

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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authority of
The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 301—The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Amendment Act

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Ms. Wight), that Bill 301, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Fondation dénommée « The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba », be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Blady: Mr. Speaker, the Jewish Foundation of Manitoba is the Jewish community's endowment fund. The foundation, which is independent of other community organizations, operates under the mandate to receive capital gifts.

Under the current act, the ability of the foundation to depart from an individual donor's wishes is limited, and, subject to the donor's trust and conditions, this new bill allows the foundation to carry out the board's distribution policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Any further introduction of bills? Seeing none—

PETITIONS

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Good afternoon, 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.

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 petition is signed by T. Heier, A. Funk, A. Rempel and 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.

Further petitions?

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): The back—I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

And 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 amalgamations will fail to address the serious issues currently facing municipalities, including an absence of reliable infrastructure funding and timely flood compensation.

Municipalities are—or 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—or municipalities with fewer than 1,000 constituents to amalgamate.

This petition is signed by A. Chadney, L. Barrett, G. Fraser and many, many more concerned Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

And these are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

(2) In the last five years, competition from the alternative—from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

(3) The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro to create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba's hydro capital development plan to ensure financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

This petition's signed by J.C. Hamilton, J. Wright, N. Derkach and many, many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): 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.

This petition is signed by R. Leclair, M. Wasylin, C. Wasylin and many, many more fine Manitobans, Mr. Speaker.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

The—these are the reasons for this petition:

Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

* (13:40)

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by H. Kehler, D. Mowbray, S. Reitsma and many more fine Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Referendum

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): 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 this is signed by A. Clarke, A. Taylor, J. Penner and many others, Mr. Speaker.

Hydro Capital Development—NFAT Review

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

(2) In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

(3) The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by D. Kelley, L. Johnson, I. Dowd 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 the provincial referendum.

This petition is submitted on behalf of E. Lindley, C. Hoffman, S. Dittman and several other fine Manitobans.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): 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.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by L. Love, L. Clifford, J. Coffey and many, many other Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): 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 recently announced plans to amalgamate any municipalities with fewer than a thousand 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 the 19th, 2012, and has further imposed unrealistic deadlines.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To request that the Minister of Local Government afford local governments the respect they deserve and reverse his decision to force

municipalities with fewer than a thousand constituents to amalgamate.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by J. Capri, S. Arnal, K. Capri and many, many others.

Mount Agassiz Ski Area—Recreation Facility

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:

For several decades, the Mount Agassiz ski area, home to the highest vertical between Thunder Bay and the Rocky Mountains, was a popular skiing and snowboarding destination for Manitobans and visitors alike.

The operations of the Mount Agassiz ski area were very important to the local economy, not only creating jobs, but also generating sales of goods and services at area businesses.

In addition, a thriving rural economy generates tax revenue that helps pay for core provincial government services and infrastructure, which benefits all Manitobans.

Although the ski facility closed in 2000, there remains strong interest in seeing it reopened and Parks Canada is committed to conducting a feasibility study with respect to the Agassiz site and future opportunities in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To request the appropriate ministers of the provincial government to consider outlining to Parks Canada the importance that a viable recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area would play in local and provincial economies.

(2) To request appropriate ministers of the provincial government consider working with all stakeholders, including Parks Canada, to help develop a plan for a viable multiseason recreation facility in the Mount Agassiz area.

And this petition is signed by C. Tait, J. Tuiversyn, L. Dupas and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

(4) Local governments are further connect-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.

Signed by D. Melvin, G. Nicholls, S. Goforth and many other Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development–NFAT Review

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) Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

* (13:50)

(2) In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

(3) The \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

Signed by J. Johnson, L. Johnson, B. Knight and many, many other Manitobans.

Provincial Sales Tax Increase–Referendum

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 not to raise the PST without holding a provincial referendum.

This petition is signed by B. Choquette, L. Townsend, C. Bourrier and many more fine Manitobans.

Hydro Capital Development–NFAT Review

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) Manitoba Hydro was mandated by the provincial government to commence a \$21-billion

capital development plan to service uncertain electricity export markets.

(2) In the last five years, competition from alternative energy sources is decreasing the price and demand for Manitoba's hydroelectricity and causing the financial viability of this capital plan to be questioned.

(3) A \$21-billion capital plan requires Manitoba Hydro to increase domestic electricity rates by up to 4 per cent annually for the next 20 years and possibly more if export opportunities fail to materialize.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro create a complete and transparent needs-for-and-alternatives-to review of Manitoba Hydro's total capital development plan to ensure the financial viability of Manitoba Hydro.

And this petition is signed by C. Driedger, M. Penner, J. Guenther and many, many other fine Manitobans.

Municipal Amalgamations—Reversal

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

And this is the background to this petition:

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

(2) 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.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by S. Smith, M. Smith, M. Derkach and many, many more fine Manitobans.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Local Government): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the 2012 Municipal Board annual report.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, then we'll move on to—

ORAL QUESTIONS

Affordability Pledge Provincial Comparison

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): You caught me by surprise, Mr. Speaker.

Well, we have a have province in Manitoba, but we have a have-not government. And today's NDP affordability pledge is as useless as yesterday's NDP no-tax-hike promise.

So what is the real effect on Manitobans if they save money on utilities if their taxes are higher? SpenDP high taxes are creating a Manitoba disadvantage, and Manitobans don't get to differentiate between the bills they pay. They have to pay them all.

So let's look at a real example, a Manitoba family of four earning \$60,000 compared to a Saskatchewan family of four: the utilities, a bargain for Manitobans, \$450 less, but taxes, \$2,700 more. Mr. Speaker, \$2,700 more for that family. That means that the spenDP has created a \$2,200 disadvantage for Manitoba families.

Does the Premier understand that his spenDP approach is actually hurting Manitoba families?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, there's no question that having the lowest bundle of auto insurance rates, home heating costs and electricity rates makes a gigantic difference in the affordability equation for Manitobans.

A two-earner family of four earning \$60,000, when all—when a comparison of all personal costs and taxes is taken into account, has the third lowest cost of living in the country, Mr. Speaker. And there are other examples: A two-earner family of five earning \$75,000, their ranking improved this year to No. 1. They have the lowest cost of living in the country.

Governments across the land at all levels are finding the right way forward for their jurisdiction. Some are raising revenues, some are slashing services. We're taking a balanced approach. We're protecting key services like health and education while we 'invest' in flood infrastructure, and we're keeping Manitoba among the top three for affordability across the country, Mr. Speaker.

Tax Increases Impact on Out-Migration

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): The Premier used the word gigantic, but it's a gigantic danger that Manitobans suffer: \$2,200 loss in taxation over a family in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Net interprovincial migration is a serious problem. Out-migration from this province is a growing problem. We have the worst record in the country. And it's a long-standing problem that the spendDP is worsening with its tax hikes. Now, every year we've lost people, more and more people, 56,000 people since the NDP came to power, last year alone 4,675 people leaving this province.

Now, the problem is, of course, that the NDP has exacerbated this problem by broken tax promises, and those tax hikes have equated to a \$1,600 additional burden on every Manitoba family. So Manitoba seniors, Manitoba families who struggle to make ends meet, Manitoba small businesses are all hurt. Incomes are dropping and employment is dropping, and the NDP is losing what should be a Manitoba advantage.

Does this Premier understand that his addiction to high spending and high taxes is effectively motivating Manitobans to leave our province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have 125,000 more people living in Manitoba now than when the members were in office.

* (14:00)

And only the Leader of the Opposition doesn't count newcomers as Manitobans. We do. We count

every single one of them as Manitobans. They have a right to be here. We're very pleased to have them here. They're making a tremendous contribution to the economy. And a single person—Mr. Speaker, 125,000 more people that want to live in Manitoba from 137 countries around the world, we're proud to have every single one of them here in Manitoba.

Provincial Comparison

Mr. Pallister: We're proud to see Manitoba be the crossroads of the world and attract people from all over the world, but we want to keep them here, Mr. Speaker, not export them somewhere else.

A family of four earns \$60,000, has a spendDP disadvantage versus Saskatchewan of \$2,233 a year, that's a lot of money. We've exported more people in the last 12 years since the NDP came to power than the entire population of the city of Brandon, our second largest city in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. And in the last two years alone with just the broken-promise additional taxes of this government, we've added the burden of \$1,600 for every family of four in this province, already a heavily taxed province.

This Premier has done what, Mr. Speaker? He's made it worse, already exporting children and breaking up families in this province. What has this Premier done? He's made it worse.

Does he understand? Does the Premier of Manitoba understand that he's not building Manitoba at all, he's building Saskatchewan?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, we're proud to have those 125,000 more people in Manitoba. Within three months they're usually employed in the area they're trained in. Within five years they're homeowners. Over 80 per cent make Manitoba their long-term home. That's a record that outdoes anything when the members opposite were in office and on a net basis over 30,000 people left the province.

But when it comes to a comparison of costs, the Saskatchewan government does their own affordability index and they rank Manitoba very high.

Here's the difference, Mr. Speaker. A single person earning \$30,000 pays \$1,441 less on costs and taxes in Manitoba versus Saskatchewan. A two-income family of four earning \$60,000 pays \$2,100 less for cost of living and taxes in Manitoba compared to Saskatchewan. A single

graduate earning \$50,000 pays \$2,030 less in personal costs and taxes than in Saskatchewan.

On every measure, Manitoba families have an affordable cost of living.

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Last evening more Manitobans came to a sweltering committee room to speak about Bill 20 even though the NDP have already rammed through the PST hike. The majority of the people there were very angry that they had been lied to by this government in the last election, and people also felt very, very betrayed and many of them spoke about leaving this province.

Before it's too late, I would like to ask this NDP government: Will they stop their wrong-headed decision and reverse the PST hike?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that members of the public who came forward last night also, I think, understood that they live in one of the most affordable provinces in this country.

Mr. Speaker, when we compare hydro rates in Manitoba to hydro rates anywhere in this country, we come out on top. When you talk about Autopac rates compared to anywhere in this country, Manitoba comes out on top. When you compare home heating rates, Manitoba again comes out at the top of that list. It's very important that we work to maintain that Manitoba advantage. That's what this government is committed to do.

Deloitte, an independent firm, says we're doing it—

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

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the last speaker of the evening was a young father who's fighting cancer. He was so upset about the PST hike that he got out of his sickbed and he came here to present. His name is John Lambkin. He offered the NDP the lint from his pocket because he said that's all he has left in his pocket, lint and no money.

So I would like to ask this NDP government to listen to John and reverse this very bad decision that they have made to increase the PST.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Speaker, I—you know, I do partly agree with what the member for Charleswood has said. We were all very touched by Mr. Lambkin's

presentation last night. Mr. Lambkin spoke from the heart and I think, to his credit, after sitting in a very warm committee room all night. I think we should all understand that he spoke from the heart.

Mr. Speaker, that's why I'm very proud to be part of a government that has shown the kind of support that we have to health care and to cancer drugs and to cancer patients from day one on this side of the House. That's why I'm very glad that Budget 2013, which members across voted against—that's why I'm glad we added even more benefits for people like Mr. Lambkin.

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

Impact on Manitobans

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, John hasn't had a paycheque for three months; he can't work. He's living on Kraft Dinner and hot dogs and not the high-protein foods that he needs to fight his cancer because, he said, he can't afford them. He cashed in an RSP and he has been living off that for two months, trying to spend it wisely and carefully so that it will last.

