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DEBATES
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PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 5, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

Madam 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.

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Good morning. I am announcing the second reading of Bill 301 until 10:30 a.m. this morning or sooner, followed by the second reading of Bill 202 for the remainder of the morning until 11 a.m.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, until 10:30 or sooner this morning, and that will be followed by Bill 202, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines).

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 301—The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: So I will start, then, by calling second reading of Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Ms. Adams), that Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm pleased to stand up this morning and put a couple of words on the record for Bill 301, The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act, Madam Speaker.

The current act was established in 1990 and certainly, Madam Speaker, I think we could all agree that a lot of things change over 30 years.

The Winnipeg Humane Society's foundation board has asked me to bring forward these changes to help ensure a sustainable long-term future for the organization that many of us, if not all of us, have come to cherish. The Winnipeg Humane Society has been established for many years and has been working tirelessly to protect animals from suffering and to rehome animals and promote the welfare and dignity of animals.

I know that in the last many years that I've been elected, I've been very proud to put on the record that I am the proud mommy of Chilly Dog. Chilly Dog actually comes from the Winnipeg Humane Society. My son and I had been looking for a dog for about a year, and it was very serendipitous, the way that Chilly Dog came to be.

But—we were actually just about to leave the Winnipeg Humane Society this one Sunday afternoon, and as we were making our way out the door, one of the Winnipeg Humane Society people that worked there, folks—I can't remember if she was a volunteer or she was a staff—was coming with Chilly Dog. He was about eight weeks old and he had been at a birthday party. And so we kind of saw him and said hello and fell in love, and he was meant to be a Fontaine. And so we brought him home literally an hour later.

And so the Winnipeg Humane Society has a very special place in my heart, not only because of Chilly Dog, but they do phenomenal work. As most people in Manitoba know, I am an avid dog lover, but also an avid animal rights advocate. And we know that in Manitoba we have a very serious issue in the overpopulation of dogs in Manitoba, particularly in northern and rural communities. And I think that it is important to support the organizations that are doing that work, including the Winnipeg Humane Society.

And so this bill, Madam Speaker, will specifically just amend the composition of the foundation's board to reflect practices that allow people who are willing and eager to participate to do so. With the changing markets, the foundation will also no longer be required to use trust companies to invest.

Instead, the foundation must establish its own investment policy and may retain external investment managers to invest the foundation's assets. This will change the way the foundation is investing its assets in a way that ensures their long-term financial stability.

I know that all of us on this side of the House are very much willing to support this bill, and willing, this morning, for it to go to committee, and then, obviously, concurrence and third reading.

We support the Winnipeg Humane Society and on behalf of the NDP caucus, we say miigwech to them for their very, very valued and important work.

Miigwech.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party, this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties, each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Are there any questions? The honourable member for Transcona–Radisson. The honourable member for Radisson, was there a question?

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Sorry, I believe the member for—or sorry, the member for Selkirk was ahead of me.

Madam Speaker: I've recognized the honourable member for Radisson. Go ahead and ask your question.

Mr. Teitsma: Very good, that's fine, then.

*(10:10)

Can the member for St. Johns explain what process they went with in terms of consulting with others about this legislation and the changes that are being proposed by the Humane Society? Was it simply the board's request or were there additional consultations that were made by this member?

Thank you.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): As the member knows, this is a public bill, and so I was approached by the Winnipeg Humane Society to support this bill.

I trust the Winnipeg Humane Society that they did the work necessary that they needed to ensure the viability of their organization for years to come.

Miigwech.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Could the member for St. Johns please tell us, how many pets does the Winnipeg Humane Society help find homes for on an average each year?

Ms. Fontaine: The Winnipeg Humane Society does—and I know I cannot say enough of the good work that they do on behalf of animals in Manitoba, and that actually translates to about 4,200 animals per year that they are—that they rescue, that they take care of and that ultimately they re-home.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, the member from St. Johns states that the Winnipeg Humane Society currently invests through trust funds.

What specifically are the problems with trust fund investments that would necessitate a change to investment management? Do the trust funds under perform? Were the wrongdoings noted and what exactly are the reasons for the proposed change?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, Madam Speaker, you know, I'm not—it's not my responsibility to go into the financial management of the Winnipeg Humane Society. They have a foundation that does very good work and they have people that are on the foundation that have the expertise and that have the foundation's best interests at heart alongside the animals that they rescue each and every year.

I think it's important to recognize, again—and I'll put this on the record—that this is a public bill and this was brought forward from the Winnipeg Humane Society, and I trust in their foundation and all of the leadership that they did the necessary work for Bill 301.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

I would ask members that are participating remotely that it is helpful if you would let the moderator know if you have any questions. That makes it much easier for us to proceed with this.

Ms. Audrey Gordon (Southdale): Can the member for St. Johns explain why these changes are necessary?

Ms. Fontaine: As I noted in the couple of words that I put on the record, the act was established over 30 years ago, and, certainly, I think that nobody in the Chamber would disabuse the Winnipeg Humane

Society in respect of their expertise that they needed changes that kept up with the times. It's as simple as that.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

MLA Asagwara: Could the member for St. Johns please explain why she was willing to support this very, very important bill?

Ms. Fontaine: I love animals and anybody that knows that since I became an MLA, I have tried my best in this position of privilege to support rescues and shelters and those advocates that are on the front line: not only the Winnipeg Humane Society, but the Winnipeg Animal Services, Save a Dog Network—it goes on and on.

In fact, just this past weekend I took one of the two dogs that was attacked with a machete into my home. There was blood everywhere because his wound is a little bit open, but he was a sweetie and I will continue to do that. I absolutely love animals and I will continue to support organizations that do that work on behalf of animals.

Mr. Teitsma: I do want to thank the member for St. Johns for her concern and her—that she's also demonstrating by her actions. I very much appreciate that. I think it's important to give good consideration to animal welfare.

I guess my question is—and where we may disagree is—I think it's important for a legislator to understand the legislation that they're bringing forward. I think of, you know, what we've seen with the WE Charity board, and nationally how what, you know, might have seemed to be a good charity wasn't necessarily operating very well.

And so I would ask again, if the member can take steps to—is she willing to take steps to further understand this legislation and explain it to us?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, Madam Speaker, it's unfortunate that the member for Radisson doesn't like animals and doesn't like organizations that do good work on behalf of animals.

Madam Speaker, we know that the Winnipeg Humane Society has the expertise to ensure that they have the stability well into the future to continue to do the work that they need to do on behalf of animals. I actually would encourage the member for Radisson to reach out to the Winnipeg Humane Society—I'm sure that they're willing to do a tour when it is safe to do so—so that he can also meet the good folks at the Winnipeg Humane Society that do this work.

MLA Asagwara: As somebody who was—who grew up, didn't have any pets, you know, I'm—I actually didn't know a whole lot about the animals that the Humane Society rescues.

And so I'm wondering if the member for St. Johns could provide a little bit of clarity around the kinds of animals that the Humane Society does rescue. You know, as somebody who is learning more about the work that they do, I'd appreciate learning more about the animals that they provide care for.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, over the many, many years that I've been going to the Winnipeg Humane Society, going to buy food at their store or going to look for a new pet, as we did with Chilly Dog, we have seen that the Winnipeg animal—Winnipeg Humane Society rescues dogs, cats. I've seen a bird there. I've seen a—rabbits there. One time I believe that there was a—maybe a pig.

So they do a lot of good work, and not only do they bring animals into the Winnipeg humane shelter, they actually do a lot of advocating, particularly in respect of this government's ag gag bill. And so they're organizing around that as well, so in the best interest of farm animals as well.

Mr. Teitsma: Certainly, I am very, very much appreciative of the work of the Winnipeg Humane Society and am very much interested in animal welfare, as is the other member.

So my question, in the spirit of good will, in the spirit of comradery that we should be enjoying in this House, I would ask if the member could take some time to tell us more about her dog Chilly Dog, and tell us maybe the favourite memory that Chilly Dog Fontaine has had with the rest of the family. And maybe you also just tell us about—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, Madam Speaker, I think that that's his best question since 2016.

So let me just say Chilly Dog is the sweetest puppy. And when I got him he was eight weeks old. I thought he'd be, like, maybe medium, like, height or anything like that. He's actually way taller, he comes up to here. I've never had a dog in my life, so it's been a journey.

He once—for the purposes of this room, he actually once broke my nose by accident because I was trying to cuddle him and he didn't like that. And so I walked around, including in the building, with a little bit of a black eye.

