

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 9, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 42—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act
(Enhancing Passenger Safety)**

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I move, seconded by the Minister of Healthy Living (Mr. Rondeau), that The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Enhancing Passenger Safety); Loi modifiant le Code de la route (sécurité accrue des passagers), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: I am very pleased to introduce this bill which enhances passenger safety.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, it may come as a surprise, but in a vehicle, currently, if there are five seat belts you can have six passengers. There's no connection between the number of seat belts and the number of passengers. This will—this bill will ensure that every passenger has to have a seat belt and have it fastened.

Currently, it is illegal to carry dogs in the back of a pickup truck but not people, and this bill will ensure that, again, that passengers are not carried in the back of trucks.

And also, there's some difficulty currently with wheelchairs and access, particularly in terms of safety. This will ensure that all wheelchairs are secured in the vehicle and that all wheelchair occupants are wearing a seat belt.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this bill will significantly enhance passenger safety in the province.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Any further introduction of bills?

Bill 207—The Family Maintenance Amendment and Garnishment Amendment Act

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): I move, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), that Bill 207, The Family Maintenance Amendment and Garnishment Amendment Act, be now read.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, this bill calls for a kinder legal system that allows parents struggling with divorce and custody—that it assists them with legal costs as the divorce proceedings occur. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none—

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by J. Russell, J. Dyck, R. Campbell and many thousands of angry Manitobans that feel disenfranchised and betrayed by this—

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

I wish to caution the House. I've been fairly lenient as your Speaker in allowing editorial comments to be made during the tabling of petitions. I must indicate to honourable members I'm going to have to clamp down on that a little bit, and please do not editorialize anything that is not included on the petition that is being tabled.

So, further petitions.

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

And these are the reasons for the petition:

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

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

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

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

We wished—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's signed by D. Comeau, J. Hopkins and K. Hamm and many, many more.

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

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

The reason for the—for this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by J. Thiessen, G. Hird, B. Arksey and many, many other angry Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by A. Reimer, E. Fosty and B. Smook and thousands more angry Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

A few moments ago, I cautioned honourable members when they're tabling petitions not to add editorial comments at the end. I'm again asking for the co-operation of the House. Please do not add editorial comments at the end.

I believe, if I understand correctly, we're supposed to read the contents of the petition and the first three names, and that would be the content of the petition itself. So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members.

Further petitions? Seeing none—

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I want to draw the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Claudia Peel, Victoria Peel, Tara Peel and Harry Peel, who are the family of the honourable Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard). Behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here today.

Also with us today, we have in the public gallery Elizabeth Catacutan, Joe Calcutt, Abi Calcutt and Cody Calcutt, who are the guests of the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers). On behalf of honourable members, we welcome you here this afternoon.

* (13:40)

ORAL QUESTIONS

PST Increase Referendum

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): In the 2011 election, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), the member for St. Boniface, promised not to raise taxes. In fact, he went so far as to say: Read my lips, no new taxes.

Now the Bank of Montreal says, and I quote, a pending increase in the provincial sales tax could act as a drag on the economy.

Will the Premier do the right thing and at least hold a referendum on the NDPST?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would hope that the members opposite just don't cherry-pick the little details out of that report that they think fits into their own narrative. I would hope that for once they would give a fair and balanced look at something that came forward that talked about our Manitoba diverse economy that continues to grow at a steady pace, which is exactly what they said.

Mr. Speaker, that same report said that stability remains one of Manitoba's key economic strengths. That same report said that manufacturing remains the key driver in the activity thanks to a sturdy performance in the aerospace sector. That report says that Manitoba's on the right track, and we intend to keep it that way.

Mr. Schuler: Well, Mr. Speaker, \$500 million in the last two years has been nitpicked from Manitoba taxpayer pockets, and that's why Manitobans are so upset.

The NDP promised no PST until they got elected. And now Manitobans know that the NDP lied. Even worse, it will have a negative impact on Manitoba's economy.

So, Mr. Speaker, the people of Manitoba have risen up against the NDP. The media in Manitoba have come out against this NDPST and now even economists.

Will the Premier do the right thing and call a referendum on the NDPST? Let the people have their say.

Mr. Struthers: What hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. Last night at the—at PAC—last—I'll talk to the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen). Last night—at the meetings last night in Public Accounts, the member for Midland was asking the Deputy Minister of Finance how we would go about implementing the HST. Their leader doesn't have the guts to stand up and say that he's going to do the HST, but he sends in the member for Midland into Public Accounts to ask about how would we go about doing this. My deputy indicated to the member for Midland how he would go about doing it because my deputy minister's an honest guy who gave the right answer. But let there be no doubt members opposite—

Mr. Speaker: Minister's time has expired.

Mr. Schuler: Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look in any dictionary, the definition of hypocrisy is that in the 2011 election campaign the NDP lied when they said: Read my lips, no new taxes. They promptly then walked into this Chamber and have raised taxes twice, and this time around, even the PST.

Manitobans have written and rallied against the NDPST. The media has taken a stand against the NDPST. Now even economists have warned this government about the NDPST.

Will the Premier listen? Will he listen to all these Manitobans and call a referendum on the NDPST? What are they so worried about? Why don't they just do it?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I commend the member for Midland for being honest and asking about the HST and how it'd be implemented, as opposed to his leader—as opposed to his leader—who ducks and dives and dodges that question every opportunity he gets. He won't come clean with the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, we very straightforwardly said to the people of Manitoba, in our budget, that we would

increase the PST by one point. We've introduced Bill 20, which dedicates every nickel of that increase towards infrastructure in this province. It will go towards defending families in Manitoba against future floods. It'll go for investing in schools. It'll go towards investing hospitals—

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

Minister of Finance Resignation Request

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): The position of the Minister of Finance is a position of power, respect and honour. It has now been abused by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers).

The member made commitments for 'multi'-year compensation for flood victims and broke that commitment. The member denied receiving Jet tickets when he did. The member, earlier this week, got caught breaking the law and has been ordered by the Court of Queen's Bench to pay the Manitoba Jockey Club their financial commitments that were both promised and owed.

Mr. Speaker, in light of not only embarrassing himself, his party and the position of Minister of Finance, will the member from Dauphin resign today?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): The members have now had three 24-hour periods, 72 hours, to read the judgment. If they'd realize it, they'd realize that the very premise of their question is wrong.

The judge affirmed the right of the government to move on this issue through legislative amendment, which is exactly what the budget said. If the member would take the time to read the budget and the judgment, he would find they're in perfect consistency with each other. Thank you.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, all members of this House are accountable for their actions. We are required by law—the very laws we make in this Assembly right here—when a law is broken, there's a consequence for those actions.

Mr. Speaker, the current Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) broke the law and cannot spin the words of the Queen's Bench Justice Robert Dewar.

So to restore honour to the position of the Minister of Finance, I ask the minister once again: Will he resign?

Mr. Selinger: I know the member from Lakeside is following the same text he's had for the last three days.

The judgment was very clear that the government can proceed to make changes to subsidies by legislative amendment, which is exactly what the budget said. They said they would proceed to make changes by legislative amendment.

If the members want to retain all the resources there, let them say so. We believe those resources are better allocated for hospitals and schools and front-line workers like nurses and teachers. We think those resources will make a very significant difference there.

We know the members opposite want to do across-the-board cuts. They want to lay off teachers, they want to lay off nurses, they want to cut all across the board. That's their approach.

Our approach is different, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do the right thing for Manitobans.

Mr. Eichler: Mr. Speaker, every member of this NDP government must be ashamed a member of his own caucus, especially the Minister of Finance, that broke the law.

The right thing for that member to do is to resign, restoring honour to the position of the Minister of Finance and protecting what integrity, if any, is left in his party.

Mr. Speaker, the only way this government can restore confidence upon the Minister of Finance and the term honourable—will the member from Dauphin resign today? He is not above the law.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, there's no question of point of order being raised here. There's no question of privilege being raised here. This is simply a dispute on the facts.

That's why it would be very helpful if the member from Lakeside would take a minute to read the judgment and then take a minute to read the budget. If he read the budget and he read the judgment, you—he would find that they perfectly complement each other. The budget very clearly said there would be a change in the subsidies to the Jockey Club and money would be reallocated to essential services of Manitoba by legislative amendment.

We know the members opposite have promised indiscriminate across-the-board cuts to all programs

and services in Manitoba to the tune of \$287 million. They went to lay off nurses. They want to lay off correction officers. They want to lay off teachers. That's their approach—

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

Assiniboia Downs Government Support

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Clearly, the Premier's making this up as he goes.

Mr. Speaker, we have a Minister of Finance who has clearly broken the law. The tactics he has undertaken may lead to the demise of the horse racing industry in Manitoba altogether. This is a \$50-million industry, which employs 500 people.

Mr. Speaker, Assiniboia Downs is located in the riding of Assiniboia. Will the member from Assiniboia stand up and support this important industry in his own backyard?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the member for Spruce Woods is absolutely incorrect.

There is no other group in Manitoba that gets as good a deal when it comes to VLTs as the Jockey Club. Mr. Speaker, there is no other group as reliant on the VLTs and the government subsidy as the Jockey Club is. The Jockey Club themselves have indicated that they have a partner, they can move forward and that they don't need that subsidy. It seems the only people in this province who think we have to subsidize horse racing in Manitoba are members across the way.

Mr. Speaker, our approach is to reduce that subsidy and dedicate those funds towards health care—

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

* (13:50)

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance isn't standing up for the industry, either is the member from Assiniboia.

And the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) has not stood up for his constituents on the PST debate. He has not stood beside them at the rally when the PST hike was introduced. In fact, I would suggest he misled his own constituents during the last election when he said we'd—there'd be no new

taxes. The member for Assiniboia may be facing job losses in his own community.

I'm going to ask the member for Assiniboia: Is he prepared to stand up to this Minister of Finance and protect the 500 jobs at Assiniboia Downs?

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, every member on this side of the House stood up for the budget of 2013 because that budget indicated to Manitobans a very clear path to building this province, a very clear path—a very clear path—to growing our economy by supporting nurses, by supporting teachers, by supporting health care and investing in infrastructure, doing the necessary decisions, making those tough decisions that we have to make in order to grow our economy, as opposed to members opposite who put forward a proposal to indiscriminately, across the board, cut, cut, cut everything: health care, education—

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

The honourable member for Spruce Woods, with a final supplementary.

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, all this from a minister of the Crown who's broke the law.

This minister is not standing up for the horse racing industry in Manitoba. The member for Assiniboia is not standing up for the horse racing industry. We're facing a possible 500-job loss in his own backyard.

We're simply asking the member for Assiniboia to stand up for his constituents, those 500 jobs, stand up to the Minister of Finance and get the job done.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, we are standing up with Manitobans to protect health-care services. We're standing up with Manitobans to protect kids in our schools. We're standing up with Manitobans to make sure that we have the infrastructure necessary to grow our economy.

Mr. Speaker, we believe revenues from gaming should be supporting important public services, not the other way around, not the way the Tories see this, in which you take money out of health care and put it into horse gambling in this province.

Child and Family Services Rally Government Attendance

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, on May 2nd there was an antiPST hike rally held at the front of the Legislature, a hike that

directly affects all Manitobans, and not one NDP member was there.

This weekend, Manitobans will once again come together to raise their frustrations with the spendP at a Child and Family Services You Are Fired rally. Here in Manitoba we have more children in care than the people in the city of Dauphin. The CFS You Are Fired rally is set for this Saturday at noon at the Legislature.

I ask the minister of Child and Family Services: Will she be there to listen to concerned Manitobans?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I think members opposite know that I've often talked to them and often responded to them when they raise issues of concern with Child and Family Services and issues of specific cases, that we try to work with them and the people involved to get a resolution. Certainly, those cases are very challenging. Nobody comes into the child and family services system because things are going well in their lives. People come in at very difficult times.

I think that there is very good work being done in the child and family services system by front-line workers who make very difficult decisions every day that they have to go to work. And we are continuing to work with those people and with other authorities and with everybody who is there to work with children, to put in more preventative programs, to give workers better tools and to make sure their—

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

Child and Family Services Case Concern

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I think I was fairly clear on my first question, and I absolutely received that answer as a no.

On May 17th, the minister said, and I quote, as she almost said today: If the member has information about the safety of children, then his responsibility, as I am sure he knows, is to bring forward that information and we will do our best to act on it. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, Chris and Wendy Bowcott are two foster parents here in Manitoba who have been in contact with the minister about their concerns with the treatment of their kids and have yet to receive an adequate response from this minister.

I ask the minister of CFS: When will she fulfill her responsibility to protect Manitoba's children and look into Mr. and Mrs. Bowcott's concerns? Or is this the best this minister can do, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Well, I think the member opposite knows, especially given the work that he comes from, that we're not going to discuss individual cases in the House. I'm not going to breach the confidentiality of children who are—who may or may not be in the system. I think the member well knows the rules around that.

When he—if he has additional concerns, I'm happy to talk to him about it. After this question period, I'm happy to receive those. We will forward those to the Child Protection branch, to the people who work in the system who have expertise in this system, and they will contact the people and work with them.

I accept that it is often in the child welfare system that people who are involved in it don't get the answers that they would like, but that system is there primarily to protect children, and sometimes that means that some of the parents that may be involved in that system don't get the response—

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

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, Mr. and Mrs. Bowcott have given this minister 28 pages of factual information with regard to their concerns about the way the CFS has been run. In their letter to the minister, Mr. and Mrs. Bowcott write that they feel like they can no longer speak up for their children out of fear of CFS retaliation. I know that the minister has read the concerns from the Bowcotts about their personal children and the children they foster.

