

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

Official Report
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	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
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor, Hon.	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MELNICK, Christine	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	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>	Arthur-Virten	
<i>Vacant</i>	Morris	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 28, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

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

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.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

(2) To urge the provincial government to reverse its PST increase to ensure Manitoban consumers can

shop affordably in Manitoba and support local businesses.

And this petition is signed by K. Knutt, B. Dearborn, W. Schroeder and many, many more fine Manitobans.

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

Government Services Offices Closures— Public Consultations

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

And this is the background for this petition:

Since April 1st, 2012, the provincial government has closed at least 20 government services offices in communities throughout Manitoba.

The closures of these offices create job losses and reduce economic activity within the community and decrease the accessibility and quality of services for local citizens.

The provincial government did not consult with the communities impacted by these office closures before deciding to close, merge or consolidate the offices.

These office closures unnecessarily increase the financial cost and time commitment required by citizens to access government services that were previously offered in their community.

Manitobans have a right to access provincial programs and services in a timely manner within a reasonable distance from their community regardless of their locations.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the provincial government restore the services provided to the affected communities until the provincial government conducts public consultations and provides an alternative solution that maintains or increases the level of service provided in these local areas.

This petition is signed by D. Gillies, K. Drysdale, D. Oliver and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of L. Denoyer, L. Torske, T. Buors and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Road 433 Improvements

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

And this is the background to this petition:

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

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

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

(4) Lee River Road and Cape Coppermine Road were not originally built to handle the high volume of traffic they now accommodate.

We petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

To request that the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation recognize that Lee River Road and 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 B. Hallmuth, M. Hallmuth, N. Berard and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to read the petition on behalf of the honourable member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat).

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to—apparently you don't need leave, so the honourable member for St. Paul.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase— Cross-Border Shopping

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Well, in that case, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

* (13:40)

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

This is signed by E. Robidoux, P. Douglas, G. Horvath and many, many other Manitobans. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Haylee O'Neill

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I wish—I rise today to recognize Haylee O'Neill, a prominent coach from the Portage la Prairie constituency.

Ms. O'Neill has been named the 2013 Home Run Sports Coach of the Year. The nomination comes after a stellar year in the sport. Haylee was head coach of the Manitoba female softball team that won the silver medal at the 2013 Canada Summer Games in Sherbrooke, Québec. It was Manitoba's highest finish ever in the event.

Earlier this year, Haylee was also selected to Softball Canada's women's national team coaches pool and provided assistance to that team at various competitions over the past summer.

As Softball Manitoba's master learning facilitator, she trains and develops learning facilitators to develop the National Coaching Certification Program as well as passing her knowledge and experience on to coaches by facilitating the NCCP clinics.

In addition, she is the co-ordinator for Softball Manitoba's junior clinician program, which trains young adults to be skilled clinicians and also—and is also involved in the inner city youth softball development program. The success of both these programs has been directly attributed to Haylee's leadership and expertise.

Haylee focuses on the holistic development of all her athletes, ensuring that they have the technical and tactical skills, mental skills, physical skills and proper nutrition habits necessary to excel. Her coaching ability is undeniably recognized within the softball community, and any athlete that works with

her will attest that they are extremely privileged. She shows her passion, dedication and selflessness in everything she does.

I ask all members to join in recognizing Haylee O'Neill for the contribution she has made to the development of her athletes and to the sport of softball in Manitoba and in Canada, and congratulate her on being selected as Softball Canada's 2013 Home Run Sports Coach of the Year.

Canadian Military

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, it can never be said often enough that Manitobans owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the brave men and women in uniform who selflessly serve to protect us at home and around the world.

The military has long played an important role in Manitoba. Currently, there are more than 4,000 troops based in the province, primarily in Winnipeg's air force base and Canadian Forces Base Shilo. Our province's strong connection to the military has touched the lives of all Manitobans at one time or another.

Through the tragedies of war and noble peacekeeping efforts, Manitoba's Armed Forces have sacrificed their lives to protect our freedom and defend it for others. We must always honour the valour of individuals who have served and are serving.

And here at home, during the devastating floods of 1950 and 1997 the Canadian military engaged in two of the biggest peacetime operations in Canadian history. They saved lives and livelihoods by evacuating residents, helping with water pumps and building and patrolling dikes.

On November 8th, I was honoured to be appointed Manitoba's special envoy for military affairs. Manitoba's military deserves recognition for the important role they play in our province. This position ensures that there is always an advocate for military families at the table. It allows government departments, elected members of the Legislature, people from the community and military members to work together on issues affecting our servicemen and -women and their families.

As special envoy for military affairs, I will be an advocate and a visible contact point for military members and their families through associations and special events. I look forward to working with both

those currently serving in the military and with our province's veterans.

Many brave families in Manitoba know too well what it's like to see their loved ones leave for active service. These family members mirror the extraordinary courage of their loved ones in the face of difficult circumstances.

I hope that in this new role I may honour them all by reflecting back their dignity and grace, and I appreciate the members of this Chamber for listening so intently. Thank you.

Provincial Nominee Program

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): This year, Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program is celebrating its 15th anniversary. It was under the Progressive Conservative Party and the leadership and vision of Premier Gary Filmon that this very successful program was developed.

Before the program was created, Manitoba did not have a voice in the federal government's immigration process. As a result, the majority of people immigrating to Canada either couldn't fill Manitoba's employment sector voids or they were settling elsewhere in Canada.

Premier Filmon recognized that our province needed skilled immigrants to help us grow our economy in key sectors like agribusiness, transportation and manufacturing. Under his leadership, the Department of Culture, Heritage and Recreation was renamed to include citizenship, with a mandate to negotiate a provincial nominee program with the federal government.

In 1996 we reached a framework agreement, and the final agreement was signed in 1998. It was the Progressive Conservative government right here in Manitoba that was the first province across Canada to negotiate such an agreement, and other provinces looked enviously at Manitoba's success and began negotiating their own agreements.

Since 1998, the Provincial Nominee Program has brought more than a hundred thousand skilled immigrants and their families to our province. These new Manitobans have settled all across our great province and are raising families and breathing new life into local communities and economies.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members join me in celebrating Manitoba's Provincial Nominee Program, their 15 years of bringing talented, new Manitobans to our province, and thanking the very many

dedicated individuals and organizations from our business community, community groups, cultural communities and churches who have worked and welcomed immigrants to settle in our province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

Domestic Violence Prevention Month

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors within the Department of Health):

Mr. Speaker, November is Domestic Violence Prevention Month in Manitoba. Many families live day to day with some form of abuse. Every November we raise awareness about this terrible crime, encouraging victims to find their voice, bystanders to take notice and perpetrators to rectify their behaviour.

Addressing domestic violence is no easy undertaking. With many incidents going unreported, empowering victims and bystanders to speak up is a critical first step. Our government is partnering with community groups to launch new tools and strengthen prevention strategies to help youth and families develop stronger, healthier relationships and reduce domestic violence.

Among the new tools are two videos on healthy relationships developed with youth as part of an after-school program at the Broadway Neighbourhood Centre. These videos show young men and women discussing what healthy relationships mean to them. They were both developed thanks to new funding for our domestic violence prevention strategies.

We are also working with community organizations to develop initiatives that engage young men and boys in ending domestic and gender-based violence. Last year, we started a campaign in partnership with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers to engage men in the discussion. All men can help create a culture where abuse is not acceptable and, by speaking out, can be allies in preventing violence.

Mr. Speaker, domestic violence can occur in a number of forms, including physical violence, emotional abuse and economic deprivation. Recovery can be a long and difficult journey. We hope that with these investments, individuals and their families will be able to get the help that they need.

As November draws to a close, we must not forget the many faces of domestic violence. I hope

that all Manitobans will continue to speak out against this terrible crime and lead by example with a commitment to a violence-free life. Thank you.

Guru Nanak

Mr. Dave Gaudreau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my best wishes to all our Sikh friends across Manitoba and around Canada, who, on November 17th, celebrated the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism.

* (13:50)

The principles Guru Nanak taught us in the 19th–in the 1400s included the equality of all human beings, how we should cherish people of all faiths in diverse societies and that we owe compassion to one another. All of these teachings are still relevant to today.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote the holy book because I believe it contains a message worth sharing. Guru Nanak wrote: We should have such a society where all the people feel included, and no one should be left out. He also taught: There is only one race, and that is the human race.

This is the time of year in sacred—to reflect on Guru Nanak's teachings, which are the heart of Sikhism. Guru Nanak travelled widely, preaching that divisions based on religion, caste and gender were irrelevant, a racial—a radical message for the time. Sikhism also teaches the natural environment and survival of all life forms are closely linked to the rhythm of nature. Sikhs worship God by serving the world and serving others because to them God resides in all persons and all creation.

Sikhs have contributed so much to our society. Here in Manitoba we're grateful to many Sikhs who provide strength to our province with our rich history. Most people are not aware that Sikhs fought in Canada along with the other commonwealth nations during World War I and World War II. I would like to recognize the Sikh Manitoban soldier Baboo Singh. Baboo was from Winnipeg. Baboo Singh enlisted in 1917 and was wounded in the battle of Vimy Ridge.

Sikh families remind us that these shared principles are not only at the heart of all Sikh faith, they are fundamental to who we are as Manitobans.

Thank you very much.

GRIEVANCES

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to grieve the Leader of the Opposition's plans to cut the services Manitoba families—and in my own constituency—depend on.

I'm so proud to represent the people of Burrows. We are a diverse constituency with people from all over the world, all social classes and all ages. We live and work together to make Manitoba a better place to live. Mr. Speaker, I am forever amazed at the great work done by the people in my constituency and across our province. In our non-profits and volunteer organizations millions of hours of work are put in every year making Manitoba's communities better and stronger.

One of my colleagues often talks about the fact that Manitoba is No. 1 in the volunteering category and Manitoba is No. 1 in the charitable-giving category. This spirit of giving and sharing is the foundation of Manitoba, and I believe it is something that speaks to why for so many years Manitobans have chosen a government that works hard to be fair to all and that watches out and works to improve the life of all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, including Manitoba's most vulnerable.

The indiscriminate cuts proposed by the members opposite will hurt jobs, our economy and put everything Manitobans have worked to in jeopardy. What would \$550 million in cuts look like, Mr. Speaker? It's not just a number, it is nearly 700 nurses. Instead, we're training, recruiting and hiring more doctors and nurses than ever before to make sure they have the time they need at the bedside of our loved ones. We're also continuing to build the health centres that families need to get the best care close to home. Their cuts would mean \$5 million from Justice or about 60 correction officers, and it would mean \$11 million from Family Services. That's 135 social workers who will no longer be helping children and families to be healthy and safe. It would mean \$16 million from Education, which is almost 200 teachers. Instead, we've added over 150 teachers in the last two years and are building new schools as part of our Class Size Initiative to make sure kids get the attention they need to do well. When we have enough teachers our kids and grandkids have a better foundation for their futures.

The cuts proposed by the members opposite come at a time when we're emerging from a global recession. Their solution involves putting people on

the unemployment rolls whether they're nurses, teachers, flood forecasters or correction workers. These people help deliver essential services to Manitobans. We're talking about people here who help keep our communities safe, who take care of the health of our families and who work with our children to help them learn and flourish and grow.

Mr. Speaker, if we want to see what Manitoba would look like under these policies, we have no further to look than the legacy of the previous government, the government that the opposition leader called the finest government Manitoba's ever been blessed with.

That government led this same attack on front-line services, and where did it lead? It led to crumbling infrastructure. It led to a frozen or cut Education budget virtually every year the Leader of the Opposition was an MLA and the loss of over 700 teachers. It meant firing a thousand nurses and cutting nearly \$37 million from rural hospital and personal-care home budgets in the 1990s. It led to reducing funding for bridges and highways five times and putting the brakes on infrastructure spending. Does this sound like the Manitoba we want to see? Does this sound like the province that our hard-working, generous and charitable Manitobans are working so hard to build? No.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans are people who care about others. That's who they are. They want everyone to have a chance at a good life. Going door to door in the community, constituents tell me they don't want to see cuts to programs. They don't want to lose home care, free cancer-care drugs or accessible health care. They're happy to see a reduction in health—in class sizes, improvements at community centres and a commitment to youth through programs in my own constituency like the Winnipeg Aboriginal Sport Achievement Centre, Wayfinders and Lighthouses.

I am seeing great things going on in the north of Winnipeg, from large to small: the completion of the access centre on Keewatin; the commencement of construction on the food centre in the previous NorWest space, which I was so glad we were able to be a part of along with many other partners; the new school field at King Edward that was so needed and is well on its way to completion; the infrastructure work; The Maples recreation centre and the Northwood Community Centre improvements; the road improvements that came our way on McPhillips and Burrows this past summer, and so many more.

Mr. Speaker, these investments are paying off for Manitoba families. Manitoba enjoys the third lowest unemployment rate in the country. We have one of the most affordable costs of living in the country and a high quality of life that makes our province a great place to live, work, invest and raise a family.

In our Speech from the Throne this month we committed to continuing to build Manitoba and—ensuring good jobs for all. We are making record investments in Manitoba's infrastructure that will create thousands of good jobs and keep the economy growing. We will continue to build our infrastructure, hire teachers and nurses, and develop training opportunities so every Manitoban has a chance for a good job. These are the things that I believe matter most to the families in Burrows and they are the things that I believe matter most to Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to grieve the cuts to disposable income that Manitobans have faced under this NDP government. Manitobans are feeling the pinch. They know that they have less money in their pockets to get their kids into sports programs, to get their kids into activities that they wanted, to go on a family vacation.

Now, I have a question for members here. How many members of this Assembly ran in 2011 on promising to raise the PST? Not one member of this Assembly raised their hands, and yet every member of the NDP caucus voted to increase the PST from 7 per cent. Every member of the NDP caucus voted against their constituents and said they wanted to take money out of the pockets of their constituents and put it into the pockets of the NDP government. None of them went door to door and said that they would raise the PST, but every one of them abandoned their constituents when their constituents needed them to be here and to be their voice in this Legislature.

I rise to grieve the fact that the government is breaking the law by increasing the PST without a referendum. Is there any member in this Assembly who ran on breaking the law and not holding a referendum under the balanced budget legislation? Not one member of the NDP has put up their hands, and yet every member of the NDP have said that they are willing to break the law and to not give Manitobans their legally entitled right to a referendum.