So I say miigwech to the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) for that great question.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): I have had the opportunity to tour the Winnipeg Humane Society. And recently, after our dog passed away, we were looking at their site and looking to potentially adopt a dog from there. I know they have very few dogs that seem available now and I understand part of that is because of COVID and the number of people who are adopting animals during COVID.

Does the member—I know because she has a special connection with the Winnipeg Humane Society—could she talk a little bit about the challenges that COVID has caused for the Humane Society and what might happen on the other side of the pandemic as a result of people having adopted dogs but maybe not keeping them always?

* (10:20)

Ms. Fontaine: In fact, the minister is right. One of the things that shelters have found, including the Winnipeg Animal Services alongside the Humane Society, is that because of COVID, because more people were home, it was interestingly enough a good opportunity to go out and adopt dogs because people are home.

I think that's one of the considerations for adopting a dog is that so many of us obviously work outside the home and are gone for hours at a time. And so, you know, I'm hesitant to say that there was a positive for COVID, but certainly in the lives of animals, there was, in respect of the increase and exponential rate of adoptions of dogs.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to place a few words on the record regarding Bill 301, introduced to the House by the member from St. Johns, Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

The amendment seeks to change the foundation of the board and allow the foundation to no longer use trust companies to invest. Instead, the foundation must establish an investment policy and has the option of

retaining external investment managers to invest the foundation's assets in accordance with that policy.

As drafted, the amendment eliminates the requirement of the Humane Society to use the services of either a trust or an investment manager at the discretion of the board. One needs to question why is this change needed.

Madam Speaker, the Winnipeg Humane Society has much to celebrate and be proud of over the years since it was first established. I'm not sure many members would know that the organization was initially formed in 1894, some 126 years ago, and was initially known as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Women, Children and Animals.

In 1899, the society hired its first agent. Armed with a streetcar pass and a basket for injured animals, the agent, Captain Smith, travelled five miles a day caring for abandoned and injured animals, while promoting the humane treatment of animals.

In 1909, a women's branch who worked on funding and education was formed. It wasn't until 1911 that the Winnipeg Humane Society focused solely on the welfare of animals, with the focus on the humane treatment of horses.

The City of Winnipeg opened the first shelter for animals on Logan Avenue in 1912—or 1929. The Logan Avenue shelter was purchased from the City in 1935. Operations were difficult until 1968, when the Winnipeg Humane Society built a new shelter at 5 Kent St.

The shelter remained in operation for 39 years until it was overcapacity. Originally designed to house 2,500 animals a year, it was housing almost 10,000. Overcrowding, disease control and quarantine procedures were taxed to the limits. There was inadequate space for the veterinary spay and neuter clinic and animal adoption area. Educational programs had to be run out of a trailer in the parking lot.

To respond, the Winnipeg Humane Society purchased an eight-acre lot for the development of a new facility. On October 25th, 2007, after eight years of planning and fundraising, the new 40,000-square-foot facility located at 45 Hurst Way opened.

Madam Speaker, today, the Winnipeg Humane Society is known as one of the most successful and proactive adoption centres in Canada and is responsible for finding homes for more than

4,200 animals and reuniting more than 700 dogs and cats with their owners each year. Around 6,000 spay and neuter surgeries are performed annually, and the organization continues to remain on the forefront of animal welfare issues concerning the city, province and country.

Madam Speaker, my background is in animal husbandry, veterinary medicine and business management. I've always been involved in animal welfare and care. In 1985, I was approached by the Department of Agriculture's Chief Veterinary Officer to see if I would be interested in conducting humane inspections on behalf of the Province throughout Manitoba on an as-needed basis.

At that time, inspections consisted of a very simplistic one-page form made in triplicate: one copy for the owner, one for the department and one for the inspector.

As the years progressed, animal protection officers became peace officers under the Department of Agriculture. I was one of the first animal protection officers appointed in the province with badge No. 2. I never knew who had the No. 1 badge.

Over the years, I saw some very disturbing cases. The case of a nine-month-old Rottweiler that we had seized because it had a very deep infected wound on its neck, was brought up by my son the other day. The dog had a wound which encircled the entire neck. The wound was so badly infected and needed immediate surgical attention.

It was soon evident, when the dog was in surgery, the cause of the wound was a metal choke collar that was placed on the dog when it was much younger. As the dog grew, the owner said he thought the dog had lost the collar. It had actually cut through the skin to the point where it was no longer visible.

Madam Speaker, I could go on and on with stories like this where the welfare and humane treatment of animals was clearly at issue. In almost every case, the owners did not acknowledge intent. Much of my job involved education, focusing on recommendations and follow-up. Many do not understand today that it is just as inhumane to have a malnourished pet as it is to have an obese animal. Both will have serious health problems that will cause future problems, suffering and premature death.

Madam Speaker, Bill 301 proposes an amendment to allow the Winnipeg Humane Society to switch from an investment trust to being able to elect to use the expertise of an investment management

company or individual. It is important to understand, the member has failed to explain the reasons for this request. Under the current system, a trust company is a legal entity that acts as a fiduciary, an agent or trustee on behalf of a person or business for a trust.

A trust company is typically tasked with the administration, management and the eventual transfer of assets to beneficiaries, in this case, the Winnipeg Humane Society. Trusts are managed for profit. The trust company does not own the assets its customers, again, assign to its management. It may assume legal obligation to take care of the assets on behalf of its clients.

Wealth management services are one of the most common uses for a trust company, which includes investment management and wealth preservation so that a client's future operations have the funds when needed. Trust companies can also build financial plans for their clients for additional fees, depending on the level of service needed. There are many trust companies to choose from ranging in size and fees. The larger trust companies provide more products and services, but may lack the personal touch of smaller institutions.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately, the member opposite has not provided any specific concern for discussion to allow for our due diligence as legislators to make an informed decision. The information as to why they wish to move away from a trust company for the management of their funds is noticeably absent. Are there underlying poor performance concerns? Or are there mismanagement concerns or wrongdoing concerns that would support the proposed amendments?

Madam Speaker, the Winnipeg Humane Society is the largest animal welfare organization in the province and provides many services to the province, from adoptions to animal advocacy campaigns. The Winnipeg Humane Society is known to take in over 8,000 animals per year, including stray cats and dogs, owner-surrendered pets, unsuccessful adoptions from other shelters or rescues, lost pets, injured animals rescued by the Winnipeg Humane Society, emergency seizures by the Winnipeg animal protection officers, animals rescued by emergency drivers and injured wildlife.

The Winnipeg Humane Society has spearheaded many innovative programs in Manitoba, providing an affordable spay and neuter option to all Manitobans, which is part of its plan.

The Winnipeg Humane Society's Subsidized Spay and Neuter Assistance Program provides low-income families the opportunity to get their cat spayed or neutered for a discounted rate. This program is part of their ongoing efforts to reduce the number of unwanted and homeless pets in Manitoba.

The Winnipeg Humane Society provides specialized training and behaviour programs for dogs, at-risk youth programs and education programs. The experienced dog adoption program matches dogs with specific issues with the appropriate owner in order to give them the best chances at success.

The Winnipeg Humane Society also supports voluntary, affordable, accessible spay-neuter programs—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have one minute remaining.

* (10:30)

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 202—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines)

Madam Speaker: And as previously announced, the House will now consider second reading of Bill 202, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines).

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), that Bill 202, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines), be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, currently under the provincial guidelines for personal-care homes, each resident should receive 3.6 paid hours of care per day. Depending on the number of residents that would mean that the 35 per cent of the care would have to be provided by nursing professionals.

The interesting thing though, Madam Speaker, about those direct patient-care hours—paid patient-care hours—is that those paid hours don't actually entirely need to reflect the direct care that's provided to patients. And so what you'll see happening is long-term-care residents may be receiving much less than that if their nursing-care providers, for example, are having a professional development day or are doing

other duties, paid duties, and not actually providing direct care.

And, Madam Speaker, I think the other thing that's really important for folks to know is that that 3.6, not only is that an inadequate amount of time but it's really, like, it's less than the bare minimum. And so what this bill is proposing—and this isn't the first time this bill has been introduced—but what this bill is proposing is that folks in long-term-care homes, residents in PCHs would receive at least four hours of direct patient care per day.

And I say that because that, to be completely clear, should kind of be the baseline—the bottom rather. That's not the ceiling. That's not the way we cap it, but we're saying that, you know, at least four hours of direct patient care per day would see folks living in long-term care have improved health outcomes. Research supports that. Research shows that the more direct patient-care hours someone receives in long-term care the better their outcomes are, the better their mental health is. The better they do overall in those settings.