When will this minister take her responsibility of protecting Manitoba's children in care seriously and personally meet with Mr. and Mrs. Bowcott and attend the rally, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Howard: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite knows well the responsibilities of every member in this House when it comes to protecting the confidentiality of children, and I am sure the member opposite is not asking me to personally and politically interfere with a decision that's been made by a child welfare agency. I hope that is not the question that he—I hope that is not what he is asking

me to do, because for me to do that would breach the fundamentals of the child welfare system.

If he has concerns—if he has additional concerns, I'm happy to hear them. I'm happy to put his constituents in touch with people who work in the Child Protection branch, with people who work in the child welfare authorities who could talk to them about their concerns.

It's a very challenging system to work in, Mr. Speaker. It is not made better by the kind of criticism of front-line workers that we're hearing from across the way.

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

Out Migration Manitoba Business

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, Richardson International has a long history in this province. The company was born and raised in Manitoba, and it's helped to drive the Manitoba economy.

However, when Richardsons want to build a new canola plant, they didn't choose Manitoba. They chose Yorkton, Saskatchewan. The—this business has lost faith in this government to provide the environment necessary to compete in an international market.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade tell us why he and his government cannot compete with Saskatchewan?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): Well, I certainly appreciate a question from the members opposite and certainly am pleased to put on the record the fact that we've seen incredible growth here in the province of Manitoba and a lot of industries that are investing in Manitoba. In fact—*[interjection]* I know they don't want to hear good news, Mr. Speaker, but we do have over 91 head offices here in Winnipeg. We've seen incredible development.

Just last month, Boeing announced another 150,000-square-foot addition to their plant. Canada Goose announced that they'll be expanding their workforce by 20 per cent.

I know—and I know they're not at all excited about Canadian Tire locating the advanced cloud computing centre here in Manitoba. In fact, they

spoke against the initiatives that were put in place to support that type of innovative technology coming here to Manitoba.

So I'd gladly stand on this side of the House where we have done a lot to encourage a competitive business environment: zero per cent small business—

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

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, Glanbia flaxseed facility in Angusville was destroyed by a fire. The company made it clear that they would rebuild and they did just that; rather than building in Manitoba, Glanbia rebuilt in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. This spendDP failed Manitobans and Glanbia by providing—and failing to provide an environment necessary to compete on an international scale. Fifty jobs went south.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade—why—tell us why he and his government can't compete with South Dakota?

* (14:00)

Mr. Bjornson: Well, Mr. Speaker, and I was very pleased to attend recently Yes! Winnipeg's update on the success of the Yes! Winnipeg initiative, which we supported as a government, to attract new businesses to Manitoba. And people recognize with zero per cent small business tax and an increase in the threshold to attract small business here in Manitoba, we have 106,000 businesses in Manitoba. *[interjection]* I know they're not interested in hearing the answer, but I'll carry on nonetheless.

We have seen a number of success stories through Yes! Winnipeg. We have reduced the corporate capital tax here in Manitoba as well, so we have groups like Goldman establishing a Canadian head office in Winnipeg. I mentioned Canada Goose already. Traffilog, an Israeli company that opened North American office here. We have Vesta Home Delivery, Dallas-based firm that opened an office here because of the IKEA store, which they criticized as well. Hampton hotel—

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

Mr. Graydon: And I'm glad that the minister referenced some of the data facilities that are coming to this province. Manitoba Public Insurance needed to upgrade their data facilities in order to stay up to date with today's technological advantage. MP could

not have set up—or MPI could have set up anywhere in Manitoba, including Portage la Prairie, Winkler-Morden, Brandon, but they decided to set up in Markham, Ontario.

Recently the spendP created a subsidy to offset the PST for businesses. A Crown corporation saw through this and realized that the Minister of Finance was right, that subsidies are not sustainable and that MPI went to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade tell us why his government can't even convince MPI, a Crown jewel, to stay in Manitoba?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad members opposite are recognizing MPI as a Crown jewel because I believe one of the candidates in the last election said we should privatize them. So I'm glad to hear that they finally support MPI here in Manitoba.

And I'm very proud to stand in this Chamber and talk about our capital expenditures that have been extremely solid for a number of years, and we've more than doubled over 10 years to \$12.3 billion in 2012, Mr. Speaker, a record annual investment of \$8.9 billion in new structures. *[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I'm not sure if the honourable member for Emerson is having a conversation with another member of the House, but I clearly heard his voice and I'm asking him that if he wishes to have a private conversation, if he would choose either the loge to the left of me or to the right or perhaps somewhere else in the building. But I'm asking for the co-operation of the honourable member for Emerson to allow the minister to complete his answer.

Mr. Bjornson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

In the last five years, Manitoba's capital investment increased by 38 per cent, the third highest increase among provinces and more than double the national average of 19 per cent, Mr. Speaker. In the past 21 years, Manitoba has the most consistent growth in business capital investment of any and all provinces with only one year of decline. That's the facts.

Tax Increases NDP Election Promise

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): In 2011 the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and every NDP candidate ran on the promise not to raise taxes. Mr. Speaker, they lied. In six short months after the election in the 2012 budget, taxpayers got hit with \$188 million in increased taxes and increased fees.

Then, Mr. Speaker, to add insult to injury, another tax grab this year, a 1 per cent increase in the PST.

How can they face their constituents with any credibility and justify why they lied in 2011?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no problem facing my constituents and talking about how affordable Manitoba is to live in. We have one of the most affordable places in the country to live, and I'll face any constituent and talk to them about that any day of the week.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the kind of investments that this government has made in infrastructure and the kind of investments that we will continue to make in infrastructure, that will grow the economy of Manitoba, and that's why we get the kind of results that my colleague the ETT Minister just laid out for this House to hear.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Riding Mountain.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order.

Mrs. Rowat: The member for Dauphin stood up and indicated that he would talk to any of his constituents with regard to the plan for the PST. Well, Mr. Speaker, he has said to us publicly that he would—didn't want to come out and talk about the increase in the tax on alcohol because he didn't want his friends in Dauphin, who are beer drinkers, to be concerned about that.

So I guess I'm a little bit confused if he wants to talk to who.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point or order.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Well, I'm sure you will want to hear from the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) on this point on order, or maybe the Leader of the Opposition or maybe the deputy leader or the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) or perhaps the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire). So we might need a lot of time to discuss this point of order, but clearly there is no point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Riding Mountain, points of order are not to be used during question periods to debate the facts of what is going on in the House. And also I did not hear from the honourable member for Riding Mountain what rule was breached as a part of this point of order.

So, therefore, I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, where were we?

The honourable Minister of Finance, to conclude his answer.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, on top of all that, we have put forward legislation in this House that guarantees Manitobans will pay the lowest bundle of rates when you take Autopac and you take home heating and when you take hydroelectricity. We've guaranteed that to the people of Manitoba and we've come through on that.

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

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's the height of hypocrisy and arrogance when members of the government side of the House don't have the guts to go out to the front of the Legislature and speak to people who are opposed to their point of view.

Mr. Speaker, not only has the government taken away the democratic right for Manitobans to vote on an increase in the PST, they lied before the last election, they've broken the law since the last election, businesses are losing faith in Manitoba as a place to invest, and they won't go out and listen to foster parents that have legitimate concerns about—

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

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, that preamble just reeked of hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker, our government, year after year, every budget that we've presented in this House had tax relief for every Manitoba family in this province of Manitoba. That's every budget that we've introduced, including Budget 2013, which members opposite voted against.

Mr. Speaker, that's \$1.4 billion worth of tax relief that we have provided to Manitobans. That's property tax relief, that's income tax relief, that's corporate tax relief, that's relief from 8 per cent down—

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

Federal Transfer Payments Government Sustainability

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): And again, what hypocrisy.

Mr. Speaker, we have a debt that has doubled under this government, and they are saying there's tax relief for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba is on a clear path to bankruptcy under this NDP government. We have heard the Minister of Finance say that, and I quote, clearly, an organization that is this dependent on government subsidies is not sustainable, when he's talking about the Jockey Club.

Mr. Speaker, how can he justify a provincial government that is 31 per cent dependent on the federal government for transfers and subsidies? How are they sustainable?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would challenge the member for River East to turn to her leader right now and look him right in the eye and say, why is it that when we had government we were spending, in terms of on the dollar, 13 cents of every dollar towards debt and debt servicing? Why doesn't she turn to her leader right now, look him in the eye and say, why did we let that happen?

* (14:10)

Mr. Speaker, why doesn't she turn right now to her leader, look him right in the eye and say, why is it that we had a lousy debt-to-GDP ratio, 32.9 per cent? And why don't you look your leader right in the eye and say, you know, the people across the way, their—

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

Order, please. Order, please. I want to caution all honourable members, please, that when we're placing our questions or answering to the questions, that you place them through the Chair so we don't make this a personal debate here today.

Children in Care Graduation Rates

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we know that under the NDP child poverty has spiralled out of control. We know that child apprehensions have spiralled out of control and that these two are directly linked, yet this NDP government refuses to raise social assistance shelter rates. Children are being apprehended because their parents have no food in the fridge. Child hunger and the trauma of Child and Family Services apprehension surely affects school performance.

I ask the Premier: What is the graduation rate of children who have been in the care of Child and Family Services?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I want to thank the Leader of the Liberal Party and the member for River Heights for being here today to ask the question. I appreciate that.

The child poverty is a very important issue, which is why when we first came into office we added back the National Child Benefit to all families, including single-parent families that required social assistance. That was a benefit improvement of about \$500 a month.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have additional programs for people in the child-care system which continues their support after they hit the full age of 18, and we have special programs which allow them to continue to go to school, including the parents.

When leaders—when the members of the Conservative Party were in office, the longest period of time that you could spend on a training program is three months. They now have the opportunity to attend training for up to two years so they can get a permanent job in the economy and be able to support their family, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, a large body of research indicates that children in the care of Child and Family Services are more likely to struggle in school. Marni Brownell, for example, and others at the Manitoba for-Centre for Health Policy have raised concerns about this. It would seem essential to keep close watch on graduation rates of youth who've

been in care, and yet this FIPPA that I table shows that the government doesn't even keep this information.

Why has the government decided to not even keep information on the graduation rates of children who have been in the care of Child and Family Services?

Mr. Selinger: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've—we do have very good information coming out in the child—Early Childhood Development program that we have in Manitoba, and I thank the member for the information. That report was tabled in the House just last week. We've been doing longitudinal research on the success of families that get the support they need from the very earliest times when children are born and we're seeing very strong results.

When families get the support they need, which we've applied, which we've supplied in the largest amount ever seen in the history of the province, they are doing well. Our overall graduation rate in high schools has gone up from about 73 per cent to about 84 per cent. So we're seeing improvements in that regard.

We have, for the first time ever, special supports for people in the child welfare system. When they hit the age of majority, they can get additional support to continue to stay in school after they hit the age of majority, Mr. Speaker. And we do special programs with universities like the University of Winnipeg which allows young people on social assistance to get a tuition waiver when they go—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, in spite of the government's claims, senior officials at the University of Winnipeg have indicated that the graduation rate for students in the inner parts of Winnipeg is an appalling 50 per cent. Year after year, for 14 years, the NDP have had an opportunity to do something about this, for example, to raise the shelter rates for those on social assistance so the children will have proper nutrition to fully participate in academics and sports and not have to use food banks.

I ask the Premier: Why has he not kept track of the graduation rates for children who've been in care or even in individual schools in the inner parts of Winnipeg to use as a measure so that he can change and—

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

Mr. Selinger: And I think it's an important question the member asks, which is why we've had a big emphasis on high school graduation rates and we've seen a dramatic improvement on it from the low 70s up into the 80s, Mr. Speaker, and that's a very powerful story.

Our Brighter Futures programs that are running in schools all across Manitoba, including inner-city schools, have seen a tremendous improvement of children both going back to school, staying in school and graduating from school. Just two examples, Mr. Speaker: the Pathfinders program run in the inner city of Winnipeg. Over 200 young people have a place to go now where they get extra support for tutoring and extra support after school and a safe place to do their studies, and we're seeing very good results of that. Another very concrete example: the Neelin alternative high school in Brandon where the students that were no—used to not be in school, many of them lone parents, are now attending that program on a daily basis and we're seeing a dramatic increase in their high school graduation rate.

Innovations like this are occurring all across Manitoba, with the result more and more young people are—

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

Tax Credit Extension Manitoba Interactive Digital Media

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Earlier in question period, I was really pleased to hear from the honourable Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade as he explained how our government is committed to working with industry to help the economy grow and create more opportunities for Manitobans to succeed.

And like many other parents, I've got kids that love technology and want to go into fields that are related to cutting-edge technology, new media, and we want to know that our children have a place where they can enter into those fields and succeed right here at home.

So I was wondering if the minister could please inform the House of the announcement made today that will help one of Manitoba's most cutting-edge industries grow and thrive.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I was very pleased to join the First Minister, the Premier (Mr. Selinger), at one of Manitoba's great success stories in the digital media, Tactica Interactive, where we were joined by members from Complex Games as well, two incredible success stories for digital media and interactive media here in Manitoba. In fact, their clients include Sony, Corona, Disney and, not only that, Mr. Speaker, a number of organizations right here in Manitoba through Manitoba Film and Sound, through Buffalo Gal Pictures, through Frantic Films.

A lot of people are benefiting from this tax credit. In fact, this tax credit is being enhanced as a result of Budget 2013.

But last year alone, this tax credit was responsible for about 700 jobs being created, Mr. Speaker, and this tax credit supported an industry that brought over \$38 million. It's a tax credit—for \$1 invested, it brings \$9 million back to Manitoba, and we're committed to work with the media—

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

Bill 33 Request to Withdraw

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): And the bullying continues. First this NDP government avoided dealing with infrastructure needs and flood claims by demanding amalgamation of smaller municipalities. The minister called municipalities dysfunctional and misrepresented current legislation, all the while single-handedly destroying a long-standing working relationship with municipalities.