* (14:00)

There was a law—there is a law in Manitoba that says that taxpayers should be protected, that the rights of taxpayers should be over the right of government to take more money out of their pockets, and yet the NDP have reached into the pockets of hard-working Manitobans, the new Canadians who have come to Manitoba to make this their home, our friends in the Filipino community, our friends in the variety of ethnic communities who said, we want to come to Manitoba and make a better life. And yet the NDP said, we are going to break a commitment, a vow we made to you in the 2011 election. Reach into your pockets, take it out of your own family pockets, and to do it we're going to break the law. We're going to ignore legislation that says you have a right, you have a right to have your say through a referendum. That's what each one of these NDP members—and it was led by the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the Premier of this province, who went on TV and made a solemn vow and said, it's outrageous, it's ridiculous, it's never going to happen that I'm going to raise the PST, not under my watch. Read my lips, no new taxes, that's what he said.

And yet after the election the first thing he did was he put PST on home insurance on every Manitoban who wants to protect their property. That Premier reached into the pockets, went to the kitchen tables of Manitobans and said, I need your money, I'm going to take it. And when he tried to come up—he tried to come up with an excuse in terms of why he needed more money. Now, we've seen other jurisdictions across Canada, they didn't have to do that, Mr. Speaker. Governments were able to live within their means. Not this government. Not the tax-and-spend policy, the tax-and-spend government of the NDP. They went to Manitobans and said, we're going to take the easy route. Don't be fooled. It wasn't hard for the government to go and say that they were going to take their money. They went and did the easy things and went and took the money.

They had options, of course. Manitobans will know about something called the vote tax, Mr. Speaker, the vote tax, which takes \$5,000 and puts it into the pockets of these NDP members of their party, a million dollars a year taken off the kitchen tables of Manitobans and given directly to the NDP. Now, when they were sitting around deciding whether or not they should take the PST, did they say, oh, maybe we should eliminate the vote tax? Was that an option for them? It wasn't an option. Wouldn't want to take any money away from the

NDP party. I'm proud because our caucus said we're not going to take taxpayers' money that we're not entitled to. That's the example that we set. This government wouldn't follow that example. They decided they were going to be more entitled. They were entitled to their entitlements. They were going to take the money from Manitobans off of their kitchen table and put it into the NDP pockets.

You know, they had other options. They've had—you know, they've mismanaged Hydro. We're seeing hydro rates going up by 4 per cent every year. Every Manitoban—every Manitoban—is going to be paying more and more for hydro because of the mismanagement of this Premier and this government. Every hard-working Manitoban, every new Canadian, everybody who is here to try to build a better life for themselves and their family is going to be paying more because the government has directed Hydro to do things that don't make sense, that don't make economic sense, that don't make management sense. They don't want to have economic reviews. They don't want to do things on a business-case scenario. So who's going to pay, Mr. Speaker? Manitobans are going to pay because of what this government has done: those cuts, those cuts to the discretionary income to—that families have in this province.

And, you know, what are the priorities of this government? Well, we've seen free Jets tickets; that's been one of their priorities, lining up—lining up—for things to benefit from their office, trying to take from other Manitobans. That's been their priority. Patronage appointments, handing out patronage appointments to their friends, trying to ensure that all of their friends are going to get things that Manitobans aren't getting.

We need a government that will stand up, that will stand up for Manitobans and say that we're going to manage your money, that we're going to manage your money the way we would manage our own money. We're going to ensure that you know that your dollar is valued, know that every dollar that is spent by government is spent wisely, Mr. Speaker. That is something that this government refuses to do. It's something that they won't do because they will always—they will always take for them what is the easy route. They will always take from Manitobans because that is what they consider to be easy, we've seen it repeatedly.

Driving up the debt, Manitoba has driven up the debt—the government has driven up—the NDP have doubled the debt—doubled the debt—since they've

come into office. That's something that our kids, our grandkids, future Manitobans, are going to have to pay for. And what do we see for it? What are the results of that doubling of the debt? Our roads aren't any better. Our health care isn't any better. The only thing that's improved is free access to Jets tickets for the NDP government. Well, you know, good for them—good for them, I suppose, but we think you need to look out for the interest of Manitobans.

Now, the good news is it's not too late, they can still reverse their decision to raise the PST. They will still have time this session to do the right thing and stand by those Manitobans, when they went door to door in the last election, knocking on doors and saying, we won't raise your taxes, we won't raise the PST. You know, they would have looked in the homes and seen the families and said, we're going to protect your family's dollars, and then they didn't. They did the exact opposite. They came here, they protected themselves with the vote tax, they protected their salaries, Mr. Speaker, they protected themselves and their perks and privileges, but didn't protect Manitobans. They did not tell them the truth, and Manitobans deserve the truth. But there's an opportunity. They will have the opportunity before this session is over to change their minds, to say, in fact, that they are not going to support that increase, to reverse it, to follow the law, to call a referendum if they want to. If they have the belief, they could actually pass that. But I don't think they do, because they took, for the NDP, what is the easy route. They reached into the pockets of Manitobans.

I would tell you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud that the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party—the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party—our leader and every member of this caucus is going to continue to stand up to protect Manitobans from the indiscriminate, hurtful and cruel cuts of this government from the discretionary income of Manitobans. We will stand up as the party who will stand up for working Manitobans. We will stand up as the party for those new Canadians who are trying to build a better life. We will stand up as the party who says, you deserve to keep more of your money because, ultimately, you know better what to do with it than government does.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Any further grievances?

Order, please. I see there's no further grievances and I have no guests to introduce at the moment, so we'll proceed directly to oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PST Increase Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, we've spent an interesting three weeks, Mr. Speaker, watching the NDP crying crocodile tears while describing how tough it's been for them to make the selfish decision to jack up taxes on Manitoba families.

But it has been a tough decision in some respects, Mr. Speaker. Sacrificing integrity to feed a spending addiction must be tough. Giving themselves the biggest raise of any Canadian province while Manitobans get the biggest cuts is tough. Abolishing the right of Manitoba citizens to vote must—they must understand, is also very tough, and being the only province in the whole country to jack up the PST is exceptionally tough.

So the government's right in respect of the word tough. But the reality is this government made an easy decision, a lazy decision in jacking up taxes.

I'd like the Premier to acknowledge today that that easy decision for him to tax more Manitobans is a tough decision for them to manage with less.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): We made a decision to create more employment in Manitoba so Manitobans can have good jobs. We made a decision to invest in infrastructure which grows our economy. We made a decision to ensure that another 75,000 people get skills to enter the labour market over the next eight years.

* (14:10)

And, Mr. Speaker, we made a decision that we should abolish the Senate, which is the largest single waste of money in the country, supported by the members opposite, \$92 million, all of which is used for members opposite and their colleagues in the Liberal Party to support elections.

They don't want to change anything. They want to keep the gravy train going for them. We want to create jobs for Manitobans.

Mr. Pallister: The only gravy train they're creating is the money that's going to their own party for doing absolutely nothing with it, Mr. Speaker, not earning it. Crocodile tears.

Tough decisions? Tough taxes—tough taxes that trickle down to Manitobans and create tough decisions for Manitobans. Manitoba shoppers forced

to desert their own friends and their own friends' small businesses and buy across the line, that's tough. Small-business owners laying off their own friends and employees, that's tough too. And an unemployed woman who can't find a job in this province because she was laid off, now on welfare, having to choose between paying her rent or a winter coat for her daughter, that's a tough decision.

This government didn't make any tough decisions; it only made easy ones.

And I'd like the Premier to acknowledge finally that he understands the reality of what he's doing and that he admit that what is easy for him to do, spend more and tax more, is very tough for Manitoba families.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the difficult choices made by governments these days go in different directions. Some choose to make major cuts to services, like the members of the opposition have promised. They want to lay off thousands of people in Manitoba. How will retail sales do then, when they lay off thousands of people? How will the housing market do then, when there's higher levels of unemployment?

Mr. Speaker, retail sales are up in Manitoba. Optimism is up with the small-business community of Manitoba. More people are working in Manitoba; 8,300 more people are working in the private sector of Manitoba. When those people go at home—go home at night, they know they have a job. They know they have a bright future in Manitoba, and we're going to make sure that they continue to have a bright future in Manitoba.

Mr. Pallister: Zero job growth, Mr. Speaker, that's not a brighter future for this province. Zero wage growth over the last year, that's not a brighter future for Manitobans. When the Premier doesn't like Stats Canada numbers, he makes his own numbers up. The reality is that zero job growth is tough on Manitoba families, but vote buying and ribbon cutting's easy on the NDP.

Eight per cent higher home insurance and haircut costs and employee benefits means a \$1,600-a-household cut that's tough on Manitoba families, and what is the NDP—what's tough for the NDP with a million-dollar vote tax coming their way for doing nothing for it? That's easy, a broken promise to the people of Manitoba that hikes the PST, that's an easy promise for the NDP. But that

creates a tough situation for Manitobans and their families.

Now, this Premier promised not to hike the PST and he broke that promise.

I have to ask the Premier: What was easier for him, making the promise or breaking it?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was the one that said he would never privatize the telephone system. He's never apologized for that. After following through, laying off thousands of—hundreds of Manitobans lost their jobs in rural Manitoba when the telephone system was privatized, and their rates went from among the lowest in Canada to among the highest in Canada.

When it comes to the economy, Mr. Speaker, retail sales in Manitoba since July have grown by over \$24 million, 1.7 per cent, which is above the Canadian average of 1 per cent. In Manitoba sales are growing above the Canadian average, 8,300 more people are working in the private sector, more people have optimism in Manitoba, and thousands of people from around the world—15,000—have chosen Manitoba as their home.

Very different when the Leader of the Opposition was in power, when people were leaving Manitoba, young people were moving out of the province, jobs were shrinking and disposable income was shrinking.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Federal By-Election Manitoba Results

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's amateur afternoon with stats for that man, Mr. Speaker. He tried to—he tries to make cases based on numbers being up since July, when retail sales were the lowest in the history of the recorded stat. Of course they're up. They have nowhere to go but up. When you're at the absolute bottom, they must go up.

There's a lesson in these federal by-elections held this week, Mr. Speaker. In Ontario, NDP support held. In Québec, it went up. Where did it tank? Down by half in Provencher, down by three quarters in Brandon. There's a lesson here. The NDP was annihilated.

There's a strong, powerful message for the Premier if he'd choose to listen to Manitobans. The

Premier may think Thomas Mulcair's the reason, but he bears some responsibility too. NDP candidates know that, they've acknowledged that. NDP volunteers know that, they've said that. And Liberal supporters most certainly thank him for his efforts.

Now, I want to know: Manitobans sent a strong message to him, but has he yet received a thank-you note from Justin Trudeau?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member has finally acknowledged that retail sales are up in Manitoba. We're making progress here. I think that's a good sign. He's finally coming into the realm of present reality.

Perhaps this statistic will help him as well. According to Stats Canada, since January retail sales have grown at 2.1 per cent, fourth strongest in the country.

What excuse is he going to do now? Who is he going to attack now? Is he going to circulate another bridge that was built 20 years ago and say we're double counting it? Is he going to withdraw his press release about all the projects that we've cut, saying that we've cancelled, knowing full well that it's wrong, or is he going to continue to support the unelected Senate because it gives him free campaign workers?

Mr. Pallister: The Premier just came from a meeting where he couldn't look a single person in the eye. He should be embarrassed by his decisions and embarrassed by his own conduct. He might not want to take the responsibility—that's pretty much a custom of his—but there are others who are willing to place the blame here on the NDP's deplorable outcomes in Monday's by-election—Tuesday's.

Broken promises by this government, record tax increases, record fee increases, unacceptable. Candidates understand. They've told us. NDP candidates have told us and told others that the PST hike is the reason. Listen to it. Pundits have said it's the conditions in Manitoba's political environment that are the reason. Thomas Mulcair said, quote: No question, local conditions were the reason.

And most importantly, Manitoba's voters sent a message. They sent a message the Premier needs to listen to them. They said, we don't accept the PST hike.

Now, why doesn't the Premier simply reverse this bad decision, or will he ignore Manitobans yet

again and have to be sent that same message that they sent this week yet again in the future?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, I do want to commend the leadership of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities. There are many very, very capable local leaders there. They're doing excellent work in their communities. We had an excellent experience with them this week. They have real concerns. They got up in many, many instances this morning asking us to pave certain roads, asking us to improve infrastructure, which is why this morning we announced a \$67-million upgrade to Highway No. 10 in western Manitoba which was very well received by the people in that part of the province.

And the newly minted Member of Parliament for that area of Manitoba, the Brandon-Souris Member of Parliament, so recently in the House when he wasn't campaigning, he said he looks forward to being able to work with other levels of government to make sure we get the infrastructure in place we need. He gets it; why doesn't the Leader of the Opposition?

Taxation Revenues Government Spending

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): I'm sure that Mr. Maguire looks forward to working with very capable municipal governments in the future. Those municipalities are capable of great things, such as launching a lawsuit against the provincial government for their deplorable shutdown of a third of their members.

The federal NDP sunk like a stone in these by-elections in Manitoba and that's the only province where the NDP govern, so there's no coincidence here. This is the last of the big-tax and big-spend governments, the last of the sad-eyed, lippy socialists, the sole province—the sole province—to hike the PST, the lonely unicorn of teary-eyed socialism in our country. Other governments in other provinces all across our land face the challenges of getting more from the taxes; this government wants to get more from the taxpayer.

* (14:20)

Will the government, will the Premier just admit what everyone else has come to understand? He thinks that Manitobans' money on their kitchen table should go to his Cabinet table. He thinks he can spend it better than the families of Manitoba. Does he admit that?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Manitobans have told us, and we've listened carefully, that they want investments in core infrastructure, which is why we announced \$67 million on Highway 10, which is why we announced \$215 million for Highway 75, which is why we're building the southwest Perimeter in Winnipeg to connect up CentrePort, which will be a major transportation hub for North America to our major market in the United States, Mr. Speaker, which is why we're seeing investments in Manitoba by IKEA, by Marshalls, by Target stores, which is why there are thousands of jobs being created in Manitoba, and our skills agenda will move that forward in a more rapid fashion to create good jobs for young people.

The newly minted member of Brandon-Souris says he wants to work with us on infrastructure investments. The members opposite want to cut infrastructure investments. They want to cut job opportunities for young people. They want to cut teachers. They want to cut nurses, and they don't want to train doctors. That's not the future, Mr. Speaker. That's a return to the '90s where the Leader of the Opposition likes to live.

Food Bank Usage Government Record

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Here in Manitoba, since 2008 we have seen an increase in food bank usage of 44.8 per cent, the largest increase in Canada by any province. The Throne Speech introduced no plan and no new ideas to stop this growing problem in Manitoba. This is the record of this government.

Has this government just given up trying to help those on limited and fixed incomes?

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, we have not given up on Manitobans. We are supporting Manitobans by ensuring that we have a stable economy and creating more jobs. We've made a commitment to increase the employment or jobs by 75,000 by 2020. That's going to make a difference. We know the best way out of poverty is by supporting families. The way to support families is to ensure they have access to good quality jobs. As well, what we are doing is ensuring that they have child care, they also have education and training opportunities.