So I want to ask this NDP government: Why are they so clueless and heartless about how their PST hike is going to affect people like John and many other Manitobans?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member for Charleswood can talk about being heartless all she likes, but she was the one—her party was the one that said no to oral cancer drugs in the election when they had the chance to do it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that Mr. Lambkin made a very persuasive presentation last night. I think we can all agree that we wish him all the best in his fight against cancer.

But for members opposite to use that as a political pawn in this debate, you know, I think they can do better than that.

PST Increase Impact on Manitobans

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Well, Mr. Speaker, I believe the minister could give him his vote tax. He would be doing something to help him out.

Shaun Horan has been a—become a successful businessman in this province after coming from a humble beginning. He presented to committee last night and shared his thoughts on the spendP's illegal

tax grab. He can see that there's one word that fits this government perfectly: addicts. They're addicted to other people's money.

Mr. Speaker, can this spend government explain to Shaun why their spending addiction is costing him more money?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I thought Mr. Horan spoke very well. I thought Mr. Horan was very eloquent when it came to talking about the kind of savings that governments should be looking for, and, indeed, those are the kind of savings we have been looking for.

As Mr. Horan spoke, I—the words lean management came to my mind, and that's the kind of approach that a number of departments in our provincial government are looking at to make sure that we can contain the costs and then take those costs and direct them directly to cancer patients, directly to farmers, directly to infrastructure like flood proofing. We're looking for ways that we can change the way the government approaches the programs to save money and put that money back into the front lines, as opposed to cutting \$550 million—

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

Mr. Graydon: And they could look at putting their vote tax back into the public pocket.

Mr. Speaker, Shaun's mom raised him and his two brothers on just \$11,000 a year after his dad died when he was 3 years old. She knew the value of a dollar and the value of spending it on essentials. This government, however, does not. They're stealing Shaun's money to feed their spending addiction, thanks to an illegal 14 per cent increase in the PST.

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: Does this spend government understand the value of a dollar, or are they just addicted to spending it?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I noticed that not one single Conservative member around that committee room had enough courage to look the members that were presenting from the public and say to them, we're in favour of a two-tier, for-profit, private health-care system. Not one across the way had the courage to say that to any one of these presenters that were there last night.

Mr. Speaker, we or—nor anybody else on this planet should take any lessons from members

opposite when it comes to being forthright and up front and transparent.

* (14:10)

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about forthright, I'm sure that the NDP government meant to be forthright when they lied at the front door of every house in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Shaun outlined the two different people we have in society, the takers and the makers. Shaun and his company are the makers who build this province. The NDP are the takers who steal money from Shaun to feed their addiction. The NDP's illegal 14 per cent increase in the PST takes money from all Manitobans to feed a massive addiction.

Mr. Speaker, can this government confirm, after years of deceit, that they're taking money out of the pockets of Manitobans just to feed their spending addiction?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member for Emerson would agree, then, that—would suggest, then, that the people who depend on us to flow \$250 million to make the channel out of Lake Manitoba permanent, are those takers? The people—the kids in our schools who benefit from our commitment of 2.3 per cent increase in funding, are those takers too? The—is—do they consider Mr. Lambkin last night a taker because he benefits from decisions we make to support cancer treatments?

Mr. Speaker, this government has a vision of investing in infrastructure, investing in schools—

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

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Verendrye): In committee last night we heard from many presenters who told us how the 14 per cent increase in the PST would hurt Manitobans. One of these presenters was Joseph Giesbrecht. Mr. Giesbrecht came from humble beginnings and learned early in life the difference between spending on needs over wants. Mr. Speaker, it's not too late for this government to listen to the concerns of Manitobans.

Will this Minister of Finance listen to the people like Joseph Giesbrecht and reverse their plan to increase the PST by 14 per cent?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, I seem to remember Mr. Giesbrecht's advice was that infrastructure is fine, that you should be investing in it. Mr. Giesbrecht made that clear. He had some problems, if I remember correctly, about whether it should be splash pads or not.

But Mr. Giesbrecht honestly came to the committee last night, expressed his views that infrastructure is important. He understands, I think, the difference and told us so, the difference between needs and wants, and totally encouraged this government to fund the needs that need to be done, Mr. Speaker, needs like schools and hospitals and roads.

That's exactly what this government is doing. We're doing it in a transparent way. We will report back to Manitobans as we do that and we will meet the needs of Manitoba families despite the advice to the opposite from members across the way.

Mr. Smook: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Minister of Finance was listening to a different speaker.

At the end of Mr. Giesbrecht's powerful speech, the Minister of Finance asked him what he would do were he in the position that the government is in. Mr. Giesbrecht replied, this government is living beyond its means and should focus on spending money on essentials.

Mr. Speaker, will this government listen to Mr. Giesbrecht's advice and reverse their decision to raise the PST and get rid of non-essential spending like the vote tax that gives every member across \$5,000 a year for their election?

Mr. Speaker: The level is starting to go up a little bit. I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. We were doing pretty good there for a bit.

The honourable Minister of Finance has the floor.

Mr. Struthers: Well, I really did appreciate the advice from Mr. Giesbrecht. I mean, he talked about essential infrastructure that needs to be funded, Mr. Speaker.

We have said very clearly that the 1 cent on the dollar that we've increased will go directly to infrastructure. We've guaranteed that by law, Mr. Speaker. We've been transparent, and we will report back to the Manitoba public on that.

What I don't think Mr. Giesbrecht would have agreed with is the position of members opposite

where they would indiscriminately, across the board, cut \$550 million out of essential items that Mr. Giesbrecht and others last night would totally support, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, that vision, that mean vision of the 1990s, the Gary Filmon kind of an approach, is not what Mr. Giesbrecht was talking about last night.

Referendum Request

Mr. Smook: During Mr. Giesbrecht's speech, he also made it clear that he was disappointed that no referendum was held on the PST hike. Last night Mr. Giesbrecht said, taking away my rights is demoralizing. When asked how he would balance the budget, Mr. Giesbrecht replied, don't spend on non-essentials.

Mr. Speaker, will this government stop disrespecting the rights of Manitobans like Joseph Giesbrecht? Would every one of them give back the \$5,000 vote tax and hold a referendum on the 14 per cent PST hike?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe we should have asked—maybe somebody at the committee should have asked Mr. Giesbrecht whether he'd like to spend money on horse racing or on hospitals.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Finance, to continue with his answer.

Mr. Struthers: I suppose it comes down to what the Tories say is essential and what's not essential, Mr. Speaker.

This side of the House has been very clear. Health care is essential. Education's essential. Publicly funded health care, I may add, is essential. Infrastructure on roads and bridges is essential.

I'm pretty sure Mr. Giesbrecht would agree with me on that.

PST Increase Request to Reverse

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, we know that his priority is picking the pockets of Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, at last night's PST committee, Mr. Michael Bailey gave three reasons why Bill 20 wasn't needed. Practically, he said, the NDP have a spending addiction, not a revenue problem. It was legally wrong, as taxpayers were already protected

under the taxpayer protection part of the existing act. And morally it's wrong because the Premier (Mr. Selinger) said he wouldn't raise PST in the 2000 election—was a 2000 election campaign promise.

So will the NDP today offer to return the increased PST collected since July 1st from hard-working Manitobans who've been forced to pay the NDP—for NDP mismanagement, or will he just continue to disrespect the constituents and—his constituents and all Manitobans?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Well, Mr. Speaker, I was very touched when Mr. Bailey talked about his kids. I think that's important to—for all of us to understand what this—what our decisions today mean to the next generation.

And I want to assure the members opposite and Mr. Bailey that this government will continue to fund education at the rate of the growth of the economy. That's what Budget 2013 has done, and we'll continue to do that. So we support Mr. Bailey's children.

Mr. Speaker, we also have capital demands in education that we need to address. The worst thing a government could do for Mr. Bailey's children is take the advice of members opposite who would cut deeply into public schools in this province. They have said a 1 per cent increase to every department. That's five hundred—

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

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, Michael Bailey also said, if you raise the PST, you will have lied to us—another reason for his claim that Bill 20 is illegal. He went on to tell NDP committee members that if they had any respect, they'd resign now instead of dragging it out. He said the public treasury is to be protected and safeguarded, not pillaged.

So will the NDP reverse their Canada Day decision in Bill 20 to increase the PST by 14.3 per cent to 8 per cent, Mr. Speaker, or will they continue to disrespect the majority of Manitobans appearing at this committee?

* (14:20)

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the advice that Mr. Bailey brought to the committee last night, and all of the presenters. It takes a lot to come to this Legislature in the heat of summer and make

those presentations, so I think we all give them credit.

Mr. Speaker, I can assure those presenters that this government will not abandon them by cutting and reducing funding like members opposite has clearly said they would do. We're not going to be the ones who cut \$550 million indiscriminately across the board from every department, including health care and education. That's not our approach.

Our approach has been very clear. We're going to build the province. We're going to build our economy. We're going to build a future for the very children that Mr. Bailey was talking about.

We're going to build. The Conservatives will cut.

Mr. Maguire: Well, when asked how Mr. Bailey felt about the NDP forcing this 14.3 per cent tykes—tax hike on him, he said: It makes me feel useless. He told the NDP that the only thing you had left as of July 1st was your honour, and now you've lost that. I hate what these people are doing to my province and to my children's futures, speaking of children, Mr. Speaker. A really clear message.

So will the NDP today listen to these desperate Manitobans and reverse their decision of increasing the PST?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we did do as of July 1st is that we took off the PST that the Conservatives added to baby supplies back in 1993. If we're concerned about the next generation, if—as members opposite pretend to be, then why would a government put that in in the first place, and why wouldn't the—members opposite support this government in removing babies' supplies from the PST?

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to make the brave decisions, not easy decisions but courageous decisions, to raise by 1 cent on a dollar the PST so that we can invest in the future of our province—

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

PST Increase Impact on Immigrants

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Increasing the PST isn't courageous. Being a Manitoban who comes to committee, that's courageous.

Yesterday we heard from Emmanuel Trawon. Emmanuel came to Manitoba 17 years ago from the

Philippines to build a better life for his family. He celebrated Canada Day as a proud Canadian on the weekend, but he wasn't proud of his government yesterday, not proud of the NDP government. He talked about the personal struggle that he had paying the increased PST and how difficult it was going to be for him and his family.

Why has this NDP government let down Emmanuel and so many new Manitobans who came here looking for opportunity but instead have found an opportunistic NDP government, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Minister of Finance): Maybe the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) can look down the road to the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) and tell him that this person is a real person. He's a newcomer to Manitoba, and Mr. Trawon does count, Mr. Speaker. He counts. He's here. He's come to our country. He contributes. He's part of the 125,000 more people living in this province now than there was before.

It would really be nice if the member for Fort Whyte got that, Mr. Speaker, and actually said to Mr. Trawon: You count as a Manitoban.

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Mr. Speaker, Emmanuel was proud of the Gary Filmon Provincial Nominee Program. He wasn't proud of the Greg Selinger provincial tax program.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I'm sure all honourable members, including the member for Steinbach, know that we're to refer to ministers by their portfolio and other members of the Assembly by their constituency names.

I'm asking for the co-operation of the member for Steinbach. When referencing other members, please use those two guides.

