

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

Official Report
(Hansard)

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The Honourable Daryl Reid
Speaker*

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	NDP
ALLUM, James, Hon.	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	NDP
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	NDP
BLADY, Sharon, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	NDP
BRAUN, Erna, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
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CULLEN, Cliff	Spruce Woods	PC
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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
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LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	Dawson Trail	NDP
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WIGHT, Melanie	Burrows	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	The Pas	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 9, 2014

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

Mr. Speaker: Introduction of bills?

PETITIONS

Tabor Home—Construction Delays

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

And the background to the petition is as follows:

- (1) Morden's population has grown nearly 20 per cent in the last five years.
- (2) Twenty-three per cent of Morden's population is over the age of 65.
- (3) The community worked for years to get the provincial government's commitment to build a new personal-care home, and as a result, construction of the new Tabor Home was finally promised in 2010.
- (4) The Minister of Health initially indicated that construction of the new Tabor Home would commence in 2013.
- (5) The Minister of Health subsequently broke her promise and delayed construction until spring 2014.
- (6) The Minister of Health broke that promise as well, delaying construction again until fall 2014.

And (7) in March of 2014, the Minister of Health broke her promise yet again, once more delaying construction of Tabor Home until 2015.

(8) Too many seniors continue to live out their final days and months in facilities far from home and

family because of a shortage of personal-care-home beds in the area.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to stop breaking their promises, stop the delays and keep their commitment to proceed with the construction of Tabor Home in 2014.

And this petition is signed by H. Dueck, C. Dyck, L.R. Burton and many other fine Manitobans.

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

**Provincial Sales Tax Increase—
Reversal and Referendum Rights**

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

- (1) The Balanced Budget, Fiscal Management and Taxpayer Accountability Act is a law that guarantees Manitobans the right to vote in a referendum either to approve or reject increases to the PST and other taxes.
- (2) Despite the fact that the right to vote is enshrined in legislation, the provincial government hiked the PST to 8 per cent as of July the 1st, 2013.
- (3) The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has asked the courts to rule on whether or not the government broke the law failing to address the referendum requirement before imposing the PST tax increase on Manitoban families.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

- (1) To urge the provincial government to reverse the PST increase.
- (2) To urge the provincial government to restore the right of Manitobans to vote in a referendum on increases to the PST.

This petition is submitted on behalf of C. Bremnell, J. Eyford, C. Thiessen and many other fine Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker: Any further petitions? Seeing none, committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund 2013 Annual Report.

Mr. Speaker: Any further tabling of reports? Seeing none, ministerial statements?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Parkland Christian School, we have 14 grades 5 to 9 students under the direction of Calvin Wiebe in this—not sure which constituency this would be, but I'd like to welcome you on behalf of all members, since it doesn't indicate here—pardon me, the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers). My apologies. It's for the—on behalf of the honourable member for Dauphin.

And also I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members, and I know we've kind of made this into a practice in the Assembly, but we've had the good fortune of having a very good group, once again, of pages serving the Assembly. And I want to draw to the attention of honourable members that we have two pages who are on their last scheduled shift this afternoon.

And first we have Mathieu Jubinville, who is a grade 11 student at Centre scolaire Léo-Rémillard in grade 11. And Mathieu provides an improv—participates in improv theatre and Youth Parliament. He participated in the western Canadian finals in BC this past spring. And with the improv—along with the improv, Mathieu is also active in the school soccer team. And, of course, you know, with the starting of the World Cup soccer, Mathieu is significantly interested in the activities of the World Cup, and he has his team picked out. Mathieu hopes to attend the Asper School of Business at the University of Manitoba, and his grade average is 96 per cent.

Also we have Destiny Oliveira, who is a grade 12 student who has been with us as a page during this session. And Destiny is a student attending West Kildonan Collegiate and graduates

this year. She will be attending the University of Manitoba this fall and study the sciences. She hopes to pursue a career in forensic medicine. She will—she also has been working at Walmart the past two years and maintains, I believe, over a 90 per cent average in her studies as well.

Both pages indicate that they are looking for meaningful jobs this summer, so if any of you know of opportunities—*[interjection]* So I'm sure if honourable members know of any opportunities, they'd be more than welcome to receive that information from you.

So we wish both our pages well and thank them very much for their service to the Assembly during this session. It's been quite an experience for all of us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Tax Increases Provincial Out-Migration

Mr. Speaker: Now we'll proceed to oral questions.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mathieu, I'm sure you've got many stimulating ideas for your future career, congratulations. Destiny, thank you so much for your work here.

* (13:40)

New data released recently shows that our province lost over 18,000 people to other provinces last year while gaining only 13,655 in that same period. That means a net population deficit of 4,465 people.

Now, the Premier has said in response to this that he's not overly concerned about those numbers, and that is, in itself, a cause for concern. These are the highest numbers in eight years and they clearly are linked to the highest tax increases in 25 years, and the reality is that these are also representative of a continuing trend under the NDP, which has the highest out-migration numbers, the highest population deficit of any province in Canada. Those numbers speak volumes about the lack of willingness of this government to look for reasons and to create reasons for Mathieu and Destiny and many other people to remain in this province and pursue their dreams.

Would the Premier clarify this issue and make sure that he makes it clear to Manitobans that he is or

is not concerned about the loss of so many people from our beautiful province?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): What we believe is that Manitoba is a growing province, over 140,000 more people living in Manitoba than when members opposite were in office, Mr. Speaker. Over—those people—two Brandons, we've grown the population of Manitoba by about the equivalent of two Brandons. A very different story in the '90s when people were leaving, we had net loss of people in Manitoba. We have a net gain now.

The average population in Manitoba now is the youngest it's been in decades at about 37 years old, and we're growing the economy, the infrastructure program, 58,900 jobs.

I was so pleased to see that just last week we announced another 93 good jobs here in Manitoba with an organization called SkipTheDishes. They are going to provide cutting-edge new technology that will help our restaurant—will help our young entrepreneurs and our restaurants in Winnipeg provide home delivery of some of the most fantastic cuisine in Canada.

That's just one example. Then there is the Canadian Tire story—

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

Mr. Pallister: Mr. Speaker, we applaud success in our small-business sector in this province, but small-business people in this province shouldn't be used as cover by a Premier that can't come up with a plan to keep people in this province, nor should new immigrants to our province be used as an excuse for a Premier and a government that seem to want to export our people rather than finding opportunities for them to be meaningfully employed and to stay here closer to their families, closer to the people that they love the most.

The Premier has said, and he obscured the problem, but he has said clearly in his answer that it's not a concern to him, and it should be. The broken-promise taxes that this Premier and his colleagues introduced to this province in so many categories are speeding the departure of people from our province, and we believe that when you have a government that is the highest spending, it's going to have the highest taxes and magnify this problem even further.

Would the Premier like to clarify that he believes, based on his first answer, that his increasing of the taxes across this province is somehow addressing this problem of out-migration?

Mr. Selinger: Good jobs are being created in this province not only through the infrastructure program—58,900 jobs—not only through that program's ability to lift the economy and create good opportunities, but we've also seen Price Industries announce another 175 jobs in Manitoba, R & D jobs—research and development—high-skilled jobs, good jobs for Manitobans graduating from our post-secondary institutions.

Canadian Tire spent \$50 million in downtown Winnipeg upgrading a cloud centre with an app lab. They're going to create 50 jobs just to get started with good graduates from our universities and our new media sector that are going to work there and create the future of retailing in this country, what Canadian Tire now calls e-tailing.

MTS has announced a new data centre with additional jobs in Manitoba.

New Flyer is bringing jobs to Manitoba, and, by the way, New Flyer, the best company in North America for the electric bus. Recently, the Transit Authority of New York ordered 295 New Flyer electric buses, developed right here in Manitoba, and those—

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

Mr. Pallister: Again, the Premier jumping on the ribbon-cutting success of Manitoba's small business is predictable and totally understandable. How much success would we have in the absence of all the broken-promise taxes that this Premier said he wouldn't raise?

The Premier knew we had a high-tax problem. His colleagues knew that we had a high-tax problem when they went to the doors of the people of this province and promised them that they wouldn't raise taxes, and just a few months ago, in 2011, in the last election campaign, they knew we had a problem then. They forgot it right after. And then they decided they'd jack up taxes and fees at a record level, more than at any previous level since Howard Pawley's day, 25 years before.

Now, that has resulted in an out-migration problem for our province that's worsening with each passing year under this administration, and the

Premier of Manitoba likes to trumpet the success of our small-business sector and pretend that he's part of it. But the reality is, of course, we'd have far more success in his absence and in the absence of the policies he's foisted on those same small businesses.

Will he admit that his policy, therefore, based on his first two answers, is to raise taxes further and then claim that he's part of the success of our economy?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, when the member opposite was in Cabinet, the small-business tax rate in Manitoba was 9 per cent. What's the small-business tax rate in Manitoba now? Zero. Every small business is saving \$55,000 because we've reduced the tax from 9, which was among the highest in the country, down to zero, which is the lowest in the country. That's what we've done for small business.

What did the member opposite do for small business? Nothing, Mr. Speaker. Less people in Manitoba, the economy was stalled, people were not getting jobs. Young people were moving away.

Now we have young people getting an education in Manitoba. If they educate—once they complete that education and stay and work in the province, they get 60 per cent of their tuition back. They're working at Canadian Tire. They're working in the health sector. They're working in the professions, in the engineering sector. They're involved in the export sector. Good jobs in Manitoba for Manitoba young people, that's what we're doing, 58,900 more on the infrastructure program alone.

And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite, they've voted against every single one of those initiatives. They cut post-secondary education; we fund it—

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

Tax and Fee Increases Long-Term Economic Impact

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that Manitoba businesses are doing well not because of this NDP government but in spite of it. That's the reality.

Mr. Speaker, over the last two years this NDP government has imposed tax and fee increases on Manitobans to the tune of \$500 million. This has placed an unnecessary burden on Manitobans, especially those with low and fixed incomes.

I ask the Minister for Jobs and the Economy: Given the hardships that her high tax and fee increases have caused Manitobans, will she indicate what the economic impact will be on Manitoba over the next five years?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): I thank the member for the question, although I have to note that only a Progressive Conservative in Manitoba can stand up and pretend to cuddle up to small business when they were the ones with a 9 per cent tax on small business. We were the ones that worked very closely with business to reduce that tax to zero.

I can tell the member opposite that our plan is very clear and it's been clear since we brought the budget forward, \$5.5 billion invested in core infrastructure that's not only going to go a long way to improve our trade corridors for export, but in the meantime, it's going to create very good, high-paying jobs for 58,900 Manitobans.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, the minister seems unable to answer the question, and this is why, Mr. Speaker, we are introducing an Opposition Day motion this afternoon calling on the NDP government to immediately commission an independent report to evaluate the economic impact of the more than \$500 million in tax and fee hikes over the next five years.

Will she agree to commission such a study today?

* (13:50)

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting question once again coming from a group who just this morning stood in a phony press conference to discredit the Conference Board of Canada, who conducted an independent report to show that not only will \$5.5 billion in core infrastructure over five years result in a \$6.3-billion boost to our economy, \$5.4 billion to export, \$1.4-billion boost to retail sales, but will, indeed, also employ young Manitobans in high-paying jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we know that Manitobans work very hard for the livings that they make. That's why we want to work together to ensure that they get the training that they need to get those good jobs so they can stay right here in Manitoba.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, that has nothing to do with the economic impact that the \$500 million

of tax and fee hikes over the last two years will have on Manitobans over the next five years.

Less disposable income means less money to spend in the economy here in Manitoba. This will have a negative impact on the Manitoba economy, and on behalf of Manitoba families we want to know what that impact will be over the next five years.

Will the minister agree to commission such a study that will provide some transparency and accountability to the impact of their decision to hike taxes and fees on the backs of Manitoba families in order to pay for their spending addiction?

Ms. Oswald: Well, Mr. Speaker, silly me, I thought I was offering the member opposite an opportunity to apologize for her leader's discrediting remarks about the independence and integrity of the Conference Board. She did not seize that opportunity and that's regrettable.

But I can say to the member opposite that when we're talking about economic growth in Manitoba we certainly can't rely on the member opposite, her leader, to cherry-pick stats. We can tell her, however, that since July the 1st weekly earnings in Manitoba have increased 3.2 per cent, the fourth best of all the provinces, better than the national average, and since July 1st Manitoba's inflation rate has increased 1.5 per cent, the third lowest of all the provinces.

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

NDP Tax Policies Economic Impact

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Mr. Speaker, in a press release last week, the Finance Minister made a connection between tax credits and the creation of good jobs.

Now, by acknowledging the correlation between taxes and job creation the Minister of Finance (Ms. Howard) is also acknowledging that the NDP government's failure to reduce the tax burden on Manitobans harms job creation. It harms Manitoba families.

Where is the proof of that? Under this NDP government Manitoba ranks ninth for wage growth, ninth for job creation, highest outward migration, an inflation rate that is double the national average.

Mr. Speaker, will the Finance Minister just admit that her NDP government's PST hike is hitting Manitobans hard in the pocketbook every day?

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Well, I've been listening to the line of questioning from members opposite and, on the one hand, members opposite will not acknowledge the extremely good work that new immigrants to Manitoba do, a conversion. A couple of months ago they wouldn't even count them in the total, but on this side of the House we recognize that newcomers to Manitoba create new businesses, which create—in turn create jobs, which in turn provide wages for Manitoba families.

I also listened to the members opposite last week scoff at the partnerships that Manitoba businesses have with the Manitoba government, incentives for bringing their businesses here and expanding, incentives to develop training. They disregard that entirely and then wonder how these jobs get created.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, last week in question period, the Finance Minister actually had to resort to citing her government's sad record when it comes to the basic personal exemption. Now, I remind the minister that her—the NDP government is a laggard and not a leader when it comes to the basic threshold at which this government begins to collect tax from wage earners.

Mr. Speaker, Manitoba raised—this government raised the basic personal exemption just 20 per cent since 2004, while in the same period Saskatchewan nearly doubled the basic personal exemption, and the basic personal exemption is unchanged under this year's budget.

Will the Minister of Finance just admit that her NDP's tight-fisted tax policies are hurting Manitobans?

Ms. Oswald: Again, the member and the Minister of Finance have had this debate many times before.

I will remind the member that Manitoba is, in fact, it continues to be one of the most affordable places to live in Canada, and that is according to the Saskatchewan government, the very item that he cites. Here is what the Saskatchewan government themselves say in its comparisons of Canadian cities: single person making \$25,000, Winnipeg third best in Canada; families with \$75,000 in income, Winnipeg third best in Canada.

There are a number of ways to slice it, Mr. Speaker. We know that the very province that he cites as being the exemplar is turning to Manitoba, saying that we're a very affordable place to live.

Mr. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased that this minister wants to talk about affordability because today is tax freedom day in Canada, and on tax freedom day the average Canadian family has, of course, earned enough money to pay the total tax bill imposed by government, but tax freedom day in Manitoba comes later than BC, comes later than Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario. That's because Manitobans pay more income tax than all other jurisdictions in western Manitoba. That's because this minister doesn't incrementally raise the tax brackets like everyone else does.

And if—and tax relief, if the minister says it is a factor in the creation of good jobs, then will the minister just admit that her government's excessive taxes are harming Manitoba families, harming the economy, harming job creation?

Ms. Oswald: In 1995, when the Leader of the Opposition was in the Cabinet, a family of four paid \$7,056 in provincial income tax and \$2,389 in property tax. That's a fact. In '97, when he left the Cabinet to pursue his glory, that family paid \$7,000.60 in provincial income tax, \$2,575 in property tax.

Today the same family of four pays \$4,514 in provincial income tax, \$2,265 in property tax. That family of four is paying \$2,546 less in income tax and \$124 less in property tax. It's arithmetic.

PST Increase Impact on Families

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, with the school year almost over, it's time for families to start planning their summer vacations.

Thanks to this spendDP government, however, families have far less money to spend this coming summer; \$1,600 out of family pockets means less money for kids to participate in extracurriculars, less trips to see grandparents, less money to attend sporting events and less money to enjoy summer events, all within this great province of ours.

Mr. Speaker, why did this government take \$1,600 away from Manitoba families to fund their political projects?

Hon. Stan Struthers (Acting Minister of Finance): Well, it might be a suggestion for members opposite to stick to the facts and not just make stuff up like they usually do.

Time and time again, we've seen over the last 15 years one example after the next of this

government actually providing tax relief to Manitobans, putting more money in their pockets.

And, as my colleague has pointed out, on the income tax side, when the Leader of the Opposition left this provincial Legislature, the provincial income tax was \$7,060 for a family of four. Today that same family of four pays \$4,514. That's a lot less income tax today than what they spent when the Conservatives last had their hands on the wheel.

So we need no lessons—

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

Mr. Ewasko: Sixteen hundred dollars, Mr. Speaker, is a large amount of money that this government took off the kitchen tables of Manitobans and that they have spent at the Cabinet table.

Sixteen hundred dollars represents 58 tickets to a Bombers game, 160 trips to the Children's Museum, 200 tickets to the Goldeyes game or 230 trips to the zoo. Rather than allowing kids to go to these events, this government is taking that money to fuel their political spending.

Mr. Speaker, why is this government stopping children and families from experiencing great events that we have here in this fantastic province of ours, Manitoba?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, what's clear is that if it was left up to those folks across the way, those stadiums and those arenas wouldn't be built in order to go to see a game.