We're listening to Manitobans. Why aren't they?

Mr. Wishart: We know that close to 45 per cent of food bank users are children, and we know what

matters most to families is food on the table, something that this government has made more difficult for many Manitobans.

Groups like Make Poverty History has asked for the increasing of the EIA housing allowance to take some of the financial pressures off these families, and the PC Party has joined them in this call.

When is this government going to do something more for the poor than add to their tax burden?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I can tell you we have more work to do but we're committed to that work. We are restoring benefits. What we've done is we reinstated the National Child Benefit. We have now the Opti-care benefit for families. We are ensuring that they have access to good quality education and jobs as well. We are not doing what the members opposite did when they had their hands on the wheel, which was they cut EIA rates, they clawed back the National Child Benefit, they reduced the funding to child care.

We are listening to Manitobans. I again ask, why aren't they?

Mr. Wishart: Close to 5 per cent of Manitobans use food banks, with 45 per cent of them being children. A total of 63,482 people in Manitoba use food banks regularly. After 13 years in government, this doesn't seem like a record that a government should be proud of.

I would like to ask this Premier (Mr. Selinger): If you're doing what matters most to Manitoba families, why are so many suffering under your watch?

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I'd like to correct the record. We know that the food bank use in Manitoba has decreased by 5.1 per cent. We're not celebrating that number at all.

We know we have more work to do, and that's why we are investing money in ensuring that there is good quality jobs available to families across this province, ensuring that there is child care available, ensuring that we're enhancing benefits, restoring the National Child Benefit, for example, as well as Opti-care, building more affordable and social housing across the province. That's what their—what we're doing.

What they did when they were in government, they clawed back the National Child Benefit. They stopped building houses; there's no record of any investment that was made. They are—they continued

to reduce the rates for EIA and didn't support child care.

Again, we are listening. We are supporting families. We are addressing what matters most, and we're listening, not like them.

Child Poverty Rates Government Record

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Children and youth are the future of this province of which the fastest growing sector is our First Nations youth, and each and every one of them should be given the chance to succeed.

This government, however, has other plans. Poverty rates and the number of children using food banks remains high, and there is less money than ever before in households already struggling to make ends meet.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government failing the children and youth of this province when they deserve the best possible chance to succeed?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I do want to remind the member for La Verendrye is talking about Aboriginal children, youth and families. As—when he was—his government was in power, they cut 56 organizations in one budget, wiped out friendship centres, and then asked the most vulnerable families and said to them that they have to share the pain.

Well, he was at a summit last week, Mr. Speaker, where we had an announcement with McConnell foundation. They can invest anywhere in the country; they want to invest and work with Manitobans because of the investments we continue to make.

We're going to stand alongside of people like David Northcott, Dave Angus, Jim Carr and all members of the committee with our investments we're making, Mr. Speaker, and we are not—we are not—going to be cutting friendship centres all throughout the country—all throughout the province.

Mr. Smook: I understand that this government knows how to spend money; they are at the top of that list. But when it comes to results, they're at the bottom of that one.

Twenty per cent of Manitoba youth live in poverty; this rate is 6.4 per cent higher than the national average, and Manitoba has been near the top for quite some time. Sixty-two per cent of First

Nations children are living in poverty. Mr. Speaker, 44.7 per cent of those who use food banks in this province are children. Five thousand more children live in poverty today than did in 2005. This minister has \$48 million in his budget and he has done nothing to change these statistics.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister failing the children and youth of this province?

Mr. Chief: I'd like to let the member know the investments, some of the investments we're making, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, we continue to invest in our Prenatal Benefit, touches up to 4,000 moms. Many of the people who accept this Prenatal Benefit are women that are pregnant, often for their first child.

We also reinstated the National Child Benefit. I don't think you're going to find an Aboriginal person that agreed with the cut that they made to the National Child Benefit. We're putting money back in people's pockets.

We continue to bring people together as part of our Healthy Baby community support program. We have been able to invest in 26 parent-child coalitions. Some of those child coalitions where they are the strongest and most active are within our northern communities where you see an increased amount of Aboriginal participation.

Mr. Speaker, I know the member from Steinbach wanted to talk about the Winnipeg Jets, but we continue to work with Mark Chipman and his leadership to bring Right to Play to many of our Aboriginal communities.

That's the kind of investments we're making, Mr. Speaker. We're bringing in new partners. We'll continue to invest—

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

Mr. Smook: Statistics are statistics. Forty-eight million dollars to cut ribbons and attend photo ops, all the while poverty rates in this province grow and children in this province go hungry.

Just under half of the food bank users in this province are children. Twenty per cent of these children—20 per cent of the children in this province, five—one in five, are living in poverty right now. Almost two thirds of First Nation children are living in poverty. These problems are real and they are happening right now.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister and this government failing the children and youth of this province?

Mr. Chief: We'll talk about some statistics: up to 4,000 women receiving the Prenatal Benefit. Another statistic: \$48 million back, reinstated with the National Child Benefit on top of the \$3-million contribution; 26 parent-child coalitions, some of the most active parent-child coalitions—where I sat with the member from Lac du Bonnet and I sat with the member from La Verendrye and they heard directly from their constituents the kinds of investments we're making through parent-child coalitions are making a huge difference in people's lives.

* (14:30)

The member from La Verendrye came to the Early Childhood Development Summit last week. He heard from parents and grandparents, he heard from members of the business sector, he heard even from people like David Northcott to say that our investments are making a difference and we're moving in the right direction, Mr. Speaker. He can read statistics, but he should be listening to what people are telling him when he's attending events.

Aboriginal Youth High School Graduation Rates

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): This government, this NDP government, can make all the announcements they want, Mr. Speaker, but the fact of the matter is, after 14 years, things are getting worse, not better.

Mr. Speaker, according to numbers released recently by the C.D. Howe Institute, Manitoba has the worst graduation rate in Canada when it comes to Aboriginal youth in our province.

Mr. Speaker, how does this NDP government expect to grow our economy and create jobs in our province when it is failing the fastest growing community in our province, our Aboriginal youth?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I certainly thank the member for the question. It interests me, of course, that she of all people would stand up and ask a question about Aboriginal education when, in fact, as a government they did very little when it came to those kinds of issues and education in general.

Mr. Speaker, what we want for our Aboriginal youth is what we want for all of our kids in Manitoba. That's why we're investing in schools,

that's why we're building schools, that's why we're making class sizes smaller, that's why we're building new gyms and that's why we're investing in science labs. We're investing in the youth of Manitoba. We're investing in Aboriginal youth. We want them to have opportunity in this province to grow.

The opposition, they don't seem to care at all.

Mrs. Stefanson: Again, Mr. Speaker, they can make all the announcements they want, but the fact of the matter is it's getting worse in Manitoba under their watch.

For young First Nation adults in Manitoba, the high school dropout rate is 62.8 per cent, the highest, Mr. Speaker, in all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government continuing to fail Aboriginal youth in our province?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Again, Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing part of our population. That's why we invest each year in the Aboriginal Academic Achievement grant, up to \$8 million every year, to ensure that Aboriginal students get the best kind of education possible.

We know that there's work to do on that file, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the member opposite would forgo the \$92 million for the Senate, ask the federal government to invest in Aboriginal education in this province like they're supposed to.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, an Aboriginal youth dropout rate of 62.8 per cent, the highest in the country, is not worth celebrating like members opposite seem to be doing. This puts Manitoba dead last in Canada. It's a clear reflection of the fact that this government has failed in this area.

Why is the—this NDP government continuing to fail Aboriginal youth in our province?

Mr. Allum: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only level of government failing Aboriginal youth in this country is the federal government; the only level of government that refuses to have the same per capita funding for youth in Manitoba is the federal government.

But it's more than that, Mr. Speaker. Not only are we investing in Aboriginal youth and ensuring Aboriginal education, we're also including it in the curriculum as well. We're dealing with residential schools in our curriculum now. We're talking about treaties in our curriculum right now. We're

working with Aboriginal communities to enhance the well-being of Aboriginal youth.

The members opposite have no other solutions but to cut funding from education, cut funding from Aboriginal youth programming, cut funding across the board. They're not doing anybody any favours—

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

International Medical Graduates Recruitment Practices

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Last week I shared that the Physician Resource Coordination Office has shut doctor clinics out of the room when it comes to meeting with international medical graduates who are potential recruits. They've been unfriended.

And why? The response that finally came back from the Health Workforce Secretariat said this: The meet-and-greets are now limited to those who are providing job opportunities that the RHAs prioritize as the most important to meet the needs of the population of the region. Mr. Speaker, this even though the IMG program website says an offer of employment can come from an RHA or from a private clinic or hospital.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: Is she saying, as of now on, doctor offices across the province are not important when it comes to meeting the health-care needs of Manitobans?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Acting Minister of Health): Not at all. We're not saying that at all. We're going to continue to work to reap-recruit doctors into a variety of programs across the province.

I would point out to the member opposite that a number of his colleagues on that side of the House have legitimate concerns about wishing to have their emergency rooms reopened; an emergency room in Vita comes to mind. And, certainly, the RHAs are focusing their recruitment efforts with a view to opening the environments that they need to prioritize, like, for example, the Vita ER.

So, Mr. Speaker, on one day they say, prioritize my community for a doctor, but then the next day they say, please don't prioritize at all.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous coming from the minister who's responsible for Jobs and the Economy. We're talking about jobs. This minister

knows that Manitoba communities are struggling with doctor shortages, and now the door is being slammed on doctor clinics.

Right now, the Wheat City Medical Clinic in Brandon is in contact with two doctors, a husband-wife team, inquiring about sponsorship and employment. They would like to practise in this doctor clinic, and yet the RHA can only make the offer, and not these doctor clinics. One of these doctors is not content with the offer of employment coming from the RHA. They want instead to accept a signed offer from this doctor clinic in Brandon. Why can't they?

Is this minister bullying doctor offices and suggesting that doctor offices have lost the ability to make offers of employment to recruits?

Ms. Oswald: Well, this is very interesting, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite are standing up in the House today to suggest that we are doing something that would make it an uncomfortable environment for doctors, we who, on this side of the House, have seen a net increase of 560 doctors since we started in 1999.

I should perhaps take a moment to remind this member that during the Conservatives' decade of darkness, we saw a net loss of 117 doctors to the province of Manitoba, including a record-breaking low and dreadful year where the member—the Leader of the Opposition was sitting at the Cabinet table, where they lost 75 doctors in one year in 1996. Shame on them.

Mr. Friesen: Today I welcome Dr. Dave Maharajh from the 'prair'—from the Wheat City Medical Clinic in the gallery with us today.

I want to remind this minister that the IMG program website says an offer of employment for a doctor, for an IMG, can come from RHA or clinic or a hospital. And yet a brand new response that I want to table today from the Health Workforce Secretariat says, if you're unable to accept the position offered to you in the Northern health region, we regretfully say that we are unable to support your request for alternative sponsorship and consider your application withdrawn—withdrawn.

This is obstruction, this is interference, and, Mr. Speaker, it sounds a lot like bullying. Just like this NDP to enact a non-compete clause.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this minister: What is going on here?

Ms. Oswald: Our regional health authorities and physician co-ordination office work with international medical graduates. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, they work with the new graduates that are coming out of our medical school, the seats that we've increased from seventy-five or from 70, when members opposite cut them, up to 110, to look for a variety of employment opportunities. Members opposite have a lot of gall—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (14:40)

The honourable member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), I'm having a great deal of difficulty hearing both the questions and the answers. I'm asking for your co-operation, please allow me to hear the answer to the question that was posed by the honourable member.

The honourable minister, to continue her comments.

Ms. Oswald: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I believe I left off by saying the members opposite have a lot of gall in suggesting that regional health authorities should not work very carefully to find the most appropriate environments where they can have doctors to work, particularly when four days out of five they stand up to say, we want to ensure that we have more doctors in communities like Killarney, in communities like Vita and so forth.

We want doctors to put down their roots in Manitoba. We want our RHAs to prioritize. We can find—

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

Bill 5 Home Warranty Registry

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, in many areas the NDP are building up an unnecessary bureaucracy, causing extra burdens on Manitoba businesses and extra costs to Manitoba taxpayers.

You know, as an example, if one looks at Bill 5, The New Home Warranty Act, the protection of new homeowners could be simplified by just mandating legally that there be warranties on all new homes. Instead, this NDP government has decided to build a new bureaucracy by hiring their own registrar and putting in place an elaborate registration system for

anybody who wants to build a home or provide a home warranty.

I ask the Premier: Why is the NDP government building this big bureaucracy and creating a nanny state in our province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, first of all, we're not doing that. I hope the member will acknowledge that we need a good home warranty program in Manitoba, and we have strengthened that warranty program because we have found there were some instances of new homes being built, problems with the construction, and people that had made their major life investment in that home were not able to get it rectified without very serious additional expenditure.

The home warranty program is the result of many long years of negotiation with the industry to improve the performance of the warranty program to cover more issues, to ensure there's longer periods of protection that covers more aspects of residential construction. It's being done in such a way that there are insurance companies that will provide the insurance so that when somebody has to make a claim the insurance will be there. The register will ensure that everybody is properly signed up. It's not creating more bureaucracy; it's creating more accountability and more protection for homeowners in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we agree it's important to have warranties, but you don't have to build a bureaucracy to do it.

You know, when it comes to car warranties, for example, the provincial government doesn't set up and enforce a complicated registry of everybody who wants to build or sell a vehicle, at least not yet. Perhaps this is the next area that Manitobans should fear an attempt of NDP power consolidation.

Now, why is the government going out of its way to build new registries and new databases in order to make life more complicated and more cumbersome for ordinary Manitobans and for those who want to build homes and those who want to warranty homes?

Mr. Selinger: The New Home Warranty Program will give an unprecedented level of protection to Manitobans when they make the most—single largest and most important purchase in their lives, buying their home. And when they spend 250, 350, perhaps even more buying a new home in Manitoba, they need to know that it's protected, and this warranty

program will do that in a way that's never been done before.

The member asks why there has to be a registry. We need to know the homes that are built. We're building a record number of new homes in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. We're building a record number of new homes because we have new—a hundred thousand more people living in Manitoba. We have more families in Manitoba. We have a younger demographic in Manitoba, and when all those people come to Manitoba, we want that home purchase to be one that is secured by a solid home warranty program backed up by insurance.

The member asks about other things. We now have new laws that protect consumers to get fair treatment when they have their car repaired. We have new laws now that ensure when you buy a new car, the price you see on the sticker is the price you pay for that car. We're protecting consumers. The member opposite should get on board and support these consumer—

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, we support the warranties; we just don't support this big bureaucracy-building NDP.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 90 per cent of new homes are already covered by warranty. We could have legislating mandating warranties for all homes to cover that last 10 per cent. It shouldn't require building a big bureaucracy and an extensive and separate database just to ensure the last 10 per cent of homes have adequate warranties. This province is becoming wrapped up in NDP orange tape instead of functioning well and properly.