This bill would also see that by the end of 2021-2022 fiscal year, the minister would be able to report on the reasons for failing to achieve this target and how the actual care was given adequately provides for the health, safety and comfort for residents. This is really, really important in terms of reporting and in terms of being able to strategically plan around how care is provided to our elders, to our loved ones in long-term care.

It's one thing to say that, you know, we should be providing for four hours of direct patient care, but it's another thing to say that we should be measuring and reporting on that. And, ultimately, we can't fix what we don't measure, Madam Speaker, and so that reporting aspect is really, really important.

And I think that now we're in a time where we're seeing, not only in Manitoba but certainly across other jurisdictions, the impacts of inadequate care on our older adults, on our loved ones and elders in long-term care. There is a heightened awareness and a new attention to what direct patient care, what reporting, what transparency in these ways means for our loved ones in long-term care.

This pandemic has devastated long-term-care homes in jurisdictions across Canada. We're seeing the impacts of this pandemic in long-term-care homes here now in Manitoba in a way we didn't see months ago and, you know, we have an opportunity right now,

Madam Speaker, to make choices as legislators that not only improve the health care and the outcomes for our loved ones in long-term care right now, but can do so well into the future. And this bill will assist in being able to do that.

Over the past several weeks, I've had conversations—almost on a daily basis—with family members of those who are residing in long-term-care homes. This week alone, I spoke with two people that I know personally, two people who were really important adults in my life when I was a young person playing basketball, when I was a university student.

And, you know, those folks unfortunately shared the news with me this week that their parents had died in long-term care as a result of COVID-19. And those are really hard conversations, Madam Speaker. And we had a—lengthy conversations about the care that their loved ones received.

And I want to make this point very clear that we know that our health-care workers are working as hard as they can to provide the absolute best care possible before this pandemic and during this pandemic. The—and I say this as someone who has worked in long-term care. I know how heavy that workload can be and is.

It's really not a reflection of how hard health-care workers are working, but it's a reflection of the importance of providing adequate resource for people to be able to provide care in the ways that best serve residents and those living in long-term-care homes.

And so, when I spoke with these folks about, you know, what was going on in long-term care, they also expressed a desire to see a bill like this passed, a desire to see, you know, everyone's loved ones in long-term-care homes receive the care they deserve. And the only way that you can ensure that is to increase the care that someone receives—to legislate it, quite frankly, and then you put that responsibility on the folks who have the power and the capacity to deliver those resources that will allow for that care to be provided.

And so I would really—I would urge, you know, all members of this House to reflect not only on what we can do right now during this pandemic, but reflect on our responsibility to contribute to real systemic change within our health-care system, to do better by our elders, to do better by older adults.

The way that our loved ones in long-term care have been treated during this pandemic—and I will specifically identify the Minister of Health's

comments recently saying that deaths in long-term-care homes were unavoidable. Madam Speaker, we know that that's false. We know that that's wrong. We know that that's not true. Experts across the board have identified that.

But I really want people to reflect on the impact of what a statement like that has on those living in long-term care, on folks who are vulnerable, many folks who are unable to protect themselves in situations of crisis, in a pandemic, who are dependent, reliant and trusting us to ensure that they receive the best care possible.

It is reprehensible that a statement like that would be made. And it would be reprehensible that now—given what is before us, what we're seeing, what has been amplified in terms of the responsibilities upon us to protect vulnerable people, to equip front-line workers with what they need to provide care in the best ways possible—it would be reprehensible for us to not do better and implement legislation such as this, and also reflect on how we can create meaningful long-term systemic change in our health-care system for older adults, elders and seniors in long-term care.

And so I look forward to answering any questions in regards to this bill, you know, the conversations around this. And I invite all members of this House, that if you have questions or concerns beyond this conversation today, that you reach out to me. I'm happy to have those conversations.

* (10:40)

I'm happy to work with folks who want to make sure that our loved ones in long-term care receive the best care they deserve, the adequate care that they deserve, and that the folks providing that care are equipped with the resources to do so, Madam Speaker.

And that's really the other aspect of this bill that's so important for us to recognize. We have a responsibility to make sure that we're providing the resources that are required for long-term-care homes to deliver the outcomes that we know the folks that reside there are in need of.

Madam Speaker: And just a reminder for all members participating remotely that if you do have a question or you want to debate, please let the moderator know so that we can move through this in a efficient manner.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be asked to

the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party, this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties, each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

The honourable member for La Vérendrye, on a question.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): Can the member from Union Station please inform the House who they've consulted about this legislation, and I mean the, like, organizations, or different associations. If the member would please provide us with that information.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I thank the member for the question.

You know, numerous organizations have been consulted in regards to this legislation. I think it's also really important to identify the fact that there's a lot of research that substantiates this legislation across varying jurisdictions in the country, certainly right here in Manitoba. There's large bodies of evidence that support this. Stats Canada has evidence and information that supports this that is years and years and years old, quite frankly.

And I also want to make clear, again, that this four hours is not the—it's a standard and certainly being looked at in a lot of ways as the gold standard. But I would also argue that, you know, we can do better and that if we say, you know, five hours is also able to be delivered, then deliver five—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I wanted to ask the member from Union Station, because I know that they are speaking from a place of quite a bit of knowledge as a front-line health-care provider, as a nurse and with a lot of nursing background—so could the member explain to the rest of us without that expertise why they are putting emphasis—like why the emphasis on direct care is so important?

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member from Wolseley for the question.

That emphasis on direct care is so important because it would ensure that it's not being confused with other paid hours within the work day; not, you know, professional development hours, not paid breaks. It would ensure that the direct patient care component is actually actioned and reported on.

So we're talking about feeding folks in long-term care; we're talking about peri-care, for example; we're talking about, you know, sitting down and engaging with folks; you know, the time that is required to actually do things like assess after you've distributed medications; all of these things to properly assess and enhance the care that someone is receiving.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): For 17 years the NDP failed to improve the health-care system in Manitoba. Can the member from Union Station please tell this House why we should listen to them now?

MLA Asagwara: I would thank the member for that question

And I would say, you know, the government has been in power now for several years and there's an opportunity in front of all members of this House to make a decision that will impact the outcomes for our loved ones in long-term care today and into the future.

And, you know, members opposite can continue to blame other people, but the fact of the matter is they have made multiple cuts in just a couple of years—in the last three years—leading into this pandemic that have, unfortunately, left long-term-care homes terribly positioned to respond to this pandemic, and they've failed them during this pandemic.

So I would encourage the member to reflect on the decision making of his own government right now, how they've compromised the ability of long-term-care providers to support our loved ones—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I thank the member from Union Station for bringing forward this bill which we certainly support.

It's been very clear for many years—in fact, the Long Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba and the Manitoba association of residential community care have indicated that, going back up to 15 years, there has been a shortage. But, clearly, this is needed now. We need to get to a much better standard of care in Manitoba.

I'd like to ask, specifically, a little more rationale for the four hours, and whether paperwork is included in that four hours or not.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that question.

The four hours would certainly be, you know, direct care provided to patients—or sorry, residents, rather. So, those hours would be inclusive of—and I say

this as a nurse, the reality of it is there are all kinds of things that happen, and I think the Speaker is well aware, you know, of what nursing looks like when you're in the field.

But, you know, there are all sorts of things that happen when you're providing care, you know, all sorts of documentation that may arise. I think about, you know, even when you're distributing medications, and that would be handing that out directly to residents, the immediate documentation that follows.

But the focus of this four hours is direct patient—

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

Ms. Naylor: I'd like to ask the member for Union Station if they can describe what the potential repercussions are for the Minister of Health and for this government if they fail to deliver four daily hours of direct care for all LTC residents.

MLA Asagwara: Thank you, the member for Wolseley, for that question.

The direct—the potential repercussions would be, you know, a decline in—actually I'm just going to be really direct about this. You know, it would be a reflection of this government's failure—ongoing shortcomings in terms of providing the resources required for long-term-care residents to have the best potential health outcomes.

You know, this is an opportunity for all of us, certainly for this government, to ensure good health outcomes for residents in long-term care. And so, by not passing this piece of legislation, the government would be sending a clear message that they're not interested in long-term positive health outcomes for residents in long-term care.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions?

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity.

In the four years, the PC government has made significant investments in health care to improve outcomes for everybody, including that in personal care; you know, we've taken recent steps in terms of strict visitor restrictions and enhanced cleaning and those things.

So, I'm wondering, can the member opposite please inform this House if they are aware of the significant measures we have taken to protect seniors in Manitoba.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for that question.