* (14:00)

Maybe members opposite are interested in savings for Manitobans when it comes to property taxes, Mr. Speaker, because I remember the day when the Leader of the Opposition had his opportunity. We saw property taxes going up and up and up every year. We saw no support for school divisions and we saw the passing along of taxes that was perpetrated by their government onto school divisions.

For example, when the Leader of the Opposition was last in government, that family of four in 1997 paid \$2,575 in property tax. We've dropped that by \$124 over that amount of time. That's real money—

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

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Speaker, \$1,600 from each and every Manitoba family to fuel the NDP spending addiction is this government's record.

Manitoba families are now forced to make tough decisions, and many events they would otherwise attend are not being—left out. This government took this money without asking Manitoba families for it. This government decided that \$1,600 spent on sporting events or trips to the zoo or trips to the Children's Museum would rather be spent at the Cabinet table than spent—and spent on political projects, Mr. Speaker, which includes lawyers, by the sounds of it.

Mr. Speaker, why did this government let down children and the families in this province?

Mr. Struthers: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there they go again, just making up numbers to suit their own political purposes.

Mr. Speaker, what—a number that is real is the amount of money that we've saved seniors in terms of tax credits. And this year, in Budget 2014, we will save seniors another round of money in terms of eliminating them from their portion of education property taxes. That was a commitment that we made to seniors. It's a commitment that we're following up on for seniors, and it's a commitment—it's a budget item that members opposite actually voted against.

Flooding (2014) Southwest Manitoba

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, this Saturday the opposition leader, the MLA for Midland and myself toured the flooded areas of the southeast—the southwest area of the corner of the province, including communities of Pierson, Melita, Reston and Deloraine. The flooding has caused roads to close, causing serious issues with EMS and schoolchildren.

Why is this government ignoring the education and health care in southwest Manitoba at this time—at their time of need?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister responsible for Emergency Measures): The member raised the issue in terms of flooding, and, indeed, we've had significant flooding this past number of months. I want to point out that we've had significant rainfall both in April and May; there was 200 per cent of normal.

A number of RMs have declared states of emergency, including the RM of Edward. And I want

to indicate that our staff at EMO are working with those municipalities, and we'll certainly make any assistance available to them.

Again, I want to stress to members opposite that we take the flooding very seriously this year. We have Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin approaching flood levels, Mr. Speaker, and, again, EMO is on top of this and is working with affected municipalities.

Mr. Pivniuk: Mr. Speaker, the municipalities haven't even heard from this government.

Mr. Speaker, in some parts, less than 10 per cent of the cropland has been seeded in the grow—in this growing season, and this means a large percentage of cropland will not be seeded at all this year. Some of these communities, this is their fifth consecutive year without a crop.

Why is this Minister of Agriculture not aware of the crisis unfolding in southwest Manitoba, and doesn't he realize—or does he care?

Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development): First and foremost, I want to recognize the agriculture producers that are suffering with excess moisture in geographical areas. We've got areas in the province that are almost completely done and we've got areas, such as in the southwest, that are experiencing. But not only that, we've got areas in the northwest region, as well, experiencing excess moisture and the problem.

But I do want to educate the member opposite, it was this government that brought in excess moisture program, where the producers were asking when they were in power and they never listened to the producers. So the question I—is, why was that government on the other side chose not to bring in excess moisture?

It's this government that's providing opportunities to insure for excess moisture of \$50, \$75 or \$100 an acre, and that's a choice that they have today, not when those guys were in power.

Mr. Pivniuk: Apparently, this government's not listening to them either.

The RM of Edward declared a state of emergency. The agriculture industry is in crisis. The oil industry is in crisis. The provincial roads are impassable, and no flood mitigation plan for this government yet again.

Why is this government ignoring the people of southwestern Manitoba and these desperate times?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Mineral Resources): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was surprised when the members of the opposition were with me in Brandon on Friday when we announced with the member from Brandon 70 new jobs in the oil industry in Manitoba and a head office in Brandon.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the Edward RM situation, as I understand that 10 to 15 per cent of the oil wells are shut down because they've been circumvented by water, and the industry's on top of it.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are drilling more wells today, 50,000 barrels of oil a day, than any other time in Manitoba history. There are more people employed in that area than any other time in Manitoba history.

As usual, the members opposite are outright wrong.

Ambulance Off-Load Wait Times ER Nursing Shortage

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, despite all the NDP promises to fix ambulance off-load times, they are getting worse, not better, under this NDP government.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health to explain to us if the serious nursing shortage in Winnipeg ERs is negatively affecting ambulance off-load times.

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Health): I'll put a few facts on the record right now.

Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of people who arrive in our ERs by ambulance, 75 to 85 per cent are off-loaded within the benchmark time. We know that sometimes they aren't off-loaded as quickly and we do want that to happen a little bit more quickly.

But what happens in our ERs is people are triaged according to need; sometimes the person with the most urgent need comes by ambulance, but sometimes they don't. Sometimes they came in off the street, either by a family member or walk in to the ER, and therefore they are treated first.

The people in the front lines at our ERs, the experts in health care, the nurses and doctors, the triage people make the decision of who should be treated first. Sometimes it's an ambulance, sometimes it's not, but we'll leave it up to those health-care professionals to make that decision.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, patients in Manitoba would be better off if this minister would pay a little bit more attention to what is going on in Winnipeg ERs. They're in trouble, and instead of the comments that she makes in here, she should really pay more attention.

Mr. Speaker, according to the most recent FIPPA, Winnipeg ERs are short 48 ER nurses: Concordia, six; Grace, eight; Seven Oaks, six; St. B, four; Vic, six; Misericordia, three. And the Health Sciences Centre are short 15 ER nurses. When Brian Sinclair died waiting for care they were short 18; they're short right now 15. Those are not good numbers.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Health to tell us: What effect is this very serious ER nursing shortage having on off-load times for ambulances so that they don't have to be stuck there five to six to 10 hours as many of them are?

Ms. Selby: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Sinclair arrived at the ER with a treatment that should have been done and it wasn't; it was a tragedy that should have been prevented. Immediate action was taken right after Mr. Sinclair's death. A critical incident investigation was started that day, and all five of the recommendations were implemented, including hiring 60 more front-line staff workers to work in our ERs.

Mr. Speaker, many, many things have changed since that day because we all recognize it's a tragedy that should not have happened. It's why now we have a new triage system in place in the ER. It's why there are more staff in the ER.

Mr. Speaker, our front-line staff have a very challenging job. They have to make very difficult positions—decisions, but we'll be there to support them.

* (14:10)

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, these are freedom of information numbers. There aren't more staff in the ERs, there's less.

They are short 48 nurses in Winnipeg ERs. They are also short four emergency doctors in Winnipeg hospitals. Having a shortage of four ER doctors right now in Winnipeg hospitals and 48 nurses is creating a scenario out there that is not good for patients and it's not good for safe patient care.

So I would like to ask this Minister of Health to get her head around this issue and to explain: Do

these shortages have anything to do with long ER off-load times?

Ms. Selby: Actually, we have 560 more doctors working in Manitoba now than when they were in government. We also have a record number of nurses working here. And I can table this to show you right now, Mr. Speaker.

The only time we saw a significant shortage of nurses was when they were in government, because when they started in 1992, there were 15,665 nurses, but, unfortunately, by 1999 that number was down to 14,092.

Today we're up to 17,795, and we're going to keep hiring more.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Climate Change Policies Reduction Plans

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, to the growing—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for River Heights has the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, to the growing list of NDP manage—mismanagement and abandoned accountabilities, we can add environmental, social and educational issues.

First, this NDP government abandoned its own legislated requirement to address climate change and to meet targets. Manitoba has come nowhere near the targets, another broken NDP commitment.

With the broken promise and rising greenhouse gases, why, in 15 years, has this government not produced an adequate plan to adapt to the extreme temperatures in Manitoba's future but instead, in its most recent green plan, just said at some point in the future they'll do something?

I ask the Premier: When he will—will he finally have a completed adaptation plan and implement it for adapting to climate change?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Every single day, we are putting measures in place and Manitobans are working on things that adapt Manitoba to being—to climate change and to be one of the greenest provinces in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, couple of examples: Our Power Smart programs recently announced will reduce consumption 157,000 kilowatt hours—milli-kilowatt

hours will be reduced. Manitobans will save money, they will produce less greenhouse gas emissions, they will keep their cost of living affordable.

Another example of climate change adaptation: We're building flood protection for Lake Manitoba, Lake St. Martin, the Assiniboine River valley, with a program for individual homeowners and cottage owners to protect their properties. All of these things allow us to adapt to the climate.

We're building infrastructure. We're building roads at higher levels. We're building them in a sturdier fashion. We're recycling more materials in those roads so we reduce the footprint on the cost of doing those roads. That's climate change adaptation.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have, by—UNESCO considers Manitoba to have the best environmental education program in the world—

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

Social Welfare Issues Government Commitment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, too many of the Premier's plans are fitful and temporary, like the subsidy for hybrid electric cars that he put on and then abandoned in 2010. The government's laissez-faire approach to—is not just toward the environment.

On social issues, for example, delivering for this and the next generation, the government is also failing. The number of children in the care of CFS continues to rise 10 times more than most jurisdictions. The number of people with diabetes has doubled. There's been no decrease in the incidence of FASD.

I ask the Premier: When will we get real solutions from this NDP problems—for all the problems that they have created and contributed to through their mismanagement?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): Manitoba's investments in early childhood development are the best in Canada. Manitoba's investment in the daycare system is—there's only one other province that comes close to it, the province of Quebec. Our initiative to reduce class size in schools from K to 3 to around 20 children on average is one of the best initiatives in Canada. Our initiatives on the skills agenda in our junior high schools and high schools, considered among the best in Canada.

On the child-welfare system, we have put a very significant program in place to help families at the community level, to support and strengthen families in those neighbourhoods.

And, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, I just signed an agreement in France with one of their major departments where they have a very diverse population, along with the government of Israel and the government of Manitoba, to do some of the most cutting-edge fetal alcohol spectrum disorder research in the world, housed here right in Manitoba and providing good results for people around the world. That research is being done here in Manitoba.

Education System Test Score Results

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Bits and pieces, Mr. Speaker, but not solving problems. That's the issue.

Now, on education, the Program for International Student Assessment reported that Manitoba students fare among the worst in Canada on problem solving. Accountability involves seeing problems and then solving the problems. This problem-solving deficit of the NDP government has now been extended by the government to our children, and so far the Premier is not doing so well either. He's not put forward a solution to the problem of poor scores of Manitoba students on these international tests in problem solving, and the example of his NDP government is poor.

Can the Premier tell this Legislature today what solutions he will be implementing to solve this problem-solving problem?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Premier): So it's like the member missed the Throne Speech, missed the budget and missed every announcement that's been made through the Department of Education and Advanced Learning, Mr. Speaker.

The math curriculum has been revised and will continue to be revised with a focus on fundamental skills, but not at the expense of the ability to solve larger problems and understand concepts. We are going to get the right mix there, in consultation with our math professors and math instructors throughout the province of Manitoba.

The English—the curriculum for language skills has been updated and improved in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

The science curriculum—just this morning, the minister announced a number of new labs for science labs in Manitoba, an announcement which will allow our schools to have the best state-of-the-art labs anywhere in the country.

The member's missing the point. He's missing what's going on, and he's voted against every single one of those initiatives. If he wants to solve problems, he should stop voting for the Tories and vote for our budget.

Youth Summer Employment Program Announcement

Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, we know that we have more and more people remaining in Manitoba and continued population growth, and that means that we have more and more youth looking for summer employment, which every parent wants their child to find.

So I'd like to ask the Minister for Children and Youth Opportunities to update the House on what he's doing with regard to summer employment for our youth.

Hon. Kevin Chief (Minister of Children and Youth Opportunities): I was very proud to announce our youth summer employment programs, Mr. Speaker, to be joined by Doug Dobrowolski, the president of AMM, all of our partners, employers, members of law enforcement, parents and non-profit organizations and hundreds and hundreds of youth.

We're very proud that we're going to have more young people working this summer than ever before. They're going to be working more hours than ever before. They're going to be making more money than they ever have before, Mr. Speaker.

We know that when young people get that critical first job, they stay here, they establish a career here and they raise their families here. And we want to make sure that the most talented young people in the nation come from the province of Manitoba and stay in the province of Manitoba.

We'll have thousands of young people all throughout the province being role models, being ambassadors, working in their neighbourhoods.

I want to say this was such a popular announcement that the hashtag #yourcareerstartshere was trending on Twitter all day on Friday.

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

Provincial Court Activities Tabling of Annual Report

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I think the minister's right about one thing: Our young people are ambassadors, but unfortunately it's to Saskatchewan, Alberta, because that's where they're finding jobs.

* (14:20)

Mr. Speaker, under The Provincial Court Act, within three months after the end of each fiscal year of the government there must be prepared an annual report about the activities and the function of the Provincial Court. According to the website, that report hasn't been tabled for three years.

Can the Attorney General give us an update about when the Provincial Court reports will be brought up to date?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Certainly, the Provincial Court is the workhorse court of Manitoba. Of course, the Provincial Court sits in more than 60 locations across the province of Manitoba dealing with a wide range of criminal, family and child protection matters.

And I agree with the member that it is helpful to have the report from the Provincial Court. I have discussed this with the chief judge of Manitoba and I will discuss it again, because I agree that it's helpful for this Legislature to fully understand the good work the Provincial Court is doing.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: And prior to members' statements, I'd like to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon from the Winnipeg Adult EAL Program, we have 40 adult English as an additional language students under the direction of Chris Bertram, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer).

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Special Olympics Awareness Week

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to celebrate Special Olympics Awareness Week in Manitoba this June 8th through 14th.

I would like to welcome our guests from Special Olympics Manitoba and thank them for being here today in the gallery: Simon Munday, Helen Halliday, Larry Chornoboy, Robert Klombies, Darren Anderson and two of our amazing Manitoba athletes, Adam Lloyd and Jennifer Adams. Welcome here today.

Mr. Speaker, it was my honour to present private member's Bill 209 last year which received royal assent to proclaim that in each year the second week in June is to be known throughout Manitoba as Special Olympics Awareness Week.

Special Olympics Manitoba's mission statement is to enrich the lives of Manitobans with an intellectual disability through active participation in sport. The programs that are offered by Special Olympics Manitoba are athlete centred. Each athlete is placed in a program which best matches their individual talents and all receive the guidance of a certified coach. The overall goal is for each athlete to have the opportunity to become all they can be physically, mentally, socially and emotionally in order to become accepted, respected and productive members of society.

As part of Special Olympics Manitoba's awareness strategy, Mr. Speaker, I have to recognize their dedication to their community outreach throughout our province. This year the Accept with no Exception notice was sent out to all Manitoba schools to challenge students to spread the message of inclusion, respect and sport participation. Schools were encouraged to support awareness by organizing assemblies and sporting events as well as promotions by way of announcements and social media outlets. This endeavour has proven to have engaged thousands of Manitobans in the Special Olympics Manitoba spirit of completion and community cohesiveness.

I ask that all members of the House join me in recognizing all of the athletes and Special Olympics Manitoba, and I also want to offer a special thank you to all the coaches, the volunteers, the family members for all their hard work and dedication towards supporting our athletes. Congratulations and bonne chance.

World Trade Centre Winnipeg

Mr. Bidhu Jha (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, increased trade in Manitoba is opening up new opportunities for local businesses and creating good jobs for families. Manitoba's central location and accessible

transportation system are key to making us a global centre for trade. By supporting organizations like World Trade Centre Winnipeg we can help foster growth and set up Manitoba an international trade hub

Mr. Speaker, WTC Winnipeg was completed in 2012, though the initial vision of this project began much earlier. I like to thank Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce CEO Dave Angus, CentrePort CEO Diane Gray and present CEO of WTC Mariette Mulaire for their dedication and hard work in establishing our own World Trade Centre in the city with a clear set objective to promote international trade. Partnering with Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce and supported by our government, this global trade network of over 96 countries facilitates international trade opportunities and encourages investment in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, as the special envoy for international trade, I have been working with the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of Manitoba. I'm keen to build more trade and investment opportunities for Manitoba's growing economy, to develop new trade opportunities with growing markets in Brazil, Russia, India and China. As a result of our efforts in our global trade, Manitoba's total exports increased nearly 12 per cent in 2013, increasing revenues for Manitoba companies and getting Manitoba recognized on the world stage. This is the largest increase in any province.

On April 15th, I was happy to attend a WTC Winnipeg luncheon with Canada's Minister of International Trade, Ed Fast. At this event, Manitoba entrepreneurs had the chance to learn about Canada's foreign trade policies first-hand. New free trade agreements and export growth were the two main topics of the event. I was very happy to discuss ideas with the International Trade Minister regarding trade from a Manitoba perspective.

Mr. Speaker, by investing in the world trade opportunities like WTC, we are creating opportunities for positive economic growth while building on Manitoba's entrepreneurial spirit.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Flooding 2014—Southwest Manitoba

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, June 7th, 2014, the opposition leader, the MLA of Midland and I toured the flooded areas that have been hit hardest in the southwest corner of

the province, including communities of Pierson, Melita, Reston and Deloraine areas.

These communities, less than 10 per cent of the cropland has been seeded this growing season. With the crop insurance deadlines quickly approaching, much of the land under water means that large percentage of cropland will not be seeded again this year. For some of these communities, this is the fifth consecutive year without a crop. This is affecting many farm families, and businesses in the communities will suffer.

