

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 20, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by J. Lowdon, D. Gonty, B. Kerneh and many, many other Manitobans.

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

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

PST, by one point without the legally required referendum.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by N. Penner, M. Penner, S. Penner and many other Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition's signed by E. Harder, B. Bobyk and C. Ireland and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

If the provincial government imposes amalgamations, local democratic representation will be drastically limited without—while not providing any real improvements in cost savings.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition's signed by J. Woloski, T. Christie, M. Alex and many, many more Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

Local governments are further concerned that amalgamation will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence

of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by R. Kaastra, V. White, C. Palmer and many more fine Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by J. Kelley, L. Gelbanks and G. Campbell and many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is submitted on behalf of J. Montgomery, S. Allan, M. Corbin and many other fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

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

* (13:40)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by J. Engbrecht, L. Olson, K. Olson and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Ring Dike Road—Ste. Rose du Lac

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

The Ring Dike Road is a well-used gravel municipal road that is used as a secondary road in and out of the community of Ste. Rose du Lac.

Given this heavy pattern of use, there is strong interest in the community in seeing the Ring Dike Road upgraded to a paved provincial road.

It would be most cost-effective to upgrade the Ring Dike Road to a provincial road at the same time the upgrades are being undertaken at the junction of PTH 68 and PTH 5.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at Ste. Rose du Lac into a provincial road, and (2) to request the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to consider upgrading the Ring Dike Road at the same time that work is being done on the junction of PTH 68 and PTH 5.

This petition is signed by H. Fortin, C. Lavasseur, V. Campbell and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by G. Anderson, L. Semeniuk, L. Graham and many, many other Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by E. King, E. Pluchinsky, P. Ryan and many other Manitobans.

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This is signed by M. Whyte, K. Valdez, C. St. George and many, many other Manitobans.

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition is signed by G.H. Anderson, K.W. Wardle and L. Conan and many more fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) The provincial government recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents.

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

And this petition is signed by A. Bloomer, S. Atech and F. Greengrass and many, many others.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition is signed by C. Pattman, G. Romijn and S. Tucker and many, many more fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I am pleased to table the 2013-2014 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

* (13:50)

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the report under section 43(1) of The Fatality Inquiries Act for 2012.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none—

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Aboriginal Day

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Yes, I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, June 21st, marks the summer solstice and National Aboriginal Day.

Five years ago, the federal apology to the First Nations, Metis and Inuit survivors of residential schools raised great expectations that a period of reconciliation and transformation was beginning. Sadly, this hope has yet to be realized.

Last year, we saw the rise of Idle No More in response to the lack of commitment to change. Trauma from the school abuses continues now through another generation, but the spirit and resilience continues.

Tonight at the Keeping the Fires Burning annual celebration, we salute the grandmothers who have been so important in our culture. They have endured

much but have survived and nurtured our youth in often horrific situations.

As the media routinely points out, there is seemingly no limit to the list of tragic statistics concerning our people from health, housing, poverty and involvement in the justice system. It is too easy to dwell in these statistics of misery and say that there are no answers. That, in my opinion, is not acceptable.

We all have a responsibility to do what we can to restore the honour of the Crown and to truly live up to the spirit and intent of the treaties. We are all treaty people regardless of our status.

I am proud that our government has taken the lead on acting on the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls. Our efforts have helped make this a national issue, something that we have championed as the chair of the Aboriginal ministers and leaders of the national Aboriginal organizations working group. Next month we are hosting the fourth annual Wiping Away the Tears gathering for families of victims of the violence against Aboriginal women.

Manito Ahbee, now in its eighth year, begins August 16th with the lighting of the sacred fire at Oodena circle at the Forks. Our support for powwows and other festivals are essential to keeping our culture alive.

The East Side Road Authority, with the support of all 13 First Nations, is making real progress in the development of a two-road network serving the remote communities of the province.

Similarly, the development of the University College of the North, with 12 regional centres, nine of them on reserves, is bringing opportunities to communities.

Future development in the north is largely dependent on the participation of the First Nations. That is why we have partnered with the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation on the Wuskwatim project and are partnering with several First Nations on both the Conawapa and the Keeyask projects.

Our water retrofit project bringing running water to the Island Lake communities is training residents who are doing the actual work. One hundred homes were done last year and another 218 homes scheduled for this year. This is genuine progress and to be celebrated.

The First Peoples Economic Growth Fund, the Communities Economic Development Fund and,

soon, the Metis Economic Development Fund are helping create jobs and opportunities on and off reserves.

I am very proud that our government has worked with the MMF to jointly develop a Metis policy and harvesting agreement, amongst other unique projects.

Last week we celebrated the Aki Energy project that will convert 100 homes to geothermal heating and cooling in Fisher River and Peguis First Nations. Thirty members of the two communities have been trained to do the conversions, creating both jobs and new business opportunities for band-owned construction companies. I salute all involved in this important project and look forward to further such projects in other First Nations.

Tomorrow, amongst a number of important National Aboriginal Day events at—the University of Manitoba will celebrate becoming the host of the archives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It is a fitting location for the archives, and I am pleased that the province is playing a small role in helping this decision. Other events tomorrow include World Peace and Prayer Day at the Memorial Park and Aboriginal solidarity powwow at The Forks.

This Saturday there is a full day of entertainment at The Forks celebrating National Aboriginal Day and the achievements of Aboriginal people. I encourage everyone to take in the many events, whether in Winnipeg, Selkirk, The Pas, Churchill or the many communities across this province.

Ekosani, miigwech, mahseecho, wopida, mutna, hei hei, merci, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs for his statement to the House today.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, June 21st, is National Aboriginal Day. Proclaimed by the Governor General in 1996, National Aboriginal Day provides all Canadians the opportunity to acknowledge the unique achievements of First Nations, Metis and Inuit in a wide range of diverse fields.

National Aboriginal Day normally falls around the time of the summer solstice, the longest day of the year. For generations, many Aboriginal people have celebrated their culture and heritage at this time of year. Whether Metis, Inuit or First Nation, each have their own distinct heritage, language, cultural

practices and spiritual beliefs. National Aboriginal Day goes a long way in recognizing the important characteristics, language and heritage of Canada's Aboriginal people.

The relationship between Aboriginal people has grown and evolved since the time that the treaties were signed, and this relationship continues to evolve. Manitoba has a rich Aboriginal history, and National Aboriginal Day allows us to recognize that this history is a part of who we are as Manitobans. It is important that this history and this relationship are recognized and celebrated, and National Aboriginal Day reminds us of the importance of the treaties to our province and our country.

Over the course of this past week, numerous events were held all across the province, culminating in National Aboriginal Day live festival—festivities at The Forks on Saturday. There have also been number—have been summer solstice ceremonies across the city and across the province in conjunction with National Aboriginal Day festivities.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues and all of the members of this House to join me in celebrating National Aboriginal Day and in honouring the achievements of Aboriginal people in our province. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to speak to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: I join the other members of the Legislature in honouring the fact that we have, tomorrow, National Aboriginal Day.

I was pleased to have been a Member of Parliament in Ottawa with Elijah Harper when this was initially recognized and formally made National Aboriginal Day and want to pay tribute to Elijah's role in ensuring that that happened.

As the minister says, the Idle No More movement has signalled that we still have a long way to go, and certainly some recent reports, the Poverty or Prosperity report released yesterday which says Canada cannot and need not allow yet another generation of indigenous citizens to languish in poverty, certainly speaks to the long way we still have to go. And the day before's report by the Canadian Human Rights Commission on equality rights of Aboriginal people again documents

widespread shortcomings, though it also documents some progress.

I'm pleased that there has been some steps forward in addressing the clean running water issues, but there are still hundreds of homes yet in northern Manitoba which don't have clean running water. And we need to have the determination to continue until the job is done.

* (14:00)

We have to remember that there's still approximately 2,000 people from Lake St. Martin, Little Saskatchewan and Dauphin River who are not yet back in their homes, and we need to dedicate ourselves to make sure that that happens as soon as possible.

I think we can note the progress that's being made in post-secondary education and the fact that our post-secondary education institutions, the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University and Red River College, in particular, have been making some significant progress, as has the University College of the North in this regard.

So I join others here in recommending that all Manitobans come out and celebrate National Aboriginal Day, celebrate Manitoba's and Canada's Aboriginal heritage, because it's a really important part of who we are as Manitobans and as Canadians.

So I join others, ekosani, miigwech, mahseecho, wopida, mutna, hei hei, merci, thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today guests from the All India Pinglewara Charitable Society, Manitoba chapter, who are the guests of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

And also in the public gallery, we have members from the South Osborne Arts Group, who are the guests of the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum).

And also in the public gallery, we have with us today from Laureate Academy 11 grade 3 to 5 students under the direction of Ms. Karen Dyck. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Gaudreau).

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

ORAL QUESTIONS**PST Increase
Referendum Request**

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): It's very hard to believe, Mr. Speaker, it's almost 46 years ago in our centennial year that Otis Redding penned a classic hit, Respect, and Aretha Franklin, of course, made it famous with her beautiful version of it: What you want / Baby, I got it—you know—What you need / Baby, I got it / You know I got it.

The government hums that song, I'm sure, every day as they tax Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. But the reality is as they take that money away from the people of this province, they shouldn't be taking the people of this province for granted. They should show just a little respect, just a little bit.

And as they go around the province preening for the cameras and prancing around as the peacocks do, doing their ribbon cuttings, they need to remember something. They need to remember all those ribbon cuttings are financed by people, real people in our province, real people who deserve some respect.

So I want to ask the Premier today if he would finally just show a little bit, just a little bit, of respect for the people of this province and let them have a vote on whether or not they want to give him their money in the new PST hike.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition, and I know that we have a tremendous amount that needs to be done in this province with the building and renewal program, and whether it's safe communities from flooding, whether it's schools, whether it's the infrastructure projects we've announced, it's all about creating a better quality of life for Manitobans while keeping Manitoba one of the most 'infordable' to live in the country.

The member knows full well that the last time the members opposite were in office that their tax rates were higher in every category and a family paid \$2,400 to \$3,400 more in taxes. Today they pay less taxes. We have better schools and hospitals, better streets and roads, and now we're going to protect people from flooding in the same way we did in the Red River Valley, Mr. Speaker.

**Future Tax Increases
Government Intent**

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): And every Province we compete with, Mr. Speaker, has lowered taxes more than the NDP has. We're falling further behind.

You know, she's—Aretha Franklin sang, sock it to me, but she didn't mean tax hikes, Mr. Speaker. Socking it to flood victims isn't the answer to respect. Socking it to middle class people who are struggling or people trying to get out of poverty is hardly showing respect. Socking it to a horse racing industry that employs 500 Manitobans is not respectful. And disrespecting, of course, federal partners, municipal partners and democratically elected people from Manitoba doing their best to represent Manitobans is hardly the way to build a strong relationship that works.

You know, we've got a lot of people getting socked by these high taxes, and the problem is seniors are unable to afford a trip to see their grandkids in another province or small business people can't afford to create more jobs and opportunities for Manitobans.

So I guess I have to ask the Premier, while he's doing all this socking, who's next? Who's he going to sock it to next year? Is he going to raise the taxes in this province again next year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it was just a few weeks ago that—it was just a few weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition wanted to implement what he called a chill in the province of Manitoba. He wanted to take \$52 million of cuts in the health-care system, which would put our seniors at risk. It would put our young families at risk. It would put the folks that are ill in this province at risk.

They voted against the \$10-million program to eliminate the cost of cancer-care drugs for people that are trying to make a living and continue to support their families. We put that in place. They voted against it and opposed it.

They wanted to reduce funding across the boards for our schools when we have a growing province with a growing number of young families that need those school opportunities in Manitoba, and we've gone out and we've announced those new schools and we'll put them in place so that young families have a chance to participate in the labour market.

Their version of growing Manitoba is to start by cutting it and laying people off.

Government Spending Respect for Manitobans

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Of course, the Premier subscribes to the belief no matter how many times he repeats misinformation, he actually believes it may come true. But the fact of the matter is putting misrepresentations on the record doesn't make them true. One representation he might like to put on the record is an apology for breaking his promise to Manitobans in the last election when he said he wouldn't raise taxes.

And the fact is Aretha was right when she said my—your kisses are sweeter than honey, and guess what, so is my money. The reality is it was her money, and she deserved respect and that's why she sang the song so well. And Manitobans deserve respect too, for earning the money, for taking the chances and the risks to create the real jobs in this province. This government has no respect for those kinds of people, hard-working people.

The reality is the NDP goes around this province misrepresenting the facts, claiming they create jobs. They don't create jobs; Manitobans create jobs. They claim they build bridges and roads. They don't build bridges and roads; Manitobans build bridges and roads. They don't build schools and hospitals; Manitobans build schools and hospitals, the real people of this province, real working people working their tail off.

Show some respect, just a little bit of respect.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): I agree with the Leader of the Opposition. When we're in government Manitobans are building this province, Mr. Speaker. But there's a contrast—but there's a contrast—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, it's true. We are building the province of Manitoba and Manitobans are participating in that. We have more people employed in this province than ever in the history of Manitoba.

When we employed Manitobans to build the floodway to protect Winnipeg, the Leader of the Opposition went out and said, stop it; stop it in its tracks.

When we build Manitoba Hydro with the people of northern Manitoba, the Leader of the Opposition says, stop it. Don't build it.

When we were building hospitals in Manitoba, the Leader of the Opposition says, we can't afford to do that. When he was in office, they cancelled the entire program for health care. No personal care homes, no hospitals, none of that was done.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, 11 days from now the NDP government will force an illegal PST hike on Manitobans. This will have a negative impact on all Manitobans, including families, seniors, flood victims, vulnerable Manitobans, and the list goes on.

Why is this NDP government refusing to call the required referendum on the PST hike, Mr. Speaker? Why are they being so disrespectful to Manitobans?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we're moving forward with our plan so that we can invest in the things that the people of Manitoba want.

Mr. Speaker, we have been up front with Manitobans and we've said in the budget very clearly that we're going to raise this revenue, this one point, 1 cent on the dollar, and we're going to dedicate that money to infrastructure that matters to Manitoba families: hospitals, schools, roads, bridges, daycares. Those are the priorities of Manitoba families. Those are the priorities of this government too.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this PST hike on Manitoba families will have a negative impact to those families, to seniors, to flood victims, to vulnerable Manitobans, and the list goes on.

My question for the Premier and for this Minister of Finance: Will they do the right thing and reverse their decision to raise the PST or will they call for a referendum? Why are they being so disrespectful to Manitobans?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, we didn't take this decision lightly, and Manitoba families work hard for the money that they earn.

What this PST hike will do for flood victims, it'll build a channel out of Lake St. Martin—a channel that

will provide protection for Manitoba families. It's an investment in our future. It's an investment in our economy. It'll put people to work and it'll protect Manitoba families. I think those are pretty good goals, Mr. Speaker.

PST Increase Referendum Request

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, they almost—already made a big investment, too, in their political party.

Rhineland Ford is a family business spanning three generations in Altona. Jim and Mia Dick are passionate about their community, and they're respected community leaders. They don't lie to their customers. Their business, however, will be harmed by this 14 per cent increase in the PST. People will look elsewhere for new cars and service and repairs to their vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier show some respect, listen to the people of Manitoba and call a referendum?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, that same business that the member for Emerson talks about is dependent on a good strong Manitoba economy. It's dependent on a government that is willing to invest in the transportation networks that are, oh, so important to make sure that those products can get to market and that we can receive the raw materials in which to manufacture the goods and services that we produce here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, you don't have that kind of growth, you don't have that kind of move forward without the revenue to invest in roads and bridges, to invest in schools and hospitals and daycares. That's been our plan all along. We've been up front with Manitobans, and it'll work good for businesses.

Mr. Graydon: Well, Mr. Speaker, Jim and Mia Dick have worked to grow their successful business in Altona. They are respected in the community and they treat their customers with respect each and every day. They obey the law. The government, however, has dumped more regulations, more red tape and more taxes on them; now, in an ultimate sign of disrespect, have decided to raise the PST without calling the referendum.

My question is simple: When will the Premier obey the law, call a referendum and show respect for Manitobans like Jim and Mia Dick?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, taking the small business tax from 8 per cent, which is where it was when the member from Fort Whyte was in Cabinet with Gary Filmon, we've taken that 8 per cent down to zero per cent. In my books that's a lot of respect.

Assiniboia Downs Government Relations

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): This NDP government have shown no respect to the people of Assiniboia Downs. They have no respect for the 500 jobs at Assiniboia Downs, and they have no respect for the \$50-million industry.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance withheld funding that was to flow to the industry under The Pari-Mutuel Levy Act. The minister chose to ignore the legislation and was subsequently ordered by the court to forward the funds to the industry.

Why has this government been so disrespectful to the people of Assiniboia Downs?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Well, Mr. Speaker, there is some progress today. I notice the member opposite is not putting Rob Ford up as an example for this government or anyone to follow. I was set to say that he might've wanted to have another crack at that line of questioning as he seems on a bit of a high yesterday. But, you know, I think we saw yesterday, when the member hit rock bottom in his questioning, that they really have nothing new in the way of questions, not only on this but many of the other issues.

