

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

| Member | Constituency | Political Affiliation |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| ALLAN, Nancy, Hon. | St. Vital | NDP |
| ALLUM, James | Fort Garry-Riverview | NDP |
| ALTEMEYER, Rob | Wolseley | NDP |
| ASHTON, Steve, Hon. | Thompson | NDP |
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| ROBINSON, Eric, Hon. | Kewatinook | NDP |
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| STEFANSON, Heather | Tuxedo | PC |
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| WIGHT, Melanie | Burrows | NDP |
| WISHART, Ian | Portage la Prairie | PC |
| <i>Vacant</i> | Morris | |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 2, 2013

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Good morning, everyone. Please be seated.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker, in accordance with rule 31(9), I'd like to announce that the private members' resolution, though it be considered next Thursday, is the resolution on Manitoba Hydro rates brought forward by the honourable member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler).

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that in accordance with rule 1-31(9), that the private members' resolution that will be considered next Thursday is the resolution on Manitoba Hydro rate hikes brought forward by the honourable member for St. Paul.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 202—The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended)

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 202, The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur la transparence et la responsabilité (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm pleased to stand in the House and speak to this bill today. I—this bill came out as a result of various consultations with people in our community, and I think what people want in Manitoba is more transparency when it comes to the budget books in the province, Mr. Speaker.

I know in the past, the members of the NDP often increased fees for Manitobans, and it's very difficult for them until they actually show up and they have to—and they see first-hand that the fee has been increased in various things like campground rentals, death certificates, birth certificates, those types of things, Mr. Speaker. It's very difficult. They are expecting it to be a certain price, and they show up and find out later that, in fact, you know, the fee has been increased.

So I think it would be incumbent upon the government to support this piece of legislation because all it does is require that these fee increases be put into the budget books and indicate very clearly for members, members of our community, what the fees were last year versus what the fees are this year and—just so that there can be a very transparent way of showing Manitobans if there is a fee increase, rather than trying to do it in a hidden way, Mr. Speaker, which is the way the NDP has done this in the past, I think it's incumbent upon them to provide for this comparison of each fee amount and the changes for the public for the current fiscal year and the previous fiscal year and, again, an itemization of the increase in total revenues resulting from those increased fee amounts.

So that's what this bill is all about, and we look at things like, again, birth certificates, campground rentals, death certificates, veterinary diagnostic services, abuse registry checks, company registrations, fishing licences, environmental permits, vehicle registration fees. The list goes on, Mr. Speaker, but again, I think if this was actually listed in the budget books and a comparison over last year, it would be very helpful for Manitobans to be able to see exactly where the fee increases take place.

We do know, certainly, last year that there was a significant increase in fees and the revenues from those fee increases for the provincial government. We also know that, of course, there was a tax

increase as well last year by the expansion of the retail sales tax, the provincial sales tax, Mr. Speaker. We know that there was a significant increase in revenues as a result of that to this government and of course that wasn't enough. They went and spent that.

And now again this year they are increasing fees and increasing taxes for Manitobans. They're now introducing an increase in the percentage of the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent. We know that there is a number of people that will be coming to the Manitoba Legislature this evening for a rally, Mr. Speaker, and I do hope that members opposite will attend that rally and stand up for their constituents who will be attending as well.

And we do know that, of course, this provincial sales tax increase—we received emails, phone calls from hundreds of Manitobans who are very concerned about this, and we know many of them will be here this evening, and again, I hope that members opposite will show up and stand up for the people in their communities.

It's very important, I think, when it comes to transparency. People really want to be able to see firsthand whether or not, you know, where—when the government is increasing taxation or increasing fees or broadening taxation, those items that are taxed and the fees that are covered. I think it's incumbent upon this government to try and increase the transparency and accountability for Manitobans. I think that's what Manitobans want, Mr. Speaker.

But again, I think the very—and again, you know, the fact that the NDP has seen fit to now increase the PST, of course, we know that, you know, it's somewhat illegal, the way they've gone about doing this. In order to increase the PST, there is legislation currently in place that—*[interjection]* Well, it is illegal. And there is legislation in place right now that states that if the government increases the retail sales tax like they've done in their budget, Mr. Speaker, that they have to first go to the people of Manitoba in the way of a referendum and ask them whether or not they agree with that increase. And we know from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), who has said no, we don't believe we need to do that. We are above the law is what he says, and he now says that they don't need to go back to Manitobans and ask them what they want.

It goes back to this government that believes this—the government believes they know best about what's good for Manitobans, and we on this side of the House believe that Manitobans know what's best

for themselves and their families. And that's the big difference between them and us.

And I think it's extremely unfortunate that the government, of course, last year, they did the expansion of the PST, but this year, now they're looking to increase the percentage. They're doing it in an illegal way and it's—Manitobans know it. They should be going back to Manitobans and asking them in the way of a referendum what—whether or not they want this increase in PST.

* (10:10)

And I think, you know, if members opposite believe they're doing the right thing, and if they believe that they're actually standing up for their communities and if they believe that this is what Manitobans want, then what are they afraid of, Mr. Speaker? Why wouldn't they go back to their constituents and ask for—and ask them for, you know, for their opinion on this?

But I think it's unfortunate that members opposite, including the members for Kirkfield Park and St. Norbert and St. James and Assiniboia and Seine River and all of the members opposite—St. Vital, member for Minto (Mr. Swan), the member for Radisson (Mr. Jha)—all of these members, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, are not standing up for their constituents. They are afraid. I know that they're receiving emails from people because I'm certainly receiving lots of emails as well, and from many of their own constituents because they're not responding to their constituents. They're not standing up for their constituents. In fact, they're ignoring their constituents because they don't like what their constituents are saying. And I think the unfortunate part about that is that we're all elected to this Legislature to represent our areas, and it's incumbent upon all of us to listen to Manitobans, and we know that members opposite don't like to listen to Manitobans.

And in fact, I know that the member for Dauphin, the Minister of Finance did do some what he called budget consultation meetings, and of course he went around, I've got a copy of his prebudget consultation paper here. And I know from that—it's about 24 pages long, and nowhere in that budget consultation presentation that the Minister of Finance presented to various communities across Manitoba—nowhere in there does it mention a PST hike at all. So he called this a consultation, but the— one of the biggest things that came out of this budget was in fact an increase in the PST. But nowhere in

his budget consultation speech did he ever mention an increase and what people thought about an increase in the PST.

So, I think it's unfortunate that one of the biggest things that he was going to introduce in his budget papers was not even part of the consultation process. And if it is in—if it is part of this, perhaps I'm missing the slide, Mr. Speaker; maybe the Minister of Finance could table that. Maybe he could table that part of his presentation that was, in fact, in this prebudget consultation meeting presentation. But nowhere do I see in this consultation presentation was there a slide saying, what do you think, would you like an increase in the PST from 7 to 8 per cent?

So, in fact, Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest things, again, that came out of this budget was an increase in the PST, but nowhere did the Minister of Finance have that in his prebudget consultation meetings. Nowhere did he ask Manitobans whether or not they wanted that.

So he decided on his own, or maybe he decided within Cabinet, maybe it was in—within caucus, Mr. Speaker. Maybe—we don't really know where this idea came from, but we do know that the Minister of Finance obviously had his hands in it, and he wanted this PST increase because he stood in this House on budget day and he introduced that increase. And so perhaps maybe he and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) came up with it on their own. Maybe members opposite were not aware of this. We don't know, and how many people were involved in it.

But members opposite do have a choice. They can stand up for their constituents and in fact vote against the PST hike. And I would hope that they do stand up with their constituents and listen to their constituents and vote against it. And—but I hope that members opposite will see that this bill is about transparency and accountability and that they will see fit to support this bill because it's an important one for the Manitoba Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it's quite something to have a Conservative in this House stand up and have the nerve to put something on the Order Paper in—with the words transparency and accountability in it. It's quite something. Members opposite, whether they're in—when they were in government or when they're in opposition, the last two words you should use—last two adjectives you should use to describe their approach is either transparent or accountable.

Mr. Speaker, the other day we were treated to the spectacle of the Leader of the Opposition standing up in this House, standing in the scrums out in the hallway, talking to the people of Manitoba, saying that this 1 per cent hike in PST was going to cost the average person \$1,600–\$1,600. What they got to—they—there's two possibilities here. First of all, they should do their math. Like Bill Clinton said one time, it's all about the arithmetic. Members opposite should learn—and I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) was in Grand Forks to hear President Clinton talk about how to balance budgets and how to approach the economy. I know he heard that advice from the former president. I wish he would take that advice. I wish he would learn from others. And I wish that maybe the Conservatives in the House would have done some homework before they trot out that number.

Because, Mr. Speaker, either the Conservatives think that the average person in Manitoba spends \$160,000 on expenses that are subject to the PST, or they simply pick the number out of the air that they could use in their little political games that they play in this House. Either way, that's not being accountable.

And, you know, I know they—I know they're feeling badly about this, Mr. Speaker, because their leader was out in the hallway yesterday still flogging the 1,600 number even though he knows it's dead wrong.

And their Finance critic comes into this House and comes up with another figure, \$1,200. Oh, no, not higher, Mr. Speaker, she's trying to make this look much more reasonable. She's trying to bail her leader out. She's trying to say, oh, oh, yes, there were reasons why we came up with \$1,600.