Mr. Goertzen: Mr. Speaker, Emmanuel spoke about how he used to encourage his Filipino friends and family to come to Manitoba—in fact, I had the opportunity to meet one of them—but now he says he doesn't. Now he says he's encouraging them to go to Alberta. He's encouraging them to go to Saskatchewan because he doesn't believe that this is the place that they can build the kind of life that he'd like to—for their family.

In fact, Emmanuel spoke of the new Filipino families—and he's very active in the Filipino community—who are struggling, who don't believe that this PST increase is necessary and it's going to harm their families.

Why is this Minister of Finance pick Canada Day of all days to betray these Filipino families and the many new Canadians who are trying to build a better life in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Struthers: Well, in that case, Mr. Speaker, I can only imagine the disappointment of Mr. Trawon when the members of the opposition would not stand up with this government when the federal government made changes to the PNP program. Where were you?

Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I wonder what Mr. Trawon would think when he understands that the members opposite won't join with us and ask for a cap to be raised from their cousins the Conservatives in Ottawa. Where are you on that one?

Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to come to committee as a member of the opposition and feign empathy for people, feign support for people when that's totally opposite to a position that you've taken publicly.

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

Mr. Goertzen: Yesterday Emmanuel said that this government is taking the support of new Canadians and Filipino families for granted, Mr. Speaker. In fact, he said—yesterday Emmanuel said to the NDP members on the committee—those who were there will remember—he said we don't owe your government anything.

In fact, he was right. These Manitobans, they don't owe this government anything. In fact, we owe them. We owe them gratitude for coming here to build a better province. We owe them a government that is going to stand up for them. We owe them a government that's going to make a better life for their families; they came here.

Why won't the NDP admit, you'll never be that kind of government?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister) who would shut the door on these very people.

Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We're wasting precious time in question period, folks. The clocks are still ticking away here. I'm asking for the co-operation to keep the level down a little bit. We were doing really good at the beginning and I was quite pleased with that. So I'm asking for the co-operation of all honourable members. Allow me to hear the questions and the answers, please.

The honourable Minister of Finance, to continue.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our approach from this side of the House has been to work with members from parts of the world coming to Manitoba to provide jobs, to provide training, to provide education.

You don't get those opportunities to provide jobs and education and training for people like Mr. Trawon if you are going to accept that you should cut by \$550 million across the board, indiscriminately, every department; \$550-million worth of cuts does not help Mr. Trawon.

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

PST Increase Legal Counsel Costs

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier has called this emergency session, now in its 10th day, and has been in a great rush to increase the PST on the backs of Manitobans, such a great rush that he hasn't even allowed Manitobans to vote in a referendum, such a great rush that he hasn't even passed the legislation that would eliminate the need for a referendum.

This morning the Premier says he has a legal opinion that what he is doing is legal. Presumably, this was paid for by Manitoba taxpayers.

I would ask the Premier to right now table this legal opinion, to share it with the rest of us with respect to the legality of his actions on July the 1st and tell us how much this cost.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we always get advice from our Legislative Counsel about bills that are being proposed in the House. Legislative Counsel gives us the advice. We follow their advice in terms of how we structure our legislation. That is what has been done here.

* (14:30)

This allows us to invest in flood protection. This allows us to invest in new schools. This allows us to

invest in the two new personal care homes that will be built in Winnipeg that will complement the ones that are being built in Lac du Bonnet and in Morden and in Niverville, across the province of Manitoba. This will allow us to continue to build and care for Manitobans. That's what this allows us to do.

Kim Edwards Government Meeting

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, the Premier should table it; it was paid for by Manitobans.

Mr. Premier—Mr. Speaker, the Premier has been in a very great rush to implement this PST, but he has been unable in 40 days to meet with Kim Edwards who's just in front of the Legislature. She cares about children and is calling for improvements in Child and Family Services. All this time, she's been on a hunger fast and one of her major requests is to be able to have a decent conversation with the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, has politics in Manitoba degenerated to this under the NDP, that a person has to fast for more than 40 days in order to be able to talk to the Premier?

I ask the Premier: Will he meet with Kim—

Mr. Speaker: Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have actually had ministers meet with the individual in question. We've ensured her safety and looked after her health-care needs.

Mr. Speaker, what we have done is to call the Hughes inquiry, and the Hughes inquiry is meant to get to the bottom of some of the fundamental issues that are creating tragedy in the child welfare system, including the systemic factors that have led to putting some people at risk on a continuous basis, perhaps across more than one generation.

We've doubled the amount of money that we're spending in the child welfare system, and in particular, we channeled money towards prevention at the community level and more support for foster parents.

All of these things were intended to provide more safe, secure families in Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, you know, I'm presuming that the Premier has some interest in children and in improving Child and Family Services.

You know, it's true that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) could possibly wait for the report on the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, which is the reason that he's saying here, but there can be things done in the interim, certainly. And certainly it would be valuable to meet with Kim Edwards, who's been talking with many people who've had experience with Child and Family Services. And, certainly, the Premier should be even a tiny bit as concerned about Child and Family Services as he is about rushing to impose the PST.

Surely the Premier will meet with Kim Edwards today. Will he?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, just last week—and the member raises an important question: what can we do in the meantime? Just last week, we created a mentorship program with private people in the community, with businesses, with the general authority in the child welfare system.

In our budget, Mr. Speaker—that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) voted against—we have more resources to support families. We have more resources for foster parents. We have more resources for prevention programs. We announced additional daycare spots in Manitoba. We announced additional training resources so people can have opportunities for jobs in Manitoba. All of those things we announced to support families in Manitoba while keeping their cost of living among the most affordable in the country.

The Hughes inquiry will provide us guidance; we're not waiting for the Hughes inquiry. We're making things and making investments and improvements in the child welfare system every single day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for St. James.

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

Point of Order

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

I refer to Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, sixth edition. I noticed you recognized the member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) for a question. I'll refer to rule No. 413 in Beauchesne's, Mr. Speaker. It indicates that those such as parliamentary

secretaries—and the provincial equivalent would be legislative assistants—ought not to use their time—use the time of question period for the privilege of asking questions of the government.

I assume that the rationale for that is that legislative assistants are supposed to have some understanding of what's happening within the government, that they shouldn't have to pose questions to their own government. I acknowledge the member may not know what's happening in her government, but, still, the rules exist, Mr. Speaker, whether she has the knowledge or not.

I understand that she is, in fact, the legislative assistant and I would ask you to call her for order for being recognized for a question when she shouldn't have to ask questions of the government. She should understand what's happening in her government, and if she doesn't understand, she should go and talk to somebody to find out what's happening.

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Well, the member opposite, the House leader, as all House leaders are signatories to an agreement about how question period will be conducted, part of that agreement is that there is allowance for a question from an NDP backbencher. It's the eighth question. If one rises, one has risen.

I know that, you know—I know this afternoon we're all waiting with bated breath to hear him outline his opposition to our antibullying legislation. We're all waiting to hear what good reasons he could have and his party could have to oppose a law that does no more than say that people have a right to meet.

So I'm waiting for that. If he would like to delay that, if he doesn't really have a lot of good reasons to oppose that law and that's what this is about, then I'm sure that once you rule we will have a challenge and we will take an hour and we will vote and we will continue to wait to hear what possible good reason there could be to oppose Bill 18.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the Official Opposition House Leader, he referenced Beauchesne's rule 413 that says that those such as parliamentary secretaries who are clothed with the responsibility of answering for the government ought not to use the time of the question period for the privilege of asking questions of the government.

Unfortunately, I had only just recognized the honourable member for St. James to ask the question and she had not yet had the opportunity to pose the question, so I'm unable to determine whether or not she was going to actually be asking the question of the minister, and in this case that I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order because I—the honourable member for St. James had not, indeed, asked the question yet.

Provincial Code of Conduct Disciplinary Consequences for Bullying

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): This morning I was canvassing in St. James and I had a really great conversation on the doorstep with a couple who were fostering long term for school-age children. And when I asked them about the challenges that they face, their immediate response was that they would like to see more done in schools on bullying, as their foster children had experienced bullying as they entered the school system. This couple said that they wished there was more that could be done to encourage children to be made aware of the challenges of others. And we know that students can't learn when they feel threatened or intimidated.

Yesterday the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) made an important announcement that I think this couple and many other parents and caregivers would be happy to know about.

And I would ask the Minister of Education if she could let us know about the announcement, which was based on a new provincial code of conduct that builds on our government's Safe Schools Charter.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that will surprise you. I'm not clairvoyant, but I think we called that one right.

So I'll refer to Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, sixth edition, rule 413, which indicates that parliamentary secretaries ought not to be using questions for question period.

In fact, the honourable member for St. James made my point; she actually asked a question about a news release that was issued yesterday. So there are actually more rules than one that I could cite, but certainly the rule that I would cite in this particular instance says, the member is paid with additional

government funds to be a legislative assistant. That additional funding from taxpayers must come with some responsibility.

I'm shocked she has no idea about announcements that were put out in a news release yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I can't believe that she doesn't have email or doesn't know what's going on within her own government. If the Premier (Mr. Selinger)—I think he's indicated the legislative assistants—in a news release—do important work, and yet a legislative 'assistant'—assistants apparently don't even know what's happening in the government or have the ability to look up news releases.

So I would ask that you rule that she should follow the rules that are outlined in Beauchesne's that legislative assistants should either find out what's going on in the government to not have to ask questions within the government or they shouldn't be legislative assistants if they're unable to find out what's happening in the government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): I listened to the question, and the question very clearly was a question on behalf of constituents that the member had met this morning who had a legitimate question. And she's putting that question on behalf of her constituents, just as members opposite put questions on behalf of their constituents.

She is a legislative assistant to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) and the Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities (Mr. Chief), not to the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan).

* (14:40)

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the rule that was quoted, it was very clear that the purpose of the rule is that parliamentary secretaries in the House of Commons, who do often answer questions on behalf of ministers, should not be putting questions to those ministers. That is not our tradition in this House. Legislative assistants who are backbench MLAs do not answer questions on behalf of ministers. We have a tradition in this House when a minister is unavailable to answer the question that is put, they have a backup minister that will answer that question.

So in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, this rule, although it is drafted for parliamentary secretaries in a House of Commons, does not apply in a

Legislature where legislative assistants do not answer questions on behalf of ministers in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I listened to the advice of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable Minister of Family Services and Labour (Ms. Howard) as the respective House leaders, and I thank honourable members for their advice on this point of order.

I believe that this particular Beauchesne's rule 413 is crafted just for that, for parliamentary secretaries that are attached to a specific department or working directly with a minister.

It's my understanding, by listening to the comments here during this point of order, that the member for St. James (Ms. Crothers) was asking for a question outside of her responsibilities as a parliamentary secretary and that she is, indeed, the parliamentary secretary for the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), if I understand correctly. I stand to be corrected on that. And it appears that she was asking a question dealing with educational matters to the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), which seems to be outside her—of her parliamentary secretary role.

So, therefore, I must respectfully rule that there is no point of order because the member was asking for a question outside of her parliamentary secretary duties.

And I believe—the honourable Official Opposition House Leader?

Mr. Goertzen: With the greatest of respect, I challenge your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair having been challenged, all those in favour of sustaining the ruling in the Chair, please signify by saying aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to sustaining the ruling of the Chair, please signify by saying nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Goertzen: Could you summon the members for a recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 33, Nays 19.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has accordingly been sustained.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now I believe we'll return to question period, and the Minister of Education, I believe, was about to respond to the question posed by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Crothers).