It must be recycling day in the member's constituency today, because, I'll repeat again, we'll continue to provide support to Assiniboia Downs. Yes, it's a lesser amount. We're putting the \$5 million into hospitals. It's going to do a lot for the west end of Winnipeg, Mr. Speaker.

By the way, Assiniboia Downs continues to operate and so does the Grace Hospital, which they said would be closing down a number of years ago.

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

Mr. Cullen: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is about treating people with respect.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are using backroom deals and bully tactics when they—comes to dealing with Assiniboia Downs. The core affidavits we have,

indicate the NDP have been working for years to take over operations of Assiniboia Downs. The NDP are tearing up contracts and they're changing legislation to protect themselves. At the same time, they're refusing to negotiate in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the government: Why have they refused to act in good faith and been so disrespectful?

Mr. Ashton: Well, Mr. Speaker, I—perhaps the member should do his homework in terms of the standard agreement in terms of VLTs. The standard agreement in this Province has a seven-day cancellation clause. That's what every commercial site holder in the province has, Mr. Speaker—a seven-day cancellation clause.

The agreement we had with Assiniboia Downs—we recognized that a seven-day cancellation clause would not be appropriate. In fact, notice was given to Assiniboia Downs of the fact that there would be reduction, Mr. Speaker, in the grant, as early as January of this year. It's now June. It's nearly been six months. We gave ample notice. We're bringing in legislation as we said we would in the budget, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing untoward. The bottom line is, yes, Assiniboia Downs will now receive what other 'commercycles' receive. They will continue to receive the parimutuel levy, Mr. Speaker, and the rest—

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

Municipal Amalgamation Victoria Beach

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): Mike Mason is a seasonal resident in the RM of Victoria Beach. He pays taxes to the municipality. He is able to vote in municipal elections. And yet the Minister of Local Government says he doesn't matter, he doesn't count.

Why does the Minister of Local Government show such disrespect to Mike Mason?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Oh, that's ridiculous.

You know, Mr. Speaker, 8.5 per cent increase or a \$30-million increase over last year—that's respect; hundreds of millions of dollars on roads, on bridges in Manitoba—that's respect; fixing our hospitals, personal care homes, working in all institutions across Manitoba—that's respect; and the fact that we consult and work with municipalities every—each and every day—that's respect.

Mr. Pedersen: Mr. Speaker, the minister won't speak with respect to the fill—community of Plum Coulee that's up in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, the RM of Victoria Beach has 2,600 people who vote, pay property taxes, maintain services in their community, and all of this without running an annual deficit, unlike this government.

The minister has told the RM of Victoria Beach to pick your dance partner. Well, Mike Mason's reply to that is, I pick mine and it's not the spendP.

What does the minister expect when he is so disrespectful to Mike Mason?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, since 1999, 261 police officers funded by the Province—that's respect; 30 additional police officers with federal funding—that's respect; police helicopter—that's respect; police cadets for safety—that's respect.

Mr. Speaker, we've worked closely with municipalities from the day we were elected in 1999. We consult with municipalities; we work with Doug Dobrowolski with regard to the new Building Canada Fund that's going to start next spring. That's respect.

Applied Behaviour Analysis Treatment Access to Treatment

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Over 80 Manitoba families are waiting for access to ABA therapy.

Young Hannah Loeppky lives with autism. Hannah's mom has fought for her to have a place in a world that has not been designed for her, in a world where she has to work hard every day to accomplish the common, ordinary, everyday tasks we all take for granted.

Mr. Speaker, will this Minister of Family Services show some respect to the 80-plus families who were in the gallery last week, seeking this government's support for ABA therapy.

Why will she not support them, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): I thank the member for the question, and I thank her for putting on the record the incredible efforts that parents of children with disabilities make to help their kids have the best life possible. They advocate for those children tirelessly.

I'm always reminded of what one parent said, that the experience of having a child with a disability

means that every day you pray that you live one day longer than your kid, so that you can make sure that they have a good life.

* (14:20)

I will say, on the subject of ABA therapy, we have invested tremendous amounts into that. We are one of the most generous jurisdictions in the country. We do know that there's more work to do, and we continue to work with educators and clinicians and families about how we can continue to make sure we're investing in those services.

Mrs. Rowat: Well, the Minister of Family Services claims that funding for autism outreach workers will address the wait-list, but we know that these workers do not provide ABA therapy for children and autism. She misled Manitoba families.

The minister also has said that there has been difficulty assessing—or accessing trained therapists when, in fact, St. Amant Centre has identified four ABA therapists who are ready to 'roove'—move to Manitoba. Again, misleading Manitoba families.

These are just two examples, and I want to know: Will this minister today take the \$250,000 in vote tax and redirect it to families with autism? I think that would be a respectful thing to do, don't you, Mr. Speaker?

Ms. Howard: I'm looking forward to the day when we can have a broader discussion about autism therapy and treatment. I know that ABA is a very important treatment for many, many families. Not all families choose that kind of treatment. Many other families choose different kinds of treatment for their children who are on the autism spectrum and, certainly, having in place those workers who provide autism treatment, who provide supports to families who live outside the city, that was a commitment that we made and that's a commitment that we've fulfilled. And I think it's very important that families outside the city also have access to autism treatment. There isn't only one kind of treatment available for autism and there isn't only kind of treatment that families choose.

We invest \$30 million a year in supports for children with autism, adults with autism and their families through the family services system, through the education system, through the health-care system. Those are dollars that are going to work for those families, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable minister's time has expired.

Spending Reduction Government Commitment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, we're now in the fourth day of this emergency sitting, and it's even more apparent that the NDP government has created this emergency because it can't manage either the Province or itself. The NDP government has created this crisis in the first place by overspending their expenditure budgets for the last 13 years, and they continued to overspend last year by a hundred and thirty million.

Given the financial crisis that caused the need to force the projected PST increase, the proposed one, I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers): Will he this year commit to reducing this year's core government expenditures to or below his budget of twelve billion, sixty-eight hundred—sixty-eight million, eight hundred and eighty-eight and three thousand dollars?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the commitment of the government is to protect things that matter for Manitobans: core services and health care, education investments, services to children and families, strategic investments in infrastructure, to do it while retaining one of the lowest per capita costs for government services in the country and to do it while retaining the affordability advantage that is so important to the quality of life in Manitoba.

It's a balanced approach, Mr. Speaker, that wants to protect families from floods, ensure children get education, seniors get health care and that people are working and have opportunities to have a future in this province which is part of our skills agenda. That's the commitment we make to Manitobans.

No-Net-Loss-of-Wetlands Policy Government Timeline

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, speaking of emergencies, in 2003 the NDP government said that they would have Lake Winnipeg well on its way to being cleaned up in two to three years. Instead, 10 years later we've an emergency on Lake Winnipeg because it's deteriorated and it is now the most threatened lake on the planet. For 13 years and nine months the government's position has focused on extensive drainage, taking water off the land and this 'extrantisif' drainage has occurred.

I was pleased to hear this morning at the Keeping Water on the Land conference that the government is going to change direction and implement a no-net-loss-of-wetlands policy.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier: When will the no-net-loss-of-wetlands policy be implemented?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, for several years now, we've had a riparian tax credit in place which protects those forests along the edges of waterways, provides support to farmers that take them out of productive use and gives them an income with respect to that. We've had alternative land use planning which provide—demonstrations which provide support to producers to protect the landscape. We've worked closely with Ducks Unlimited and the International Institute for Sustainable Development with respect to cattails projects.

And, yes, Mr. Speaker, there is more that can be done to retain water on the land, which is why we've supported the Nature Conservancy in taking land and putting it aside for the productive use of restoring the soil, keeping the water on the land, providing the native vegetation that's found there.

These are all many things that we've done in the past, and we'll find ways to do even more in the future to protect Lake Winnipeg.

Assiniboine River Basin Government Initiatives

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh) this morning emphasized that his focus was going to be on the Red River Valley. Now, efforts on the Red River Valley are certainly needed, but the large flood emergency in 2011 occurred primarily along the Assiniboine River, and it was emphasized after the minister left the conference that urgent and major attention to the Assiniboine River basin is needed to decrease the likelihood and extent of future flood emergencies on the Assiniboine River, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipeg—and Lake St. Martin.

I ask the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship: What specific actions will he take to ensure that the Assiniboine River basin gets the urgent attention that it needs?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, this is one of the major reasons we're bringing forward the 10-year building and renewal program in Manitoba,

because we do—and the member from River Heights is correct—we do have to invest in our infrastructure that will protect the people from Brandon all the way through the Assiniboine valley, from Portage la Prairie to Winnipeg, up through Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin—we need to invest in the kind of infrastructure that'll allow them the same safety that we provided to the city of Winnipeg and the people in the Red River Valley.

And that will include at looking at how we can retain water on the land and not have it run off too rapidly to exacerbate flooding conditions. That is part of the strategy, as is the channel on Lake St. Martin, as is the new channel out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin, as is strengthening the dike system all along the Assiniboine River, which will keep water in the river but also out of the river.

Smaller Class Size Initiative New and Expanded Classrooms

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be part of a government that has invested in education at historic levels. Upon our election, we restored collective bargaining rights for teachers and began to address the billion-dollar infrastructure deficit left to us by members opposite. In Brandon, we invested in the Brandon School Division and in transforming our post-secondary environment with investments in Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I was in Brandon with the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) making our most recent investment in educational excellence in this province, and I'd ask the minister to inform the House of our work this morning.

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Well, Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be at Meadows School this morning in Brandon to announce our latest investment in our public schools in the province of Manitoba. We announced that we would be investing over \$4 million in Brandon to reduce class sizes. We will be building two new classrooms at Meadows, two new classrooms at Waverly school, and we will be building a gymnasium at George Fitton School and refurbishing the gymnasium at George Fitton School for two new classrooms.

And this is all because we understand how important it is for our youngest learners to have one-on-one time with teachers. And that is because we respect teachers. Yes.

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

Lake Manitoba Outlet Construction

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): Mr. Speaker, the Premier recently said, and I quote: One of the great legacies of any premier in this province was the building of the floodway, including the diversion channel. End quote.

Mr. Speaker, one of the great tragedies under the watch of this Premier was overwhelming that diversion in Lake Manitoba in 2011, and then breaking his promises to the flood victims.

I ask: Why is the Premier showing no respect for the Lake Manitoba flood victims? Why do these victims have to wait seven years for a new outlet out of Lake Manitoba?

*(14:30)

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the inlet and outlet in Lake Manitoba were built during a time when we had a premier that wanted to build flood protection and we've—respect that tradition and followed up on it. But in 1978, under the Conservative government, another outlet could have been bid—built out of Lake Manitoba into Lake St. Martin, and the government of the day turned that down at a time that the estimate of the cost was a million—17 to 18 million dollars, and they refused to do that.

The difference today is we have followed up with an independent review of the 2011 flood, worst ever seen in the Assiniboine valley, and we have committed \$250 million for flood protection for the people of Lake Manitoba and the people of Lake St. Martin, and the member opposite asking the question, and his entire bench with him, all his colleagues, have voted against that.

Mr. Briese: Mr. Speaker, 14 per cent increase in the provincial sales tax, \$275 million per year supposedly for flood mitigation.

Why does this NDP government continue to show such a lack of respect for the Lake Manitoba flood victims? Why are they being forced to live in fear for another seven years?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker in the '11 flood, we spent \$1.25 billion to deal with the issues arising out of that flood, including very significant compensation programs.

The disaster financial assistance guidelines were increased to the highest level ever seen in the province of Manitoba. Additional programs were put in place for producers. Additional programs were put in place funded a hundred per cent by the people of Manitoba through the provincial budget. The federal government didn't want to participate in those programs. We went ahead with it anyway. Members opposite voted against it, and now they want to spend money that they won't support in the budget. That is the definition of hypocrisy.

PST Increase Request to Withdraw

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, Mr. Dave Mouland, a senior on fixed income and a volunteer at Winnipeg Harvest, spoke at the rally for respect. He spoke about the impact on himself and others. He sees every day the impact this government's agenda to increase taxes has. Those on limited and fixed incomes feel the impact of every penny in tax increases, and they deserve to be treated with more respect.

Mr. Speaker, will this government cease and desist in their plan to increase the PST?

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): I can tell you something that we will not do. We will not cut income assistance three times like members opposite did, Mr. Speaker, \$150 per month. They cut \$40 in 1993, \$14 again in 1994, \$95.60 in 1996, an 18 per cent cut in a single year.

And, of course, we could also talk about the child benefit and how they clawed that back, and we gave it back, \$48 million back in the pockets of those who need it the most. That's respect for people on fixed incomes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wishart: Mr. Speaker, if they were really showing respect, they would have increased the housing allowance.

Those on fixed income feel the increase—feel the impact of every increase in costs. This government's tax increase is causing a substantial increase in costs to those on limited and fixed incomes. This government needs to rethink its priorities and stop the tax increase that punished those on limited and fixed incomes.

Mr. Speaker, will they commit today to reversing their plan to increase the PST on the 1st of July and show Manitobans the respect they deserve?

Mr. Bjornson: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a little rich when they never had the housing allowance. Low-income families living in private market rentals receive RentAid of \$2,760 per year, up from \$2,520 a year, and we have come to the table yet again with more improvements to RentAid, an additional \$20 a month for RentAid.

We are investing in education, which is the great equalizer. We are investing in training, which is the great equalizer. We are providing wraparound services for people on employment income assistance so they can get back into the workforce because we have a dynamic economy here that has weathered the economic storm very well, and we want them to participate in the economy like they do, Mr. Speaker, and it's our investments in not only housing but—

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

Bill 6 Amendment Request

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): All across Manitoba, private, faith-based and community-based personal care homes have a record of good will, hard work and success in providing direct care to thousands of individuals each day, but the unproclaimed provisions in Bill 6 disrespect these groups and undermine that goodwill and success by requiring RHA control over the hiring process of senior managers of these facilities.

Stakeholder groups working in co-operation have attempted to sit down with this minister and explain that no jurisdiction in Canada has requirements like this.

I know the minister will be quick to get up and paint everyone with the same brush today, but will she, instead, agree to respectfully listen to these groups and amend her legislation and accommodate their concerns?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question because he well knows that faith-based institutions have been providing excellent health care to all Manitobans for years and years and years, and we want this to continue well into the future.

And to answer his question, I can tell him that when members asked us to—members of the faith-based community asked us to pause and not proclaim all components of the law, we did exactly

that. Since then there has been a preconsultation; there have been a number of discussions and correspondences, ideas brought forward. I can say to the member that certainly we have seen in other jurisdictions in Canada, and regrettably in a few circumstances here in Manitoba, where there have been some liberties taken by some individuals concerning payment to CEOs and so forth. We're investigating and rectifying—

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

Keeyask Community Centre Project Update

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Mr. Speaker, TCN First Nation families and Hydro ratepayers would like to ask the NDP member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) for some respect.

Number 1: How is it that \$125,000 was spent on furniture for a cultural centre that doesn't exist? And No. 2: Where exactly might that furniture be?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, the member's fellow Tea Party member for the Taxpayers Federation laid out a press release yesterday that attacked the—an audit that the federal government is satisfied with, an audit that Hydro said they're satisfied with, but the member chooses to attack the First Nations, and the Leader of the Opposition says that we shouldn't be working with the First Nations in the North. That's not respect. To quote another song of Aretha Franklin, that's a chain of fools.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

I understand that, as I've expressed before in this House, that feelings can run very high on some topics and some issues and I respect that. That's all, in fact, why we come here to represent the business of the people of Manitoba, but I also want to ensure that this is a respectful workplace. And I often said that here, and I'm asking all honourable members here, including the honourable Minister of Innovation, Energy and Mines, to please pick and choose our words very carefully in here. I want to ensure that we have a respectful workplace. I don't want—it's my responsibility to ensure the decorum and the dignity of this House and I want to make sure that I do that job to the best of my ability as well.

Flood Evacuees Return to Community

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): That is a total lack of respect for every member in this House, and I'd like the member to stand and apologize.

Mr. Speaker, two years, 2,000 people still out of their homes. It's time for them to get back to their homes.

Will the minister stand up today and tell us what their plan is to put those 2,000 people back in their homes? Show some respect. Two years; too long.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): I remind the member opposite that what we're dealing with, Lake St. Martin, is the legacy of decades of those communities being at risk in terms of flooding, significant brown water, and, in fact, I'm very proud that we, as a government, during the flood, we took action by—in a matter of months, building the emergency channel that brought down the level of those—of that lake by three feet, brought it down below flood level.

What we've been doing—and I credit our Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) who's been working with the federal government to come up with permanent solutions so that those people have homes they can go back to that aren't subject to flooding. That is respect for First Nations.

* (14:40)

Green Team Projects Funding

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): The Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities has stopped funding new Green Team projects, projects that employ youth to help pay for their school tuition and living costs.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP minister is willing to take 5,000 vote-tax dollars to pay for his political activity but won't create any opportunities for youth in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of youth—Children and Youth Opportunities: Why is he disrespecting the youth of this province by cutting summer jobs?

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I've actually answered this question, pretty much daily. I did it for the member

from Emerson yesterday, and here's what I'll tell—here's what I'll say again, and I'm willing to say it.

