to a billion dollars of spending, we 'priorized'—first and foremost—the additional channel out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin, taking the emergency channel that was built in Lake St. Martin—making it permanent. That's about a \$250-million commitment. The engineering work is supposed to proceed immediately on that, so that we can get that in shape and start building it as quickly as possible.

The member knows full well that these projects require good lead times to clear all the environmental review hurdles and all the technical requirements often required by the federal government in these matters.

But by starting now and making this commitment now, we want to give greater certainty to the people in that Interlake area, that they will have the kind of flood protection that we've offered in other parts of Manitoba. So we're proceeding on that. And then we will move forward to see what other measures we have to take.

But, first and foremost, the communities that were dramatically and negatively impacted by the 2011 flood require protection. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

Feasibility Study

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, since the budget in April, members of the NDP government have stressed 41 times in this Legislature the importance of spending the \$1 billion flowing from the flood of 2011 task force. The Premier himself has stressed this 17 times. Each time they've stressed the need to spend the \$1 billion on flood protection.

Now, Manitobans need fiscal, social and environmental accountability for all the 1 billion they are or will be paying. The flood report says a feasibility study needs to be done due to the lead time, which the Premier himself mentioned.

I ask: Has the government even commissioned a feasibility study on the Holland Dam, who's doing it and when will it be done?

Mr. Selinger: I thank the member for the question.

And I can—I just want to simply reiterate we've 'prioritized' infrastructure for flood protection, to have the great and direct benefit for those communities that were most negatively impacted in the 2011 flood. Those are the communities around Lake Manitoba, those are the communities around Lake St. Martin and in the Lake St. Martin area—that's a \$250-million commitment for which the engineering studies are being commissioned as we speak. We're moving forward on that because those are the people that need the greatest amount of relief and the greatest amount of certainty going forward.

Additional projects may be taken in the future, as we get that one up and running. The member knows full well that we are making commitment to other forms of infrastructure in Manitoba: strengthening the dikes along the Assiniboine River; strengthening flood protection in communities such as Brandon; continuing to make sure we have the proper measures to managing the Red River Valley as well as through Winnipeg and the north end of Winnipeg, as we go up the Red River towards Lake Winnipeg. All of these things are part of the long-term strategy to prevent flooding dislocating and hurting families in Manitoba and hurting our communities. That's our commitment and that's where we're going.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure the Premier's aware, the Holland Dam is questionable on a number of fronts, including from an environmental

perspective, and many Manitobans feel that it couldn't or shouldn't be built. There's an alternative, and that is widespread efforts to retain water on a smaller scale, as in South Tobacco Creek, or building what's the equivalent of large on-farm dugouts, as David Lobb at the University of Manitoba has suggested.

I call on the Premier to include widespread smaller water retention project efforts as an alternative to the Holland Dam as part of a feasibility study to the two options, so that the two options can be directly compared as to their impact on flood prevention cost and environmental effects, so that we can proceed forward, looking at the both options comparatively rather than just one.

Mr. Selinger: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Liberal Party. I think he's correct. There are many ways to retain water on the land to prevent flooding. Ducks Unlimited has been a leader in this regard not only in Manitoba, but throughout North America. Wetland preservation, a very important priority, one which we support and that's one of the reasons, for example, we put the Riparian Tax Credit in place to protect those riparian forests along waterways which also help protect our waterways and keep them clean.

So we're very interested in lagoons; we're very interested in wetlands preservation; we're interested in small-scale projects which will keep water on the land. There are some new technologies emerging with regard to this. This is part of a larger surface water management strategy that we need in the province.

The member is right. We should avoid phenomenally large capital investments until we've canvassed a very—a variety of alternatives. But, again, I have to repeat, the No. 1 priority is to put the infrastructure in place that will protect those communities most severely damaged in the 2011 flood, and I can only reiterate that this side of the House is committed to those resources. The other side of the House has said no to that and refuses to fund it. That is shameful.

NorWest Co-op Community Health Centre Community Food Centre Opening

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): We all know that access to healthy food is the key to a balanced, meaningful approach to people's health, to healing, to the prevention of disease and investments in healthy,

accessible food is definitely a priority of our government.

So I would like to ask our Minister of Housing and Community Development to tell us how the new Winnipeg Community Infrastructure Program is partnering to create a new food service that will provide a centered—central shop for healthy food and positive lifestyle living in northwest Winnipeg?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): This morning I was very pleased to be joined by the MLAs for Burrows, as well as Tyndall Park, as well as the Minister for Local Government (Mr. Lemieux), where we gathered at the northwest co-op access centre in wonderful north Winnipeg. And there we announced our commitment of a hundred thousand dollars to support the food centre that northwest co-op will be doing in partnership with the community. This is an innovation and will be the first of its kind in western Canada, and we are so pleased to be partnering with the community, with northwest co-op staff and board of directors. This new food centre will provide support for over 500 people a week. I will repeat that: 500 people a week will be accessing a lunch program, community kitchens as well community gardens.

Thank you very much.

Child-Welfare System Government Accountability

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Yesterday, the Minister of Family Services stated, and I quote: We have seen through the Hughes inquiry, and in the reviews that came before, an unprecedented look at the child-welfare system, a look that has been transparent and accountable.

Well, we know that Phoenix Sinclair's protection and care was anything but transparent and accountable. However, her death was unprecedented and the circumstances surrounding it were unprecedented.

*(14:40)

I ask the Minister: Will she indicate to the House why her—she and her predecessors continue to be disinterested bystanders when we see children like Phoenix Sinclair lose their lives because this government fails to act?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I want to talk about some of the things that ministers before me have done to

improve the child-welfare system in the wake of a horrible tragedy like the murder of Phoenix Sinclair and with the knowledge that the suffering and abuse of children is something that happens all too commonly in this province. And it is our role, all of us, I believe, as legislators, to do what we can to change that.

And so some of the actions that we've taken are things like ensuring that there are people working on the front lines to protect children and to protect those investments, even when it's extremely challenging to do so, Mr. Speaker. We've tried to make sure that those people who are in charge of protecting children have some of the best tools in North America to do that, and we've worked with them to change the way that they—

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

Mrs. Rowat: We know the former minister of Family Services, the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick), failed in her responsibilities to protect children in care. Under her watch, case file evidence was shredded. Those standards were in place since 2004, a full year before Phoenix was murdered.

Mr. Speaker, Phoenix Sinclair's murder was—her murderers were tried and convicted without important evidence, and we know that the member for Riel failed to keep—be accountable for that safety of that information.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister confirm that based on the member for Riel's actions—or lack thereof, I should say—was the reason she was fired as the minister responsible for Family Services?