The truth of the matter was—and the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) knows this, Mr. Speaker. The truth of the matter was that their leader reached up in the air and just pulled that number out so that he could play political games with it during a very serious debate that Manitobans should be able to listen to and compare ours—our approach to their approach. That's fair. That's fair. We'll do that any day of the week.

But, Mr. Speaker, if we're dealing with people on the other side of the House who are so dishonest as to pull numbers out of the air with no basis in reality, it's not fair to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, \$1,600, \$1,200—they're all over the map on this. They've picked a number out of the air and then they've tried to rationalize this over and over, over every which way from here to Sunday.

Mr. Speaker, they want to talk about transparency. We see this debate happening in Saskatchewan this week, the province of—the government of Saskatchewan is being pointed out by the—their Auditor General that they're running two sets of books. Now, that's—and running a provincial debt of \$19 billion which is a lot more substantial than what ours is.

But, Mr. Speaker, the relevance of that is that that government is doing exactly what these Conservatives in our province did when they were in government. They had one set of books up on top of the desk and then their Finance minister and Premier Filmon had another set of books way down here, underneath the desk.

I'm—I watched that when I was a member of the opposition. Is that their definition of transparency? Is that what you think transparency is? You have one set of books to show the people of Manitoba and then the real set of books underneath the desk, Mr. Speaker? And you have the nerve to come in here and say you're transparent and you put—have the nerve to put it in a bill in this House? This is the height of craziness coming from the members opposite. What does that say about their approach?

You know, here's the other thing I wonder about, Mr. Speaker. Almost two weeks ago, the Leader of the Opposition—well, it was two weeks ago; this is Thursday. Two weeks ago, the Leader of the Opposition said, oh, yes, oh, don't tell me that I'm ignoring the problem, we're going to solve this problem by doing cuts to programs.

An Honourable Member: Reckless cuts.

Mr. Struthers: Absolutely reckless cuts.

Mr. Speaker, our budget, on the other hand, was very much in tune with raising the revenue that we need to invest in the services and invest in the infrastructure and invest in the flood proofing that Manitoba families depend on us to deliver. And we're going to do that. And we will continue to do it in an accountable, transparent way.

* (10:20)

We introduced a budget—sorry, a bill, Bill 20, the Building and Renewal Plan. Mr. Speaker, that plan is transparent. It's accountable. We say where we're

getting the money. We're saying what we're spending it on. We're saying we're going to—every year the Finance Minister has to stand up and account for that spending, has to show the people of Manitoba, including members opposite, where that money is going. That's accountability, that's transparency, maybe that's why you're not going to vote for it, Mr. Speaker—the Conservatives across the way, of course.

Mr. Speaker, compare that open and transparent approach that we have to what I see coming across from the other side. Two weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition stands up and he says, we're not going to ignore this problem. You're right, government. There's—we—there's flooding that's going to happen. There's flooding that's going to happen over the next number of years. There is a Building Canada plan that we want to participate in. Okay, that's fine. We are going to cut services to do it, and he said so. This isn't somebody over here making this up. He said so. He said that he would take that money out of health care and out of education. He said he would take it out of family services and justice. He called it tough love.

Gosh sakes, Mr. Speaker, I understand and Manitobans understand that there are tough challenges out there that we need to take head-on, and they want leaders in this province who are going to take those challenges head-on and make some decisions in order to take those challenges on. But Manitobans have been very clear they do not want a government to put them in the position of choosing between highways and health care. They don't want that. They want us to come forward with a plan that is accountable and transparent and invest those dollars into infrastructure, and that's what we're going to do. And we've said we're going to do that and the people of Manitoba understand that we need to take on the infrastructure problems that we—challenges that we face.

Mr. Speaker, we're not going to be the ones, members opposite are the ones who will lay off—fire is the more appropriate word—almost 700 nurses. Instead of showing support for kids who need protection, especially in light of the inquiry that's happening in this province right now, firing 135 social workers out of Manitoba, chasing them off to another province as they did when they were in government is not transparent. It's not accountable. It's not what the people of Manitoba have asked and it's not what the people of Neepawa have said is necessary. It's not coming from anywhere other than

the Conservative Party across the way in this House who are out of touch with the priorities of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, there was a complaint I just heard from the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) that these fees are coming forward and we're not being transparent with the fees. Every one of these fees was contained in a news release. That's not exactly trying to keep it secret, I'll let you know. I was at the sport fishing enhancement dinner in Dauphin the other night and some—to their credit, there were some members from across the way who were there and I enjoy them coming. I, you know, as long as they pay their bills when they're in town I enjoy them coming to Dauphin. But it was very clear people said to me that fee, that licence fee that you put in place and you told us about is going to go right back into some of the very projects that that group wanted us to support.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans understand that. Manitobans tell us that that's what we need and Manitobans will see right through your phony-baloney bill that you put forward claiming to be transparent and accountable.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): It was a pleasure to listen to the minister skate all around the issue. He did his best to dodge and to deflect, Mr. Speaker. I don't think he did a good job. We'll find out though, you know.

I would encourage him, you know, he's got his speech written down. He's got it down on paper. He could use it tonight at a rally, you know. There's a rally tonight at the Legislature at 6 o'clock, Mr. Speaker, if he could go and give that same speech. You know, and it's nice to talk to us as MLAs. I enjoyed hearing the speech. I didn't agree with most of it, but I enjoyed hearing it. But I would challenge him to give that same speech to Manitobans, and he'll—and he doesn't have to go far. You know, he doesn't even have to if he doesn't want to leave his office. He can lean out the window. I'm sure he'll be overlooking the people who will be there. He can, sort of, he can give a speech from the balcony of his window, Mr. Speaker, and we can judge. He can be like the Pope, you know, and the smoke can go up white or dark whether or not people approve of the speech or whether they disapprove of the speech.

So the minister doesn't have to go far. I'll buy him supper. We can meet in his office, and then at 6 o'clock, he can lean out the window and he can give the same speech to the however many people come to the rally as he gave here in the Legislature. And then let's let the people decide. You know, I don't have to be the judge of this. I'm not the judge of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers). He can let the people decide. You know, we can—they can hold up their cellphones or have some other voting mechanism whether they agree with the minister or not. I'm certainly open to any mechanism the minister wants to give and we'll find out, because he talks about accountability and he talks about transparency, but ultimately I don't think he wants to adhere to any of them.

Because let's talk about what accountability really is. In my book, in my definition, I would include keeping your promises as being part of accountability. And I—you know, I have a good relationship with the Minister of Finance; this is nothing personal. It never is between members. But ultimately, he has to keep his promise. He ultimately has to do what he said that he would do and that his Premier (Mr. Selinger) said that he would do. And they said that they wouldn't raise taxes. Then I think the PST is a tax, Mr. Speaker, and I think that people would think that's a tax.

Now he says, oh, Manitobans understand. You know, the Minister of Finance says, Manitobans understand. Well, you know, that's fine. I mean if I were to raise that as a point of order, the Speaker would say that's a dispute over the facts between members.

But the public's going to be here. Here's a rare opportunity. He doesn't have to, you know, search out the public. He doesn't have to do a street or go down Portage Avenue and ask 50 people. They're coming to him—they're coming to him. They're coming right outside his office at 6 o'clock. What a wonderful opportunity for the Minister of Finance, if he really believes that the public understands why they're doing this, to come and speak to the public.

And I would extend that invitation to the other 36 members of the NDP caucus to do the same—to come and to listen. You know, they like to stand up here and, with bravado, say that they're representing people and they're doing this for the people. Well, the people are coming to them. They don't have to go far at all. They don't even have to get in their cars or

government vehicles and let them warm up. He just has to lean outside his office.

And the great thing is the Premier's office is also on the second floor, and so the Premier (Mr. Selinger) can lean outside his window and wave to the people. I think the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) can do the same; he's even closer to the ground. Just like he has those front-row Jets seats, he has a front row to the rally tonight. Or, Mr. Speaker, he can lean outside the window and say to the people, what do you think of what we're doing with the PST? And that would be accountability. That would be true accountability, which is what this bill is about in part.

And so I would challenge the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), and I know that he's someone who sometimes goes into negative territory. I saw that a couple of weeks ago, so he can do that. He can do that today for people to see exactly how it is that they feel about this tax increase.

But I don't think he's going to do that. I'm not always good at predictions, and so I'm not going to make a bet on this, but I don't think he's going to do it because I think he knows what's coming.

And I would challenge him, because this isn't a government and it isn't a Premier who should just be there for the ribbon cuttings. You know, that's the easiest job as an MLA or as a premier or Cabinet minister to just show up when there's a ribbon cutting or when there's a sod turning or something like that. I mean, that's the easy part of the job, and I know that members opposite and members on our side, we like that; we relish that.

But that's not the only reason that people elect you. They actually expect you sometimes to go when there's tough questions, when there's difficult things being done, when there are hard things being done. And those aren't easy things to do, and I get that. I understand that. I'm not suggesting for a minute to the Minister of Finance that it would be easy for him to go and to address the people who are going to be there tonight and for the Premier to do the same. I'm not suggesting that they would be the most fun thing he's ever done as an elected official, but it's part of being an elected official. It's part of what you do. You don't just show up when you think you're going to get applause and pats on the back. You've got to go there too sometimes when you know there's going to be tough questions and people who aren't going to agree with you and people who don't feel exactly the same way that you do.