Municipal officials in Reston and Pierson advise that the oil industry has suspended some of its operations due to the excess standing water and on lease sites. This will cause lost tax revenue for our province. The RM of Edward has determined a state of emergency exists and has passed resolutions to halt any heavy-hauling activities that both agriculture and oil industry, which some of these agriculture activities are being approved by on a case-by-case basis. School buses and emergency vehicle routes are also compromised.

The RM of Edward's CAO, Lisa Pierce, has requested help on behalf of the residents, the farmers, the business in the area, and many of the residents are worried about how they would get out of—if they need to leave.

Mr. Speaker, today I am representing this statement in the Assembly and ensuring that the—a voice of the taxpayers, the residents and farmers and business people are heard during this difficult time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

École Robert-Browning 50th Anniversary

Hon. Sharon Blady (Minister of Healthy Living and Seniors): Mr. Speaker, throughout the school year, staff, students, parents and alumni at École Robert-Browning have been celebrating the school's 50th anniversary.

École Robert-Browning is a vibrant community and it is near and dear to many in Kirkfield Park. The school was built in 1963 and originally served English students in kindergarten to grade 6. As demand for French language education grew, École Robert-Browning became dual track in 1982 and was fully converted to French immersion in 1986.

Today, École Robert-Browning is the largest elementary school in the St. James school division. The staff are dedicated to their students and have

built a school environment that inspires creativity and growth.

Students have been busy coming up with unique ways to celebrate the 50th anniversary. Three beautiful mosaics handcrafted by staff and students hang in the hallways to mark the occasion. One mosaic features the school at the heart of a number of pathways; it signifies how the students view the school as a community where people from all walks of life come together. Along the paths are 51 hearts representing each year in the school's history and one extra for the school's future.

This week, a year's worth of anniversary activities will come to a grand finale at the annual parent council picnic. The event will feature carnival games and face painting for children, a memory lane so alumni can reflect on photos from the past, and a performance by a local band, The triChorders, featuring École Robert-Browning teacher, M. Bohémier.

By celebrating its past, École Robert-Browning has built school spirit and a stronger community, but what has a lot of people excited is the school's future. A new vice-principal will be joining the staff this fall, and Principal Michelle Clarke is currently reviewing options to enhance the school grounds.

Mr. Speaker, École Robert-Browning has shaped many lives and continues to inspire students each day. Congratulations to all the staff and students, past and present, on being a part of École Robert-Browning's 50-year journey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Major Marc George Retirement

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize a valued member of the Brandon, western Manitoba and CFB Shilo community, Major Marc George, retired. Major George has served his country with dedication, professionalism and humility. Throughout his career, Marc George has been a committed advocate for Canadian military history. Thanks to his dedication, CFB Shilo is now home to the Royal Canadian Artillery Museum, where he has served as director since its inception and where he will soon retire from this summer.

* (14:30)

The RCA Museum tells the story of the Canadian Artillery, Canada's Gunners, and is the only site in Canada to bring together their story

under one roof. RCA veterans, family members, interested Canadians and international visitors now travel to CFB Shilo to discover the long history of Canada's gunners.

As director of the RCA Museum, Marc George has used his renowned historical passion and military expertise to establish a truly exceptional museum. In March 2014, the RCA Museum received the highest level designation for a Canadian museum. Out of the 70 Canadian Forces museums, the RCA Museum at CFB Shilo now stands as one of only four to be so designated. This is largely thanks to Major George's dedication to the preservation and promotion of Canada's military history.

In 2011, in recognition of his dedication to the RCA heritage and history, Major George received the Colonel Commandant's Commendation, an award recognizing exceptional service to the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery.

Marc George has been an incredible force for good while at CFB Shilo. Whether as a commander or historian, Marc George's leadership at CFB Shilo was an inspiration to all who served alongside him. The province and the nation has been well served by his good work.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Province of Manitoba, I ask all honourable members to join with me in congratulating Major Marc George on an exceptional career. I wish him well in his retirement, which will include documentary movie productions and a rumoured book, and I thank his wife, Caryl, for so generously sharing Marc with our country.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no grievances, orders of the day, government business.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Could we move first into the Opposition Day motion on commissioning a report. We'll then move into concurrence and third readings in the following order: Bill 300, Bill 64, Bill 72, Bill 208, Bill 209 and Bill 214. And then, Mr. Speaker, we'll move on to debate on second readings on Bill 69, Bill 70 and Bill 71.

Mr. Speaker: The orders of business for this afternoon include starting with Opposition Day

motion, and then it will be followed by concurrence and third readings of Bill 300, Bill 64, bills 72, 208, 209, 214, and then debate on second readings of bills 69, 70 and 71.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTION

Mr. Speaker: And we'll start first with the Opposition Day motion.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately commission an independent report with agreed-upon bipartisan research parameters to objectively evaluate the economic impact over the next five years of the \$1,600 in broken tax promises and fee hikes that have been forced on Manitobans since the imposition of the illegal PST hike on July 1st, 2013.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, this motion calls on the government to commission a fair, unbiased study to find out how much economic damage is being done by their more than \$500 million in tax and fee hikes in the last couple of years alone.

Taxes take money out of the economy and put it in the hands of government. The NDP is quick to commission reports that ignore the negative consequences and only report positive news, but that is misleading to Manitobans. We can see the negative effect of the NDP's high taxes in the number of people who are looking for work, the number of people who have given up hope of ever finding a job and the low wages Manitobans earn relative to workers in other provinces.

Manitobans have a right to know how much of this economic damage is being caused by the recent tax hikes and, Mr. Speaker, that is the reason for the motion today, it's to bring transparency and accountability to the tax and fee increases, the more than \$500 million in tax and fee increases introduced by this NDP government in the last couple of years.

Manitobans deserve to know the economic impact that will have on our economy over the next five years and, to date, the NDP government—I've asked questions on this, they have refused to answer the questions as to what the economic impact will be over the next five years as a result of these tax and fee hikes. They've yet to answer those questions, which leads to believe—and I've asked them if they've

commissioned a study, if they've done this kind of a study. They have yet to answer that question, Mr. Speaker. It leaves me to the conclusion that they have not done this kind of a study and I think, in order to be fully transparent and accountable for their tax and fee increases for the last few years, they need to come clean, they need to commission this kind of a report so that Manitobans know exactly the kind of impact that these tax and fee hikes will have on our economy over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada's latest information shows that Manitoba's economy is getting worse since the PST was hiked a year ago. The evidence of the NDP's tax-high-tax policies are obvious if you look at the performance of our economy since the PST hike came into effect. Since July of last year, Manitoba has lost more jobs than any non-Atlantic province. There are 5,000 fewer people with a job today than there was when the PST was hiked last July. Over the 10 months since the Manitoba's—since Manitoba's PST was raised by this NDP government by 14 per cent, most of the other provinces have created thousands of new jobs. Only Newfoundland has had a bigger drop in the rate of employment since July of last year.

Manitobans—Manitoba's participation rate dropped faster than any province as more and more people are giving up hope of finding a job. Manitoba's average year-over-year wage growth is the second lowest of any province. The unemployment rate is at 5.9 per cent when it was just 5.5 per cent last month and it's been near that range since before the recession hit. To make matters even worse for the thousands of Manitoba families that are coping with job losses, our province also has had the highest cost-of-living increase over the last 12 months. It's time for the government to study the economic impact of the \$500 million in tax and fee hikes that they've implemented since the last election. The economy is hurting and Manitobans have a right to know how much of the damage is being caused by these unfair tax hikes.

Mr. Speaker, I am calling on all members of this House to join with us today in calling for this kind of a report to be commissioned. This is in the best interest of Manitoba families. We know that based on other reports that have been commissioned across the country, whether they be in Quebec, whether it's the Canadian government itself, whether it's the United States, it's time that the NDP come clean and tell us how much damage their tax increases are doing on our economy. The government has

not revealed any of their own estimated economic costs, but comparable estimates from publicly available studies range from 17 cents, the Canadian Department of Finance, to 54 cents, Quebec Department of Finance, per dollar of tax. One study estimated that the marginal efficiency cost of sales tax in the United States was 26 cents. That means that the economy shrinks by \$1.26 for every dollar the government hikes in sales tax. The 1990s—in 1997, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development published Department of Finance—Canada's estimates, that the estimate that the marginal efficiency cost of the GST was 17 cents. In 2006, the government of Quebec estimated that their GDP would shrink by an extra 54 cents for every dollar the government takes in sales tax.

* (14:40)

The NDP continues, Mr. Speaker, to refuse to admit that their PST hike is hurting the Manitoba economy, and the NDP is telling us how much the PST hike is costing the Manitoba economy. They're refusing to tell us that.

So, until a real study is done, Manitobans can only guessed—guess, Mr. Speaker, and so that's why it's important. We're hearing from Manitoba families who heard from members of this government just prior to the last election where they went door to door and they campaigned on not raising taxes in Manitoba. And their first available opportunity after the last election, they turned around and they hiked the taxes and fees. And then they hiked the fee—the rate itself, and that has had a negative impact on Manitoba families.

We know that taking more disposable income away from Manitoba families, where they would normally spend that in our economy here in Manitoba, taking that away from them and giving it to themselves at their Cabinet tables to spend because they feel that they know better how to spend Manitoba families—than Manitoba families do, Mr. Speaker. And that's just disrespectful to our families here in Manitoba.

So Manitoba families want to know, what is the negative impact? What is the overall impact? The Manitoba government, the NDP, likes to talk about just certain parts of it, that certain parts may grow our economy. But the problem is, Mr. Speaker, that taking—we know that the tax and fee hikes to Manitoba families will have a negative impact; we just want to know to what extent that negative impact will be.

And so we're calling on the government to not just look at one part of the puzzle, but to look at the overall puzzle, Mr. Speaker, and to put it all together and to show what the real numbers are when it comes to how their fee—tax and fee hikes will have a negative impact on the economy here in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, really what this does is it brings transparency and accountability here to show exactly what the impact is on the Manitoba economy over the next five years. Manitoba families deserve to know what exactly that impact will have on our economy here in Manitoba.

And they're calling on this government, they've been asking all of us, what is the impact going to be? And that's why we have brought forward this motion today for debate, and I'm hoping that all members of this House will see fit to support this motion today because this motion is about nothing more than transparency and accountability that should be offered to the hard-working Manitobans who have recently been charged with the tax and fee increases, more than \$500 million by this NDP government. They deserve to know what that impact is.

We know that in the last election they promised not to raise taxes, Mr. Speaker. We know that they turned around and they raised taxes again. We know that any kind of a promise that comes out of the mouths of members opposite, the NDP government—just prior to the next election, I'm sure they will be promising again not to raise taxes.

But can we really trust them? Because we know that past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour, Mr. Speaker. We know they've said they wouldn't raise taxes in the past. We know that they turned around at their first available opportunity and jacked up those fees and jacked up those taxes. So we know that they're looking to do that again.

And Manitobans should be aware of that, and Manitobans are aware of that. And that's why they want us to bring forward this motion today for all members to vote on this motion to ensure transparency and accountability, and so that Manitobans can fully understand the true impact of this 500—more than \$500-million increase in taxes and fees on the backs of Manitobans.

So I encourage all members of this House to vote with their conscience here, to do the right thing for Manitoba families. We on our side of the House, Mr. Speaker, our Progressive Conservative Party, will be standing behind and standing beside

Manitoba families when it comes to transparency and accountability. We just want to know, will members opposite join us?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation): I must say that, once again, the members opposite have been true to form. The Finance critic for the opposition got up, talked about the 1-cent-on-the-dollar additional sales tax that is going to pay for very significant investments in infrastructure, talked about having studies, but they didn't mention one word about the benefits of investing in infrastructure; didn't mention at all the fact that it's going to grow the economy.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give some sense of studies that already exist on the public record. And I'll quote, and this is from a website: Infrastructure investments are key to building a stronger economy. Modern infrastructure supports commerce, creates jobs, boosts competitiveness and improves the quality of life for Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, what website am I reading from? It's infrastructure.gc.ca, the federal government website. It lists 15 separate studies showing benefits in terms of infrastructure and the economy. It goes on to look at benefits in terms of infrastructure and the environment. It talks about infrastructure and stronger communities, and it talks about numerous studies talking about the financing of infrastructure and then lists numerous that talk about planning and sustainability.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous studies that are out there. Now, I know members opposite don't like to believe that investing in infrastructure has benefits. We saw that earlier today when the Leader of the Opposition took a leaf out of his federal counterparts' approach, which is if you don't like the message, you attack the messenger. I mean, when we engage one of the most respected institutions in Canada, when we engage them to look at the economic benefits of infrastructure, and when it demonstrates what many of these other studies that I've indicated on the Government of Canada website, the true benefits, what did the Leader of the Opposition do today? He tried to undercut their credibility.

You know, Mr. Speaker, he must think he's still in Ottawa with the federal Conservatives because that's been their pattern. You know, if you don't like the message, you attack the messenger. You attack the institution. But the report we received is not alone. There have been numerous reports worldwide

that demonstrate the degree to which if you invest in infrastructure, you're investing in the future growth of your jurisdiction.

I also want to put on the record, Mr. Speaker, that the doom and gloom of members opposite doesn't even make sense on the tax side. It's interesting. The Finance critic completely ignored the fact that since we've been in government, we have reduced taxes by more than \$1 billion.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding anything that has happened over the last period of time, Manitobans today, they pay less taxes than they did in 1999. They have better health care and education, and with the investments we are making in infrastructure, we're well on our way on having better roads, better bridges and better investments throughout the province. So they don't mention that because, again, it doesn't fit into their narrow-minded political agenda.

Now, I want to stress, too, by the way, that it's not just consulting agencies and institutions that have done studies. It's not just on the website. Members opposite may want to talk to—well, I'd start with the Heavy Construction Association, which has been clearly validating our stance in terms of infrastructure. They've been at many of our announcements and they've identified, again, the importance of investments in infrastructure. They might want to talk to the AMM because the AMM was a leader, as was the FCM, in terms of municipalities putting forward the fact that we need investments in infrastructure. And we can debate how much goes to municipal or provincial infrastructure, but they were very clear that it was time to invest in infrastructure.

I could run through many of these validators we've had at our announcements in terms of infrastructure. The CAA, which, while not getting into the issue of the budget, has certainly indicated we're on the right track in terms of investing, Mr. Speaker, in our infrastructure in this province. Our chambers of commerce—I mean, I could run through the list of people and organizations that have said, right on, it's about time to see that kind of historic investment.

Now, why would members opposite not want to talk about that investment? Well, perhaps it's something to do with their abysmal record when they were in government. I want to put on the record how little they spent on transportation-related infrastructure.

Let's take, you know, the good old days of when the Leader of the Opposition was sitting in Cabinet, a prominent Cabinet member. I want to give you what transportation, infrastructure-related expenditures were in the mid-1990s. They were—I'll take '95-96, \$167 million. They then cut it to \$161 million in '96-97. When the Leader of the Opposition quit provincial politics—in the middle of the flood, I might add—they had actually cut it to \$152 million—\$152 million. This year we are going to be reaching a record \$707 million as we enter into our five-year, \$5.5-billion plan.

*(14:50)

So I can understand why members opposite don't want to talk about infrastructure in their motion, because their record was abysmal. I mean, I know this is a trick question and I've said it before in speeches, I'll say it again: One of the questions I ask people when I travel around the province, I talk about the Conservatives, I say, what did they build when they were in government? Even they have no answer, Mr. Speaker. Nothing. Absolutely nothing. It's ironic, in their questions earlier today they talked about people going to Bomber games and Jets games et cetera; well, if it had been up to them, there wouldn't have been the MTS Centre, there wouldn't be the stadium, because they did absolutely nothing.

They shut down hydro development. They shut down Conawapa. They actually ripped out the coffer dam. They actually ripped up the contract with Ontario. That's how much they did to develop things in this province. So, obviously, they haven't done their homework. They haven't checked with studies that are out there. They don't want to talk about their record and they certainly don't want to talk about our record of in terms of infrastructure, because what they realize, Mr. Speaker, it's as follows: We put in place, on top of the work we've already done—and I want to point out that our highway capital plan over the last five years, we've already spent more than they did in the entire 11 years they were in government—the entire 11 years.

Mr. Speaker, we are now engaging on historic, renewable infrastructure. Highway 1, Highway 75, Highway 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Highways 373, 374, Highway 39. I mean, I could run through the list. And it's interesting, because members opposite on occasion ask a question about infrastructure in the House and once in a while they make it look like they're actually interested investing in infrastructure, but Manitobans should understand one thing: It's

phony. It's as phony as a \$3 bill, because when they were in government, the bottom line was they did nothing. Take Highway 75, for example. It was an embarrassment when you have tourists coming here or if you came back from a visit to the US, to hit the US-Canadian border. You didn't have to—you know, if you were sleeping in the back of the car, you knew when you hit the border in 1999.

We've already started with historic investment. We're going to now bring it to full interstate standards, Mr. Speaker, and I want to apologize again on behalf of our government.

There will be more construction delays again this summer. In fact, the work's already started, but when we're done, we will have state-of-the-art infrastructure on Highway 75 which will connect to the Perimeter Highway and will connect into the fully upgraded southwest Perimeter, which will connect into CentrePort. We've completed the CentrePort Canada Way on time, on budget. We're now doing the Headingley bypass.

Highway 1, east and west, we're spending \$300 million-plus, again bringing it up to full standard. And I mentioned many of the other investments around the province. I want to put on the record that these again are a result of the investment on the 1 cent on the dollar.