I certainly hope that the member will be supporting this legislation. I know that in—that Dauphin's personal-care home, there's about a 60 per cent vacancy rate right now, and a piece of legislation like this would certainly help ensure that the residents in that personal-care home would receive the care that they deserve, would receive the direct patient care that would enhance their health outcomes.

And so I look forward to the member supporting this legislation to make sure that the cuts that this government has made that would have impacted long-term-care homes like the one in Dauphin can be—the harm that was done as a result of that can be mitigated, and that we can work together to make sure that—

* (10:50)

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

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Can the member for Union Station please inform this House if they are aware that our \$2-billion health-care funding guarantee will increase the already record level of investments the PC government provides to health care, which was already \$648 million more than the NDP ever spent?

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station—*[interjection]*—order.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for the—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Union Station.

MLA Asagwara: I thank the member for the question.

Myself, you know, members of this House, certainly, people in community are well aware that this government made multiple cuts to long-term-care homes in this province leading up to this pandemic, and folks are very well aware of the fact that this government has failed to invest adequately in long-term care to prevent the deaths that are happening. Right now 23 deaths of our loved ones in Parkview Place; eight as of yesterday at Maples personal-care home.

Let's focus on passing legislation that will literally help save lives, that will literally help folks in long-term care have better quality of life. Let's focus on

mitigating the harms done by this government and pass a piece of legislation that's going to support our elders and loved ones in long-term care today.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): Is in—it is an honour to rise in this House today and put some words on record for the bill brought forward by the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Staffing Guidelines).

But before I get into my comments about Bill 202, I would like to thank the Speaker, the clerks, and all the staff for the hard work and hours they have contributed to make the Legislature function virtually. I'm not a computer techie. I'm sure my grandson can figure things out faster than I can. But the change from in-person to virtual, from what I have seen has gone out—gone over without any hiccups and has put this Legislature into the 21st century. It will be interesting to see where this will take us and what we can do next.

Madam Speaker, today personal-care homes play an important role in helping our seniors as they get to the age where they need care and are not able to care for themselves. Physical issues, dementia and other issues make it so they need to be in a home where they can be looked after and cared for with dignity so their final years with us are ones that are comfortable and secure. Our seniors have given us a lot and they deserve proper care.

Many of us are not—are a lot closer to making use of these facilities so we must make sure we maintain proper standards for all our seniors.

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Until about four years ago, I had been in personal-care homes visiting different people, making visits as the MLA for the area, but never got to see the inner workings of a personal-care home. But when my mother-in-law became a resident of one, that changed my perspective on them.

I got to see first hand the fantastic treatment she received from the staff: how the staff treated her like family and gave her the best care that anyone could ask for. We had a birthday party for her at the home to celebrate her 100th birthday. The staff sang happy birthday to her along with the family and had cake

with her. We could not ask for better care than she was receiving. The staff was fantastic.

It takes a special person to work at a personal-care home. Some of the tasks they are called upon to do, there are many that would refuse to work there. The staff have patience and they care about the people they look after. The staff at all personal-care homes need to be thanked and congratulated for everything they do to care for our loved ones.

The other day the Leader of the Opposition made a comment about filth in some of the personal-care homes: the cockroaches, residents being allowed to be in soiled diapers. The way he made it sound, they were in these soiled diapers for what was—seemed like an eternity. Well, Madam Speaker, in the three-plus years that I visited my mother-in-law in a personal-care home here in downtown Winnipeg, I did not see any of that.

The workers I got to know would never let this happen to one of their residents. I think the Leader of the Opposition owes personal-care-home workers an apology for what he said. It is an insult to suggest that the workers are not looking after the residents. Our government is committed to ensuring the health and well-being of seniors and their loved ones.

Despite what the NDP members may say, our government has added personal-care-home beds to the system. Since April, 2016, we've built 257 PCH beds, with another 253 in facilities at Steinbach and Carman currently under construction. And any—if any of the NDP members don't believe me, maybe they could come for a ride and I would gladly show them what new PCH beds look like.

Madam Speaker, that's 510 beds in total and a \$156-billion investment in our first two years in government. We built almost twice as many PCH beds in Winnipeg as the NDP did from 2010 to 2016.

They—the NDP did a lot of photo ops, a lot of promises, but that's as far as it went: no shovels in the ground—absolutely no shovels. These investments support our PC government's commitments to increase the number of personal-care-home beds by 1,200 in Manitoba by 2025, and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier this year our government announced \$280 million in safety and capital upgrades at PCHs in Manitoba. These built on the government's commitment to ensure health-care facilities are in line with revised Manitoba fire code requirements, including provisions of fire suppression

system and increased fire separation, enhancements to better protect residents, staff and the public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government cares about the residents of personal-care homes. That is why PCHs in Manitoba are routinely inspected. The department conducts standards review at all Manitoba PCHs at least once every two years. Our government has increased PCH inspections.

And despite a pause caused by this COVID-19 pandemic, we have completed a record number of personal-care-home inspections this year. To date, inspectors have completed 115 reviews in 2020. From 2010 to 2015 the NDP averaged 79.5 inspections per year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our government will continue to take the necessary steps to protect our most vulnerable Manitobans. We have increased annual home-care funding by over \$50 million, or 16 per cent more than the NDP ever did. Our \$2-billion health-care funding guarantees increased the record level investment by our PC government to provide health care, which is already \$648 million more than in the last NDP budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could go on all morning comparing our record with that of the NDP when they were in government, but we all know they were great at spending money but were poor at achieving results.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our world, our country and our community is in a pandemic. COVID-19 is making our lives difficult, especially for our seniors. Our government is committed to ensuring the health and well-being of our seniors during trying times. With the onset of COVID-19, we instituted steps to keep our seniors in personal-care homes safe, including strict visitation—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Lagimodière will have two minutes remaining—pardon me—La Vérendrye has two minutes remaining.

* (11:00)

House Business

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So the honourable Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Yes, pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the next private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one put forward by the

honourable member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw). The title of the resolution is Immediate and Comprehensive Supports Needed for Manitoba Small Businesses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been brought to our attention from the honourable Opposition House Leader that, pursuant of rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution be considered for next Thursday of private members' business and will be put forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry. All in order—the honourable member for Fort Garry—yes, the member—the title of the resolution is Immediate and Comprehensive Supports Needed for Manitoba Small Businesses.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time being 11 o'clock, moving on to resolution business.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 3—Better Support for Schools, Teachers, Students and Families

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately invest in—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Sorry, the honourable member for—order. The honourable member for Transcona, if you can first present it and then seconded it by another member: I move, and seconded by another member of your party.

Mr. Altomare: I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor), the following:

Can I speak to this now, to the resolution?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. Bring forward, yes—therefore be it resolved.

Mr. Altomare: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately invest in public schools to hire more teachers, more educational assistants, acquire new spaces for teaching and programming, provide more mental health supports for students and educators and invest in remote learning supports and use the money provided by the federal government to ensure all Manitoba students—and get the education they deserve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I just want to clarify a correction that—to make sure that when we—the

resolution be actually put forward as printed in the Order Paper for today.

Is there leave to agree to consider the resolution as in the Order Paper? [Agreed]

WHEREAS the Pallister Government has for years underfunded schools in Manitoba and eliminated important programs that kept class sizes small; and

WHEREAS the Pallister Government failed to present a plan to invest in schools to ensure they can meet the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS the Pallister Government received over \$85 million dollars from the Federal Government to invest in schools but has refused to spend any of these funds in the schools; and

WHEREAS the Pallister Government has ignored calls from teachers, students, support staff, parents and other community groups to ensure class sizes remain small so that all students can safely and properly physically distance themselves in the classroom; and

WHEREAS the Pallister Government has refused calls to hire more teachers, support staff and educational assistants so that students can receive one on one attention and address learning loss that resulted from the closure of schools last spring; and

WHEREAS the Pallister Government did not provide any new supports so that schools and school divisions could prepare and acquire new classroom space, teaching and learning supplies and teaching areas; and

WHEREAS the Pallister Government instead interfered in ongoing negotiations at school divisions which precipitated a strike affecting transportation for many students and families; and

WHEREAS the Pallister Government failure to prepare an adequate back to school plan which has left teachers, educational assistants, support staff and school administrators and educators scrambling to make last minute changes to accommodate new realities of COVID 19 and public health orders.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to immediately invest in provincial public schools to hire more teachers, hire more educational assistants, acquire new spaces for teaching and programming, provide more mental health supports for students and educators, invest in remote learning supports and use the money provided

by the Federal Government to ensure all Manitoba students receive the education they deserve.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare), seconded by the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor),

THEREFORE THE—BE RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to immediately invest in provincial public schools to hire more teachers, hire more education assistants, acquire new spaces for teaching and programming, provide more mental health supports for students and educators, invest in remote learning of supports and use the money provided by the federal government to ensure that all Manitoban students receive the education they deserve.