Ms. Howard: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, last week and this week you've encouraged us to try to improve the tone in this Legislature, and I think there are many, many members in this House who are doing their best to do that. But to smear a person in the way that the member opposite has just done does not do anything to improve that tone. Every member of this House—I believe every member of this House on every side is honourable, I believe that they want to protect children, I believe that they want to do the best by children.

We all may have different ideas of how to do that. On this side of the House, we invest in child welfare. We also invest in initiatives like we just heard about that help to deal with poverty, that helped families to have healthy food and to keep—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The minister's time has expired. Time for oral questions has expired. It's time for—

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

In Memory of Robert Taylor

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I rise today to pay tribute to an extraordinary Manitoban whose work touched the lives of many. I refer, Mr. Speaker, to Mr. Robert Taylor, the esteemed artist who passed away last week at the age of 73.

A skilled wildlife photographer, Mr. Taylor was best known for capturing stunning images of bison, muskox, beluga whales, great grey owls and polar bears. Indeed, his early work included some of the first close-up images of polar bears along the Hudson Bay coastline. He was noted for his respect for his wild subjects and for their safety.

Over the course of a 40-year career, Mr. Taylor's images became emblematic of the natural heritage of Manitoba. His work has appeared in national and international magazines, and he published several books depicting Manitoba's landscape, the Hudson Bay area and the great grey owl. Mr. Taylor's work had a lasting impact on our province, fostering an awareness of the incredible natural wonders with which we have been endowed and helping us to develop polar bear tourism in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Taylor was also a strong and extraordinary community advocate known for his generosity in donating his time and his art for various causes. A noted lecturer and teacher, he was involved in arranging trips for other photographers so that they, too, could capture the wildlife in Canada's North and across the world. His passion for his art also extended to painting and carving, and he helped launch the Prairie Canada Carvers Association.

Many have honoured Mr. Taylor for his accomplishments. He received a fellowship from the Professional Photographers Association of Manitoba and a master of photographic arts from the Professional Photographers of Canada. And then, last week, Mr. Taylor received the Order of the Buffalo Hunt from the Premier of Manitoba at a private ceremony at his home just nine days before his passing.

Mr. Speaker, it is a remarkable individual indeed who has dedicated his life to bringing us closer to the natural world. I would like all members to join me in

remembering this remarkable Manitoban and this great Canadian. Thank you.

Lunches with Love

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my constituents, Scott Burton and Nathan Unrau, who are in the gallery today, on their dedication to a local charity, Lunches with Love, founded recently by 12-year-old Westdale school student, Nathan.

Nathan started this project as his commitment to get into We Day last fall. This has snowballed into a program that is feeding the homeless and also inspiring others to join in. With help from his parents and many volunteers who have come to his home every Saturday, Nathan puts together almost 500 lunches to give to homeless shelters.

They get all of their supplies through donations and make the lunches with people who volunteer their time to make and deliver them. Scott Burton, a local parent with two children attending Beaverlodge elementary school, recently organized and completed a 24-hour marathon in Charleswood with all proceeds going to the Lunches with Love program. This event generated community awareness and food donations for the local charity and was done in partnership with Beaverlodge elementary school and Westdale Junior High School.

They hope to inspire the students and the entire community to give to the less fortunate. The run started on June 12th at 8 a.m. and continued non-stop to June 13th at 8 a.m., following a route around the Westdale area of Charleswood. In the 24-hour period, Scott completed 151 kilometres. He was joined on the final few kilometres by radio personality, Ace Burpee.

I was happy to be able to join some of Scott's friends at the corner of Roblin and Dale to cheer Scott on when he passed us during his four-kilometre loop every 40 minutes or so. I'm afraid I wasn't in much condition to be able to run with him, but I did my best standing at the sidelines, cheering them on. There were also a lot of cars going by, honking their horns in recognition of this really incredible event that was going on in our community, and people donated bread, tuna and snack-type foods that can go into bagged lunches.

On behalf of the whole Assembly here, and especially on behalf of people in Charleswood and Manitoba, I'd like to say congratulations to Scott and to Nathan for this extraordinary effort. They have

made a great step in bringing awareness to the plight of the homeless and the needy, as well as furthering and bringing awareness to the Lunches with Love program. We salute you for this extraordinary effort.

Manito Ahbee Festival

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate in Manitoba to have a rich, beautiful heritage made up of many nations. Today is the last day of the Manito Ahbee Festival, a six-day celebration of indigenous entertainment and culture in Canada.

Now in its eighth year, Manito Ahbee kicked off last week with a round dance on Edmonton Street. More than 400 people of all ages and cultural backgrounds gathered together and held hands during the lunch hour, establishing a new record for the largest round dance in Canada.

This year the Manito Ahbee Festival featured a variety of events, including an indigenous marketplace and trade show, a square dancing and jigging contest and a youth cultural camp at The Forks. The new—a new event featured this year was the Oh My Gospel—or OMG—Jamboree, at which several talented Aboriginal artists sang gospel music.

One of the festival's annual highlights, the Aboriginal Peoples Choice Music Awards, was held Sunday night at the MTS Centre. This is the only awards program of its kind in Canada that recognizes top First Nations, Metis and Inuit artists. Manitoba artists picked up five awards this year, Mr. Speaker, and Manitoba music legend Ray St. Germain received the Lifetime Achievement Award. Ray is also a recipient of the Order of Manitoba, and I am proud to say that he is from Kirkfield Park.

Tonight, the festival will end with a flourish with the second night of the International Competition Pow Wow. All are welcome to come and to see one of the largest showcases of traditional and contemporary dance, drumming and singing in North America—and, if they like, join in.

Mr. Speaker, the most amazing thing about Manito Ahbee is the way that this powerful affirmation of the talents of Aboriginal artists allows us all to deepen our understanding of our cultural heritage in Manitoba. Everyone, indigenous and nonindigenous, is invited to be a part of the festival and let it spark their imaginations, strengthening connections between people and communities.

I invite all members to join me in thanking the board of governors of the Manito Ahbee Festival, as well as the festival sponsors, organizers and its many volunteers for yet another year of celebrating Aboriginal culture in the new millennium.

Miigwech. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:50)

SHARE

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize SHARE, which stands for sharing hope and resources of the earth, a grow project with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. SHARE hosted a free barbecue this past Saturday to celebrate a successful crop for the fifth year in a row. SHARE has been involved with grow projects since 2009. It has become the largest Manitoba growing project, where there were 570 acres seeded this spring accounting for 10 per cent of the overall production of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank's projects in Manitoba. It started off with a group of farmers who felt the need to start a grow project in the Morden area. Having the same vision as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, this group of farmers joined the other Manitoba grow projects which now number 45.

SHARE treats the project like their own farm. They collaborate and decide what would be the best crops to grow, and then they make happen on top of their own personal crop commitments. Unfortunately, last Saturday's barbecue could not coincide with the harvesting of the crop, which wasn't quite ready to come off, but that work will go on soon enough.