Probably the most obvious area that the members are lacking is their recognition of the importance of investing in flood mitigation. I find it ironic, the other day the critic actually thought it was wrong that we're operating parts of our flood infrastructure.

Well, Mr. Speaker, thank goodness that previous generations had the foresight to understand you build a floodway, you build the Portage Diversion, the Fairford outlet; you have the Shellmouth Dam. That enables you to deal with the flooding challenges.

And there is a bit of history here. The government of the day in the '60s that brought in the flood infrastructure brought in a 5-cent increase in sales tax. And yes, Mr. Speaker, our top priority is flood investments with the 1 cent on the dollar, but I want to put on the record, would Manitobans rather have the scenario that Calgarians saw themselves in, Albertans saw last year? Flood protection levels in Calgary, one in 30 years. Here in our capital, one in 700. So the bottom line is investing in infrastructure makes sense.

There are numerous studies that show it makes sense, but it makes sense mostly from common sense, and that's what Manitobans know.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): It's my pleasure to be able to rise this afternoon and to add some comments to the record with respect to the motion that has been brought forward by my colleague. And, Mr. Speaker, I also thank you for the opportunity to stand and correct the record. There's been a lot of things put on the record in the last few minutes by this member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and I welcome the opportunity to kind of set the facts straight again. There's no shortage of distortion that goes on whenever that member gets up and starts to speak.

He wants to talk about the government's record on infrastructure, and Manitobans are understanding more and more every day what this government's record on infrastructure is. It is a record of underspending. Underspending, Mr. Speaker, year after year after year. As a matter of fact, in the last four years alone, underspending to the tune of \$1 billion on infrastructure, and that is something that people are coming to understand more and more all the time. No other department is that government—underspending and in no way has that money been held back somehow. It's been put in other places for sure. They spent the money, they just haven't spent it on infrastructure.

And so even now, while that member can jump up and down and talk about the fact that Manitobans can really, really trust him this time when it comes to infrastructure pledges, Manitobans know they are nothing more than pledges. Mr. Speaker, we know, as this government has done in the past, they will promise one thing, they will do another thing and nowhere is there a better example of that when it come to the PST because we have to understand what the context is of the motion that has been brought forward this afternoon, and the context is this—and I have as the critic for Finance in this province said this on many occasions. The context is that this government was in a position where they enjoyed transfer payments from the federal government that have been stable and increasing. As a matter of fact, in their 14 years in government, they have never had a transfer payment that did not increase in size. In addition to this, this government has enjoyed conditions that have been—have seen record historically low interest rates, interest rates that are one third what they were before they took office.

Mr. Speaker, we know that this government has enjoyed increasing taxes, increasing revenue from taxes, personal income tax, corporate income tax. As a matter of fact, the other day in debate I took time to mention again to the members of this government that even income tax from personal finances revenue accruing to this government is up a billion dollars over 10 years. It is shocking the kind of revenue that is accruing to government, and in that context within that framework these government members—*[interjection]*—even as they chirp from the other side they know full well they are the only provincial jurisdiction who took the opportunity of that financial reality and hiked taxes for all Manitobans. They promised one thing; they delivered something else. They promised no PST hike. They promised. They said that the idea that they would raise taxes was nonsense, and no sooner were they across the line and they raised that tax a first time through the widening of the RST generating for this government something just short of \$200 million annually accruing to government extra, and a year later they hiked the PST entirely.

And, Mr. Speaker, so when this member for Thompson talks in those cute ways about the 1 cent on the dollar, we have to understand that what he's not telling Manitobans is that it is not 1 cent on the dollar. If you have widened the retail sales tax, if you have as a government been so cynical as to now assign provincial tax to whole areas of expenditure that families have that have never seen tax applied it is not a 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase, it is a wholesale increase of 8 per cent where no tax applied before.

So now think of every Manitoba household, every Manitoba homeowner who gets that bill in the mail that says this is now your renewal notice on your home insurance policy, and I can remember how this government widened that RST and I know there's even members on this side who used to sell those kind of insurance policies and used to do that kind of work in the insurance industry.

Mr. Mohinder Saran, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Can you imagine what insurance agents had to do, the calls they had to field not all at once, but sequentially and incrementally as people came home, they opened that envelope, they looked at the bill and they said this is not a 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase on my policy. It is a wholesale new area where this government that is so stingy on handing out tax relief to Manitobans but so quick to tax is going after them

yet again in places like haircuts and personal services, in places like group insurance policies.

* (15:00)

So let us correct the record. Let this member from Thompson not be so reckless with the information he puts on the record. Let's understand this is not a 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase. This is a huge increase, and as my colleague already has pointed out this afternoon, it is an increase that costs Manitobans \$500 million a year that this government is additionally taking in. It is an increase that is equal to \$1,600 per Manitoba family of four each and every year. We know that's mathematics, we know that will be difficult for those members to grasp, but that's what it is, year after year.

What we understand is that these are increases that Manitobans can ill afford, and that is why my colleague has brought this afternoon a motion calling on this government to commission an independent report that would have widespread agreement, that would have parameters to actually evaluate what has been the economic impact over five years on that \$1,600-per-Manitoba-family-of-four-per-year increase that they have to pay to this government since the PST was first collected on July the 1st, 2013.

The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) alluded to the Conference Board report that they brought—the member for Thompson was very—he was very clear to not point out the fact that this was a poisoned exercise, that the government set careful parameters on what the CBC could study. They set careful parameters on what the CBC could come back and report. They reserved the right to not report at all on the findings if they didn't like it. They so handed them a poison mandate that, when it came back, of course, we don't know what the economic impact of the PST is because this government told the Conference Board, don't study that.

So the question, of course, they ask is—in the context of this study, in the context of this third-party arrangement that they broker to provide this study, they said, well, could the government create jobs by hiking the PST? Could the government create jobs by hiking the PST? You bet, our government can create jobs by hiking a PST. The real question is: Could Manitobans have done a better job if the money had been left in their pockets? And, that is the—an answer that this government does not want to give. They don't want to respond to those questions at all because they know what the answer is.

Coming back to context, this is a province that pays more income tax than any of the western provinces. This is a government that is right at the Fiscal Stabilization Account. This is the only jurisdiction that is saying, well, there was an economic crisis, but depending on the day and depending on our mood, we reserve the right to artificially extend what we called a period of economic recovery into the distant future. There's no other jurisdiction that is doing this. Either the economy is recovering or the deficit is continuing. Only these government members feel like they can reserve the right to waffle, to oscillate, depending on their day, depending on the mood.

Mr. Acting Speaker, here are the facts: 5,000 fewer people in the province right now than a year ago, 5,000 people—fewer people with a job today than there was when the PST was hiked. We know that we are leading the nation in inflation and we are at the back of the bus when it comes to job growth, and that's why we have called on this government to—for their support on this motion introduced this afternoon to really study the effect, to understand the full consequence of an ill-advised and illegal PST hike that has broken the trust of Manitobans, and we are calling on the government today to do that work and to stand on side with us in understanding what the real cost to Manitobans is of this PST hike.

Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. Theresa Oswald (Minister of Jobs and the Economy): Yes, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to this motion, really because there's just so much about it that needs to be corrected.

And I just listened to the member from Morden-Winkler once again speak about his leader's allegations this morning concerning the Conference Board of Canada. It's shameful, of course. I'm surprised the member would repeat it when every media outlet in town has dropped it like a hot potato because, in fact, it stunk to high heaven and everybody knew it. But the member chose to speak about it, and I understand why, because the Tories, I think, are really becoming clear on the point that their leader's promise to make deep cuts in infrastructure investments is a real loser, and the Manitoba public is aware of that and they're realizing that this promise to, once again, move forward with a no-growth kind of decade and no investment in infrastructure is not popular in any way.

And so when you're in a situation like that you have to attack an institution, as the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) said, and we know that. We on this side of the House accept the independent findings of the Conference Board of Canada. We accept their credibility and, of course, the Conference Board of Canada, in fact, depends on their integrity and depends on doing good work for their business; they would never compromise that. Any thinking person would know that. Our contract with the Conference Board of Canada, in fact, states the obvious fact that information about our infrastructure plan would come from the government. It is the government's infrastructure plan. Where would the information come from? Mars? No, it would come from the government and that's a very, very obvious thing, and, furthermore, even if we should go by what the members opposite say and disregard and put in disrepute the Conference Board of Canada's report, what would they have to—will they go on to Standard & Poor's next and endeavour to discredit what they say about the importance of an infrastructure investment? And maybe when they're done with that they'll go on to the Brookings institute and maybe, just for good measure, they will criticize TD Economics, all of which have said that, in fact, investments in infrastructure as a result of a 1-cent-on-the-dollar increase of the PST will not only go very far to improve our core infrastructure which is key to our location as a central trade in the midwestern continental corridor, critical for export, but in doing those improvements we see, according to the Conference Board, that nearly 60,000 good jobs will be created, and I just don't think that the members opposite get that.

We know, of course, that we on this side of the House acknowledge that a recession did, in fact, occur. Members opposite spent quality time during Estimates to try to be in abject denial about the existence of a recession. We on this side of the House also recognize that the recovery is fragile and that you have to ensure that you continue to invest, that you continue to work with businesses whether it's developing tax credits or whether it's developing training programs. We need to ensure that we keep moving in concert with our businesses to ensure that we continue to create good jobs.

Now, in one week the Leader of the Opposition will say that our investments with somebody like Price Industries is nothing more than a photo op despite the fact that it will create 175 high-paying,

high-skilled jobs, and then the next week he'll stand up and applaud Price Industries and say what a jim-dandy job they're doing for creating 175 jobs. Now, the leader of the opposite can't have it both ways.

It's critically important that not only do we invest in our schools right from kindergarten to grade 12 to ensure that our young people get the best possible start in life, but that we're also investing in those schools to ensure that our young people know what their options are in terms of pursuing their dreams and pursuing a really great career here in Manitoba. And, when they get to that stage, it's important that we work with our industries to ensure that we know what their needs are so that we can in partnership with our universities, our colleges, our training institutions ensure that we support training that can support our labour market, and that's exactly what our plan is.

Our plan is not, as the members opposite would do, to cut deeply half a billion dollars in one year, I think they were purporting. No government in the land including the federal government suggested taking such austere measures would be a good idea.

But the folks across the way haven't change a bit. They get a little sensitive when we talk about the 1990s, but they themselves are staring in the mirror, saying, wow, let's do that exact same thing again. So it's not just talking about what they would do in the '90s. It's talking about what they just last year or the year before purported that they would do.

* (15:10)

Now, I will say to the members opposite that I would endeavour to give their leader the benefit of the doubt. When I see him cherry-picking certain stats to try to describe doom and gloom in our economy, I would just presume that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, doesn't understand. But, after several days have passed, whether it's an attack on our economy on Thursday or an attack on the Conference Board on Monday, I have come to the conclusion that it's not that he doesn't get it, it's that he doesn't care. And I would say very simply that that is not leadership, that is pretending. And I think it's really clear that we need to have this discussion here in this Chamber, that the Leader of the Opposition cannot stand up in the House and pretend that it's all doom and gloom and cite numbers that don't exactly bear out what he's saying, or stand up on a Monday and say spurious

things about the Conference Board of Canada when, in fact, what he is saying is just absolutely not true.

It's very, very similar, I would suggest to you, when the Leader of the Opposition goes for a walk on the Day of Mourning and stands there proudly among members in our workforce and says that he cares about them in terms of their safety and their health and well-being, and then tiptoes back into the House to vote against workplace health and safety legislation. That is not leadership; that is pretending.

It is exactly the same, I would purport, as coming into the House wearing a jaunty pink tie and then one minute later making the decision to vote against the rights of gay and lesbian kids. This is not leadership; this is pretending.

And he hopes that members of the Manitoba public won't catch on to this, but he's absolutely wrong. Manitobans are very, very smart and they're very, very savvy, and they know the difference between what is real and what is pretending.

It's the same thing as when he stands in the House and purports to care about women but in the backrooms he makes snide and demeaning comments about them. And, in fact, he expresses his opinion that he does not support a woman's right to choose. That is not leadership, that is pretending.

And that is what this entire press conference of his was about today. It was about pretending that there was something wrong with the integrity of the Conference Board of Canada. It was about pretending that there's something wrong with investing in core infrastructure and that it won't create any jobs.

You cannot, as a leader or, in fact, as an elected official, in my humble view, pretend when you're out in public that you care about people, to say things like, it's okay—it's okay that I voted against the rights of gay and lesbian kids. It's okay because I phoned Evan Wiens, so it's fine, everything's okay. I wore a pink tie today and I phoned Evan Wiens, so don't worry, everything is just jim-dandy.

And, in fact, in those moments, the—those moments in your life as a legislator when you can stand up for kids who have been bullied and who have been facing all kinds of struggles, whether it's in context of their own families or in the context of their school, and you have a chance to stand up and say, I stand with you; I'm not only going to wear my pink tie, I'm going to stand with you and vote in support of this legislation. The member opposite

would not do it. He pretended, just like he pretended to care about workers as he strolled down Broadway on the Day of Mourning and then turned around and voted against workplace health and safety legislation.

So all of this is to say that we know that 1 cent on the dollar is going to go towards core infrastructure, that's going to give good jobs to our young people and build our infrastructure for an even better tomorrow, and that's because we're standing up for what we believe in; we're not pretending. We're not pretending about kids, we're not pretending about jobs and we're not pretending about our economy, because we care about Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): I do wish to speak to this motion, and I hope members give me the latitude to take a few moments to reflect on the fact that I was chosen as a official Canadian election observer representing Canada. I would like to thank a few members individually in this Legislature.

The genesis of the idea came when I had the opportunity to have a discussion with the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). We spoke about the upcoming presidential election and we both agreed that probably what should happen is in the mix should be elected officials. Elected officials, of course, know how elections are run; we've participated in them, we've seen what's good about elections, we've seen what's rough about elections, and we'd take that with us. And both of us agreed that we would apply and see what came out of it. I went online and put my application in. I happened, a couple days later, to bump into the member for Kildonan and ask him how his application went. And with a heavy heart he said to me that this time wasn't going to work for him, that there were other circumstances that were in the way and he wasn't going to apply. And then, actually, that was too bad because I think we would have made just an amazing team. He and I, we have quite a great history in this Chamber. We know how to be partisan when it's necessary, and we know how to put that aside and come together on important issues when it's—when that is necessary as well.

And on this issue, members of this Legislature were incredibly generous with their support. I'd like to thank members, the Thursday before I left, unknown to me there was a point of order raised by the two House leaders and spoke and sent greetings and best wishes and, certainly, that was very important to myself and I want to thank members for their support and how many of them—many of you

came up to me and wished me well, and stay safe and make sure you take care of yourself.

I'd also like to thank the Leader of the Opposition, my leader, the member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Pallister), who that when I broached him on the subject was very excited and said, absolutely, that's where you should be going. That's a very important cause and it's something very important not just for Ukraine and for Europe and for world peace, it's also important for what we're doing here in the Legislature.

I would like to also thank the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) who went out of his way to encourage me to go and appreciate that support and all members. This has been an important issue, I know, for all members in the Chamber, and we spent a lot of time debating these issues, issues of democracy, which is interesting because today we have an issue where we aren't unanimous on and some of the debate does get acrimonious and it gets passionate, and that's what's good about what we do here.

In fact, I would suggest that what is going on in Ukraine, what is going on in Syria, what went on in Egypt and countries around the world is—what they basically want, what they're advocating for and what they're striving for is what we have here today. It's a free and democratic system that you can get up and we do our fighting with words and we do not pick up arms and go out on the streets and shoot each other.

In fact, on my Facebook I feature a young man. I came across his memorial as I was walking up and down the Maidan which is the main street in Kiev where the protest took place, where the revolution took place. And this was a young individual, 18 years old, a bright-looking, good-looking young individual, reminds me of our page who sits here today, he reminds me very much of him. And this young individual decided that he was going to go home and raid the refrigerator, probably made some sandwiches. They're not too sure what he did. Anyway, he took a lot of food out of the family home and put it in paper bags and decided he was going to go and help feed some of the demonstrators. That was going to be his part of fighting for his democracy and, unfortunately, there were Russian sharpshooters on top of the buildings that decided they were going to participate in this revolution and were shooting at young people in the streets, and within two hours this 18-year-old had been shot in the head.

And I stood there for a long time and I went back again the next day and I looked at his pictures and I looked at the memorial. I left him a little Canadian pin and decided I'm going to make him one of those individuals that I'm going to speak about when I go into schools and when I talk about democracy, when I talk about what we should be standing up for and what's important. He is going to be one of those that I am going to reference, because you know what? He should not have died in vain. All's what he was trying to do is do his little piece for democracy, stand up a little bit for what he believed in and bring food to protestors, and paid the ultimate price for it.

And at the end of the election there's a great saying, and it basically means glory to Ukraine and it's Slava Ukrayiny, and it was very fun to walk up and down the streets and greet people with that and they would greet back in return. And, again, they would find out that you're a Canadian, they'd say, I mean with unbelievable air of reverence that you were Canadian and that you were here helping out and you wanted what was best for democracy, and that's what they want.

* (15:20)

So the debate today is a good debate. It's healthy to have these debates, and I would suggest to members opposite that, you know, they made a decision in the last election they decided that they were going to campaign on no tax increases. In fact, they went so far as to say that to raise the PST was going to be nonsense, that it was not going to take place, and then felt that they had another decision to make after the election. In fact, it was the first budget where they increased a lot of taxes, although they said they wouldn't, and they went back on their word, and then the second budget thereafter they raised the PST, which was clearly against what they had committed to.