Will this minister finally show some respect to local municipalities, withdraw Bill 33 and begin to repair the damage that this NDP has done to the municipalities?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Acting Minister of Local Government): Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's increasingly obvious to those of us on this side that the members opposite are the party of the '90s—of the 1990s in terms of economic policy, probably the 1890s in terms of social policy—and when it comes to municipal boundaries, they're definitely the party of the 1890s. They haven't recognized that Manitoba's changed.

I think it's important to put on the record that what our minister and what our government is putting forward is a way of helping many of the

municipalities. We have 39 municipalities who do not—unable to submit audited statements for 2011 gas tax funding from the feds; we have two there that go back to 2009. We want to see that federal money come back to Manitoba. We don't get enough of it.

I want to make sure those municipalities have sufficient size and sufficient resources to do it. That's what amalgamation is about, Mr. Speaker.

HST Government Promise

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, again, this government won't listen to people and they're not listening to the municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance spoke about public accounts last night, and, you know, we sat there and I watched the deputy minister take questions and go, you know what, I don't know that answer, we'll have to get back to you. But he knew—when asked about the HST, he knew how the Province would implement that immediately. Isn't that interesting this government has checked that out.

* (14:20)

Is this just another broken promise? And we know they broke their promise on not raising the PST. They break promises time and time again. Is just—this just another lie by this minister and by this government?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The rules of the Assembly are very clear and I'm sure all members are aware of the rules. I've often expressed to the House not to personalize the debate here, and the word lie that the honourable member for Brandon West just spoke is clearly on the unparliamentary list.

I'm going to ask the member for Brandon West to withdraw that word, please.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, I do withdraw that word.

Mr. Speaker: Thank the honourable member.

Now, the honourable Minister of Finance, to respond.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I thought that was the most interesting part of PAC last night, when members opposite specifically asked the Deputy Minister of Finance how to implement the HST.

Now, their—the Leader of the Opposition on numerous occasions has avoided answering that question, Mr. Speaker, so I guess I should get—I guess I should give the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen) some credit because at least he came forward and he was honest about this particular topic last night.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Clarkson is a very good deputy minister. He has served many departments well, including Finance. For this member to get up and badmouth Mr. Clarkson is just beyond the pale.

But I do appreciate the honesty of the member for Midland who has exposed the secret agenda of members opposite, and that is the HST, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Best Buddies

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): Mr. Speaker, all people deserve the chance to feel respected, appreciated and that they have a place in the community. Today, I rise to commend a group that does really great work to ensure that this happens.

Best Buddies is an organization that helps both students and adults with intellectual disabilities forge meaningful friendships with their peers in the community.

The program runs as a club in middle and high schools, with the help of teacher advisors. Students with intellectual disabilities are matched with a peer based on their interests and they get together regularly to see movies, go bowling, attend cultural and sporting events, play video games or just hang out. They also hold group events and fundraisers. Universities run Best Buddies chapters, as well, where student volunteers are matched with adults with intellectual disabilities.

This March, I spoke at Chapters' annual Read All About It event, which highlighted the Best Buddies program. There, I was able to meet some of the dedicated staff, teachers and student volunteers involved with Best Buddies in Manitoba, as well as the families who have loved ones in the program, and heard more about the great experiences that participants and volunteers have had through their involvement.

Best Buddies promotes inclusion and helps to break down barriers that prevent young people with intellectual disabilities from experiencing some of

the social opportunities that many others have. Some of these students go on to join school clubs and organizations that they likely would not have felt was an option for them to join, until they developed a friendship through the Best Buddies program. This program takes possible preconceptions, on both sides, and creates a whole new view of what each of us has to offer.

Mr. Speaker, friendship is important to all of us, old and young alike. Everyone should have the opportunity to feel accepted, to participate in their community and to enjoy some of the everyday experiences most of us take for granted, like grabbing a coffee with a friend or attending a movie with someone outside of their immediate circle of family.

I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the individuals and schools involved in making a difference through this superb program. Thank you very much.

Kelly Robertson

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the local curling rink is often filled with farmers, local business people, school kids trying to learn the game and become local legends.

Kelly Robertson, a Neepawa-area farmer, has become a legend on the curling ice. Kelly has taken part in 20 provincial championships over the years.

His rink—consisting of himself, third Doug Armour, second Peter Prokopowich and lead Bob Scales—captured the senior men's provincial championship and, while representing Manitoba, captured the 2011 Canadian senior men's championship. While representing Canada, they earned a silver medal at the 2012 world senior men's championship. The rink also captured the 2012 senior men's provincial championship for two in a row.

In 2013, Robertson held the lead going into the final end of the provincial senior men's championship, where some excellent shot making denied him his third provincial title in as many years.

Though it may be hard to believe, these victories almost never happened. Mr. Robertson had previously considered retiring, due to arthritis in his throwing hand. At times the pain of this condition made it nearly impossible for him to make his shots. Luckily, medication has improved the situation and made his exciting successes this year possible.

Kelly Robertson is a great role model for curlers everywhere. His easygoing attitude and sense of humour make him a remarkable ambassador for Neepawa and the surrounding area, for the province of Manitoba and, indeed, for Canada at the world championship level.

There are few curlers in Manitoba who have competed in world championships, and the people of Neepawa are extremely proud of the accomplishments of Kelly Robertson and his seniors' rink.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents and all members of this House, I would like to congratulate Kelly Robertson and his rink on all of their accomplishments out on the curling ice, and I look forward to their continued success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

India Trade Mission

Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, the Province of Manitoba prioritizes building and strengthening our relationships with our education and business partners abroad.

At the end of January and beginning of February, I was fortunate to accompany the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the members of Concordia and Radisson on a trade mission to India with these objectives in mind. Together with the representatives of the Business Council of Manitoba and members of Manitoba's colleges and universities, we extended support for international development and promoted our province as a great place to study and do business.

I am delighted that more Indian students are coming to our province to further their education. This is a message I gladly conveyed in meetings with the Minister of Education and Chief Minister of Haryana. The students who choose to stay in Manitoba after graduation help meet the skilled labour needs of Manitoba's economy and contribute to our wonderful multicultural mosaic. Through mutual co-operation, both Indians and Manitobans benefit and thrive.

Fruitful business ventures are integral to a prosperous future. As one of the world's fastest growing economies, the Indian market offers remarkable possibilities for our companies. Indeed, Manitoba's overall trade with India has grown by 115 per cent in the last decade, including a 60 per cent increase in our exports. It was beneficial

to meet with business leaders in Chandigarh and Ludhiana. By working together, we attract skilled people and investment to our province and continue to explore new export opportunities.

I am pleased that Manitoba business and government continue to work together to strengthen our ties with India. We are increasing exports to India and helping grow our respective economies. The world is taking notice of the wonderful assets Manitoba has to offer, making our province a top choice for investment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let No One Be Alone Week

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this House that from May 5th to May 11th is Let No One Be Alone Week. This is an important initiative that is about bringing the public awareness to those who are alone and encourage reaching out to visit, call, and/or reconnect with someone who is by themselves.

Last March, this wonderful idea was brought to life by Brenda Tonn, a seniors' resource co-ordinator from the community of Plumus, Manitoba. She realized that her innovative idea was possible because of her unique position to be able to network with resource co-ordinators all over the province and could help to turn the tide of one of the leading causes of death in the elderly. In total, more than 50 communities across Manitoba participated in the event.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that feeling lonely is a reality for many older adults living in Manitoba. Often, those who are lonely feel a general sense of emptiness, miss talking and having people around, and even feel rejected. In fact, only a few years ago 36 per cent of elder Manitobans felt lonely in a study profiling Manitoba's seniors.

Mr. Speaker, no act is too small or unworthy in helping people feel engaged. Something as simple as a phone call, a visit or even sharing a meal can go a long way and mean the world to someone else.

I invite all member of this Legislature to participate and to congratulate all the Manitobans from across the province, be they from Morris to Thompson, or from Portage to Lac du Bonnet, who are rising to the task and reaching out to friends, family and even complete strangers. This is being done to help older adults in our province remember that they really aren't alone after all. It also reminds

us that even something as small as a smile can make a world's difference in someone else's day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

The Halcrow Family

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I would like to—I would like you to all know about a special family in Cross Lake who have spent many years giving happiness to children, youth and families in the community. They are the Halcrows, Dion and Zelena, and their children, Dionness, Zoe, Johnston and Daveigh.

For 12 years, Dion, Zelena and their children have volunteered their time and services to hosting a youth night in Cross Lake. From playing games and sports to learning about growing up and other life skills, the youth nights are an important part of life in Cross Lake. Young people aged 4 to 18 all come together to participate in the activities and workshops.

The Halcrow family youth nights have been known to draw 50 to more than a hundred children and youth from all around the community. The youth night has been held at a variety of locations over the years, including the local church, the band hall and the high school. With summer around the corner, the family is planning on hosting some of the games and workshops outside.

Mr. Speaker, the Halcrows work together as a family. They have volunteered so much of their time, efforts and resources in order to help others and provide a welcoming group where young people can grow and develop important skills needed to succeed in life. Their efforts are not going unnoticed. People throughout Cross Lake know and appreciate the great commitment they have made to their neighbours and to making their community a better place for all kids.

I would like to ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to join me in congratulating and thanking Dion, Zelena, Dionness, Zoe, Johnston and Daveigh for their dedication to and support of their community. They are great leaders in Cross Lake, and I would like to wish them the best for the future.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. No grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Acting Official Opposition House Leader): On House business.

Mr. Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), in accordance with rule 31(9), I would like to announce that the private members' resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on integrity of the Finance Minister, brought forward by the honourable member for Spruce Woods (Mr. Cullen).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that, in accordance with rule 31(9), that the private members' resolution to be considered next Thursday is the resolution on integrity of the Finance Minister, brought forward by the honourable member for Spruce Woods.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now, orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please call for debate on the Opposition Day motion?

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Speaker: We're considering the motion brought forward by the honourable member for Tuxedo

THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to follow the law and seek the approval of Manitobans through holding a referendum before raising the retail sales tax (known as the provincial sales tax).

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook),

THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to follow the law and seek the approval of Manitobans through holding a referendum before raising the retail sales tax (known as the provincial sales tax).

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, it's a sad day in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, when we have to introduce a motion on the floor of the Manitoba Legislature where we have to urge the provincial government to actually follow the law. I think it's unfortunate that this has to come to this, but, obviously, with this NDP government that likes to play fast and loose with the law, we need to in fact make sure that we do urge them to follow the law.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011 each and every one of the NDP MLAs went door to door in their constituencies. They promised back then not to raise taxes. They received a mandate from the people in Manitoba to—in that election where they promised not to raise taxes. Manitobans thought that they could trust the people that they elected in this Manitoba Legislature. Obviously, they were mistaken when it comes to this NDP government. Each—again, each and every one of those NDP MLAs, whether it be the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) or Southdale or Seine River or St. Norbert, all of them went door to door and campaigned on not raising taxes. And then the first thing this NDP government did as soon as they got into power, they made the biggest tax increase in 25 years in the 2012 budget, the biggest tax increase that this government and this province has seen since the last NDP government of Howard Pawley.

Mr. Speaker, if that wasn't enough, they also, in this budget, have now announced that they are going to increase the PST by one percentage point, a 14 per cent increase in the PST in Manitoba. Manitobans did not ask for this and they don't want it, and now what's happening is that this NDP government wants to take away their right to vote on this. Manitobans have the right under existing laws in Manitoba to have a say on this PST hike, but the NDP government is refusing to give them and allow them to exercise that right. They should be calling a referendum.

We have heard from many groups and many organizations across Manitoba. We've heard from the Manitoba Business Council, and I was over at their meetings earlier today, and there's hundreds of Manitobans, hard-working Manitobans and business leaders in our community who are meeting to try and make this place—our province a better place to live at the same time as this government is not living up to the law in our province. Jim Carr said, and I quote: A referendum should be held to settle the matter.

The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce CEO, Chuck Davidson, said, and I quote: Chambers across the province are clearly concerned with not only the government's decision to increase the PST, but also the manner in which they are trying to accomplish it.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business director, Jeanine Carmichael, said: Unbelievable. It's so disrespectful to taxpayers. That legislation existed for a reason and to just negate that and go ahead is so disrespectful to taxpayers.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Colin Craig said: It's—and I quote: It's cowardly. I think the NDP know that Manitobans would turn down their plan.

I go back, Mr. Speaker, to—and I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) had various consultation meetings in Manitoba, and he had a prebudget consultation slide presentation that he presented to Manitobans, interested Manitobans, at those prebudget consultation meetings. It is a 25-page or a 24-page document entitled "The Prebudget Consultation Meeting, Winter 2013." And, in this slide presentation, I don't see anywhere in this whole presentation where it says anything about raising the PST by one percentage point. Nowhere in this document and nowhere in the minister's presentation did he mention that they were going to hike the PST.

And, again, I asked in this House, I asked the Minister of Finance, how many people at these prebudget consultation meetings asked for a PST hike? And the minister would not answer the question, which leads me to believe that nobody asked for this.

And I would say to members opposite, I know that they have been receiving emails, they've been receiving phone calls because I've been receiving them as well and members on our side have been receiving them not only from our constituents, Mr. Speaker, but from the constituents of those members opposite who don't seem to be listening to their own constituents. And I remind them of their job to listen to their constituents, but if they're not going to listen to their constituents, we will listen to them for them because we believe that all Manitobans should have a right to vote on this tax hike by way of a referendum. It's the law in Manitoba and this NDP government should follow the law and give people the chance to vote on this.

* (14:40)

But I suspect, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Finance and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) know that if they had—if they have a referendum in this province on a PST increase, I suspect they know what the result of that would be. I suspect that the result, and I suspect that they understand that the result, would be negative for this government because nobody asked for this, nobody wants it and it would be voted down. And I think that the government is just afraid of what Manitobans may want to say to them. And I think it's so disrespectful for them to act this way.