The executive committee consists of chair Ben Friesen, treasurer Colin Wiebe and secretary Irv Dalke. Many others are involved including Harry Dalke, John Dyck, Ike Friesen, John Hildebrand, Ernie Hoepfner, John Klassen, Ben Peters and Ken Wiebe, and many of their spouses who worked hard to make the day a success.

The project would not be possible without the help of business and personal donations for equipment, land, seed, fertilizer, chemical and monetary donations, and there were new businesses that joined SHARE this year including Phil Hildebrand of Pioneer seeds, Viterra, genAG and Flaman Rentals.

Along with their celebrating of their fifth anniversary, it was also the 30th anniversary this

year of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Last year, \$7.2 million was donated through 216 growing projects to the Foodgrains Bank, almost eight–1.8 billion of that came from the 31 projects in Manitoba.

I applaud the hard work of these individuals to find the time and the commitment during the busiest season of the year to do something substantial about world hunger. Thank you.

Holland Dam Feasibility Study

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, today I'm calling on the government to deliver on the feasibility assessment for the Holland Dam which was recommended by the Manitoba 2011 flood task-force report months ago.

The feasibility assessment of a dam along the Assiniboine River near Holland was proposed by the task-force report as a way of holding water back upstream of Portage la Prairie in order to decrease the risks of those living around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and to decrease the risk to people from Portage la Prairie to Winnipeg.

This dam was looked at extensively in the 1980s and rejected for various reasons including environmental concerns. The concept has been brought back by the task force in their report. Because of the very controversial nature of a dam along the Assiniboine River near Holland, I'm calling on the government today to have not only a feasibility study on the Holland Dam but a feasibility study of an alternative option of widespread, smaller water retention projects.

These projects could be modelled on small water retention projects in other areas including, as an example, what's been done at South Tobacco Creek or on the proposal of David Lobb of the University of Manitoba for widespread, small on-farm water retention projects. These would be the equivalent of large dugouts strategically designed to capture and retain water from the farm to slow the rate at which water moves into our rivers and to decrease flooding. The parallel assessment of the two options would allow a comparison of cost, a comparison of the effectiveness on flood prevention, a comparison of the environmental impact and a comparison of the cost benefits to farmers and indeed for all Manitobans.

The Premier (Mr. Selinger) should move quickly in starting this feasibility study, ensuring that there are people with the appropriate expertise to

undertake the assessments. There's already been a lot of delay in the calling of the initial task force and delays in acting on many aspects of the report. It's time to move on this so that effective and beneficial action can be taken to decrease future flood risks to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. Seeing no grievances–

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please proceed with report stage on Bill 20.

REPORT STAGE AMENDMENTS

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

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

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing the heading for Part 3 with "RETROACTIVE TAX INCREASE AND COMING INTO FORCE".

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing–dispense?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

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

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to bring forward this very important amendment for this piece of legislation that the NDP has introduced to increase the PST and strip Manitobans of their right to vote on that increase that they are calling on, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that this amendment more accurately reflects what this bill is, in fact, all about. And I know members opposite, they have called the bill The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), but, I think if you were to peruse the bill and to–all the way through and all the different parts of it, I believe that you would see that this amendment is–perhaps more accurately reflects what is in the bill.

Of course, we know that this is about a PST increase, and we would argue that it's an illegal PST increase because we know, of course, that members opposite, they didn't want to abide by the existing legislation that we have in this province because it didn't suit their own political agenda. So what this minister does and what members opposite do in Cabinet and what the Premier (Mr. Selinger) does when they don't like the existing legislation, they change it, Mr. Speaker, and when it doesn't suit their own political agenda.

But the fact of the matter is here we are in Manitoba, the PST has already been increased. People are out there paying for that increase right now, and the bill hasn't even passed through the Manitoba Legislature. That's just wrong, and I think Manitobans know. They're beginning to see that this is a tired and arrogant government, that they believe that they can pay—play fast and loose with the laws in this province.

And I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is quite busy in his own court cases right now, Mr. Speaker, and he has all sorts of lawyers advising him and we know that tens of thousands of dollars are going from Manitobans' pockets into his lawyers' pockets. And we've asked in this House on many occasions how much money is going into defending his—defending him, and, of course, we have not received any answers from the Minister of Finance. But I think it's very important.

We, of course, heard from many Manitobans at committee here in the Manitoba Legislature. We heard from many Manitobans by way of email and voice mail and just talking to many Manitobans out there across this great province of ours, and they're very concerned not only about this PST increase which they think is egregious enough, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the bill hasn't even passed through the Manitoba Legislature and people are already paying for the increase.

But I think the thing that they really—that really hurts them the most and that they're most upset about is the fact that this NDP government has done this in an illegal way. They have stripped Manitobans of their right to vote by way of a referendum on this PST increase, and we know that the existing laws in this province—and if the Minister of Finance would choose to abide by those laws, he would have to call for a referendum in order to increase the PST. Now, he could choose not to call that referendum if he just chose simply not to raise the PST and then we

could—we wouldn't be here having this debate. If members opposite could find ways to rein in their spending habits, we wouldn't be standing here in the Manitoba Legislature today having this debate. But the fact of the matter is that the NDP is so set in pushing forward their own political agenda because they can't rein in their own spending problem so they have to put that on the backs of hard-working Manitobans by the way of a PST increase.

* (15:00)

But we heard from all Manitobans, many Manitobans who are very concerned about this PST increase. We heard from seniors who are very concerned about this increase and, in particular, seniors who are really concerned about the way that this government has gone about increasing the PST here in this province by stripping away the democratic right to vote in this province, to vote on this PST increase.

And we know that new Canadian citizens have come to our province, Mr. Speaker. We know that they left their countries and many of them left their countries for reasons because they were living in an undemocratic country. They were living in places that they didn't like the conditions. They wanted to move to Canada for the freedoms that we share here and that we're so lucky and fortunate to be a part of.

But what's unfortunate is this is setting such a terrible example for those new Canadian citizens, saying to them, you know what? We don't respect your decision to move here for the freedoms that we have here. We're going to strip away those rights of yours. And it's reminding them of the countries that they came from and they fought so hard to come here to escape. And I think it's unfortunate that members of this government, they just—you know, just in order to suit their own political agenda, Mr. Speaker, that they will strip Manitobans of those very rights that—those democratic rights that they fought so hard to come here and to be a part of.

And so I would encourage members opposite to look very seriously at supporting this amendment, because this is—this whole bill, if you go through part 1, 2, 3 of the bill, it—this is all about increasing the PST. So, of course, this amendment of calling this the PST increase and referendum elimination act is very appropriate, because this is about—this is also about eliminating a referendum which is stripping, again, Manitobans of their very right to vote on this—on the PST increase.