And so all of those members, it's a challenge for each of them to remember that when they got elected, it wasn't just a—cut a couple of ribbons or to give some high-fives to some kids here or there or to, you know, show up at some hockey games. There's a whole lot more to being an accountable, elected representative than just doing the fun stuff. You've got to go and do what sometimes isn't as fun but is just as important.

* (10:30)

And so, if the Finance Minister is true to his convictions, as he says he is here today, if he really believes as strongly as he says he does that they're doing the right thing, should be no problem for him to go and try to sell that message if he believes it in his heart, if he feels that of conviction. Because—it—I don't think that in some ways, he does.

You know, I've seen these budget ads now that are playing on TV and are going on the radio, and I see the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is very proud of them and I wonder if he would go to his constituents and say if those are representative, because they're missing one thing. When those budget ads—and I think we're paying hundreds of thousands of dollars for them—what they're missing, Mr. Speaker—what they're missing—*[interjection]* Well, I'm glad the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is back from Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. You know, I know the member for Elmwood, he put in some of his brochures that he was proud that he spoke more words in Parliament than any other MP. Maybe if he would have spoke a little bit less, he'd still be in Ottawa. I think people heard what he said.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, I digress—I digress. The reality is that the budget ads don't say anything about the PST at all. They're silent about the PST, and yet the Finance Minister stands here and says, oh, we're completely transparent about this. We're not worried about this at all; oh, we want people to know about it, we're not concerned about it at all. And yet you turn on the TV, you see these ads—not a word about the PST.

I saw from the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), he wrote an article in *The Carillon* about Budget 2013 highlights. He didn't mention the PST at all. And yet the Minister of Finance stands up as though it's the greatest thing in the budget, you know, we had to do this because it's so important, and yet nothing from the member of Dawson Trail.

I've heard other members talk about the budget. They don't talk about the PST, and yet here they say, oh, it's such a great thing. Well, they're going to have an opportunity. So they left it out of their ads and they're not putting it in some of the articles that they're writing about, but tonight they're going to get an opportunity at 6 o'clock.

They can come on out to the front steps of the Legislature, we can—you know, we can have dinner together. Let's make this a bipartisan thing, Mr. Speaker—maybe we can even do it in your office. We'll order in some pizza, you know, and then we'll have a nice discussion. You know, I'll even let the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard)—I'll let the Government House Leader decide what kind of pizza she wants.

And after we sort of have this bipartisan binding moment—bonding moment, not binding—it might be binding—we'll all go out to the front steps of the Legislature and we'll see what the people think. We'll have a democratic discussion with real Manitobans who are—would rather be doing something else in an evening, I'm sure—a lot of things going on.

But they're going to come to the Legislature to bring a message to the government—to bring a message. And so we'll find out, because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) talked about courage—he talked about courage.

And so we'll find out how much courage these individual MLAs have when we see who comes at 6 o'clock tonight, when we see if they really believe what they say about the PST increase, when they—when we see if they really believe how they think Manitobans feel about this increase.

We'll see who's there and we'll do a head count; we'll do a check. We'll see who actually shows up and then we'll let their constituents know who came and who didn't come to stand up for them at this rally. And they can certainly go and talk in favour of the PST rally, it's freedom of speech, and we'll find out what Manitobans think, Mr. Speaker. So I extend that invitation.

The Minister of Finance talked long and loud about transparency and accountability, but he only has to wait a few more hours—only about another seven and a half hours or so, and then he can find out about what Manitobans really think. And we can find out if he's really as committed to accountability and transparency as he says he is.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): I'm honoured to be here to have this opportunity to speak to this bill.

We knew—I've been learning a lot, Mr. Speaker, of course, as everyone here that's new has been doing, I'm sure. And some of the things I would like to get out on the record, and one of them is about some of the actions we've taken already to improve controls and monitoring and transparency and accountability in government. And some of those include the fact that we actually prepare our financial statements with national accounting standards. When you're in government, you can't just pull those numbers out of the air, as sometimes seems to happen over on the opposition side. We actually use national accounting standards to do them.

We make a summary budget available online. We provide an annual report as part of the Public Accounts process. We require that departmental annual reports be posted online. And most interesting about this is that none of these things existed prior to 1999. So interestingly enough, it was our government that brought in all of those things.

Another really interesting thing is the accountability that will be shown on the Manitoba Building and Renewal Plan, where every dollar that is raised will be spent on critical infrastructure and flood improvement mitigation. And we will be showing that very clearly.

So those are all excellent points that are already there. When you look at accountability just on sort of a—I don't know—a basic plan, but when you—true accountability to me, Mr. Speaker, means a lot more. It means that we continue to ensure that Manitobans keep working. To me that's being accountable to the people of Manitoba. It's making sure that the—we continue to grow, that we continue to build, that our people aren't out of work, because joblessness is a death sentence, obviously, for any economy. And so true accountability to the people of Manitoba means making sure that we continue to provide those opportunities to the people of Manitoba.

And we have the third lowest unemployment rate in the country right now and we want to keep it that way. Because as long as Manitobans are working, Mr. Speaker, they will be able to use our businesses, they will be able to buy houses, they will be eating out in restaurants, they will have the money to be able to do those things. They will be able to send their children on to post-secondary education, which, by the way, happens to be one of the best in the country for our students. That's accountability.

We're accountable, Mr. Speaker, to our youth when we provide the ability for them to be able to afford going to university, going to Red River Community College, becoming—being able to be part of apprenticeship programs and mentorship programs. So reaching out to our youth in that way, to me, is accountability.

All our early education work, Mr. Speaker, with the youth and the young of our province, that's accountability. Really being able to reach out, and not wait until kids are in trouble before we do anything, but working prenatally with the children, working with mothers that are pregnant, helping to ensure that their babies are born healthy and have the best opportunity in life. That's accountability.

And that's the kind of accountability I want to be part of, Mr. Speaker. It's about prevention, prevention in every area. Prevention in health care is just a key piece of us being accountable.

And I believe our Budget 2013 is there to protect families. It's going to protect families, it's going to protect businesses and it's going to keep our economy growing in a very difficult, unstable economic time.

And I—another thing I would like to mention that seems to be lost here often, is that good government, Mr. Speaker, involves taking into consideration the facts that occur through your mandate. You cannot sit back in 2011 and ignore what happened in 2012, or the additional things that happened prior to the election. So a flood that cost \$1.2 billion is key. The fact that the economy did not recover in the way that was forecast is key. Good government means we don't ignore those things. We do what we need to do to keep our economy moving and working.

We are the second highest growth, in Manitoba, in Canada. So we have the second highest growth rate of any province. So Manitoba has done incredibly well, in spite of difficult economic times, and we need it to continue that way.

This is—I think, also, another huge piece to being accountable is affordability. We need to keep Manitoba a place where people can afford to live. We want to be able to afford our—to send our kids to recreation centres and to play hockey and to play baseball and all of those things.

I was very pleased, just recently, Mr. Speaker, in fact, in going out and being able to deliver a grant on that very issue, over to NorWest where they're working with kids, getting them playing baseball and

other activities during the summer so that they are doing the very best they can to help our kids.

* (10:40)

And with regard to paying the PST, other governments have done, also, things to raise income, of course, and most of them in much worse situations than ours. So the harmonized sales tax, for example, would cost Manitobans millions more dollars, Mr. Speaker, than this increase, which carves out all of the things like, you know, food and prescriptions and baby products and all of those things. So, we took a balanced approach to keep Manitoba moving forward and, to me, that is what accountability is all about. That's exactly what we need to do. I mean, compared to 1999, when it comes to tax cuts, families will be saving more than \$850 million in income and property taxes as the result of the changes made by our government in Budget 2013.

We have been cutting taxes in this province for years. People would be paying more in 2013 if they were still with the Conservative government than they will be paying even with any increase that we have ever brought in. And often that seems to be lost. It's lost on the opposition, and sometimes it's not what's printed, but is nonetheless a fact.

Budget 2013 provides important tax reductions that will benefit all Manitobans. Eliminating the education property tax for Manitoba seniors by 2015: I know, as I was knocking on doors, there was many seniors that were interested in that and were very pleased that that was one of the things that was coming through.

Improving the basic personal amount by \$250 this year and again another \$250 again next year, which is higher than the rate of inflation, Mr. Speaker. And higher exemptions means that there are savings for all taxpayers, and it will take an additional 5,500 people completely off the provincial tax rolls. That's accountability, and that's what we're here to be able to do for Manitobans. And I'm so proud that I get to be part of that.

I'm proud when I knock on doors that we have not chosen the tax cuts that the opposition leader said that he would bring in if he were in government. And only a couple of weeks ago he mentioned that he would be slashing every government department by 1 per cent. Well, 1 per cent may not seem that large unless you understand what 1 per cent is. So 1 per cent would be \$52 million from health care—that's nearly 700 nurses; \$5 million from Justice, or

60 correction officers; \$16 million in Education, which is almost 200 teachers; \$11 million from Family Services, 135 social workers who wouldn't be out there on the front lines helping our families and our children.