It's like a dictatorship; this is supposed to be a democracy in Manitoba. We are supposed to come into this Manitoba Legislature and debate issues. That's why I'm very happy to have this debate today, and I want to hear from members opposite. I want to hear from them why they broke their promise in the last election and why they are now saying to their constituents that they don't have the right to vote on this referendum, Mr. Speaker. I will be interested to hear from the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) and the member for Southdale (Ms. Selby) and the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau) and others, in Seine River and all the other members opposite.

I am interested to hear what they have to say about this motion because I suspect the constituents in their ridings, of which I have been receiving emails from, they would want to urge this government to follow the law and call for a referendum. They would be supportive of this motion here in the Manitoba Legislature, and so I would—I'm interested to hear from those members and what they have to say today. And I would urge them to support this motion today because if they are truly representing their constituents in their areas, their constituents would be in favour of this motion, and they're in favour of having a right, the democratic right under the laws of Manitoba right now, to have a say on this PST hike. And the—and each and every member opposite, if they vote against this motion, are saying to their constituents, no, you don't have a right. We know better than you; we know it's what's best for you, and, no, we're going to rip away that right for you to have a democratic vote and a say on this PST hike.

So, again, I urge all members in this House to make sure that they read this carefully and that they understand what this motion means today, because their constituents would want—they would want this, Mr. Speaker, and again, you know, they're here to represent their constituents. Every Manitoban under the existing laws in this province right now should

have the democratic right to vote by way of a referendum in this province on the PST hike, and unfortunately the NDP is denying them that fundamental right. In my opinion, and I think the opinion of many, many, thousands of Manitobans, that's just wrong. They do not have the right, they shouldn't be breaking the law. We know that they have broken the law in many cases, and I would encourage them to support this resolution so that they stop breaking the law.

Laws are put in place in this province for a reason, and this taxpayer protection act was put in place and the balanced budget legislation was put in place in this province to prevent this very thing from happening, Mr. Speaker. And now the NDP has just decided to say, well, no, that's okay, you know, we're just going to break that law. Because I will remind members opposite that this—that Bill 20 is still before the Manitoba Legislature, it has not passed yet.

An Honourable Member: No, not for a long time.

Mrs. Stefanson: That's right.

And, Mr. Speaker, until that bill does pass, if it ever does in this House, the fact that there hasn't—there is a—an increase in the PST that's been introduced by this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), and they're breaking the law. So it's unfortunate. I encourage all members opposite to stand and speak with their constituents.

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

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I am pleased to be able to speak on the motion today because I think it's important to put a number of things on the record.

First of all, I—you know, I find it interesting that the member opposite talked about our budget consultations, Mr. Speaker. I've had a number of them in Thompson, I've never seen a Conservative member at any of those meetings, and I checked. And I checked with, you know, the one person that would know the most who was at all those meetings this year, was the Minister of Finance. It's interesting they didn't attend a single one of those consultation meetings, and yet now they bring it up in debate, they bring it up in an amendment. So, you know what, let's put on the record that's how little they know or were concerned about any of the consultation process.

The second thing I want to put on the record, as well, Mr. Speaker—oh—

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Point of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon West, on a point of order.

Mr. Helwer: A point of order, I guess. I did attend the prebudget consultations with the minister in Brandon, and perhaps I was missed. I know I spoke to the minister and his staff there, and obviously the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was not aware of some of those things, and I'm sure there were other members of our caucus that did attend those prebudget consultations.

Mr. Speaker: Any further advice? Seeing none, I failed to hear where there was a breach of the rules regarding the point of order from the member for Brandon West, so I must therefore respectfully rule that since there was no rule that seems to have been breached I must rule that—respectfully, that there is no point of order.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, if it makes the member feel better, you know, we can get into an argument whether there was none there or one there, but clearly it wasn't a priority for them.

I also want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the balanced budget legislation, they ran on—in the last campaign on actually amending and drastically changing the balanced budget legislation. You know, I think it's important to note, by the way, that they ran on a platform of balancing the books of this province by 2018, I believe. Now that, you know, given the uncertain world economy, I wonder what would have happened if they had been elected. I mean, you know, they started with 2018; I wonder where they would have moved it now—2019, 2020, 2021? I mean, the reality is they ran on what would have required an amendment to the balanced budget legislation, so that's not an issue for them either.

And I want to get into the broader issue here, because we have a debate that includes various different dimensions of what is critical in terms of governments. We've had a debate on the budget; it's

passed through the Legislature. Obviously, there was a debate on the enabling bills and the various other processes that go with it. We had a good debate. There was a significant disagreement. The members on this side voted for it. The members opposite voted against it, Mr. Speaker, and that's reasonable. It does happen. And I think it's also important to note that in doing so—I want to give them credit—they put on the record what their true agenda is.

They didn't just, you know, say, well, we're going to vote against it, and we'll let you know in a few years what we would do. They did what I would consider the ice—you know, kind of the tip-of-the-iceberg strategy. They said, well, we're going to cut expenditures by 1 per cent. Now I note, by the way, that the, you know, member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), I think, has gone on at committee last night to say that, you know, our problem is we're not very good at cutting. I guess by, you know, implication that members opposite, they're good at cutting.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I—you know, and anybody that knows what they did when they were in government in the 1990s—you know, guess what, I will admit hands-down that the Conservatives are pretty adept at cutting. They have lots of experience. Now, I wouldn't 'necessay' good, because the results were pretty difficult for Manitobans. You know, it was tough in terms of health care and education. I remember the targeting they did of programs, northern and Aboriginal programs, in particular. And I always like to ask members opposite what they built the entire time they were in government. And I think the only answer—I did have one of our members remind me, after I spoke on the budget and used that phrase, that they probably did build something; it was Connie Curran's mansion. I don't know if people watched HGTV, but she did quite well out of this government. So they don't have much in the way of a track record in terms of building. They certainly have a track record in terms of cutting.

And, if anybody thinks it's 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, well, how do you think they would find, you know, anything to take to—the revenue that—yes, tough decision, but where would they find it? We all know it would come out of health and education, and I want to identify one area it definitely would come out of—it would be infrastructure. Because the—you know, the party of the 1990s—I want to let you know what our expenditures on capital were for highways in the 1990s. It was about—it maxed out at around \$85 million—\$85 million. In this budget, we brought

in a capital expenditure in our highways program for \$468 million. Now, even Tory math would show you that that's a significant increase. And I want to put on the record that we have a track record of credibility in putting not only our money where our commitments are, but exceeding it.

* (14:50)

We actually had—it was so bad under the Tories that they raised taxes on gas and then they proceeded to cut the amount they spent on highways. They actually cut it, Mr. Speaker. So, when we came into government, one of the first things we did, we brought in the bill that requires that we spend at least as much as we raise on the gas tax on our highways. And we've exceeded it every year since we brought that in. So, when our Minister of Finance brings in a budget and says we are going to spend more on infrastructure, because of the budget and because of the PST, we have a track record of showing that we can and we will do it.

And I want to really stress, Mr. Speaker, what it really comes down to—because if you really want to look at it, I think, historically—governments that make tough decisions, they often are the governments that are able to make a real difference.

I had a meeting recently and this was arranged a number of weeks in advance with producers from the Shoal lakes area—and I want to thank the member for the Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) who was part of arranging that—and it came down to their difficult circumstances, some of the highways that had been closed because of high-water levels. And I—you know, without getting into all the discussions that took place, what really struck me was at the end of the meeting where we outlined our plan in terms of dealing with the hydraulic issues—we're doing all the technical work right now for Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin and also in and around the Shoal lakes—one of the producers who was there—formerly a municipal councillor—said, you know, I don't mind an increase in the PST. What I want to see is I want to see it going to infrastructure. And what I did—I actually said, you know, there's a bit of history to that, because I will give, you know—and he actually, by the way—he said that the issues at Shoal lakes goes back many decades, and he wasn't pointing fingers at anyone. But we talked a little bit about making a difference on flood protection. I said, we've spent a billion dollars the last 10 years.

I went back—talked about the Roblin government, and the Roblin government, by the way,

made more significant investments in infrastructure at that time than had ever been made in Manitoba history. And what did they do, Mr. Speaker? They brought in a 5-cent sales tax—not an increase; there was no sales tax. What was interesting—one of the farmers said to me—he put his hand up and he said, you know what? I remember that. He said, I was working at the Grand Rapids Dam—also, by the way, it was the last hydro dam a Conservative ever built—and he said there was a fair amount of controversy at the time, but he said, you know, I don't know anybody now that would say that Duff Roblin didn't do the right thing in building the floodway. And he said, it didn't help me because I lived out in the Shoal lakes here in the Interlake, but he said, everybody now says the same thing: It was the right thing to do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what is the right thing to do for Manitobans at this point in time? Well, first of all, investments in infrastructure are important because they're part of our economic strategy.

And for members opposite—you know, I always get a kick out of members opposite. They seem to be interested in Saskatchewan recently. I'm wondering when football season rolls around if they're not coming in wearing Rider green or something. But you know what's interesting: I don't know if they read the Wall Street Journal about 10 days ago. There was an article and it was covered by the press. You know, and it described us as the dark-horse province. We have the second highest growth rate in the country, and we're ahead of Saskatchewan. We never get that in their discourse.

And, you know, they talk about people going to Saskatchewan. I want to put on the record as Highways Minister, there's increased number of people going to Saskatchewan. Actually what it is, they drive here from Saskatchewan and watch the Jets, they probably go shopping at IKEA afterwards, and they head home to Saskatchewan and they say, boy, things are happening in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is part of—economic development. And I want to put on the record that every dollar spent on infrastructure gets us greater economic growth.

But I want to talk about the key challenge for infrastructure that's ahead of us and that is in terms of flood protection. After the 2011-2012 flood, we commissioned two reports. I've received those two reports; our government has adopted them—126 recommendations in the main report. It talks about comprehensive flood mitigation.

How on earth do the members opposite think that we're going to be able to do anything on flood mitigation, Mr. Speaker, if we cut expenditures like they're saying and if we don't have the revenues that are a part of this budget initiative that we're debating today?

It's fine to get up and ask questions on behalf of flood victims. I have met with a lot of them and I've a lot of sympathy for that. And we've said that we're going to do the same for the people who were impacted on Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin and other affected areas like Shoal lakes. We are committed, Mr. Speaker, to putting the dollars in and getting the work done so we can have flood mitigation for them.

But, you know, it's one thing to get up, as they do every day and ask questions, but it's another thing to back it up with the real decisions that need to make it happen. You know, it's one thing to bring in petitions, Mr. Speaker, that add—would add tens of thousands, tens of millions of dollars to public expenditures; it's another to back it up.

So I want to put on the record that I don't think there's anybody on this side that relished the thought of a budget that made the kind of tough decisions that we did. But just as the Duff Roblin government and the Ed Schreyer government and the Howard Pawley government and the Gary Doer government, and this government under the leadership of the Premier and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) made those tough decisions, that's how you move forward.

This is about economic growth; it's about being there for flood victims, Mr. Speaker. And those tough decisions, I believe, will be seen in the future as the right thing to do, and, in fact, tough, yes, but it—they are the right thing to do. So I reject the member's motion out of hand.

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

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member from Tuxedo for bringing forward this motion. For the benefit of the members opposite, the motion reads as follows: that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to follow the law and seek the approval of Manitobans through holding a referendum before raising the retail sales tax, known as the provincial sales tax.

Under the balanced budget debt repayment and taxpayer protection act, Manitobans have the democratic right to a referendum whenever a government wants to raise a major tax. The PST is one of these taxes.

Mr. Speaker, in the last few weeks, I have received emails, phone messages from constituents of La Verendrye and from other parts of this fine province, urging me not to support Bill 20, not to support the PST increase. They can't believe that this Premier (Mr. Selinger), this NDP government, would bring in such a tax increase without Manitobans' permission. During the 2011 election, the Premier stated, and I quote: Our plan is a five-year plan to ensure that we have future prosperity without any tax increases, and we'll deliver on that. We're ahead of schedule right now.

Mr. Speaker, members opposite all campaigned on no tax increases. They all went door-to-door in their campaigns and they promised constituents no tax increases. The Premier said, and I quote: Ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense—everybody knows that. Well, the people of Manitoba did not know that. We on this side of the House did not know that. He wants to raise the sales tax and after he said he wouldn't. That's not very credible; a person should be very credible in what they say, especially in politics. We get warned here every day about the words we use, but you have to do something to achieve credibility, and what this government has done is not that.

With Bill 20, this NDP government planned to change The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act in order to raise the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. Mr. Speaker, why will this NDP government not do the right thing and call a referendum? There's plenty of time for it. They had every excuse in the book as to why they didn't have time, but there's no reason they still can't call a referendum. I mean, by the time Bill 20 gets passed through, I'm sure there'll be plenty of time to do a referendum.

Let the people of Manitoba make the decision. How does the Premier expect the people of Manitoba to obey the law, when he himself thinks he's above the law?

* (15:00)

In the budget of 2012, the NDP laid groundwork for the budget of 2013 by expanding the PST to

include a number of items like home insurance. Now they want to increase the PST by 1 per cent. This is not really just a 1 per cent increase; 1 per cent onto 7 per cent is really a 14 per cent increase on that tax—14 per cent.

The NDP in this province have enjoyed record low interest rates since they've been in power and record federal government transfer payments. I ask the Premier: What will happen should interest rates go up by just a couple per cent—2, 3 per cent? Will this mean the cost of servicing Manitoba's debt will increase by 3 or 4 hundred million? Mr. Speaker, will the Premier then increase the PST by another 1 per cent to cover this additional debt? With Manitoba's population only being slightly larger than 1.2 million, a \$400-million tax increase just adds hardships to all Manitobans.