Mr. Speaker, we also know that—we know that this PST increase is having a harmful effect on Manitoba families. We know that it's having a harmful effect on low-income Manitobans who are having a terrible time trying to make ends meet. If they—they already were having a very difficult time trying to make ends meet, and then this government brings in yet another tax increase for those Manitobans, making it even more difficult for them.

And I think it's unfortunate just because this government didn't have the time or didn't take the time to sit around their Cabinet table, to sit around their caucus table and really comb through the budget and find ways to save Manitobans some money, Mr. Speaker. Rather than making those tough decisions around the caucus and Cabinet table, they have offloaded that responsibility onto hard-working families in this province; families that have to sit around on the eve of going back to school and families that are sitting down and trying to figure out if their kids are going to be playing hockey this year or baseball or soccer or football, or if they're going to be taking piano lessons or violin lessons or if they're going to doing any of these extracurricular activities that they have in the past.

They're having to sit down and make those tough decisions around their kitchen tables, Mr. Speaker. And it's very difficult for those families, especially on the eve of having to go back to school where they're going out and they're going to be taking the time to go out and they'll be shopping for their school supplies—of course, there'll be an increase in PST on those school supplies.

So, if it's not already bad enough, Mr. Speaker, that these families are being forced to make a decision between their kids taking a piano lesson and not because of this PST increase, if it's not already bad enough, then they have to go out and be reminded going to the store and when they're picking up their school supplies for their kids. You know, it's just—it's very unfortunate that this is what's happening in Manitoba.

And so I would encourage members opposite to support this amendment, because I think it—and I think members opposite will—should agree that this change and this amendment to the title to the PST increase and referendum elimination act is indeed very appropriate, Mr. Speaker, and, indeed, much more appropriate than the existing title of this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on this?

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Sorry for being a little tardy at standing up, but I was hoping somebody from the government might want to stand up and speak to this amendment, because I feel it's a rather important amendment and by supporting it it would give the government an opportunity to get out of the mess they're in. I mean, they brought in an illegal tax as far as I'm concerned. This would give them the opportunity to make amends to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in favour of this amendment brought forward by the member from Tuxedo. This amendment more accurately describes Bill 20. When a tax is introduced and money is collected but the bill has not passed—or, as far as I'm concerned, an illegal bill, because according to the balanced budget, debt repayment and taxpayers' protection act, Manitobans have the democratic right to a referendum whenever a government wants to raise a major tax, and the PST falls into this category. And the reason we are still here on August 21st is because the NDP government will not listen to the people of Manitoba and call a referendum. I mean, in the last four months we've had demonstrations. We've had people at committee. We've had hundreds of thousands of people signing petitions. We've read petitions, hundreds and thousands, and this government is not listening to the people of Manitoba. It's time that this government listened to the people of Manitoba and called a referendum.

On April 16th of this year, more than four months ago, the NDP government brought in their new budget along with record tax increases that'll only hurt the people of Manitoba. Tax increases like this PST that they're trying to implement from 7 to 8 per cent is not only an illegal tax increase, but it'll also will hurt the low-income earners in Manitoba. The taxpayer protection act was brought in to stop governments from doing things like this and make them call a referendum. But, obviously, this NDP government has no intention of calling a referendum or listening to the people of Manitoba, even though they do have the legal right to a referendum should they want to increase the PST.

In April when this budget and Bill 20 were introduced, the NDP tried to use the chicken little theory and scare everybody into the sky was falling. They needed money right now. They needed money because the province was in the middle of a major

flood. The province would be devastated by this flood. But, Mr. Speaker, who starts flood mitigation in the middle of a flood? This NDP government has had 13 years to do something with flood mitigation, but they chose not to do anything. They may have done a little bit here and there, but there was no plans—there's no plan in their box showing, well, we'd like to do this—we'd like to do this. This is the plan for this part. This is the plan for this. There's nothing there. The NDP failed miserably when it came to flood mitigation.

A good example of this was the Gardenton Floodway on the Roseau River. This floodway has come close to failing in the three major floods that we've had in the last 15 years. In the flood of 2011 nearly \$700,000 was spent on temporary protection with tiger tubes and raising a roadway. That was to protect the town of Vita should the Gardenton Floodway fail. This NDP government has done studies on the Gardenton Floodway. Should the government floodway fail, Vita would be under a foot of water. The school, the hospital, the low rental, the seniors care, everything, the businesses, the residents would all be under a foot of water. The government knows this. They have done a study. They're the ones who realize that, but yet all throughout this session not one word has been mentioned about the Gardenton Floodway. The RM has a letter on file from this government stating that at least eight kilometres of the Gardenton Floodway need to be rebuilt. The floodway was built in 1922, and it is in terrible condition but yet nobody wants to admit that or do anything about it; but in the last four months this government has not introduced a single plan.

* (15:10)

When the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the First Minister, was asked about plans, you know, when we wanted to spend money, the tax money, on flood mitigation to protect Manitobans, he could not come up with any plans that are ready to go to work on. Even as far as today and yesterday, he was asked about the Holland Dam. No plans are available. He seems to know nothing about it. And, if you have no plans, that means that this government is not ready, so you can't be spending money that you don't know what you're talking about.

The government has been collecting these taxes since July the 1st and other taxes—in tax since the last budget, but yet the government is collecting money but it's not spending it on necessary items. The roads

in my constituency along the major highways have not been mowed yet this year. It is a extremely dangerous situation when people are driving down the highway and they can't see deer coming out from the ditch, or if you're at intersection in a small car and another small car is coming down the roadway, you can't see it. I was, on Sunday night myself, coming at the intersection of 59 and 311. I was standing at the stop sign waiting to cross 59, and you could not see a small vehicle coming because of the tall grass alongside the road.

So this government is collecting the money, but yet is making all kinds of cutbacks all over the place. If they're collecting the PST, why are they not spending it in places they need it? Because this government is a spendDP government. It has a spending problem, not a revenue problem. It doesn't know where to spend the money.

Several complaints I've received from the Whiteshell—the same thing. Roads have not been mowed there this year and people are walking along the highways, just about getting run over because they can't walk in the ditch because the grass is four feet tall, so they're forced to walk right on the edge of the highway. And there have been cases where there have been close to accidents, people getting run over, which is not right. The people of this province deserve safety, and it seems like the rural parts of this province are getting shafted in a lot of cases when it comes to having money spent on them for safety.