The Green Team program's an—a popular, effective program, envy of other provinces. We continue to invest. This year alone, we're investing and touching over 500 organizations for Green Team. It's going to create over 1,000 jobs for young people, one program. They're going to take more money home this summer than they ever have in the past. And, in the last 10 years, it has created over 15,000 jobs, one program for The Green Team. Hasn't been cut, it hasn't been reduced, and you can see all these young—

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

Government Priorities Respect for Democracy

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, we've seen over the last few months how this government utterly disrespects Manitobans. They disrespect flood victims. They disrespect Manitobans who deserve a referendum. They disrespect Manitobans by not telling them the truth in the 2000 election campaign. And who are these Manitobans? Well, they're young people. They're seniors. They're leaders. They're new Canadians. They're business people. They're entrepreneurs. But most importantly, they are Manitobans.

Why won't you do, like we are as Manitoba Progressive Conservatives, say you'll stand with Manitobans and show them some respect, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, because we respect all Manitobans, that's exactly why we brought in Bill 18, the antibullying bill, in this province. And that's exactly why we've strengthened the Human Rights Code. And that's exactly why we've created more jobs, in partnership with communities and businesses, than have ever existed in the province of Manitoba.

And because we know Manitoban is a growing economy with more people coming to live here, more people staying here, in direct contrast to the '90s, when the economy was not growing, people were leaving and no investments were made, we will continue to partner with Manitobans to grow a strong economy for young people and look after our seniors and have respect for diversity. That's what we'll do in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Rally for Respect

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Today, hundreds of Manitobans gathered once again on the steps of the Manitoba Legislature to protest this NDP government's lack of respect for Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, Gary Mercier [*phonetic*] was there representing Manitoba Families for Effective Autism Treatment. He spoke of the NDP's disrespectful treatment of families facing lengthy wait times for treatment for their children.

Mr. Speaker, Kevin Yuill was there representing flood victims who had been disrespected by this NDP government. He spoke of the NDP's broken promise for funding of flood victims.

Mr. Speaker, David Mouland was there from Winnipeg Harvest. He spoke of the negative impact that a PST hike will have on the most vulnerable people in our society and how disrespectful this government is to those Manitobans.

Mike Mason was there from Victoria Beach. He shared his concern for the NDP government's disrespectful behaviour towards municipalities with the introduction of Bill 33.

Taxpayers and families were there to show their disapproval of this government's disrespectful behaviour. They told us they want a say in this NDP PST tax hike. It's their right, but the NDP wants to take that right away. Mr. Speaker, hundreds of other Manitobans more, each with their own personal story.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the people who attended today's rally and spoke out about the disrespectful behaviour of this government. I hope members opposite finally listen to Manitobans and reverse their decision to increase the PST. But, Mr. Speaker, they haven't listened for 13 years, so why would they start now?

National Aboriginal Day

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, June 21st, marks an important day for all people throughout this land, National Aboriginal Day. This is a time of celebration and a time of reflection, of coming together to remember our history and look to our future.

Early tomorrow morning, when we attend sunrise ceremonies like the one in Opaskwayak Cree Nation, we will gather and give thanks for the blessings that we receive every day. We will do our part to make use of the longest day in the year to help and support each other because that is our way. When we support each other, it gives our communities the strength needed to grow and flourish.

Tomorrow is an exciting day in OCN. In addition to the sunrise ceremony, three members of our community, Marie Jebb, Norman Glen Ross and James Smith will be presented with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medals in recognition for the contribution they are making to the growth and development of their community and the region. In the evening we will have our community graduation feast. Together, we will share in the celebration of our students' graduation and encourage all children and youth to continue contributing to the happiness and growth of the community.

National Aboriginal Day provides an opportunity to acknowledge our rich First Nations, Metis and Inuit heritage in Manitoba. Although this is a time of celebration, we must also use this time to reflect on the work that needs to be done to improve the lives of Aboriginal people throughout this province and this country. Together we can make improvements.

We are all treaty people and together on June 21, and every day of the year, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are invited to share in the culture and history of this land we call home. I encourage all members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in some of the many activities that are taking place throughout our province tomorrow and this weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Rally for Respect

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve respect. In fact, this afternoon, we had a number of people outside the building that didn't get the respect that Manitobans deserve. We saw the government first-hand ignore flood victims time and time again. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) went out two years ago, made commitments of fair and fast compensation.

We had many people there outside in the rally, saying this minister and this government has not owned up to their commitments. We had people

there in regards to the PST, saying, we want a voice; we want the respect of the government, to be able to say, we have a choice. We want to be able to have a referendum. We want our voice heard.

What we've heard very clearly that this government is arrogant enough to believe that they can do what they want, when they want and how they want. It's not true, Mr. Speaker. The people are going to fight back. They're going to make sure their voices is heard.

We saw also this government brought in Bill 33, a bill to force municipalities to be amalgamated without any consultation. They said if they were not going to do it on their own, then the government would come in and do it. They would take their marching marker and they would go and they would highlight where—who was going to go. Again, lack of respect.

We also bill—saw Bill 43 brought in by that minister of lotteries and liquor, and we saw there very clearly they have no respect for the Assiniboia Downs. What they want to do is take the stroke of their marker and get rid of 550 jobs, \$50 million worth of employment and revenue for the province of Manitoba.

We saw Bill 47, the BITSA bill. This is their get-out-of-the-jail card—free, for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers). He thinks he can just take and rip up any agreement that he wants without any consultation. It's disrespectful. It's unacceptable. We challenge the government. Do the right thing. Call a referendum. Let's get rid of this nonsense once and for all and respect Manitobans.

South Osborne Arts Group Spring Open Studio Tour

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Mr. Speaker, the south Osborne in Fort Garry-Riverview is unique, vibrant community full of strong schools, incredible community clubs, fabulous restaurants, wonderful recreational amenities and very progressive residents who work extraordinarily hard to make our neighbourhood strong, safe and sustainable.

This past Mother's Day, our beautiful neighbourhood was on display, as were the artistic skills, abilities and sensibilities of several of our residents when the South Osborne Arts Group celebrated the long-awaited coming of spring by holding its second spring open studio tour. Ten brilliant local artists in the south Osborne area

opened their workspaces, giving area residents and visitors alike an opportunity to see a working artist studio and chat about their work.

* (14:50)

The weekend was a great success. Hundreds of people came out to visit the studios, view incredible art work and learn about pottery, photography, paintings, sculpture, drawing, glasswork, jewellery, and much, much more.

My wife, Susan, and I had the chance to bike through the neighbourhood to visit many of the home studios, and we were delighted by the warm reception we received and their incredible works of arts we saw.

Mr. Speaker, neighbourhoods thrive when local residents are dedicated to making it a vital lively community. I want to thank the South Osborne Arts Group, Colleen Chamberlin, Steve Jorgenson, Tom Roberts, Lesly Dawyduk, Joan Kakoske, Dave Maddocks, Judy Jennings, Helen Lyons, Pam Rayner-Moore and Reymond Pagé for bringing the arts to life in our neighbourhood and for contributing to the vitality of the south Osborne community.

Thank you.

Pingalwara Hospice (India)

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year I was fortunate to join the Premier (Mr. Selinger) and the members for Radisson and The Maples on a trade mission to India. There, we had the opportunity to visit the Pingalwara hospice in Amritsar.

Pingalwara is an incredible charitable organization that cares for some of the most disadvantaged people in India. Located in Amritsar, this institution was founded in 1947 by one man, Bhagat Puran Singh, to support the poor, elderly and sick. Bhagat Puran Singh began his social and humanitarian activities as a teenager in 1924. Until his passing, he was dedicated to tending to those who could not care for themselves and inspired others to follow suit. Today Pingalwara continues to provide essential services to those in need.

When we arrived at Pingalwara, we were received by President Dr. Inderjit Kaur, Administrator Colonel Darshan Singh Bawa and many others. They showed us their facilities and explained the history and philosophy of Bhagat Puran Singh and the Pingalwara Society.

Pingalwara has facilities for over a thousand patients who are provided housing, food, medical care, vocational training and education. Trained nurses, doctors, pharmacists and lab technicians help many patients to make full recoveries and reunite them with their families.

The free services that Pingalwara offers are made possibly sole—possible solely through the donations of people across India and the world. Manitobans value the work of Pingalwara, and during our visit the Premier announced a \$50,000 donation to Pingalwara through the Manitoba Council for International Co-operation and the Manitoba matching grant funding program. Gurdwaras throughout Canada also raise funds and keep donation boxes. With us today we have guests from two of these gurdwaras in my neighbourhood, Khalsa Diwan Society and Guru Nanak Darbar, as well as other gurdwaras in Winnipeg. Thank you for your dedication to this important work.

Pingalwara operates on the belief that all things are possible through love and compassion. The hospice exemplifies the philosophy of Bhagat Puran Singh that: a nation's strength is not found in its treasury statement. It lies instead in the character of its people, in their willingness to sacrifice leisure, comfort and a share of their talents for the welfare of their nation.

As such, I declare Pingalwara an inspiration to Manitoba, India and to communities across the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. No grievances—

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I wonder if you'd canvass the House to see if there's leave for a brief recess to allow for House leaders to confer on House business. I would ask for 20 minutes.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow for a brief recess of up to 20 minutes, to allow the House leaders to confer on House business?
[Agreed]

We will now recess for 20 minutes and we'll ring the bells for one minute to remind members to return to the Chamber.

The House recessed at 2:54 p.m.

The House resumed at 3:21 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Call the House back into session.

Ms. Howard: Yes, would you resume debate on Bill 20, please.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Mr. Speaker: Now resume debate on Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended), standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach who has unlimited time.

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, pleasure to again continue the debate on Bill 20, and yesterday, when I was speaking on the bill, there was a number of areas that I was able to cover in the time that I had, including the issue of prebudget consultations and the reason that we brought forward a reasoned amendment, and the reason that we believed that this government wasn't transparent, wasn't fully transparent on the issue of the PST tax increase.

I talked a bit about the hoist motion, Mr. Speaker, that we brought forward and how, in fact, the government had not accepted the offer. And I thought it was a generous offer, to allow them to consider for six more months the issue of the PST increase. I talked about the many people who had signed up for committee and the concern that we had that the government would not respect them by driving them through the night. And you know, I've been asking questions about that for more than a month, about my concern, not just on this bill but on other bills before this House, that members of the public would be forced to sit through the night.

As the rules allow, I understand that, Mr. Speaker, on the third night of sitting, that the government can, essentially, with the majority of their committee, force people through the night and, ultimately, in a way, have closure on that committee. And I found that to be disrespectful, and that was one of the concerns that I raised. And we had,

unfortunately, some public negotiations around that issue, but in some ways I think it's also helpful when you bring some of these issues and you discuss them in the public because it often results in people understanding the political process better. And I think all of us want that. All of us want to see a better understanding.

But I continue to have the concern about Manitobans who've signed up to present to Bill 20 and other bills, Mr. Speaker, that they'll be forced to go through the night, that they'll be forced to sit through the night. And it's disrespectful. And we had a bit of a theme going this morning, or this question period, about respect and about how it's important to respect Manitobans. And I've always found it's disrespectful to have Manitobans come and asked to present at 3 in the morning or 4 in the morning.

And I understand this is an entirely a partisan issue. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that at different times under different governments, they—maybe the situations were less than ideal on different committees. And it's certainly been the case, I know, with the bill regarding the pork moratorium—was less than ideal here, as well, with this government. It's not how Manitobans should have been treated. We saw people presenting through the night. Government members were hardly awake. It's probably difficult for all members to stay awake during that time. And members of the public wondered why it was that they were there presenting at that hour to a committee that was hardly awake, that was hardly attentive at that particular time. And it showed disrespect.

And I know the previous speaker and others, when we had discussions around that particular debate on that particular bill and how committees were run, that all of us, I think, agreed that it was not ideal. That it wasn't done well and it's one of the reasons that we proposed to this government on this bill and other bills that have drawn significant interest in the Legislature here, that we have a structured system. And I would like to see that sort of as a go-forward thing, but, certainly, in the interim that we have a structured system so that when people are coming, it's not just for two nights 'til midnight and then the third night they go through the night and ram through 'til 9 or 10 in the morning. That's not respectful. There are better ways, I'm sure, to do it in the modern world, in a world that we rely on technology for everything. I look around and I see technology, and yet we still have a system in our

committee system where people are going through the night.

Now, I understand, Mr. Speaker, and the government has indicated that, well, this system is a better system than they have in many legislatures, that it's—at least people can come, and I don't disagree with that. I think it's important that people have the opportunity, the average citizens, not just experts, because some of the best advice that I've ever gotten both personally and professionally are for people who are not experts. And so I think it's important that we have that system, and I don't disagree with the government that it's important. But it diminishes the system when we go through the night. It diminishes the system when you say to people, we want to hear from you, but we want to hear from you at a time that isn't respectful. We want to hear from you at a time that isn't appropriate. That is concerning and I don't think it should just be concerning to me or to opposition members. It should be concerning to all Manitobans. All Manitobans should be concerned about that and all members because collectively we have an interest in how this committee system works.

So I want to emphasize it's one of the reasons right from the beginning of this debate we put a high priority on that. We put a high priority, saying this bill shouldn't proceed to committee or other bills shouldn't proceed to committee that have a high number of presenters until there is some agreement in terms of how those committees will be run and how those committees will be operated. It was important to us to see that and, ultimately, we still await a resolution on that about whether we can ensure that there is a committee system that will be run appropriately. We know, ultimately, at some point that these bills will go to committee. We understand that, Mr. Speaker. But they have to go in an appropriate way. They have to go in a fashion that is respectful for Manitobans.

And on Bill 20 in particular, it was the Premier (Mr. Selinger), of course, himself, who invited Manitobans, invited them to come and sign up. Now, he may have felt that because he took away the referendum that he was somewhat obligated, that it was somewhat beholden upon him to call for the committee and to ask people to come and present at that committee. I don't know all of his motivations in particular about why he decided to put out the plea for people to sign up for committee. But at the time that he did that he should've known. He should've understood that, in fact, this is something that should

be done in a respectful way, that makes sense for Manitobans, that makes sense for those people who are at the committee.

And that continues to be a high priority for this caucus, not just on this bill or other bills that are before the House today, but a high priority for the future for bills that might come forward at a different time for committee. So I certainly hope that the government will listen to that, will take action on those recommendations because we think it's important. We think it's very important.

Now, I had other discussions yesterday in my comments regarding the hoist motion that was brought forward to the Legislature that the government ultimately defeated—and, I think, unwisely—about how we, in fact, were more than willing to allow them the time, a time out, to hit the pause button, to go and confer with Manitobans, whether that would be Manitobans within their own community, whether that'd be Manitobans at festivals in different communities that they were not in, that they don't represent. But, ultimately, to talk to Manitobans because that's what the opportunity would've allowed them to do. It would've allowed them—it's not as good as a referendum, as I mentioned yesterday, but it's better than what they were offering. It would certainly give them an opportunity to speak to Manitobans more directly.

* (15:30)

I also had the opportunity yesterday, Mr. Speaker, and I'll move on to a more fresh material because I know you're waiting for that, but I want to review for members who maybe forgot or weren't able to hear the comments yesterday, some of that, and I have the opportunity—*[interjection]*—and the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) mentions that sometimes repetition is good. I know there's issues around repetition within our rules but there is value in repetition in that it often reinforces a point that it ensures that people who maybe didn't see the selling point the first time understand that the second time that it is of value. But I wanted to simply show a couple of things.

I spoke yesterday about the government's concern or problem about not admitting that they've made a mistake on Bill 20 and had the opportunity to read a few articles—and I've got a couple more I want to reference, Mr. Speaker—about how it's important that government is willing and individuals are willing to admit when they've made a mistake. And I had the opportunity to reference a couple of articles

about how it is that people can become better at admitting mistakes. Now the thesis of one of the articles was, of course, that people benefit by admitting from mistakes. Sometimes there's a feeling, and I think it's often the case for a government that they worry that if they admit a mistake that it's going to be looked at poorly or looked at negatively by the public and so there's a reluctance. There's a reluctance by government members to admit those mistakes.

The theory that was put forward by other authors, Mr. Speaker, on the whole issue of admitting mistakes is that, in fact, it's not always a bad thing. Often those who are affected by the mistake will give you credit when you admit that mistake. They will hold you in higher esteem than if you don't admit the mistake. But there were a couple of things that needed to happen first before a person is ready to admit their mistake, and one of them was that they had to admit the mistake first to themselves. And I think that is one of the problems the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has, that he's not willing to admit to himself that this is a mistake, and it's the first hurdle that needs to be overcome. It's the first thing that the government needs to find a way through, that you have to find a way to admit your mistake to yourself and then you can admit that mistake to others.

The second point was, Mr. Speaker, that—to admit your fault to the person who was affected. This is almost confessional, in a way, I suppose, but you have to go out and tell the people who are impacted by your mistake that, in fact, it was a mistake, that it was wrong. And I do think that that is one of the challenges that this government has. They don't want to go to people and to admit that they've made a mistake. They've become, I think, in the time that they've been in government, they've become arrogant. They've become disrespectful to Manitobans. They don't share the same concern for Manitobans than maybe they once purported to do at an earlier time when they were in government.