I ask the Premier: What is this NDP's government goal in building such an expensive bureaucracy and creating such a nanny state here in Manitoba?

Mr. Selinger: The member's just dead wrong on his assertions. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, the New Home Warranty Program provides protection to everybody buying a new home in Manitoba, and there are a record number of new homes being built in Manitoba.

The home builders support the program. They see the value in ensuring that they have a product that they will stand behind with a warranty, and they see the value of having a warranty that can attract

assurance that backs it up, that gives an unprecedented level of protection to Manitoba families.

I appreciate the member finally acknowledging that a home warranty program is a good thing. Now he has to support enforcement of that program, proper insurance for that program to make sure middle-class families in Manitoba, when they make the most significant investment in their life, it's an investment that has a high degree of security and a high degree of protection. That's something we're doing in Manitoba and we're leading the country on that, Mr. Speaker.

Affordable Housing Condominium Development

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Providing our people with affordable housing is a challenge that is being solved by proactive, strategic investments. An affordable housing project on Ross Avenue was recently unveiled with the Minister of Multiculturalism present.

Will the Minister of Housing and Community Development please tell the House about this important announcement and our broader investments in affordable housing?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Housing and Community Development): Well, speaking of new homes, Mr. Speaker, we're absolutely delighted that this past Tuesday, after only Monday's announcement of 102 apartments right downtown Winnipeg for University of Winnipeg students, the very next day, we're opening a new home for 10 condos that are available to low-income families, of which eight have already been purchased. And this is a \$2.1-million investment that is partnered with the Manitoba government, partnered with the City of Winnipeg, and through the HOMEWorks! initiative and Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation.

And I'm absolutely delighted that not only is it accessible in terms of affordability, but these houses are also accessible in terms of ability, Mr. Speaker, because they have ground-level entry, 36-inch-wide doorways, accessible washrooms and fenced backyard patios.

So the difference between us and our members opposite, we want access for all Manitobans, and we saw that when we—

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

International Medical Graduates Recruitment Practices

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, the document I tabled today was dated November 28th, 2013—that's yesterday—and it shows conclusively that there has been a decision to shut doctor clinics out of that process of attracting doctors to Manitoba. It picks winners and losers. It's a wholesale shift from before, when clinics or RHA or a hospital could make an offer of employment.

Mr. Speaker, the minister is saying to IMG recruits, you have one shot to go where we send you. Resistance is futile. If you don't take the offer, we consider your application withdrawn. There is a name for that and it is called bullying.

Mr. Speaker, will this minister say no to doctors' offices that are trying to get doctors to the same rural communities that she is shorting through her practices?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Acting Minister of Health): Well, we've got another one to add to the list of factual failings from members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, very clearly, the IMG program is designed to bring in excellent doctors from various places around the world and to assist in providing additional training and skills in exchange for those individuals serving in underserved communities. When that kind of relationship is entered into and then perhaps broken, that is a problem, which is why, indeed, the regional health authorities are working hard to ensure that they follow through with the agreement of the IMG program and ensure that those individuals are serving as per the entered-into agreement. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

* (14:50)

ORDERS OF THE DAY (Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: We'll now move on to orders of the day and government business.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): On House business, I would like to call Bill 2 for second reading. Bill 2 is The Highway Traffic Amendment (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones).

Mr. Speaker, could you ask for the third time now whether the opposition House leader is in agreement with proceeding in this fashion as required under sessional order 11 which was adopted this September, and, if so, we can then proceed with the second reading of Bill 2.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we've asked three times for answers to a series of questions. The government refused to provide them. If they ever decide to make this a priority, we'll consider it.

Mr. Speaker: Seems like there is no agreement to proceed with Bill 2.

Mr. Swan: All right, then, Mr. Speaker, then we'll call for third reading bills in the following order: Bill 9, Bill 12, Bill 14, Bill 44, Bill 8, Bill 16 and Bill 25.

Mr. Speaker: Well, we'll call bills in the following order for third reading: Bill 9, followed by bills 12, 14, 44, 8, 16 and Bill 25.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 9—The Teachers' Society Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Starting with Bill 9, The Teachers' Society Amendment Act.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum), that Bill 9, The Teachers' Society Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Association des enseignants du Manitoba, reported from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Debate on the bill?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I rise today to speak to the third reading of Bill 9, The Teachers' Society Amendment Act. I'm pleased to speak to this bill because it will support teachers, ensure high standards are maintained in our education system, and demonstrate our commitment to responding to teachers' needs. This bill enhances the Manitoba Teachers' Society ability to establish, maintain and enforce standards of professional conduct and a code for its members. It expands the range of penalties for members who, following an investigation and

hearing, are found to have engaged in unprofessional conduct or conduct unbecoming of a teacher.

It now allows for a teacher to be suspended or terminated as a member of the society or impose other such penalties as the society may prescribe by bylaw. It also allows the society to establish a process for a teacher to be reinstated once their membership has been terminated. The society will also be able to order the teacher to pay up to \$5,000 of the expenses relating to the investigation and hearing on allegations of unprofessional conduct if it is proven they engaged in such behaviour. This order may be filed in the Court of Queen's Bench to allow for enforcement.

These changes were recommended to us from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, a proud partner of this government, and were discussed and endorsed at their most recent annual general meeting. We have a great working relationship with teachers and believe these changes are reasonable and sensible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I—you know that we have a strong partnership with our teachers in Manitoba. Through our partnership with the Manitoba Teachers' Society and its president, Paul Olson, we are continuing to strengthen that relationship. The Leader of the Opposition, who, by the way, is a former teacher, would return us to the cuts and freezes of the 1990s. In those days, they fired teachers. It hurt our education system and our students. We're moving forward and working with our partners to make our education system the best it can be.

So what's our record, Mr. Speaker? We put more teachers in classrooms and built and expanded schools. The opposition has voted against it. Our government has invested over \$1 billion to replace and build schools, classrooms, gyms and science labs since 1999. The opposition voted against it. We work with teachers to develop our new parent-friendly plain language report card, which makes it easier for parents to help their kids learn. We passed legislation to keep kids in school until they're 18. Now more students are finishing high school. Manitoba's graduation rate increased to over 84 per cent.

Education quality is a key part of our plan to give our kids a strong start, but we've taken other important initiatives. Our antibullying legislation spearheaded and still driven by the member from St. Vital protects all of Manitoba's students. We are well under way with our commitment to reduce class sizes, also brought forward by the member for

St. Vital (Ms. Allan). We have already reduced large classes by 41 per cent. On that point, Mr. Speaker, my own daughter teaches grade 1. She tells me that that class last year was 27. This year she has 19 students in her class. We're helping parents by establishing common in-service days within school divisions to help families co-ordinate their busy schedules.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Paul Olson and the Manitoba Teachers' Society for their leadership on this issue. I invite all members to support this bill.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, and a pleasure to put a few words on the public record regarding this bill. We've heard it come to committee and heard various concerns and comments from stakeholders involved. Obviously, we agree that there needs to be standards in place when it comes to many professions, and that would include the profession of teaching.

We know that our teachers are among the best in Canada. They do a tremendous job in ensuring that our children are prepared for the future. We know that, where there are challenges and failings, they fall at the feet often of this government, who react slowly to issues, who react slowly to needs within the education system, be that infrastructure or otherwise, and the answer to the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) who asked really, is, yes, the answer is really. We've seen many places where there are huts that populate the schools that almost become, if you would total them all together, they would probably be the fourth or fifth largest city they're so significant in terms of how many huts there are because of the lack of preparation and planning, and that includes places not only in rural Manitoba, where there is growth in communities, but they're also in south Winnipeg, where there's been a lack of funding.

I expressed some concerns at committee, and I continue to have those concerns regarding the possibility of teachers being punished for not being able to—for speaking out their views against the teachers' union. We heard at committee this summer by proxy some teachers who were unable to present because they were advised that it would be unwise for them to speak against their union's position on a bill, and so they had someone else present a presentation on their behalf, withholding their name because they were concerned they would, in fact, be punished.

We heard the Manitoba Teachers' Society make a presentation indicating that their teachers were all in favour of the PST tax increase, which resulted in a flood of emails to me and to many others from teachers, Mr. Speaker, who said, in fact, that they weren't. And I hear the Minister of Education restate that. He also believes all the teachers are in favour of the PST tax increase, and I look forward to having that debate with him among many teachers in the province, and I think he's going to have a difficult time defending that. Certainly, recent polls have indicated that 80 per cent of teachers don't support the PST tax—oh, sorry, 80 per cent of Manitobans don't present—accept the PST tax increase as being necessary. He, perhaps, believes that the 20 per cent who do are all teachers. I don't. I suspect that it's probably representative of the portion of teachers who also don't think that it's necessary, but now that the Minister of Education has stated that he actually thinks that all teachers are in favour, I look forward to distributing that opinion to teachers and to see if they believe now not only if their union is off-base, but the Minister of Education is off-base as well.

But I do have concerns whether or not there would be repercussions for teachers who speak against the position of the union. That was expressed this summer. It was expressed in the issue of the PST tax increase, and I have not been given that assurance in legislation that that wouldn't be the case.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 9?

* (15:00)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just a few comments on Bill 9. It is the goal of the Liberal Party to have the very highest quality of education in Manitoba, and on this bill we certainly support the legislation, support the Manitoba Teachers' Society and their advocacy for this legislation. We appreciate the presentation by Mr. Ken Pearce of the Manitoba Teachers' Society at the committee stage. I think it is important as we, you know, move forward that we are consistently and steadily looking at ways that we can improve the education of our young people, the quality and the ability of our young people to do well.

We still have some ways to go in improving the graduation rates. We're not yet the highest in Canada; in fact, I think we're still—under this government, the lowest in Canada and I think that applies particularly, for example, to Aboriginal students and young people who we need to give opportunities to. But, for today, we're certainly supportive of this

measure and look forward to it being passed and implemented. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 9? Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is The Teachers' Society Amendment Act.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of Bill 9, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

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

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Bill 12—The Community Schools Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 12, The Community Schools Act.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum), that Bill 12, The Community Schools Act; Loi sur les écoles communautaires, reported from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Any debate on the bill?

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I rise today to speak to the third reading of Bill 12, The Community Schools Act, an act which we're particularly proud of on this side of the House. Of course, we want all our children to get a strong start in school, get a strong start in life. We believe wholeheartedly on this side

of the House on the transformative power of education and the importance of schools in transforming lives, transforming neighbourhoods, transforming communities and transforming regions and provinces when it comes to that. This power works best when students and families are positioned to take full advantage of our education system.

This bill calls for the establishment of the community schools program so that we can help provide targeted supports to help kids do better in school. This bill will enhance programing by helping schools forge partnerships, mobilize and leverage resources, and access training when needed. This bill opens the community schools' network to any school to participate so that we can broaden the reach of the program, because we know what it takes, that it takes a whole community to raise a child and, in the same manner, it takes a whole village to build a school.

We know that the community schools' philosophy and the way of practice helps provide an integrated response to address the challenges some families face. Community schools are central to their communities because they link students and their families with services and programs such as nurse practitioners, summer and after-school programs, adult skills training and financial literacy. Currently, 29 schools throughout Manitoba participate in the Community Schools Partnership Initiative. And this bill solidifies our ongoing work to expand the philosophy of community schools in our—into all of our province. This is part of our ongoing commitment to make our schools the best that they can be.

A recent independent review of our program by Dr. Michael Tymchak of the University of Regina and Phyllis Fowler had this to say, and I quote: This legislative mandate and the plans to move forward even more strongly as suggested in this report will go some distance towards catapulting the province of Manitoba into the front ranks of the community school movement in Canada.

Report goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, and I quote again: Judging what we heard and saw there can be little doubt that the CSPI has made it possible for schools to be more effective and successful in working with children and youth as well as their families and caregivers.

This support demonstrates that our public education system is on the right path. We've put more teachers in classrooms and built and expanded schools. We've passed legislation to keep kids in

school until they're 18, and now more students are finishing high school. Manitoba's graduation rate is over 84 per cent.

Since 1999 our government has invested over \$1 billion to replace and build schools, classrooms, gyms and science labs. As I said earlier, our new parent-friendly, plain-language report card makes it easier for parents to help their kids learn; it's going home this month in every school in Manitoba. Our EDI program helps kids in pre-kindergarten, and our Aboriginal Academic Achievement Grant and building students success with Aboriginal partners program helps to ensure that everyone has access to the supports they need.

Mr. Speaker, The Community Schools Act will help schools to better support students' educational success, building stronger families, improve communities and provide targeted support to help kids to better—have a better, more successful future.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can't say enough about what The Community Schools Act and what the community schools program has already done in this province. I hope that all members in all parties in this Legislature will see fit to support this important legislation. We need to change people's lives. We need to build neighbourhoods and build communities. We need to take this province forward into the 21st century.

I invite all members, Mr. Speaker, to support this legislation. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I find it a little bit interesting that the minister wants to take this—not only take this direction, but considers that this is moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, the community use of schools and community involvement of schools dates back in Manitoba well over a hundred years. This is not something which has just happened today. It may be that the NDP have, after 14 years of power, finally discovered that this is important. But for most people in Manitoba this has been a well-known and well-established role of schools going back decades and decades and decades, going back to when, you know, the public schools really started in that latter part of the 1800s.

I'm a very strong supporter, as I think most Manitobans are and would be of community use of schools, and I think this is, in fact, really important that schools are a part of the community and that everybody in the community can benefit from the

resources, the things that are present in schools, and not just young people, but they, in fact, can really be a major facility which improves the health and other qualities of life of everybody in the community.

I want to say that, you know, not only has this approach for schools being used for community-based purposes got a track record in Manitoba, an established use going back a hundred years or more, that, you know, there are many, many examples of this.

* (15:10)

I think that, you know, in the 1990s, for example, there were many community access centres providing Internet access to communities set up in schools and the expertise that was present in school divisions with regard to information technology became very important in establishing local community networks and enabling Internet access not just for schools, but for businesses, for improvements in health, for improvements in actually accessing government services. All this was a part of the effort which was undertaken, for example, in a major way in the 1990s. And, you know, this government, in its early years, even gave token verbal support to programs like the Community Access Program and helping to increase in certain ways this presence and the role of schools in communities. In my community in River Heights, many of the schools have major roles in the community and have had such major roles for a long, long time. The schools are places for community meetings, places where schools 'shan' show off their talents of the students in pageants or theatre, where schools like Robert H. Smith School can hold community breakfasts in which the school and community can come together as one.