With the Bill 20, the NDP have confirmed their plans for Manitoba: Tax and spend more, get less. With this spenDP government, problems have only gotten worse. Manitoba now ranks at the bottom of the barrel on many social and economic indicators. Our Premier was ranked the worst premier in Canada for fiscal management.

Manitoba has the highest income tax in Canada outside Québec. With this PST increase Manitoba will be the worst in the west for consumption taxes.

According to the Budget 2013, the capital infrastructure budget for highways and flood protection work is only going up by \$28 million. That's only 14 per cent of this year's PST increase. So where's the rest going?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Finance Minister talk of uncertain economic times. Would this be the reason that the NDP want to take over a million dollars in vote taxes from hard-working Manitobans? To help pay their own spending addiction?

Mr. Speaker, when economic times get tough, any financial manager in the world will tell you the first thing you need to look at is look at your spending. When you look at spending, that does not mean you cut front-line people. It means you look at where money is being wasted and where services are being duplicated. You need to adjust your spending, and this government's spending addiction is the problem here. Manitobans should not be penalized for poor fiscal management by this NDP government.

This government has totally misled Manitobans in the election of 2011, the budget of 2012 and now the budget of 2013. But, to add insult to injury, the NDP are willing to take from Manitobans the taxpayer protection laws that are here to safeguard Manitoba families from governments like the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, our Minister of Finance, after question period the other day, made a statement to the scrum: Clearly, an organization that is dependent on a government subsidy today is not sustainable. I would ask the Finance Minister about our government. As they rely solely—31 per cent—on the federal government for their funding, how can they say that somebody else is unsustainable when they themselves fall into that same category?

Mr. Speaker, I know that members opposite have been receiving emails and calls from constituents. I believe these are the same calls and emails that we've been receiving to ask the government not to raise the sales tax, to keep their word, be credible, don't make promises you can't keep. I would ask them to listen to their constituents and don't pass Bill 20. I would ask them to join us and stop Bill 20.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): It—I always welcome the opportunity to stand and respond to motions brought forward from our friends across the way, Mr. Speaker, especially when these motions are as hypocritical as the ones that have been brought forward.

Mr. Speaker, here they are in the House today, yesterday, the week before, talking about a referendum when their own leader—[interjection] Yes, that's a pretty anemic response over there, but nonetheless, their own leader—their own leader, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister)—and I look across to his chair right now and challenge him to disagree with what the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has put on the table and what I'm going to talk to in terms of his quotes on referendums.

You know, the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) always—always—just a few minutes ago in this House, quoted different people and the support that they claim they get from their position, Mr. Speaker. Why doesn't she quote the member for Fort Whyte, their leader, who said very clearly about this 'referend'—about this legislation, that he was part of the government that brought it forward? Why doesn't she quote him and what he said when this legislation

came forward, and that was that any government has every right not to hold the referendum, has every right to make decisions on its own, because the people of the province of Manitoba—[interjection] Well, the member from Steinbach, from his seat, disagrees—the member across the way from Steinbach disagrees with his member, his leader, because now the member for Steinbach seems to be saying that you have to follow the referendum.

The Leader of the Opposition said very clearly when this law came in that it was up to elected governments, duly elected governments, to make those decisions. Or is it, Mr. Speaker, that they think that this should apply to other governments and not just their government? They can't have it both ways, either they are in favour of the referendum or they're in favour of an elected, duly elected, government making decisions. Clearly, the member for Fort Whyte, at least when he was in government, said that it should be elected, duly elected, members of this Legislature, of the government, making these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, in the election we stood with Manitobans and we said we would protect front-line services. We came to a decision that we—in order to do that we needed to increase by 1 cent on the dollar the PST. That will be implemented, we will do that because we said we would do it and we're going to do it. We're going to do it no differently than what happened back in 1993 when the Conservative Finance minister—I believe it was Mr. Clayton Manness at the time—stood in this House and read a budget into the records—members opposite can go look at it if they like, if they would ever do some homework, which is a rare sight around here. But they can look and see what Mr. Manness said, and he said in that budget speech in April of 1993 that they were going to expand the PST—expand the PST to include baby supplies.

That might be fine for the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), he might be able to support that, but that's fine. That's what they did and they voted on it and they passed it, Mr. Speaker. They expanded the PST not just to include baby supplies but safety equipment—[interjection]—safety clothing—thank you. That's what the Conservative government did then. We, actually, in this Budget 2013 which they voted against—they like nailing baby supplies so much, they put it in the first place and now, when they have an opportunity to take it off, they vote against that. So we've taken baby supplies off the list for PST.

Mr. Speaker, the procedure and the process that we're following in this budget is no different—

* (15:10)

An Honourable Member: It's illegal.

Mr. Struthers: If the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) thinks it's illegal, then he must think that Clayton Manness broke the law in 1993 as well, or the member from Agassiz is just being dishonest, Mr. Speaker, because it's the same process—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I want to indicate to the honourable Minister of Finance that the word that he used with respect to dishonesty of another member of the Chamber clearly breaches the rules of unparliamentary language here, and I would like to ask him to withdraw that word, please.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I unequivocally withdraw the word dishonest.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable minister.

Mr. Struthers: That does not change the fact that the member for Agassiz is absolutely wrong in what he says. The Finance Minister of Clayton Manness brought in the PST, expanded it in his April budget and, Mr. Speaker, as every other budget in the history of this province, no different than this year, the PST at the time, came into effect and then after that the budget received the proper authority for which it always does, every year in this House. That will not be different this year that—we'll do the same thing.

It's no different than—I wonder why members opposite aren't making an issue about the cigarette tax that went up, because that is the same thing every year in our budgets, in Clayton Manness' budgets, in Eric Stefanson's budgets, in Harold Gilleshammer's budget, every year, pretty much. I know, I hear from smokers sometimes, they don't really like it, but up goes the price of cigarettes on midnight, the night of the budget. I haven't heard members opposite squawk once about that and go to bat for smokers in this province.

The fact of the matter is the process doesn't fit in to the political story, the political narrative that members opposite want to talk about, so they just make it up. If it suits their political agenda, they just make it up. No different than the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), the Leader of the Opposition, who stands up in this House and he just, out of mid-air, comes up with the number 1,600 in terms of what it will cost—this PST hike—what it will cost

families in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, \$1,600, that would mean—and I challenge members opposite to get their slide rules out and figure this out for themselves, or talk to anybody, any elementary school kid and they'll do the math for you. If that was an absolute true number, if it was \$1,600 that was the average cost for a Manitoba family that means that that Manitoba family would have to be spending \$160,000 every year just on goods that the PST is applied to. Now, \$160,000 a year, I would suggest, is not the average Manitoba family. I don't know many or hardly any—maybe—I don't know of any—maybe the Leader of the Opposition spends \$160,000 that's PST claimable. I don't know if anybody else does. His number was so far off that his Finance critic had to come in this House and say, oh, no, it's not \$1,600 it's \$1,200. Well, that's even a little wacky. At least she was closer than the Official Opposition Leader, but she's wrong too.

Now I understand they've gone back to the \$1,600, according to the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), who came in and added \$43 onto the top of the \$1,600. She broke it all up for me. She's right. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? She came up with a third different number. She was even farther out of whack than the Official Opposition Leader is. One says \$1,600, one says \$1,200, the member for Tuxedo says it's even higher than that. So while she broke it all down, she says, she put it onto the record, \$1,640—\$1,640. So, according to her calculations, you got to make about \$164,000 in terms of expenses every year.

Mr. Speaker, they keep pulling things right out of mid-air. None of it makes any sense. They keep making stuff up. I would—my advice for them is invest in some research, do some homework, come into this Chamber with something that is real, come into this Chamber with a rationale that you can actually back up. Don't just pull things out of mid-air and try to pass them off as the truth.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): That was a wonderful, wonderful speech on rhetoric. I could add some other things to that type of rhetoric, but—and he would know exactly what it is because he's been ridden by a jockey, or what was that? I forget what it was—something to do with the jockeys anyway.

But I'd like to—I would like to thank the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) for bringing forward this motion.

For the benefit of the members opposite, since some of them haven't heard, the motion reads as follows: That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to follow the law and seek the approval of Manitobans through holding a referendum before raising the retail sales tax, known as the provincial sales tax.

Under the balanced budget act—or bet—debt repayment and taxpayer protection act, Manitobans have the democratic right to a referendum whenever the government wants to raise a major tax. The PST is one those taxes.

And I would suggest to the Finance Minister that he should do his homework, he should read that act. And I have no doubt he has the ability to read, but comprehension seems to be his problem. That seems to be the problem he's had with a number of things. It took a court—queen of court—queen—Court of Queens's Bench judge to point out to him that you have to sign that, sir, because you've broken the law. That's what he said to you—you broke the law.

So please pay attention to this, this taxpayer protection act—you are breaking the law. And when you break the law, you're going to have to pay for that—you have to understand that. Don't break the law, call a referendum.

You are the professional referendum caller, you spent \$80,000 fighting the federal government over something that wasn't your business. It wasn't in your purview—wasn't in your purview at all and you wanted to change—didn't want to change the Wheat Board. You said they had to have a referendum. Here it's written in law that you have to have the referendum and you can't comprehend—it's unfortunate. And I'm—I actually lost a great deal of respect for you, as all of Manitobans have.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An Honourable Member: A long afternoon.

Mr. Speaker: It could be a long afternoon.

I want to caution the honourable member for Emerson—in fact, all the members. The reason we have a Speaker in the House is to ensure that the debate can flow in an orderly fashion and, in fact, in a respectful manner.

And we ask, as Speakers have for a long time in this province, and, in fact, every province and territory in Canada, that the debate occur through the Speaker's Chair so that we would not inject a—personal comments into the debate.

And so I'm asking for the honourable member of Emerson, please, place your comments through the Chair so that we can have debate occurring in an orderly fashion, in fact, in keeping with the procedures and practices that are so common across Canada.

Mr. Graydon: Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for not directing my comments to the Chair, and in order to have them recorded properly I would do that now.

And I would suggest to the Chair that many, many Manitobans have no respect for this Finance Minister. When they stood on the steps of this Legislature and he was asked specifically by members in this House if he would come out and speak to them over the PST, he refused. Thirty-seven refusals, I believe, came out of this House, on that side.

* (15:20)

The respect for this government right now is probably at the lowest it's been for many, many, many, many years. And they deserve it; they deserve it because in the last election they promised that they wouldn't raise taxes, they promised that they wouldn't raise the PST. In fact, as soon as the election was over the first thing they did was they raised taxes by \$184 million on key business goods and services like gasoline and property insurance. They also raised user fees on basic government services to the tune of \$114 million, Mr. Speaker. The vehicle registration was a prime example of that. That's something that people need every day. They need to drive their vehicles to get to work. And, because of the terrible conditions of the roads, the cost of repairing those vehicles, the cost went up as well.

They quickly followed that in the next budget with a 14 per cent PST increase. That increase, Mr. Speaker, has caused nothing but grief for all of Manitobans. Small businesses and big businesses are leaving the province. As I pointed out earlier today, Richardson's decided to develop their canola plant in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Glanbia went to South Dakota. A Crown corporation—excuse me—MPI, went to Ontario with a database. Technology and innovation is what will drive this province going forward. This spendP government drove it out of the province. They drove it to Ontario. It could have been in Portage la Prairie. Could have been in Brandon. My choice would have been Altona. Could have been in Morden-Winkler—

An Honourable Member: Vita.

Mr. Graydon: It could have been in Vita has been pointed out by my honourable colleague from La Verendrye, and I'm sure that Vita would have done a great job. A lot of brilliant people in Vita as there is in all of Manitoba. But 24, 25 high-paying jobs went to Ontario, outsourced by a Crown corporation. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) must be proud of that. He must be proud of that.

They brought in a tax credit to offset the PST and then raised the PST. The taxes that have come forward are hurting all of Manitobans. But, just as importantly, the deficit, which they don't understand deficit and debt—at least the former minister didn't; perhaps this one has an idea, and if he doesn't I will explain it to him—but both of those are taxes. They may not be taxes for you and I, Mr. Speaker, because of our age, however, for our grandchildren, they will be paying this debt in taxes. It has to be paid. That is a tax—that's the hidden tax that this government hides daily, and they stand up and say we're doing all these wonderful things for you. We're doing all kinds of wonderful things.

So maybe we should just take a look at the wonderful things. According to a recent CFIB report, 89 per cent of small businesses in Saskatchewan said they would likely recommend starting a business in that province. And we know that that's a fact when we see Richardson's, a company that was born and raised in Manitoba, goes to Saskatchewan. We know that the member from Dauphin said: if the lights are brighter in Saskatchewan, then that's where we have to go. We have to go to Saskatchewan. That comes from the Minister responsible for Agriculture.

Alberta businesses said—71 per cent of them said they would encourage development in Alberta. In Manitoba only 53 per cent of the small businesses said that they would encourage people to develop in Manitoba. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker. That is a shame. They have lowered the bar, as my colleague from Agassiz says, they have lowered the bar so low that people are leaving. They want to be out of here.

They have broken election promises over and over. They have bullied, as the Minister of Finance tried to do with the Assiniboia Downs and got corrected by a judge that said, Mr. Minister, sign here. That's what he said. He had to show him where to sign because he didn't know or he wasn't going to. But he told him that he'd broke the law, Mr. Speaker.

What we're asking today is that they do not break the law in the province of Manitoba, that they do call the referendum. Give the people the democratic right that our forefathers have fought for in this country, and that our brothers and sisters are fighting for today in other countries. Let them honour that democratic right in this province, this year, tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debates?