Interestingly enough, for the last 13, 14 years, they've run on a commitment that they would stick with the balanced budget legislation, that they would stick with the referendum provision, and that, too, after they introduced the PST, then they introduced legislation to get rid of the referendum.

That is one of the reasons why the government is in court, is because the way they did it was wrong and was illegal, and that's why it's called, to this day, it is called the legal PST, because the way they did it. First should have come—first should have come

legislation removing the referendum on any tax increase, and then the tax increase itself.

But, government has a right to make decisions. People are elected, they make these decisions and they also have to pay the consequences. And one of the consequences has been that this government has faced a lot of criticism, certainly not the kind of criticism that governments have faced in other countries because we do things differently. We don't go and fight on the streets and fight with guns and Molotov cocktails and that kind of thing. We have a system whereby we are allowed to challenge each other in this Chamber, we're allowed to challenge each other in the courts and we're allowed to challenge each other in elections. And I believe that's the right way to go. It's the proper way to go, and we know the government is defending itself in court—poorly, I might add but, nevertheless, they are defending themselves, and we would expect nothing less. We would expect them to defend themselves.

It proves that, once again, what we are doing here is the right thing. It is what the world would like to see themselves have. I believe that Manitobans and Canadians should hold themselves very, very tall and pat themselves on the back. We are doing things right. I said on numerous occasions that I disagree with the last four provincial elections and disagree with them vehemently. However, I respect the process.

So I understand that the NDP campaigned on no tax increases, they campaigned on not raising the PST, they campaigned on keeping the referendum and they decided after the election that they were not going to keep any of those—any of those three.

But they will one day have to face reckoning, and they will face that reckoning in, what I believe will be, a true, free and fair election. The sanctity of the secret ballot will be upheld and Manitobans will go to the polls and they will put these commitments that the NDP made and broke onto a scale and we'll see if they find them wanting or whatever the people decide. Again, we may disagree with the result, but we always respect the result. Whatever the people decide is the right thing.

So I would suggest to members opposite maybe doing a study into the impacts of these decisions would be a good thing because we know that taxes always do have an impact, but whatever the case may be, we would like to point out to members opposite that the day is coming when this will go in front of the people, and in a free, democratic and

open process they will have to pay the price at the ballot box.

I thank you for this opportunity to get up and put a few comments on the record. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I rise to talk a little bit about this resolution. First of all, I need to comment that this report in this resolution is based on bipartisan research parameters and, as such, this resolution is unacceptable to the Manitoba Liberal Party, which believes that if it were to be supported it must be an all-party—have all-party input, not what the Conservatives are asking for, an inquiry with only bipartisan input from only the Conservatives and the NDP.

In order to have any real perspective on the issue and to assure some accountability, rather than just politicization of this issue, it's essential to have some Liberal input. Can you imagine how much hot air, how much finger pointing, how much sharp-tongued haranguing would go on if there were only NDP and PC representatives involved? It would be a waste of time, at a minimum, to have even a hope of getting something useful done. The parameter should have Liberal input, as well as the hysterically partisan input from the warring Conservatives and NDP who are a million kilometres apart on this issue.

Curiously, in this resolution the Conservatives are asking for an independent but bipartisan effort to do research. This is research which the Conservatives should be doing themselves. In fact, the Conservatives receive a whole lot of public money to do research in their caucus and by their caucus. The big question is why are the Conservatives not using the public dollars which their caucus gets to do research in order to find the answers to this problem. The public should not be asked to double fund, you know, the report and the Conservative research at the same time. It doesn't make any sense.

For some reason, the Conservatives don't have a very good history of doing research. Let me give you an example: the Conservative Party commitment to do research and release a report on the flood of 2011. It's now three years after the flood and we're still waiting for the Conservative caucus report. The Liberals released an interim report in the fall of 2011 and a final report in 2012, long ago, while the Conservatives are still dilly-dallying and, I guess, maybe still doing some research before when, who knows, they will finally produce a report. Instead of asking the NDP to participate in this report, the

Conservatives should themselves do a proper report, you know, with strong analysis using the public dollars that their caucus has been given by taxpayers to use

Much of the facts are already known. The number of people employed in Manitoba is today fewer than it was a year ago, in spite of the fact that our province has been the beneficiary of many, many people coming to Manitoba as immigrants. I mean, part of this may be that there's a lot of young people and immigrants who are going to other provinces as the recent analysis of provincial outmigration has shown. People are saying there are more opportunities in other provinces. Manufacturing has increased dramatically in Saskatchewan, while it's only increased slowly in Manitoba so that Manitoba now has—or Saskatchewan now has more manufacturing sales than Manitoba.

The NDP have left us behind. They have left us behind because they have created an environment with high taxes, high personal taxes, high payroll tax, and they've been very poor at managing expenditures. Year after year they come in a budget for their expenditures and, year after year, at the end of the year, they spend more than they budgeted. It's a problem; the NDP can't plan.

Let's look at their record on universities. They tried to have a three-year planning financial framework for universities, but then after the—a year they gave up, and this year they brought in legislation to announce that they've completely abandoned any thought of having three-year financial planning for universities. The legislation specifically eliminates it. There are dramatic increases in the numbers of kids in care; they've done poorly, the NDP, on social problems. There are dramatic increases in the number of people with diabetes; the NDP have done poorly on health-care problems. There's been dramatic increases in the provincial debt; the NDP have done poorly on financial problems. They failed to meet their climate-change targets and in this latest green plan there's not even any targets there.

* (15:30)

This inquiry should clearly cover a much larger scope, if it were to go ahead, than just the PST. Not saying that that's not a big issue, but there's so much else that the NDP have done so badly that this inquiry should—if it were to go ahead, should include all these other things as well.

But, that being said, the way the inquiry is set up, we unfortunately cannot support it. That is my comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mohinder Saran): Is the House ready for the question—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry. Yes, honourable member for Spruce Woods.

Mr. Cliff Cullen (Spruce Woods): Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the resolution today.

And I certainly listened with interest, the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) and his comments. I hear he's taking some issue with some of the wording in there. Certainly, if the leader of the Liberal Party had three more members I think there would have been a different wording in this particular resolution brought forward. But that's the way it is at this point in time, and I do appreciate his comments—*[interjection]* Well, just appreciate the comments from the Liberal leader. *[interjection]* Yes, obviously.

And the other point I was going to make, certainly, the Progressive Conservative Party didn't take the vote tax money that the Liberal Party and the NDP party have taken from the taxpayers of Manitoba. So we're doing it the old-fashioned way; we're going out and we're raising the funds to operate our party the old-fashioned way. We're asking supporters to come and support our party and asking for their financial assistance to help us run the party and do the things that parties do.

You know, the other issue here, I think, when you listen to the debate today, is the campaign has started. We hear the fear-mongering tactics coming from the members, the NDP members. They're doing everything they can to scare the public about the possibility of having a Progressive Conservative government in Manitoba, and we certainly welcome the opportunity. They're not—the NDP are not standing up. They're not standing up and trying to defend their record over the last 14 or 15 years. They're not defending their record because they can't defend their record. As a result, they're turning to fear mongering and they've turned to the scare tactics that they're used to. We've seen that before. We've seen it before the last election.

And we would just hope that the NDP would come forward in having an open, transparent and a truthful debate in the House. We're always interested in truthful debates on this side of the House. We know the NDP will say and do anything they want, especially if we reflect back on before the last

election when they went around, they knocked on the doors and told Manitobans the thought of raising the provincial sales tax was actually nonsense.

Now, clearly—clearly—they went and they changed the rules right after they were elected. They certainly broadened the provincial sales tax on a number of services and products, goods and services. And also then, after that, the following year they went and they raised the provincial sales tax from 7 to 8 per cent without asking Manitobans their idea on whether or not that should be implemented, and that's really the gist of the court case that we are pursuing at this point in time and we will certainly see where the chips fall on that particular court case.

Clearly, Mr. Acting Speaker, any time taxes and fees are increased in the province it has a direct impact to each and every Manitoban from each and every corner of this great province of ours, and the NDP have to recognize that the increase in taxes and fees will have a bearing on Manitobans and it will have a bearing on how Manitobans spend their money and will have a bearing on the amount of money Manitobans have to spend and stimulate the economy. And that's all we're asking in this particular resolution, is that an analysis be done is—on terms of what the impact of those extra taxes and those extra fees have on the economy of Manitoba. Now, clearly, Manitobans recognize that.

In fact, listening to—this morning on the way into Winnipeg, listening to CKLQ out in Brandon, they had a—have a—we'll call it a public vote on the—on every day on that radio station. And the comments today were on this specific resolution and they're asking Manitobans if there should have been a study or should be a study done in the future in terms of what the impact of these taxes and these extra fees have on Manitobans and have on the economy of Manitoba. So it will certainly be interesting to see what the results are of that particular survey over the course of tomorrow.

Certainly, people in western Manitoba and southern Manitoba, who live close to the US border and close to the Saskatchewan border recognize the implications of the provincial sales tax. We hear first-hand from those residents and those businesses because we know that Saskatchewan, the provincial sales tax is only 5 per cent there and, certainly, dramatically less than our 8 per cent here in Manitoba.

So we're seeing people voting with their feet, Mr. Acting Speaker, because they are going to

neighbouring jurisdictions to purchase goods and services where the taxes aren't so high, and it has a direct implication for the business communities and the economies of those communities along those borders, both in Saskatchewan and the US. And, certainly, members opposite should recognize the impact it has on some of their communities.

The other issue is taxation, and I just want to point that issue out. Clearly, we are the highest taxed province west of Quebec, and very few provinces are taxed higher than Manitoba. In fact, as an example, I have a university student. I thought it'd be a good opportunity if we sat down, we went through the income tax with him this year so he has an understanding of the process and how to complete the forms. Well, I was quite disturbed, Mr. Acting Speaker, to find out that a full-time student in Manitoba, who has a pretty decent summer job, but, again, only from the period of April to the end of August, still pays income tax here in Manitoba. I was shocked to see that a full-time student could still be paying income tax in Manitoba. I know, if we were living in Saskatchewan, we would not be paying income tax. In fact, we would probably be getting some kind of a rebate in Saskatchewan.

Now, we, at one time were—always made fun of Saskatchewan, but not any longer. We—I think now the government of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan are having a little bit of fun with what's happening in Manitoba. So that's something I just wanted to point out and—as far as the taxation.

So we're certainly looking forward to other comments here in the Chamber today, and I know some of the members opposite were quite vocal. We're interested to see what they might say on this particular resolution as well, and we look forward to see how they're going to vote on this resolution later in the day.

Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Arthur-Virden): I'm going to put a few words here today about the motion that calls for the government to commission a fair, unbiased study to find out how much the economic impact and damage is being done by this \$5-million tax hike.

Well, one thing you have to do, or this government should do, is listen to more of the Manitobans out there, to listen to them and speak to them. Prime example of this past weekend is going out to flood disaster areas, such as Pierson and

Edward, the RM of Edward, and just listen to the people out there. And being out on the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border, again, when the PST was hiked, they should've listened to Manitobans, especially across—I see the minister of Dauphin—or MLA for Dauphin, and, again, the impact on my hometown that I used to grow up with, Roblin, Manitoba, again, those towns have been really affected. One particular owner from the Home Hardware store stated that, we're just becoming a convenience store for a lot of our residents that go to Saskatchewan, to Yorkton, Saskatchewan, to shop.

We're seeing that much the same way in places such as Virden and Melita. I was talking to a mayor—deputy mayor, Bill Holden, and we had breakfast one morning. He indicated to me that he actually—he's actually on the arts council, and he actually—they run the movie theatre. And what they really thought, like, it's not losing those residents coming from other places around the riding, they wanted to make sure that we—that the movie theatre did not increase the rates so that they continue to get the clients coming. But, unfortunately, for many other businesses he indicated in that conversation, that a lot of them go to Minot, North Dakota, to the Walmarts there. A lot of them go to Bottineau, North Dakota, which is very close, and that's again, throughout—for Boissevain and Deloraine, they're going to Bottineau, and, again, it has a Walmart too.

And so that's a big impact for all our areas, and, again, there's—this government had not listened to the area.

* (15:40)

I also was an insurance broker in the town of Virden, Manitoba, and many of my clients would come in, and some of—actually, clients would come in from other provinces to actually register and incorporate in Manitoba. Unfortunately, with all the frustration and the increase in taxes—the PST—when a vehicle is bought brand new in Saskatchewan, they pay 5 per cent and that's it. If that car gets sold to another corporation that the owner owns, or to the individual—he buys it from his own corporation or transfers it from his own corporation—he has to pay PST all over. They don't have to pay PST in Saskatchewan. But, in Manitoba, every time that vehicle changes from one entity to another—if it's an individual or corporation or many corporations that person owns, they have to pay PST over and over again, on the fair-market value of that vehicle, no matter how many times it's been sold.

So one of my constituents and one of my clients basically said to me the reason why he sold his business—his oil field-related business is because in—because the competition in Saskatchewan. He said that he could not do this anymore, when we had other individuals, who actually were incorporated in Saskatchewan, competing with him in different jobs throughout the constituency of mine—which, again, is in the oil patch—and that was a concern for him. So he actually sold his business. And, it's funny, he sold it to an out-of-province company.

And so more and more companies are now starting to incorporate in Saskatchewan for that. So how much of an impact is that going to be for our economics? The loss of—whatever—the \$500 million that were received from excess revenue? It's going to—a lot of it's going back to Saskatchewan or Alberta, especially in the oil patch.

Yet we also saw lots of cases in North Dakota and Saskatchewan. The economy is booming in those areas and retail is growing, the hotel industry's growing.

One example of a hotel that was actually—was being there—a chain that was being built in Saskatchewan, there was probably about six different—he already built six different hotels. He decided to come to Manitoba to build a hotel in Melita. When he built that hotel in Melita, he said to the insurance agent there, and he said to some of the key people in Melita, he will never build another hotel in Manitoba again because of the red tape and bureaucracy that this government has. And, again, they failed to listen to Manitobans.

And in this case it's a prime example of when I went to—this weekend—to Pierson, and to the RM of Edward, for a town meeting, we were really, really surprised how many people actually showed up there. There was over 50 people. They were frustrated because they never hear from this government. There should've been many ministers there, knowing that this was the case, when there's, all of a sudden, a state of emergency. That should be in everybody's departments. There was the Department of Water Stewardship should have been notified. The minister of oil and gas should be notified. The Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Transportation—*[interjection]* And, apparently, the Minister of—MLA from Kildonan was basically at a ribbon cutting in Brandon that same day. An hour away he would have been in Pierson to talk to the oil industry.

An Honourable Member: I didn't see you in Brandon.

Mr. Piwniuk: Well, I was too busy with my own area of having to help people out here because the government is failing to listen to MLAs.

And, you know, this is what the government's all about; it's all about the offensive. They're always reactive; they're never proactive like they should be. And we are—we would like to see a proactive approach, and this is what our side would like to see. And this is a proactive approach that we want to see when it comes to establishing this study in that, and I think Manitobans deserve it because, again, this government has been tired, reckless and reactive. And that's what this is all about. And they're not listening to Manitobans. And that's really—what really hurts me, you know, to see this. And I think that's one reason why I decided to run for government.

One thing also, what I was really upset about, too, was when I was in the private sector, insurance premiums on—and life insurance and house insurance were not taxed before. So, when they increased that, as a revenue for taxation, they increased—they included insurance premiums. Well, that was 7 per cent. And then the next year, they increased it to 8 per cent for the whole—for that.

Then, again, it's affecting very different organizations. If it's non-profit organizations because, again, adding 7 per cent to, let's say, a literacy program, adult literacy program in Manitoba. When they have to be added 7 per cent more, or now 8 per cent on the insurance premiums, that's a big impact, especially when they don't even increase the amount of allocation for indexing for adult literacy programs in Manitoba.

This is affecting Manitobans. And, again, this government's failing to listen to Manitobans. And this study would really be—help to get an impact on what the impact really is.

Again, where we're seeing more and more people going shopping south, and how much of an impact is that going to be now when people don't have to pay as much, the PST on hotels down in North Dakota or very little taxes when it comes to going shopping down to the States?

The other impact, too, is corporations. How much revenue or jobs are we losing no that they're incorporating in Saskatchewan? It's going to be—it's probably going to be tremendous, and especially our

town is not growing as fast as Moosomin. Moosomin's growing by 13 per cent. Langenburg is growing by 13 per cent. Our towns along the border are only growing about 2 to 3 per cent. That shocked me on the last census.

And we have stats here, too, that really shocked me, too, when it comes to studies that, you know, the—your—there's few—5,000 fewer jobs here in Manitoba since the PST hike, and I can believe that. Again, since the—we're one—we're behind the Atlantic provinces for job growth. Manitoba participates and rates drop faster in any—than any other province as more and more people are giving up hope in finding jobs.

And when we have an industry, an oil industry, that is growing and prospering just like we see in North Dakota and South Dakota and Montana and Saskatchewan, we should be really focusing on our oil industry, too, to help provide new jobs. This government, all they focus on is jobs that—delivery service for restaurants. How much—that's basically minimum wage jobs. We want to see some good grow jobs here, geologists who come into the area, engineers who we see that we were seeing coming here. But even we went to Pierson, the lady that actually works at the—one of the offices there is actually living in Saskatchewan because she says, if I lived in Manitoba, the difference in price of taxation living in Saskatchewan, I wouldn't want to lose that extra revenue.