And then, of course, one of the problems was that, when the NDP came to power in 1999, they sort of forgot to a large extent about the fact the schools really are the centre of communities. They forgot to support and enhance the vital role of schools in communities. And, you know, now, after 14 years, it's quite interesting to see the NDP rediscovering the importance of schools in communities, a role that's very important and has been for decades and decades but was neglected considerably under this government. But it's good to see that they have finally seen the light. I'm not sure that you actually need legislation to do this. These are important activities of schools. They should be recognized, they should be supported by governments, but this should be part

of what happens day-to-day in our communities and in our province.

So it is of some interest here to see that the NDP see in this legislation that they need to mandate in legislation that deputy ministers must actually work together. This is sort of extraordinary, to say the least, Mr. Speaker, passing legislation telling deputy ministers to do their job which they should have been doing all along. It's been clear to many of us that one of the problems with Child and Family Services, with so many children being taken into care, is that under the NDP there developed a disconnect between Child and Family Services and what was happening in schools. And we saw this in the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, where Child and Family Services was operating all on its own and wasn't connecting to other organizations within the community. And I've had personal examples of people who have come to me, where they've had problems with Child and Family Services and their family, but it could have been easily addressed had there been a good working relationship, a much better working relationship between the family, the schools and Child and Family Services people, so that there was an integrated approach to helping families and children in communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm a very strong supporter of the role of schools in communities. I am glad to see that after 14 years that the NDP are actually coming on board with this. And I hope that we will have, you know, better appreciation of the role of schools in communities moving forward. We think that this should be a natural, an integral part of what schools are and what schools do and that this should be recognized broadly with funding for the schools themselves for their community-based activities, rather than to have, in some instances, school boards divert budgets from the studies of their students to the community activities of the schools. And this way that we could have a more integrated approach in which departments wouldn't be such separate silos, in which the deputy ministers would naturally be working together instead of pursuing separate agendas.

Mr. Speaker, we think this is good. We're glad to see that the NDP are coming on board with this. We're certainly going to support this legislation. I'm not sure that much of what's going to be done here could actually have been accomplished without the legislation in other ways which might have been even more effective. But certainly we will support this legislation. I'm glad to see that the NDP are

finally realizing the importance of schools to communities. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 12, The Community Schools Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

We'll now proceed to—the honourable Government House Leader.

House Business

Mr. Swan: On House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I have to correct the record in regards to the statement made by the Opposition House Leader earlier in regards to Bill 2. Bill 2 is The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Safety of Workers in Highway Construction Zones).

The Opposition House Leader stated they'd asked questions which had not been answered. That's not the case, although I want to put on the record I presume the Opposition House Leader was not aware of certain facts. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we received information, following up from the in-person technical briefing that members opposite had received from the minister and her staff last week, a written response was provided to members opposite yesterday, so I'll now table that response.

Mr. Speaker, this bill's a priority for government. We hope to move to committee with the goal of protecting workers before the next construction season. So, with these facts now established, I hope we can move ahead.

So I will ask again whether you can ask the Opposition House Leader whether he's now in agreement in proceeding this fashion, as is required under sessional order 11, which was adopted this September, and, if so, we can then move to proceed with the second reading of Bill 2.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I've looked at the correspondence that's dated yesterday. I am not sure if it was simply received today, but I suspect the minister wouldn't mind if we actually read the correspondence, and I'm sure if it'd been a priority for them, they would've gotten on this 12 years ago.

Mr. Speaker: So I take it by the response that no leave has been provided to proceed with Bill 2. There's no agreement to proceed with Bill 2.

On House business, the Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce the private members' resolution that'll be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Employment and Income Assistance Rental Allowance, brought forward by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart).

Mr. Speaker: In accordance with rule 31(9), that has been announced that the private members' resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Employment and Income Assistance Rental Allowance, brought forward by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

Honourable Government House Leader, was there further House business?

Mr. Swan: Proceeding with Bill 14 now, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 14—The Education Administration Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act (Parent Groups for Schools)

Mr. Speaker: Okay. We'll now proceed to call Bill 14, The Education Administration Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act (Parent Groups for Schools).

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister for Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum), that Bill 14, The Education Administration Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act (Parent Groups for Schools); Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire et la Loi sur les écoles publiques (groupes de parents œuvrant en milieu scolaire), reported from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I regret that the House leader for the opposition doesn't want to protect roadside—doesn't want to provide roadside protection for construction workers.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I mean this issue has just been dealt with, in terms of the request for leave. The House leader for the government indicated that a response was drafted yesterday—may have been slipped under the door of night. Certainly, we have the opportunity to read it. If this had been a priority to him, they could've been doing this the last 12 years, and I'm not expecting our critic to have to read something that may have come in in the dark of night and make a decision a couple of hours later.

* (15:20)

So, if they want to be respectful, they could do that. If they want to play politics, they can do it somewhere else, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, there is no point of order; it's clearly a dispute on the facts, and, if the member opposite wants to explain to construction workers why he's not interested in moving on this legislation to protect them, then he'll have to make that. It's a dispute on the facts; there is no point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Official Opposition House Leader, I'd like to remind the honourable Minister of Education and Advanced Learning that we are currently dealing with Bill 14, The Education Administration Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act (Parent Groups for Schools), and the comments that were made by the honourable minister, I think, strayed away from that topic that's under debate currently, and I'm asking the honourable minister to confine his remarks to the content or the purport of the bill.

The honourable member for Steinbach does have a point of order, and I'm asking the honourable minister to stick to the bill under consideration.

* * *

Mr. Allum: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will abide by your direction and your advice, of course, as always.

So, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the third reading of Bill 14, The Education Administration

Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act, or more properly, Parent Groups for Schools.

Like all members on this side of the House—and I can't speak for members on the other side—we do go in regularly to our public schools and talk with our parent advisory groups. And I know that they do incredible work, Mr. Speaker. I certainly had visited the parent advisory groups in my constituency of Fort Garry-Riverview, at each and every school, and I'm amazed by the work that they do, the commitment that they give to their schools, the fundraising they do on behalf of their students, and their commitment to enhancing the educational quality of the school, quite apart from the fantastic work that our teachers and administrators and principals do as well.

Mr. Speaker, you know that on this side of the House, we regard education as being critical to the future success of our children and our province. That's why, since 1999, we've invested almost a billion dollars in capital funding for schools. That's why we built new schools. That's why we've renewed parts of schools. We've gone forward with technical-vocational improvements. We've gone forward with increasing—improving science labs. We've gone forward with building new gymnasiums. We've made sure that schools are safe and inclusive places for all students in Manitoba.

We know that the opposition doesn't share this point of view with us. We know that they are anti-education. We know that they cut funding instead of investing in schools. We know that they send kids running from schools instead of keeping them in classrooms. And we know that they rarely, if ever, consult with parents, and, Mr. Speaker, that's what this bill is all about.

We all have a role to play in education, of course, but no one—and I mean this quite sincerely—no one plays more important a role than parents. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, as a parent myself, of three kids who have gone through the public education system in Manitoba. They've gone through French immersion in this province, and they did so because their father—he's ashamed to admit it—doesn't speak French very well. And I was determined that this badge of citizenship—to speak in more than just one language—this badge of citizenship in the 21st century would be worn by my children.

And so I know the role that I played and my wife plays in the education of our children was very, very important in making sure that we communicated

directly with our teachers, making sure that we were involved in school activities, making sure that we talked first and foremost to teachers every single day, to make sure that we were working in partnership, to enhance the well-being of our kids.

And so this bill, Mr. Speaker, tries to do—tries to recognize the fundamental role that parents play in the education, not only of their own kids, but of all of the children in Manitoba. Parents act as a kid's first teachers and are intimately invested in their educational well-being. And studies have shown that children perform better academically when parents play an active and supportive role in their child's school and in their learning.

So this bill addresses the formal role parents can and do play in schools. It recognizes the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, otherwise known as MAPC, as the representative organization for school-based groups, with the exception of the DSFM. The Fédération des parents du Manitoba continues to represent parents in the DSFM, and I know that they continue to do so very, very well.

I'm very pleased to make reference in legislation to MAPC, as this dedicated organization and its executive have provided helpful resources to parents, given constructive advice to parents and been an important recourse to helping inform the decision-making process in the K-to-12 education system. I personally want to thank President Marilyn Kolody, her executive and executive director, Naomi Kruse, for their ongoing work, their support and their dedication to this great cause.

This bill sets out the requirement for the minister to meet MAPC annually. We value their opinion and the important contribution they give to our kids' education. They have been instrumental in our development of the class-size initiative.

This bill also formalizes, at the school level, the role that parent council plays in the development of the annual school plan. The bill also sets out the role of the principal in providing information to parents on the role, function and creation of parent groups. Principals will now be required to inform parents of the role of parent council. This will encourage more parents to get involved in their child's school. It is my understanding that this is already happening in many schools, and it is encouraging that our principals and parents are taking such a proactive approach.

Mr. Speaker, we know that children do better in school when our education system is strong and when parents are actively engaged as partners in education. We've committed to providing some online tools to help parents get involved, and I encourage all of you in this House to stay tuned for an announcement soon about that particular aspect of learning and parent involvement.

I want to thank MAPC for serving on our report card advisory committee. With their input, we've brought in our new parent-friendly, plain-language report card, which makes it easier for parents to help their kids learn. Mr. Speaker, I can say, as a parent myself, that report cards didn't always make sense to me. Having now, as minister, reviewed the new report card, I do find it much easier to understand. Its plain language provides an opportunity for parents to be intimately involved in the education of their children. This new report card is now mandatory in all schools and will be arriving home to parents very soon.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we've put in laws to keep kids in school until they're 18 and help reinforce the importance of good attendance. We've put more teachers in classrooms and built and expanded schools. We keep kids in schools 'til they're 18 with the idea of improving our graduation rates, and I'm pleased to report that our graduation rates are over 84 per cent.

Our antibullying legislation, which was opposed by the opposition in every specific detail everywhere along the way for considerable, considerable months, and I hear the member from Steinbach cheer that particular aspect, that particular opposition. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker, that he feels so poorly about protecting all children in Manitoba. It's a shame that the member from Steinbach doesn't want to have GSAs in schools. It's a shame that he doesn't want to have respect for diversity policies in schools. It's a shame that he's taken this backwards, 19th-century approach to schooling when, in fact, he should wake up and recognize this is the 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, we're well on our way to our—in our commitment to reduce class sizes for K—for the K to grade 3. We've already reduced large classes by 41 per cent, and, again, we want to thank MAPC for participating in our class size advisory committee.

We've established common in-service days within schools to help families co-ordinate their busy schedules.

Mr. Speaker, education quality is critically important to this side of the House. We want to make Manitoba's education system as good as it can possibly be. We're working with parents and teachers, administrators and principals every day to improve a system, to make sure that our kids not only have good, successful, productive lives, but they go on to have good jobs and raise healthy families and to be proud Manitobans throughout the rest of the 21st century.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*(15:30)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I listened with interest to the Minister of Education who is working every day, he says, with administration, but doesn't ask them any questions—never asked them how often schools are locked down, doesn't ask them the reasons that they're locked down, never asked them how often drugs are found in schools, never asked them the kind of drugs that are found in schools, doesn't ask them if there's ever weapons found in school, doesn't want to know what kind of weapons are found in schools.

But he trumpets the safe charter act, he trumpets the safe charter act, which he didn't even know was an Education bill last week. He thought it was a Justice bill; he was completely confused, doesn't know what legislation is even in his own portfolio, Mr. Speaker, so maybe that's why he wasn't asking the questions. Maybe now that he realizes that that actually falls under the Department of Education he'll go and he'll learn.

Unfortunately, when he talks about safety, we still have so many kids who are getting bullied. Last week I had a parent come into my office and we had a discussion about their daughter who was being bullied, and I won't get into the difficult details other than, you know, she said to me, I thought there was a law last year that would protect this. And I said not for any of the reasons your daughter's getting bullied, and she was quite disappointed that false hope that she was given. But I said, you know, there are things that could be done that might have helped, for example, actually having consequences, and she said, well, why weren't there consequences within the bill. I said, because the government voted against it, the minister of Education didn't think it was important to ensure that your child was protected in that way. So it is unfortunate that the government doesn't seem to care about the protection of children, and, hopefully, there'll be other ways to resolve the situation with the

young girl involved, even though this Minister of Education doesn't care about her.

We certainly did hear at the committee on this particular bill regarding issues around MAPC, and certainly we all believe that there should be good involvement with parents and that our school system is made stronger when parents are involved. But there were specific concerns raised about the current structure of MAPC and whether it was prepared for this kind of legislation. We had lifetime members, I'm not sure if the Minister of Education was there or not, I know he wasn't the minister at the time, but at that committee there were lifetime members of MAPC come forward and spoke against this. In fact, ironically, every presenter that evening spoke against this bill; there was not one presenter who actually spoke in favour. So he talks about how everybody is so happy and in favour, but I guess that just leads me to the conclusion he wasn't there, wasn't listening or didn't read the Hansard from the committee, because every single presenter, including lifetime—

An Honourable Member: Or all of the above.

Mr. Goertzen: Or all of the above, including lifetime members of MAPC came out and said that they didn't think this legislation was right at this time. They were hoping that it would be suspended and held up until some of the issues surrounding the organization's structure could be answered. Clearly, that hasn't happened. The Minister of Education is too busy filling himself with bluster instead of trying to get some answers.

So, for those reasons, we will not support it at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I just want to put a few words on the record here. I am, and we in the Liberal Party are, very supportive of parent councils. I think they play a vitally important role in helping to support education in our schools, to encourage their children in learning and provide a vital link between the schools and the community. So we're certainly supportive of measures which will strengthen those links.

I must say I'm a little surprised that the bill puts in legislation something which would seem to be common sense and which one would have thought would have been happening annually, and had hoped that it would be happening annually for years and years. But in this bill the minister is required to meet with the association annually. And one can only conclude that the reason for this is that the minister

under the NDP have not been meeting the association annually and that in order to make sure that the—their own minister is meeting with the association annually, they're now putting this in legislation to make sure that the minister actually does his job.

Now most of, you know, my experience in politics is that if you're a minister of Education that you're going to meet with the relevant groups: the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba association of school—actually, it's not MAST anymore; it's the Manitoba association of school boards, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, et cetera, and including the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. And one would hope that the minister would not only meet with them but actually attend perhaps their annual meeting, or at least be there and available for questions. I mean, I was, you know, encouraged that the NDP wanted to meet with councillors and reeves and mayors at the AMM meetings in Brandon because, clearly, they needed to reconnect because there's been a bit of a disconnect between many reeves and councils and mayors and members of the Cabinet in—under this NDP government. So, clearly, this is another instance where there needs to be a reconnection of the minister and the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils because this is, you know, a vitally important part of what one had assumed that was the minister's job to meet with the association annually.