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to have a chance to put a few words on the record in support of the member from Tuxedo and the resolution she has brought forward. And many members on this side of the House, and I'm sure it's occurring on that side of the House, no doubt have been receiving a significant number of emails or letters or phone calls or even been stopped on the street to talk about what's going on regarding the increase in the provincial sales tax, and almost without exception they have been very negative, very anti-the-increase, and I cannot imagine how difficult it must be for an NDP MLA to meet these people and look them in the eye and say, well, this is just a little minor thing that we forgot to tell you about during the last election campaign. In fact, they were very, very clear during the last election campaign about no increase in taxes. In fact, they were in line to balance the budget by 2016.

Now I know our leader at the time had some serious doubts about whether those numbers could actually work and time would prove him very likely correct, and certainly there were a number of people that we talked to when we were going from door to door campaigning during the election, or in the run-up to the election, that were very doubtful, very disbelieving of the NDP position, and it would seem that they actually knew better than the Finance Minister and certainly knew better than the Premier (Mr. Selinger) because he didn't seem to know. He made certainly lots of indications otherwise very public and very clear. Now perhaps some of the MLAs knew that this wasn't true and that the Premier was misleading them as well as everyone else. I'm not sure that—what the case was, but certainly a lot of people had serious doubts about that.

And now we reach the point where we're dealing with an increase in PST and we wanted it to express our opinion as Manitobans on what should be done with that because we didn't get to express our opinion during the election on that particular issue. That was put aside. That was not put to the public in

any way. Now we would like to have a referendum to that end, and that right seems to be denied to us. We thought we had that in legislation, and very clearly it was just a myth and certainly a legislation that this government is quite clean—quick to overlook.

Now I've been very concerned, I think, with the frequency of how legislation is ignored in this House. We've seen a long history, not only of breaking election rules—which by the way they actually wrote in most cases—and now rules like this, which is something that's been on the books for a long time. We've certainly seen different stories been put forward about things like Jets tickets and inadvertent examples of breaking the rules, and, in fact, leads me to a comment of a friend of mine that's in the legal profession, says—actually for a period of time after the—I believe it was the Finance Minister made the com—member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) made the comment about it being an inadvertent mistake, that actually was a line of logic that many lawyers tried and it didn't get them very far. Certainly, it was not—didn't carry the day. But it's certainly something that the minister might be pleased to know he actually added to the legal profession in regards to that.

But here we are looking to do a referendum and that's been denied to us, and as was pointed out by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) that there's lots of time to do this. You take something like this to the people and the people would, I think, be very pleased to be consulted on an issue as major as this, and we have not seen any effort to do that. And, in fact, during the process, Mr. Speaker, of consultations, we all got copies of what was being presented by the NDP at the consultation usually through a friend of a friend who would be very quick to supply it. Often many of them had attended these consultations, and very little in terms of information was there and certainly nothing in regards to a PST hike.

* (15:30)

So, certainly, that consultation didn't lead to this move on their part. In fact, we're really wondering what has been driving this. I mean, clearly, they have a significant deficit, and even with the increase that they're putting forward they have not dealt with that deficit. It'll be just as high next year, which leaves us wondering what's going to happen next year. We've seen—first seen a broadening of the sales tax. Then we saw an increase in the sales tax. But our financial

position moving into next year will not be any better, though, certainly, revenue will be far higher. But the deficit will be just as big, if not bigger, and that's assuming that they actually come in on the budget which, if you look back, you see very little history of that. So we could be in a situation right back here a year from now where we're worrying about another major grab in terms of tax revenue.

Mr. Speaker, you look back, of course, and there is very little history of this, but there are a few times in the past when governments have dipped heavily into taxpayers' 'promise'—pockets in a single year. And that would be going back to the Howard Pawley days, I think, before you would find one—an example that this was as big as it was. And it certainly was not a time that this government today likes to refer back to, and they do like to refer back to history an awful lot. Perhaps from now on we can expect them to refer to how good the Howard Pawley days were. In fact, a few things that I actually remember, because it was certainly a long time ago, one was the increase in the provincial sales tax that they did and another was how they handled a thing called the MTX where a good deal of money—and we're never really sure how much—left the province of Manitoba and helped out the people of Saudi Arabia. And if I remember correctly, at the time Saudi Arabia was a country with the highest average annual income of any country in the world. So, certainly, they obviously needed a great deal of help from Manitobans to deal with that.

Now, earlier this afternoon we heard the member from Thompson talk about, well, they're going to spend this money on flood infrastructure, and flood infrastructure is something that is particularly important to the constituency I represent. We have some of it in that constituency. We need more. But a lot of the water, particularly from the west, flows through our constituency. And we had a extremely close call on a number of fronts in 2011, and that actually has brought most people's memory—refreshed most people's memory quite a bit on the issue.

Now, almost all of those projects—and I have been through in great detail the task force reports that he was referring to. Almost all of those projects have been on the books for a very long time. Many governments—in fact, I dare say, some of them go back to the Douglas Campbell days—have been on the books to do for a lot—a long time, and governments have had many opportunities to do that—including the government across the way—and

action was very wanting. In fact, when you look back and look at the numbers that they spent on flood infrastructure other than the floodway around Winnipeg, it is a really small amount. We can argue over whether it's 0.015 or 0.018, it is certainly a very tiny amount in terms of commitments, and we were very much at risk because of lack of attention to that.

In fact, I know it was actually many of the municipal people that pushed government to take action very quickly on the lower Assiniboine dikes, because I don't think this government's staff were very well aware or the minister were very well aware of the condition of those dikes in any way. And so I actual credit the municipal governments for having the foresight to save a lot of people from those problems. These are the same municipal governments that the—this government today say—calls dysfunctional and need to look at amalgamation. But these are the people that actually were the best informed and front and centre in regards to dealing with the prevention of the flood.

Now, I did want to put a few comments on the record, actually, regarding the impact on low-income households. Any raise in the PST, even though they are exempt on things like food and children's clothing and a few other assorted things, actually does impact every household. There is no complete exemption, even basic things that you need to maintain a household do cover—are covered by PST.

And though they may not amount to the 12 or 16 hundred dollars that the average income household will spend on PST extra costs, it will still take hundreds of dollars out of these households. This is money that they clearly cannot afford to be without, and so there will be quite a significant impact even at that level. In fact, there are many people that can be termed the working poor that this will be perhaps the straw that broke the camel's back and put them to a point where the sustainability of their household is very much at risk.

So I hope this government reflects on that and realizes that they are putting a lot of households at risk with this type of axe—tax increase. It is not one that—or it is one that actually has a significant impact on every household, whether they be at high-income levels or low-income levels. But, in particular, the ones at low-income levels are much more vulnerable to these types of tax increases.

So I'd like to thank the Speaker for the chance to put a few words on the record in regards to support

to the resolution from the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Speaking to the Opposition Day motion brought forward by my colleague from Tuxedo, and this all—really, all this motion does is talk about following the law, and it's following the law and holding a referendum prior to increasing the provincial sales tax, the PST. Manitobans, each and every day, are expected to follow the law. And they do, by a large measure, follow the law, and there's consequences when they don't follow the law. And that's all we're asking from this government is to follow the laws of the Legislature because until Bill 20 is passed, according to the law, there must be an—a referendum prior to increasing the PST.

And this isn't—the government likes to say it's a penny a doll—a penny on the dollar, but this is a 14 per cent increase in the sales tax and this is a substantial amount of money for a family between the PST rise, the rise in the expansion of the PST last year—which they had every right to do and which they did into property insurance, group insurance. They also increased many fees: a \$400-million tax hit to Manitoba families—\$1,600 for every family. Somewhere on the table they have to find where that money's going to come from because the tax man will get it before they're able to pay their bills. So this is a decision that each and every family will have to make.

And it's about calling a referendum, and I know that the Finance Minister's not opposed to referendums because he sent 80,000 Manitoba dollars to have a referendum on the Canadian Wheat Board just a year ago. I don't know where—what did we get for our \$80,000 out of this? But, in fact, I think what we got for our \$80,000 is an expansion in the wheat acreage this year, and if—when the guys hit the fields, so there we go. So that was—he's not totally opposed to referendums, so we would like to see him do that on this.

And now we know that the Finance Minister is rather desperate these days, and in his desperation he said, and I quote from his scum, that: Clearly, an organization that is dependent on a government subsidy today is not sustainable. So, let's see, Manitoba gets, what? A third of their income out of—off of the backs of every other province in 'manito'—in Canada? So does that mean that we are—does that mean we're not sustainable here in Manitoba?

Apparently the Finance Minister has some doubts about our sustainability.

And it's—and I—you know, I realize with 192 communicators that, you know, the message is just going to get messed up a little bit once in a while, because I was sitting here in the Chamber this morning during the hydro resolution debate. And the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Chomiak) said, we're going to replace fossil fuels with hydroelectricity in selling clean hydroelectricity.

Well, that's an admirable goal. Five minutes later, the member from Elmwood stands up and says, no, we're going to sell power to the Alberta oil sands so that they can produce more fossil fuels.

* (15:40)

And then, of course, what—the member from Elmwood didn't quite get into all the details, but we're pretty sure when they build that transmission line to go from northern Manitoba to the oil sands, it will go via Kenora because using the rationale that they've used on Bipole III, I guess it's going to swing around by Kenora on its way to the northern Alberta.

So, you know, and I can just—I was sitting here listening to this discussion from the NDP members—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines, on a point of order.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines): Yes, I'm wondering, the member said Kenora. I wonder if he means Canora, Saskatchewan, or Kenora, Ontario; I wonder if he could outline which direction he was referencing.

Mr. Speaker: Any further advice to the Chair? The honourable member for Midland, on the same point of order.

Mr. Pedersen: Clarification for the member—it was absolutely Kenora, Ontario.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable minister, I would encourage all honourable members not to interrupt debate on points of orders that don't at least include where a particular rule or practice of this House has been breached, so I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order, since no rule breach has been pointed out.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Midland, to continue his comments.

Mr. Pedersen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now the NDP wants to break the law again. We already know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) broke the law in terms of trying to break the Manitoba Jockey Club. That was very clear in the judge's decision. He wants to break the law again now by passing Bill 20 prior to July 1st.

Now the law says that you have to have a referendum before you can increase the PST, but this government seems to just say, the law doesn't apply to us; we're going to increase the PST 14 per cent on July 1st. It doesn't matter whether Bill 20 passes or not.

So Manitobans are sitting there listening to this and they're thinking, well, you know, does the law not apply to everyone here?

And they—they're—hence the sheer number of—hence the number of people that were in front of the Legislature last Thursday night protesting the—this proposed increase to the PST, which all members of the NDP were busy going out the back door of the Legislature, climbing into the Minister of Local Government's (Mr. Lemieux) pickup there so that they could all ride away together. But I hope it wasn't in the back because I understand now we're—we have a law coming in against that one, too.

But, when this budget was announced, Mr. Speaker, and which is the primary reason for their Bill 20, when the budget was introduced, the 192 spinners were very, very busy. First of all, we're—they said they needed the increase in the PST because of flood. Well, about three days later they decide, no. That one's not going to sell; it's for infrastructure. Nope. About three days later, that one didn't sell because the mayors of their major cities in Manitoba got together and said, no, it's not going to infrastructure. So now the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the Finance Minister are out there saying, oh, it's for schools and daycares and splash pads and so we'll reannounce schools that were announced three years ago that we still haven't built, but we'll just reannounce those again.

But, really, what it comes down to is the increase in the PST is really for only two purposes. First of all, it's the NDP slush fund. It will bring them in more money to spend to secure their own position and, secondly, it's for the vote tax. This caucus, NDP caucus, is too lazy or too afraid to go out and ask

Manitobans for financial support. Instead, they want to tax every Manitoban, and they're going to tax every Manitoban \$7,000 for each one of them. Each one of the 37 NDP members sitting in here are going to collect \$7,000 off the taxpayer to pay for their own politics. They're either too afraid to go out there and ask Manitobans—now, it's Thursday afternoon. We're probably all headed home for the weekend, and I know I will run into a lot of my constituents that will be very upset about this, and I talk to my constituents. I see them regularly. I hear from them regularly and, you know, so I really wonder—it would actually be kind of nice to tag along to some of the NDP as they go—or maybe they don't go talk to their constituents.

You know, like—and I look across, I see the member from St. Norbert as he gets his Harley out there and he's filling up with gas at the St. Norbert Co-op—I'll bet you he keeps his shades and his helmet on—uses his credit card at the pump because he doesn't want to go into the store and talk to anybody because he knows he's going to get blasted about the PST.

Me, I—when I go to the Co-op at home, I go in and I talk to my constituents—I'm never afraid to talk to my constituents. So I certainly look forward to—and if you like, I actually have a pair of camouflage sunglasses that you can wear so you can actually sneak in and get your gas without being seen. So—and, you know, Cabela's opening tonight—today, so we can all run over there and get camouflage sunglasses for everybody on the NDP so they can sneak around and not—heaven forbid if they ever run into their own constituents.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would really urge the government to take a look at this, obey the law, call a referendum. What are you afraid of? Are you afraid of Manitobans? Are you afraid of the message? Like, even 192 communicators can't spin your way out of this one. Go to the people and ask them on this—ask them if they're in favour of a 14 per cent increase in the PST.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I rise today to support the resolution brought forward by the member from Tuxedo, and, as members of this House know very clearly, that what this government has done to the people of Manitoba—the hard-working people of Manitoba—has broken their promise.

It's unfortunate that they decided to do that first off. When people go the polls, they take us at our word, and when we lose our credibility with our word, it starts to have a ripple effect. And I know the government don't feel that they're going to be punished one iota on this, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if they had the courage, they would take this to the public for a referendum. And it's very, very important that when this legislation was brought forward, the taxpayers protection act, that we have the ability to be able to do that.

Yes, the government can change it—there's no denying that. Laws can be changed, laws can be repealed, things can happen. But right now under the current legislation, it's very clear that there needs to be a referendum on this particular piece of budget item, and it's very clear that the 1 per cent is a law that's going to be broken by this promise.