And so you—this government has to—let's start listening to some of the people of Manitoba, because, again, we're no—going nowhere. Our economy—I don't think this government understands economics or business. You know, I think there's one person who maybe have some kind of business skills which would be the Agriculture Minister, and did somebody actually run a deejay business, I think? Again, this is something that this government does not understand is small business, and they say they do, but they don't. And I really think that I want to put these words on the record here, and thank you very much.

Mr. Stuart Briese (Agassiz): I'm pleased to rise today to put a few words on the record on the motion brought forward from the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). You know, we've watched this government over the last two or three years dramatically raise the sales tax the first year by expanding it to a whole raft of different services, and then in the second year—2013 and 2012, they

expanded it, and the second year they increased it by 14 per cent. And along with all sorts of fee increases, other taxes, fuel tax, continue to draw more and more money out of taxpayers of Manitoba's pockets.

I just discovered another spot on Friday. I went and apply—or picked up a form for a subdivision application and discovered that the fee on the subdivision application, the cheque to be sent to the Manitoba government had went up by \$50, from \$275 to \$325, which is an 18 per cent increase. So they even found the very small things and increased it, and I would suggest that there's very few people in Manitoba that are seeing 18 per cent increases in their income. But, with all the extra increases of 14 per cent on the sales tax, 18 per cent on this subdivision application, it just goes on and on and on. We're not keeping up. We're not even coming close. We saw hydro go up by 10 and three-quarters per cent in just over a year. Once again, salaries don't keep up to it.

*(15:50)

I know every time we mention the figure of \$1,600 per family of four it—the—we get the indignant catcalling coming back from the other side of the House. That—it's very simple math. The taxes, the overall tax increases in 2012 and 2013 have resulted in at least an extra \$500 million into the government coffers. We have roughly one and a quarter million people; do the math, it's \$400 a person, a family of four, \$1,600 a family.

There's people that were hit to a greater or a lesser degree by it. They increased the fuel tax in 2012 by three and a half—or 3 cents on farm fuel, and I farmed for years. I know how much fuel goes through even a medium-size farm and that was a dramatic increase. It cost lots of farmers as much as 3, 4, 5 thousand dollars a year just on that 2 and a half cents.

We listen to them crow about what they're going to spend on infrastructure. We go back and check the figures for the last four years on what was budgeted for infrastructure and which they actually spent, and they underspent what their budgeted by \$1.9 million. So why would we ever believe that they're going to spend anywhere near the amount on infrastructure that they're crowing about?

You know, every province across this whole nation has some infrastructure deficits. They're all coping with it in their own way, providing more money into their infrastructure budgets.

We're the only province that raised our sales tax and supposedly raised our sale tax to address the infrastructure deficits. It seems strange to me that we can be in that bad of shape on our finances that we would be the only one to have to raise our sales tax. They stagger it all over the place trying—the NDP stagger it all over the place trying to justify the PST increase, and first of all they said it was going to be for flood mitigation, then it was going to be for schools and hospitals and then it was going to be for hard infrastructure, roads and sewer and water. But they finally, the last few months, managed to stick to one reason.

Like, the flood mitigation part, for instance, if you look at the promises and the announcements they're making, many of them are way out sometime between now and infinity. It's pretty obvious they have no intention of actually ever providing on those promises. They announced, supposedly have announced a new outlet out of Lake Manitoba some seven, eight, nine years down the road. But they needed the provincial sales tax supposedly right now, the increase in the provincial sales tax right now to address that.

They talk about the flood situations on Lake Manitoba—something's that near and dear to me because I have a pretty long stretch of the west of Lake Manitoba in my constituency—and they talk about the emergency channel helping Lake Manitoba, helping keep Lake Manitoba lower. The only way it does is if they use it in the winter, and for the last two years it hasn't been available to use in the winter.

So the amount of water in Lake Manitoba continues to rise. We're still pouring water into it through the Portage Diversion to keep some downstream flooding probably from happening, and there's no new outlet. We're one major windstorm away from another disaster, one weather event, and it doesn't seem to concern this government. It sure concerns me. Those people have been through enough already, and it should be addressed and it should be addressed quickly.

You know, this NDP government's been making roughly one or two announcements a day, every day. And it's adding into the hundreds of millions and probably billions of dollars, and they're making them all based on the fact that they raised the PST by 1 per cent. So they're supposedly taking in an extra \$280 million a year and making announcements that are into the billions of dollars.

So what the message is going out to the people, and I hear this often, is this is a government that said they were hard up, they needed money, they had to raise the PST in order to be able to do this infrastructure work. And now, all of a sudden, they get a—\$280 million and they make billions of dollars' worth of announcements. What's that tell the people? That tells the people that they're overstating one or the other, and I would suggest that they're overstating both.

The PST increase has created a great hardship for people. We see all the border towns, all the border businesses, all the small business in many of those towns suffering because there's cross-border shopping going on.

And, you know, it's pretty hard to escape what they've actually done here, what the NDP have done with this. Every time you pick up a bill that has both GST and PST on it, take a look at it. What did the federal government do? They lowered the GST by 2 per cent. What did the provincial government do? They raised PST by 1 per cent. You compare those two figures, it's almost double, the provincial tax—provincial sales tax to what the federal government is.

I know my time is running short, and there's others that wish to speak. So, with that, I thank you.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I, too, would like to put a few words on the record regarding the Opposition Day motion that was brought forward by my colleague the member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson). And I think the motion bears repeating, because I'm not sure the government has heard, and I was kind of hoping that maybe if some members on the government benches of the House listened very intently, we might find some of them with some common sense that might agree to supporting this Opposition Day motion today.

And, Mr. Acting Speaker, the motion says that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urges the provincial government to immediately commission an independent report with agreed-upon bipartisan research parameters to objectively evaluate the economic impact over the next five years of the \$1,600 in broken tax promises and fee hikes that have been forced on Manitobans since the imposition of the illegal PST hike on July 1st of 2013.

And, in my mind, it's a no-brainer. It's a no-brainer for government members to stand up and support this. I mean, otherwise, what are they trying

to hide? Manitobans deserve a government that's accountable and transparent, not a government that's shown the arrogance of this one over the last couple of years.

Since the 2011 election, they feel that they have a mandate to govern forever and they can do whatever they want. They can say one thing before an election and do something else after an election. Now, that's the height of arrogance of a government that's been—come very tired and out of touch with the priorities of Manitobans.

* (16:00)

And Manitobans said very clearly when it came to debate and discussion and presentations in public hearings on legislation that increase the PST and took away Manitoban's right to vote in a referendum which they'd previously had under legislation, we heard loudly and clearly—I guess, the members on the committee from the government side of the House either had earplugs in or didn't listen. They didn't hear what Manitobans had to say and, you know, it was rather disgusting to think that the Premier (Mr. Selinger) of the province of Manitoba who had been the Finance Minister for many, many years and then became the Premier wouldn't have listened to any one of those presentations.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

As a matter of fact, we know that when people came to rally in front of the Legislature and speak out in opposition to the increase in the PST hike, the Premier snuck out the back door of the Legislature. He wouldn't even stand up and face Manitobans and justify why he did what he did, why, Mr. Speaker, as part of a government that lied to Manitobans before the last election and then proceeded to do exactly opposite to what they said they would do.

They said that raising the PST before the 2011 election, the Premier said that was nonsense, that his party would never think of doing anything like that. Well, fast forward until just shortly after the election, and what did they do? They expanded the PST to many services that hadn't been included before. Well, you know, that was bad enough, but what did they do the year after that? They increased the PST from 7 per cent to 8 per cent and, you know, that's unconscionable.

You know, and people—no wonder people are skeptical about politicians and the political process when you have a government that can say one thing before an election just to get elected and then do

something completely opposite after they get elected, then that is the height of, as I said earlier, the height of arrogance, the height of a government that is completely out of touch with Manitobans, Manitobans who are struggling with some of the highest taxes across the country.

Mr. Speaker, Manitobans want the ability when they work hard to keep the money that they earn in their pockets. They don't want government to come and pick their pockets on a regular basis and say to them, you know, we know best how to manage your money. Just give it to us, just trust us and we'll spend your money the way we think it should be spent not the way you think your money should be spent, but the way we think. You have—we have a much better idea on what we should spend your money on. Just give us more and trust us. We'll look after you, we'll make sure that we do the right thing.

Well, doing the right thing was not lying to Manitobans before the election, deceiving Manitobans before the election and then changing your mind afterwards. Mr. Speaker, Manitobans deserve and want a government that is accountable. They want them to be able to account for the dollars that they spend and this resolution does exactly that, and it's saying, look, let's get together as members of the Legislature, let's set some parameters with some rules around how we can move forward and do an economic impact assessment of the huge tax increases that have been placed on Manitobans as a result of this government's misplaced priorities.

When you have a government that has a spending addiction and can't—has an insatiable appetite for more money and more tax revenue it's incumbent upon government and members of the Legislature to stand up and say, look, let's give Manitobans the rationale and the reasoning. If they can make a case and say that the economy in Manitoba is better as a result, let them stand up and make that case. Let it be a non-partisan process in this Legislature. Let us all have some input. But, Mr. Speaker, they're afraid. They're afraid to stand up and to be accountable and to let Manitobans know what their real agenda is.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know what the real agenda is. We know. We know that we have a government that has a spending addiction. They are addicted to taxpayers' dollars. And, you know, they want more and they want more. Meanwhile, Manitobans are having to make do with less and less. I have many seniors on fixed incomes within my

constituency that have seen their spending power eroded in a major way as a result of the decisions that this government has made, and many of them are living in apartments that have seen rents go up by 18 per cent over the last few years as a result of this government's decisions.

And I remember, during the last election campaign, when the NDP was running around River East, having targeted that constituency and saying, oh, don't elect those terrible Conservatives because if you do your rents are going to go sky high.

Well, what has happened? In the two years since the election, under an NDP government, their rents have gone sky high—18 per cent increase in their rents. These are seniors on a fixed income, Mr. Speaker, and that's the way this NDP government treats them? This NDP government lied to them and said, oh, we'll keep your rents affordable. Trust us; just trust us, and that's what we'll do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a government that cannot be trusted. This is a government that has lost the trust of Manitobans right across the board, and it's time that they stood up and said, yes, we will do an impact on the—and an economic assessment of what has—impact on what has happened as a result of these increases in taxes. We will stand up and be accountable. But I guess we're going to see those on the government side of the House stand up later today like trained seals and vote with their government against this resolution. And it's a sad day for Manitobans when we have a government that's become so arrogant and out of touch—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for River East's (Mrs. Mitchelson) time has expired.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise and speak to my colleague, the MLA for Tuxedo's very timely and important motion, and it's a motion that really speaks about accountability and transparency which one would imagine would be the cornerstone of any government, regardless of which side of the ideological fence you're sitting on, because we have to remember that it's the citizens of Manitoba, that it's the people in our own constituency that we see every day, it—whether it's when we fill up—are getting groceries, or filling up our gas tanks, or going to community events, those are the individuals that we're all accountable to. And those individuals want accountability from us as political representatives, and they want transparency.

And this is really what this resolution speaks of, Mr. Speaker. I mean, it talks about bipartisan research to objectively evaluate the economic impact over the last five years. I mean, \$1,600 per family—I mean, it's a significant amount of money for any family to absorb, including those Cabinet ministers across the way that decided that they didn't need to take the balanced budget penalty, in terms of the reduction in their Cabinet salary pay, for failing to balance the budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, my colleague the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), in the closing remarks of her comments, made reference to trust, and she talked about a government that you simply can't trust, a government that made it very clear in the last election that the idea of raising the PST, and again, this is the Premier's (Mr. Selinger) quote—and if you can't trust the Premier, who can you trust?—was, quote, total nonsense, end quote, that it was, quote, ridiculous, end quote.

* (16:10)

So, again, these aren't my words, Mr. Speaker. This is their own leader, the MLA for St. Boniface, their Premier, that's using those words. But we talk about trust. I mean, back in September of 2011, and I'm quoting from one of the NDP's own press releases, and I'm quoting that with smart, practical solutions, the Premier and your NDP are, and I'm quoting, balancing the provincial budget by 2014, right on schedule.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this most recent budget, the 2014-15 budget was my first budget that I had an opportunity to sit—or review as a member of this Legislative Assembly and I'm pretty sure that didn't come in as a balanced budget. So I'm a bit confused that on the one hand we have in black and white the Premier saying that they will balance the provincial budget by 2014 right on schedule, and yet as quickly as they made that promise they threw it on the pile of broken promises that grows so very high.

As well, during the recession at any point where we would point out as an opposition party's role that maybe the government's claims are a bit robust and they need to be a little more honest, I guess, for lack of a better word in terms of the information they're showing—sharing with the—with Manitobans.

And again, this is September 9th, 2011, and again, from the NDP's own press release saying that job numbers contradict Hugh McFadyen's claims that this—that—claims this week that, quote: Manitoba's

economy is falling behind other provinces in Canada. End quote. Under the leadership of the Premier and the NDP, Manitoba has weathered the global economic storm and continues to buck national trends. So, Mr. Speaker, again, you know, in—during the last provincial election the members opposite would release these glowing report cards and how things economically speaking were all rosy, that they were on the verge of rebalancing the books in 2014, that there is a chicken in every pot, so to speak. But, apparently, that was all for naught, and I guess the Premier and his cronies said what they needed to say to get elected.

But to that point, Mr. Speaker, the member, or the minister of municipal affairs actually did say what I think is one of the most honest things that any NDP has ever said to me, and it was during the Health Estimates. And it was during the rancour that surrounded the Minister of Health's (Ms. Selby) unfortunate comments about dead babies, which she was duly taken to task for by a number of members of the public and media outlets. But the conversation and the heckling back and forth, and I made reference to the minister, the minister of municipal affairs and his government lying to Manitobans, and I said isn't that what you do to the minister here? Isn't that what you do? Isn't that part of your election strategy, and the minister looked at me and he said, absolutely, and it worked last time and what makes you think it won't work again? So at least—I'll give him credit, at least he put the information and made it straight forward that that is their agenda and that is how that they do things.

But, Mr. Speaker, they will go out to Manitobans and they went out to Manitobans—and, again, September 6th, 2011—and again, you can—I know members opposite will dismiss my comments just because I don't—that I don't wear orange. But, again, I'm not sure if they can be so quick to dismiss the comments from the MLA for St. Boniface and their Premier. And I'm quoting, and this is in reference to their election commitments and not to raise the PST or taxes, quote: This is my contract with Manitobans, end quote, said the Premier. Quote: These are commitments we believe in and commitments Manitobans know we will keep. End quote.

So again, Mr. Speaker, it leaves Manitobans a bit confused when their Premier, the MLA for St. Boniface, time and time again was offered opportunities to correct the record, to correct the information that they had an agenda to raise the PST

and every time that opportunity came to correct the record the minister decided to dismiss that.

But, you know, speaking of, again, Mr. Speaker, that I'm here only to reflect the views of Manitobans, here's another Manitoban whose views that the members opposite shouldn't be so quick to dismiss, and that's one MaryAnn Mihychuk. Now, Ms. Mihychuk for—I'm sure the members know all too well—was a high-ranking Cabinet minister with members opposite who apparently has seen the light and has decided to run federally. But for some reason she doesn't want to carry the NDP flag going into the—into a federal campaign. I think she's realizing that the election nationally if not provincially of an NDP government is a detriment to our economy.

And so what did Ms. Mihychuk say? This is—again, this is a former NDP Cabinet minister that sat with a lot of members there, sat around that same Cabinet table. She said that the private sector right now was facing enormous challenges. Not only are you facing global competition and a lack of capital—which, by the way, Mr. Speaker, might be related to, I don't know, the collapse of Crocus under the NDP and their effort to sweep that whole financial mess and the loss of retirement savings by thousands of Manitobans under the rug—she goes on to say that these folks—meaning, again, private business—are working 18 hours a day, no time off, no pensions, and the insecurity of that situation for them and their families is very high.

And then the host of the news program goes on to say and asked the question about how you can't grow an economy without having the expanding private sector. And, again, NDP Cabinet minister—former NDP Cabinet minister Ms. Mihychuk said, quote, absolutely, and went on to talk about that this government and, again—and their ideological stance when it comes to the private sector. And, again, this is a former NDP Cabinet minister, Mr. Speaker, said, and I'm quoting, is not good enough. Now, it's unfortunate Ms. Mihychuk saw the proverbial light after she left Cabinet and went out to the private sector and, in particular, actually, the mining sector, where she saw the investment climate for mines in this province fall from, I believe, first—within the top three, I believe, just a few short years ago, where I think we're now ranking No. 26—

An Honourable Member: Twenty-seven.

Mr. Martin: Or 27, my colleague for Arthur-Virden suggests. But, whether it's 26 or 27, it's a dramatic, dramatic drop, Mr. Speaker.

So here we have—here we are, Mr. Speaker, a government that introduces an illegal PST hike to the tune of \$277 million. They said there's no time for a referendum. You know, we got things to do, we got infrastructure to build, we got flooding. Like, God help us all, it's—the apocalypse is upon us.

And then, of course, they spent that immediate summer running around Winnipeg announcing splash pads. I remember one of the PST-funded announcements was a mural that they announced in the Osborne Village. Now, I'll give members at least a little bit of credit, and I'll have to assume that when the mural is eventually painted that it'll be a—at least a flood-themed mural to go with that suggestion that the PST would go to flooding, Mr. Speaker.

The other comment, Mr. Speaker, and the other need for this support of the resolution is the Auditor General herself, who noted that in the year they brought in the PST they lapsed as much—

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

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): It's a pleasure to rise to put a few words on the record regarding this motion.