We talk about our health-care system. The hospital in Vita, the ER has been closed since October and nothing is happening. We talk to the people, but yet for—the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) has talked about nurse practitioner for the hospital ER. Nothing is happening, but yet in her message to us yesterday she said for her QuickCare clinic in Selkirk, they have recruited an out-of-province nurse practitioner. All of sudden, for something else in a hurry, they can do it. Vita Hospital—no chance; nothing is happening. Why? Are we second-class citizens in the southeastern part of the province? Like, we've got 18 ERs that are closed in rural Manitoba. Why? Is it because this government is not doing their job? And that's a serious accusation, but it's a serious problem. People in the rural communities, as our First Minister mentioned last year, doesn't matter where you live in this province, you deserve health care—the finest of health care. We're not getting it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker for—I've got a sore throat and my cold here, but—this government, when they came into power in 2011, promised all kinds of no tax increases, and they seem to have broken all their promises. They've lost the confidence of all of Manitobans. And that's—it's a serious problem because nobody believes them that what they're doing any more. What they should do is listen to the people of Manitoba, learn how to spend their money probably—properly, pull back Bill 20, cancel the—either call a referendum on it or cancel the PST and let the people of Manitoba have some say in what happens in this government.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on the amendment?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear noes.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, a recorded vote, please.

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

Order, please. The one hour allowed for the ringing of the division bells is expired, and I'm instructing that they be turned off and we'll now proceed to the vote.

The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 17, Nays 29.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: We will now proceed with the next amendment.

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing Clause 5(1) with the following:

Coming into force—section 1

5(1) Section 1 comes into force on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing Clause 5(1) with the following:

Coming into force—section 1

5(1) Section 1 comes into force on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

The amendment is in order.

Mrs. Stefanson: It's indeed an honour to rise and move this amendment in the Legislature today and, of course, what this amendment does is change it

because—change the section which is part 3 of coming into force with respect to this bill. It says coming into force, section 1, 5(1), the existing legislation says, section 1 is deemed to have come into force on April 16th, 2013.

Well, here we are in late August, and April 16th was quite some time ago. It's—this is a retroactive piece of legislation. I think we were barely getting in—stepping foot into this Chamber at that time, on April 16th, after this government brought us back very late this spring with the session and with the budget and, of course, you know, we're barely have our foot in the door at that day and they're already taxing us. We didn't know it at the time, though, because, of course, this bill wasn't introduced in the Legislature at the time.

* (16:20)

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it's unfortunate when members opposite try and play fast and loose with legislation in this province, that they play fast and loose with people's money in this province, they tax them time and time again, they tax, they—if it wasn't bad enough last year, of course, they expanded the PST last year to take in all sorts of other products and services. That wasn't bad enough, know that this year they've gone about breaking the law in this province by introducing a 1 per cent increase in the PST, which actually is, effectively, more like a 14 per cent increase in the PST.

But members opposite, of course—we know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) went around the province, he—when he was doing his budget consultation meetings in the early part of this year, Mr. Speaker, he did those meetings and he had a presentation that he gave at those meetings. And I have had the opportunity, as have many of my colleagues on this side of the House, have looked at that presentation. We read through that presentation and nowhere in that presentation did it call for an increase in the PST.

So, of course, the minister is standing in front of Manitobans at these consultation meetings in various communities across our province, and he is talking about something, Mr. Speaker, that he didn't even—he didn't even mention this, which is one of the biggest things in this piece of 'legislay'—in the budget. One of the most—one of the things that they brought forward, and one of the biggest things that they brought forward in the budget, was the PST increase. And we know that certainly at the time that this was brought

in that the existing legislation says that they can't bring forward an increase in the PST without going back to Manitobans by way of a referendum and asking those Manitobans whether or not they agree with a PST increase.

But we know that members opposite were afraid to bring up the PST increase at those budget—the Minister of Finance was afraid to bring forward that PST increase in a slide presentation in the public, because I think he knew what Manitobans would say at that time. He knew that they would say no to a PST increase. And so rather than be upfront, rather than be transparent and accountable to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, he hid the fact that he was already—that he was—had already planned to increase the PST in this province. He hid that from Manitobans.

And I would suspect that if he didn't hide that at the time, that Manitobans would have told him that they would not in favour of that PST increase. But they didn't have the opportunity to do that at these budget consultations meetings because the Minister of Finance did not let them know that that was actually on the agenda. And I think that's unfortunate because we could have saved us all a lot of time, effort and energy. He could have saved Manitobans millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, had he just taken that off the table.

And I will say, Mr. Speaker, that it isn't too late. Even though they have already implemented the increase in the PST in the province, albeit illegally because they had to go back to Manitobans by way of a referendum—they haven't done that. Those are the existing laws in this province.

And yes, you know, they're going to change the law because it doesn't suit their own political agenda. Yes, when—you know, when this bill finally passes, I guess it won't require that they have to have a referendum, Mr. Speaker. But the fact of the matter is that today this bill has not passed through the Manitoba Legislature. They have already implemented a PST increase in Manitoba on the backs of hard-working Manitobans, on the backs of the poor, on the backs of seniors, on the backs of small-business owners. They have already implemented that PST increase without having gone back to Manitobans and ask them by way of a referendum, which, of course, is the existing piece of legislation that exists in this province right now and members opposite are thereby breaking the law by not going back to the members of our communities by way of a referendum.

And I'll remind—Mr. Speaker, I'll remind members opposite that, of course, during the last election the Premier (Mr. Selinger) stood in front of Manitobans and he said, he promised that he—there would be no tax increases. He said, read my lips, no new taxes. And, of course, the first available opportunity that he had when he got elected is he turned around, he disrespected Manitobans and he brought in one of the largest tax increases in the history of this province in 25 years, since the last Howard Pawley government—the NDP government in the '80s—they brought in one of the largest tax increases that we've seen in Manitoba history.

So, Mr. Speaker, if that wasn't enough—of course, they had picked the pockets of Manitobans in the last budget—they didn't do enough, though, and they had a spending problem. Their spending problem continued.

And, you know, members opposite—I've said this time and time again that they had the opportunity to sit around their Cabinet table, to sit around their caucus table, to find ways of reining in their spending, Mr. Speaker, but they chose not to. They chose to offload that responsibility onto families in Manitoba.

And that's the unfortunate thing because as families now are gathering together and they're trying to get ready for their kids to go back to school, Mr. Speaker, what is this government doing? They're forcing those families to sit at their own kitchen tables and make the tough decisions now that they need to make at those kitchen tables because this government couldn't make the tough decisions around their Cabinet table. And they couldn't make the tough decisions around their caucus table.

So now these families in Manitoba are having to sit around their own kitchen tables, Mr. Speaker, and make a decision as to whether or not their children will be able to play hockey or soccer or football or baseball, volleyball. Whether or not they'll be able to take piano lessons, violin lessons, singing lessons, you name it. There are so many—art lessons—there are so many things that these families are now forced to choose between because this NDP government couldn't make the decision around their caucus table and their Cabinet table. They're making those tough—they're forcing Manitobans to make the tough decisions at their own kitchen table.