Mr. Altomare: Well, thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and for allowing me to put a few words on the record regarding this private member—my private member's resolution.

The Pallister government has set up schools to fail going into this pandemic with very little planning and very little signal as to the direction they wanted to go to. Year after year we have seen cuts to education that have left us grossly under resourced.

We know that small class sizes are conducive to both a better learning environment and a reduced spread of COVID-19. If this government had invested in keeping class sizes small our schools would have been able to provide the two metres consistently throughout the province, as Dr. Roussin has steadfastly maintained as a very effective way to reduce the spread of COVID in our schools.

And this government has outright ignored calls from teachers, students and support staff, EAs, parents, other community groups to ensure that class sizes remain small so that students can safely and properly distance themselves in their learning spaces.

This government did not provide any leadership to schools, leaving teachers, school divisions, everybody that works in the thing trying to scramble to see what direction they were going to go, because we have some new realities now when it comes to COVID-19 and the public health orders that have to be instituted in our buildings.

They also did not provide any new supports that schools and school divisions could prepare, acquire new classroom space, see about community space, even looking at the teaching and learning supplies that

have now become different in—with the realities of COVID.

The Pallister government received \$85 million from the federal government to invest in schools but have spent none of it and—leaving our schools less prepared even though we have these funds available. Also, out of the \$100 million of provincial money that they say they put in, only \$17 million has so far been sent to our school divisions, right?

And because these pieces are now missing, what ends up happening is that schools are feeling unsupported. Instead what they see is a government preoccupied with the bottom line, which results in teachers' stress—many on the brink of burnout—and parents that are worried about their kids' well-being in their own neighbourhood schools.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the minister have also refused calls to hire more teachers, support staff, EAs so that students can receive one-on-one attention, address the significant learning loss that has occurred since March and, also, all of the significant demands that are now put on schools and the kids so that they can be compliant with COVID-19. And what ends up happening is that we've had a Premier lay off nearly 8,000 educational staff during the pandemic. So now what we have is the true cost of these cuts coming to the table.

So to—as an example, the Premier has interfered in ongoing negotiations to school divisions which precipitated a strike affecting transportation for many students and families. Teachers, EAs, staff in schools are doing the best they can right now but they can't do this alone. They need a partner in government: a partner in government that is vocal, that is out there on the front lines with our staff, with everybody that works in the system saying that we've got your back.

But now, in the middle of the pandemic, we have more stress being created because of the K-to-12 education review. Without the public release of this report—not only are they not releasing this report, they're introducing legislation and interfering in a democratic process by not distributing the bill that has cuts and changes to our educational system.

And we urge the provincial government to immediately invest in provincial public schools to get more teachers, more EAs and—right to the front line and that means also acquiring some extra space so that we can provide the proper teaching and programming and the mental health supports for students and edu-

cators. And this can be, of course, supported by some of that federal money that has been put to the table.

Now, the Pallister government lately has also removed the cap on the K-to-3 class sizes that used to be 20 students and this has been a major contributor to the inability to physically distance in our schools.

As we know, every parent wants their child to have more one-on-one time with their teacher or with the adults that are in their classroom. And the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how important it is to have appropriate teacher-to-student ratios, not only for health and safety but for, of course, our number one piece, which is the teaching and learning process. Research—multiple research studies have shown that small class sizes allow this to happen so that we can get some of that important face-to-face time that is necessary in an effective classroom.

Let's go back to the 2016 election. This government said that the Progressive Conservative Party believes that small-class sizes are one factor in improving educational opportunities and outcomes for young children. There are 6,300 more children in Manitoba schools since 2015-16 school year, yet they cut the cap of 20 students in K-to-3 classes right away in 2017. That sent a clear signal.

* (11:10)

And since the removal of this cap classroom size, the poll conducted by Viewpoints Research, teachers and students are feeling the effects of these cuts: 84 per cent of teachers agree that the removal of the cap has had a negative effect in the ability to provide individualized attention to students and to even communicate effectively with parents.

And now, in a public health crisis where top medical doctors are calling for physical distancing in classrooms, the Pallister government has made it impossible because of a lack of investment in schools and a failure to hire more teachers and find more space.

The Premier is only focused on the bottom line. He has pushed education funding below inflation despite a growing population, which transfers into a de facto cut to education. Then he failed to commit to provide funding to hire more teachers, keep classroom sizes small so that we can remain safe during the pandemic.

Then, after pressure, right, that we kept mounting from the public and from opposition benches, they misled Manitobans into thinking that they were

investing \$100 million into schools, where nearly half of that savings was 'utterment' laying off thousands of school staff in the spring. And if the return to school wasn't stressful enough, the PC government is making schools jump through hoops just to apply for the money they say that's on the table.

The Pallister government is playing a dangerous game of underfunding the COVID-19 response and refusing to commit to using federal funds to keep our class sizes small, hire more teachers and get the necessary teaching and learning supplies into our classrooms. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has no evidence to support his decisions. His so-called review of small class sizes didn't allow time to measure any of it. The Pallister government's funding freeze means more crowded classrooms which we know will have devastating consequences on the quality of education.

And the Pallister government, it's only just getting started. And just like in health care, their education review will mean more cuts to our kids' classrooms. We believe in putting the educational needs, health and safety of our children first, ahead of these budget cuts. That is why we are committed to calling on the government to reinstate the cap on K-to-3 class sizes to 20, and including right now, because of the pandemic, an actual 15-student cap for all grades so that we can maintain what Manitoba Health has outlined to—and ensure safety throughout the province.

The Premier's college and health-care review were also used as an excuse to make cuts, and it will do the same to do the same to K-to-12 education. We believe that investments in quality education from early years to adulthood is critical to ensure the success of Manitoba children and meet the growing needs of a skilled workforce for today and years to come.

Just like in health care, though, the Pallister government's review of schools will lead to more cuts, more stress for teachers, larger class sizes, less one-on-one time and fewer EAs in the classrooms to help our kids succeed.

Manitoba MGEU president, Michelle Gawronsky, says that every review that this government has undertaken is looking right now—has led to cuts in services to Manitoba, and they have already cut classroom size.

The minister, who was—used to be the Health Minister, has recruited the previous Ed Minister for

\$750,000 to finish the job he started—that was Clayton Manness. And I remember those times in the '90s. So right now what we're doing is we're calling on the government to reinstate funding and get that money into the classrooms now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up. [*interjection*] The honourable member's time is up.

Questions

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period for up to 10 minutes will be held. A question may be addressed by the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party, any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties, each independent member may ask one question. And no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

The first question goes to the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It gives me great pleasure today to be able to participate in today's resolution, brought forward by the member from Transcona. So I'm asking the member from Transcona—I know that he was an administrator for quite some time, and a teacher, so basically I'm just going to ask you a straightforward question: Sir, did you actually write this resolution yourself?

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I want to thank the member from Lac du Bonnet for the question. This is my first time addressing him in this forum. And I'd like to continue by saying that, in answering his question, I had a great role in writing this resolution. It's—because of my experience in the classroom and in running schools, a lot of these pieces that you'll find in this resolution are things that I had direct experience with, right?

We know that the teaching and learning process has been greatly affected by the pandemic, and we know that as—when we're trying to budget in our schools to make sure that we have what we need to get these changes in place, that we require these kinds of resolutions to make—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I'm certain that everyone who's sitting in this House has heard from teachers what a disaster is happening in schools right now.

So I would like to ask the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare): How would an NDP government have better planned a safe return to school this fall?

Mr. Altomare: I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I always think it's time to talk as soon as the question is done.

But I will say we would have instituted, immediately, all of the Manitoba Health public health regulations in our schools. We would immediately have instituted a capped class size at 15. We would have ensured that we had enough human resources so that we can properly space our classrooms, because it takes—it actually takes time to make sure that these things happen.

We would make sure that all of the teaching supplies that are needed to make the teaching and learning process smooth in classrooms would have been there for teachers. They would have known right away that the government would have had funds available and would have—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Just heard the member talk about how they would have made sure—they would have done all these things, but for 17 years, there was poor planning in Manitoba's public school systems. We had the second highest dropout rate in the country. We had the lowest scores among all the provinces in Canada.