Really what we're calling for here is a fair analysis of what the impact has been and will continue to be on the increase of the PST that this government has put into place illegally and forced on Manitobans.

And I think it's more than fair that we look at both the positives and the negatives that are related to this, because just looking at one side or the other gives you a very unbalanced approach. And I think a message that needs to be brought forward—I know the government is very quick to hype all of the spending that they are generating in terms of infrastructure, and as the member from Morris has indicated, the infrastructure definition has evolved quite a bit over time from splash pads and murals to highways and to flood and to any one—any number of other things that might someday be of value as infrastructure to the province of Manitoba.

But, at the same time, they very quickly overlook all the money they didn't spend on infrastructure during the run up to this unfair, illegal tax increase, the \$1.2 billion that they shorted infrastructure spending over the past four years or so. And, if infrastructure's such a great stimulant now, why wasn't it a good stimulant then? Why wasn't it done then when it was needed, and we wouldn't have

the tremendous infrastructure deficit that we hear so much from all people about today?

* (16:20)

We hear about, and they like to tout, the lovely smell of asphalt that we're going to see, I gather, at least some of this summer. And I was through a construction site the other day and they hadn't got to the laying of asphalt yet, but they were certainly destroying the road in the process of—that's down Highway 75—so that hopefully they could raise it, because they just rebuilt it, you know, about eight years previous. They didn't get it high enough that time, so this time maybe they'll get it high enough. Looks like money really well spent. I hope that they do raise it above the traditional flood level, and maybe that will actually be some spending on flood infrastructure because nowhere else in the province are we finding significant amounts of dollars being spent on flood infrastructure as was announced when they increased the PST.

In fact, if you talk to the people around Lake Manitoba, they're looking out their front window right now at record levels again in Lake Manitoba, very much as critical as occurred in the fall of 2010 when we had a weather event that actually caused really significant damage all around the lake again. We're setting ourselves up for that kind of failure again and yet we don't seem to have moved too far. We're studying very hard, and we have a bunch of groups looking at what might be done to improve the infrastructure and the outlet on Lake Manitoba, but we actually haven't done a whole lot other than the emergency channel which, I would remind everybody, is still closed, still not doing anything, even though we have a pressing need again.

And, in fact, not only did we do the emergency channel from Lake St. Martin across to Big Buffalo but we did two thirds of another channel but then never finished it because we actually hadn't sat down with everybody that needed to be talked to to determine whether there actually could—we actually could finish it. We could find the need, and, certainly, the need was there. So we did a channel and a half, never used the other half channel at all whatsoever, so that was money really well spent. In fact, it's a real scar on the landscape. Hopefully, someday we're going to come to some consensus and we can actually use that part of the channel as well and actually get taxpayers of Manitoba decent value for their dollar.

Let's get the other one working as quickly as possible and even—I was up there when they were using it and the outlet was not properly planned, and they just basically let the water find its way across the countryside into Dauphin River. And it just totally destroyed a big chunk of that area, but that was okay because it was an emergency, and we've done nothing to improve on that emergency. And we'll probably end up back there again because of lack of planning.

But the river still runs and now we're starting to hear talk about, well, we need to do something to get the water down inside the city limits in Winnipeg. There's a flood going on in Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. I really don't think we're going to be able to get the water down inside the city limits in any reasonable timeline. I think the reality has to come home to a number of people, and they should be paying attention.

But that's getting a little bit off the topic of this particular resolution. We want a fair analysis, and I love it when they talk about well, we're getting 1.16 return on the dollar for the money that we invest in infrastructure. If you leave the money in private hands, and I worked with a couple of federal studies to look at the multiplier effect that we got for a dollar in private hands in agriculture, and we worked on moving that forward, and we were finding numbers like six- and seven-to-one multiplier effects depending on the length of the supply chain that was involved and how many times the dollars were turned in the local community before they actually left the immediate region. Those kind of multipliers are out there and are very common in other sectors, especially when they're in private hands. So infrastructure dollars are not great multipliers, but you have to have important infrastructure to allow the other sectors to move forward and to do their business, and so important infrastructure is an absolute necessity, but it does not provide the level of stimulant that private sector can.

Now, I know that there are a number of other members on this side of the House that want to speak to this. It would appear the other side really doesn't want to speak to this, that they don't want anybody to pay any attention to what both the pros and cons are on this.

So I am disappointed that they don't want to do a proper analysis. You would think that as government in this province that they want to do—make the right kind of policy decisions, but it's pretty clear that

they've already decided, based on some philosophical plan going back whatever number of years ago, that they've made up their mind as to where they're going to spend their money. They're not really looking for the best place to spend their dollar.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this motion.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on the motion?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): Recorded vote, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order, please. The question before the House is the Opposition Day motion.

Does the House wish to have the motion reread?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, the motion reads as follows: that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately commission an independent report with agreed-upon bipartisan research parameters to objectively evaluate the economic impact over the next five years of the

\$1,600 in broken promises—tax promises and fee hikes that have been forced on Manitobans since the imposition of the illegal PST hike on July 1st, 2013.

Division

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

Yeas

Briese, Cullen, Driedger, Eichler, Ewasko, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Helwer, Martin, Mitchelson, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Rowat, Schuler, Stefanson, Wishart.

Nays

Allum, Altemeyer, Ashton, Bjornson, Blady, Braun, Caldwell, Chief, Chomiak, Dewar, Gerrard, Irvin-Ross, Jha, Kostyshyn, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Melnick, Nevakshonoff, Oswald, Pettersen, Robinson, Rondeau, Selby, Selinger, Struthers, Swan, Wiebe, Wight.

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

Mr. Speaker: The motion is accordingly defeated.

* (16:40)

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 300—The St. Charles Country Club Incorporation Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now, as previously agreed, we'll move on with concurrence and third readings of Bill 300, The St. Charles Country Club Incorporation Amendment Act.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), that Bill 300, The St. Charles Country Club Incorporation Amendment Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for the third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Graydon: Mr. Speaker, Bill 300 allows the St. Charles Country Club members to be able to vote on all matters of the country club by proxying. It's just basically a housekeeping bill. Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to rise to support this legislation. I've played quite a bit of golf out there, and they have a great organization, and I'm happy to support them.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I understand this is a bill of some importance to the Progressive Conservative caucus, so we are not going to stand in the way of passing it this afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 300?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

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

Bill 64—The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed with concurrence and third readings of Bill 64, The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Jobs and the Economy, that Bill 64, The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le recouvrement des petites créances à la Cour du Banc de la Reine, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, small claims court is truly the people's court in Manitoba that allows people to attend with or without a lawyer in front of, in many cases, a hearing officer. This will continue. We believe it's important that there be access to justice. A concern has been raised that at the present time there's an automatic right of appeal to a new hearing before a Queen's Bench judge. There's a concern that that takes a lot of time of Queen's Bench judges, and we believe we can make better use of their time in the court system.

When this bill passes, it will then still be able—Manitobans will be able to appeal cases, but that appeal will only be heard by a Queen's Bench judge on a question of law or of jurisdiction, but we think it will continue to give Manitobans tremendous access to small claims but will allow us to allocate precious court resources more effectively. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I just want to put a few words on the record this afternoon regarding

this bill. Certainly we agree that we want to do what we can to see the court system work better and more efficiently in the province of Manitoba.

We hear from too many people who are frustrated with the delays in the court system, who are frustrated that it takes a long time for them to get a resolution regarding whatever matter they have, whether sometimes it's civil or criminal, in the court system. So, to the extent that this might improve things and open the doors for additional things to be heard at a different level, we certainly support that.

We also know that there are many within the court system who are frustrated, that they have a difficult time in terms of access to legal aid, and we've raised those concerns with the government, the ability for people to get representation. [*interjection*]

I hear the Minister for Justice talking about the federal government, the very same federal government that's given more in transfers to this government than any in the history of the province of Manitoba. So I suppose it's a matter of what you do with that money, Mr. Speaker, when you've gotten more transfers than any provincial government in the history of the province and you still can't fund your programs, you must wonder, where is that money going? [*interjection*]

And I hear the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lemieux), also, who also has benefitted from a great deal of federal funding for roads and infrastructure. We know, we've seen that in our region thanks to Stephen Harper and the federal government and the previous regional minister, Vic Toews, Mr. Speaker, who ensured that there was good funding.

I've heard the—or the member for Dawson Trail stand at meetings and give a lot of credit to the federal government for all the money that they're putting into the province of Manitoba. So I know that he sits at opposite ends from the Attorney General, but they should get together. Maybe there's room in loge, Mr. Speaker. They could sit down and talk about how the member for Dawson Trail recognizes there's so much federal money coming into the province but the Attorney General doesn't think that there's enough. So they could perhaps come together and try to come up with a uniform position.

Mr. Speaker, I would side more with the member for Dawson Trail on this issue—not on every issue, not on many issues, but on this one I'd side with him that there's been a great deal of federal

money come into the province. And if legal aid was a priority, of course, they would try to make it a priority.

But I digress, Mr. Speaker. And I do want to also say that we want to ensure that when we're dealing with the court system that people can get a resolution, whether it's a civil matter and particularly on issues of criminal matters. We know that the sooner that there is a dispensation from the actual action and having some sort of a resolution, that that can be a deterrent to crime when we're talking about the criminal justice system.

And I raised also with the member, the Minister of Justice (Mr. Swan), today in question period about the fact that we don't have an up-to-date provincial court annual report. In fact, I think we're three years behind. He indicated he would be talking to the Chief Justice about that, and I hope he's going to take that seriously because it is actually the law in Manitoba. It's in The Provincial Court Act.

I know this is a Court of Queen's Bench jurisdiction, but The Provincial Court Act says that you need to have an annual report—I believe that it's three months after the government fiscal year end, Mr. Speaker, that it has to be produced. And we are three years behind.

So I'm not sure why we have laws if they're not going to be followed in the province of Manitoba, where we've seen the government break a lot of laws, of course, in the past. But this is one that's—and I've got the attention now of the Minister of Jobs and the Economy (Ms. Oswald), who herself has been in violation of the law, The Elections Act, when she held a political event at the birthing centre, Mr. Speaker.

So a lot of heads turn when I talk about the government breaking laws because a lot of them have been involved in those actions. But I digress again, Mr. Speaker.

The issue regarding the provincial annual report is important, and I think we need to have that. And the fact that we're three years delayed is not only a violation of the law, but it makes it difficult for us to examine how things are going in the court system.

On this particular bill, we look forward to seeing how it works in action when it actually gets road-tested, whether or not it'll improve things and move things along quicker. And we certainly hope that it does, Mr. Speaker. And we're prepared to see

it pass this session, as we have agreed to in the agreement that we have signed.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to support this legislation to help modernize the small 'caims' court and the activities that surround handling of small claims. I look forward to seeing things move a little bit more smoothly as a result.

* (16:50)

I must say it is disturbing, as the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) has pointed out, to see the government yet again breaking the law. And, hopefully, the government will pay more attention to the law in the future, because their record in the last little while hasn't been very good in that matter.

But, hopefully, that will change. But this government doesn't seem to learn very quickly, so I won't, you know, go on a fast waiting for it to happen. That wouldn't be a very good idea.

Anyway, that's what I wanted to say, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully, the government is paying a bit of attention and—but for this legislation it's good to see it moving forward. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 64?

House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 64, The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act.

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

Bill 72—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call Bill 72, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection (Mr. Lemieux), and many other things, that Bill 72, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les armoiries, les emblèmes et le tartan du Manitoba, reported from the Standing Committee on

Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection): Mr. Speaker, along with members opposite said not only do I have Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport, Consumer Protection and Liquor & Lotteries, but they also said fish, bison and bluegrass, so I'm really pleased actually to be the minister responsible for that and images and symbols responsible for Manitoba.

But I—let me just say that these are iconic, Mr. Speaker, images that embody the spirit of Manitoba and the legacy of our province and soon we'll have the museum for human rights opening, we'll have the Journey to Churchill and there are many iconic features to Manitoba. But a number that we have put forward with regard to new provincial emblems, the plains bison, the provincial mammal, and the walleye, or the pickerel, as Manitobans call it, is really long overdue, and I appreciate the support that members opposite have given to this bill and we look forward to moving it very quickly. And, again, the pickerel was chosen by Manitobans who responded to a public consultation process, and our government is recognized for consultation and discussion, having that with Manitobans on many different bills and this being no different.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to conclude by saying that, with these remarks, I'm really pleased to bring forward this bill to be read for a third time and passed.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): And in regards to Bill 72, we find it very interesting that the government chose to have a, if you will, referendum on designating the plains bison as the mammal emblem for Manitoba, yet, somehow, in all their deliberations, they removed the referendum for the PST. So in Manitoba you can vote for the plains bison, but you can't have a vote or a say on something as significant as the PST. That referendum, Mr. Speaker, was removed by this government.

In fact, this government allowed people to vote on the walleye to be the fish emblem of the province. So we now find out that the walleye fish has far more ranking than the PST referendum, which was something that this government ran on in 1999 and every election since then. They made a commitment

on the PST that they would not raise it, they made a commitment on taxes, they made a commitment that there'd be a referendum and then stripped Manitobans of the right to have a referendum on something as significant as the PST. But the walleye—the walleye—got the right to have a referendum. In fact, this is the government that gave the big bluestem as the grass emblem of the province of Manitoba, the bluestem. The bluestem got its own referendum, Mr. Speaker, and somehow something as important, perhaps, as raising the PST, oh, for that they strip Manitobans the right to vote, because, you know, clearly the fact that there were thousands of people demonstrating out in front of the Legislature, hundreds of people at committee, there were thousands and thousands of emails and letters and concerns—those individuals, all 1.2 million Manitobans, had no right to a referendum on the PST, although it was enshrined in legislation.

However, what they did have a right to have a referendum on was the big bluestem as the grass emblem. In fact, I'm sure that when the provincial dirt was announced by this government, it probably, too—it probably had its own referendum, see, because only with this NDP government would dirt get a referendum but not the people.

So let's be very clear about this, Mr. Speaker. We certainly approve of the plains bison being the mammal emblem for Manitoba, and we will support this legislation—and it got a referendum, but not the PST. So the walleye, as the fish emblem for the province of Manitoba, which we support, it got its own referendum, but not the PST. The blue—the big bluestem, as a grass emblem got its own referendum, but not the PST. And it's interesting that in the last election, none of those three, including the provincial dirt, never was raised as an issue that they would be given a referendum.

But, in the last election, the PST, it was a commitment made by the NDP that it would get a referendum, and, Mr. Speaker, the PST had its referendum stripped from it, including the right of people to have a vote. In fact, it's an illegal referendum, which is in front of the courts right now; however, all of these other items did get a referendum. It just shows you that the priorities of this government are wrong-headed, that they should have not just given the plains bison, the Manitoba walleye and the big bluestem and even Manitoba's dirt—not just should they have been given a referendum, but also the PST. We do support this piece of legislation and would like it to move on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): I'd like to put a few words on the record in regard to this bill, and I'd like to thank, first of all, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport and Consumer Protection (Mr. Lemieux) for bringing this forward, and also thank the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship (Mr. Mackintosh) for the work that he did with the fishery community in identifying the walleye.

The plains bison—and I'm going to try and take a higher road than the previous speaker here—the plains bison, who would have thought it wasn't already our emblem? I was shocked when I found that out, but our work is never done here, obviously, and, you know, such as, for example, excess moisture insurance was left undone by members opposite, but we've resolved that. We continue to work—to do the work necessary.

Big bluestem, I should add, is emblematic, officially now, of the tallgrass prairies, something that is under extreme threat across western Canada, so this identification of this particular grass is very timely.

But I would like to focus my remarks on the provincial fish. It's of great interest to me personally, Mr. Speaker. My family owns a fishing lodge, so I've been literally fishing for more than 50 years. I have more than one master angler award to attest to that and many years put in guiding as well, so I've interacted with many tourists. But I also represent an area where there are a great number of commercial fishers, so this particular species of fish is very important to many of the people that I represent.

And, of course, there is a debate about the name. Now it's officially walleye, so we will go forward with that. I, of course, grew up knowing it as pickerel, as many of us have. But I look back 30 or more years ago, some of the other names for it. I always grew up thinking its official name was walleyed pike, and I wanted to clarify that within my own mind and have it done on the record here as well, so I did a little research, Mr. Speaker.

*(17:00)

First thing I did was I went to *The Freshwater Fishes of Manitoba*, a wonderful book we should all read, and I want to thank Prairie Sky Books who actually gave that to me as a gift, as they do give gifts to all MLAs. I thought that was a—just a

wonderful gift to receive. I'm very much grateful for that.

And I read the description in there and soon after called the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to follow up with some of the experts, and, in short order, got to speak to none other than Mr. Doug Watkinson, who is co-author of that book, along with the late Kenneth W. Stewart. And we had an interesting conversation on the topic. The walleye has had many names in times past actually; it's been known as the walleye pike, it's been known as the yellow, it also had an official name as the yellow pike-perch at one time. So I'm glad we finally put this all to rest and decided on the name walleye. And I'll tell you how we came around to that.

There was actually a committee on names and fishes, and this is information passed on to me by Dr. Watkinson—said there's a joint committee of the American Fisheries Society and the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, and the committee did include one Canadian, so I think we may have been somewhat overbalanced on the committee and maybe that's how they came to a joint conclusion that walleye was the best name for it. But we did have representation and had a chance to put our two cents on the table, I guess, so to speak.