And if that isn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, on the eve of going back to school, we know that families are—will be going out and shopping for their school

supplies. And, of course, we know that because of the illegal PST hike that they'll be forced to pay more for those school supplies.

And so this week and next week as Manitoba kids are getting ready to go back to school, you know, families have it tough enough as it is already, Mr. Speaker. They already have forced them to make that decision of whether or not they're able to take the, you know, the lessons that the kids want to take. But now they'll have to decide whether or not they can afford to buy the binders that they need for school or buy the paper that they need for school or all of the supplies—the pencils, the pens and so on that they need for school.

And I think it's unfortunate because this government had a decision to make. They had an opportunity. They could have made the decision—the tough decision—around their caucus table and the Cabinet table, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that, you know, that this kind of responsibility wasn't passed back and passed on to the hard-working families in our province. But I think what's unfortunate is that this government—because they wouldn't make that decision themselves—they've forced that onto hard-working Manitoba families.

And I think it's extremely unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, and so I will encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this amendment. I think it's a good amendment to bring forward. This should not be done retroactively, the way that this government is calling on this. It should be done by way of proclamation and to be done and brought in at a later date.

So I encourage all members of this House to stand and support this piece of 'legis'—this amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to the next amendment to Bill 20.

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing the title with "THE PST INCREASE AND REFERENDUM ELIMINATION ACT".

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by replacing the title with "THE—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense? Dispense. The honourable member—the amendment is in order.

* (16:30)

Mrs. Stefanson: I think that this is a very important piece of amendment that should—that I think all members of this House, if they're going to be honest about what this bill is all about, it is a referendum elimination act; it is taking away the rights of people vote—to vote. It is about a PST increase, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, if members opposite wanted to be honest about what we are debating here, the—in Bill 20, they would see that this clearly should be the title here and not the existing title that they have.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'll go on to just continue on, where these Manitoba families have had it tough over the last number of years with—as a result of the never-ending tax increases by this NDP government. We, of course, know that in the last budget that was

brought forward in this House, there was an expansion of the PST. And this, of course, I'll remind members opposite—that expansion took place as one of the largest expansions and one of the largest tax increases in the history of our province in 25 years.

And, Mr. Speaker, after that we, of course, know that that was done after—during the last election campaign members opposite went door to door and they knocked on those doors in their ridings and they told—each and every one of members opposite, they told people door to door, read my lips, no new taxes. We will not raise taxes for you. And that's what members opposite said, and then the first available opportunity that they had when they got back into the Manitoba Legislature, they raised the PST, they expanded the PST and they raised the taxes on hard-working Manitobans.

And, if that wasn't bad enough, Mr. Speaker, of course, we see this budget come in bringing in a 14 per cent increase in the PST, raising it from 7 to 8 per cent, which we know, of course, it requires a referendum. And what this bill is doing is taking away that right for Manitobans to vote by way of a referendum when it comes to major tax increases in this province.

Members opposite know that it's wrong, Mr. Speaker. They are afraid to go back to Manitobans by way of a referendum because they're afraid of what Manitobans are going to tell them. And Manitobans are telling them now, loud and clear, that they are not in favour of this PST increase; they are not in favour of the NDP government taking away their right to vote by way of a referendum when it comes to major tax increases in this province.

And I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), during his budget consultation meetings, he didn't mention the PST increase at all. And I suspect, Mr. Speaker, had he done that, Manitobans would have told him, loud and clear, at that time, we are not in favour of a PST increase. And had he done that, had he done the consultation before he brought forward this legislation here illegally in the province of Manitoba, he would have heard from Manitobans that this—that they were not in favour of a PST increase.

And so, because he neglected to do that, because he was not transparent and not accountable to the citizens in our province, Mr. Speaker, we are now in this Manitoba Legislature today debating this on behalf of Manitobans, because we are here standing with the hard-working Manitobans who are not in

favour of this PST increase. We've heard time and time again—we heard it in this Manitoba Legislature when people came forward and spoke out against this PST increase. We had seniors, we had low-income Manitobans, we had families coming forward, telling their heart-wrenching stories of what this PST increase and the negative impact it has on their family.

We heard time and time again from Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, who were not a bunch of Tory, you know, party members that came forward. These were people from all across Manitoba that, I suspect, vote differently politically. And that's their right, of course, to vote the way that they want. Of course, I remind members opposite that they are eliminating that right to vote for those Manitobans when it comes to major tax increases in this province, and that is deplorable. And members of the public have told us and they've said to us, you keep going, you keep pushing them on this, because it is wrong.

We had—we've had veterans speak at committee, veterans sent notes to us, Mr. Speaker. Veterans tells us that they are not happy with this NDP government stripping their democratic right away from them by way of taking away their right to vote on this major tax increase. We've heard from all sorts of Manitobans who are extremely upset about that. And so I think that this title is much more reflecting—reflective of what is in this section. And I think that members opposite, if they want to be honest and they want to be true to Manitobans, if they want to be accountable to Manitobans and if they want to be transparent to Manitobans, they will support this amendment today because it most accurately reflects what is in the bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to get up and speak to this amendment introduced by my colleague from Tuxedo.

This is the amendment that I actually call the honesty-in-advertising amendment. Certainly, the bill should be known by its content and this is—very clearly the content of this bill is an increase in PST and the removal of the referendum, and those are two things that actually play out very, very strongly in the community.

I hear very many comments repeated that there are two things that really bother people about this whole process. One is they never got a voice. There was an election that never included this piece of

information. It was certainly never promoted on part of that. In fact, promises were made otherwise and so people felt that they were misled during the election and then, of course, we had a broadening of the PST in the first budget immediately after the election. That was not well received and still—I still get many comments particularly related to the increase on the insurance side of things where people see a very substantial jump going from zero basically to 7 per cent, now to 8 per cent, and so people are very unhappy about that. And that's one of the tools that people frequently use to manage risk for themselves in the community, and so a sudden increase in costs to do something like that is certainly inappropriate and a cause for concern to many.

And the other side, of course, is, of course, the increase to the PST. We know that promises were made during the election—the last election campaign that there would be no increase to the PST, and here we are very shortly into the term of this government and that's already happened. And I work with a number of different community groups, some of which are—represent seniors and those are very often on fixed income and they are finding it a real burden. Hard—difficult for them to manage, and though even federal pensions are indexed, they are not indexed to keep up to the rate of inflation. So, with the rate of inflation increasing as it is here in Manitoba so strongly because of our government's tax policies and also the increase to the provincial sales tax, they're finding it quite an additional burden, and, accordingly, they have to make some very tough decisions. And the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) drove home I think very clearly what a lot of families are going through: making the decisions on what they are going to spend their money on. And that applies around the kitchen table for seniors as well, and very often it is the little things that we would hope that our seniors would get to enjoy. They certainly paid their debt to society, and we would hope that they would be in a position where they could enjoy their retirements and their golden years so to speak, and, when it's tough to make ends meet financially, you have to do without an awful lot of benefits at that point in time.