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Yesterday we announced, Mr. Speaker, a new provincial code of conduct. This code of conduct will set out a range of consequences that will provide clarity and consistency and strong measures to deal with bullying and cyberbullying. We will work with our education partners and the professionals to develop this code for all of our schools.

It's unfortunate that the MLA for Steinbach has been leading the charge against Bill 18. He's been leading the charge against Bill 18 on Facebook. He said he was never so proud as when 1,200 people stood up in his community against Bill 18 and gay-straight alliances in schools.

When is he going to stand up for Evan Wiens and move this bill to committee so that the hundreds of people from Steinbach, their voices can be heard? When is he going to do that, Mr. Speaker? We're there. He isn't.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. The honourable member for Riding Mountain has the floor.

PST Increase Impact on Women Business Owners

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I think the member opposite should really be talking to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), who has been yelling across the floor about coming out of the closet.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba women are very concerned about this, the PST increase, such as Anita Zimmer of Russell, who has said, no, thanks, to the PST increase. She has said, and I quote: We are hearing from many locals along the Saskatchewan border who have decided to shop in Saskatchewan for goods and services. They are trying to make every dollar count in their own family budgets.

The Manitoba government website says, and I quote, "we must also remember the women who worked so hard to make their success possible—then, consider how we can better help women business owners of the future."

Well, Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of the Status of Women believe the increase to 14 per cent in the PST is really what she considers helping Manitoba women businesses now and into the future?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I think, as I've said before, as we've said before, the decision to raise the PST was a difficult decision, but it's a responsible decision, because I know that what Manitoba women count on is having a personal care home like the ones that were announced today to look after their elders.

I know that what Manitoba women count on is making sure that there's quality child care, quality not-for-profit child care that their families can depend on, the kind of child care that we're funding in this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I know what Manitoba women depend on is knowing that there's a nurse, that there's a doctor, that there's a nurse practitioner to look after their families, that they won't have to get in line with their credit card the way the Leader of the Opposition would like to see them do under a two-tier health-care system.

I know that's what Manitoba women count on, and we will stand with Manitoba women and make sure that those front-line services that they need for themselves, for their families, are there today and are there into the future, and we'll protect them from members opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Tiffany Thunder—Youth Ambassadors Program

Hon. Flor Marcelino (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a hard-working young student from Logan who will soon represent Manitoba on a unique program. Tiffany Thunder—and her parents were here earlier—she's from Gordon Bell High School, has been accepted into the prestigious Canada Youth Ambassadors Program to the United States.

The Youth Ambassadors Program is a partnership between the US Embassy, the State University of New York and Fulbright Canada, which looks for candidates who are determined, involved with their community and interested in developing their leadership skills. Only 20 applicants were chosen out of over 150 young people applying across Canada. The Canada youth ambassadors will spend three weeks in the United States exploring the themes of civic engagement, community service and what it means to be a leader.

Tiffany Thunder was first chosen to represent Gordon Bell High School as a candidate, and now will represent Manitoba and the western provinces in the United States. Tiffany says she applied to the Youth Ambassadors Program to learn how to be a leader; however, she is no stranger to being involved in her community. Tiffany performs in several choirs at Gordon Bell, including the auditioned vocal jazz group and a drumming circle called the Peaceful Village Drummers, which has performed at non-profit fundraisers across the city.

* (15:50)

While in Ottawa, New York and Washington, DC, Tiffany and other young leaders of Canada will

participate in workshops and volunteering. When they return home, they will work to apply their new skills toward new service projects in their own community.

Tiffany has worked hard to earn her spot in the Canada Youth Ambassadors Program. Many congratulations to her and her family.

I ask my colleagues to join me with—to join me today to wish Tiffany and the rest of our Canadian ambassadors a wonderful and challenging trip. I look forward to seeing what new skills she brings to our community on her return.

Thank you.

Central Plains Challenge Walk and Run

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, in June of 2006 and 2007, Kathy Chapman, Paulette Connery and Nancy Andrews entered the 60K weekend to end cancer—or to end breast cancer walk in Winnipeg. They each were participating for personal reasons. During their training they walked and they talked and they shared many stories during this time and encouraged each other in both fundraising and training.

As they walked these 60K weekends, they talked about the many people that they knew in their own community who would benefit directly from the \$50,000 they had raised. They knew the money—knew that money for research was important, but so was the ability to directly help cancer patients and their families right in their own community, and so the decision was made by these women—known as the Portage Crew—that they would organize a challenge walk to raise money for Central Plains Cancer Care Services.

Since its first walk in 2008, many volunteers have joined this special crew giving endless hours of their time so that the annual Central Plains Challenge Walk and Run takes place every June whether it's raining or whether it's 90 degrees outside so that all participants taking place enjoy this special day. This event is about caring for each other and raising money to help fight—help loved ones fight cancer. More than 200 people participate individually or as team members in support of a special person as everyone has someone in their lives who have faced the challenge and battle of cancer.

On June 1st, 2013, \$75,000 was raised. I'm very proud to say that over the past six years an incredible total of \$354,000 has been raised to help those who

are battling this illness. All of this money, all of these funds raised by the participants went to Central Plains Cancer Care in support of the programs and services they provide to the 74 communities in our region.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members of this House to join me in recognizing the Portage Crew and the Central Plains Challenge Walk and Run.

Flooding in The Pas—Community Response

Mr. Frank Whitehead (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the efforts of the citizens of RM of Kelsey, Opaskwayak Cree Nation and the town of The Pas as they prepare for an impending flood. Over 500 citizens from all three jurisdictions came out in full force to protect homes and properties from rising waters. Citizens from other communities arrived to contribute to the flood protection effort.

Mr. Speaker, more than half of the citizens are between the ages of 15 and 30, all of them putting in 10 to 12 hour shifts. These hard-working citizens, affectionately known as the sandbaggers, have worked through rain, scorching heat and swarms of mosquitoes. They are relentless in their efforts to protect the people, their homes and properties. Such efforts are greatly appreciated by all citizens. Citizens from all walks of life, local businesses and organizations provided lunch for the sandbaggers every day. As we were celebrating Canada Day, the sandbaggers chose not to take a break. Such a commitment and dedication to their task and their duty does not go unnoticed.

The real impact of the impending flood remains to be seen. However, no matter its size, it is clear that the communities' spirit and resilience will overcome any challenge the flood may bring.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, I thank all citizens, the local governments and all organizations that have responded to the state of emergency.

Thank you.

Amanda Crook

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I am pleased to be able to take a few moments to recognize a young woman with roots in the Angusville area. The late Joe Senko and wife, Angie Senko, were a successful farm family in the Silver Creek municipality for many years.

Amanda, their granddaughter, Amanda Crook, grew up in Brandon and is currently a senior at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, in the bachelor of science agronomy and agribusiness programs. She was one of 30 students from her university that recently travelled to Lubbock, Texas to 'comete'-or, sorry-and to 'comete'-compete in the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture. The competition includes 11 contests in agriculture business, agriculture communication, agriculture computers, crops, dairy judging, horse judging, meat judging, knowledge bowl, livestock judging, livestock management and soils.

Amanda competed on two teams this year: the agriculture computers team and the agriculture communications team. She won first place in the agriculture computers individual competition, which consisted of six complex computer tasks.

Students began preparing for the contests in November and they are allowed to compete only one time per contest with the exception of soils, which allows a student to compete twice. The contests are hands-on, and the judging contests, like those in crops, dairy and livestock, require the students to both rank and provide reasons for their decision.

Agriculture has been and continues to be an important part of Manitoba's economy. It is encouraging to see the young people are in pursue—are pursuing post-secondary education in this field and will bring their knowledge and enthusiasm to the table.

And I am sure that Angie Senko will be very proud to share this release with Amanda, who is doing great work in the area of agriculture. Congratulations, Amanda, on your achievements.

Kim Edwards

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak of the situation outside in the scorching heat on the front lawn of the Manitoba Legislature. Even as members sit here today in this air-conditioned Chamber, Kim Edwards, Phoenix Sinclair's former foster mother, is on the 43rd day of her hunger strike. Ms. Edwards has been relentless since Phoenix's tragic death in her efforts to address the deficiencies within the Manitoba provincial child and family services system.

The Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, one of the largest inquiries in this province, began last fall amid several efforts from both the Province and a number of government stakeholders to stall the proceedings.

Kim had standing at the inquiry. She said the inquiry didn't dig deep enough into the case and didn't allow ordinary people to testify about ongoing flaws in the system.

Kim is starving herself in front of her government's Legislative Building to show her dismay and to highlight the injustices she believes Phoenix experienced from this child and family services system. Kim notes the inquiry hasn't listened to many of the families and children who've—lives have been affected by Child and Family Services. She speaks of families that live their lives day by day, according to the currently flawed Child and Family Services legislation, its policies and its standards.

Kim has pleaded to speak with the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Selinger). In fact, she recently called out to this Premier, indicating she was hungry and asked why he won't listen to her. The Premier didn't respond, and, in fact, drove away eating an apple in front of this hungry woman. The Premier says he's waiting for the recommendations from the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, which he now calls the Hughes inquiry, rather than meeting with Ms. Edwards.

I'm asking the Premier today to show Ms. Edwards decently—decency, to meet with her and to demonstrate to Manitobans a constructive dialogue with Ms. Edwards. I believe the Premier could learn from listening to her ideas and from further dialogue with families and children affected by CFS to rectify an existing flawed CFS system.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances. Seeing no grievances—

**ORDERS OF THE DAY
GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Government House Leader): Would you please resume debate on Bill 18; and if we wrap that up, we can move on to Bill 12, Bill 14, 17, 26, 31, 40, 43 and 44.

Mr. Speaker: So, we'll resume debate on bills in the following order starting with Bill 18, followed by Bill 12, Bill 14, Bill 17, Bill 26, Bill 31, Bill 40, Bill 43 and then Bill 44; starting with Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools), standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach who has unlimited time.

* (16:00)

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 18—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): A pleasure to be able to continue some discussion on Bill 18, Mr. Speaker. I've been disappointed; I know we've been waiting now several weeks, I think, for the bill to be recalled by the government. I know they're busy trying to get through a tax increase and to try to get through a—a budget through, and so, obviously, we know what their priorities are. Their priorities are to try to gouge Manitobans.

We heard it yesterday in committee from people who are dealing with serious illness who wondered if the government was taking the last lint from their pockets, Mr. Speaker. We heard it from Filipino-Canadians who wondered what it was that they should tell their family who are looking to come to Canada and why they shouldn't go to Saskatchewan or go to Manitoba—those great Filipino friends we have who've lost trust in this government because they just continue to take, take and take from them. We heard it from a number of other people who came to committee. We heard it from those who are living with disabilities. The first speaker that we had came and made an impassioned plea, living with a disability, about how it is the government could be taking money from him, out of his pocket.

You know, often we hear the NDP try to talk about that they're a caring government, that they care about new Canadians, about those living with disabilities, and yet we've seen their priority. Their priority hasn't been to call an access bill here in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker—hasn't been to call that, that's not been their priority. Their priority hasn't been to help those new Canadians. Their priority has been to try and take their money; that's been their priority.