I'm just wondering how the member opposite can say some of these things, knowing that his party actually left very significant holes. And when you compare across our country, begs a lot of answers, and certainly contributed significantly to change in government in 2016.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank the member from Rossmere for his question.

I understand, too, that the member from Rossmere was a Transcona Collegiate grad, if I'm not mistaken, as I am a TCI grad, and I think we're—both of us are up on the wall there at TCI, right in front of the bench, the coaster bench.

But to get back to the serious question, I—you know what—all we're focused on right now is what's in front of us and what's going to be there in the future. This pandemic has placed many challenges in front of

us. And if anything is needed, it is—we need a government that is supporting teachers and public education and in putting the necessary resources in place so that we can move forward and ensure—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for Transcona for bringing forward this resolution.

I was wondering if, in the creation of this resolution, there was any part of it that was directly aimed for post-secondary students and post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank the member from Tyndall Park for the question.

You know what, we know that the current government has also instituted cuts in post-secondary, and we're starting to see some of the effects of that.

Many of us members here in the Legislature, as a matter of fact, have students right now that are currently enrolled in our universities and colleges. And we're feeling the effects of those cuts because—not only increased tuition, but also a lack of, you know, training space that has now become made available.

We had the member from Radisson describe how, you know, he has his daughter dropping all those IVs and stuff from the kitchen van, but I will say that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): Can the member from Transcona expand on why an independent review of Winnipeg 1 school division was ordered by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen) while his fellow member, the MLA for Fort Garry, was board chair?

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank the member for—is it Lagimodière, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

* (11:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Lagimodière, yes.

Mr. Altomare: Lagimodière. Again, you know, what we're focused on here is the pandemic and how it's impacted on our classrooms and how it's impacted public education in the province.

And what we've seen is we've seen a lack of support from this government during this pandemic in

the classroom, and we have to make sure that as members of this House, that we put forth private members' resolutions such as this that support our teachers, support our students and support our families because they're rightly concerned what's going on in the classroom, and they're kind of concerned about the inconsistent—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Naylor: I wanted to ask the member for Transcona to speak to some of the issues going on that I'm hearing about in my constituency. Right now, there's a teacher who's at the school with 33 staff—oh, 33 teachers out sick and the ability to only get substitutes of half the classrooms, and I'm hearing multiple stories like that. That's just the most recent.

So how would this private member's resolution speak to those very real concerns happening right now?

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank the member for Wolseley for that question.

As you know, teaching is a human resource intensive occupation, and in order to make sure that we reach, you know, every kid and every child and every family that we have to make sure that we have enough human resources in place to ensure that those kind of things don't, you know, don't happen.

We knew that through the pandemic that staffing was going to be greatly impacted. I think we could have done a—this government could have done a better job on planning for that and knowing that it is a human resource intensive piece that we could've had some more teachers—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up. [*interjection*]. The honourable member's time is up.

The honourable member for Lagimodière. Do you have another question?

Mr. Smith: I do have question. I know the member from Transcona has talked about investing in education.

I would like to ask him why under 17 years of NDP government, the NDP government did not build adequate number of schools across the province to address the growing communities in our many communities across this province?

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank the member from Lagimodière for his question.

Again, you know, I've said this earlier, is that what we're focused on is we're focused on what the effect of the pandemic is having on our education right now. We're focused on, right now, what's going on in our classrooms. We're focused on how as the pandemic progresses, we're going to have more and more challenges. I mean, this government talks about Ready. Safe. Grow.

They need to ask themselves what are they doing to make our classrooms safe so that we can keep some of our economy going, and I think that's more important question than one that looks to the past. We're looking to the future. We're looking to see how—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Ms. Naylor: One final question for the member from Transcona.

Where should this government invest the \$85 million of federal funding for schools to keep Manitobans safe?

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank the member for Wolseley for the question.

You know, as a principal and as a teacher, just like many members that are here in the Legislature, our number one job is to keep our kids safe, right?

So what we would do immediately is ensure that we have a proper adult-to-student ratio so that we can maintain a physically-distanced pieces that have been put forth by Manitoba Health and Dr. Roussin. That would be the number one thing we would do, and we would ensure that those pieces are consistently applied throughout the province. That's what's missing. It's the consistent application of Manitoba—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Debate is open. Any speakers?

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Thanks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I believe that the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) is speaking first.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for—the honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): I thank my—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Goertzen: That's a rousing applause for the members in the Chamber.

I thank my colleague from Lac du Bonnet for allowing me to speak in advance, although I do look forward to his words of wisdom on this—on this resolution.

To the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare)—who knows that I have an appreciation for him, personally and professionally. I think we respect each other as colleagues here in the Legislature. I believe he brought forward the resolution with all the best intentions. Although it might be in its form and substance misguided, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do think that he does have the best interest of those working in the education system at heart.

And he did speak—and we'll agree on this point—about the challenges that teachers and EAs and bus drivers and janitors and all those who are working in the school system are going through at this time. And, of course, that's reflective of society as a whole. Everyone is going through difficult times regardless of what occupation field or life circumstance you are in, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is a universal condition that everyone is going through.

But, in particular, when it comes to the schools, there's no doubt that teachers and others are having a lot of challenges when it comes to their job because they're being asked to do a lot more, like many others are in society, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I would say that they are doing an exceptional job. They are taking on this task of keeping their students safe at the same time that they're educating them with great vigour and with great responsibility. And we are all grateful. I think all members of the Legislature are grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And all of us extend our thanks and our gratitude to them.

Dr. Roussin has already indicated several times, including as late as last week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that schools are not a significant source of transmission at this point of COVID-19, of the virus. And that truly is a credit to all of those who are working in the system, but also to those who plan.

And where I would take particular exception with my friend from Transcona is that he continues, along with members of his caucus, to degenerate and to speak negatively about the planning that happened from public health and others in the school system during the summer when it was leading up to the re-opening of schools.

Certainly, Dr. Roussin and public health in general—and I know there's a large team, although Dr. Roussin is very much the face of that team these days—worked very closely with our department, with officials in the school system more generally to develop a plan that was not only safe, but truly designed to keep schools open.

Because we heard from parents through EngageMB and from teachers and educators, as well, that they wanted to be in the classroom, that they wanted students to be back in the classroom—and I continue to hear from students who are glad that they're back in class.

So the planning that went on was truly intended to ensure—we knew that there would be cases that would come into the school because there are cases in community and students are, of course, living in the community. Some are working within the community depending on what their age is. So we knew that there would be cases that would come into the schools, but all the work was done to how do we ensure that safety was there and schools remained open.

So the cohorting that was happening from grade K to 8 was about ensuring that we wouldn't have to close down an entire school. And we saw that in many places, in Alberta and other jurisdictions where they didn't have cohorting, at least, initially, that entire schools were affected when there was a relatively minimal number of cases in the schools.

At the high school level, where we know that transmission of the virus from other jurisdictions is more risky, that there's a higher level of transmission, we had to ensure that there was that two-metre distancing. Of course, it was encouraged throughout the system, but the cohorting was there for K to 8.

Now, that is following public health advice. That is the advice that our government received from public health. Dr. Roussin and public health agreed to the plan, they were there when it was announced. The member opposite, the member for Transcona, knows that that planning happened, yet he continues to speak negatively of the work of public health. And I think that that's a very—a big disservice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this particular time.

I think that those who, in public health, are leading us and giving us advice, we need to be supportive of that work, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And so I would ask him to be cautious in his words, and to ensure that he is looking at the great work that they've done.

* (11:30)

Now, leading up, of course, to the pandemic, our government has provided record levels of supports for the K-to-12 education system. That is ignored by the member opposite. He ignores the 20 new schools that we're committed to, but—not only committed to, a number of them have already opened, many of them are under construction and others are going to be coming online, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And there was a question about why the NDP didn't invest properly in schools.

So on the one hand, they talk about the lack of space and yet, on the other hand, they are very much the reason that there is a lack of space within our schools. But we're addressing that. Of course, it's not as simple as adding water and stirring when it comes to building classroom space. There's a lot of time and design that happens.

But our government got to work on that immediately in terms of taking office in 2016 and getting those schools built, and many of them have already now opened. And so, that is a better situation than it would have been had the NDP been re-elected in 2016 or in the most recent provincial election.

When it comes to class sizes—the class size initiative, of course, that money still remains in place. What we have said, of course, to school divisions is the money for the initiative remains in place, you can determine how you'd best like to use that money to better the educational experience for your students.

Now, on the one hand, members opposite will say we need to give more discretion to school divisions to allocate and use money but then, on the other hand, they say well no, you should force them to use this pot of money in a certain way, Mr. Deputy Speaker. So they are contradicting themselves in what it is that they want us to do when it comes to working with school divisions.