I remember the former premier, now the ambassador for Canada in the United States in Washington, talking about how they were going to be a government for all the people and perhaps he entered that with the best intentions, Mr. Speaker. I know it's a campaign slogan but perhaps there were stronger intentions at that time by Mr. Doer, but that's not what it's evolved to. It's not what it's evolved to. It's become a government that has very narrow interests, that is not governing for the best

interests of all Manitobans, who refuses to govern for the best interests of all Manitobans, and that's part of the reason I think that they are not willing to admit the mistake on Bill 20. They are not willing to admit to Manitobans that they made that mistake, and clearly in the article that I referenced yesterday, that is one of the key and critical points that has to happen first.

Now the—I didn't get a chance to get to this point yesterday, Mr. Speaker, so this is a new point that I know you'll be waiting for.

In the article, Mr. Speaker, by E.C. LaMeaux, it also indicates that, if you're going to admit a mistake, that you had to say you were sorry and ask for forgiveness. It's an actual expression. It's not enough just to admit the mistake to yourself or to admit the mistake to other people, but you have to actually ask for forgiveness. I will read the quote in the article, and the article is entitled "Becoming better at admitting mistakes", by E.C. LaMeaux. So the third step, where it says, say you are sorry and ask for forgiveness, it says, apologizing is only half of the equation. It is the part that you control. By asking for forgiveness, you're asking the person who was wronged to be an active part of the restoration process. So let me just read that again: Apologizing is only half of the equation. It is the part that you control. By asking for forgiveness, you are inviting the person who was wronged to be an active part of the ration—or the relation—or restoration process.

And so this is something, I think, that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and the Premier (Mr. Selinger) should take to heart when they're thinking about Bill 20, Mr. Speaker, that it's not enough to admit the mistake to yourself, and they haven't sort of gotten past that hurdle, that initial step. It's not enough to admit the fault to the person, to the public, to Manitobans about Bill 20, but they would have to go one step further and ask for forgiveness. And I do think that that, in fact, is important, to ask for forgiveness. And I hope that the government, as they think about this bill and the problems that they've gotten themselves into with this bill, will consider asking for forgiveness of Manitobans. And I think that they would find that Manitobans are actually very willing to forgive. They are willing to acknowledge when somebody has made a mistake and look for an act of forgiveness. When they see that true contrition, and I don't know that they always see that—I don't know that they always see that act of contrition from the government.

Now, the other issue that I raised yesterday, and it was from the article, The power of admitting mistakes, by Bob Whipple. He indicated that there are a few situations where the admission of a mistake would not produce higher trust. And I think that this is one of the barriers in terms of why the government isn't willing to admit that they've made a mistake. One of the issues is if the blunder was out of sheer stupidity then you might not get higher trust by admitting your mistake, or if it was the third time that the leader had done essentially the same thing that you might not, in fact, get higher trust by admitting the mistake, or if the leader is prone to making mistakes due to shooting before aiming, or if the leader has simply failed to get information that he or she should have had, or if the leader was appeasing higher-ups inappropriately.

And those are the barriers, I think, Mr. Speaker, that the government faces when it comes to admitting a mistake. It's one of the things that stops them from acknowledging that what they were—are doing on Bill 20 is simply wrong, both by increasing the provincial sales tax from 7 to 8 per cent, but going beyond that by taking away the referendum. I think that they should acknowledge that this is a mistake, but that those are the barriers they face, because it's not the first time that they've done this. It's not the first time that they've said something to Manitobans and then didn't follow through. And so, in fact, they may not receive higher esteem as the result of this. It is not likely that Manitobans would hold them in greater trust because they've done it so often to Manitobans that it wouldn't necessarily seem like something that they've learned from. It might actually seem to them that it's a pattern, that it's repeat behaviour. In a different context, we might say they were repeat offenders, that they continue to do the same thing over and over, and the term repeat offenders might be particularly sensitive for the Minister of Finance and member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau) these days because it has legal connotations that they might at some point face down the road.

Now, there is another article that I didn't get the chance to reference yesterday. It's by Amy Rees Anderson, a fairly recent article, it was published on May 7th of this year, Mr. Speaker. I think it was published in The Globe and Mail, and I want to give due credit to the publishing authorities who published this article and the author who penned it. Amy Rees Anderson wrote an article that said: Admitting you were wrong doesn't make you weak—

it makes you awesome. That is what the article says: doesn't make you weak.

* (15:40)

And I do hope that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) is paying especial attention because we're all still waiting for that apology that he offered on taking the Jets tickets, Mr. Speaker, from the Crown corporation. It was actually a promise made by the Premier (Mr. Selinger) that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and the Minister responsible for Hydro would be issuing an apology to this House. Now, I know sometimes it takes a long time to get around to things in the House. The Minister of Finance has already acknowledged that he misled the House. But we haven't heard the apology yet from the member for Kildonan.

Now, he's a busy guy, so he might be—he might still be working up that apology, Mr. Speaker. He might be sending it through the 12 lawyers that are employed by the Minister of Finance, legalizing it. There's 192 communicators that have to look at it. But it was his Premier who said that he would apologize, so I hope that these comments from this article are helpful to him as he looks for the apology for taking the tickets.

Anyway, the article says, and I'll just quote a little bit, Mr. Speaker, and then I want to expand on it. It says, I deal with people who believe that admitting that they were wrong shows weakness or ineptness. The danger of that belief, especially when it is held by people in positions of power or authority, is that it backs a leader into defending poor choices, even when they themselves have come to recognize they are wrong.

But it's as though this article was written particularly for the Minister of Finance and the Premier, Mr. Speaker. The article, admitting you were wrong doesn't make it weak—make you weak, it makes you awesome, by Amy Rees Anderson, I'll read that quote again: "I deal with people who believe that admitting they were wrong shows weakness or ineptness. The danger of that belief, especially when it is held by people in positions of power or authority, is that it backs a leader into defending their poor choices even when they themselves have come to recognize they were wrong."

Now, that holds out the hope and possibility, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier and the Minister of Finance have already come to realize that they are wrong on

Bill 20. It holds out the possibility that they understand that they were wrong on Bill 20. But they've backed themselves into a corner. They are now forced to defend poor choices because they believe that admitting that they are wrong will show weakness or ineptness.

And that is kind of the hurdle that we face now with Bill 20. We find a Premier who is—clearly was wrong, Mr. Speaker, who I think maybe even understands that he was wrong, but he feels that it's going to be a sign of ineptness if he admits that he was wrong.

Now, there are certainly other areas one could find the Premier to be inept in, Mr. Speaker. We talked about the issue of Crocus and how he misled Manitobans, how he told them that the Crocus was strong, even though there were concerns raised about the valuation of companies that were held within the Crocus fund. He essentially encouraged Manitobans to hold those funds or to buy those funds through his suggestion that the fund was strong. He changed legislation to allow for rolling over and reinvesting in the fund as a way to try to mask the fact that there were problems and concerns with the Crocus Investment Fund. So he has shown ineptness already. We know that, and that's already on the record.

But the danger in this particular case is that he's defending a choice, a decision that is wrong, because he thinks that it's going to harm him by admitting that he was making a mistake.

Now, it is certainly possible, Mr. Speaker, that if the Premier were to come out today and acknowledge that Bill 20 is, in fact, a mistake, is, in fact, a problem, that there are many Manitobans who might see him as inept. I suspect many of those Manitobans already see him as inept. It might not add to the numbers. It might just confirm it in the minds and hearts of those who already hold that belief. But it would still be the right thing to do. It would still be the right thing for him to come forward and acknowledge that having a PST tax increase is the wrong thing to do, that taking away the referendum is the wrong thing for Manitobans. It would give him that opportunity to acknowledge to Manitobans that this is a problem.

The article, Mr. Speaker, goes on to suggest a few other things. It indicates in the article that in their minds—this would be the leaders that the author is referring to—in their minds they see this as a way to save face or prove they are deserving of their power or retain respect for their intelligence. Sadly, they

don't accomplish any of those things. In fact, they accomplish the exact opposite.

Let me read that again, Mr. Speaker.

An Honourable Member: No, I want to hear it again, please.

Mr. Goertzen: I—and I appreciate the member for St. Paul (Mr. Schuler) who is particularly engaged in this discussion. He himself, you know, being a former business leader in our province, Mr. Speaker, I think he understands the power of admitting mistakes, having employed individuals. He himself would know that people often respect you more if you tell them when something has gone wrong or if you've done something wrong.

So, again, the quote says, in their minds—the leaders who've made a mistake—they see this as a way to save face or prove they are deserving of their power or retain respect for their intelligence. Sadly, they don't accomplish any of those things. In fact, they accomplish the exact opposite.

And what we're trying to do for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), for the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), for the Premier (Mr. Selinger), is to give them an opportunity. They may believe they're saving face by not admitting that they are wrong on Bill 20. They may believe that they are saving face by defending the decision to take away the referendum. They may believe, Mr. Speaker, that that is what they're doing. But I would subscribe to the theory of this author, the author who wrote the article for *The Globe and Mail*, that, in fact, they accomplish the exact opposite.

Now, we've seen Manitobans numbering in the hundreds, Mr. Speaker, who not only have signed up for a committee, who are being threatened to be jammed through the night in an archaic and unfair committee system, but we've seen Manitobans who have come to the Legislature, to the front steps of the Legislature, to the people's House, to try to get this government to admit that they've made a mistake.

And I think in the early days of this debate—and I think we've been debating this bill now for 50 or so days in the House. It probably seems like less time for some and more time for others. I'm not sure which side of the equation you'd fall on, Mr. Speaker. But I think that for those who came to the Legislature, both today and in rallies past, that they would have given some credit to the Premier and to the Minister of Finance had they come out and said clearly that they made a mistake, that they were

wrong and that they were sorry for not only bringing in a bill that would increase the provincial sales tax, but also bringing in legislation to do away with the referendum. It certainly would have taken a lot of the legal haze on this issue away.

And we know that this government is on extremely soft legal ground when it comes to this particular bill, not only by implementing the PST before the July 1st date, Mr. Speaker, or—sorry—implementing it prior to the bill passing on the July 1st date, but also by the mere fact that they introduced the bill without first dealing with the issue of the referendum, because the current balanced budget law that stands in the province of Manitoba—indicates clearly that before a government can even introduce a bill that says that they can increase the provincial sales tax, that there needs to be the referendum or, I suppose, that referendum requirement could be removed. But what the government has done—and I wouldn't recommend the removal of it, but, I mean, there are, certainly—it would be more legal for the government to of—have two different bills. Had they brought in legislation first that would have dealt with the issue of removing the referendum, we wouldn't have supported that; we would have opposed that and would have voted against that. But had they done that prior to bringing in a bill on the increase of the PST, well, that would be a different debate.

* (15:50)

But they decided to put it all into one bill. They decided to move the two things and marry the two things together. And I wonder why that is, Mr. Speaker. Now, I have my own theories in terms of why that would be. And I think they simply didn't want a fight on two separate bills.

They knew that they would be getting strong resistance from Conservatives who would be standing with and standing up for Manitobans, on the one bill as it is—stands today. And they made the calculation that, better to have the resistance all flow on one bill than to have it spread out over two bills. Because then, we might be sitting here 'til November. Well, look what they've done. We might still be sitting here 'til November, Mr. Speaker, because this government hasn't been able to provide any rationale that makes sense to Manitobans in terms of why they need to have a PST increase.

There hasn't been any proper rationale, Mr. Speaker, in terms of why they need to do away with a referendum requirement. It doesn't make any sense.

It doesn't make any sense for Manitobans. And when I look back at the article, about how, in fact, it accomplishes the opposite, by not admitting a mistake, I would hope that the government would come to a better understanding, a better understanding of what it is that they've done, that they would decide to take the time as a caucus and as a Cabinet to change their minds.

Now, at some point, we're going to hear from Manitobans on this bill. There are 200-and-some Manitobans already registered to speak; I think 210 or so. And they are going to have to be the ones to try to convince the government to change their mind. They are going to get their opportunity, Mr. Speaker. We've done, I think, almost everything that is possible on second reading of a bill, and we still have third reading and other things to come. But I think that we've done everything possible on second reading, to try to get the government to change their mind.

And I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, the various things that have happened: the reasoned amendment, which is not unprecedented but certainly highly unusual in the Manitoba Legislature and legislatures across Canada; the hoist motion, which, combined with the reasoned amendment is a very unusual thing, rarely done, I think, in the parliamentary system that we operate under here in Manitoba; having virtually all of our members speak to these issues, often at length, I would say, to give the government an opportunity to change their mind, to give the government an opportunity to acknowledge that what they were doing was wrong.

That's an exceptional measure. That is not something that happens often. It's not something that happens easily. It's not something that happens without a great deal of thought. And, certainly, we put a lot of thought into that, Mr. Speaker. And we thought it was right to stand up for Manitobans. We thought it was right to stand up for the people who were emailing us, who were calling, who were saying that this is the wrong decision. And we still feel that way. We still feel strongly for those Manitobans, and many of them are going to have the opportunity to speak directly now to their government.

We hope the Premier (Mr. Selinger) will attend all of the committee hearings, whenever they're held, Mr. Speaker. We've asked numerous times in this House whether or not he would be attending the committee hearings. We have not got a firm answer

from him, even though it was the Premier himself who invited Manitobans to come to this committee. We've not gotten a firm answer from him. We've not heard a—firmly from a number of the members opposite, whether or not they are going to come and hear those Manitobans who are concerned about this legislation.

We've not heard a commitment from the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson), the Minister of Entrepreneurship, who, of all people, should be interested in coming to a committee to hear Manitobans talk about competitiveness. And there will be people who will come and talk about how Manitoba is less competitive as a result of an increase in the PST. I would hope the member for Gimli would want to hear those presentations.

There will be people who will come to talk about how cross-border shopping will increase as a result of the increase of the PST, and not just cross-border shopping to the United States, Mr. Speaker—

An Honourable Member: I was going to say Alberta.

Mr. Goertzen: —but also to Alberta and to Saskatchewan. And my friend from Arthur-Virden who represents the constituency on the border of Saskatchewan, he knows full well the allure that can happen now because of the disparity between the provincial sales tax between us and our fine friends in Saskatchewan. In fact, we had the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) who was promoting it, who was saying that Manitobans who believe that the lights were brighter in Saskatchewan, well they should head there, they should go there, is what he suggested; they should pack up their cars and their trucks and they should go to Saskatchewan and buy what they need in Saskatchewan. Doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to me, doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.

I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will come as well, and I know he represents a constituency that's along or near the border of Saskatchewan. So he'll hear from his constituents and maybe that's why he suggested that people head off to Saskatchewan, pack up their bags and go to the bright lights of Saskatchewan. That, maybe, is why he made the suggestion because he's hearing from those constituents of his who are along there—*[interjection]*

The member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) mentions that they're even having babies on the highway on the way to Saskatchewan because they're

not able to have them in the medical facilities here in Manitoba. I've heard of cross-border shopping but not cross-border birthing, but that seems to be the case now in Manitoba as people have to head off to Saskatchewan and have their babies on the highway. And certainly I would hope that having a baby in Saskatchewan wouldn't make them a Rider fan, they would still continue to be good Bomber fans as opposed to Roughrider fans; in fact, I think I heard the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) accuse members of this House of being Roughrider fans. If there was ever something that was a matter of privilege that should have been raised, it should have been that. It should have been that as a matter of privilege that he would accuse any members of this House of being Roughrider fans. But maybe we'll save that for another time, but there probably is no greater case for a matter of privilege than accusing people of being Roughrider fans.

I want to refer back to the article because I got a little off track, the article, Admitting you were wrong doesn't make you weak, by Amy Rees Anderson in The Globe and Mail edition, this year, May 7th, 2013. She also writes that if you want to be genuinely successful both—in both business and life, we have to be willing to set aside our pride, our fears and our insecurities and really come to recognize that to be a true leader that is deserving of their position of authority, we must earn, not demand, that respect. The journey towards earning the respect begins the moment we recognize our mistakes and have the integrity and fortitude to utter the words: I was wrong and I am sorry.

Now wouldn't it be something, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier (Mr. Selinger) would stand up some day—and we'd give him leave, I think, even on a day like today. We'd give him leave on this Thursday afternoon; there's still time left in this sitting, and the Premier could rise in his place and he could utter the words: I was wrong and I am sorry. In fact, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who has yet to offer the apology that his Premier promised he'd be bringing, could stand up and say: I was wrong and I am sorry.

And the author says the journey towards earning respect begins the moment that we recognize our mistakes and have the integrity and fortitude to utter the words: I was wrong and I am sorry. Now, perhaps part of the problem is the government simply does lack the integrity, lack the fortitude. The Premier lacks those characteristics, that the Minister

of Finance (Mr. Struthers) lacks those characteristics, and I don't say that easily. It's a difficult thing, I think, to say, but ultimately, I think there's a truth to it, that there is a reality that if you're not willing to stand up and admit that you've made a mistake, that that is certainly part of the problem, that you might not have that integrity, that you might lack the fortitude to stand up and to say I was wrong and I am sorry.

* (16:00)

But we continue to be optimistic, Mr. Speaker. We are not people who have lost hope. We are eternal optimists in the hope that the government will come to realize their mistakes. That they will have the integrity and the fortitude to stand up and say they were wrong.

And the member for Kildonan may set the example, by giving the long-awaited apology that his Premier said that he would be giving. And perhaps with that example, it might encourage the Premier himself to offer an apology. It might be a cascade. We might hear from the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) who slashed the pensions of retired teachers, who hacked and slashed the pensions—

An Honourable Member: Fourteen thousand.