And I also hear fairly frequently from young families with kids in sports and other activities. Some of them are single-parent families and, certainly that has left them in a very tough situation to keep their kids in as many activities as they would hope to do. It's not cheap, and, certainly I appreciate that. Having two kids in many activities at home, and

we know that it costs a fair bit of money. But they have to make the decisions on what it is they can afford to do. Certainly, some sports that are a lower cost are the ones that are looked on more favourably.

We do have a couple of foundations actually in the community of Portage la Prairie that are available to help kids stay in sports, and they're getting a lot more use now in the last year than they have previously, and, I guess, that's good from the point of view of the foundations. But it is reflective of the fact that there are many families particularly with young children in activities that are feeling the pinch of the economy and feeling the pinch of the tax increase, and certainly it's important that we keep—bear these people in mind. It is actually usually the in—the groups in society that are challenged in terms of income that are the most vulnerable to changes in tax situations.

* (16:40)

So we're certainly seeing that they are the ones that—the canaries in the coal mine so to speak, that are feeling this and certainly coming forward with an awful lot of concerns about the impact and where we might be going in the future. And certainly the removal of the right to have a vote brings that back into focus, Mr. Speaker, because they never had a voice on this dramatic increase to the PST—14.3 per cent—and they're concerned that there'll be even more to follow, because anyone who follows, of course, provincial government's funding situation knows that we're certainly not in a balanced-budget situation and the deficit continues to grow and that that's a deficit someone will have to pay off. Whether it's the people that are earning money now, their children or grandchildren in the future, it is certainly a cause for concern down the road.

And so it's nice not to have to make the tough decisions now, and I suspect that that's what's happened around the Cabinet table and the caucus table, is nobody wants to make the tough decisions now. But in the future those decisions actually will be removed from that authority and it'll be someone in the financial world that makes those decisions for you. And they—and certainly that'll be far harder to deal with and—probably much more severe, so you need to make the decisions early on rather than have someone else dictate them to you because you've gotten yourself in a financial situation that you would—that would certainly be very difficult to deal with.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would applaud the member from Tuxedo's amendment that she has brought forward. I think it's very important that people know what they're getting, and certainly the advertising that came out following this budget certainly did not leave anyone with the impression that there was anything to do with a change to the retail sales tax or the PST. In fact, it was never mentioned in any of the advertising that I saw, and yet that is probably the single biggest impact on people. A lot of other things were mentioned.

Even going back to the consultations, there was really no—nothing in the consultation process that brought this forward, because I think they would've got a very clear message. I know we certainly got very clear message from our constituents that this is not something they approve of, it is not something we expect to see brought forward and certainly was not something that the NDP government ran—or the NDP members ran on in the last election.

And I can't help but feel a little bit sorry for some of the NDP candidates that didn't succeed, because they don't—they never have—they don't have any voice in this whole process. They ran on what they were told the party position was, and then, of course, that changed dramatically. They didn't get elected, and yet people are looking at them and saying, well, why didn't you tell us the truth? Why didn't you run on what your party stood for? And they are not in a position to speak to what has happened. They're certainly not in a position to answer the question of their—of people in the community. And I'm afraid it has probably had an impact on their credibility, if they choose to run again, or even their credibility in the community in general.

So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to bring this forward. And this particular amendment, that I like to call the truth in advertising amendment, I would certainly—would encourage the members opposite to support that. I'm sure that they're very strong. I know they believe consumers have rights and consumers need to be protected and people that vote are, in a form, consumers of the services that are provided by government, so I would think that they should be very comfortable with supporting this amendment into the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Charleswood—no? Okay.

Any further debate on the amendment? No?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Goertzen: On division, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll proceed with the next amendment.

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by adding the following after Clause 2(2):

2(2.1) The following is added after section 1.2 and before the centred heading that follows it:

Study of impact of increased sales tax on the poor

1.3(1) Within one year after this section is enacted, the minister must cause an independent study to be conducted for the purpose of determining the impact of the increase in the general sales tax rate on poor and disadvantaged Manitobans.

Tabling study in Assembly

1.3(2) The minister must table a copy of the study in the Assembly within 15 days after receiving it if the Assembly is sitting or, if it is not, within 15 days after the next sitting begins.

Publishing study on government website

1.3(3) The minister must publish the study on a government website.

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

THAT Bill 20 be amended by adding the following after Clause 2(2)—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker—[interjection]—thank you very much.

I think this is one of those amendments that does have some significant impact because, certainly, the people we have heard from that will be hurt most by this PST hike are the ones that can least afford it. It is going to be the poor, the working poor. It is going to be also seniors on fixed incomes, students, small businesses. We've heard from a lot of them, but, in particular, it is the people that can least afford it, those that don't have the same disposable income as people with more money that are going to hurt the most from this, and those are the people whose comments at committee really stood out, are the ones that came to speak about this. Many of them had never, ever made a presentation in this Legislature before. A number of them indicated how afraid they were, that they were shaking as they stood there to make comments before the Legislature. But they felt so committed to wanting to have a say. They knew that the government would probably not be listening to them; many of them said that. But they said that they would not feel right if they didn't at least make the effort to try to have a voice in this and to tell the government how much this PST hike is going to hurt them.

And, you know, we look at, for instance, single mums, and there's lots of single mums, and, you know, I mean, all we have to do is talk to any one of them, and especially right now, as a lot of those single mums are getting their kids ready for school. You know, you have to wonder how many little kids are going to be going to school without having all the supplies they need because, at some point, some decisions have to be made in families as to what a family can and can't afford. A lot of them don't have options like this government. A lot of them don't have credit cards. They don't have the ability to go in debt like this government has done, where we have

seen this government double the debt in Manitoba. They don't have those kinds of options. They don't have lines of credit that they can tap into. They have to live within their means. And, when they don't, there are certainly a lot of harsh repercussions for a family if they're not living within their means.

So, you know, I think at this time, you know, kids going back to school, is going to be a significant time for a lot of these families, and, as I said, single moms—and single dads as well who are going to be stuck in the same place. And then, you know, as we go down the road, it's going to be Halloween costumes, and then as we go down the road, it's going to be Christmas, and Christmas will be a time where people are going to feel, in a more significant way, the impacts of this PST.