And we see it again over the last few weeks, day after day, they're just calling issues around trying to get a tax increase through, trying to get a budget through that takes more money out of the pockets of Manitobans—that's what they care about. You see it, Mr. Speaker, every day in this House, and so we've waited—waited weeks for the government to recall this bill. And, you know, it's interesting; we hear the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), she stands up and she demands—demands—that the bill goes to

committee. I wonder if she has that same passion in her own caucus to demand that the bill be called for debate, because clearly—and I see that the member for Gimli (Mr. Bjornson) says, yes, she has the same passion. So I can only assume, then, that she has no clout in her own caucus, because it hasn't worked. It hasn't worked, because day after day that's not what they call. What they call is the tax increase. They call Bill 20. They call things that Manitobans are angry and upset about and are coming to the Legislature to talk about, Mr. Speaker. That's their priority.

Their priority isn't to help those who are struggling with disability or to help those new Canadians, our great friends in the Filipino community and a variety of other communities, in the Sikh community, Mr. Speaker. And I want to say I've talked to many people in the Sikh community who've talked to me about this particular piece of legislation. I've talked to those in the Muslim community who talk to me about this particular legislation, and they don't think the government's on their side. They wonder where—what happened to the NDP government who said that they would stand up for these new Canadians. I know I have some friends on the other side, I think, who would feel the same way when they were talking to their constituents, those in the mosques and in the temples in Manitoba, and I would ask them to consider that and to think about that when they go to their own caucus.

And so we see the priorities of this government. The priority is to take money out of the pockets of Manitobans. The priority is to ignore those who are coming to committee, and I was disenchanted during question period when we heard questions about the various things that were said by the members—or—of the public who came yesterday to committee, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) stood up and he said, well, we're listening—we're listening. Well, there's—I don't think he understands clearly what the definition of listening is. Listening means that you're attentively hearing and considering options, considering what the person is saying and taking it to heart. That's not what the government's doing.

In fact, you know, there was a couple of questions regarding presenters—Joseph Giesbrecht, who—I enjoyed his presentation yesterday, Mr. Speaker. He talked about how he, as a young father, was providing for his children, putting a little bit of money away into an RESP when he could, putting a little bit of money away for a vacation where he could, but it wasn't easy; it was hard to make ends meet.

And he talked about how it was when he was a young person, a young child, and how they struggled. They struggled as a family, but they found a way to make ends meet, and he couldn't understand—couldn't understand—why this government wasn't listening—wasn't listening—and trying to find a way to live within their means. And yet, when the question was asked of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers) today, it was as though the Minister of Finance had heard a completely different presenter. It was as though he was—had heard somebody completely foreign to the question that the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Smook) was asking, because he responded to say, well, what I remember Mr. Giesbrecht saying was, you know, that we should be spending more on this and spending more on that. And he clearly isn't listening and that's the priorities—that's the priorities of this government.

And so for the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) to stand up and bang the table and say, why—why isn't this bill a priority? Well, it's not a priority because they haven't made it a priority, Mr. Speaker.

If I calculated the number of days that we've been in session since mid-April, Mr. Speaker, and calculated how many days the NDP have called Bill 20, in relation to Bill 18 or any other bill in this Legislature, overwhelmingly, they will have called the PST tax increase bill far more than any other bill.

I don't know if they've called for—as a primary point of debate, the access bill, even once—even once, Mr. Speaker. Have they ever—have they even called that bill yet? They go out into the community and they say how important it is and we want to get this bill passed, and yet they don't want to debate it. I don't understand. I don't understand how they can even say that with any sort of credibility.

There are other pieces of legislation that, you know, we might not entirely agree with, but the government says it's a priority for them. Then call them. Where are they? Why aren't they calling those bills for—as the first order of debate, after orders of the day? And yet they stand and they say, oh, we want to have these things passed. We want to get them to committee. And yet they won't call them. All they're concerned about is the PST increase.

Now, I guess, ultimately, you know, you find out the priorities of a government by their actions. Yes, the words are interesting, Mr. Speaker, and you can hear their words on Hansard, and you hear it during question period. But you really find out what their priorities are, not during question period—and I

would challenge the members of the public to look when they're looking at Hansard, to go beyond question period to that thing we call orders of the day, because when orders of the day happens here in the Legislature, you find out the priorities of the government.

All the rhetoric that the government puts out during question period, it's all very interesting, entertaining for those who are entertained by question period, but the priorities of the government are seen and set and determined during orders of the day. And if you would go back—I challenge any member of this Legislature or the public who is reading these comments, to go back day after day after day, back from the day that I'm speaking right now, and look under the orders of the day. And when the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) stands up and calls bills for debate, look which one is always called first. Almost day after day after day, it's been Bill 20.

Almost day after day, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) talks about how he's got important legislation; he says he's got important legislation he wants to pass. Well, either he is silent in his Cabinet or in his caucus, or he has absolutely no influence in his caucus. And I don't know which it is and I'm not going to speculate, Mr. Speaker.

But, when you look at what—the bills that are called, for orders of the day, Justice bills, they're not called. They're not brought up as the first order of business, so how can it be a priority to the Minister of Justice? He either—he's either speaking to the wind in his caucus or his Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, or he has absolutely no ability to influence the agenda of the government.

You know, I look to the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), I've heard him talk about how there is bills that he's brought forward that are a priority and yet they're not called. They're not called. *[interjection]* They have to have timelines he says. You know, it's so critical that some things be called, you know, that he's built in timelines. They might be unreasonable and unrealistic, and they're growing more unreasonable and more unrealistic every day that this House sits, Mr. Speaker. But he says how important this is; it's critical.

Now, I don't know if the member for Dawson Trail has no clout in his caucus, has no clout in his Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, but the bill doesn't get called—*[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: He just knows he's running out of time.

Mr. Goertzen: He knows, I suppose, he's running out of time, but the bill doesn't get called.

The Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) demands that we—that Bill 18 be debated, and yet for three weeks she couldn't get it on the agenda in her own caucus or Cabinet. You know, she—Bill 20 is the only thing that they care about. The only thing they care about is getting a PST increase bill through.

And all the Cabinet ministers who have all this important legislation that they talk about don't have the ability, don't have the clout, don't have the motivation, or maybe all of those things, Mr. Speaker, to get it past the barrier of Bill 20 because that's all the government is concerned about.

Oh, let's just talk about Bill 20 and the PST increase. Ah, we're happy to talk about that, we'll talk about it for months yet. We have no problem. We'll talk about it through the summer. We can talk about it in the fall. We can have some great Christmas discussions about Bill 20. You know, we can give little Christmas ornaments that say, stop Bill 20 on it, and hand it out to people, and they can hang it on the Christmas tree, Mr. Speaker. I mean there's lots of things that we can continue to debate through the fall and the winter.

But I don't understand this government, how they can talk about something being a priority, how they can talk about something being important and yet they never call it. They never actually want to debate it, and yet they never call it. They never actually want to debate it, and yet they have all the rhetoric.

*(16:10)

So I'm looking forward to—and I'm compiling, I'm compiling, you know, the orders of the day and which bills are called for debate and so the next time the Minister for Local Government stands up somewhere in a hall and says how important something is, I can wave these pieces of paper and say: Oh, Mr. Minister, can you explain to us how it is that you say it's a priority but your bills were actually never called for debate in the Legislature?

The next time the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan) stands with a photo op and a press conference—and he knows a little bit about photo ops and press conferences, I'll grant him that, Mr. Speaker. Not a

lot about results but a little bit about photo ops. He, you know, he'll stand up and say and how important it is, they're cracking down on this or cracking down on that and we need to get this bill passed. And I'll wave the orders of the day record and say, Mr. Minister, why it is—why is it that your bills were never called for debate? You know, why is it that it wasn't a priority?

When the Minister of Education stands up, as she often does, and says, oh, this is a priority, this is so important to us, we need to get this passed. And I'll have the order of the day record and I'll say, well, if it was a priority, why is it that only Bill 20 was called day after day after day after day? Doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker.

But that is what their priorities are really shown, that's where they're shown, they're shown in the orders of the day. They're shown by what this government prioritizes, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm happy to talk about Bill 18; I've got lots of suggestions that I want to bring forward to the government. As I've said in the past and I'll continue to say, this is the weakest antibullying bill in North America, so I'm not sure—I'm sure the minister wants to quickly rush through the weakest antibullying bill in North America, so it can do nothing to help the kids that actually need help, Mr. Speaker, to do nothing to help the kids who need help.

And I want to spend a bit of time reading some correspondence that I receive from schoolchildren. I know the Minister of Education, she's supposed to represent kids and so she might be interested in some of this; but she might not, I don't know. She might have more narrow interests than that, Mr. Speaker. But I know when you look at some of the letters that I've gotten from school kids, it's very interesting. And I think we need to hear from school kids and I want to go into some different ideas.

I received correspondence, Mr. Speaker, electronically, from a young person who is in a middle school. And she wanted to comment to me about the definition of bullying in the—in Bill 18. And she said even accidentally hurting someone's feelings counts as bullying; I think that this approach is the wrong approach to making schools safer.

Now this is a young person who is still in school, someone who is living this school environment. And, you know, for those of us who haven't been in grade school for some time, and that would include a few of us in the Chamber, we understand, particularly if

you have kids, that there are different challenges and there are different difficulties, Mr. Speaker, that the kids go through.

But it's important for us because things have changed, and I understand that and the dynamics of school have changed, and so we need to listen to those kids who are actually living the experience now.

Now, and maybe the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) doesn't like to listen to kids, maybe she doesn't—maybe she thinks she knows better, and that's fine. She can pretend she knows better or believe that she knows better.

But I think that it is important to listen to the very kids who legislation on bullying is going to impact or, in this case, probably not impact, because this being the weakest antibullying bill in North America, it's not actually going to protect kids, Mr. Speaker.

But it was interesting to have the correspondence from the girl in a middle school who said even accidentally hurting someone's feeling counts as bullying; I think that this approach is the wrong approach to make schools safer.

And I think one of the reasons that she wrote this in her correspondence is that she wants to ensure that the definition actually means something, because we know in law, Mr. Speaker, that where a definition is so vague to mean everything, it ultimately means nothing, because it becomes either completely unenforceable or it becomes enforced arbitrarily.

And then those who are responsible for enforcing that definition or that law, whether that's in a school or any other environment where the legislation is in effect, have to take guesses and have to make arbitrary decisions, subjective decisions about whether or not this particular definition applies.

And so you try to have a definition that is both effective but meaningful. In this case, as outlined by this student, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't have that meaning, it doesn't have that influence.

And so she's indicating, as somebody who's in the school system, who one would think the Minister of Education would care about, is indicating that it's not going to help bullying, that it's not actually going to make things better, that's it not going to make a difference, Mr. Speaker. So I would hope that she would listen to someone like that.

I want to reference another letter that I received from a young student. This correspondence that I receive is from Elandra Angermann, Mr. Speaker, and she indicates: I do agree that we need to stop bullying, but I don't think that this bill would do it the way it is worded. I totally agree that we need to stop bullying, that it is in our everyday lives and, sadly, it happens right under our noses.

Being bullied is not a nice thing and nobody wants it. The cause of most suicide attempts is because of bullying. People judge you on anything: how you look, what you wear, how you act, what your religious beliefs are, and even if you come from somewhere else. Doesn't matter what kind of bullying it is, it does need to be stopped.