Mr. Goertzen: Fourteen thousand—I'm reminded, Mr. Speaker—retired teachers, who today don't have the promised retirement that they were offered. So we might hear an apology for him.

We might hear an apology from the Attorney General for deleting warrants. I remember the Attorney General when he was at his computer late at night, deleting warrants for people who were dangerous offenders, Mr. Speaker. He might want to apologize for that. It's one of the reasons why we still have such a high crime rate in the province of Manitoba. And I was glad that the police association brought forward that issue, about the minister, or the Attorney General, deleting warrants.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And it's a terrible thing when the police—when the police—have to come forward and cite the Attorney General for deleting warrants, for taking off the record warrants, and the police, I think rightfully, said—

An Honourable Member: And then giving them Slurpees.

Mr. Goertzen: Getting there—rightfully said, how can we do our job if you're deleting the records and the warrants from the computer system? Why is the Attorney General (Mr. Swan) sitting in his office late at night, probably while the committees are going on at 4 in the morning, and deleting warrants from individuals who are dangerous to the community. Why would he do that? But he has an opportunity to apologize, married with the apology from the minister from—or the member for Kildonan, on taking his ill-begotten Jets tickets.

We'd have the apology from the Attorney General, and why the Attorney General? While the Attorney General had the floor, he could apologize for buying Slurpees for high-risk car thieves. I don't know how we managed to—I wondered how it was that we became the Slurpee capital of Canada until I found out that the Attorney General was buying car—or buying car thieves all of these Slurpees. Well, it's hardly a wonder. There are so many car thieves in the province of Manitoba that if you buy every one a Slurpee, you're going to be the Slurpee capital and the car thief capital of Canada. He managed to kill two birds with one stone.

And we didn't hear the apology from the Attorney General. We didn't hear him stand up and say, I'm sorry; I shouldn't have been buying Slurpees and baseball tickets. He was buying baseball tickets for these high-risk car thieves and, again, the police association came out and said, this is ridiculous; it's an affront to our justice system, when the Attorney General shuffles off to 7-Eleven with his Slurpee card and fills up Slurpee cups and hands them off as the kids jump into their stolen vehicles, and drive away—doesn't make any sense, but no apology. No apology from the Attorney General, we never heard that.

An Honourable Member: What about the member for Riel (Ms. Melnick)?

Mr. Goertzen: And so I—well and I'm asked about the member for Riel, and this a serious—it's a serious issue, and I understand that the issue around the death of any child and particularly the tragic case of Phoenix Sinclair, but we've never heard an answer from the government. We've never heard an answer from the government about missing files, and somebody ultimately should take responsibility, because there was information—there was information within there about those—about the actions and what happened within Family Services.

And whether it's the former minister, the member for Riel, or the current minister, the member for Fort Rouge (Ms. Howard), there has to be somebody who stands up and says, I was responsible; I may not—I have to be accountable, because, ultimately, you need to be account—it's what accountability is. And so we could have that apology from her.

We would look for an apology from the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), who blew up a bridge and didn't replace it. Who took out his dynamite sticks and his electric charges, he headed out down Highway No. 75 and put the charges under the bridge and he blew it up, and down went the bridge—down went the bridge. I remember when the former premier, you know, the—this is one time I wish that the minister of diddly-squat would've done diddly-squat, and perhaps—and instead of just blowing up the bridge, found something to replace it with so that the people of the communities affected wouldn't be so inconvenienced.

I remember when the Premier—the former premier, the—now the ambassador, was here and there were questions about bridges going across the floodway, and he said: Well, we have to put bridges across the floodway; otherwise, the cars just go into the floodway. And he was very animated in showing us the cars would go boop, boop, boop, all over the bridge. Well, that's what we have for the minister of Dauphin—the member for Dawson Trail, the car would just go boop, boop, boop, into the river, because he's blowing up the bridge—he's blowing up the bridge.

I might look to my friend—*[interjection]* Orders of the day, I—the kind of things I'm seeing, you'd think that this was the last day of session, and we're months away; I don't understand what's going on in this House. And, you know, we could look for apologies from other members, for the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar). We could certainly ask him for an apology, and I remember I—and I told him—I—could apologize for using displays in the House, first of all. But I was listening to the news a few days ago and I heard on the news, they said that in Selkirk there was a relic that was rusting and they needed to do something about the rustic—the—about this rusting relic, and I said, that's a terrible thing to say about the member for Selkirk. How could the news say that about the member for Selkirk? And then I—it turned out that it was actually a ship that was in a slough and it wasn't actually the member for Selkirk, and so I had to say to my wife I misunderstood.

Now, it turns out that this might not be entirely relevant to the issue of Bill 20, but I want to remind the House—and why I was taking about apologies is that it's difficult for the government to apologize. It's difficult for the government to say they're sorry on Bill 20, and there's a lot of different reasons why they're difficult—because they've made the mistake before; because they maybe don't have the integrity that they need to have. And I could go on with the different apologies but I wouldn't want to be called for relevance, because there is a lot of important things that I want to cover over the time that I have remaining, which is unlimited, so that's a lot of time to cover things.

I wanted to speak a little bit about the balanced budget legislation itself and sort of the history around balanced budget legislation. And I know that the government takes great pleasure in saying negative things about previous governments. They don't want to talk about their own record, they simply want to point back in history and try to find fault with previous regimes. And I think that that's unfortunate, that the government makes a mistake when they do that. But I do know that there are, in fact, many people who look to Manitoba as a leader. That look to Manitoba as a leader when the Manitoba balanced budget debt repayment and taxpayer protection act was brought into the province of Manitoba. And, rightfully so, I would say, because we were, in fact, a leader.

* (16:10)

And you have to remember the times. This was a time in 1990s when the International Monetary Fund, the IMF, was considering coming in and intervening in some of the economic affairs of Canada just simply because of the high debt levels that were being racked up both at the federal and the provincial level, and we had political parties that started—that were really started on the issue of balancing budgets. I know Preston Manning, for example, was one of the early pioneers in talking about balanced budget legislation. He is one of the early people in terms of how do we fight to ensure that balanced budgets happen? And that was at a time in the late '80s and the early '90s when there weren't a lot of governments actually talking about it, that there weren't a lot of governments in Canada talking about the need to balance budgets in their provinces or in Canada. And so it was with great pride, I think, that the government at the time, the government led by Gary Filmon—and there were members in this caucus who were part of that government who took up the

challenge of bringing forward balanced budget legislation. And certainly it was a challenge and it was a difficult challenge, but I believe it was because of the actions of the government of the day that we aren't in the worse economic position as some other provinces and other countries might be because there was action taken by the Filmon government at the time.

And I want to refer to an article that was written in 1996, and it was published in the Canadian Parliamentary Review, an important and esteemed magazine that people in this Chamber are involved with today, those who are involved within our—within the Clerk's office. And I—the Canadian Parliamentary Review, volume 19, No. 2, 1996—and I understand that this isn't the kind of magazine that shows up beside Maclean's on the newsstands and the grocery stores and in the bookstores. It may not be the most well-read magazine in the history of Canada, but it's important and it's some very important information that you often find within the Canadian Parliamentary Review. And I commend those who are involved with it, I do myself read it when it comes across my desk. I often learn things about other jurisdictions, about other parliaments, and I think it's important to learn from others, but also to learn important things from your past.

And there was an article in the Canadian Parliamentary Review, volume 19, and No. 2, published 1996, and it was written by J. Patrick Gannon, who, at the time, I think, was the deputy minister of Finance for the Province of Manitoba. And I want to read some of the excerpts from that, if I could, because it's important, I think, to have a foundation and understanding of the balanced budget legislation and why it was written and how it was written.

It says the 1995 budget was a significant event in Manitoba's financial history. Now, again, this is written by the deputy minister of Finance in 1995, not by a politician. The 1995 budget was a significant event in Manitoba's fiscal history. Not only was it the first balanced budget in many years, but the budget document included draft legislation that would require the government to continue running balanced budgets, pay down the general purpose debt and obtain voter approval before increasing the rates of major taxes. Following public hearings on the legislation, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection Act was passed by the Legislature and received royal assent in November of 1995, an historic occasion for

Manitoba. And I know that there are many provinces who were watching the events in Manitoba of the day; they were watching how things were unfolding in Manitoba. And many provinces actually decided to emulate the legislation or portions of the legislation after it was—received royal assent in November of 1995.

It goes on to talk about how, beginning in the mid-1970s, Canadian governments began to run deficits on a regular basis. Those, of course, were oftentimes when there were Liberal governments in the federal House who perhaps didn't see the long-term damage that running consecutive deficits and accumulating debt would cause to the country.

The article says that a high level of debt accumulated and interest payments became a major expense of the government. The high and rising level of interest payments, governments throughout Canada and elsewhere, have caused them to raise taxes significantly during the 1980s. However, the higher taxes did not fund additional programs. In fact, they were there to fund rising interests.

And that is, I think, a key point here when we talk about the balanced budget legislation and this government's decision to gut a good part of the balanced budget legislation that we have here in the province of Manitoba: That the taxes that continue to go up, they are often there to pay for debt and interest rates.

Now, this government has been very lucky because, on the one hand, while they say they were impacted economically by the events of 2007 and the global financial crisis, in fact, in many ways they benefited because that caused record-low interest rates. And those record-low interest rates have allowed this government to, even though they are continuing to increase the deficit and the debt at high levels, it's allowed them to continue to spend and not have to put as much into interest and debt repayment.

But it hasn't always been that way, and it won't always be that way, because we know that things change, that, ultimately, interest rates will go up. And that's—I know, a caution that's been sent out by the now former governor of the Bank of Canada and by those who are now running the Bank of Canada. They have certainly indicated that the interest rates that we have in Canada now won't be able to stay at the same rate that they are, that these low interest rates, of course, are going to go up.

And I know those who had experience in the early 1980s, often dealing with interest rates that were in the high teens, that many people had a difficult time keeping their homes and the businesses had a hard time continuing to operate because of those very high and often extraordinarily high interest rates, that those were difficult times for governments and for individuals and for businesses.

And this government, because it's nearly doubled the debt of the province of Manitoba, will run into the same problems if interest rates go up in the near future. Just as consumers may not be prepared to pay those higher interest rates, because they may not have any personal history with higher interest rates, they might only know interest rates as being as low as they are today, so too will the government be surprised and shocked if interest rates even go up a small amount. They will be surprised at the impact that it will have on the treasury, on the impact that it'll have on the government.

I hope that they would take that into consideration when they talk about their own fiscal record, when they talk about how they're going to proceed in the future, when they talk about how it is that they intend to deal with financial matters in the future, that interest rates that we enjoy today, at record low rates, are not always going to be that way, and they're not always, I suppose, good in the long run.

There are, of course, questions about inflation and what low inflation does—or, sorry, what high inflation does because of low interest rates. What impact does that have in the long run? And the government needs to consider that and consider the words that were written by the deputy minister of Finance of the day, when he said that there were challenges, there were problems, that rising interest rates caused, and that there needed to be higher taxes, not to bring different programs into place, but there needed to be higher taxes to ensure that the interest on the debt was being paid. And that's a caution—that's a cautionary tale for this government, and I'd say for any government.

Now, it indicates in the article that once governments in Canada found out—once the public debt had risen out of control—

* (16:20)

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable House leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you would canvass the House to see if there's leave to recess for 20 minutes in order for the House leaders to confer on House business.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to recess for 20 minutes for the House leaders to confer on further House business? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are in recess for 20 minutes.

Oh, wait a second.

At the 20-minute mark we will ring the bells for one minute to reconvene.

The House recessed at 4:20 p.m.

The House resumed at 4:48 p.m.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We'll now call the House back into session.

Ms. Howard: Would you canvass the House to see if there's leave to not see the clock until 6 p.m.?

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not see the clock until 6 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Howard: Would you now canvass the House to see if there's leave to recess until 5:30?—*[interjection]*—5:15, until 5:15.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not see the—or into recess the House until 5:15 p.m. and then we'll allow for the one minute ringing of the bells to encourage members to return to the Chamber? Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

This House is now in recess until 5:15 p.m. and we'll ring the bells.

The House recessed at 4:29 p.m.

The House resumed at 5:28 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We'll now call the House back into session.

House Business

Ms. Howard: On House business, could you please canvass the House for unanimous consent to adopt the following agreement?

The government will seek and receive leave on June 20th, 2013, today, to not see the clock until second reading debate on Bill 20 has been completed and the bill has been referred to committee.

Committee hearings for bills 18 and 20 will be structured such that every individual who has registered to present to the standing committee hearing considering this bill, at the time of this agreement, will be told what evening they are scheduled for.

Evening meetings called to hear from these presenters will not hear from more than 30 presenters, unless agreed to by committee with unanimous consent. These specified presenters will be offered the choice of either the appropriate evening meeting, bearing in mind their place on the list, or a Saturday meeting under the terms outlined below. They will also be asked to confirm their presence at the relevant committee hearing within 24 hours or they will be offered the next available slot at a subsequent meeting.

The Saturday committee hearing will begin at 10 a.m. on July 6th to hear from 60 presenters. The committee will not sit past 10 p.m., unless by unanimous consent. Presenters will be scheduled for the Saturday meeting on a first-come, first-served basis.

People who can't make it on their assigned night or who are not present at that meeting will be dropped to the bottom of the list. People who sign up after the time of this agreement will also be added to the bottom of the list.

* (17:30)

Committee hearings, hearing from these presenters, will sit as long as is determined by the committee.

As for the existing House rules, presenters will be able to sign up for committee until midnight on the 3rd evening that the committee meets. The length of time for presentations and questions is unchanged from the existing rules.

As per standard practice, individuals who are notified of the bill's referral to committee may have

their names removed from the list by the Clerk's office, if desired.

Bill 20 will be referred to committee beginning on the evening of June 27th, to hear from up to 30 presenters. There will be no meetings on June 28th, 29th, 30th or July 1st. The next meeting will be on July 2nd. There will evening committees on each week night that week, also all to hear from 30 presenters.

The committee may also, by leave, decide to hear from presenters in addition to those scheduled for that particular meeting.

There will be further meetings on the evenings of July 8th and 9th if necessary.

This is a one-time agreement that sets no precedent for further standing committee meetings called to consider legislation.

The House leaders will agree to put in place a process to examine the current rules of the House and will report to the Speaker on this process.

When the Committee of Supply meets during the week of June 24th to consider departmental Estimates, the House shall sit until 6 p.m. No Committee of Supply meeting will be called for June 28th.

Mr. Speaker: Is there a unanimous consent to adopt the following agreement:

The government will seek and receive leave on June—dispense?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Is there leave of the House and unanimous consent to adopt this agreement? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Ms. Howard: Would you resume debate on Bill 20?

Mr. Speaker: We'll now resume debate on Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended). And I believe before the recess the honourable member for Steinbach had the floor.

Mr. Goertzen: I think—I'm not sure that that sentiment is shared by everyone in the House, Mr. Speaker. I think this is 13th or 14th hour on second reading I've spoken to this bill.

But I want to say that this, I think, an important moment for this Legislature. We have been saying for the last number of weeks that we are very concerned about the hundreds of presenters—I think the 450-or-so presenters who are registered to speak both on Bill 18 and Bill 20, that they would be forced into a process that I think has outlived its usefulness. Not the public presentation portion—that is very useful and I think that is important, Mr. Speaker.

I believe in the system that we have where members of the public can come and can speak to us directly. Because ultimately, Mr. Speaker, I think the best advice that we get is often not from experts but from Manitobans, ordinary Manitobans who bring their life experiences, who bring their own ideas to this Legislature.

But I've never believed—I've never believed since I've been elected in 2003—and I believe my colleagues share this feeling as well, that it's inappropriate to have members of the public come to this Legislature at 2 or 3 or 4 in the morning to make a presentation to committee members on both sides of the House who are not at their best, when they're not fully alert and fully attentive as we might otherwise be, Mr. Speaker. And I've heard those concerns expressed on various committees that we've had in the Legislature.

And so for the past number of weeks, we have been raising in question period, in the media and in the public offers that we've made to the government in the past, that we wanted a structured committee so that people would have certainty about when they would present and that it would be respectful and dignified, Mr. Speaker.

And I believe that we have achieved that, and I will say that that's important for all members. I don't believe that any of us believe that the process before was ideal—it was far from ideal, Mr. Speaker, to have hundreds of Manitobans show up for a committee and not have any idea of whether or not they were going to present.

And so we stood up for Manitobans over the last number of weeks and I was prepared to speak for as long as we needed to, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we all did what was right. And I think we did; I think today we have done what is right for Manitobans.

And my hope is as we see this unique and unprecedented process unfurl over the next few weeks, Mr. Speaker, that we will all see the value of

it, that we will see that we all benefit from it, that we all do better from it.

And so I think that this is important. This is an important time for us as legislators because I think we are doing the right thing. And I'm proud of each of the members of our caucus, Mr. Speaker, all of whom—who've been engaged fully in standing up for Manitobans to try to ensure that they would have a process at committee where they would be rightfully heard. And I do believe it is time to hear from Manitobans. I do believe it is time to hear what they have to say on this issue to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) and to the Premier (Mr. Selinger), and they will come and they will give their opinions and their views.