So, do I think that's the better plan? No, I don't. I don't think that's accountability at all. I think it's a simplistic approach that has no real understanding of what Manitobans—what we can do to really help and benefit Manitoba. So I think that would just be a failure to really be dealing with the economy. We know that in this economy what you need to be doing is to be ensuring that Manitobans are working and Manitobans have jobs. That's what we're going to be doing, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): It was indeed a pleasure to enter into a debate on Bill 202 this morning. I certainly want to commend the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) for bringing forward The Increased Transparency and Accountability Act. And listening to the minister of taxation this morning—pardon me, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) this morning, otherwise known as sometimes as the minister of taxation and spending, you know he goes on at length about how transparent his government is being in his eyes, Mr. Speaker. And I think nothing can be further from the truth. And if, I guess if he really does believe that his government is being transparent, he would relish the legislation that we're putting forward and debating here this morning in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in representing the great constituents of the new riding of Spruce Woods, and I think each of us as MLAs take great pride in representing our constituents. And I think we have to remember when we're in the Chamber that we are here to represent our constituents, and I think we should challenge the members opposite in government: are they really representing what their constituents are thinking? And we're going to have a great opportunity tonight at 6 o'clock at the Legislature to hear from Manitobans. A lot of Winnipeggers will be here. A lot of their constituents, I would assume, would be here, and an opportunity for them to really engage with their constituents and hear what they have to say. And, clearly, the discussion tonight is going to be about the 1 per cent additional PST that the government has proposed in their budget and, clearly, they want to bring forward Bill 20 to ensure that that increase in taxation happens, Mr. Speaker.

And I think the challenge for all members in the House, and I guess really the members on the government side, of the promise they made to their constituents back during the last election campaign of 2011. Mr. Speaker, under the guidance of the Premier (Mr. Selinger), their leader, who said there would be no new taxes after the election—obviously they went out and they campaigned on the promise of no tax increase. And in particular, the Premier said the thought of an increase in provincial sales tax is ridiculous and nonsense. Well, here we are less than two years later and they've completely increased the PST to various products and services—last year's budget. Now they've taken the next step. They've increased the provincial sales tax by one point.

So clearly they're not doing what they said they were going to do, and I challenge the members. Are they really representing their constituents? They've broken their promise to their constituents. What are their constituents telling them now, Mr. Speaker? And clearly this piece of legislation speaks to being accountable and being accountable to all Manitobans and being accountable to your constituents.

You know, and the member from Burrows talked about going door to door during the last election campaign. I'm assuming she would have been following her leader's instructions and telling people that, yes, there would be no tax increases. There'd be no PST increases in the future, Mr. Speaker. Now, I wonder what her residents would say to her now that the PST has been increased on such a wide range of products and services and, of course, the PST now is subject to go up as of July 1st. And clearly that's what Manitobans are going to be here tonight to talk about.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) talked about ordering some pizza so we could engage the members of government. We could sit down and have a drink after 5 o'clock and have a little bite of pizza and then we could go out and have a conversation with Manitobans. But it also got me to think about pizza and the discussions we had last night with the members of the food service industry, the restaurant and food service industry that were here. And it's pretty clear the government also misled that industry over the last two years. Again, the promise was no increase in taxation.

Well, what have we found in the last less than two years since the election? This government has hit that industry threefold. They've increased the fees and taxes on alcohol products through the Manitoba

liquor commission. Obviously, that's a direct impact to the food service industry. It can impact them in quite a negative way by some of the surcharges they placed on those products. Second of all, they've increased the PST on a lot of products that they would have to purchase and, of course, the—increased the percentage one point on the PST by those types of services. So if the member for Steinbach is going to order a pizza, you know, he better get it now because after July 1st the price of that pizza's going to go up, and that's going to impact all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, clearly, the minimum wage increase is impacting the food service industry as well and that's certainly going to be a challenge for that industry. And we know, of course, the government likes to collect as much tax as they can.

Now, you know, Mr. Speaker, I give the government credit over their last budget. They were pretty—I'll call it inventive, creative in terms of the way they added that new PST to different types of products, you know, things like insurance products—and that's obviously impacting all Manitobans. And clearly, this year, in this year's budget they were—they lost their creativity. They're not very inventive any more. They just are challenging Manitobans face on with a 1 per cent increase in the PST.

*(10:50)

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, hopefully the government will support Bill 202, and I thank you for this opportunity to debate the bill this morning. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to rise and speak to the member's bill today, Bill 203—or 202.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that in the last 11, 12 years, we have now a \$62-billion economy—that is double what it was in 1999—third lowest unemployment in the country. And the fact of the matter is that on a basis of jet—debt-to-GDP figures, which are commonly used to compare how well jurisdictions are doing, the fact of the matter is that Manitoba's net debt-to-GDP ratio is forecast to be 28.7 per cent. Now, 12 years ago, under the Filmon government, with half—half—the GDP that we have today, they were at 32.9 per cent debt to GDP. And the federal government—their federal government, the Stephen Harper Conservative federal government—their debt to GDP currently is 33.9 per cent. So on a debt-to-GDP basis,

we are doing better than their federal government, and we're doing better than their old Filmon government that they long for those 11 or 12 years ago.

Now, I've dug up a figure out of the budget books that I thought would be helpful to the members to understand the big picture, because they don't seem to be—these titans of industry, as they like to be, like to refer to themselves—the titans of industry really never seem to represent the big picture. Okay, so I want to give them a couple of pieces of information regarding the big picture. The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that we have assets in this province of \$38 billion. And \$38 billion—13—\$38 billion represents the replacement cost of all the infrastructure in Manitoba, the hospitals, the roads and housing, universities, public schools. That is the true value of the—of Manitoba assets. And the total debt owed against those assets, for the members, is \$17 billion. So that means the taxpayers' equity in all of our assets would be \$21 billion.

Now, the Conservatives—we will argue that a provincial jurisdiction is really not the same as an individual homeowner's situation. On the other hand, they will argue the opposite—that there's no difference between a provincial budget and a homeowner's budget. So I thought we might spend a couple of minutes looking at that premise of theirs.

So let's take two homeowners; let's take a homeowner in Elmwood constituency who owns a \$200,000 home and has a \$100,000 mortgage on it—okay, that's in rough proportion to our assets provincially versus our debt—and let's take another home, say, in the Tuxedo, River Heights area, a \$2-million home, which—and I have pictures of two homes in those areas—let's pretend for a moment that we have an equity in that home of 50 per cent, so the mortgage then in that home would be a million-dollar mortgage. So we have a—provincial assets of \$38 billion, we have provincial debt of 17; we have an equity of \$21 billion. We have our hundred thousand dollar home in Elmwood with a—or, sorry, a \$200,000 home with a \$100,000 mortgage; and so we have an equity of \$100,000. We have a \$2-million home in Tuxedo with a million-dollar mortgage; we have an equity of \$1 million. Okay? So the fact of the matter is that if you pretended these homes are based on a 20-year amortization, which means these homeowners are halfway through the process of paying off their mortgage, having that mortgage burning party that people like to have. So, you know, people would prefer to have no mortgage

if they could. But that isn't a reality in most situations, but people are reasonably happy when they've got half their debt paid off.

So let's say we have some improvements to make in the homes. If we have—the roof has to be replaced, now that Tuxedo home will cost a lot more to replace the roof, but nevertheless it has to be done. And if the homeowner doesn't replace the roof, there's going to be leakage and we're going to have excess damage to the home and the whole value of the home will go down. So the value of maintenance is obviously very important in both of these homeowners—homeowner situations.

Now, the member for Agassiz (Mr. Briese) wants to talk about how those homeowners are going to deal with taxes because he's very concerned about provincial taxes. Well, I want to ask him how are those homeowners going to deal with the City of Winnipeg tax increases. Are they going to go down? Is that \$2-million homeowner in Tuxedo and that \$200,000 homeowner in Elmwood, are they going to go down to city hall and complain about the property tax increases? I'm looking forward to hearing that. And, you know, perhaps the home in Tuxedo may have a few garages and those garages may have to be repaired at some point. All this is going to cost money. You're not going to ignore repairing your property but you're not necessarily going to go out and refinance the home either. The fact of the matter is that all of the economic statistics show that we are in not that bad a shape.

So what would the member suggest? Well, perhaps we should go out and find alternate sources of income. Well, the member for—the homeowners in Tuxedo and River Heights area, you know, may have other sources of income they can access to pay off these loans. But the fact of the matter is that these are—*[interjection]* Well, you want to talk about tax increases. Like they want to talk about PST. The fact of the matter is for the people in River Heights-Tuxedo who can afford to buy a Lexus to put in one of those garages—and, by the way, what do you call them when you have more than one? Are they Lexuses? Are they Lexis?

But I think we would argue that on a PST basis that we are talking about, if we assume that the Lexus is worth a hundred thousand dollars, right, and the member from Morris who recently retired—resigned had a Lexus, we assume that a Lexus is worth a hundred thousand dollars, 1 per cent of the PST would be \$1,000, and I would submit to you

that if you can afford a Lexus you can probably afford that extra thousand dollars.

I had a friend of mine two weeks ago say to me, well, you know, maybe this tax increase will mean that we'll go to the United States to shop. I said, well, you tell me how much would you spend in the United States on a weekend. And he said—I said, would you spend a thousand dollars? Because that would be \$10 more. You couldn't even fill a Lexus with that \$10. He says, well—and I listen to the Conservatives and the media, it makes it sound like it's a way more than 1 per cent. And that gets back to their misrepresentation when they talk about \$1,600 increase in taxes. Each one of them, what the homeowners would have to be making—

* (11:00)

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Elmwood will have one minute remaining.