Giving school divisions the opportunity to use that money to keep class sizes low—and I understand that there's been no change in the class sizes since 2016, Mr. Deputy Speaker—but giving them the ability to use that money is important, in the way that they feel is best.

When it comes to funding for the COVID-19 response in schools, we've been very clear from the beginning that there was going to be funds available for the additional costs in dealing with the pandemic in schools. And, in fact, there is, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) ignores that fact.

We asked school divisions to accumulate the savings that they had when it came to the disruption of schools in the spring. That amounted to about \$48 million. We added \$52 million on top of that. School divisions have been accessing that funding.

In September, \$15.5 million was spent on such things as PPE, technology, transportation. And millions of dollars—millions of dollars, Mr. Deputy Speaker—has been spent on hiring teachers and other staff in the schools. So, the member for Transcona simply is not being accurate and not being forthcoming with the facts when it comes to—there's been significant investment in new personnel in the school system.

When it comes to the federal funding that was announced, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is of course important to remember, because members opposite continue to put the wrong information on the record, that half of that funding is only going to come to Manitoba, we're told, next year, from the federal government. It hasn't even been provided to Manitoba.

In terms of the balance, we've already indicated we're going to be using a good portion of that money to hire education officials to help with remote learning. We understand that there are many more students, including those who are now choosing to homeschool, who might not naturally be home-schooled but for the pandemic, and they need additional support, and that money is going to be used to provide that support to the system.

We also know that as students go home, whether because of cohorting or immune-compromised education, that they need that support, and their teachers need that support for additional remote learning. So, we've indicated that that funding is being used for that particular purpose.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the member opposite—the member for Transcona may have been well-intentioned in this resolution, it is simply not true in terms of the facts that he is trying to state.

There has been more funding invested in the K-to-12 system than ever was under the NDP. There's more capital funding when it comes to the schools that are—been built and are going to continue to be built. There have been \$100 million invested in the COVID-19 response. Millions of those dollars have

already been spent, and they'll be continued to be spent and fully expended.

The federal money such as has flowed already has been allocated partially to getting the new resources for remote learning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and there's been significant planning that has been happening since early in the summer together with public health, our health experts who we rely on, who the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) is not only disparaging but now asking us to ignore, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So he's wrong on many accounts. Even though I like him personally, doesn't mean he's right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time is up.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): I'm very happy to get the opportunity to speak to what I think is a very important resolution, and I thank my colleague, and the member for Transcona, for his very hard work on this resolution.

I want to say that I have had almost daily—possibly it's been daily, but I don't want to make an error on the record—but almost daily contact with teachers, EAs, parents of school-aged children, administrators, board members from various school boards around the city over the past few months, dating back 'til probably mid-July when people were very concerned about what was the government doing to get ready.

And I didn't have an answer for them because there was no information being released from the government at that time, excuse me, nothing to show us, nothing to assure the school community that the many months of low cases of COVID, many months of self-isolation had been used as an opportunity to prepare and to fund schools for what was required.

Some of the more recent contacts I've had in the last couple of days include, as I mentioned a little earlier, a teacher in a high school where 33 teachers are self-isolating this week awaiting for test results, and less than half of those were able to find substitutes for their classrooms.

Yesterday, a recently retired principal reached out to share with me her grave concerns about the level of burnout that teachers are experiencing. And, excuse me, until recently, teachers were not told to self-isolate if a student in their classroom tested positive.

In fact, some teachers only learned from students themselves that they were ill, because they weren't considered close contacts and were not notified in any

formal way. One teacher, who is at home awaiting test results after developing a fever on the weekend, only found out after the fact that she also had a student at home who is ill and recovering from COVID-19.

The Pallister government set schools up to fail going into this pandemic. Year after year of cuts to education did leave school divisions grossly under-resourced and particularly in the last few years when terrible caps were set, where schools were undermined through the funding process.

We do know that small class sizes are conducive both to better learning and reduced spread of COVID-19. And I won't pretend I—people know that I was a school trustee. That was a challenge, to meet some of those goals around reduced classrooms—reduced classroom sizes for school divisions, but it was an ongoing process and it made for better education. It made for better educated students.

And just as that school division where I was involved was meeting that cap and finally able to have that in place for students across the board, this government was elected and just got rid of something very important that schools had been working on for some time.

If the government had invested in keeping class sizes small, our schools would have been much better able to provide two-metre separation for all students, teachers and staff. And the Pallister government has simply outright ignored these calls from teachers, students, support staff, parents and other community groups to ensure that class sizes remain small.

I guess I understand, at a high up level, that there's, you know, a big desire in this government not to spend money at any cost. But I can't imagine that other members in this House are not receiving the same calls, the same emails, the same desperate cries to be heard from teachers and education assistants and parents.

And I honestly don't know how the members in this House on the other side of the House can look those people in the eye, can listen to their pleas, and not push the health—sorry, the Education Minister and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) to invest adequately in education at this time.

* (11:40)

We know that the Pallister government received over \$85 million from the federal government to invest in schools, and that none of that has been spent. And the gaming in this House over the last week, the

unwillingness to just tell us the plan, is just—it's reprehensible. We know that out of the \$100 million of provincial money, only \$70 million has been spent for cleaning, transportation, technology, staffing and PPE.

This government is just simply more preoccupied with the bottom line than the teachers that are stressed out, on the brink of burnout; the parents that are worried about their children's well-being. They've simply refused calls to hire more teachers, support staff and educational assistants.

And we all know about the 8,000 educational staff who were laid off during the pandemic when all kinds of creative things that—ways they could've been put to work to support students' learning at home last spring. That was such a disappointment and such a lost opportunity.

We know that this Premier (Mr. Pallister) has interfered in ongoing negotiations at school divisions, which precipitated a strike affecting transportation for many students and family right at the height of the pandemic and the return to school.

We also know that teachers, educational assistants and staff in schools are doing the best they can right now, but they can't do this alone.

This government would like to twist these comments on the problems in education, and I'm probably going to hear that, you know, at some point, that I'm saying that there's something wrong in schools or wrong with teachers. No, these people are heroes, and they are doing everything they can with so little and so little support.

We urge the provincial government to immediately invest in provincial public schools—public schools—to hire more teachers, hire more educational assistants, acquire new spaces for teaching and programming, provide more mental health supports for students and educators, invest in remote learning supports as needed and use the money provided by the federal government to ensure that all Manitoba students receive the education they deserve.

If the return to school wasn't stressful enough, the PC government is making schools just jump through hoops to apply for the money they need to keep schools safe. And all I can think about is how much of the administrative costs that this government—the administrative funding that this government has cut from schools. Year after year, they've put caps on administration costs at schools.

Even when school divisions were ahead of the game and capped their administrative costs in anticipation of cuts, they were just cut further. And now, all this government's doing is creating administrative work, creating more and more hoops for administrators to jump through while having—it's like cutting the legs out from under them, and it's a dangerous game. It's a dangerous game to underfund the COVID-19 response and refuse to commit to using those federal funds and to make people jump through all kinds of administrative hoops in order to access those funds.

The Premier has no evidence to support his decision. This so-called review of small class sizes didn't allow any time to measure. The funding freeze means more crowded classrooms, which we know had devastating consequences for the quality of education. And we know that the Pallister government is only getting started.

Right in the height of a pandemic, they're hiding the results: hiding the results of a public education review and have been sitting on a report for six months—seven months, hiding the results while writing bills to change education permanently in this province, devastating, potentially, education for many years and decades to come.

We believe in putting the educational needs and health and safety of our children first, ahead of budget cuts. Education should be the most important thing we do next to health care and next to climate change. Those are the three things that will help us survive as a community, as a province and as human beings moving forward.

The—sorry, I just lost my train of thought there. We will continue to fight the Pallister government's austerity agenda by calling them out on their cuts to education and lack of investments in services and supports that improve children's outcomes such as nutrition programs, reduced class sizes, hiring more EAs and making schools safe during COVID-19.

We call on the government to step up and do the right thing and please, please consider this PMR. Past supporting this PMR, I urge the members of the other side of the House to stand up for your community, stand up for families, and don't just toe the party line this time around because lives depend on it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): It's an absolute privilege and an honour to, of course,

represent the constituents of Lac du Bonnet here in this great building on Broadway in Winnipeg here. It gives me great pleasure to be able to put a few words on the record to basically correct the record from some of what the member from Wolseley has just decided to put on, and again, I remind her, in Hansard under her name.