We're going to hold the government to account. We're going to make sure—make sure as the best we possibly can to stall this bill 'til at least July 1st, and we know that there's well over 170 presenters at this point in time that have signed up—signed up to have their voices heard. And I know the member from Steinbach has asked the member from St. Boniface time and time again whether or not he's going to be at committee to listen to those hard-working Manitobans from across Manitoba. I know very clearly from looking at the list, there is a quite—quite a few people from all across Manitoba that's coming and hoping the—that, not only the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) be there, but also the First Minister. Whenever we make decisions that affect each and every Manitoba one way or another, we need to make sure their voice is heard, and we're going to do everything we can to ensure that that happens.

In fact, I know that the First Minister and the Minister of Finance, when they were preparing for the election in 2011, went to the doors, as every member on that side of the House—the member from St. Vital, the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, the member from Wolseley, member from Thompson, the member from Gimli, the member from Kirkfield Park, member from Rossmere, Brandon East, Point Douglas, Kildonan, St. James, Selkirk, on and on—they all went to the door and what did they do? What did they do, Mr. Speaker? They lied to the people—they misled those people and they put their vote—their X beside each one of those candidates and said, yes, we are going to not raise taxes. In fact, what they said, it's nonsense. And we

know very clearly—we know very clearly what this government has done to each and every Manitoban.

* (15:50)

And it was interesting, the member from Gimli got up today in response to a question from the member from Emerson, and he was talking about these businesses that came to Manitoba. I wonder how each of those businesses feel now that they've been blindsided—blindsided—by this government because of a government that went out and said they were not going to raise taxes. They were—it was just plain nonsense, and what they did to these businesses that came, unfortunately, they just threw them under the bus. Threw them under the bus and said, you know what? We're glad you're here, but it's too bad. We're going to raise the tax anyway. And you know what? You're not going to have a say in it, either. But I know the member from Selkirk, the member from Interlake at least had the courage to go out in their local papers and say, we support it. We think this is wonderful. We think this is great. It's going to be good for all Manitobans.

Member from Gimli—being quiet on it, not said a word, has not got up in this House and said, oh, I support my government. I was consulted on it.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I know that every member on that side of the House has a responsibility to answer to their taxpayers or their ratepayers and their voters. And I know whenever I look at the various opinions and letters to the editor—in fact, the member from Dauphin had his own local paper, the Dauphin Herald, come out with a letter to the editor. And they said the first road to recovery is admitting you have a problem. It is a step the provincial government decided not to take when it released its financial plan for the coming year.

An Honourable Member: Which paper was that?

Mr. Eichler: This was the Dauphin Herald—the Dauphin Herald.

An Honourable Member: Don't we have a member from there?

Mr. Eichler: You know, I think it's the same member that broke the law just here a couple of weeks ago, the same member that stood up in this House and refused to admit that he had any Jets tickets: no, no, I didn't have any of those. No. Oh, but then, he got caught. He got caught. And that's unfortunate for all Manitobans, that we can't trust

what comes out of members' opposite mouths whenever they make a statement in this House. They have to have credibility. They have to have the authority of the people that they are representing—best interests at heart. And if this is what they call their best interest, then give the people a choice. Give them an opportunity for a referendum, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I just want to come back to this Dauphin Herald article. I got a little off sidetrack. And the thing is is that what it goes on to say is this type of arrogance the NDP has shown over its time in power, and especially since the member from St. Boniface took over the reins of the party from Gary Doer. Well, I remember very clearly when MPI, and Gary Doer was the First Minister at that time, MPI was going to come in and do a whole bunch of work for the universities. Well, what happened? What happened? Public jumped up, said don't touch our money. This is our money. This is money we paid for our insurance premiums and you're not about to go and start taking Crown corporation money and spend it in other departments. So at that time Gary Doer was smart enough to say, hey, we're not going to go ahead with this thing.

The NDP have an opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They have an opportunity to right this wrong. They have an opportunity to do the right thing and say to each and every Manitoban: you come; you vote; we will make sure we listen; and, also, we will give you that opportunity. We will not break the law. But we know very clearly they're prepared to do that. They've made that very clear. They want to ram this bill through, get it over with so they won't be seen as breaking the law on July the 1st.

Unfortunately—unfortunately—what we are seeing from this government and this Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) is the fact they've been in power too long. They get arrogant. They get so full of themselves that they don't want to listen. They don't want to listen to anybody that anyone has to say, and I know they say, well, you're just playing politics with this. Well, you know what? We're not playing politics. We're representing the people of Manitoba that want to be able to come to this great building, the building they own, Mr. Speaker, the building that they've put us here to do—and, actually, whenever the legislation was brought forward for the taxpayer protection act, there was a big cry for that legislation to come into place so that they would be able to have that opportunity.

I know that as we ask public opinion on various different things, and we go out, and we do our consultation as well, and I know we've asked this question again: How many people did the Minister of Finance say will you please raise the PST? Yes, there were some people out there that did, in fact, want to have the PST increased. But that was for a pacific reason. It was the RMs that said, hey, we want this to go to infrastructure. Manitoba heavy equipment went out. Manitoba Business Council, which I know is having a big event today, and there is a number of issues going on there as well, good discussions, is my understanding.

And whatever—what of we do in this building is so important to make sure we have—have people's support. And when you lose that ability to not have support of the public, it'll come back some time, some day, somehow, to bite you.

And I know very clearly that this government—and people will remember, and they say, oh, well, it's the middle of our mandate, the middle of our term, middle of our opportunity to be able to right things for our people—in fact, you know what? We're going to balance our budget by 2016. We're going to do the things that the people want and we're going to come out in 2016 and we can see it already. It's going to be a balanced budget; it's going to be a budget that's full of—full of things for everybody. Everybody's going to get everything they want. And then they'll call the election which we already know they want to change the date because of the federal election. So what they'll do then is say, we're sorry; we're sorry we didn't listen to the people. Give us one more chance and we will right whatever we did wrong.

So I know the members opposite have this opportunity to call a referendum and we certainly encourage them to support this resolution and do the right thing and call a referendum, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It's gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Lac du Bonnet constituents to put a few words on the record to speak towards the Opposition Day motion brought forward by the member from Tuxedo.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, part of the Opposition Day motion is, basically, bottom line, the—for the provincial government to do as I say, not as I do, to follow the law and seek the approval of Manitobans through holding a referendum before raising the retail sales tax. Now, in the Budget 2013,

once again, they—the NDP government has decided to raise the tax, the PST hike, by one point, which is nearly 14 per cent. And with that is going to generate roughly \$236 million, which is basically going to be coming right of taxpayers' pockets. And the biggest problem we, on this side of the House, are having with this—well, there's many, many issues that we're having with this, but one of them is the fact that there was no consultations in regards to this PST hike. The law, the taxpayer protection act, does say that in order to raise taxes, they would have to hold a referendum. And the government of the day is trying to ram through Bill 20 so that they can change the law so that they can go ahead and raise this tax without having any voice from the grassroots where the actual people who gave them the majority mandate in the last election to govern our fine province of Manitoba.

Also, within—within the Opposition Day motion there's a few things that I would like to also put on record in regards to many of the various interest groups that do speak out on a daily basis about this PST hike and their wish for a referendum. And some of those interest groups are the AMM, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, Manitoba Business Council and the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association. Just yesterday I had spoke towards an amendment on the Bill 20, and I had mentioned that on May 8th, just the other day, Janine Carmichael from CFIB—she's the Manitoba director, had sent out a news release talking about a poll that was conducted by Angus Reid Public Opinion, that 500 Manitobans were surveyed and 74 per cent of them agree that the provincial government should hold the referendum before raising the PST from 7 to 8 per cent. Of the small business owners that were also surveyed, 93 per cent of them want a referendum first, Mr. Speaker, before they go ahead and raise this PST.

* (16:00)

So, basically, if that referendum is not held and they go ahead come July 1st and raise the PST, they are breaking the law, Mr. Acting Speaker, and so I just take a look at many of the other laws that have been instituted and I support. In the past, bicycle helmets—I know just yesterday I told little bit of a story about bicycle helmets and how my children, when we go out for a bicycle ride, that they put the bicycle helmets on because it is a law. They're both under 18 and they do not need any confrontation with the local law enforcement.

Distracted driving, no texting or cellphone use whilst driving is another good law, and I believe that a lot of people are trying hard to abide by that law.

Another law that was brought forward was smoking on beaches or in parks, that's going to be interesting to see that law in action this coming summer, to see if there's any enforcement of that.

But that being said, Mr. Acting Speaker, we're probably going to be in the House all summer, so as far as going and enjoying some of our local beaches and parks might be out of the question this year because it looks like we're going to be speaking on Bill 20 for quite some time, and I don't see us getting out of the House before summer.

Another law that was brought in was smoking in vehicles whilst infants being in the car, Mr. Acting Speaker. I'm not sure what the stats are on how that's all working out, or how many people have been charged with that offence. But I know—because I commute into the Legislature every day—I do see various people still breaking some of those laws that I've already mentioned.

But, just in addition to this Opposition Day motion, I would like to just extend or possibly just read the article that was in the Winnipeg Free Press on May 8th, 2013. No, scratch that; I apologize.

Earlier on this year, when the Finance Minister was in and it was—he was speaking towards the Jockey Club in the Assiniboine downs, and the PST hike to me just doesn't seem like it's out of the realm of this government's mandate, I guess, and the level of arrogance.

I'm just going to read just a quick quote from this Finance Minister in this Free Press article and it says, and I quote, "By telling people that I am putting tax dollars into hospitals and schools instead of horses . . . I have already won the public opinion vote."

And because I'm quoting this it says, Struthers is quoted as telling the club officials: So if you want to go there, I am prepared. I am a politician. That is what I do. If you want a public fight, I am ready and we will win; no question.

Well, it disheartens me a little bit when we have our—one of our more senior cabinet ministers saying things like that in a local paper because what ends up happening is they—the local or the fellow Manitobans start to read some of these things and they start to paint all politicians—

The Acting Speaker (Mohinder Saran): Order, please. Order, please.

The honourable member, he used the name of the Finance Minister. Instead, he should have used Finance Minister. So I would ask to withdraw his comment.

Mr. Ewasko: I withdraw, but I was actually quoting directly and I said that I was quoting directly. *[interjection]* Okay, then I just withdraw. Thank you. Thanks for the advice, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Okay, so as I was saying, the promise from this government doesn't hold much water because in the election of 2011, in September and the beginning of October, they had promised many things. They had promised not—they had promised to raise—not raise taxes in order to balance their books.

And we noticed that in 2012 Budget, the amount of hidden fees that had come about that budget, was about \$184 million. And so, if you add that \$184 million of hidden fees, you add it to the PST increase now for this year, and you tack on that extra 1 point of PST onto those hidden fees from the previous year, you're looking at close to about \$500 million in additional fees over the last couple years.

So, when equated and when broke down, we are looking at about \$1,600 per family of four, of extra money that's going to be taken out of their pockets, out of the local economy, and given to the NDP government so that they can spend it however they do see fit. There's not 1 cent of that money that is going towards the deficit or the debt, Mr. Acting Speaker.

So I think there's a lot of families that are going to be hurt if they do proceed, and we're sure hoping that they have a change of mind, a change of heart, and they withdraw Bill 20 and not elect to raise the PST.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the time to put a few words on record in regards to the Opposition Day motion, and I look forward to listening to some of my other colleagues.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and it—indeed, a pleasure to speak to the motion brought forward by the member from Tuxedo. And clearly the motion is a very fitting motion; we're certainly involved in discussions about

the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Struthers) budget that he brought forward just a few weeks ago.

Clearly, the minister is—appears that he wants to break existing legislation, yet again, Mr. Speaker. It's unfortunate the NDP government has no respect for the laws of the province here. And we've seen examples of ministers on that side of the House breaking existing legislation in the past. And, clearly, this year, we've seen it again, time and time again.

Clearly, we've been raising the issue in the Chamber with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), in terms of his position as Minister of Finance. And, in fact, the fact that he has broken the law here just in the last few weeks—it was recognized this past week in the release by the Court of Queen's Bench, Mr. Speaker, and with the existence of Bill 20, it appears he is bent on breaking the law yet again.

And, quite clearly, Mr. Speaker, the people in the province of Manitoba recognize that fact. They certainly recognize the increase in the 1 per cent sales tax will have quite a dramatic effect in their—on their pocketbooks. And, as mentioned before, this 1 per cent increase, or increase of 1 point in the percentage of PST, will impact the—probably the portion of our society which we—the most vulnerable. And I'm thinking about people on low income, people on fixed incomes, such as seniors. This tax will have quite a dramatic effect on the bottom line.

Today, Mr. Speaker, in fact, we have the BMO report that comes out and talks about Manitoba's economic forecast, and, quite frankly, it downgrades the economic forecast here in Manitoba. And that forecast is a direct result of the policy that's been put forward by this NDP government in terms of raising provincial sales tax here in Manitoba.

Clearly, hundreds of millions of dollars of what would normally be disposable income, will now be going to pay the taxman. And we know the Minister of Finance is also known as minister of taxation and spending, he will be getting as much money as he physically can out of the ratepayers here in Manitoba. And, Mr. Speaker, we think, you know, enough is enough; the taxpayers of Manitoba have had enough.

*(16:10)

And this comes on the heels of a broken promise by the NDP government. During the last election, they promised not to raise taxes. The Premier (Mr. Selinger) says the thought of raising the PST was

nonsense. Well, within six months, we had the provincial government come in here and introduce their budget, which clearly impacted pretty well every Manitoban in the province with the broadening of the provincial sales tax. A year later they followed with the notion of raising the provincial sales tax another point, and clearly that will impact all Manitobans as well, and that's why companies such as BMO recognized the implications to Manitobans and the implications to the economy here in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

And it's interesting when we talk about PST, if we're going to be at 8 per cent here in Manitoba, our neighbours just to the west have a 5 per cent provincial sales tax rate, and I would think the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), the member for Swan River (Mr. Kostyshyn), who have constituents that live right beside the Saskatchewan border, I would think those members, in fact, those ministers would be getting some calls from their constituents in Swan River, constituents in Roblin who are going to be impacted by that sales tax increase.