The hour now being 11 a.m., it's time for private member's resolution, and the resolution before us this morning is the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Charleswood, entitled "Provincial Taxation Broken Promises."

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 4—Provincial Taxation Broken Promises

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

WHEREAS the provincial government promised in the last election to deliver a balanced budget with no tax increases; and

WHEREAS the Premier vowed in the 2011 provincial election that no tax increases would occur in his mandate; and

WHEREAS since the 2011 election, the provincial government expanded and increased taxes and fees by over \$500 million per year.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to acknowledge that it is guilty of breaking its promise not to increase taxes on Manitobans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the

provincial government to stop increasing the burden of taxation on Manitoba families.

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

WHEREAS the provincial government promised in the—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, we have an NDP government that has a spending problem—they don't have a revenue problem—and they've allowed this to go unchecked for years, putting in place structural deficits year after year, and they did very little to rein in their own spending.

Now taxpayers are on the hook for their spending addiction and, Mr. Speaker, by doing what they've done, by failing to deliver a balanced budget with no tax increases, by breaking their promises, by the level of spending we have seen by this government, we have seen the debt in Manitoba double under their watch. They have dug such a deep debt hole that they are now in a position, because of their financial mismanagement, that they are going to the Manitoba taxpayers to pay for their financial mismanagement.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's just not fair. Just because they can't control their spending, Manitoba taxpayers shouldn't always have to bail them out. But this is so typical of this NDP government, and actually NDP governments before them. They take the largesse that is provided to them by good fiscal management by a Conservative government before them. They come in and they make a mess of it eventually.

And we said that every year. The warning flags have been out to this government for a long time. All of us have stood in this House and told them that eventually the chickens come home to roost. And they laughed about that. Year after year, they actually sat in this Chamber and they laughed when warnings were presented to them that you can't go on and do this forever.

People in their households know that, Mr. Speaker, at some point you hit a wall. At some point, somebody has to pay. And in this case, because they never made an effort to do anything to rein in their own spending, to try to be more fiscally responsible, they are now turning to Manitoba taxpayers, and in

order to do all of that, they're breaking their promise. And not only are they breaking their promise, they are actually going to break the law in order to bring in a PST hike.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's no wonder that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of Manitoba was ranked the worst premier in Canada for fiscal management. He was at the bottom of the barrel of all premiers in Canada, and I think that says a lot as to why Manitoba is in the place it is now in. And by increasing the taxes, the fees and the PST in this next budget, and by spreading out the PST to a lot of services, we are seeing this government try to grab from Manitobans amounts over \$500 million more in taxes and fees. That is a big burden for Manitobans to have to pay.

Now, I thought that the first promise that they broke was probably going to be the biggest promise in Manitoba history that would go down in the books as the biggest broken promise, and that was to end hallway medicine in 15—with \$15 million in six months. I thought that one was going to be the biggest broken promise in Manitoba. But no, I think that they now have gone beyond that, and they have now eclipsed that one broken promise with one that is now so blatantly egregious that this one will now go down as the biggest broken promise in Manitoba's history because this Premier, over and over again in the last election, made so many statements about how he was going to not raise the PST.

In fact, one of the comments he made, and I'll quote: Today's release of the 2010-11 Public Accounts shows that the five-year economic plan is on track to return the budget to balance by 2014 while protecting jobs and services without raising taxes. And that, Mr. Speaker, was a Fact Check by the NDP. They certainly are free with their language, with their rhetoric. That was a Fact Check on September 2nd, 2011. That was around the election.

Ten days later, the Premier said: 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. Well, how does something change so quickly when, during an election, they are making these comments, and within months after that, they go and break that promise. In fact, the Premier also went on to say about questions he was being asked about a PST hike, he said, ridiculous ideas that we're going to raise the sales tax. That's total nonsense; everyone knows that.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we saw in an election campaign was blatant, blatant misleading of the public by this government. They, NDP government, in that election, lied. They broke that promise when they promised to, in their budget, expand the PST. Last year's budget, we saw them put PST on insurance products from your home, property, group life insurance, and Manitoba is only one of three provinces to tax insurance. And no wonder Manitoba inflation on insurance products was the highest in the country last year. It starts to show very quickly where things will start to go sideways. And so, they brought in the PST expansion over products, and we're seeing Manitobans being directly affected by it.

They broke their promise to not raise the T-PST when they added it to personal services like manicures, pedicures, hair styling. They ignored the cries of a thousand women who told this government, you promised not to raise PST, you are expanding it to services, you have misled us, you are trying to balance your budget, your deficits, on the people of Manitoba. And in this case, it was on the women of Manitoba. And this government chose not to listen; in fact, he stuck it to the women again by increasing the PST now to 8 per cent. So, he put all of the spa and hair services into a position where they were taxed on PST, and now he's expanded that.

Mr. Speaker, not only have they broken the promise to not raise taxes, they've also broken their promise to deliver a balanced budget. But I guess we shouldn't be surprised, either, by this government because they've been gutting that balanced budget legislation for years. Nobody on that side of the House probably ever truly believed that they believed in a balanced budget. We saw that from a number of comments over the years. They made the promise and, in fact, Gary Doer made the promise. That's how he got elected in 1999. He promised that he would balance budgets. That's how the NDP fooled Manitobans.

And, Mr. Speaker, we saw it through all their comments over many years. They really don't believe in balanced budgets. So over the years, they've gutted it one bit at a time, and now they're bringing forward legislation that is going to just totally gut it because they're going to take away the taxpayer protection component of this. They are actually going to break a law in order to bring in this PST hike.

* (11:10)

Mr. Speaker, they have increased gas and diesel fuel taxes. They've increased fees on everything from birth certificates, campground rentals, death certificates. It costs more to die in Manitoba probably than in most provinces. They've brought in fees on fishing licences and environmental permits. And they look like they're going to look in every pocket that they can to find a way to get as much money out of Manitoba taxpayers as they can find. And they have no shame in doing it. They've lost their integrity with what they have done in this—in the last two budgets. They've lost their integrity. Their incompetence is now costing Manitobans—Manitobans money.

Mr. Speaker, they—there is no shame by this government in what they're doing, and they're all standing in here and, in fact, they all voted yesterday to keep with their promise to raise the PST even though every one of them in the election made the promise not to raise the PST. Every one of them, every backbencher, every Cabinet minister in that last election said they would not raise the PST. And what that shows by, yesterday, reinforcing it when they all stood in the House and they supported that decision to break that promise, they have basically told Manitobans, we're just going to stick it to you; our promises don't matter.

And the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Selinger) has also not given any indication that he wouldn't do this again. And, obviously, with the lack of integrity by this government, we can expect, I think, further woes, further tax—

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

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): You know, what a spectacle this morning, not once but twice. What a spectacle, Mr. Speaker. First this Conservative opposition comes in and talks about transparency and accountability when they're anything but transparent and accountable. Now this member for Charleswood stands up and actually uses the word integrity—she used it, it's on Hansard—integrity, coming from members opposite who, just this week, she had to come running in to this Legislature and bail out her own leader in terms of some of the facts—so-called facts that they've been putting on the record. She knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Her leader in this House and in the scrums outside in the hall and around the province has been saying \$1,600 is what this PST's going to cost a

person—[interjection] Oh, and first she's—you know, it's crazy. First from her seat, just now—first she said, yes; now she said, oh, no, no, no, no. Well, make up your minds, for heaven's sakes, pick a story at least and stick to it. If it's \$1,600, you know, stick to it, even if you're wrong, even if you pulled it out of your ear, stick to the story.

Mr. Speaker, now they're saying—[interjection] Well, she's saying \$1,200 is what it's going to cost people. You know, another number they've picked out of the air from somewhere, who knows where they came up with it. When I—well, can't add—they've got two different positions and they're both wrong, they've inflated both of them. They inflated one a little more than the other, they start with a big, big, big, big number at \$1,600—do you know what that means? Just so the member for Charleswood knows, her leader thinks that the average person in Manitoba has \$160,000 worth of expenses subject to the PST every year—every Manitoban; that's what he said. Nobody's making this up, this is what the Leader of the Opposition said. When they realized how far-fetched that is and how lacking of integrity that is, the critic for Finance, the member for Charleswood, comes running into the Chamber yesterday in the middle of a debate to fix the record, to say, oh, no, no, no, no, we didn't mean \$1,600, we meant \$1,200—\$1,200 for an individual Manitoban that this 1 per cent increase is going to cost.

Well, let's take a look at that, Mr. Speaker. That means, then, that she thinks the average Manitoban is going to spend \$120,000 in PST-subject expenses this year. Now maybe that's a little closer than her leader, who is way off the deep end on this. She's just a little bit off the deep end, because maybe she spends—I don't know about this, but maybe the member for Charleswood spends \$120,000 every year subject to the PST. I don't, and I don't think most Manitobans do either. And I think most Manitobans would appreciate the Conservative Party being honest and putting honest numbers on their record.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And, you know, Mr. Speaker, every day of the week, any day of the week, I will debate anybody across the way on this whole issue of the PST and investments in infrastructure—any day of the week. All I ask is that they pick a story and stick to it. Pick a number; put your rationalization together for that number. If it's \$1,600 per Manitoban, get your story together. That's going to be tough to get that story

together because it's just pulled out of the air. Pick \$1,200 if you like, because that's going to be hard to defend too. You pick your numbers, you pick your story, you stand by it. Don't come in here and whine about accountability and whine about transparency and then whine about integrity like they have this morning. Get your story straight.