And I would—the Minister of Health (Ms. Oswald) seems to feel she's left out of this equation—and I would invite her to come to the committee because those—there will be people, I'm sure, from her riding who will be there to express their concern about the PST increase, and she'll be welcomed at that committee if she comes, Mr. Speaker. She'll be particularly welcomed if she comes with a different viewpoint on the PST than the one that she currently holds today as we are in the Legislature.

So this is, I think, a very important step for us, an unprecedented step for us as legislators to take a reasonable process, Mr. Speaker, and I think it actually reflects well on all of us to have done something that is proper and that is just and that is right for Manitobans.

Now, there's another opportunity for the government, Mr. Speaker. Now that some of the right things are being done, they might want to feel there's a bit of momentum and continue to do the right thing. And doing the right thing would be not having a PST increase. Doing the right thing would, at the very least, following the law and calling for that referendum. And perhaps now that we've seen a bit of a breakthrough in things that are the right thing to do, that we will see the government continue to look at doing the right thing, to look now internally for those savings within government. That is, I think, what would be expected from all of us as Manitobans.

And I think that that is something that each of us would do well by, if we would say to our constituents: Mistakes were made by the government. They didn't realize the errors of their ways when they increased the PST; that each of them could stand up and say: We made a mistake by not

following our election promise in 2011. Each of them could stand up and say: I wish—I wish that we hadn't agreed with our caucus or our Cabinet on bringing forward a budget that likely breaks the law and that certainly breaks the trust of Manitobans—that certainly breaks the trust of Manitobans.

And so, perhaps, this new spirit of new way of doing things, Mr. Speaker, that is in this House—and I look forward, and I don't want to diminish the fact that we will have a process—a rules process, that the government House leaders, whoever the House leaders are when the process is under way, to look at how we can do things differently here in this Legislature, because I believe that there are ways that we can do things better, that we can do things more appropriately.

I've seen instances when the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), for example, when he asked for leave to ask questions for the member who brought forward the resolution—I think the member for The Maples (Mr. Saran), I believe it was, who brought forward the resolution on the issue of the spreading of ashes, and he asked leave to ask questions for the member. And, as I said that day, I think the member accorded himself well in answering those questions, and I think it was engaging for all members of the House to have that opportunity. And I've seen that opportunity in other legislatures in Canada and in Parliament, and I think it's both empowering for individual members to be able to speak to their resolutions or the bills that they're bringing forward, to engage with other members, that it's helpful in democracy.

And I think sometimes, too often, we get lost in the politics and the partisanship, Mr. Speaker, of these discussions, and we believe that everything that is being done is being done simply for partisan reasons. And I think this issue that we have been standing up for, for the last number of weeks, for Manitobans on the committee issue, I think transcended politics or it should have transcended politics. It should have transcended partisanship because it is important, I think, to have a respectful and dignified process, for Manitobans to come and to be heard and to listen to the questions from those who might have—members at committee, and to give their presentations in a respectful way.

* (17:40)

But it doesn't change our view on Bill 20. It doesn't change our view on Bill 20 at all. In fact, we're going to have many more hours in this House,

at subsequent readings, Mr. Speaker, to debate Bill 20. I'm—while I regret that I maybe am not able in this particular sitting to give many more hours of explanation, I certainly was prepared to, and I still am prepared to, at subsequent sittings, to continue to show that Bill 20 and the PST increase and the elimination of the referendum is bad for Manitoba, bad for Manitobans.

The committee structure that, I think, that we've achieved is good for Manitobans, but the bill is still bad for Manitobans, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to have plenty of opportunity after we hear from Manitobans, to continue on with that debate here in the Legislature, but I do think that the input of Manitobans might be very helpful, and I think they will have plenty to say in terms of the potential PST increase.

I was disturbed, I think, to hear reports that there are actually some retailers who are already charging 8 per cent. I saw that on the news, Mr. Speaker, and that is particularly disturbing. But it's disturbing that it's going to happen at all. Whether it's a day sooner than the government would want it or whether it happens on July 1st, it simply isn't right. It simply isn't good for Manitobans.

And my hope is that over the weekend that we will have in front of us, that members of the government will take this opportunity to reflect, to stop and to reflect about how it is that they have dealt with this legislation. And remember, Mr. Speaker, this has been a historic debate on second reading. I believe, and I've yet to be contradicted by the fine folks who know more about this than I do in our Clerk's office, that I believe that this is the longest second reading debate in the history of Manitoba. And I think, and I see some furrowed brows on the other side, because there is this lore, this mystical lore, that the MTS debate was somehow longer, and I spent some time showing what a small effort, compared to the effort that this caucus has put up on Bill 20, in comparison to what happened over the MTS debate.

This caucus has engaged in a process to stand up for Manitobans that is unprecedented, I believe, in this Legislature. And by the time this bill is finally approved, it will be even more so, and that history will record that the members of the Conservative caucus used every measure that they could, that they used every procedure that they had in their opposition abilities, to give the government every chance to change their minds. And we did that, and

we do that and we will do that in the days ahead on behalf of Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of them.

While we, in this House, we look at the government on the other side, we in many ways look past the government to Manitobans, and we think of them. We think of the single parents, Mr. Speaker, who have a difficult time making ends meet. We think of those who might be living with a disability or who are having to visit food banks, and I've spoken in this House in the past about my experience as a president of the local food bank in my region in southeastern Manitoba, and I had the opportunity to help found that food bank with many other good people in the community. And I'm sorry to say that it's actually still doing well. When we started up the food bank in Steinbach, it was always our goal that it would close down someday because it wouldn't be needed; it's one of those few enterprises you start up hoping that it'll someday close. But it is still unfortunately needed, and they will be needed more.

I heeded the words of David Northcott from Winnipeg Harvest, who I had the opportunity to work with when I was president of South East Helping Hands, and we appreciated his support in getting the food bank operating in the way that was most efficient for those who needed to use it, Mr. Speaker. But I appreciated the words of David Northcott when he has expressed concerns about the PST increase and the impact that it will have on the clients that he serves at Winnipeg Harvest. And that will be echoed across many different social service organizations. It'll be echoed across the various areas where those who are least able to pay, and who have the hardest ability to pay, will continue to pay, and that that is simply a concern for them. And I echo that concern for them.

And we will continue, in the days ahead and the different readings that we have on this bill after committee, Mr. Speaker, to be the voice for those Manitobans who may not be able to have a voice for themselves, who may not, in fact, be able to, obviously, not be elected at this particular time, or who simply don't have the ability to advocate for themselves. We will be that voice in the days ahead. But we look forward to hearing from Manitobans. We look hear-forward to hearing from the Manitobans.

And I would challenge the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), who I've had the opportunity to speak with on good terms. And, you know, I

appreciate him as an individual. I see him at Bomber games, Mr. Speaker. I guess—I'm not sure if this messes up his plans for the home opener. But I've had the opportunity to see the minister at committee hearings for the pork moratorium. And I was very disappointed that government members at that committee, which was often run through the night—and I'm glad we'll avoid, I think, to a large extent, that experience here—not listen to the members who came.

I think that committee set a record, and it's yet to be seen if other committees will set a record yet, here in the Legislature. But there were some 330 presenters, I believe, or in that range, who came to the Manitoba Legislature to speak about the pork moratorium bill. And what they were greeted with was not only a committee that wasn't run at the right time, and that wasn't run respectfully, I would say, but were greeted with a government that wasn't listening, that wasn't open-minded to change.

And I remember hearing the disappointment, and I don't forget that disappointment, and it's one of the reasons why, Mr. Speaker, we, as a caucus, advocated so strongly for a structured committee system around Bill 18 and around Bill 20, is because we remember what happened with that particular bill. And we heard from individuals who came and they told us how disappointed they were on how that committee functioned. And I remember talking to a number of individuals at the time, and they indicated to me that they thought things would be quite different, that, first of all, they thought that the committees would be run at a respectful time, but secondly, that they believed that the way the government treated them was disrespectful. The government wasn't listening to their concerns, that the government wasn't adhering to the concerns that they were bringing forward.

And almost unanimously, Mr. Speaker, of the—and I believe it was actually 270 or so speakers, I correct myself, presenters—almost unanimously among those presenters, they were opposed to the direction that the government was heading. And yet, they refused to change directions. They weren't listening. They weren't listening to those Manitobans there, and that was certainly concerning.

And so I hope that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) will take a different approach than he took as the Minister of Agriculture. I hope that he'll go engaged and he'll listen to the presenters, that he'll go with an open mind, that he'll ensure that he is being

respectful to those who are coming here to listen to those committee hearings, Mr. Speaker. I hope that that will be his attitude, and that he will take that attitude with—to his caucus as well, and that he will ask the members of his caucus to have that same attitude, because it's not just enough to change how the committees are run. That is a significant and important step, Mr. Speaker, and I don't want to diminish that. But, without a government that is willing to be respectful, to listen respectfully, to ask questions respectfully, then not much changes, then there hasn't been as much progress as we would like.

The progress that has been made in terms of the structured committee system will work much better for those Manitobans who are here to present, but they will be hopeful for a government that is equally respectful as the process is now becoming. And we hope that that will be the attitude of the government.

* (17:50)

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, in the comments that I've made—and I won't be able to go through all the material during this reading that I would have liked to have gone through; I spent a good deal of time doing a fair bit of research—but I do want to talk a little bit about how important I believe it is that the government consider referendums, that the government look to referendums as an appropriate way to get public input.

And there is, in fact, a great deal of research that is available on the issues of referendums. In fact, when you look at the United States, that is one of the countries that has some of the earliest experiences with referendums. It was Thomas Jefferson, I believe, who was the first of the Founding Fathers to propose legislative referendums, Mr. Speaker, and most of the issues around referendums in the early days of the United States and in the early days of Canada focused around constitutional issues or prohibition.

That seems to have been a common reason for referendums. But we would see that even in the earliest days in the United States, in 1778, the first state to hold a state-wide referendum for its citizens was Massachusetts.

And so it's not as though referendums are new or things that haven't been tried, Mr. Speaker, far from that. Today in the United States, every state has a referendum process, and they're well tested and well applied. Some of them only apply to constitutional issues in the United States, and some of them can be

more broad than that. Manitoba has experience with referendum as well, and I'll touch on that either today or in another reading.

So it's not as though this is something unique, and I want to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that the issue of referendums isn't about replacing representative democracy or representative government. We in the British parliamentary system, of course, feel very strongly about representative government and representative democracy, but referendums enhance that. They don't detract from the democratic process that we have. It doesn't take away power from legislators. In fact, it often provides more power for legislators, because it gives them the public approval on certain difficult decisions, and it should be considered to be empowering. And I would hope that the government would consider it that way.

The Swiss government, Mr. Speaker, is probably the heart of referendums. They have referendums on many different issues, and I—they have many different referendums in a year. And that's not necessarily what I'm proposing. I do believe there is a place for a referendum but that not every place is a place for referendum. But I do think that it certainly does have its place, and when you look at the Swiss experience, there are some positive experiences.

I was reading an article that was contained in one of the—I think it was the Toronto Star, Mr. Speaker, and they were talking about the Swiss experience. And they noted that in Switzerland, which they refer to as the world capital for referendums, between 1960 and 2003 there were 321 referendums. Certainly, compared to Canada where there's been three referendums in our history on constitutional issues, on conscription for wartime, that it's quite different. It's a different experience.

And I know that in the Swiss experience, every law that's passed by their parliament that affects a constitution must go to a referendum, and laws not affecting the constitution can still be sent to a referendum if 50,000 people in the country of Switzerland ask for it.

Now, that's not obviously what we would consider to be our system or desirable necessarily in our system, but we do know, Mr. Speaker, that it does, within certain countries—and that's been the Swiss experience—not detract from the democratic system, but in fact it engages citizens. It engages citizens in a way that they might not otherwise be engaged.

We know when we look at the history of Canada, of course, there's, I mentioned earlier on, that there have been three Canada-wide referendums. In 1898, there was a referendum on prohibition and many of the provinces held several different referendums on prohibitions in the early days, Mr. Speaker; in fact, probably a half of the referendums in Canada or the provinces can somehow relate to alcohol or the use of alcohol. But that was one of the earliest national referendums that we have had in Canada but there are others, of course; in 1942, as I mentioned, in terms of conscription into the army, you know, in relation to the war, and then the 1992 Charlottetown Accord, of course.

And while some might look at the Charlottetown Accord which is more close in the memory of the majority of Manitobans is—or of—and Canadians, Mr. Speaker, as being somewhat divisive, it was also very engaging. It was also a time when you had Canadians who often didn't talk about the Constitution or the Charter suddenly find new interest in that. And so, there can be great benefit, indeed, from looking at a referendum. In fact, in the referendum on the Charlottetown Accord in 1992, on October 26th of that year, 75 per cent of eligible voters actually went to the polls.

We would all be envious, I think, or many would be envious these days, of that sort of turnout, where we struggle often in elections these days to achieve 50 per cent turnout, Mr. Speaker, that we feel that that's become almost the new benchmark and that's unfortunate and it doesn't speak well of our democratic system but it speaks to the frustration that people have, that they don't feel that they always have a voice in our democracy or in our democratic system. And so the Charlottetown Accord and that referendum in relation to the Charlottetown Accord showed something very specific, very unique in Manitoba and in Canada. It showed that Canadians were not only willing to engage in a debate around issues that they might not otherwise be engaged in, but they were actually eager in many ways to be involved in that debate.

And I would think that, in this particular instance, if there was a referendum on the PST, that we would achieve a similar turnout. I believe that there would be many people who would be interested in having a debate on the PST and the potential increase in that. I think that it would engage Manitobans in electoral way that they've not been engaged in, Mr. Speaker, in some time. And I do think that is something that all members in this

Chamber should think about. We often talk about how can we get more people involved in the democratic process, how can we get more people involved in our democracy. Well, this would certainly be one way. You wouldn't want to necessarily call a referendum simply for that purpose but if the law already requires it, as the law the does in Manitoba, it's certainly a benefit.

It's certainly a benefit to have Manitobans talking about issues. It would get them talking about tax policy. It would get them talking about how money is spent within the government, Mr. Speaker. So there's lots of good benefits that would come from the government but this is a government that only looks at the costs. They only look at the political cost. They only look at the cost in terms of money and how much money it costs to run a referendum. But the benefit of democracy is lost on them and they don't consider the benefit of democracy in the way that they should and I would certainly encourage them to reconsider their views on democracy.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that when you look at different people who have spoken about referendums, even those who don't necessarily follow our political persuasion—Seth Klein, who's the director of the BC office of the left-leaning Centre for Policy Alternatives, and I use the word left-leaning, I'm now quoting from the Vancouver Sun. I'm not suggesting their partisanship, but the Vancouver Sun indicates that the director, Seth Klein, the director of the BC office and left-leaning Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, he indicates that there are many—there may be occasions for referendum, perhaps when government wants to do something significant that it didn't campaign on. I mean, that's his quote from the Vancouver Sun. He says that there are occasions for the use of referendums, perhaps when a government wants to do something significant that it didn't campaign on, and that falls squarely into the debate that we're having here on Bill 20.

* (18:00)

We clearly have a situation where the government did not campaign on this particular issue of the PST tax increase, Mr. Speaker. In fact, they campaigned the opposite. They said exactly the opposite. They not only didn't campaign on increasing the PST, they made a promise to Manitobans that they wouldn't increase the PST. A promise was made in the 2011 campaign.

And so, according to Seth Klein, the director of the BC office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, this is exactly this kind of situation that one should look for, for a referendum. It's significant. I certainly think everybody in the House, even the government members would agree, that it's significant when the PST is increased. They would agree that it is something that is important, that is happening, and it's something that the government didn't campaign on.

So I would certainly hope that they would look, Mr. Speaker, for reasons to bring this to a referendum. That they could see that not only would it engage Manitobans in a way that hasn't always been engaged in the past, but it would be something that would be of benefit for them as well.

In Manitoba, it's not unusual at all to have referendums contained within legislation. I know that, either currently or in the past, there's been a referendum criteria of some form or the other contained, of course, in the bill that is impacted by Bill 20: The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act. There are referendum contained within the legislation on local authorities election act. There is referendum contained in The Municipal Act. There is referendum contained in The Municipal Board Act, The Public Utilities Board Act, The Liquor Control Act, The Public Schools Act, and the Lord days act.

So, I mean, over time, there's been many times, I think, Mr. Speaker, where you had legislation in Manitoba that has allowed for referendums. And so it's not as though the concept itself is foreign, although it might seem foreign to this government, that the only thing that they really are resisting is because I think they know what the outcome of the referendum would be. I think they know that if they brought this to the people, that the people would say no, and they're concerned about that. They're concerned about bringing this to Manitobans.

But it certainly would not be the first time that a referendum was brought to Manitoba to allow Manitobans to have their voice heard. The earlier—earliest referendum, according to my research, Mr. Speaker, in Manitoba, was the 1892 referendum on the topic of prohibition. And the question at that time, in 1892 was: Do you support the prohibition of alcoholic beverages?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Goertzen: The—well, we already have people voting. You know, this is exciting, Mr. Speaker. We hear the member for Gimli who wants to vote. He's interested in being involved in a referendum.

An Honourable Member: Brandon East.

Mr. Goertzen: Now this one took place—maybe if—this one took place—oh, I'm sorry. I—it was actually the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) who wants to talk about prohibition, Mr. Speaker, not the member for Gimli.