More pertinent, I would like to pass on additional information that Mr. Watkinson supplied with me. He made reference to the seventh edition of *Common and Scientific Names of Fishes from the United States, Canada and Mexico*. The seventh edition, published in 2013, did two things in particular; one was to make a policy of theirs that these names, these common names be capitalized, and I notice in the bill that that wasn't the case. So perhaps, in time—in future, or when we do that legislation, we make minor amendments to a number of acts, we might want to consider that, Mr. Speaker: the capitalization of these common names. And, of course, the other thing they'd recommended at the time was that any Canadian species be listed in the French language as well, which shows that these people were very forward-thinking in their way of looking at things.

So, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by commending the staff of the Department of Conservation and Water Stewardship—Natural Resources in the past—for their management of the fishery species in Manitoba. It—a very important—I grew up on Lake Athapap and, in the 50 years that I have fished it, I have seen the quality of the lake

trout improve dramatically thanks to the work of our staff.

I'd like to tell few more stories about my dad's 14-pounder that he traded for three fish for chickens, the—Mrs. Grayson the—63-pound lake trout caught in 1930 in Lake Athapapuskow, but we have more important business, Mr. Speaker.

So thank you, and I hope that we all support this bill unanimously.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I have heard it all now. I have heard—well, members on the government side of the House may consider this really funny to be standing up and debating this piece of legislation, but where were they, Mr. Speaker, when we were debating very important legislation? And that was a increase in the PST. Not one member on the government side of the House got up and stood and defended their position to raise the PST. But now we have them filibustering on this piece of legislation, standing up and laughing and joking and indicating that this is so very important—this is much more important to Manitobans than the 1 per cent increase from 7 per cent to 8 per cent in the PST. And they have ample opportunity: last summer, as we sat here all summer to stand up and be held accountable.

And I know the member for the Interlake will be very interested in seeing some articles in his local newspaper, indicating what his priorities are. I'm sure the residents and the taxpayers in the Interlake are going to be very interested in knowing that he had the courage to stand up to talk about the plains bison, to talk about the walleye and to talk about the bluestem, and how important it was to have consultation and votes, and how important it was to have a committee, Mr. Speaker, a committee formed to debate these very important issues. And how wonderful it was and how wonderful his government is. But where was he? He was hiding in the bunker when we debated the PST, an issue that impacted the pocketbooks of every single Manitoban in the province, where this government felt that it was important for them to take money away from hard-working Manitobans and put it into their own government coffers, rather than giving Manitobans the opportunity to manage their own money.

So this is the priority of this government. And I would imagine there may be more on the government's side of the House that want to stand up and talk about how wonderful this piece of legislation is. But, Mr. Speaker, they should

be hiding their heads in shame when not a person on the government side could stand up and debate legislation when they picked Manitobans' pockets and took money away from hard-working Manitobans with the increase in the PST.

This is a shameful day, for a government in Manitoba that has become so arrogant and so out of touch, that they think this legislation today is more important and more worth debating than legislation that increased the PST. Mr. Speaker, I say shame on them as a government that would sit in their chairs and laugh and think this is a funny issue when Manitobans are suffering as a result of the wrong-headed decisions that they made around raising the PST.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly about, you know, this bill.

One of the things that was actually quite surprising was that we had a wonderful presentation at the committee meeting about the big bluestem and the finding of big bluestem grass in the Parker lands. And yet the minister, when he talked on this bill, completely forgot to mention the big bluestem and tell us what he's planning to do in terms of the big bluestem ecosystem, because the bill provides for the big bluestem to be a national—or a provincial emblem, and yet, you know, we have a minister whose come forward without any plan of what's going to be done in terms of preserving the ecosystem and the big bluestem.

In any event, maybe on another occasion, when he next gets up in the House, the minister will enlighten us on what his plans are, but I'll just say very briefly that, you know, I've followed the line of argument very closely about the vote that we—was allowed on the walleye and the big bluestem, and the bison—the plains bison.

* (17:10)

But I'm glad to see the importance that's been given to natural emblems in Manitoba, but it's rather surprising that there wasn't a vote on the PST. And, you know, the government provided, as I recall, a kitchen cabinet list of excuses, a kitchen sink of excuses, when they were coming to why they weren't going to have a vote on the PST. One, it was going to cost millions and million and millions of dollars—well, I don't think it costs millions and millions of dollars to have a vote on the walleye; and, second, that it would take far too long to have a vote. Well,

as it turned out, when, from the time they introduced the budget until we had the bill passed on the PST, there was many, many, many months in between and there was lots of time. Certainly, the vote on the walleye and the big blue stem and the plains bison didn't take that long. So I mean this really exposes the government to their—you know, try to pretend that they like democracy, but only when they—it serves their purpose and not necessarily when it serves the purpose of Manitobans. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on this bill?

The question before the House is Bill 72, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

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

Bill 208—The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Support Our Troops Licence Plates)

Mr. Speaker: We'll now to proceed to call Bill 208, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Support Our Troops Licence Plates).

Mr. Ralph Eichler (Lakeside): I move, seconded by the member from Brandon West, that Bill 208, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Support Our Troops Licence Plates), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and now be read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Eichler: Very briefly, I wanted to thank all members of the House for this legislation brought forward and, of course, working with the House leader, the Minister for Justice, on their input as far as the amendments were concerned. We certainly appreciate those and appreciate the passing.

Most importantly, I think every member in this House can relate to someone that's served this great country of ours, and, however they may be able to take advantage of some of the funds that's going to be derived from the sale of these plates, I know that the minister has a number of groups that's been in contact with him to support the application for this plate. And we're just hoping that it move forward very quickly and the plates'll be available very, very soon.

So, with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): I thank the member for Lakeside for his comments today and certainly he is correct. We're working with a possible proponent, who, I think, has some good ideas in mind. I believe it's agreed that we want money raised from the sale of these plates to go to the support of active military personnel and their families, and it's our goal to do just that.

It is our intention that this plate would be rolled out in the way that other specialty plates have been rolled out in Manitoba. It's expected the cost of the plate will be \$70. Thirty dollars of that will then go into a fund to be paid out to an organization yet to be confirmed, and that money will then be available for some very good purposes.

Manitobans should know that any organization that is interested in considering a specialty plate can access the MPI website to get more information. There's actually a very simple application process. MPI has a number of criteria. We have seen some exciting specialty plates, and I expect there will be more rolled out in the future with organizations who want to step forward. We think this'll be a very positive step, and I do thank the member for Lakeside for his co-operation and his work on this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this legislation. I think it's really important that we support those who are in the armed forces in Canada and for all the wonderful work that they do for all of us. I look forward to this passing and to these—seeing many of these licence plates around our streets in the not too distant future. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 208?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 208, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment Act (Support our Troops Licence Plates).

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

Bill 209—The Lymphedema Awareness Day Act

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call Bill 209, The Lymphedema Awareness Day Act.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I move, seconded by the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat), that Bill 209, The Lymphedema Awareness Day Act; Loi sur la Journée de sensibilisation au lymphœdème, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ewasko: It gives me great pleasure to stand up today and speak to Bill 209.

Lymphedema is a medical condition of chronic swelling that affects a limb or other body parts due to an accumulation of lymph fluid. Lymphedema has a history of being underdiagnosed and is more common than people think. It affects approximately 25 per cent of cancer patients. Children and infants are also at risk, and anyone whose lymphatic system has been damaged. The World Health Organization says that approximately 250 million people around the world are afflicted with lymphedema.

For years the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba has been lobbying municipalities and the provincial government to proclaim March 6th as lymphedema awareness day. For this, I commend Kim Avanthay and the Lymphedema Association of Manitoba, between producing pamphlets and distributing them throughout the province, the Pathways magazine, which is put out by the Canadian lymphedema association. Also, their yearly conferences at the beginning of March of each year adds to the awareness campaign of those suffering, or those family members suffering, the effects of lymphedema.

So, with this, the bill makes March 6th officially Lymphedema Awareness Day in Manitoba, a day to honour patients with lymphedema. They recognize health-care practitioners who care for their patients with lymphedema, and educate the public at large about this medical condition.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the support from all members of the House and look forward to celebrating March 6th, 2015, as the official first of many Lymphedema Awareness days to come. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this bill brought forward by the member from Lac du Bonnet. Certainly, this is a worthwhile initiative, and I think it's important that we not only have the annual awareness on

March the 6th, but we also move forward in fully funding lymphedema coverage under our public health-care system. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 209?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question?

Question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 209, The Lymphedema Awareness Day Act.

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

Bill 214—The Neurofibromatosis Awareness Month Act

Mr. Speaker: Now proceed to call, under concurrence and third readings, Bill 214, The Neurofibromatosis Awareness Month Act.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): I move, seconded by the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko), that Bill 214, The Neurofibromatosis Awareness Month Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development, be concurred in and be read now for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

* (17:20)

Mrs. Rowat: Briefly, I'll indicate that—to the House—that I am just overwhelmed by the amount of support and effort that the Manitoba neurofibromatosis organization put forward in ensuring that NF did receive recognition by the Manitoba Legislature and will be successful in having May declared as an awareness month for NF.

I believe that this has been a very emotional month for many members of the NF association and families associated with NF. Many have never spoke about their illness or the family's illness or association to neurofibromatosis. And I think that by the number of people that presented at committee, the number of people that attended debate in the Legislature, shows that they're very committed in making sure that Manitoba become—Manitobans become more aware of the debilitating effects of NF and how it weighs heavy on families, because you may be diagnosed with this, there is no cure, but you can continue to have different relapses and surgeries.

And as Tracy Gregorash, who started the NF organization in Manitoba many years ago—I think

about eight or nine years ago, after her son Seth was diagnosed, Tracy continues to be a fixture in many hospitals across Canada, spent the winter in Montreal with Seth for surgeries, and recently in Winnipeg, at Health Sciences Centre, with other complications, a femur and other complications with regard to NF.

So I want to congratulate Tracy on her work. I want to congratulate Christa and Annette and Nancy and Rebecca and Jeffrey, so many others associated with the organization as directors and supporters. They do a number of events across the province, and I believe that by having this little extra support, that is supported by members of this Legislature, will go a long way in recognizing the disease and move towards a cure.

So, on behalf of the Manitoba Legislature, I want to congratulate Tracy and the organization for the work that they do, and that we'll continue to support what they're doing and someday rise in the House and talk about the cure that has been found and how we've played a role in helping Manitobans become better for it.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Riding Mountain (Mrs. Rowat) for her efforts on this bill, for bringing it forward successfully. Clearly, neurofibromatosis is a condition that warrants a lot more attention, and I'm glad to see that as a result of this bill that it will get that.

I want to congratulate Tracy Gregorash and all the others who came to present on this bill. It certainly shows the interest and the need that is there to pay more attention to neurofibromatosis.

Hopefully, that attention will also draw the—improve the research and the funding so that, in fact, we can look forward to the day where we can have treatment which is less invasive than the surgical procedures we're using at the moment and more effective in decreasing the growths that occur within the nerve cells with neurofibromatosis and the problems that they create for individuals with this condition.

So, with those few words, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to this legislation becoming law shortly.

Mr. Speaker: Any further debate on Bill 214?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: House ready for the question?

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 214, The Neurofibromatosis Awareness Month Act.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 69—The Technical Safety Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call bills for debate in second readings, starting with Bill 69, The Technical Safety Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to put a few words on the record regarding this bill. This is one of the bills that we've discussed with government about holding over until the next session, whenever that might be, whenever the government recalls the House. I'm sure it'll be sometime early in September, though, when the government recalls the House.

But we have agreed, of course, to allow this bill to go to committee. We are looking forward to the input of the different individuals and groups who are impacted by the bill. There are many different bills that are amendment—amended under this bill. So we want to hear the input from individuals, and we'll reserve comment about our feelings on the specifics of the bill until we hear from those people at committee, and when we get back to the House in September, to debate this legislation, on third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 69?

The question for the House is debate on second reading for Bill 69, The Technical Safety Act.

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

Bill 70—The Real Estate Services Act

Mr. Speaker: I'll now proceed to call for debate on second reading of Bill 70, The Real Estate Services Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen).

Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Steinbach?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): This is another piece of legislation that was introduced late in the session and thus will be carried over to the fall session, whenever it is called.

Bill 70 is a substantial piece of legislation and is something that should not be rushed through very quickly. In fact, it's one of the larger pieces of legislation in front of the House, sitting at about 62 pages. So what we are looking forward to is seeing it go in front of a process whereby individuals across this province will have an opportunity to have a look at it and give feedback to it. That's very important, Mr. Speaker. And it'll go to committee and we'll get some feedback there as well. I know there are a lot of different groups that will want to have a better look at it, and we'll have the next few months to have that opportunity.

So, before this Legislature ceases to sit by the end of this week, we wanted to make sure that there was an opportunity that there be an mechanism whereby this would then go to committee and have the opportunity to be discussed, and individuals have the opportunity to have a good look at it and give us some feedback on the legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 70?

No. No further debate, so we'll proceed to call debate for second readings vote on Bill 70, The Real Estate Services Act.

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

Bill 71—The Animal Diseases Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: We'll now proceed to call debate on second readings of Bill 71, The Animal Diseases Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Midland.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): This government works in strange circles, it is said, and this bill is certainly another example of that. It came out of—the Minister of Agriculture doesn't seem to be able to pick up the phone and phone Maple Leaf Foods when they're shutting down a work shift for once a month, and yet out of nowhere comes a bill to amend powers of the—within a department for inspections and disease control.

Now, the official explanation of this bill is that it's modernizing language. And, you know, we're all for modernizing language, of course, but within there

it's always the devils in the details, and there is some language in this bill that expands the powers, by their own admission, expands order-making powers to issue director orders and matters such as that. And so while their—you know, their disease control and ability to inspect, should there be a disease outbreak—Mr. Speaker, this—we hope to—when this bill goes to committee, and actually prior to this bill going to committee, we would hope that the minister and his department will actually reach out to some of the major players within, particularly, the hog industry. We have two of the largest hog transport companies in Manitoba who knew nothing about this bill, and that was concerning.

* (17:30)

So I hope that they reach out to those to seek some input, and we will certainly hope that they are able to come to committee to express any comments or concerns they may have on this and that the department really does do that.

Biosecurity is a huge issue within the livestock industry, and we've seen some rather troubling instances where biosecurity is not being followed by some of the government staff. So we want to make sure that this is followed to the letter in recognizing producers' biosecurity agreements.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to this going to committee and see what the industry has to say about this bill. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is there any further debate on Bill 71?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question for the House is second—debate on second reading of Bill 71, The Animal Diseases Amendment Act.

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

Hon. Andrew Swan (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, can you canvass the House to see if there's will to call it 6 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 6 p.m.? *[Agreed]*

We wish our two pages, whose last day is with us today—and we wish them well in their future endeavours.

And the hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 9, 2014

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS		Members' Statements	
Petitions		Special Olympics Awareness Week	
Tabor Home—Construction Delays		Stefanson	3221
Friesen	3211	World Trade Centre Winnipeg	
		Jha	3221
Provincial Sales Tax Increase—Reversal and Referendum Rights		Flooding 2014—Southwest Manitoba	
Eichler	3211	Piwniuk	3222
Tabling of Reports		École Robert-Browning 50th Anniversary	
Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund, 2013 Annual Report		Blady	3222
Allum	3212	Major Marc George Retirement	
		Caldwell	3223
Oral Questions			
Tax Increases			
Pallister; Selinger	3212		
Tax and Fee Increases			
Stefanson; Oswald	3214		
NDP Tax Policies			
Friesen; Oswald	3215		
PST Increase			
Ewasko; Struthers	3216		
Flooding (2014)			
Piwniuk; Ashton	3217		
Piwniuk; Kostyshyn	3217		
Piwniuk; Chomiak	3217		
Ambulance Off-Load Wait Times			
Driedger; Selby	3218		
Climate Change Policies			
Gerrard; Selinger	3219		
Social Welfare Issues			
Gerrard; Selinger	3219		
Education System			
Gerrard; Selinger	3220		
Youth Summer Employment			
Wight; Chief	3220		
Provincial Court Activities			
Goertzen; Swan	3221		
		ORDERS OF THE DAY	
		GOVERNMENT BUSINESS	
		Opposition Day Motion	
		Stefanson	3224
		Ashton	3226
		Friesen	3228
		Oswald	3229
		Schuler	3231
		Gerrard	3233
		Cullen	3234
		Piwniuk	3235
		Briese	3237
		Mitchelson	3239
		Martin	3240
		Wishart	3242
		Concurrence and Third Readings	
		Bill 300—The St. Charles Country Club Incorporation Amendment Act	
		Graydon	3244
		Gerrard	3244
		Swan	3245
		Bill 64—The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act	
		Swan	3245
		Goertzen	3245
		Gerrard	3246

Bill 72—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and
the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

Lemieux	3247
Schuler	3247
Nevakshonoff	3248
Mitchelson	3249
Gerrard	3249

Bill 208—The Drivers and Vehicles
Amendment Act (Support Our Troops
Licence Plates)

Eichler	3250
Swan	3250
Gerrard	3250

Bill 209—The Lymphedema Awareness Day
Act

Ewasko	3251
Gerrard	3251

Bill 214—The Neurofibromatosis Awareness
Month Act

Rowat	3251
Gerrard	3252

Debate on Second Readings

Bill 69—The Technical Safety Act

Goertzen	3252
----------	------

Bill 70—The Real Estate Services Act

Schuler	3253
---------	------

Bill 71—The Animal Diseases Amendment
Act

Pedersen	3253
----------	------

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are also available on the Internet at the following address:

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