Now, I'm glad that we're putting it in legislation that the minister must do his job. I'm a little bit surprised that it's actually necessary to do that, but what was not present in this was any, you know, any penalty for the minister if he doesn't do his job. You know, one would've expected that if the NDP were serious that they would have put in, you know, a reduction of the minister's salary perhaps if he wasn't doing his job properly or some other measure. But, certainly, this is a start, and maybe the reduction in the salary will come later if he doesn't do his job properly. Perhaps the NDP will find themselves out of government. I think that's actually quite likely, and because, you know, one shouldn't ordinarily have to put in legislation that the minister does his job or her job, but if that's the way the NDP feel they have to operate in order to get things done, then so be it.

I think the same thing applies to principals consulting with the school's parent advisory council or the school committee. One would've hoped that

this was happening naturally under the ordinary due process of—and the ordinary course of events, but if the NDP feel that this is, you know, what would normally be happening is not happening and should happen, well, fine for that. We'll certainly support this. So we're just surprised that legislation to do this would actually be necessary.

So, with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this legislation passing, but I hope in the future the NDP will find other ways of doing—getting their job done rather than having to write it in legislation first.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 14?

House ready for the question?

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 14, The Education Administration Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act (Parent Groups for Schools).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

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

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Bill 44—The International Education Act

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call Bill 44, The International Education Act, as amended in report stage.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Advanced Learning (Mr. Allum), that Bill 44, The International Education Act; Loi sur l'éducation internationale, reported from the Standing

Committee on Human Resources and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

* (15:40)

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): I rise today to speak today to the third reading of Bill 44, The International Education Act. And I'm particularly pleased to speak to this bill for two reasons: one, because it highlights the critical and important role that international students make to our educational community here in Manitoba, to the contribution they make to our city and our province and how they enrich us by their very presence here in Manitoba.

I also just want to take a second to say that I'm pleased to speak to this bill because it highlights the coming together of two departments into one, bringing the K-to-12 and the post-secondary side of education together and we're now trying to speak more completely and fully to the continuum of education here in Manitoba, Mr. province—and today I've had the opportunity to get up to speak to a few bills on the K-to-12 side, and now I'm very pleased to be able to do one on the post-secondary side, because it indicates, at least to me, Mr. Speaker, and I think to members of this side of the House and to the government and to Manitobans more generally, that we're working to make sure that we connect the points in our education system from the very earliest stage to lifelong learning. And this bill, I think, highlights what we're trying to do not only with respect to international students but to the education portfolio more broadly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this bill will make Manitoba the first province to codify best practices for ensuring the integrity of Manitoba's international education providers and the welfare and safety of the students they host.

This act will help keep students safe. Let me say that again: This act will help keep students safe. It will allow the Province to inspect and investigate any education provider. It will suspend or cancel any provider's right to recruit and enrol students if they were to violate the code or the act. It will fine any education provider between \$25,000 and \$100,000 if they commit an offence such as providing false or misleading information or obstructing its inspections and investigations, and, finally, it will help to collect

new information in order to promote better understanding of Manitoba's international student body.

At committee hearings on the bill and in the course of consultations with stakeholders, we have received praise for our efforts to promote Manitoba as a safe and high-quality destination for international students from across the world.

We are privileged to work with Manitoba's post-secondary institutions who, above all else, govern their work with student well-being and educational quality in mind. We 'implaude' their effort—we applaud their efforts to safeguard Manitoba's quality education brand, and we sincerely appreciate their efforts to work with us to ensure that we have among the best post-secondary education systems not only in Canada but in the world.

Mr. Speaker, students come from around the world to study in Manitoba. The number of international students on our campuses has more than doubled in the past 10 years. In fact, Manitoba attracts over 6,000 international students from all around the world every year to pursue their education, and just a few weeks ago in room 200 here in the Legislature, I had to go—a chance to go celebrate with our international student community the great achievements of that community, to 'cebre!'—celebrate the award winners from that community and to talk and speak with them and to learn a little bit more about them. They're proud to live here in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. They're proud to do their education here and we're proud to have them here. We hope they'll stay for many more years to come.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to protect students' safety, and we'll want to maintain our reputation as a destination of choice for international students by ensuring that we protect students who come to our province to study. This bill governs education providers that enrol international students as well as the persons who recruit international students. To enrol international students, an education provider must be designated. Universities, colleges and other specified education provisers—providers are designated automatically. Others are required to apply to become designated and their designation may be subject to conditions. Education providers and recruiters must comply with the code of practice and conduct to be set out in the regulation. The code will provide consistent standards for education providers and their recruiters in dealing with international students. Education

providers and recruiters are also prohibited from engaging in misleading or deceptive conduct with international students. Additional protection is provided by requiring education providers to make a list of their recruiters available to the public on the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, funding for universities and colleges has more than doubled since 1999, increasing by more than \$300 million, and, over the last three years, we have increased funding by 12.5 per cent, one of the biggest increases in Canada. In addition, we have frozen university tuition fees at the rate of inflation, and this year, I'm proud to say, we have the third lowest university tuition fees in Canada and the second lowest college tuition fees in Canada.

Contrast this with the 1990s when the opposition leader was a senior minister in the Filmon government. You know what, Mr. Speaker? During that era tuition fees skyrocketed by 132 per cent and enrolment in universities and colleges decreased by 8 per cent from 1993 to 1999. Now, the Leader of the Opposition, a former teacher, someone who should have a vested interest in Manitoba's education system, is proposing to cut \$550 million in—across the board not only to our educational system, not only to our universities and colleges, but across the board to hurt students, to hurt parents and to put Manitoba back not only to the 20th century, but to 19th century.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you one thing I'm not going to do as Education Minister, we're not going back to the 1990s when young people were fleeing the province to go to school, to find a job and build a better life. No, we're going to work with students to keep them here, to keep them as Manitoba citizens, to enrich our community, to enrich our neighbourhoods, to enrich our cities, to enrich this province and to ensure, once and for all, that we have the best education system not only in this province, but in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 44, The International Education Act. I find it quite ironic that some of the comments of the minister just a moment ago—I know they don't believe in Stats Canada, but post-secondary enrolments by province between 2010-2011, 2011-2012, the post-secondary enrolments in Manitoba dropped the most of any province in Canada. And he's talking about

increasing enrolments and all the—everything's coming up wonderful, -1.7, the biggest drop anywhere in Canada, from 62,000 down to 60,900. That is in spite of these lauded investments in education. They are still not retaining student enrolment.

I've said on a couple occasions on Bill 44 that, you know, it's almost like a redundant act. It's one that they're making a lot of claims on, but, you know, the universities and the major colleges already all have their own protocols in place. This act won't even impact them. They've got their systems up and running.

So, basically, this is an act dealing with the private vocational institutes of which there's about 52 in the province, and they are also very extremely regulated prior to this act, so regulated that it—that sometimes their programming opportunities are limited. The National Association of Career Colleges represents over 400 institutions in Canada and approximately 94,000 students, and they do administer their own organizations and the career colleges that belong to them. And this is almost a duplication of what they do. They are administered by the private vocational institutes—unit and governed by The Private Vocational Institutions Act and its attendant regulation 237/02.

* (15:50)

So the regulations are in place to cover this, as the bill is truly an unnecessary bill.

What the bill actually is doing is, at a time when we want foreign students in Manitoba, because of the—well, for several reasons—we need more professional people in the province, but also there's an economic impact to the province by foreign students coming here, and it's a positive economic impact.

So now we're putting in place a piece of legislation that effectively is a roadblock to foreign students coming in. Most of the private vocational institutes will say, we just won't bother with even trying to recruit foreign students.

This piece of legislation also actually, probably, raises some privacy concerns simply because of the information that's going to be collected on recruiters and on the institutes. So I really believe the institutes simply aren't even going to look for extra foreign students. There's—at the present time, there's something like only in all the private—the career colleges, there's only about six students, I think, I found

somewhere here that are actually recruited into the private vocational institutes.

Robertson College, the largest private college in Manitoba, has zero international students, and indicated that they probably aren't interested in taking on any more—even looking for foreign students because of the regulations and the roadblocks that this legislation puts in place.

As written, The International Education Act will prevent Manitoba career colleges from fully participating in Manitoba's efforts to become a destination of choice for international students. This hurts not only the career college sector but education in Manitoba as a whole.

So I think this legislation effectively defeats what the end goal really is, and that's unfortunate. The—we want to expand our private vocational colleges, and, as I said earlier, the really large ones—the universities and the large colleges—already have all the steps in place.

Manitoba's private vocational institutes are, as I said earlier, already thoroughly regulated through the private vocational institutes branch. But this bill contains clauses that seem to essentially double up powers that are already there for the director of private vocational institutes.

Article 8(3)(b) requires the PVI's to give information to the director of international students that is already routinely given to the director of private vocational institutes. It would make far more sense if this information wasn't just shared between the two directors, instead of creating another bureaucracy collecting exactly the same information.

Article 8(4) states: the director of international students may inspect the premises of any institution applying for a designation. The private vocational institute director is already empowered to do just such an inspection. Why, once again, do you have duplication of a service? All it does is create more bureaucracy, less financing going into front-line services, quite literally.

And article 12(2)(a) gives the director of international students the power to block particular training program if it fails to meet genuine education or training needs. Under the private vocational institute act, which already exists, as I said before, training programs already have to meet that criteria in order to be registered.

So what you essentially have here is an act that is duplicating an existing act. It's—and, for some reason, they seem to think this is an improvement, but it's duplicating an existing act that has the powers there already. And what it does is it's going to curtail the recruitment of foreign students into our systems—foreign students that we want very badly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put a few words on the record here. I think that all of us in Manitoba should be proud of the fact that we have many international students coming to our province, that this has been very important, you know, to Manitoba, to the quality of education, because it—each of these students brings their own experience. And, when you have a classroom which has a mix of international and Manitoba students, it enriches the whole classroom, the knowledge that individuals bring from different places around the world.

And this has enriched Manitoba for many other reasons. One of those being that, you know, quite a proportion of those who come here as international students have decided to stay—they have decided to stay and become teachers or engineers or business people here in Manitoba and make a major contribution to our province. I have, you know, many friends who have been in this position, and they are here because they were attracted here because of the opportunities for education and because we were open to international students coming from around the world and because we ensured that we had good quality education.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the perplexing comments that the minister made was about how this was a major step forward bringing together primary, secondary and post-secondary education, and certainly his remarks would suggest that for the last 14 years the NDP have been on the wrong track, and that may be so. Most of us—you know, many people who I know would, you know, agree with the fact that the NDP have been on the wrong track for much of the last 14 years. And—but it takes more than just bringing together primary, secondary and post-secondary education to have an effective approach to international students.

I think one of the things that the minister said is that he wanted to bring in this legislation so that it would facilitate, enable—or ensure, I think it was, best practices in the education of international students. Now the—most of the things in this legislation deal

with, you know, recruitment of students, they don't necessarily deal with the quality of education, the outcomes of the students in terms of, for example, students coming here to learn English, how well they learn English, how quickly they learn English, whether they learn English to the extent that they need, whether it is in—if they're going back to their own country or whether they're involvement in international trade or whether they're staying here to work. And it could be at the Université de Saint-Boniface, it could be learning French.

But whatever language it may be that—or whatever subject it may be, that the important thing is the quality of the learning experience and the quality of the learning that is being done by the international students, as well as the quality of their experience here.

* (16:00)

I think no one would disagree that it's very important to ensure that there is no fraud, so no misrepresentation to international students. But at the same time it is very important that we are encouraging our institutions like the Robertson College, as was mentioned not very long ago by the MLA for Agassiz, that we should be encouraging all our institutions, large and small, to be involved in international education rather than putting in a whole lot of barriers, which may be quite restrictive and may not necessarily achieve what we want to achieve, which is ensuring the high quality—the highest possible quality of the education and the educational experience of international students.

There was, as was pointed out, and, I think, importantly by Bilan Arte when she presented, that there has been a problem in Manitoba with the International College of Manitoba and—but it would seem to me that this could have been addressed much—in a much improved way without involving the sort of bureaucracy and orange tape which—and the extra fees, which is being used here. I have heard from a variety of concerned—both the public-sector universities as well as private-sector institutions, colleges and so on that—the importance of facilitating, having international students here rather than putting up barriers and roadblocks and, in fact, doing things which may be problems in terms of our privacy legislation.

You know, I think the goal here is a good goal, and I think that the government could've brought in a much better approach instead of the legislation that they did. Certainly, you know, the praise, perhaps,

that could be described to this is that the government has, instead of using on-target leadership, has used off-target manipulation and inappropriate use of resources to build up, you know, bureaucratic processes rather than focusing in on ensuring that the quality of education is of the highest standard and that the experience of international students.

I don't see here a—I don't see here—for example, one would've expected, if we're talking best practices, that this government would've presented to us, you know, some research which actually measured the outcomes—the learning of international students here in Manitoba. How many international students were interviewed? What did they say about their experience here? What were the problems? We should've had a—some detail and carefully done research presented by this government as a basis for bringing forward this legislation, you know, that here are the problems, here's what we want to achieve, here are what the international students are telling us.

But instead the government has, you know, plowed in without providing us, you know, the evidence that they are, in fact, bringing in best practices. And, you know, sadly, part of the problem here is that, over the last several years, the government has misled the people of Manitoba so often, whether it's in flood-related matters or the PST or other matters, saying one thing and then doing something else, that it is not enough anymore for them to say that this is best practices, that they should actually have demonstrated this with some good, solid based research in which they had looked at the international students' experiences, how this compared to elsewhere, what was happening in terms of the learning outcomes of students. And I think we could've had some legislation which would've been much better than this, which would've not been duplicating existent registries and existing things which are already present and which have been a significant contribution, instead of building up a more bureaucratic approach.

And so I think that the effort, the goal, perhaps, is a good one, that we had some very good contributions at the committee stage, as I mentioned by Bilan Arte, and by a number of people representing various institutions involved in international student education.

I just feel, in this instance, that we could've had better legislation, that the government could've listened to what was said at committee stage and brought forward, you know, more improvements to

this legislation, and that they should have given us the research base on which this education bill was brought forward, rather than just saying, oh, this is best practices, when, in fact, they haven't given us the evidence for that, that this will, in fact, lead to improved educational outcomes for international students and improved experiences for international students.

So, Mr. Speaker, let us make sure, before we proceed with something like this, that we are, in fact, you know, improving our ability to host international students and to do that better, to be innovative in our approach and improving the experience, rather than just engaging in a bureaucratic exercise, much of which will actually duplicate what's already being done, at considerable additional cost to institutions who could use those dollars to improve services to students and educational experiences to students, rather than just, you know, fulfilling this—the appetite of this government for additional bureaucracy.