Most of the bullies don't even realize what they are doing and how their actions may take someone's life one day. It doesn't make sense to let bullies just take people's lives without thinking, why haven't I done anything to stop this horrible act?

The bill defines bullying too broadly. Even normal interactions in our everyday lives between students and teachers or coaches would fall under the definition of bullying. If this bill goes through, lots of people will be bullying each other. If a teacher yells at a student to be quiet, that student may be hurt and that would be considered bullying. I don't like the bullying happening in our everyday lives, and I believe that it should be stopped, and the bill just isn't worded properly.

Now this is a young student who—and again, I'll—I've provided her name for the record, Elandra Angermann, and she gave me that permission to do that, Mr. Speaker. It's someone who's in our schools now. One would hope that the Minister of Education would care about students enough to listen—to listen to these young people who are actually in the school system, to not believe that she knows better than young people who are living these experiences, to not necessarily believe that she has all the answers, to be open to suggestions, and that hasn't happened.

We have heard—it's interesting that the minister would demand that this bill be rushed into committee, because she's already indicated that she's not going to be listening to anybody at committee. She's already indicated she's not going to be open to any amendments. She's already indicated that she's not going to consider any changes, and yet there are many young people—I know the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) has received many letters

from young people concerned about how this bill is structured and concerned about the general issue of bullying. And so I'm not sure what the Minister of Education's (Ms. Allan) rush is if she's not willing to listen. Maybe that's it. Maybe she wants to close her ears to the students and the young people who are going to come to committee and just get it through, just whatever it takes. You know, like let's just endure the committees, and then we can just move on and pass the weakest antibullying bill in North America, Mr. Speaker.

But I don't think that's good enough. I mean, I would like to see a commitment from the Minister of Education that she's actually going to listen and consider amendments at that committee, that these young people, these students and I—she's apparently more familiar with the list of presenters than I am—but these young people and these students who will come—and I know that there are going to be more—that there's going to be some young people and students who are going to come, Mr. Speaker. Will she listen to students? Will she listen to those young people? Or is she going to take the arrogant attitude that she's taken with so many other things that it doesn't really matter, that she knows best, that these young people don't know anything, even though they're the ones in school, even though those are the ones that were hoping to craft legislation to actually protect? I would hope that she would give us that commitment before this bill passes.

And, you know, I think this bill could probably move to committee within a few days if the Minister of Education would just say, I'm willing to listen. I'm actually willing to listen to people who are coming to committee, and I'll consider amendments.

I mean, that's the kind of commitment that we're looking for, and I think that that would be the respectful thing, but that's not what she's said. That isn't what the Minister of Education said, despite the fact that the Premier (Mr. Selinger)—and I had the opportunity to question the Premier about our committee system a number of days ago—probably a few weeks ago—and I asked him about the whole committee system, and he said, oh, it's a wonderful thing. It's a wonderful thing for people to come and we get really good amendments that often come out of the committee system. That's what the Premier said.

And I said, well, that's interesting, because the Minister of Education indicated that she's not going to be taking any suggestions at committee and he

was shocked. He was surprised that one of his own ministers wouldn't be willing to actually listen and to be open to amendments. Now, I don't—you know, I don't pretend to know all the different personalities within the NDP caucus, but it seems strange that the Premier would be surprised that one of his own ministers would've taken such a harsh stance against committees and against those who are coming to present. So it is interesting to me that the Minister of Education would demand that a bill be rushed to committee, when she's already said that she's not going to be listening to anybody who actually comes to those committees.

* (16:20)

So I'm going to take the opportunity to read a couple more pieces of correspondence that I've received, and this particular piece of electronic correspondence, Mr. Speaker, came from—and I'm also permitted to use a name—Danielle Ruten, and Danielle went on to say in his electronic correspondence: First, I want to make it very clear that I am against bullying and fully support all those who want to see bullying stop. Bullying is ugly and really hurts kids. In Bill 18, however, the definition of bullying is said to include hurting someone's feelings. I've given you my opinion on Bill 18. I believe that this bill does not protect my freedom to have opinions. Therefore, I am against Bill 18 as it is now written. I am sure that, if the government wanted to, they could change the wording in the bill to really protect everyone from being bullied. Thank you for taking the time to read my remarks.

And here's a young person who is probably on their summer break now but will be returning to school in a couple of months, Mr. Speaker, Danielle Ruten. And I appreciated that Danielle wrote this correspondence, electronic correspondence, to me and allowed me to put the words into the record because the point that this student makes, and I want to emphasize again the minister's diminishing the whole committee process and those who might be actually speaking, but this is a young person. This is a person in school. She's the Minister of Education. I would hope that she would be concerned about what young people are saying and not make fun of them and, actually, in some ways, act as a bully herself to these young people who want to have their views heard, who want to have their opinions heard.

But the comments made by Danielle, I think, were very instructive because, first of all, echoes a common concern that I've been hearing from many

young people, that they all agree that they would like to see something done about bullying. There's no doubt that it's a problem, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think there's any argument from anybody on this side of the House or anybody on either side of the House that bullying is a problem, that bullying is a concern.

Now, introducing the weakest antibullying bill in North America won't do very much to address that, but there is certainly a common feeling that something needs to be done. It shouldn't just be token; it shouldn't just be something that is symbolic. And that is certainly one of the concerns that we've heard, and it certainly should be something that's well crafted, something that is put together properly, that is actually going to protect kids because we know that that is what we're here to do.

We're here to introduce legislation that is actually effective, and bringing forward simply symbolic legislation, Mr. Speaker, doesn't do that. Bringing forward legislation that is purported to do something but doesn't actually do the thing that it purports to do ultimately not only doesn't it help, but I think it does something worse than that. I think it gives false hope; I think it gives false hope to those who might hear that there is legislation, that it's going to be coming on bullying, gives people false hope that something is actually going to change.

We as legislators, I think, are instructed to do something that's meaningful, that actually is going to make that change, and this young person who wrote and wanted me to share their name so that the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) could hear it, because I'm sure she, like others, are very concerned that the Minister of Education refuses to listen to kids, refuses to listen to children, Mr. Speaker, the very people that she says she's trying to protect, and indicates not only that they are concerned about bullying, but says: I've shared my opinion on Bill 18 with you, and I'm sure that if the government wanted to, they could change the wording in the bill to really protect everyone from being bullied.

Now, whether or not we are ever going to be able to craft legislation that will protect everyone is probably more of a matter of debate, but I certainly do know that if there was an honest effort to change things within the bill, to change the wording of the definition, for example, as suggested within this letter, we could sure go a long way.

And I'm distraught, and I'm concerned that the Minister of Education doesn't want to listen to these kids, doesn't want to listen to these young people, the

young people who are going to present at committee. And I know there'll be some young school-age children presenting at committee, that she's already said to these young school-age kids it doesn't matter what you say; I'm not interested. I'm not interested in hearing from you. Well, then, maybe I'm not surprised that the government has refused to call this bill for so long, that this government has refused to call the bill, Mr. Speaker, for week after week after week. The government only was concerned about the PST increase, that the Minister of Education's top priority was getting the tax increase, that her top priority was trying to take money—and, ironically, out of the pockets of kids, too, because kids are paying the PST as well—that when you look at the thing that she achieved for kids so far is to take money away from them, Mr. Speaker. That's been her top priority. I suppose when she's gone into the Cabinet and then the questions come up, well, what should we be prioritizing in the Legislature today? She said, well, let's take money from kids. Let's get the PST increase through. That's really what I'm concerned about. I just want those kids to pay more; that's my top priority.

And so day after day when the orders of the day were called, the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) would stand up and say, we want to debate Bill 20. And the Minister of Education would cheer, happy that the money was coming out of those pockets of kids, Mr. Speaker, that that was what she was concerned about.

But the kids are actually writing and saying something different. The kids are actually writing and saying, we want you to listen about this whole issue of bullying because there's some really important stuff, and things can be changed and things can be improved and we can make the weakest antibullying bill in North America maybe into something that's going to make a difference. That's what they're saying. They want the Minister of Education to listen. They're proverbially, you know, beating the drum so that she might hear what they're saying, Mr. Speaker.

I got another piece of electronic correspondence from a young person, Mr. Speaker, and I want to read some of the comments that this young person said as well: that Bill 18 places hurtful but inadvertent comments on the same level as physical and verbal abuse. Bill 18 doesn't define bullying accurately. The bill defines bullying as any hurtful words or comments that may not be meant to hurt and still count as bullying. The issue of bullying is

important to be dealt with—more important to be dealt with than with a poorly written bill. Now, it's interesting that a young person would send electronic correspondence so clearly about a piece of legislation before the Manitoba Legislature and be so direct and so frank that the bill is poorly drafted, that it's poorly worded.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, I heard the Government House Leader (Ms. Howard) speak publicly to say that this bill is not perfect, that there is problems with this bill, and she was right. And I'll give the Government House Leader some credit because she acknowledged what the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) won't acknowledge: that there are problems with this bill, that it needs to be—if it's going to be effective it needs to be changed. It needs to be corrected and yet we haven't been able to break through to the Minister of Education about being willing to listen to people at committee, being there with an open mind and not just, you know, saying that you're going to listen, but be willing to look at changes.

And that's one of the important reasons that we want to give the Minister of Education an opportunity, an opportunity to say I was wrong and my initial position was that I wasn't going to listen to anybody. My initial position was that I wasn't going to listen to kids, that those kids that I'm purporting to be the Minister of Education for, that I stated that they didn't know anything, that they didn't know what they were talking about in their own schools, that I wasn't going to listen to any of their comments, and that was a mistake.

And, you know, she might get some credit for that. She might get some credit for saying, I made a mistake. I was too hastily in my comments and that, really, I should listen and that I'm going to go to committee with the understanding that this bill isn't perfect and that there can be changes and that there can be amendments. And I think she might get some credit for that.

I think the kids who have written to me already, and the names that I've read, I think that Danielle Ruten, the young person in Manitoba going to school, that Elandra Angermann, that they might say, well, you know, this was worth writing then, that it was worth writing and getting my opinion out because now maybe the Minister of Education will listen.

And it must be terribly disheartening for a young person, a young person in our school system to know

that the minister who's responsible for the education system won't listen to them. It must be very disheartening for a young person to know that the Minister of Education isn't actually going to take their concerns seriously. It probably does a lot to make kids, young people, very disenchanted with the political system.

And I want to say how concerned I was yesterday during the committee hearings on Bill 20, how many people came forward and said that what was happening—what the government was doing and bullying through the PST tax increase illegally was causing them to be more cynical about government overall and causing them to be more cynical about the political process.

* (16:30)

And I was really sorry to hear that because we all struggle, I think, sometimes to get people engaged in the political process. We all struggle to try to get people to see value in the political process, and yet there we saw it yesterday. There we saw it at committee, where a number of presenters said that what the NDP were doing by bullying through the PST increase and doing it in an illegal way, was something that was causing them to be more cynical about politicians overall.

And so I equate that with this, Mr. Speaker, because the young people who've written to the Minister of Education, who she's ignored and who she has said that she's going to ignore—it's not enough that she's just said, well, you know, we might have some disagreement, or that, you know, maybe we might part ways on how we feel about a certain issue—she's just said to them, I'm not listening; I don't care what you say; I don't care how many people come to committee; I don't care if young people from across the province come and make a presentation at committee; I'm not listening to you. That must be pretty tough for a young person who is in the school system to hear from the Minister of Education.