But the question in 1892 was: Do you support the prohibition of alcoholic beverages? The Brandon—the member for Brandon East would vote no, and he would have been on the losing side in that referendum, because, in fact, it was 637 who said yes and—or, sorry—19,637 who said yes and 7,150 who said no.

In 1902, they also had here in Manitoba a referendum, again, on the topic of prohibition. In 1916, there was another referendum—and this will become a pattern, I think, but the topic was prohibition and temperance. And the question was: Do you support the prohibition of—on sales of alcohol in the province? And voters supported the prohibition in 1916. In 1923, there was a referendum held on June 22nd. Not—I think we passed the anniversary of that, Mr. Speaker, but the topic was again, prohibition, and the question was: Do you support the government-regulated sale of alcohol? And the yes side won in 1923.

We hear a couple of yeas for the yes side on the other side.

On—in 1923, on July 11, there was another referendum not long after the referendum that was held on June 22nd and the topic was again liquor sales, with the question: Do you support the sale of beer and liquor with meals in hotels? And the no side won in 1923.

There is—was a referendum in 1927, in Manitoba, on June 28th, with the topic being beer regulation sales, and for whatever reason I wasn't able to research what the result of that was, but there was certainly a referendum. And we've had referendum on issues related to grain marketing, so it wasn't—in 1952. So it wasn't all about alcohol; there have been other issues that have been brought to the people. I know when I look at Saskatchewan, we have seen them vote on different issues.

Mr. James Allum, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In 1956, people of Saskatchewan voted on the topic of time zones, whether they would be in the standard time or the Mountain Time. And the standard time won with 55 per cent. So they were engaged in that. In 1991, on October 21st, there was a referendum in Saskatchewan on a few different issues related to finances and social issues. So, clearly, it's something that can obviously happen as well in other places.

And Alberta, we've seen referendum held on issues such as daylight savings time and whether or not the province of Alberta would adopt daylight savings time, and in 1971 that was put to a vote in Alberta.

British Columbia, of course, has, I think, probably the most recent history with issues of referendum. They started off back in 1873. Now it's interesting that, in 1873, according to my research, they voted on whether or not they supported an increase in MLA sessional allowances, going back to 1873 in British Columbia.

An Honourable Member: That was the year I was born. I remember that well.

Mr. Goertzen: There were—I'm not sure which way the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) voted on the topic of support for increase in MLA sessional allowances, but she's indicating to me, I didn't indicate that she was involved in that election, but she said that she was, so I offer that for the public record.

But I do know that in British Columbia there are many other votes that took place. In 1948, they voted on the issue of health care. In 1952, they voted on the issue of regulating the sale of liquor. Like other jurisdictions, in 1972, they voted on the issue of time zones, which seems to be a common theme that we see. In 1991, they voted on MLA recall and citizens' initiatives, something that is obviously a very democratic process. In 2005, the British Columbia people, the residents of British Columbia, voted on electoral reform. The question in 2005 was: Should British Columbia change to the BC-STV electoral system as recommended by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform? Forty-two per cent said no and 57 per cent said yes. But it didn't require—it didn't garner the 60 per cent required to pass; it required a super majority to pass, and so it did not pass.

In 2009, again they voted on the issue of electoral reform, and the question being: Which electoral system should British Columbia use to elect

members to the provincial Legislative Assembly? Something that would be of interest, I'm sure, to members of this Assembly. And the question was whether it should be the existing electoral system, the first-past-the-post or the single transferable vote electoral system, the BC-STV proposed by the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. And in that particular result in 2009, Mr. Acting Speaker, 39 per cent voted in favour of the British Columbia single transferable vote electoral system and 60 per cent voted in favour of the first-past-the-post system.

And so you learn many interesting things from the citizens when you go to the citizens. We've often heard people—I'm sure I'm not alone in this experience—you hear people who say that they would like to possibly change the electoral system, how we elect people, either to this Assembly or in Ottawa. And yet we know that it's difficult to judge how Manitobans would feel about that without some sort of a referendum mechanism.

*(18:10)

And so we have had that referendum mechanism by others in other provinces, and we've seen that it yielded results in the fact that we learnt how people felt about these issue. And so I do think it is important—it is important—to look at different ways for how we can look for changes to the electoral system but also to value referendums, to value the value of listening to people, to have them come and speak directly, not on every issue, not every matter that comes before us.

We, of course, are elected to make the vast majority of decisions that'll come before this Legislature. And nobody is suggesting that that would change. But where there are significant issues and where the law requires and that should not—that's no small point: where the law requires we should clearly follow the law. And we should clearly give an opportunity for those who want to have their voice heard where the law requires that they should be heard.

And that is why we as Progressive Conservatives are standing up for Manitobans. That is why we are saying that we are going to continue to speak on this issue and to hope that the government will change their minds.

And we look forward, of course, to the input now of Manitobans. We look forward to hearing what they have to say on this particular issue. And I

hope that the government over the next few weeks, as they listen to Manitobans, will decide that in fact they want to listen to Manitobans as well.

There are a number of different reasons why referendums are often promoted. I had the opportunity, in my spare time, to read a book entitled "Direct Democracy in Canada: The History and Future of Referendums", by Patrick Boyer. And I know that this book has been in circulation for some time, but I think it's still relevant. I think that there is still relevance to the arguments that have put forward by Mr. Boyer, who has himself had experience as an elected official, I believe, at the federal level of government, and perhaps also at the provincial level—but I am certain about the federal level.

And one of the things that he indicated when talking about resolutions in his, or, sorry, talking about referendums in his book is that it takes a bolder act of leadership to divine an issue that is right for resolution, to distill this essence, to articulate that clearly in the public and to ask people to express their wishes; that it actually takes bolder leadership to go to many Manitobans, to ask them to—for their opinions, to express their wishes.

And I think that that's important. It's not a sign of weakness at all, and I know that the government in some of their arguments have said that looking at referendums would be a sign of weakness; that they were elected to make the decision.

But, in fact, one of the arguments that the author of Direct Democracy in Canada makes is that it's quite the opposite: that, as opposed to it being an issue of weakness, that it's actually an issue of strength, that it shows boldness, that it shows that you're not insecure in some ways, I suppose, but that you're willing, you're willing to put a question to people. And, more than that, that you're willing to argue, that you're willing to articulate on behalf of your position, that you're willing to go out and sell your position to the people who elected you. So I think that's an important point to make on behalf of those who think that having a referendum would be something that would be important.

I know in the book as well, he went on to say that—and he's referring to the federal Parliament because I think that's his experience, but he says easily 98 per cent of the issues that come before a government or a parliament can be dealt with in the routine fashion, by the men and women who are paid to inform themselves about these issues and resolve them in the public interest. Yet, occasionally, there

are transcending issues that require a major and broad appraisal because the way in which the question is decided could dramatically alter the future direction of public policy or the country itself.

Now that's important, I think, to spend a few minutes talking about, and I just want to read it again: Easily 98 per cent of the issues that come before a government or parliament can be dealt with in the routine fashion, by the men and women who are paid to inform themselves about these issues and resolve them in the public interest. Yet, occasionally, there are transcending issues that require a major and broad appraisal because the way in which the question is decided could dramatically alter the future direction of public policy.

And there, I think, is one of the key issues here when we talk about referendums and the value of referendums. Easily we could have 98 per cent or probably more, I would argue—I would argue more of the issues that are dealt with, dealt with without a referendum, and that's why referendum, why they do appear in our Manitoba laws in the Legislature, don't appear in every law or in every legislative framework because, most often, it's not necessary. But it's why they were specifically put into the balanced budget law, because it is unique, that it is a unique situation, Mr. Acting Speaker.

And it's not common. It's not something that happens all the time. But it was supposed to be there because it was a unique situation if a government was going to be increasing the PST or corporate taxes or personal income taxes, that that guard was supposed to be there because, in fact, there were unique situations.

And I think that the author makes the right point, that where there are those significant issues of public policy, that you want to have that flexibility, that you want to be bringing it to the people often, and particularly when the law says that you should—when the law says that you should bring these issues to a referendum, that it's important and it should not be considered as something that is a negative.

Also, in the same book, the *Direct Democracy in Canada*, by Patrick Boyer, he indicates that the direct voting process involves everybody. So referendums involves everybody, Mr. Acting Speaker, not just the privileged few who can appear during the workday at hotel rooms or committee room hearings to discuss their ideas or proposals with MPs or royal commissioners.

I want to read that again: The direct voting process, referendums, involves everybody, not just the privileged few who can appear during the workday at hotel rooms or committee room hearings to discuss their ideas or proposals with MPs or royal commissioners. And I think the key to that is that referendums are clearly inclusive. They allow people to be involved in many, many different ways that they might not otherwise be involved with. It allows people to have direct access.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Now, as important as these committee hearings are going to be, that we're going to be hearing from in the weeks ahead, and they are important, and I wouldn't diminish that, it doesn't become accessible for everybody. We have almost record numbers of people who are going to be presenting at committees, some 450 people, I believe, are already scheduled to hear from Manitobans, who have already scheduled to hear at the Legislature, and that's important. But there are many, many Manitobans, hundreds, and maybe hundreds of thousands, who may wish to have their voice heard, but for whatever reason they don't feel comfortable presenting at a committee. It's not something that they're willing to do. They might not have the time. There's a variety of different reasons why people aren't able to come to a committee and make a presentation. It's a very hard thing, often, for people to do. It's why we typically don't get thousands of people, and that when we get two or three hundred, that's significant. That's a pretty large representation of Manitobans who are coming to hear and to have their voice heard.

I think that it is also important to consider that, for those who aren't able to come to a committee, that the ability to vote in a referendum is an easier alternative for them. It's not as remote for many people, and often I hear the members opposite, I'll hear government members who represent the fine communities in northern Manitoba talk about the remoteness, that it's difficult, often, to come to Winnipeg, that it's not as easy for those of us who are living in southern Manitoba. But the same members don't seem to have the same desire to make it easy for their constituents to be heard on this issue, because it would certainly take a lot of time and some amount of resources for members to travel from different northern communities to come down to the Legislature and to be heard at committee. Now we're in a better process, at least for these two bills, that are now going to be structured and people at least know what day they're going to present if

they're on the committee list. So that's the—that is a leap forward into the future. But, still, it is expensive and time-consuming for people in many communities in Manitoba to come down to the Legislature and to have their voice heard.

* (18:20)

And so I would certainly say to the government that not having a referendum is a missed opportunity, that it is a bit exclusive, that it does take away the ability for many people who want to have their voice heard, and there are many who do and they show it in different ways. And they show it in the ways that they can. They send emails. They send letters.

They'll phone their elected representatives. I know the members opposite have had those phone calls and they've had those emails and they've read the letters. Some will write letters to the editor, so we read them in the local newspapers and the newspapers here in Winnipeg. Others will come to rallies, and we've seen a few different rallies now outside the Legislature where people, in fact, come to have their voice heard at those rallies. We have heard people who have tried to directly contact and go to their MLA's office to have their voice heard on this issue. So there are a lot of ways that Manitobans are trying to express their concern.

But none of them are as good or as equal as a referendum. None of them provide that same access to a direct democracy as a referendum, where they wouldn't have to travel great distances, where they wouldn't have to write a letter and hope that one of their elected representatives or those making the decision will, in fact, read it. They would know that every one of their votes counted.

And so it's disappointing that the government would take away that opportunity, that the government wouldn't allow people to come and to be heard through a referendum process, and they have the opportunity to change their mind yet. We're not without hope that the government will still change their mind, and we'll certainly give them opportunity to change their mind in the time ahead as we continue to tell them how important it is that we have the referendum.

I certainly think that it's going to be important that we continue to stand up for Manitobans in the days ahead, whether it's at committee, and I know our members will be at committee and they'll be listening and they'll be attentive. They'll be there to hear from Manitobans. They'll be asking questions of

presenters, and I hope that the government members who will be there, and there'll be different government members at different times, I understand that, but I hope that they'll have the same approach. I hope that they'll have the same feeling about the process, knowing that it is important, that it is an important process and that Manitobans want, not just to be listened to, but they want to be heard and the government will have an open mind in that.

Also in the book, *Direct Democracy in Canada*, the author talks about division or divisiveness from referendums. He asked: Did plebiscites create these divisions or do they merely record them? Does a surgeon create a tumour or simply reveal it in the course of an exploratory operation? Plebiscites are like mirrors, they show us collectively at the same time the nature of our society in a way that cannot be replicated by opinion pollsters, duplicated by media pundits, imagined by policy elites or imitated by political establishment.

And so the point that the author is making is that, in and of themselves, referendums are not divisive. That in and of themselves, referendums do not cause division. They will record that division and they will record the differences that people will have on opinions, but they're not the creators of that, and, in fact, they are just simply a mirror, they reflect the division that happens among individuals. And so there is an importance to that. There is something I think that we can learn from that, that we shouldn't necessarily be worried about a process that one might consider to be divisive, because that's not actually always the case. There simply is a reflection of the division that already exists, and I think that that might be true constitutionally when we look at the constitutional referendums that we have had as well. So I would hope that the government would reflect on that and not to be overly concerned.

I want to read a little bit from a different book now. It's called, *Direct Democracy: The Struggle for Democratic Responsiveness and Representation*. This is a bit more recent book than the one that I was quoting from before on direct democracy in Canada. This one is published in 2011. And in this particular narration, it says that valid issues may also increase the perceived benefits of participating in politics for issue-orientated, independent voters who are not motivated by the political parties. And that's important now, because it indicates that when you have a referendum on a particular issue that it can engage more people that might otherwise consider themselves to be disengaged by the political process.

And I would venture to say that there would certainly be many people who would otherwise not be engaged in the political process, or not necessarily be involved with political parties, who would want to be involved in a referendum on the PST, that they would find the particular issue-orientated ballot more interesting, more engaging than simply on the political party process. That's something that the government should consider—the benefits of having the referendum, that, in fact, there would be those who would be quite eager to engage, those who might not otherwise be involved in the political process. And that is the debate, as I mentioned earlier, that we often have in this House. How do we get more people involved? And I think that they are missing an opportunity.

Now, that's a side benefit, of course. Ultimately, the government, by having a referendum on the PST increase, would be doing simply the right thing because it's the law, because the law says that there should be a referendum. They would be doing the right thing because people believe that the law would be followed, that people were under the understanding that if the PST was ever to be increased, that the referendum would be there and that they would have that democratic voice. And so I don't want to leave the impression that any of these external benefits or side benefits are the rationale or the reason for the referendum, because they're not. But they are benefits, and they shouldn't be denied and they shouldn't be excluded from the argument. They are important. They're important benefits. So I would certainly hope that the government would reconsider their decision in the days ahead and to look at all the different reasons and rationales why one could have the benefit, the positive benefit, from calling a referendum.

I want to read another quote from the book, *Direct Democracy: The Struggle for Democratic Responsiveness and Representation*, written by Kara Lindaman. And there's a variety of different articles. She was the editor of the book. But in one of the articles in the book it indicates that a number of studies show that mass-based direct democracy has indirect behavioural and attitudinal effects on citizens such as increasing political proficiency and engagement with politics and increasing the likelihood that citizens have information about politics.

Now, I think that's worth just repeating, because it's an important point. Not—often the feeling is that referendums are divisive and that people feel

division about referendums, but here is almost the opposite perspective. It says that a number of studies show that mass-based direct democracy has indirect behavioural and attitudinal effects on citizens such as increasing political proficiency and engagement with politics and increasing the likelihood that citizens have information about politics.

So there, again, is an indirect benefit quite apart, or quite different, than causing division or causing discord among those who are involved in the political process over a referendum. The studies actually show that it causes people to be more engaged in politics. And in our—isn't that one of the things that all of us talk about—how do we engage people in politics? I know that it's—and I've talked to members of the government about this as well; I know that there are many people who have, in cases, felt that they were frustrated by the fact that they go door to door and they spend money on political campaigns and they try to get people involved and they have volunteers and a variety of other things that—and yet it's still difficult to get people to come out and vote and to be engaged. And all of us, because we're involved essentially in the business of politics, we're involved in a process where we want people to be engaged in the public debate and in discourse, but we grow frustrated by that. We wonder why it is that we don't have more people who are engaged in the political process.

* (18:30)

Well, here's a great opportunity. Now a side benefit, of course, from following the law, the main reason is that the government would be following the law by calling the referendum and breaking the law by not calling the referendum, as many believe that they'll be doing on July 1st, but they would engage so many more people. Now the Premier (Mr. Selinger) has said that, well, we can't afford the time, we can't afford the costs. And he's, essentially, you know, slapping those in the face who might want to be engaged, who maybe don't become engaged in partisan politics, but who, on a particular issue, would want to engage. And all the side benefits of those who would learn from that process, who would find that there'd be more direct democracy in a referendum, and that they would want to feel that engagement.

And so it's disappointing that the government doesn't have the willingness to be involved with that and that they've made up so many different excuses. And that is certainly one of the things that is

concerning. *[interjection]* I will probably save that for third reading, actually.

But I know that, within the book as well, there are other issues that is raised by the author. As they raise the issue—valid issues may also increase the perceived benefits of participating in politics for issue-orientated, independent voters who, again, are not motivated by political parties. It says that research—recent research— finds that disaffected citizens are more supportive of increased opportunities to participate in government and that the young are more supportive of using referendums to make government decisions. And this comes from a 2007 survey. Now isn't that interesting that it indicates that research finds that disaffected citizens are more supportive of increased opportunities to participate in government and that the young are more supportive of using referendums to make government decisions?