And, of course, the member from Transcona who brought forward this resolution, I gave him a couple of opportunities. I gave him a couple opportunities and—to basically say that no, really, it wasn't him who fully wrote that resolution. He said he put an extensive amount of work into it. And then the member from Wolseley even solidified that by saying how greatly appreciative she was of him for putting all that hard work into this resolution.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this resolution is so full of holes we could be making a sandwich out of it with some cheese, put some salami or something going on, because this resolution absolutely—as the Education Minister had stood up and put on many, many facts to basically battle this.

And I—and again, the member from Transcona, I know that we have many friends in the, you know, mutual friends in the education world. And I know that, you know, he was principal of a K-to-5 school. And so when I first received this resolution and started looking at it last week and really started to think about okay, so what am I going to say?

And, I mean, the majority of my speech, I really do want to take the time to commend all the hard work of all of our teachers—not only teachers, but school staff, our custodians, our bus drivers, our administration, our senior administration.

As a teacher myself, and as the member from Transcona being a former teacher, a retired teacher and a principal, again, of that K-to-5 school, you know what? I listened to him talk passionately on Tuesday on the United Church piece of legislation that the member from Riding Mountain brought forward. And I had a few things sort of ready to go for today's speech, and then the member from Transcona mentioned that he is of Italian immigrant descent and they moved here into—to Manitoba, and then it reminded me.

As many people know, I spent the majority of my education career teaching at a 6-to-12 school of over 700 kids: guidance counselling, worked mainly in student services but also taught at the high school level, middle school level. But during my time of

student teaching going through university, I spent some time, of course, teaching at the kindergarten level, which was absolutely fantastic.

And you know what? One of the really important, memorable books that a lot of kindergarten students loved—and I know that the member from Transcona would appreciate this—is—was a book which was set up in a small Tuscan village called San Miniato in Italy, actually. And so that book, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is actually titled Pinocchio.

And so with this resolution, and because the member from Transcona put so much effort into this resolution, I'm almost thinking that instead of being the MLA for Transcona, the member from Transcona should maybe be the member from that small Tuscan village where the book, Pinocchio, had come out. Because again, this resolution has so many holes in it.

* (11:50)

I would like to echo some of the words that our Education Minister put on the record. I have to commend him—and I know deep down that the member from Transcona, I don't believe that he put that much effort into this resolution. I actually thought that he probably was given some of this. But I'm going to take his word for it that he put in that much work into this, because I don't believe he believes in a lot of the things that were put in this resolution.

I know from experience, and so does he, and so does some of our trustees, and so does a lot of our caucus members on the PC government team that actually spent, you know—I'm thinking we're about—probably close to about 100 years of collective experience within the education world on the PC government team.

And, you know, I know how much effort and how much work not only the Education Minister, but also Dr. Roussin had put in to making sure that we had the right plans to make sure that our kids and our staff—and again, not just teachers, not just EAs—but definitely there on the front lines; but our bus drivers, our cleaning staff. Think of how overworked our cleaning staff is now with making sure that everything is COVID-friendly, COVID-free.

And for them to put this resolution forward today is a bit of a slap in the face to those people that had to put in that much time and effort into the planning for this. There is no playbook. There was no this is how you should do it. Those superintendents, senior administration, boards, administration, principals, all

the way down, student services, they've put in countless hours.

My youngest son is in grade 12 in his final year of high school. He is going every second day. His teachers are going above and beyond to make sure that he is getting the equivalent of an education as if he was in school each and everyday. Matter of fact, I think he is receiving more homework. But he is 'bussin' it to make sure that he gets all the knowledge possible that he can get throughout his grade 12 year.

And I have to commend the teachers and the communication. And the member from La Vérendrye earlier today mentioned about the technology and how we have to learn to live within this new world. I—again, I can't commend the staff and also the parents for having to work on—and in such a trying time. It is difficult. But you know what? Much like our police and firefighters and teachers and doctors and nurses and absolutely everybody, they went to school for these reasons. They are stepping up and they are exceeding their potential. They are knocking it out of the park as far as how they are handling this.

Is it stressful? Absolutely, it's stressful. We are absolutely all stressed, all of us, each and every one of us throughout this whole province of ours—and not only province, but Canada, North America and the world. This is something we've never seen before, or that I've seen before. Maybe some of our members are old enough to have seen some other things, but—and I'm talking on both sides of the House—but for myself, this is the first go around on something this major, this pandemic.

I do want to highlight a few of the fundings that have gone out to schools. And I want to echo some of the things that the Education Minister had put out to correct the record from the member from Transcona and the member from Wolseley. We're talking—since 2016 we've increased funding to schools by over \$30 million. That's—that is not a drop in the bucket. The member from Wolseley and the member from Transcona, they often talk about cuts. Well, if it's an increase it is not a cut, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I appreciate the amount of time that I'm getting to put on the record here. I see that I've got just under a minute left, and there's so many more things that I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am going to talk about the fact that these people on the other side of the House, they want to see certain things happening.

Well, I have to remind them—the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has reminded them, the Education Minister has reminded them—that this is not a sprint, this is a marathon. The money is going to be there. The federal government is going to be sending in the other half, as the Education Minister mentioned, not until next year.

So there is money flowing. There is decisions. There's money flowing so that the administration and senior admin can make those decisions that they need for their sites within their school divisions.

I more than appreciate—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time is up.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Yes, there are lots of problems with this motion, and I think if you actually listen to each side you quickly understand exactly what the problem is.

The fact is, this pandemic has showed lots of problems, and one of them is that in Winnipeg School Division, the last time ventilation systems were installed is in about 1976. They last for 30 years, so they're 15 years past their due date. So neither the PCs nor the NDP put any investments into Manitoba schools. These are long overdue investments, and they never happened.

The fact is that both under the NDP and PCs the provincial contribution has shrunk. I actually have kids in Winnipeg School Division. I have skin in the game. It's my kids who've had to put up with this nonsense.

The math curriculum was a disaster under the NDP. And the fact is, is that there were cuts to special needs children in 2015 under the last NDP government. So please spare me the sanctimony and the hypocrisy, because if you want to know what it's like to ask for help from a government that doesn't care about education, I have experience doing it from both the NDP and the PCs.

I had to—have to try to—at a point, this government did such a bad job of communicating its pandemic preparedness that I was supposed to sell chocolate bars so they could have handwashing stations and remote learning in my kids' school. It's unbelievable. They did nothing.

There's been—there was no commitment to the—until the end of August to spend any new money on schools—not a dime of new money—and there's still a

huge gap. But they've said, well, we're going to spend \$48 million. To date, we've spent \$15 million.

The Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen) is not being accurate when he says that the federal government won't send money 'til next year. The only reason that will happen is because this government isn't spending the money now, you know.

And there was multi-million dollar slush fund that used to be spent on NDP schools. This government cancelled a whole ton of projects in places at, like, Kelvin High School, downtown, all sorts of projects where people had raised money, and this—the PC government cancelled it and then invested in schools in places like Steinbach and Morden-Winkler.

And I'll just add one other thing, is when we talk about this \$85 million that's supposed to be going to federal funding, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) keeps on saying, well, you know, it's really not that much of a deal, it's only a tiny percentage.

He wants—he's trying to pretend that \$85 million is not a lot of money when we're talking about teachers burning out. I'm getting calls from people who are desperate. The Manitoba Teachers' Society just said that the teacher workload is unsustainable and the government must ask now.

Now, I'm just going to say one other thing, is that this—the NDP could've mentioned the fact that this Minister of Education has met with Ted Cruz, has met with Betsy DeVos, that he has foreseen a future where than—where less than half of the students are going to be educated in public schools, and they've been absolutely silent about it.

Instead, the NDP critic shrugged. He doesn't care about who the Minister of Education meets with. We do, and we stood up for Safe September as well when the NDP didn't.

So please, spare me the sanctimony. Spare me the hypocrisy. We support investment in schools but we—but the fact is the PC and the NDP have both been wrong in failing to invest not just for years but for decades. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Oh, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) or—okay. [*interjection*]

Okay, the honourable member for Rossmere.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I noticed that the speaking order was a little bit mixed up so I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to this.

I have a number of things in common with the member who brought this forward. We are both TCI grads, and he mentioned that we both appear on the wall at Transcona Collegiate. That is true, but I'm fairly certain that we are not in the same frame. Sometimes I wonder if I look older than I am, but I was, I think, 1996. So, and I see colleagues nodding that I look older, but that's not the subject under debate today.

I do want to—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When this matter is before the House, the honourable member for Rossmere will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed 'til 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 5, 2020

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