Why, that'd be—I'd equate that to, you know, to the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Howard), if the Minister of Family Services would say to young people who were in care: I don't care what you think; I'm not going to listen to any concerns that you might have, even though I'm the Minister of Family Services. I'd equate that to, if the Minister of Housing (Ms. Irvin-Ross), if there were people in housing units who contacted their office and the Minister of Housing said: I don't care what you think; it makes no difference to me what your

opinion is; I'm not going to listen to anything that you say.

I'm sure that the Attorney General (Mr. Swan)—there are people who work in the legal system who were to phone up and to say, you know, we have concerns about how this goes on. I have enough faith in the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) that he wouldn't just say: I have no concern about what you, what you're say—I don't care what you say. It makes no difference to me. Now, he may disagree at the end of the day, but to simply say, I don't care—but that is what the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) has done. She's taken these correspondences from kids, from the ones that have come to me or the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)—and I know she's gotten thousands, because I've been copied on many of them—and she's just said: I don't care; yes, I'm the Minister of Education; yes, I get my extra \$35,000, or whatever it is, and I'm supposed to be here to help the kids and to help the education system, but I don't care. It makes no difference to me; you can say whatever you want at committee; I've made up my mind; I'm not going to look for any amendments; I'm not going to even consider anything. But that's what she said. That's what she said publicly.

And so, why did—but now, she wants the rush to committee, wants to rush to committee when she's publicly said, makes no difference what anybody says. That's a very strange—it's a strange situation to be in, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to give the Minister of Education some time to reconsider. You know, we'd like her to come out and say: The bill's not perfect, and we're open to amendments and we're going to listen and we're going to look for some changes, and maybe there's something that we can do to make the weakest antibullying bill in North America something that might have some impact to help kids. And we'd say: Well, that's a good step, you know, that's a good step, and now, we can look to hear from those young people and from others who have professional advice, on both sides of the issue, on both sides of the issue.

Like, we know that when the committee comes that there'll be people who have varying views, varying opinions, and we should be there to listen to all of them and to hear what they have to say and then try to come down and look at, sort of, what the majority of people were suggesting and see if we can find a way to make things better and to make things in a way that'll be effective for young people, that they might actually be protected. I mean, I think that's what people would expect from us as

legislators. They'd want us to do that. They'd want us to do that, and it's not about just because one side says one thing or the other side says another thing. It's about listening to people, but listening with an open mind, listening with an open mind to being open to changes to make things better. But what the Minister of Education has already said is that she's perfect, the legislation's perfect. She's not listening to kids. She's not going to listen to kids. And these are the kids who are sometimes getting bullied. These are the kids who are often scared to go to school. You know, they might be getting bullied.

Now, when you look at the statistics, Mr. Speaker, you'll find that the most common reasons that kids get bullied in school these days is body type; it can be clothing; it can be academic performance; sometimes it's language. Those are the most common reasons. And the Minister of Education has written those kids off and said, you know, it doesn't matter to me; it doesn't matter to me that you might be getting bullied for any of those reasons. And I think that's terribly unfortunate. It's sad. Sad, because I've had some of those, the kids and the parents—more often the parents, but sometimes the kids—come to my constituency office and tell me their stories. And they're heart-wrenching stories. And you want to be able to do something. And you want to be able to make a change to help them. And yet the Minister of Education is saying, I'm not making any changes. It doesn't matter to me how many kids are getting bullied for those reasons. I'm not changing anything. I think it's perfect.

And those kids I really feel for and those parents I really feel for because they're the ones who are writing and saying, well, what about me and what about my kids and what can I do? Like what's—what am I going to get?

And, when I have to tell them that the Minister of Education's not open to any ideas, that they're not open to any sort of suggestions, they can't believe it. They can't believe it. I mean, they go, well, she must care about these situations. And I'm not going to say she doesn't, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to say she doesn't. But the actions make you wonder, make you wonder what the motivation is for not being open-minded before we get to committee.

I'd hate to see a scenario like we've seen on Bill 20, where Manitobans—and I'll just use yesterday as the example—we saw people with disabilities come. We saw people who were fighting cancer come, Mr. Speaker, to that committee—a really—a real

emotional presentation. We saw people who hold high positions in the City of Winnipeg; the mayor of Winnipeg was there last night. We saw people who are heads of organizations—the head of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business came in to make a presentation last night. We saw small business people make presentations, as I referenced in my question in question period. We saw people who've come from the Philippines who were here to make presentations, and they all said the same thing: the government's not listening. It's a government that refuses to listen to us, and so I guess I'm worried.

I'm worried that we're going to have the same scenario. We're going to have Bill 18 go to committee and we're going to have, you know, people from across the province come with different opinions, different age groups, different life experiences. We're going to hear a lot of, I think, personal stories on all sides of this issue. I think we're going to have a lot of personal stories, and I don't want them left with the impression that the government's not listening because before we even get to committee that's what the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) has said. Now I'll give—I don't know if I'll give credit, but the Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers), at least before we got to committee, never said he wasn't going to listen. We got to committee, and he didn't listen, but he never said in advance to the committee, I'm going to refuse to listen. He just doesn't listen when he gets there, Mr. Speaker.

But I have a lot of concern about a situation, Mr. Speaker, where we're going to have a committee of Manitobans and they're going to come and they're going to have a lot of different views and opinions, and the Minister of Education is simply saying, not interested, not going to listen, not interested in your opinion.

That's concerning, that's very concerning. So she may want to rush us to committee. She may demand that this bill move to committee today or tomorrow or she could help the process along. She could really help the process along. In some ways, she's the reason it's not moving, because if she would say, I'm willing to acknowledge that this bill can be improved, I'm willing to acknowledge that there are changes that could happen that would make this bill something other than the weakest antibullying bill in North America, which is what it is now, if she were willing to make those concessions, if she were willing to put out that olive branch—to use a phrase, Mr. Speaker—I think this could move pretty quickly,

because then at least we'd know that the hundreds of people who are coming to present on Bill 18, and there will be hundreds and they're going to represent a variety of walks of life in different parts of the province. They're going to represent young people. They're going to represent those who have a lifetime of experience and they're going to be coming with those experiences and they're going to want to be listened to, and I'm very concerned that we're going to get into the same scenario where presenter after presenter is going to come and they're going to empty their hearts. They're going to empty their souls. They're going to come with their personal experiences.

It's going to be difficult for a lot of them. A lot of them are going to be telling their own personal stories of being bullied, and for some of them it'd be the first time they've ever given that story publicly or maybe ever at all, Mr. Speaker. I know that. I know that's going to happen, and it's going to be a lot of nights of emotional hearings. And the worst situation I think we could have is they get there and they find a government again, just like Bill 20, just like the Minister of Finance, who isn't listening, who's just not interested in what they have to say, and that's what I'm trying to prevent. That's what our caucus is trying to prevent. We just want these Manitobans to be respected. You know, is it too much to ask? Is it too much to ask that Manitobans just simply be respected at this process?

Now we achieved a small victory and I'll give credit to our caucus because it was the entire Progressive Conservative caucus who put up and stood up for Manitobans to try to get the committee process into a system that is moved from the arcane to at least the quasi-modern era.

* (16:40)

And it's not perfect, and I know—and I'm sure the Clerk's office would agree with me, that there are wrinkles that need to be ironed, and that's fine. But I do think, and I've heard from some members opposite, that it's a better system, that even they acknowledge it's a better way to do something. And there are things that, you know, if we do it in the future, we're going to have to tweak and we're going to have to change it a little bit, and that's okay. I mean, that's a learning process. It's part of admitting not anything is perfect, unlike the Minister of Education, who won't acknowledge that something isn't perfect.

But I'm willing to acknowledge that the system we've come up with for the bills, for committees, it's not perfect, but it's a whole lot better than what we had. It's a whole lot better than the system we had where we'd ram 200 people in a room and maybe get through 30 people a night, and the other 170 went home without any idea of when they were actually ever going to get to present. That was a bad system.

So we've come up with something better. Not perfect. Happy to work with the staff of the Legislature and members of the government to come up with a system that is even better, Mr. Speaker, because when you test things out, you know, it's like road testing a vehicle or something. You know, there's things you like, things you don't like. And so you make adjustments and you make changes, and that's kind of what we're looking at.

But I do know, from the people who've come out to committee, what they haven't complained about is the process. And I—when we remember the hog moratorium, the pork moratorium bill, when that went through, speaker after speaker talked about how bad this process was. They were concerned that the minister of Agriculture at the time, the now Minister of Finance (Mr. Struthers)—he's like a repeat offender—but that he wasn't listening. They were upset that he wasn't listening to the debate during the pork moratorium bill. But they were equally upset, or as upset, about the process—that they were coming to committee, they didn't know if they were going to be up, they were getting rammed through the night.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing I haven't heard from committee presenters yet, and maybe there'll be some who have some issue with the process, but I haven't heard a lot of that. I haven't heard people come and say, you know, this process is archaic, I didn't know when I was going to be presenting, I didn't know what day it was going to be, it's 5 in the morning or any of those sort of things.

So I think we've taken a step forward in that part of it, but it's a half-step because if you're going to make the committee process in our legislative system work, it's more than about just scheduling. It's more than about saying, well, we're going to have 30 a night. Now, that's good, and I appreciate that we were able to work out an agreement with the government. It didn't come easily. And people got tired of hearing me talk and they might get tired of hearing me talk again, Mr. Speaker. But it wasn't an easy process to work out but it was a valuable one, and I think we did the right thing by working out that

process on committees. But it's a half-step because the other step to make committees effective is you have to have a government that's willing to listen. You have to have a government that values people enough that they're willing to listen to what they say.

Now, I listened to the Minister of Finance at committee the last couple of nights, and after every presenter he says, thank you for coming to committee, thank you for coming to committee, thank you for coming to committee. Well, that's nice. I mean, it's a nice thing to thank somebody, nothing wrong with that. But a number of the committee members, certainly as we got on to the evening, they say, okay, but you're thanking me but are you listening to me? Actually listening to—is anything I'm doing making a difference at that committee? And that's the litmus test.

And I bring it back to the question that I asked the Premier (Mr. Selinger) when we were doing Executive Council Estimates, Mr. Speaker. And I asked him, do you value the committee process? Is it an important part of our legislative process? And he said it was. The Premier said it was very important. They got good ideas. They like to listen to people. What's happened? We're not seeing that on the Bill 20 committees. Maybe things will change tonight, but I'm not optimistic. We're going to have good Manitobans who are going to come out and give ideas.

We've already had the Minister of Education say she doesn't care what she hears at Bill 18, doesn't care about the kids who might come and present. It doesn't mean anything to her. She thinks she's drafted a perfect bill, even though it's the weakest antibullying bill in North America. She's not making any changes.

Well, that's not a great committee process. We now have an orderly process. We now have an orderly system where we can identify 30 people a night and those who come have an orderly system that they can go by, but it's not a good process when the government won't listen.

And so, again, I would say to the Minister of Education, if she's that interested in having this bill go to committee, she's got another step to go. We got halfway there. We got halfway there with the government by getting them to bring forward an orderly process so that we can identify 30 people a night, and I'm happy that that same process will apply to Bill 18 so that people who are presenting on any side of this issue will be treated respectfully, and

they need to be treated respectfully. It doesn't matter what your position is on this bill, if you're a Manitoban and you're coming to committee, you should be treated with respect.