Mr. Speaker, the—I think this is a direct result, members opposite, of the cuts that they made to education back when they were in government, and it's now showing on their side of the House. You can't cut education by 2 per cent and 2 per cent and 2 and a half per cent and then, oh, in an election year you make an improvement, which is a freeze, and then after the election go back to cutting by 2 and a half per cent again. It's going to have some outcomes, and it appears like it's on the math side of the equation for members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little time talking about some of the things, some of the very responsible things, that we've done on this side of the House to improve the efficiency of the—of our—of government and services, the things like the stuff that the Conservatives across the way, who complain about spending but then squawk when we announce like the reduction of regional health authorities in Manitoba. We took that on last year as an initiative in Budget 2012. We reduced the amount of administration going into health care and put that money directly into front lines. Now, I don't suppose they're worried about reducing administration costs, they can go along with that, but I think it really bugged them, I guess, when we put that into the front lines and improved services for Manitobans. That's real protection of services and that's real savings for Manitobans. We combined liquor corporation and lotteries corporation—combined them into one. We've saved millions of dollars on behalf of the people of Manitoba. We've reconfigured the way we deliver services in every region of Manitoba. We've reconfigured a number of the offices that are in place in every region, in the southeast, in the southwest, in the Parkland area, in the north and in the city of Winnipeg, and we've saved money on behalf of the people of Manitoba, on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba, which members opposite claim to represent.

Mr. Speaker, we have undertaken an in-year spending reduction initiative coming out of the—out of Budget 2012—an exercise in which we found \$128 million in administrative savings. Because we understand that we have to, as a provincial

government, do our part to make sure we're spending those tax dollars wisely if we're going to turn to Manitobans and ask them to pay a little bit more through the PST and dedicate that money through our Bill 20, which members opposite have voted against already once in this Chamber. That Bill 20 makes sure that we spend the money efficiently and that we spend it on projects that are important to Manitoba—flood proofing, critical infrastructure, hospitals, schools, roads, bridges. Manitobans should not have to choose between highways and home care.

Mr. Speaker, we need to continue to grow our Manitoba economy. The approach that we've taken invests money in those exact priorities of Manitobans. The—for the—for members opposite to have a resolution in this bill that's before us, a resolution that says stop increasing the burden of taxation on Manitoba families, nothing could be further from the truth.

* (11:20)

This government has provided \$1.4 billion worth of tax relief for Manitoba families since 1999. Every year that we've presented a budget, we have decreased the tax burden on the—on Manitoba families—every year. Every year members opposite voted against that tax relief—every year. And now they come forward and—complaining about a tax burden. We've given tax relief on property taxes, Mr. Speaker. We've—give tax relief on income tax.

An Honourable Member: For seniors.

Mr. Struthers: We have given tax relief for seniors, as the Minister for Seniors has just reminded me, Mr. Speaker, and that was part of Budget 2013, on top of the kind of tax relief that we've put forward in past budgets.

So, Mr. Speaker, we don't have to take one single lesson from people across the way who are—whose phony approach has been exposed this week. Their approach is to take the most ridiculous numbers that they can possibly come up with and portray them as if they were anywhere least connected to the truth. And then I think what they think they can do is they can say that number often enough that it becomes part of—oh, well, almost as if it were the truth.

Mr. Speaker, we're not going to take lessons from members opposite. They have a lousy track record on this, and we're going to continue to invest in Manitobans—

The Acting Speaker (Mohinder Saran): Order. Order. The honourable member's time up.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I will say to the Minister of Finance that I would listen to any member on this side of the House when it comes to math over his math skills any day, Mr. Speaker, and any of those members opposite, by the way, over—so let me just be clear to this Minister of Finance because I know that numbers aren't his strength, but let me just be clear that it is an increase of \$1,600 a household of tax and fee increases for the last year.

Now, let me—in 2012, Mr. Speaker, the increase in taxes—and again, this is—these are his own numbers. I would think that the Minister of Finance in this province would understand at least his own numbers: a tax increase in 2012 of \$182 million, a tax increase in 2013 of \$227.5 million. Again, these are his own numbers: total fee increases in 2012, \$114 million. Now, just to total that up for the Minister of Finance, \$523.5 million divided by 1.28 million people, that equals \$408 a person. The average household in Manitoba, at four people, that comes to \$1,635 a household. There are the numbers. Those are the facts. It was the Minister of Finance's numbers. That's—if I had to do the calculation for him, that's really unfortunate, because they are his own numbers. But that's where we get at the \$1,635 a family in Manitoba: tax and fee increases introduced by this Minister of Finance.

And now I want to thank the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) for bringing forward this great resolution today, because we know that in the last election, every single member opposite went back to their communities and they ran on not raising the PST, they ran on not raising any taxes, as a matter of fact. I believe it was the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of this province that stood before all Manitobans and said, read my lips, no new taxes. As a matter of fact, I think he even called the very notion of raising taxes in this province as ridiculous and nonsense. Those were his words again, Mr. Speaker.

And so I just want to say to each and every member opposite in this House, Mr. Speaker, I say shame on you for campaigning on one thing in the last election, and the moment you get it—get back into office, you flip-flop and you raise taxes on the backs of those hard-working Manitobans. So I want to say shame on each and every member opposite. They broke their promise. They're not listening to their constituents. Each and every one of those

members opposite, I'm sure they've received emails, especially the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady), St. Norbert and others, maybe Riel as well, Mr. Speaker, and certainly St. Vital, Seine River, Southdale. I'm sure that they're receiving the same emails we're getting.

As a matter of fact, we're receiving emails and phone calls from their constituents because they're not listening to their constituents. We've been getting those emails; I know that they've been getting them. The question is, are they going to listen to their constituents? Are they going to stand up with their constituents today who attend the rally outside, at 6 o'clock this evening, at—outside the steps of the Manitoba Legislature? Will they stand with their constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Will they stand with their constituents and vote against this ridiculous PST hike in Manitoba?

But not only that, Mr. Speaker, we also know that this is an illegal PST hike. Members opposite know full well, or at least they should know what the law says today. The law says that in order to raise the PST in Manitoba, that members opposite have to go back to the people of Manitoba in the way of a referendum and ask the people of Manitoba whether or not they want a PST increase. And if they really believe, and if they're truly standing up for their constituents and they really believe that those constituents want a PST hike, they should not be afraid of that. They should be going back to the people of Manitoba and asking them whether or not they want this PST increase.

And I want to just go back to, again, Mr. Speaker, and talk about the prebudget consultation meetings that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) had in Manitoba. And, again, in his 24-page documents, this side presentation that he stood before hard-working Manitobans in these prebudget consultation meetings, not one page in here refers to an increase in the PST.

So I ask and my—the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) and I and the Leader of the Opposition, we've all asked this Minister of Finance and the Premier (Mr. Selinger), who asked for this PST increase? How many people showed up to these prebudget consultation meetings and asked for a PST increase, Mr. Speaker? Was it 10 people? Was it five people? Or was it in fact zero people?

So I just want to—and I ask that and of course the Minister of Finance refused to answer the question. And so, Mr. Speaker, I will challenge him any day

on that and say that that was never something that came out of those prebudget consultation meetings. So then where did it come from? How many people opposite were actually consulted on this PST increase?

We've heard that members opposite have been going out into their own communities saying, we never asked—we didn't ask for this. Oh, we didn't ask for this, this is something that the, you know, that the Premier did and the Minister of Finance did, and we didn't know about it. And, well, I challenge those people who are standing and should be standing up for their communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I challenge each and every one of them to attend this rally today, to stand up with those constituents of theirs and vote against this, and speak out at this rally against this PST hike. Because we believe maybe members opposite and some of the backbenched were not around the Cabinet table when this was discussed. Maybe that was the case. But they have a choice to make in this Manitoba Legislature when it comes to voting on this PST hike. They can stand up with their constituents and vote no, or they can stand up with the Premier and the Minister of Finance and support them because they're more concerned about protecting their own jobs than they are protecting their own constituents' pockets, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So having those—said those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe strongly that this is a resolution that we should all support in this Legislature. It's about accountability, it's about keeping your promises, and that's what any government should be doing. It's about integrity. They should be protecting their constituents, not hurting them.

And so having said that, I would ask all members opposite to stand with their constituents today and vote in favour of this resolution. Thank you.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Mr. Acting Speaker, I'm honoured and delighted to get up and say—put a few words on the record about the resolution.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

But before I do, I want to take a moment just to compliment the member from Tuxedo. I had the chance to—along with many members of this caucus—go to the Youth Parliament fundraiser on last Friday night and the Speaker who was also there and many members from the opposition side were there.

* (11:30)

And the member from Tuxedo, Mr. Speaker, had the opportunity to provide the introduction to a good friend and colleague of hers—her mentor, I think it might be—and that's none other than the former member of this Chamber and the leader of the opposition—former leader of the opposition Stuart Murray, who many of you will know as the president and CEO of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. And I want to compliment the member for providing a very warm and generous introduction to her friend and colleague.