So those are my comments on this legislation, Mr. Speaker. I think it could have been much better than it is.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 44?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question. The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 44, The International Education Act, as amended.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of Bill 44, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

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

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Bill 8—The Provincial Court Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call Bill 8, The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson), that The Provincial Court Amendment Act—that Bill 8, The Provincial Court Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour provinciale, reported from the Standing Committee on Justice, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, this is another bill as we move ahead to increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of our court in Manitoba. This bill will provide for the use of electronic documents in the Provincial Court. The federal Criminal Code of Canada allows the use of electronic documents in relation to matters under that statute, provided that their use is in accordance either with the rules of the Provincial Court or an act of the Legislature. This bill will enable their use for Criminal Code matters, as well as matters related to other provincial or federal enactments. This bill is going to support the ongoing work to develop and implement an electronic system in court and eliminate most of the paper processes currently used.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Court of Manitoba is a very busy court. It handles the vast majority of criminal matters in the province of Manitoba, as well as a number of family matters and child protection matters, as well, outside of major centres. And anyone who's attended Provincial Court is aware that almost the entire process is paper-based. And moving ahead to allow the acceptance of electronic documents in the court system will increase the efficiency of our courts, our police and our other partners in the justice system. It will continue to modernize and streamline the system. There is no question that reducing and, in many cases, eliminating paper will streamline the criminal justice system and significantly reduce its paperwork.

Mr. Matt Wiebe, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

* (16:10)

This amendment specifies that electronic documents may be filed with and created by the Provincial Court. The amendment also specifies that

if a document is filed and is required to be signed, an electronic signature as specified in the regulations will be considered to be valid. Scanned documents can also be received and used to process matters in Provincial Court.

As I've said, Mr. Acting Speaker, it's one of a number of innovations on the justice front across many, many different areas in justice. Of course, on the policing side we've been proud to assist in the cost of Winnipeg's auxiliary police cadets that are now up and running and very successful in the city of Winnipeg. Of course, the Province of Manitoba shares the cost of the police helicopter with the City of Winnipeg. As the members know, we've made amendments to The Manitoba Public Insurance Act to reduce the need for individuals to attend at police stations to report, all of which are intended to free up our police officers to do the things that they are best trained to do.

As well, within our courts, we know there are many other things that we can do, and it's one of only a series of advancements, some of which have been announced and some are yet to come, and, of course, one of those that's very important to the court system is the advent of video conferencing. Video conferencing is now being used far more widely, especially in the North. Since the video conferencing project came online we've been able to save many transfers and many tens of thousands of kilometres of transport for sheriffs and correctional officials, especially in the North, and we've also improved the effectiveness of the court.

And, of course, Bill 8 will move very well, along with Bill 38 which is also before this Legislature. Bill 38 is a major overhaul of how summary conviction offences, now to be called provincial offences, are handled, the first real advancement in some 60 years. And, as well, Bill 38 will provide for greater municipal bylaw enforcement for Manitoba's municipalities.

And I can tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, it was certainly a warm reception at AMM in Brandon. Municipalities across Manitoba were very pleased with the work that the Department of Justice is doing to assist them in enforcing their by-laws, enforcing public order on the front lines, frankly, in municipalities, and they were very pleased, not just with the legislation, but with the work of officials in my department. And I know those officials have been out meeting with communities, providing additional information, and even this morning at AMM in

Brandon there was a plenary session which was being hosted by Justice Department officials, giving municipalities more information on how this will make their matters more efficient, save legal fees, save other costs and, most importantly, take issues which likely should not be in the provincial court system, outside of the provincial court system and let us move cases more quickly.

Frankly, I mean, the only surprise that members of AMM had is that Bill 38 was still to be passed, but we did explain the way that matters were worked out. I'm very pleased that that bill will be coming to a vote on December the 5th, and I'm certainly hopeful that this House will unanimously support that piece of legislation which, again, works so closely hand in hand with Bill 8 as we move ahead to modernize and streamline the court and allow for electronic documents.

So, again, this is one of another—many measures that we're making. I want to congratulate the Provincial Court for the work they're doing, for the efforts they're making to work with courts and with the rest of the department to try and improve the delivery of justice in Manitoba. So I certainly encourage all members to support Bill 8. Thank you.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm indeed pleased to rise to speak to Bill 8, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, and I listened intently to the minister's comments. I can't say that I had the same experience at AMM that they are pleased, but perhaps he has a different perspective on how the AMM individuals, all the delegates are pleased or not pleased with the government actions.

But, anyway, on this particular act, it's interesting that the government has just discovered that computers exist. I know they have been existence for many, many years, and so it is nice that perhaps the government is moving ahead to utilize computers and electronic signatures, electronic documents to enhance and, indeed, try to deal with some of the backlogs in our court system which we know is delaying justice in Manitoba to a great extent.

I am, though, a little bit concerned when we talked about security, and especially when I look at how the Auditor General is concerned about security in IT systems in the government. She was very concerned that there is not a culture of security existing in the IT departments, and wanted to make sure that that is something they could start to look at, especially when we look at breaches of security such

as the Brandon University breach that occurred, and the University only became aware of it when the individual that hacked the website actually told them about it. And, indeed, that is common, that intrusions into electronic devices and such are—often go undetected unless the individual does make it aware, because usually they, at this case, are going in and looking at the information, maybe not modifying but have made use of it for their own purposes. And then, of course, we had the hack of the Lieutenant Governor's website.

So this does bring us to the question: Do we have a culture of security in the IT systems in Manitoba and, indeed, can this be something that Manitobans can be assured of, that these significant documents are correct and will be maintained correct? It is very important if you are submitting an electronic document through the court system that we are assured that the documents are correct, that they're maintained accurately and that they have not been modified by someone that is hacking into the system.

So that is a critical part of it that is not really covered throughout this act, and it is something that I know we did address with the department through the Public Accounts Committee to make sure that they, at least, had an idea that there is the need for this culture of security in electronic documents and is something that perhaps they have not paid enough attention to. So, obviously, when we see hacks like the Brandon University student records and the Lieutenant Governor's website occurring, those are hacks that we became away of—aware of because of the actions of the hacker. How many others did those occur to? How many other intrusions have there been into government systems? So can the government assure Manitobans that these electronic documents will be accurate, will be maintained with accuracy and will not be able to be modified by somebody that is intruding into the system?

So, again, something that is obviously in use in other places, long past-due in Manitoba and certainly something that we hope will help the government to deal with the vast backlog of cases through our justice system that have been preventing justice from being served in Manitoba and something that may help move things along, although there does seem to be some concern about how that would actually happen, whether it would make a difference in terms of the cost of court systems in Manitoba, both to the plaintiffs and to the defendants and, of course, to Manitobans as a whole. So thank you. At that point, I

believe there may be others that wish to speak on this. So definitely concerns about security and we'll met—want to make sure that the government is aware. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I think it is important that we are moving forward and improving our ability to use electronic communications for legal purposes and for the operation of the courts; this is a good thing. One of the things which would have been helpful if the minister, whether in legislation or separately, provided some assurances that, you know, the communication was not only going to be acceptable but that we were going to have adequate addressing of privacy issues with what has transpired in the last number of weeks, in the last few months with the amount of electronic spying that that has been going on around the world and the ability of various organizations to access electronic communications without necessarily having authorization to do so that it becomes particularly important, that when we're working with legal circumstances, you know, family matters or other matters where privacy could be tremendously important and confidentiality tremendously important, that whatever system is set up, that, in fact, we have the assurance that it will meet high standards in this area of privacy, of encryption or whatever mechanism is being chosen.

* (16:20)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair.

It—in the use of electronic communications, one of the things that's become very apparent is the fact that when we have warrants delivered to a house, when we've got notices delivered, that's it's important that we be assured that the person has actually received those. The same applies in terms of electronic communications. What sort of assurance is there that a person has actually received the message? And, from my experience, there can be a whole variety of reasons: Internet service can be down temporarily; a person can be, for whatever reason, not using their computer for a while; they could be travelling and not where there is Internet access; there could be, you know, temporary problems with the computer. So that the assurance that somebody has actually received electronic communication, a system needs to be there to ensure that there is confirmation that the electronic message has actually been confirmed.

There needs to be a requirement or an ability to be assured that whatever the message is, that it's not

been altered; that the message or the legal document, whatever it may be, it's absolutely essential that people who are receiving it can have assurance that it is—has got integrity; that it is the real document and not some, you know, fraudulent document. I mean, I think most people who have used email know that from time to time you get all sorts of fraudulent documents and that you have to be quite careful.

And so, if we're, you know, building an electronic system on electronic documents, electronic communications, we need to be absolutely sure that we have valid documents and that they have integrity. And there would need, I presume, to be an approach to make sure that there is some sort of a back-up system where the integrity of the document can be checked.

And, indeed, it's a—perhaps a little bit surprising that there wasn't, under the regulations, a regulation which requires the ascertaining of the integrity of documents and of ensuring that there is some sort of back-up system so that if one computer or server goes down, that we're not completely lost and the documents are not lost or changed.

So we certainly support this effort. We hope that the Minister of Justice is going to ensure that, as the system develops, that all these safeguards are there and that they're there in a high-quality system.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to support this legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 8?

House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 8, The Provincial Court Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 16—The Department of Justice
Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 16, The Department of Justice Amendment Act.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 16, The Department of Justice Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Justice, reported from the Standing

Committee on Justice, be concurred in and be now read for the third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Speaker, this bill responds to a need to ensure there's a fair and equitable process to retain and compensate legal counsel when a court determines that a person is entitled by law to government-funded legal representation, or that a lawyer ought otherwise to be retained to assist the court.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees all persons charged with a criminal offence the right to a fair trial. It also guarantees people fundamental justice in situations where life, liberty or security of the person is at issue. In order to fulfill these protections, the courts have the authority to direct the government to provide a lawyer to those who require legal assistance but are not financially able to retain a lawyer privately, or not eligible for legal aid under a province's legal aid plan.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, this duty might exceed the grasp of Manitoba's or any other provincial's legal aid plan. Even though Manitoba has one of the broadest legal aid plans in the country, we are aware of an increasing number of situations where individuals who are not eligible for legal aid are granted coverage by a lawyer by the court. And this will usually occur in serious criminal matters or in child welfare proceedings. When the court makes such an order, the government does not become directly involved in the process for retaining and compensating the lawyer, to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

The bill before the Legislature will permit a process to be set out by regulation to retain and compensate lawyers who are approved in this fashion. It's anticipated the regulation will allow Legal Aid Manitoba to manage the matter, and will ensure that the lawyers who are retained are compensated in the same manner as those who accept legal aid certificates.

The bill also addresses another situation where the courts may order that a lawyer be appointed. In some instances, a person may not have a lawyer by choice, or they may not be able to find a lawyer who is willing to take their case. In these circumstances, a court may direct that a lawyer assist the court by performing certain functions in the trial, functions that will serve to protect the accused's constitutional rights or the rights of parents in child welfare cases.

Another example may be in a domestic violence case; if someone is unrepresented by a lawyer, a lawyer may still be appointed for an unrepresented accused, for the purposes of questioning the victim, frankly, Mr. Speaker, to avoid an abuser from being able to further harass in open court the victim.

The rates to be paid to the lawyers who offer this service to the courts will be paid according to regulation at a rate equivalent to that paid to private lawyers by Legal Aid Manitoba.

The bill permits lawyers employed by Legal Aid Manitoba to act in the two situations I've described above. If this occurs, the government will compensate Legal Aid Manitoba for the lawyer's services at the rate set out in the regulations.

Of course, legal aid in Canada is, on criminal matters, is a right, it's not a privilege. And I need to put on the record that Manitoba has been doing the best it can to maintain its legal aid system, first of all, in historical low interest rates, which has created some difficulties with the amount of money The Manitoba Law Foundation is able to provide, but also successive governments in Ottawa which have failed to maintain the partnership with Manitoba and other provinces and territories with respect to legal aid.

There was a time when the government in Ottawa provided equal funding to the Province of Manitoba for Legal Aid Manitoba's services; over time the federal percentage in legal aid funding has dropped from an equal share down to only 16 per cent. Similar provinces and territories across the country are reporting this concern. And despite it being on the agenda, frankly, every time provincial and territorial ministers meet with the federal government, there has been zero increase since 2006 and it continues to be a concern, which is one of the reasons why Bill 16 is necessary.

We certainly support a strong legal aid system. We support renewing that agreement with the federal government and we're hoping the federal government will move, and I'm certain that whatever the political stripes of various provinces and territories across the country would agree with that.

So certainly this is a bill which we think is important to comply with Manitoba's constitutional obligation, and also make sure the costs of complying with that are in line with the provincial legal aid system and not above that.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I hope that all members of this House will support Bill 16. Thank you.

* (16:30)

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 16, The Department of Justice Amendment Act.

And is interesting to listen to the minister's reasons for the legislation and seems like a bit of a work-around for the legal aid system that has not received much of a change in funding, I'm told by many people, for many, many years. Although I understand there was an increase to the Legal Aid budget of some \$1.1 million over the last years, the thresholds did not change, and, indeed, accessibility did not change.

So it is necessary that we have access to the system to make sure that people have availability of legal counsel so that they can make a proper defence throughout the system, so, indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is necessary to make sure that is available. The question, of course, comes from where does the money come from this. And I don't know that we find out in this act at all, and it's something that is a bit of a grey area there. So where the money comes from, we'll find that out, no doubt, in possibly the next budget.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will allow others to speak to this.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just to indicate support for this bill and looking forward to its passage by the end of next week. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 16?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question? And called—the question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 16, The Department of Justice Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 25—The Statutory Publications Modernization Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call Bill 25, The Statutory Publications Modernization Act as amended.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the

Minister of Housing and Community Development (Mr. Bjornson), that Bill 25, The Statutory Publications Modernization Act; Loi sur la modernisation du mode de diffusion des publications officielles, reported from the Standing Committee on Justice and subsequently amended, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Swan: I'm pleased to speak on third reading of Bill 25, which is a surprisingly long act for some fairly basic things we want to accomplish in order to modernize the way that Manitobans can be sure of what the law in the province is.

This bill will replace two acts with two new acts. The existing Regulations Act will be replaced by the new statutes and regulations act. Since 2002, the government of Manitoba has provided the public with free online access to the acts and regulations of Manitoba through the Manitoba Laws website. However, at present, the online version does not enjoy the same official status as the print version published by the Queen's Printer. This new act will give official status to the online bilingual version of the acts and regulations. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, an official version is considered to be accurate and proof of its enactment is not required.

This new act will continue the existing system for registering regulations, but will shift the focus from print publication to electronic publication. Currently, regulations must be published in the Manitoba Gazette, and publication in the Gazette is official notice to all persons. Under the new act, the publication of a regulation on the Manitoba Laws website will be official notice, and its publication in the Gazette will no longer be required.