But that's only half the story, because the true respect comes from listening, and the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) says she's not going to listen. And so she's holding up, in many ways, her own legislation. She's holding up this process by not coming forward publicly, saying she's made—that the bill isn't perfect, that she's open to suggestions and she's going to listen to people. If she's not going to listen to people, then the committee process doesn't make a lot of sense, does it? Then the committee process doesn't have a whole lot of value, then those kids who she purports to care about, those kids who she's paid to care about by being a Minister of Education, those kids need to be listened to. Those kids should be heard, Mr. Speaker.

I got another young person who sent me some electronic correspondence, Mr. Speaker, indicated that they were a grade 9 student, so they would have graduated from grade 9 and will be going on into grade 10 next year. It says, it would be advantageous to change this bill, talking about Bill 18. It would be advantageous to change this bill because both sides of the argument would be satisfied and stop arguing over how the bill should be. What you could do is have the modification only apply to privately run schools—she gives a suggestion—and keep the bill for other aspects. So she's giving suggestions. She's giving ideas.

Now, minister might not agree with this idea. You know, there are other ideas that are going to come forward that I might not necessarily agree with. It's not about that. It's not about necessarily agreeing with everything.

So this young person who is in grade 9 or the other comments that I had from the young person who wrote about the definition of bullying, the letter from Danielle Ruten, the letter from Elandra Angermann, and I've got many more young people who have written me correspondence and I'm going to read them. I'm going to read those pieces of correspondence. Some are from the minister of—or the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), some are from his constituency.

In fact, I got correspondence from every constituency in this province, and many of them are from young people saying, we just want to be heard, we just want to have our voice heard, because

bullying does mean a lot to them. And, on this, we're going to agree.

On this, we're going to agree that it's a serious issue. Nobody is going to doubt that. I doubt it's been taken in a serious way by this government, because it is the weakest antibullying bill in North America. So I don't think it's been taken seriously, but it is a serious issue, Mr. Speaker. It is a serious issue, and the kids get it. Kids know it's a serious issue.

But, from the correspondence that I'm getting, they get something else: they get it that this government isn't taking it seriously. They get it that the government isn't putting thing—anything forward that's really going to make a difference for them. And it means something to them, Mr. Speaker, it does. It means something to them and they want to have their voice heard.

And so some of them have brought letters forward, Mr. Speaker. Some of them have sent emails. Some of them will have made phone calls. Some of them have signed petitions. There's a lot of different ways that people can voice their concern.

But people voice their concern for a particular reason. And one of the concerns—or one of the questions that I've gotten more recently as this bill has sort of moved along the legislative agenda, the calendar, is: Is the government going to listen? That's the question I'm getting now. A lot of the debate—I mean, the bill has been debated publicly to some extent now, Mr. Speaker. There's been lots of opinions given on the bill and why it won't work, why it's not going to help kids who are being bullied. But the question that I'm getting most often now is: Is the government listening? Are they going to listen? And people are asking that for all the right reasons. People ask, is the government listening, for all the right reasons, because they want something that works. They want something that's going to make a difference.

And what frustrates me, Mr. Speaker, is that it's not as though we're devoid of examples. It's not as though you couldn't find examples in North America of things that work, of things that make a difference. There are lots of examples of things that actually work, and yet the government's ignored those things. The government doesn't, for whatever reason, want to have the effort or have the energy or have the motivation to put something in place that's actually going to make a difference, and that's frustrating and that's why people are saying, are they going to listen—are they going to listen?

And the Minister of Education has said, no, I'm not going to listen to you, not going to listen to you at all. I'm going to sit at committee and, I don't know, read—look at my BlackBerry and play BrickBreaker or whatever, but I'm not going to listen. I'm not going to be paying any attention, because paying attention is more than looking at somebody, Mr. Speaker; you've got to be listening. And if you're not going to be listening to somebody, that's not paying attention.

* (16:50)

So we're trying to give the minister—you know, we're trying to do her a favour, Mr. Speaker. We're trying to give her an opportunity to say to these kids that she's supposed to be helping, I'm going to listen. I'm not telling her she has to agree with everything. You know, that's not the suggestion here. We don't all agree on everything. That's not what this Legislature's ever going to be about. That's not what this Legislature should be about. It's good to have divergent opinions. That's helpful in a democracy. But, if you're not listening, that is not helpful. That is not a helpful part of the process.

And the minister staked her claim very early. She put her flag in the ground and said, I'm not listening; we're not making any changes. And she said it to all those kids. She said it to the young people who've written me and she said it to the young people who've written her, and that's really wrong and that's really unfortunate.

I know I'm running short of time today, Mr. Speaker, and I'm looking forward to having more time in the future to discuss a couple of suggestions for the government.

And I had the opportunity to look up some research, and I found this interesting. It was a study or an article that was written about a study, and it was done for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board on antibullying programs in schools, Mr. Speaker, and the study actually looked at all the studies. So it looked at 622 relevant articles published between 1983 and May of 2009, so over a lengthy period of time, 622 articles. And they looked—and these were all articles on bullying and antibullying programs and what worked and involved—articles had to involve the K-to-12 school years. And so the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board was publishing about this study that looked at 622 reports on antibullying and they distilled the most effective elements of an antibullying program. So I want to spend some time in the time that I have left today, and then whenever

this bill is called for debate again, giving some suggestions to the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan).

Now, she's said she's not going to listen to any suggestions and she's not interested in any changes, but I'm a fairly determined guy. I'm a fairly determined guy. I'm going to try because I'm not going to give up, and I'm not going to give up not for myself, but for the kids—for the kids who are saying, try to find a way to make the Minister of Education listen. She's supposed to be there for us. They don't believe that anymore, Mr. Speaker, and I'm not surprised. But they're the ones who are saying, can you try to find a way to make the Minister of Education listen?

So here's just a few, Mr. Speaker, and I'll take the time that I have. So it says that the most effective elements of an antibullying program that were associated with a decrease in antibullying—now, I'm just—there's a whole series of them and I'll list them off in the time that I have. But I want you to remember now, this is now distilled from 622 studies about antibullying programs in schools from K to 12, looked over from the time period of 1983 to 2009. So I don't think you could have a more comprehensive review, comprehensive study than this one. It looked at virtually every relevant study over that time.

So one of the key elements was parent training and parent meetings. This is about ensuring that parents understand the issues that are associated around bullying.

Now, I started off my comments about an hour ago, Mr. Speaker, about the issue about how things have changed in school since some of us were in school, and that's not to age us or to date us. It doesn't take long before things change in school. I remember being, you know, just four or five years out of high school, and thinking as I returned back to the school that I had graduated from, things have changed a lot in the four or five years.

And so the young people who are here as our pages, they're going to experience the same thing as, you know, they've graduated from high school and they'll realize that in four or five years, if they go back to the school that they came from, a lot of things have changed and they—kind of makes you feel old sometimes. But that's just how life is and things change quickly in schools and they change quickly for young people.

And so the parent training and the parent meetings is an important part of that to meet with the

parents and to have programs for the parents within schools so that they can understand the different things that kids are facing, so they can understand the different challenges that kids are facing. Now, I looked through Bill 18, and I didn't find anything about that.

I was surprised because it's—I don't think these are ranked in order of importance, Mr. Speaker, and I've got a whole bunch to go through, but it does say that one of the critical things that was found in reviewing these 622 programs is that one of the critical things was parent training and meetings—nothing in Bill 18.

You know, the minister talks about that this is going to be a strong bill, that this is going to be a strong bill for trying to reduce bullying and yet—nothing in there, nothing about parents and how to engage parents in the battle against bullying. And I was surprised. I was surprised that there was so little that—in fact, nothing. So that's pretty—that's little, Mr. Speaker. There was nothing in Bill 18 about engaging those parents and parents in the fight on bullying. But I think it's a critical, critical step. And, you know, I think that the parents, I think, would be appreciative of that.

Often what I hear from parents about the education system is they don't often feel they have enough information, they don't always know what's happening within the school system and it often takes a lot of personal engagement to go and to find out. And I know now, as a parent of a young child in school, that you have to make an extra effort sometimes and to go and to engage yourself into the school system and to find out what's happening in your son or daughter's class. And that's important and I would encourage parents to do that, but sometimes it has to be more proactive.

And, on the issue on bullying, I'd like to see that, and we'd like to see something more proactive that says that for parents, we want to ensure that you are part of this process, that you will understand what your kids are facing, that you'll understand the different dynamics and how the dynamics are different from when you were a kid, or maybe from when your last kid was in school, Mr. Speaker.

But I look through Bill 18 and it's not there. There's nothing there. And so this might be a good suggestion. This might be a good suggestion in committee when the bill goes forward. How do we engage parents in this? How do we ensure that parents are understanding what's happening with

bullying in the school system, Mr. Speaker? It'd be a good suggestion. It'd be something worth talking about, be worth—something worth having that discussion at committee, but it doesn't have the same value when the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) says it doesn't matter what's said in committee, I'm not going to listen.

And so we could have a number of people who could come forward who aren't politicians. And I know, as politicians, sometimes, you know, the things we say get diminished a bit in here because everything seems to be political or adversarial. But we could have people from the public come forward and they might be referencing this study or another study, Mr. Speaker, and they'd be saying we need to get parents more engaged in this. What is it in Bill 18 that's going to ensure that parents are actively engaged in trying to reduce bullying in the schools?

And I challenge any of the NDP members to show me that, but it's not in there. There's nothing in there. It's blank. And yet the study says that it's one of the factors, it's one of the key factors, in a successful antibullying program. And yet there's nothing there, nothing in Bill 18 about that. And there probably won't be if the minister doesn't agree to listen to changes and amendments at committee, Mr. Speaker.

I want to also look at, on the list as well, talks about classroom rules. The classroom rules—what happens actually in the classroom is one of the key things in terms of reducing bullying. Now, there's about 15 different suggestions about what makes an effective antibullying program, and I'm not going to be able to get through them all today and so I look forward to speaking about them in the future, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to say that when I look through this, Mr. Speaker, when I look through all the different suggestions—not suggestions—all the different evidence in terms of what makes a good antibullying program or antibullying law, not one of the things that are suggested in this particular review are in Bill 18, not one.

And I couldn't believe it. I had to double-check. I had to check my eyes again. I thought maybe I was missing something. I went through the list, one, one after the next, after the next, after the next, and go, somewhere it must be in Bill 18. You know, it is the weakest antibullying bill in North America, but, you know, the saying goes, even a blind squirrel finds a nut now and again.

There must have been one thing, there must have been one thing in what was seen as being an effective antibullying program out of these 10 or 15 suggestions. One of them must have accidentally landed up in Bill 18. Not one—not one was in there.

And so I think sometimes that the government thinks that I'm using, you know, is a catchphrase, that it's the weakest antibullying bill in North America. I'm not. I'm being quite sincere about that. I've looked at the studies and seen what makes a good antibullying bill, what can actually reduce—we're never going to eliminate it, but what could

reduce bullying and none of the things that are suggested in a review of 622 studies are in Bill 18, not even one. And yet the minister says she won't listen to any suggestions, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Steinbach will have unlimited time remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

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