And it's not just the PST increase that is happening right now. It's what the government also did last year by expanding the PST to a lot of services as well. And so a lot of those areas have seen a significant hit. But I know, the other day, we had a woman come to the Legislature. She happens to live on Burrows, and she is so upset about what the NDP is doing that she has gone on a crusade of her own to put up a stop the NDP PST, and those signs are popping up all over Manitoba. In fact, I was driving down Portage Avenue one day just a couple days ago, and I saw one in front of Polo Park. And this woman is building a small group of people that are equally upset by this, and they are trying to get the government's voice to say: Listen to us; we're the little guy out there. Pay attention to us. This is going to hurt us.

*(16:50)

This woman was not a person with a lot of income, and she didn't have a lot of disposable income. In fact, she told me she had to drop one of her insurance programs, her accident insurance, because she couldn't afford to pay it with all the insurances now that have to be covered by PST because of the expansion. She could not afford to pay one of those insurance policies, so she dropped one of those insurance policies. And that's what this government just doesn't seem to understand, that this has a real, direct impact on a lot of these families.

This woman is ensuring that she has got people from all over now, in Selkirk as well, in south Winnipeg and west Winnipeg and in north Winnipeg. There are people all over that are coming together and they're actually asking her for signs, and people stop her in the street as she's driving and ask

where can I get those signs. People are actually wanting to put up these signs. So she's already got close to 500, I believe, out there already. That tells you something. That tells you that, you know, besides the tens of thousands of people that have put their name on a petition or written letters, there are also now over 500 people. In fact, we're probably—with all the other signs have been put up even before this, there's probably close to a thousand.

People are wanting to get this government's attention, and they don't seem to have this government's attention. The government doesn't want to seem to want to be listening, and this woman, you know, besides the PST affecting her quite significantly, she's also very concerned that what this government has done is stolen her vote by not having a referendum on this. She feels very, very strongly and feels very insulted actually and very disrespected by this NDP government that they have taken away her vote. She feels that it's a stolen vote.

She says democracy matters to her. When she was 18 and could vote, she said that was such a privilege for her, and she has voted in every single election since she turned 18. So, when she saw this government actually break a law by hiking the PST while an old law's still on the books, she thinks this is an illegal act, and she says, and here you have a government that's trying to tell people to go out there and behave legally and obey the laws when they turn around and they should be an example. They turn around and they break the law. She says why doesn't that matter to them. So she feels this government is a very poor role model for a government that should be more respectful about the laws that are currently in place. So she feels very, very upset that what this government did was break the law and forced in, rammed up the PST before they were legally entitled to do that.

So, Mr. Speaker, the NDP certainly have shown with their behaviour that, you know, taxpayer protection, whether it's for the poor, middle income or anybody else out there, doesn't seem to matter anymore. It's all about them all of the time. They've spent years gutting the taxpayer protection act. They have spent years gutting the balanced budget legislation, even though they said they weren't going to do it. In fact, Gary Doer promised election after election that he would respect the balanced budget law.

And then we saw this government go to every door—every single NDP candidate in the last election

went to every door in Manitoba and promised not to raise the PST, and then they turned around and they did exactly the opposite.

So the woman from Burrows that is fighting this feels very insulted not only that she was misled in the last election but she's also being hurt because she doesn't have the money to pay for what the NDP is taking from her. She feels that democracy has been abused by this government, and she really feels that this government doesn't deserve to be in the place that they are in right now because they are not good stewards of taxpayers' money. They seem to think this is all their money. They seem to have forgotten that they were put in their positions by the people who they no longer listen to, and the people that they really need to be listening to right now are certainly those that can least afford it. So we would ask the government, pay attention to this amendment. This is one amendment that they should look at and look at the impact of this PST hike on the poor.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that they will support this particular amendment that is put forward today. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to just talk for a few minutes on this amendment. It's an important amendment because one of the things that, when one sets the financial policy of a government, when one sets the tax policy, when one looks at shelter rates, when one looks at how you address issues in Manitoba, that one of the things that we need to be concerned out-about is those people who are less well off, those who are disadvantaged, to make sure that they are adequately supported. And so it is important when we have any major financial change brought in, in this case, the increase in the provincial sales tax from 7 per cent to 8 per cent, that we're, in fact, know what's happening with people who are on lower income.

We know with people—what's happening with people who are struggling, often with disabilities, seniors, students, people who are not as financially well off, to find out how they are impacted, negatively and positively, by this change. And, certainly, this will apply to people anywhere in Manitoba, whether in Winnipeg or in communities around the province, that it's important to look at this impact. And, certainly, Mr. Speaker, we should know what's happening in terms of the impact on people, whether, as I say, in Winnipeg or in Brandon or Thompson or First Nations communities, that this should be taken into account because this—we need to

know to be able to assess what is happening in our province, what's the impact, whether conditions are better or worse for those on low incomes.

And, certainly, when I held a forum earlier this year to look at the question of the increase in the provincial sales tax and the increase and its impact on the people who are of low income and fixed income, that I heard from many people, and basically what came across pretty clearly was that people who are on lower income are disproportionately impacted. It's not necessarily that in dollar terms they will be paying more, but, certainly, as a proportion of their income, the PST expense is a higher proportion of their income. Many of them are, particularly under this government, with the very lower shelter rates that this government provides to those on social assistance, they are struggling.

And I meet to talk with people daily who are struggling with trying to find homes, having enough money to get a shelter and to be able to find a place to live. I had people in my office last week, both Monday and Tuesday, different people coming, because either the actions of this government or other things which had come up in their lives, were rendered homeless. And they were saying that in Manitoba at the moment it's a pretty difficult environment to be homeless. And so that we need to take this into account and take this impact into account, measure it and make sure that we know what that impact is.

One of the things that was talked about at that forum was the need to have a rebate on the PST for those who are on low incomes, just like there is a rebate on the GST for those on low incomes. It would have offset this increase in cost that people on low incomes have to have, and at the same time it would have provided some sort of a balance. But the people on low incomes at the forum were saying that the government is just taking, taking, taking but not giving back and not helping, and that should change. And that's one of the reasons why we should have this study, and I support this amendment, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Goertzen: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, prior—because the hour is—we've reached is 5 p.m., but before I adjourn the House for

the day, I want to, under the heading of celebrating our youth again—taken, I'm sure, in many ways.

We have with us today pages, of course, that have been for a considerable amount of time, but one of them is in her last day with us here today. And Kasia Kieloch will be leaving us after we adjourn the House here today.

Kasia, of course, has been with us for just about a year now. And her future is entering the University of Manitoba faculty of law, political science—faculty of arts, pardon me, political science, and—this fall. And she wants to pursue a career in law or politics. And I understand that she has been the captain of her debating team and loves to debate, so maybe one day we'll see her back in this place.

But, on behalf of all honourable members, Kasia, we wish you very well in your future education and your career choice.

And so the hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning—*[interjection]*—a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, August 21, 2013

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