And I want to say, too, that Mr. Murray, Mr. Speaker, gave a very fine speech in defence of human rights. It was very impressive, and he made a point of talking about the scourge of bullying that runs through our society. It was a clarion call for human rights and for opposition to bullying, and it was an impassioned plea that we create safe and secure spaces for all young people and for all of us all across the province. And so, I just want to say to the member from Tuxedo, through you, of course, that when Bill 18 comes before this House, I hope she will take the advice of Uncle Stu and stand—stand shoulder to shoulder with everyone on this side of the House and support Bill 18. And I'm asking her, will she do that today?

And then when she's done doing that, Mr. Speaker, when she stands up and agrees she's going to stand on this side of the House with us, then I want her to turn and talk to her friend from—the member from Steinbach and said, you know, Uncle Stu had this suggestion for us last week that we should be supporting Bill 18 because it's about the defence of human rights in this province. And then when she's done that, she should turn around and talk to her friend from Morden and Winkler and also say to him, Uncle Stu said that we should support Bill 18 because it's about the defence of human rights in this province. So I hope, Mr. Speaker, that that's exactly what she'll do and that, instead, she will stand with all of us on this side.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm also delighted to get up and put a few words on the record about the resolution put forward that we're speaking about. No person in their right mind could possibly support this resolution, because it's wrong. Manitobans pay less in taxes today than they did in 1999, case closed. Manitobans will be saving, collectively, \$1.4 billion in taxes this year, 500—over \$500 million alone to families, another \$330 million alone in property

taxes, another four mill—hundred million to businesses. They can't take yes for an answer, no matter how hard it comes.

Now, I was proud to support the budget put forward by my friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers). I'm honoured to work with him as his legislative assistant. He does listen to people, he does care about the kind of society he has, and he has a very balanced pro—approach to the way in which we treat the economy. Mr. Speaker, I supported the budget and I'll support Bill 20 because it's a realistic thing to do that responds to the very real and urgent circumstances facing Manitoba today. I'm going to support the budget and I'm going to support Bill 20, because it's a responsible budget that re—continues to protect the programs and services that matter most to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to support the budget because it's a jobs budget that stimulates economic activity by making record investments in infrastructure and keeps Manitobans working. This is the thing that strikes me as so preposterous about the opposition side—you know, we have the third-lowest unemployment rate in the country—the third lowest—at, oh, just over 5 per cent. It's 2 percentage points lower than the national average. People in Manitoba are working today while all across this country, in the United States and in Europe, they're not working and they're taking to the streets, just as they did on May Day, yesterday. And they said to government, restore funding to social programming, restore funding to communities, restore funding to neighbourhoods, make sure that people are working. And that's exactly what's happening in our province today.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we were at the insurance broker's last week, and there was a great, great event. It was fantastic and both members of—all members of the House were represented there. But I want to make a point that people aren't buying insurance if they're not working, and they are working. And the Canadian restaurants association—people aren't going to restaurants if they're not working. But they are working. That's the point. That's what's going on here in Manitoba.

But you know what really defies imagination? It's how out of step the opposition is with expert opinion on what we should be doing in the—with the economy. Just a few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, the International Monetary Fund—that's the IMF—advised responsible policy makers against austerity, against

making savage cuts to budgets, and against making huge budget—huge cuts to jobs and laying off people, which is precisely what the Leader of the Opposition recommended just a few short weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, this is what the IMF had to say: They said the main challenge for Canada's policy makers—this is you folks too—the main challenge for Canada's policy makers is to support growth in the short term while reducing vulnerabilities that may arise from external shocks and domestic imbalances.

Let me read that again, quote: The main challenge for Canada's policy makers is to support growth in the short term while reducing vulnerabilities that may arise from external shocks and domestic imbalances.

Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what Budget 2013 does. It supports growth by continuing to invest in Manitoba so that external shocks from continued uncertainty outside our borders and the domestic imbalances caused by flood waters from within our borders don't result in extreme financial hardship for Manitobans—Manitoba. We're following the advice of the IMF. This isn't a Socialist International giving this advice; this isn't our friends in the CCPA telling us this. You know, it's not like this is a radical left-wing group; the International Monetary Fund is saying this, and you guys are ignoring it. You're not paying it any attention to it. They're not giving any credence to the beacons of 21st century capitalism. They're not only not a very good opposition, they're lousy capitalists too.

So, Mr. Speaker, I couldn't possibly begin to support the resolution that's put forward by the member today. It is so out of touch with reality. It's so out of touch with expert opinion. It's so out of touch with what Manitobans are thinking that it's not relevant. And what it should really read is that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba should applaud the provincial government for decreasing the tax burden on Manitobans, for building a province and keeping faith with Manitoba families. Now, that is a resolution that I could support. Thank you very much.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Well, out of touch: that's an interesting term that could well address most of the members, in fact, all the members across the floor. We know that they promised in the last election not to raise taxes. They campaigned at the door. They campaigned in Brandon East and Brandon West, promising that they would not raise taxes to Manitobans, and then,

obviously, they broke that promise several times, lied to Manitobans again and again and again. And will they ever stand up and tell the truth? There is the question, Mr. Speaker.

So they are, indeed, out of touch. And it took a while for the member opposite to get to some kind of point there. I'm not exactly sure what it was; he was all over the map on particular bills. This is—we're talking to a resolution here, speaking to a resolution. And, of course, he talks about the International Monetary Fund, and I think the interpretation there is quite interesting because tax increases stifle growth, Mr. Speaker. That is one of the things that is very clear in economic policy, but, again, this member may not know those types of things.

* (11:40)

And domestic imbalances, well, where do we see that? Let's see now, domestic imbalances—Saskatchewan's PST is, let me think now. I think I've heard that some are 5 per cent, and we're going to 8 per cent in Manitoba. That may be a domestic imbalance as opposed to what the member thinks it might be. So it's very interesting in interpretations and, of course, the member is free to make his own conclusions and interpretations, however erroneous they may be.

Because, you know, we hear things from across the floor where Manitobans need protection from this government. In fact, the Finance Minister did say that Manitobans need protection from this government and he's going to give it to them. And, yes, indeed, he has given it to them in this budget with the tax increases and the previous budget with the tax increases. It's really quite disturbing to watch the process of spending that we see across this—the floor, Mr. Speaker.

You know, they talk about spending on infrastructure, and there's very little there. They talk about spending in Brandon and, you know, that is a question that I did indeed ask. And while we're going to the speak—the, Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister's exact words were: refresh Victoria Avenue. Well, Victoria Avenue has been refreshed after every year or two for the past 14 years, and it hasn't worked. They put patches on there; the patches have failed. They put experimental patches on there; the experimental patches are failed. So to promise—well, I guess we know what the promises are worth from this government—that they're going to refresh Victoria Avenue over two years, well, okay, so we'll patch those potholes. That's a refreshing. And we

won't tell you how much we're going to spend on it because that might truly 'reflect'—reflect the inadequate investment that this government has made in infrastructure.

And the overspending on other infrastructure, we have two fine examples in Brandon and in western Manitoba. We have the Thompson bridges that were over twice the original estimate and are still not complete. And we have, you know, falling approaches that the minister said, well, that was a design feature. So I'm interested to see if we're going to have that design feature on the Trans-Canada Highway when we finish those bridges there so we can launch over that bridge and then hit the bumps along the way, because this infrastructure investment has been very poor in Manitoba.

And then, of course, we have the highway bypass that was originally proposed to be \$12 million and, again, not quite complete. We're getting close there and, you know, 14 years later we're talking. The last number I saw on the sign was \$28 million before it was taken down, and we know, Mr. Speaker, that was probably not even close to the final estimate. So how far over budget on that one are we? Well, you know, we don't even know, because the government won't give us the true numbers.

If this government really believes that this PST increase is necessary for Manitobans, if they really believe it, and if they all believe it and they all voted for it, and if they all believed it and backed it up in Cabinet and in caucus, then they should go out and they should be able to sell that concept to Manitobans. If they really believe it they should be able to make Manitobans believe it's necessary as well. And if you can make Manitobans believe it then you should have no trouble going out and having a referendum, because then you would believe that you're going to win that vote.

But, again, this government doesn't believe it. They're going to force Manitobans to do this. They're going to force them to go through that because Manitobans have their rights taken away by this government again, time and time and time again.

And then, you know Mr. Minister—Mr. Speaker, when I see—when I used to see companies that were in trouble, the first thing they would do is we'd look at, well, can we term out some debt? Well, this government's done that, term out the debt, extend it, borrow more money. Okay, when we run out of that, then we look at doing other things. Then we look at,

well, maybe there's some assets we can sell, that we can do to pay down some—so the government did that. They sold some assets and they paid it down, you know, we took against the current liabilities. Well, usually you want to take long-term assets reflect long-term liabilities, but again, you know, this government looks at it in a different perspective. We're going to sell off those assets and make things look a little bit better. So again, the accounting perspective—[interjection]—and I hear some chattering from across the floor that, maybe from some not accountants that maybe don't understand how accounting principles are important, but those are the types of things we hear.