Clearly, the businesses there will be impacted as we will see many Manitobans travel across the border into Saskatchewan to buy commodities and goods that have a much lower provincial sales tax. So there will be a significant impact to their residents, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure, you know, we've talked about the consultation process, the dog and pony show that the government has each year in their prebudget call it consultations if you will. I would suggest that there would be very few, if any, members of either the minister for Dauphin or the minister from Swan River, whether any of their constituents would've been calling them to recommend another increase to the provincial sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, we wonder why the government would have to introduce an increase in the provincial sales tax. But I think to understand where the NDP is coming from you have to have a look at the big picture and you have to look at the big budget here in Manitoba. Now we know the current NDP government love to spend money. We've seen them in the last 13 years increase their budget from \$6 billion to over \$12 billion in this budget. So that's a very substantial increase in the size of the budget. The problem is they haven't been able to live within their budget—their own budget allocations. They have repeatedly year after year spent more money than they've budgeted. In fact, at the end of this fiscal

year, the government of the day plans to have a \$30-billion debt. The Province of Manitoba, including Crown corps, will all owe over \$30 billion.

And just in Public Accounts last night we were able to go over some of the numbers from the 2012 expenditures, and we saw there and we verified with the Deputy Minister of Finance, given in that year we spent \$820 million alone just servicing the debt of the core budget here in Manitoba. In the core operations of Manitoba, \$820 million that can't be used for education, for health care or for infrastructure. The other disturbing part of that was that the Manitoba Hydro also carry a substantial amount of debt, and we learned last night the cost to service the debt for Manitoba Hydro for the year 2012 was an additional \$430 million. If you add those two figures up, we are paying—or we did pay in 2012 over \$1.2 billion in debt-servicing cost. That's the kind of money we're paying on the mortgage, Mr. Speaker, each and every other year that can't be used for important things like education, health care and infrastructure.

Clearly, we've got a government out of control in terms of their—on their spending, Mr. Speaker, and that's why we're in a position—and that's why they're in a position where they have to go back to Manitobans, dig into their pockets a little deeper and raise the provincial sales tax. But, by doing this, they are contradicting the existing balanced budget legislation. So, to make those changes that they want, they have to change the referendum principle in that balanced budget legislation. So what they're doing is they're circumventing the Manitobans' right to have a vote on this increase in tax. I don't think it's right. Manitobans don't think it's right. The only people that think it's right are the NDP members across the way, and that's why I think it's very important that this motion was brought forward today, and we'll look forward to the vote later this afternoon, and hopefully the NDP members across the way will have a sober, second thought.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the Opposition Day motion put forward.

You know, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) states that he has not broke the law; he has broke the law. The law says that he has to—or he will be breaking the law when we get to July the 1st when they implement the sales tax because he has to

change the legislation first, and that legislation hasn't been changed yet.

The—you know—and over the last two years—last year we saw taxes raised by \$184 million and then licences and permits and user fees and so on, by another \$114 million. I hear the opposition quite vocally saying, where does this \$1,600 per household come from?

An Honourable Member: No, you're the opposition.

Mr. Briese: The—you're our opposition.

And so last year that total was \$298 million, this year another \$298 million, but just using this year's, \$298 million. You raise the provincial sales tax by 1 per cent for the remainder of the year, that's another \$198 million, plus there were another \$30 million of additional taxes this year. Takes it up to about \$520 million.

Now, you just do simple math. There's one and a quarter million people in Manitoba. Divide it into \$50 million. You've got \$1,600 per household, \$400 apiece. In fact, you've got more than that. Pretty—

An Honourable Member: Fifty million?

Mr. Briese: Pretty simple math.

An Honourable Member: Better do your math.

Mr. Briese: Five hundred million, pardon me.

An Honourable Member: Yes, you're out by a lot.

Mr. Briese: Thank you. Member from Elmwood has corrected my figures already; it's \$500 million I'm talking about, divided by one and a quarter million.

On top of that, ran a deficit last year of \$665 million, and this year we're running another deficit of at least \$502 million, just unreasonable. It's roughly a little over \$2 billion of extra income in two years. And we're still running deficits.

Now, I know Preston Manning used to have a saying that was: Get your fiscal house in order. And I think that's a pretty good saying. And they suggest that we'd be firing this and firing that. I'll give them some suggestions on where they could save costs right now and where they could have saved some costs in the past. One would be Bonnie Korzeniowski, the 58th Cabinet member. They're spending at least \$100,000 a year to maintain that office, and it was an office that was done by a

backbencher of the governing party up to that point in time.

They're spending massive amounts of money on advertising. Advertising costs could be cut quite easily. They could cut their communications people; 192 communications people: cut it in half.

Now, some of the things they could've stayed in the past: Spirited Energy cost \$4 million—\$4 million—where's the Spirited Energy thing now? They loaned Burnaby Bakery \$300,000 to establish in Churchill. I don't know whether it's still operating or not.

The forced unionization of the floodway cost a hundred million dollars. I expect the east-side road will be similar because it's a similar price. In fact, it's going to cost more than the floodway expansion, and so it's probably going to cost us a hundred million dollars extra for the forced unionization there.

The floodway cost overruns were \$135 million. They had to cut out a couple of bridges that they couldn't do at the time and they are now being tendered to be done now.

* (16:20)

The Winnipeg health authority new high-rise building, \$30 million; enhanced driver's licence, \$13 million. How does that one work? You know, the 1 per cent increase on sales tax will impact every Manitoban, every Manitoban that buys a good, buys a service. Doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor, young or old, it affects everybody. It affects the most vulnerable in society; it affects everyone out there.

You know, I've listened to the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Struthers) defences on the judge's ruling the other day and saying that he really didn't break the law when the judge says he really did break the law, but I do like the defence. I think it gives us all an out now on almost anything we do, traffic ticket, whatever, we can just say, well, somewhere down the road we're going to change that law, so we really aren't guilty of breaking it because we intend to change it in the future. So it certainly would play out that way, I would think.

You know, I really wonder when the NDP went door to door, or however they campaigned in the last election, what they actually were telling people. Did they actually go out there and say, we really want to raise taxes? We're going to have to raise taxes this year; we're going to have to raise taxes next year, and we think you should be happy about that. I don't think they did.

You know, the Premier was making some comments on federal health transfers recently and he said, well, I think there's a big concern just about the way it has been done, just dropped on people without any consultation or discussion. I mean, this is a process, he said. Now, that's the end of the quote, but he, I'm sure, when the budget came down this—a few weeks ago, that that was the first any Manitobans, even I think a number of the back benchers, had heard that there was going to be a 1 per cent increase in the sales tax. And I think it took everybody by surprise. Now they talk about consultation. It was never in the consultation. It was never said to anyone when they were out campaigning. They didn't say, we're going to raise your taxes. They said, we're on track to balance the budget by 2014; in fact, we're ahead of time and we'll do it without raising taxes.

So I know there are a number of other members here that want to speak to this, so I'll thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Helwer: I was quite enjoying listening to the previous speaker. I think he was doing a fabulous job but—

An Honourable Member: That he was.

Mr. Helwer: That he was. And, as we've heard a great deal speaking to this, the member from Tuxedo's motion today, it's interesting to listen to perspectives on what this is going to do to Manitobans, this PST increase; and, you know, that I've spoken before about Manitobans expecting that they were protected from tax increases from this government by the balanced budget legislation. They really had that belief, and that belief is shaken now that they will lose that protection. And, indeed, the Minister of Finance has talked—spoken in the House about the Manitoba public needing protection from the government and he was going to give it to them; but, unfortunately, he's taking it away in this regard. So Manitobans really did have that belief that they were protected from tax increases, but, again, apparently that's not the case in this government.

And we see the impact of this projected increase is starting to show up, indeed, where the Bank of Montreal has now downgraded its economic forecast for Manitoba, saying this pending increase in the provincial sales tax could act as a drag on economic growth and that, indeed, does follow economic theory, because it—when you have taxes increasing, it increases the price that firms have to pay for labour and that drives up, indeed, the prices that they must receive for their output to the consumers and on and

on. So, from what we see in the household from the average consumer is, when you have these types of increases, the bigger the tax wedge, then the smaller the supply of labour to the market. And, indeed, we often do see unemployment rise following tax increases. And who knows if that will, indeed, happen in this regard, but if we follow theory, and it often does follow, obviously, that it's true, the imposition of an income tax or an expenditure tax will have an impact on employment and unemployment in Manitoba and, indeed, on consumption.

So we know that, as taxes are increased, the number of workers employed will decline and, of course, the total product—the total production will also experience a reduction and will decline, and it's called fiscal drag, Mr. Speaker, and that is often what we see in economies that have this type of thing occur. These PST increases and other tax increases that this government has imposed on Manitobans will certainly be a drag on Manitoba—the Manitoba economy and Manitobans, in particular. So, when we see taxes on labour, whether paid by employers or workers or employers, when they're increased, the prediction that there will be a drop in the level of employment and, indeed, a rise in the measured rate of unemployment.

Now, I'm not sure if you're familiar with the multiplier effect, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you probably are, but when we look at economic theory, the multiplier effect of government expenditures is much lower than the multiplier effect of the private sector. When you leave tax dollars in individuals' pockets, they will spend them. When you leave them in their pockets, they will go out, and the effect that they will have on the economy is much larger than any government expenditure would be. And this is proven time and time again throughout the world, and it's obviously a lesson that this government has not learned.

There is a multiplier effect, indeed, for government expenditures, but again it is much lower than what you see for business or for consumers. So, if you leave the money in business, if you leave the money in consumers' pockets, they have a greater effect on the economy and will grow the economy faster than any government possibly could. That is a lesson that I think this government needs to learn and needs to understand that this type of a tax increase will drag the economy down and is not something that we need to see in Manitoba.

We have other provinces that are outpacing us in growth. They're attracting our labour. They're attracting our investment from Manitoba and we've—get into a black hole there that is just going to continue, and then you see things like recessions and depressions occur. And to be an economy in Canada that is one of the greatest economies in the world, Mr. Speaker, and to be not a net contributor to that economy is something that we should indeed not be proud of in Manitoba. It is something that we can change. Manitoba, I believe, has some of the greatest opportunities in North America and, indeed, in Canada, and this government is missing those opportunities and allowing infrastructure, allowing investment, allowing labour to migrate to other communities in North America, to other provinces, to other states. And, indeed, we are growing those economies but not our own to the same extent.

So it's very disappointing to see, Mr. Speaker, this type of a thing happening and, indeed, Manitobans would like to vote on this. It's something that they thought was a right, something they believed was a right that they had—the right to a referendum to vote on tax increases such as a PST increase—and those rights are being taken away by this government. It is something very sad to watch for Manitobans, a very sad day in Manitoba when those rights are taken away by this government, something that we really believed that we had.

If this government truly believed in their tax increase, Mr. Speaker, then they should be able to go out and convince Manitobans that it is necessary. They should be able to go out and convince Manitobans to vote for a PST increase, but they're not willing to take that chance, because I think they have a pretty good idea that Manitobans do not agree with this PST increase.

So let's really find out. Let's find out if Manitobans agree or not. Allow them to have a right to vote. Allow them to have that referendum, and that'll be the true test of whether they believe not only in the PST increase, but, indeed, in this government's plans for the economy, because we know it's going to be a drag on the economy in Manitoba—a very unfortunate thing that we might see here and we will see that drag continuing out for several years. The difficulty with economic theory is you can't always predict the future. You can protect what might happen but not when, but there will indeed—

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The hour being 4:30 p.m., pursuant to rule 28(14), I must interrupt the debate to put the question on the motion of the honourable member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson).

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, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, could you assemble the members for a recorded vote.

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

Order. Order, please. The question before the House is the motion brought forward by the honourable member for Tuxedo.

Does the House wish to have the motion reread?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear yes, so then:

It's been moved by the honourable member for Tuxedo

THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to follow the law and seek the approval of Manitobans through holding a referendum before raising the retail sales tax (known as the provincial sales tax).

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 17, Nays 31.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 9, 2013

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS			
Introduction of Bills		Tax Credit Extension	
Bill 42–The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Enhancing Passenger Safety)		Blady; Bjornson	1151
Ashton	1141	Bill 33	
Bill 207–The Family Maintenance Amendment and Garnishment Amendment Act		Pedersen; Ashton	1151
Pedersen	1141	HST	
Petitions		Helwer; Struthers	1152
Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Referendum		Members' Statements	
Mitchelson	1141	Best Buddies	
Wishart	1142	Crothers	1152
Ewasko	1142	Kelly Robertson	
Smook	1142	Briese	1153
Oral Questions		India Trade Mission	
PST Increase		Saran	1153
Schuler; Struthers	1143	Let No One Be Alone Week	
Minister of Finance		Cullen	1154
Eichler; Selinger	1144	The Halcrow Family	
Assiniboia Downs		Whitehead	1154
Cullen; Struthers	1145		
Child and Family Services Rally		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
Ewasko; Howard	1145	(Continued)	
Child and Family Services		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
Ewasko; Howard	1146	Opposition Day Motion	
Out Migration		Stefanson	1155
Graydon; Bjornson	1147	Ashton	1157
Tax Increases		Smook	1159
Mitchelson; Struthers	1148	Struthers	1161
Federal Transfer Payments		Graydon	1162
Mitchelson; Struthers	1149	Wishart	1164
Children in Care		Pedersen	1166
Gerrard; Selinger	1150	Eichler	1168
		Ewasko	1170
		Cullen	1171
		Briese	1173
		Helwer	1174

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