Now, we are particularly concerned, of course, about youth engagement in politics. We were concerned to see the member for Kirkfield Park (Ms. Blady) take on a group of young people that left them feeling intimidated and left them feeling uncertain, and we need to find more ways to get young people involved in politics. And here the research demonstrates that, if we were able to have referendums, more referendums, that it would engage young people and disaffected voters. So those who are least likely to participate, those who are least likely to be involved in the political process, might be more likely or as likely as anybody else to be involved in the referendum that is engaging for them, that they are willing to be involved in that democratic process. And so I think that we have missed an opportunity not only to follow the law, to do the right thing, to hear from Manitobans, but to have that democratic exercise.

So I know that, as we look forward to presentations from committee members, as we look forward to the presentations from Manitobans who will come here, and I know that there are going to be many Manitobans who are going to be making presentations who have never presented to committee before. This is going to be their first opportunity, maybe not to be here in the Legislature, but to be in front of a committee and to talk about, and talk to, directly to their elected representatives, and I hope that the government will accord itself well in that process, that they'll be listening and that they'll be willing, in fact, to hear from those Manitobans.

Now, I want to say that, when we've looked at the different excuses that the government has brought forward for not holding a referendum, when you compare them to the benefits that I've already outlined, there seems to be no dispute that they should be calling that referendum. When you look at the excuses that they've used, they've included costs of a referendum. They have included the time that it takes for a referendum. They've included the urgent need for infrastructure, and I've indicated in each of those excuses that they simply don't hold water, that there is a cost to democracy, that we know that there is a cost to democracy, that we know that sometimes you have to ensure that democracy is operating and it costs money sometimes to do that, but we value our democratic system in such a way that we put value on it monetarily.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The issue of taking time for a referendum, Mr. Speaker, we know is also a red herring. We've been debating this bill—I think I indicated for about 50 days already—and we know that a referendum could have taken place, that we could have already had a referendum take place had the government called it earlier on. This debate might have been moot if we had been able to go and have the referendum among Manitobans. They will have told us whether they thought the PST increase was a good idea or bad idea. I have my own feelings about how the referendum would have turned out, but we could have had that already. We wouldn't have to be having the debate into the evening tonight.

And, if you look at the comparisons then, between the benefits of following the law, making sure that there is confidence in the political system, engaging disaffected voters, engaging people who don't necessarily become involved in partisan politics, engaging young people, Mr. Speaker, those are the benefits. Those benefits exist for calling a referendum.

And then, when you look at the excuses that the government have brought forward, the excuses that don't actually hold any water, Mr. Speaker, that it's clear what the decision should have been.

And there is still time. There is going to be lots of time for this government to change its mind and to do the right thing. There is going to be lots of time for this government to change the direction that it has in terms of not calling the referendum in terms of increasing the PST.

The committee's only one step in this legislative process, Mr. Speaker, an important step to hear from Manitobans, but there are other steps, of course, that are going to come in the days ahead. And those steps will be equally important. And those steps we will continue to stand up for Manitobans to tell them that we're here to be with them in their struggle to get this government to change its mind.

And it's a larger struggle than that; it's a larger struggle than just the PST, Mr. Speaker. It's about ensuring that there is financial responsibility, there is financial accountability within the government.

And so we do this because we know that there are larger things at play. This is obviously significant; it's going to hurt many Manitoba families. We've heard from those families, Mr. Speaker. We've seen the—we've heard the stories. Some of them are very emotional stories, and we will continue to be with those Manitobans. We'll be here to continue to be their voice on this issue.

But we look forward to their voice as well, Mr. Speaker, for them to come and tell their stories and for them to express not just frustrations but the hope that the government will change their minds. And those Manitobans will come from—and not only a variety of walks of life, but they will come from a variety of communities and areas. They will come from constituencies that are not representative—represented by Conservatives. They'll come from constituencies that are represented by New Democrats as well. And they will be here to talk directly to their MLAs. And I hope that, when they're talking directly to their MLAs that their MLAs are listening, listening to their heartfelt stories because that would give them, I think, some assurance that the government will do the right thing and to change their mind on this.

And so, as we move towards those committee hearings, Mr. Speaker, the government, I think, has to—has to go there with that mindset that they are willing to listen to Manitobans as we have listened to Manitobans, and that they're willing to stand by Manitobans as we have stood by Manitobans. That is their opportunity now; this is their opportunity to do the right thing, because, ultimately, each of the members of the government will be judged on the decisions that they make on this bill and how they do or don't represent their constituents. I don't believe that their constituents will be fooled again, I don't believe that their constituents will forget the promise that was made by these members in 2011 as they

went door to door and promised that they would not raise taxes and specifically promised that they would not raise the PST.

And, for the newer members of that caucus, I know that there is—there are many who are concerned about this, that don't feel comfortable with the promises that they made and now the actions that they and their government are taking. And they have the opportunity—they certainly have the opportunity to do the right thing and to stand up for their constituents, to speak on their behalf here in the Legislature.

*(18:40)

And, you know, whenever I conclude my comments, there are many members of the government who have not spoken to Bill 20, in fact, all of them, except for the Minister of Finance (Struthers) who introduced this bill on April 16th or 17th, and he spoke to it on introduction, and he spoke to it on the debate on second reading.

But other members of the government have been reluctant to stand up and speak to Bill 20. They weren't reluctant to go door to door to their constituents and to tell them that they wouldn't raise the PST, and they weren't reluctant to make promises to those constituents that they weren't going to raise the PST. But they are certainly reluctant now. They are certainly reluctant to do what is right for their constituents and to live up to their word because there are lots of arguments I know that the government has made about how they believe that it is legal to increase the PST on July 1st without this bill having been approved by the Legislature.

Now I would disagree with many of those arguments. But we can put aside the legal arguments, and I don't want to get into a fight with the 12 lawyers that the Minister of Finance has hired in a different context. But we can put aside the legal argument and simply go to, is it the right thing to do? Is it the right thing to do? And that's where, ultimately, I think the constituents of the members opposites will appeal to. They will be frustrated and they will be concerned about the legality of whether or not the government has actually put in place a legal tax increase, but more than that, I think, they will express frustration about whether this was a moral decision, whether the government had the moral right to increase a tax that they specifically campaigned against. And I do think that you're going to see the concern from many Manitobans, not just at committee but in the days ahead where they're going

to say to these individual members, this is not what you told me would happen when you came to my door, when you wanted to ask for my vote, when you came to me in my yard, and you said, I want to be your representative and this is what I promise I'm going to do or I promise I'm not going to do.

That's not what these members did when they went door to door. They didn't say we were going to raise the PST; they said the opposite. They said we weren't going to raise the PST. And so they have opportunity yet, and they will have opportunity in the days and weeks ahead to change their mind on this, Mr. Speaker. And I don't know if there's ever been more of a chorus for the government to change their mind on any decision as there is on this one. From the letters to the editor, to the editorials, to the talk shows, the emails, the letters that are coming in to the members, the commentary, to the rallies that we've seen at the Legislature, to the number of people who are signing up to present at committee, all of these things speak to a populist—to a population that want to have their voice heard.

Manitobans are crying out to have their voice heard on this issue. And we've done what we can on second reading to ensure that their voice was heard, that their concerns were expressed. We've done our best to ensure that they know that we're standing up for them, and we've been able to achieve a number of things that I think are important. But, ultimately, the end result has to be in this government listening, listening to these Manitobans, listening to their concerns, because, ultimately, it doesn't help any of us when a government is so disrespectful that they don't listen to Manitobans, that they tune out to those Manitobans.

They've become so arrogant after these years in government. And I do think that arrogance has a lot to do with it. I do think that this a government that is so out of touch because they believe—they believe they have an entitlement to government. They believe that somehow they are vested into government. They believe that it's their rightful place to be in government, and that breeds arrogance. That breeds a level of arrogance that I think has settled in to the hearts and minds of many of the members opposite and it allows them to tune out and to turn out from many Manitobans who are talking to them. It allows them to dissociate with the many Manitobans who are saying, please listen and don't raise this PST; look internally first. Find a way to first decrease the P—or to decrease your spending, to look internally at your own house; don't come to our

house. Don't come knocking on our door for more money until you've actually looked internally for those savings. And I don't believe that Manitobans feel that this government has made an honest effort, or almost any effort, to find those savings, to find those ways that they could reduce their spending.

There's a reason why Manitobans are concerned about the spending habits of this government. They know that the government doesn't have a revenue problem. They understand that. They know that the government doesn't, in fact, have a problem with revenues. Revenues have been pretty consistent, even after 2007. But what is the problem is that the government has a spending addiction, that they simply can't stop their spending, and the bureaucracy grows and everything continues to grow. We don't see the results from it; we don't see the services that come along with all of that spending. We've heard the examples in question period and in other places. We've heard all of those examples, but what we don't hear, what we don't hear from this government is a real plan—a real plan put in place to try to reduce the spending within government.

So I hope that, as we move towards the committee hearings, the committees that will now be held in a respectful fashion for Manitobans that they will be there to listen, that they will put aside some of the arrogance that has grown within this government, that they'll put aside some of the lack of respect that is grown in this government and that they'll find themselves when they're listening to Manitobans, that they'll do so with an open mind and that they'll want to hear their presentations and then, hopefully, that ultimately change their mind and make a different decision.

And we'll be there to stand with those Manitobans at committee and in the days ahead, and we'll provide a positive alternative for them. We'll continue to be there to ensure that their voice is heard and not just for the people that we represent in our constituencies. We will reach out, and we have been reaching out, to all the different constituencies across this province and saying to those Manitobans that there is a different way, that there's a better way that things can be done, that we don't have to pit organizations against each other like it's been done with Assiniboia Downs and—when the Red River Ex—that we don't have to have things endlessly tied up in litigation, that we don't have to have a system where governments bring in laws without actually consulting with Manitobans or the groups that are impacted, that we don't have a situation where

leaders in our province like municipal leaders are told what they're going to have to do with their boundaries and not been consulted on that and be surprised by the outcome of that.

We don't have to have that kind of system; we can have a different system. And we will be there to stand with those Manitobans to let them know. Now, I—as I look to conclude my comments, I want to say, we did this for a reason. I don't think that any of us who get elected do so with the hope to speak for hours and hours and hours on a particular topic. I know that when I, in my studies in law in—when I look at the profession, they taught us to do exactly the opposite. They taught us to be brief and to make our arguments concise, and so I'm sure that over the course of this speech and at second reading, many of my law classmates would probably look back and say I've not done them any service by the long speeches I've had here at second reading and on the two amendments. But we collectively as a caucus did this for a particular reason. We collectively as a caucus did this because we want to stand with Manitobans. We saw from the beginning what this government's strategy was.

This government's strategy was to come in late into session, in the middle of April, which is a ridiculous time to start a spring session when you have 40 to 45 bills and some that are controversial. So their strategy was to come in late into the spring session and then to have Estimates take up two to three weeks, the debate on the budget take up eight to nine days, three opposition days, then to go through the different bills, we would be left with about two and a half weeks.

* (18:50)

And under our rules, we do have a session ending. And, ultimately, the government relies on that date to have institutional pressure, to have pressure put on MLAs to adhere to that date. And so as they start the session later and later, and they allow less and less time for debate on bills, their hope is that the different pressures that we all have, as individuals, to be with our family or to be at events—and we all feel that, Mr. Speaker. There are many people within this caucus who have young families or who have other events within their constituency, and I'm one of those. And it's difficult sometimes to be here through the summer, and the government has relied on that. They've relied on us coming back later and later with the hope that everybody would target that session end date.

And they hoped that with this bill too. They hoped that in bringing in Bill 20, the PST tax increase, that it would simply go through, and that the committee hearings would proceed the way they always do, and that you'd have—I'm sure they expected there would be many people who would sign up to present at committee, as there has been. And I'm sure that they expected that they would simply ram those individuals through the night. That they would have two days where the committee sat 'til midnight, and then they would run the other hundred, or however many people who had signed up, through the night, Mr. Speaker.

Because they know that mothers and they know that people who have businesses and have jobs in the morning, well they can't be here at 3, 4, 5 or 6 in the morning. And they know that people get frustrated. I've seen that before. Members opposite have seen that before in other debates, where people walked out of the Legislature shaking their head and thinking, how can this be? How can you run a committee system like this? They were told on one hand that this was a unique opportunity, unique in Canada, it's never been done before anywhere else. And this was going to be their opportunity to be heard by representatives. And then they come here and they find out, well, maybe they're not even presenting that day, or they're presenting at 5 in the morning, and they walk out in disgust and they don't come back. They don't come back because they know that that's disrespectful. That's not how a system should run.

And so we took on this challenge for Manitobans. We stood up for Manitobans to say, we'll do everything we can at second reading, and I think that we have, Mr. Speaker. History will show that this bill will be the longest debated bill, I believe, in second reading. That it's had amendments that haven't been used in 30 years, reasoned amendments, hoist motions that are rarely used, and I don't think they have ever been combined together on second reading on a bill. Where we've had dozens of people speak for hours. Now we didn't do that because we like to hear ourselves speak, we did that because we were speaking on behalf of Manitobans. We did that because we wanted to see something that was respectful for Manitobans. To give the opportunity for the government to change their minds.

And so we had a little bit of a break through today. We had a little bit of a break through. For the first time now we're going to have committee hearings that are going to be structured in a way that

the majority of people on those committees will know when they're actually going to be called. They won't—we won't call 250 people and have them show up in a room and then tell 230 of them that they're not going to be heard that night. We're going to actually have people who know the day that they're going to be presenting. And hopefully that will bring, not only respect for those individuals, but it will cause this government to respectfully listen to them. It will cause the government to be engaged with those individuals, with those Manitobans.

And so I'm glad for that. It's never happened before in the history of the Manitoba Legislature, and I had my doubts that it would happen this time as well. But because this caucus was engaged in that, because this caucus said, we're willing to do this for Manitobans, we're willing to stand up for Manitobans and to take this on and to maybe be away from our own families a little bit more, and to maybe miss some events that we'd like to be at. We made that sacrifice so that Manitobans will be able to have their voice heard respectfully here.

But it's not the last sacrifice we're willing to make. There's going to be more committee—or more debate time on this bill after the committees. There's going to be lots more time to debate this bill and we're willing to continue to sacrifice, to be with Manitobans who have told us that the PST increase isn't necessary, that it's not needed, that the government should look internally first for savings.

And so we're glad, we're glad that Manitobans' voices will now be heard, starting in a week from now, and they'll be heard in a respectful way. And we just hope that not only are their voices heard, but the government listens, Mr. Speaker. And that's the critical part; that the government listens.

And so, yes, we've achieved something historic in the fact that we'll now have committees that run in a proper way, and my hope is that going forward, when the government House leaders have these discussions, that this will be something that we can continue on in the future. I think we're going to see that it's a much better way. It might not be perfect, Mr. Speaker. I don't think any of us were trying to achieve perfection, but we were trying to get something that was much better and that was respectful. And I think we're going to see that this process is much better and that it is respectful for Manitobans.

But, ultimately, our ultimate goal is still to have this government change its mind, to have this

government do what's right for Manitobans, to not allow the PST increase to go through without a referendum, Mr. Speaker. That is, ultimately, what we are still struggling for, and that we are struggling for with Manitobans, the Manitobans who call us, who email, who phone, who write letters to the editor, who realize that this is unjust and it's not necessary. That is still the struggle that we'll continue after committee and in the years ahead to ensure that individuals know that their dollars are spent respectfully. That is still the struggle that we commit to for Manitobans, to continue to work with them.

But now, Mr. Speaker, it is now our time to hear from those Manitobans. We look forward to hearing from the Manitobans who are going to come to that committee. We are committed to listening to those Manitobans who are committed to being there, to stand up for those Manitobans, and we'll continue to do that as Progressive Conservatives in the days and the years ahead. Thank you very much.

Some Honourable Members: More, more.

An Honourable Member: There's still a third reading yet, you know.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 20 on second reading?

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Not to extend things, but a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

* (19:30)

Order. Order, please.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 32, Nays 17.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

House Business

Ms. Howard: Yes, Mr. Speaker, on House business. I'd like to announce that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet to consider Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended) on the following dates: Thursday, June 27th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Tuesday, July 2nd, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Wednesday, July 3rd, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Thursday, July 4th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Friday, July 5th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Saturday, July 6th, 2013, at 10 a.m.; Monday, July 8th, 2013, at 6 p.m., if necessary; Tuesday, July 9th, 2013, at 6 p.m., if necessary.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development will meet to consider Bill 20, The Manitoba Building and Renewal Funding and Fiscal Management Act (Various Acts Amended) on the following dates: Thursday, June 27th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Tuesday, July 2nd, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Wednesday, July 3rd, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Thursday, July 4th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Friday, July 5th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; Saturday, July 6th, 2013, at 10 a.m.; Monday, July 8th, 2013, at 6 p.m., if necessary; and Tuesday, July 9th, 2013, at 6 p.m.; also if necessary.

Any further House business? Seeing none, then the hour being, as previously agreed, the hour being past 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 20, 2013

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