As I believe came out of our discussions at committee and even our discussion with some of the report stage amendments that were brought forward, the interest in receiving printed versions of these regulations is very, very, very small. I understand that now the number of subscribers for laws in Manitoba is now fewer than 60, and the number of individuals who—or corporations who subscribe for printed regulations is now less than 30. So most Manitobans, not surprisingly, choose to get their information from searching out a fairly user-friendly and modern system on the Internet.

This new act will also give Legislative Counsel the power to make minor corrections and changes to acts and regulations that do not change their legal

effect. Notices of such changes will, in most cases, be published on the Manitoba Laws website. I know we—at report stage amendments, we had some amendments that were put forward on this; although we think that the law was already clear, we didn't have any difficulty in accepting some amendments which perhaps can provide even greater clarity to Manitobans.

The outdated Public Printing Act will now be replaced by a new Queen's Printer act. This new act will enable the electronic publishing of statutory publications.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we move ahead in so many areas, we think that statutory publications was an area which was long overdue for some attention. I therefore look forward to the support of this House in having the bill passed. Thank you.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I'm indeed pleased to rise to speak to Bill 25, the Statutory Publications Modernization Act. And it's very amazing to see this government trying to move forward into the 21st century. I highly encourage that, and I am all in favour of anything that would increase the efficiency of government. We all look forward to that, when things are easier. So, indeed, I think that this is a positive step.

I do, though, have concerns about this, like we had with some previously—previous legislation. We do question whether there is the culture of security in IT services to make sure that these publications are accurate and have not been tampered with, so that the public is aware that what they're looking at is the real thing and not something that someone has modified, like a Wikipedia site, for instance, that they can go in and change at a whim. So we want to make sure that that security is available, also that there is reliable access. We've seen the government, through MPI, look at changing their computer systems. And there has been challenge—there have been challenges there, Mr. Speaker, in terms of access, in terms of when those systems are available for people to use, and, indeed, is something that—excuse me—we would have—be necessary in this that there is reliable access when the public wants to use these. And, of course, the cost of storage is something that is not well-defined in the act at all, and sometimes things of this nature do take on lives of their own. We have seen storage systems greatly outstrip the initial cost of what was estimated to put these systems into place. So those are cautions there that we want to make sure are covered by this

government, that the security is there, the access is there and, indeed, the storage is something that is not only reliable but also cost effective.

So I'm all about efficiency, Mr. Speaker. I think that that is a good step for the government to looking forward into the current century and a positive step in that regard. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, just briefly speak, you know, in support of this legislation. I want to pay tribute to the Legislative Counsel who has played a role in making sure that this bill came forward. There is—it's quite a lengthy bill. And I think it's important to note that there was, from what I can see, quite a bit of care put into this legislation. And I would look forward to it being passed and coming into effect in the very near future. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 25?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question?

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 25, The Statutory Publications Modernization Act, as amended.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, could you call Bill 20?

DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READING

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

Mr. Speaker: All right, we'll now proceed to resume debate on concurrence and third reading of Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended)—pardon me—(Various Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Finance—and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Finance?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, it is our intention to allow the

Minister of Finance to speak at third reading on this bill despite the fact that we denied leave to leave it standing in her name.

Mr. Speaker: So, just so I'm clear, leave—there's permission granted that the third reading debate, the Minister of Finance will be permitted to add her comments with respect to that at that time. That agreed? And she—and leave has been denied with respect to the amendment. Okay.

Is there debate on Bill 20?

* (16:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we have on Bill 20, the hoist motion here, which would require that the debate on the bill be postponed for a number of months.

Certainly, this is a bill which the government brought forward, requiring, of course, an increase in the PST and eliminating the need for a referendum.

Certainly, I've argued very strongly on a number of occasions in this—before the Chamber, that this referendum on the increase in the PST not be eliminated or obliterated by this government; that this is a normal part of the democratic process, that this was an expectation of people in Manitoba.

I have talked to many, many Manitobans. In fact, we held a forum in my constituency in River Heights, and the vast majority of people felt that there should be a referendum, that people should have the opportunity to have input on this bill, that the citizens of Manitoba, as is currently required by law, should have been able to vote whether or not that they agree with increasing the PST by 1 per cent, as this government is doing, or not.

And part of the reason for having such a referendum is, in fact, to ensure that the government explains clearly to people, in a very clear commitment, what their intention is with respect to spending the money that would be raised by this referendum.

Now, of course, when this government began, they said, oh, we're spending it on infrastructure, we're spending it on flood infrastructure, we're spending it on—and then they started talking about school infrastructure, and playground infrastructure, and hospital infrastructure. And pretty soon, you know, anything that, you know, was solid was considered infrastructure. It could be housing. It could be all sorts of things.

And, indeed, the government went around the province and made, you know, a large number of announcements; for a period we were getting them virtually every day. And those announcements were of—supposed to be representative of the sort of thing that this government was spending its PST on.

I remember one of the early ones was, this PST was to be spent on a gym built at the Queenston School in River Heights. Now that's a very important gym, and people have needed that gym for a long, long time. But it clearly was not what most people would have considered core infrastructure—roads or highways, bridges, and—but, instead, it's, you know, recreational and educational infrastructure—very important—but it became very diluted in terms of what the government was spending their PST on.

And, indeed, there were members of the government who were talking about social programs—addressing all sorts of issues with social programs—and that this was why that they had to increase the PST.

And so, pretty soon, with some 50 different proposals, it became very unclear as to how this money would be spent.

Now, finally, of course, in the Throne Speech, some many months after this budget was brought in, the government brought in the Throne Speech, and they said, oh, we're only going to spend it on core infrastructure. And then we started finding out what was core infrastructure, in terms of roads and bridges and flood infrastructure, and I began asking questions about what was considered to be road infrastructure.

And I raised the problem that, you know, when the first snow came, that people were having trouble getting back over night from Brandon because the Highway 1 wasn't cleared. And the problem here was that the—you know, the highway was there, the infrastructure was there, but it wasn't opened because the snow had not been cleared overnight, because this government had cut back on overnight snow clearing. And so I said, well, you know, Mr. Premier, is the clearing of snow basic core infrastructure? And he replied right away, yes, this is core infrastructure. And so we still have some things to find out about what is core infrastructure and what is not, because most of us would not have expected snow clearing to be core infrastructure, even though it is very, very important to have roads cleared and snow cleared off the roads so that people can travel.

So we're waiting still for some better answers on this, and I think it would be quite appropriate that the government be given, you know, probably another six months to make sure that it's not going to change its mind [*inaudible*] I think that, you know, after all the different answers that we have, that it would probably be a good idea to make sure that this government is going to be consistent for another six months. And it would also send an important message that, you know, if you think that you really have it right and you want to go to the people, then you should go to the people. I mean, there is still an opportunity to have a referendum, this bill is not passed.

As I pointed out to the government, which initially said that one of the reasons that they had to bring in the PST without a referendum was because they had to hurry up, right, because it would be much faster to bring in the PST without a referendum than to have a referendum first and then bring in the PST. And the fact of the matter is that, you know, our Elections Manitoba is a pretty efficient organization. We can all be pretty proud of Elections Manitoba—

An Honourable Member: If they call the by-election.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, that's the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) problem is calling the by-election. The Elections Manitoba would run it—

An Honourable Member: We can do the referendum at the same time.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. And the Premier's problem here was not calling the referendum, because I am sure that the Elections Manitoba could have run this referendum and done it in, you know, perhaps a little bit longer than it would take to do a by-election, 33 days, give them 40 days, right—40 days from April 16th or April 17th. We would've had this done probably by, well, no later than the end of May, which was months and months ago, and plenty of time to implement the PST when they wanted to implement it, which was July the 1st. But instead what this government did was to bring Bill 20 and try to manipulate its way around their legal requirement to have a referendum. And the fact of the matter is that, instead of this being done by the end of May, it wasn't done by the end of June; it wasn't done by the end of July; it wasn't done by the end of August; it wasn't done by the end of September; it wasn't done by the end of October. And I don't think it's going to be done by the end of November.

And so, you know, this government is typical in the way that it has acted. Instead of doing something that could be done simply with a referendum that would've been completed by the end of May, this government has stumbled around all the many months since then and is still in a position where Bill 20 is not passed, and they have implemented the PST without having the legal right, all right, because the legislation hasn't been passed to have done it without having a referendum. This government should've had a referendum, and I think that the reason for a hoist motion would be to give them an opportunity, some additional time, to consider and to do the referendum. And I hope that we'll have support from all the MLAs to make sure that the government has that additional time to have the referendum.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I'm appreciative of the opportunity to stand and speak on the hoist motion, and the reason that we brought in a hoist motion was indeed to give the government more time to think about this bad decision that they brought forward to raise the PST to 8 per cent and make it the highest PST in western Canada. And we were really hoping that the government would finally, you know, if they had opportunity to listen to people, maybe come to their senses and either stop the PST hike or at least call a referendum.

* (16:50)

So that was the whole point in the hoist motion, and the government still does have a chance. Because of the hoist motion and because of our ability to hold the government to account over the summer, we are still here debating Bill 20, and the government has an opportunity now to do the right thing. They have 'til the end of next week to change their mind and kill Bill 20 or at least call a referendum.

And, certainly, that would be more in keeping with what the government promised Manitobans in the last election, and they certainly did go door to door in the last election and they told everybody, when they were door-knocking, that they weren't going to raise taxes.

And what happened then, Mr. Speaker? Within months of making that commitment and getting elected on that commitment, they turned around and they did the opposite. In fact, they expanded the PST to a huge number of products and services, and it

was especially startling to see some of the services that they actually expanded the PST to.

And then in this last budget what we saw was the government actually increasing the PST by 14 per cent to 8 per cent. And, Mr. Speaker, I think everybody, when they heard that, had a very, very strong reaction to it. And we've seen that and heard that across the province. And I think the other part of it that really, really offended people was the fact that the government refused to follow the legislation that was currently on the books and is still currently in place, and that is to call a referendum when this particular tax is increased. So the government didn't do that.

We've also since found out that the experts in the tax department, in the Finance department, actually prepared a briefing note for the government and advised them against doing this, indicating that, as long as the current legislation was in place, that the government should not be going ahead with Bill 20. The NDP, for some reason, because they thought they knew better—I suspect it was because they're so desperate for money because of their tax-and-spend ways, they decided they were going to ignore everybody and take their chances.

And so what we saw was the government not listening to anybody, whether it was rallies here, whether it was mails, emails, Facebook fans that are out there, thousands of them that are actually telling the NDP this is a bad thing for Manitoba. The government didn't listen to the Retail Council, who had been indicating that they were struggling already and had been for the last, I believe it was, three or four years. They were already seeing a decrease in sales in Manitoba and, in fact, in this past year, prior to the budget coming in, was a particularly bad year for them.

So, Mr. Speaker, for some reason the government just turned, really, a deaf ear to all of these people at many, many levels, who were advising the government not to do this. And it really does make one wonder why the NDP government and the NDP Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the NDP Finance Minister had such a tin ear to what was being said to them and why they ignored the advice. We know now that they've taken in—well, now it's well over a hundred million dollars since the PST went up on July 1st. Imagine what Manitobans could have done with a hundred million dollars come this Christmas. There are some families out there that are really going to be doing without. We're hearing on a

regular basis about the number of people that are using food banks, the number of children that are involved in using food banks.

But we see the government not giving much thought to that, and which is really offensive because it is the people on low income, it is the working poor, it's seniors on fixed income that are going to be the ones struggling the most with having to be burdened with the PST because they are the ones that don't have that disposable income. They are the ones that are going to have to be making cuts within their own family budgets, whether it's going to be, you know, a jacket—a winter jacket for their child or something for school. You know, a lot of kids go to school and get bullied at school because they don't dress or have the same things as other kids.

And I don't think this government paid a lot of attention to what—they think it's just a small amount of money; it's not. It's already over a hundred million dollars, and in one year it's going to be \$277 million. That's a lot of money. And with Christmas around the corner, I think a lot of people are going to be feeling the pinch in this.

And so, Mr. Speaker, what a lot of people were saying and what we were saying is, enough is enough. When is enough going, you know—when is it going to be enough for this government? And, in fact, the NDP Premier (Mr. Selinger) has indicated that he may be open to looking at a further increase. Right after the budget, when he went out into the scrum, that was the question that was asked to him. He never shut the door on it. He left it opened to make it seem like he was not going to slam the door shut on a further PST increase. And we know, in the briefing note that the government asked for, they asked the staff to actually crunch the numbers at a higher than 8 per cent increase in the PST, so we know that Manitobans need to be fearful.

And if this bill comes into place and it becomes legislation here, they will have put the final nail in the coffin for balanced budget legislation and taxpayer protection legislation in Manitoba. So, then taxpayers in Manitoba have no protection from this government who does not know how to stop their spending. We've seen them all over the map in the last number of months, with all kinds of ribbon cuttings. We've seen them abuse the definition of core infrastructure and critical infrastructure to include now murals and park benches and ponds and you name it. It became very obvious in a very short period of time that this was a slush fund for the NDP.

It was a pre-election slush fund. And when we see that only a third of the infrastructure or the PST money was actually going to pay for infrastructure—core infrastructure—it was being used for all kinds of other things—we know what the government has been doing. They have been using it as a slush fund. And, in fact, at their own NDP convention, it was certainly made obvious by their own chief of staff, who stood up there at that convention and said, this is the beginning of the next election.

So it became obvious. I mean, Manitobans won't be fooled by this, and Manitobans have really taken notice, that this government is certainly taking advantage of them and making them, as Manitobans, as taxpayers, as hard-working families, pay for the tax-and-spend activities of this government. And the fact that this government always likes to talk about, oh, well, we'll ask, we'll consult, we'll, you know, talk to the people, it never, ever, ever came to the people's opportunity to have a say in this, because this NDP government did not allow a referendum.

So, Mr. Speaker, I, certainly—I think the government has certainly been all over the map, in terms of how they wanted to use the PST. The minister of Finance had many times in Estimates to be more upfront with what he was going to spend the money on, and he would not do that. He would not actually tell us what that money was going to be spent on. And we thought that, if he said he was going to be accountable and transparent, we thought he would table a list of infrastructure projects that the PST was going to pay for, and he didn't do that. He actually refused to do that.

And now, since then, we have seen the government try to reset the channel and we have seen them try to change the definition of core infrastructure, and they're scrambling to try to get back on message, but I think they're—they have failed in doing that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity and I look forward to third reading while I'll have more chance to make more comments.

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Question's been called. Any further debate before I get to the question?

Question's been called.

The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts

Amended), as reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development to be not concurred in and read a third time, but that it be concurred in and read for a third time this day six months hence.

It—is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

* * *

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

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested and has previously been agreed on November 20th of 2013, a request for a recorded vote would be deferred to Monday, December the 2nd, as the first item under orders of the day. So that will appear on the orders of the day for Monday.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 28, 2013

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