But again, if they really, truly believe in this PST increase, if they really, truly believe in those tax increases, go out and sell them to Manitobans. Talk to Manitobans in the coffee shop. Listen to Manitobans is perhaps even more important, and there will be a listening opportunity here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, unless this government's going to make it illegal, which they seem to like doing that. They don't like protests because, you know, if people come out and tell them the truth as they see it, and the government has a tough time hearing the truth, time and time and time again. They are so far out of touch with Manitobans that they're in their little, little—I don't know where they are, you know, they're just in that little cloister that they're not listening to Manitobans and ignoring the things that Manitobans really want to talk about, ignoring the needs of Manitobans, and just putting these tax increases there time and time again.

Even the numbers that the Finance Minister plays with time and time again and some of the members opposite that they promote—you know, I know I can't say that that particular member said one thing or another, but obviously the government lies and lies and lies again and we see that so many times. It's very disappointing to watch here in the House, Mr. Speaker, that those lies just continue and they flow so easily from this government. It's quite sad to watch. Yes, indeed, as the Finance Minister said, these Manitobans do need to be protected and defended from this government. And it's something that the balanced budget legislation did do, and, apparently, this government wants to take away that defence that those Manitobans depended on and believed in and believed that, you know, even if there was a misguided government that at least they have some protection from them for the balanced budget legislation.

But, apparently, we want to remove that, so, indeed, I would encourage the members opposite to speak in support of this resolution, and actually speak to the resolution, under like—unlike the prior speaker there, who went several different places, but to read it, reflect it and think, is this something that I can truly support? And I will recommend that they do support it, Mr. Speaker.

So, with that, I think that, you know—*[interjection]*—yes, the people seem to want me to speak longer and, well, it's all more, more, more. Well, again, so, you know, when I think back to the election that we had, I know that the people that I saw running in Brandon West, that—the particular candidate out there for the government opposite that did not make it, he was a good candidate. I quite liked the individual, but, again, he did promote the types of things that this government has promised to Manitobans that they would not raise taxes. I know we had several forums that that was a discussion issue and the promise was there, we will not raise taxes, we will not raise the PST, and, apparently, you know, the government lied, so he just carried on with the lies not knowing that this government was lying, apparently.

How can you ethically come back and talk to people, saying, well, gee, you know, I guess maybe we didn't tell you the truth in the election? Gee, I don't know. How are those ethics possible that you can come back and speak to those people?

So, really, I know that, as I said, this government is out of touch. This resolution would put them back in touch with Manitobans, and I highly recommend that they vote in favour of it. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to continue today speaking to the resolution at hand, and, you know, I can appreciate that the opposition is very discouraged after having lost four elections in a row and have to be very—wondering why, what the road to success really is for them.

Because, you know, we have had a very serious deterioration of the national and international economy since 2008. And, certainly, Ontario has been under a lot of stress, Québec's been under a lot of stress, and, you know, when I come back to Manitoba I would see a total difference in the attitude of people here. The people in the western provinces, of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC, never had the stresses of the—of that recession of 2008 that we saw in the rest of the country and to a

greater extent in Europe and other places around the world.

So, you know, rather than celebrating the fact that we're doing quite well the opposition just are totally negative, and the public don't support that. You know, the public are optimistic. The public were very happy that we got the Jets back last year. The public are very happy that we were able to get the stadium built. The public are very happy when we are able to get hospitals redeveloped, when we're able to expand the floodway, when we're attempting to build the hydro system.

* (11:50)

Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that we have only built 50 per cent of our total capacity in hydro in Manitoba over the years, and it's not for want of trying. For 20 years now, since the time that Bob Rae was the Premier of Ontario, successive governments including the Conservative government of Gary Filmon were trying to get an east-west power grid built so that we could—rather than exporting our power north and south—that we could have that vision of John A. Macdonald a hundred and some years ago where he built a national railway east-west when it didn't make sense to keep the country together, and we have—we want to offer that vision of an east-west power grid, and we need the support of other governments. And the Prime Minister, to his credit, back in 2007 was quoted as saying he was very happy to have given Premier McGuinty 580-some million dollars out of a \$1.8 billion—I think it was—ecoTrust fund for the purposes of building an east-west power grid. That's what the Prime Minister of the country thought was going to happen with the money. Instead, Dalton didn't do that with the money. He used it on solar power and other issues.

But now, five years later, we are seeing a possible revisit of that issue and we have—even the Ontario government having to look at realities in that province—and we have Saskatchewan-Alberta. Saskatchewan has to replace its infrastructure with a \$15 billion expenditure, and so things are coming into perspective here and into play. With a huge infrastructure program being announced next year by the federal government the possibility exists for this long-awaited east-west power grid to be built, and that would allow us to expand our hydro construction. By the way, the Conservatives don't know much about building hydro projects because it's—I don't think they built a single one since Grand Rapids in the 1960s. We've had to pull them kicking

and screaming all the way. But the idea here—and they should be able to understand this—the big picture is to develop this clean hydroelectric power from 5,000 megawatts up to 10,000. Get the dams built and get the power going into Ontario, into Saskatchewan, into Alberta.

Now, the question is why are they not doing anything about it? Why do they sit here and complain? They complain that the power rates are going up by 4 per cent when, in fact, their previous leader wanted to drive the power rates up to market rates. There's an inconsistency in their approach, and so we—you know, we wanted these—we want to give them a second chance. We want to get them on side. We have a federal minister, Minister Fletcher, who is in charge of the infrastructure funds for the west, and they should talk to him. Obviously they don't because he wants supporters. He's looking for supporters. Where are the MPs? There's 11 of 14 Conservative MPs and they do nothing. They say nothing. They come in here and try to, you know, lobby the provincial government last year but where do we hear them on issues where it matters? Why aren't they standing up in the House of Commons demanding—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I regret to interrupt the honourable member for Elmwood, but we are discussing the resolution brought forward, and I'd hope that the member would confine his remarks to the resolution that is under consideration here this morning.

The honourable member for Elmwood.

Mr. Maloway: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that.

And certainly I wish to deal with a position of the opposition leader when he was in the Filmon government some years ago, and I'm going to get to that in a minute. The member is bringing up a PMR here that's talking about the provincial government and the burden of taxation on Manitobans, and all I'm indicating is that if we can have development in this province the taxation basket will be reduced on all of us. If we could increase the productive capacity of the province, whether it's through mining, whether it's through hydroelectric development, all of our taxes will be reduced as our economy improves. And we simply want them to get on-board and perhaps even introduce a motion in the House.

Do you know, Mr. Speaker, that in the province of Québec—and to the members—member for

Brandon, in the province of Québec, they routinely pass all-party resolutions. During the Filmon government, we did, on an all-party basis here, deal with the issue of Meech Lake, we dealt with the issue of smoking—we got the smoking ban—from the—Denis Rocan was. We dealt with—whenever there was a very controversial issue, something we wanted done, that's what happens in Québec, the Assembly gets together and passes a motion. And I would suggest that these members get with the plan here, get with the program, get with development in Manitoba and introduce a motion. This member who introduced this resolution today, I would submit, should have introduced the motion asking for the federal government to build an east-west power grid and get on board with the Prime Minister, with Steven Fletcher, and let's get the job done. And that will—*[interjection]*—well, of course it does. I'm saying that this resolution should be replaced by one that calls for an east-west power grid.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when the member—when the Leader of the Opposition was in the Filmon government a number of years ago, he had a part to play. We're talking about—you know, the member for Brandon wants to talk about taxation, right? And the fact of the matter is it's all tie into the issue of taxation. When we—when the Filmon government brought in the balanced budget legislation that the member claims—the leader claims to have had some input to, he was—he said in 1996—the current Leader of the Opposition, he said that this legislation does deal on the spending side very heavily. Granted, there are restrictions in the legislation that NDP members have talked about that they suggest are unreasonable or that would handcuff future legislators. This is the Leader of the Opposition saying, I do not believe that that's true. I believe the legislation can be by any subsequent Legislature withdrawn or repealed. So I do not believe that the hands-being-tied argument is one that has any validity at all.

So, that says it all. The Leader of the Opposition said that when he was in that—

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

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): I am very honoured to be able to put a few words on the record, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed the comments from the member for Elmwood as he talked a lot about the legacy of the member from—for Fort Whyte. And, as he even mentioned in his comments, back when this legi—

when this bill—when the original balanced budget law was brought in that it's not binding on any future government. He even admitted it himself, and he said so, and the member for Elmwood just raised that very issue here.

It's important for us to talk about tax cuts and the legacy of their government versus our government when it comes to tax cuts, Mr. Speaker. As the members have said, we cut taxes \$1.4 billion every single year.

Now, the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), she was a member of the Filmon government. I remember the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), he asked a question here in the House a while back: What did the Conservatives build when—build here in Manitoba when they were in government? There was no answer from across the way. Silence—there was absolute silence from their side.

Well, I'll ask: How many tax cuts did you bring in when you were in government? How many tax

cuts did the member for Charleswood bring in when she was in government? Absolutely none—absolutely none. Complete silence from that member. She never brought in a single tax cut in all the years that she was in this government—or when she was in this Chamber. So we need no lessons—we need no lessons—from the member for Charleswood. We need no lessons from any of those members across the way when it comes to cutting taxes. We need no lessons from the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) when it comes to cutting taxes in this Chamber.

This is a government that's cut—

* (12:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Selkirk will have eight minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, May 2, 2013

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