

Third Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Myrna Driedger
Speaker*

Vol. LXXV No. 3 - 10 a.m., Friday, October 9, 2020

ISSN 0542-5492

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

Friday, October 9, 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.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2020

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 2, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, be now read for a first time.

An Honourable Member: I've got no audio.

Mr. Fielding: You can't hear us, but we can hear you.

Madam Speaker: As I said, there would be glitches and this will happen, but that's good for a Friday morning.

Could I ask the minister to please stand and repeat what he just said?

Yes. The honourable Minister of Finance.

Mr. Fielding: Can I get the—

Madam Speaker: Oh, could you give that back to him?

Mr. Fielding: I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 2, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2020, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Fielding: It's my absolute pleasure to introduce Bill 2, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2020.

The bill implements tax and other measures announced in the 2020 Manitoba budget. Additional

amendments implement and support the summary budget and make various amendments to tax legislation.

These measures lower taxes for Manitobans and businesses and will help further repair our services and approve our fiscal management, which makes Manitoba stronger and more resilient, Madam Speaker.

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

Bill 205—The Latex Control Act

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park, that Bill 205, The Latex Control Act; Loi limitant l'utilisation du latex, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, during the pandemic more people have been using latex gloves in more places, and it has made life very difficult for those with a latex allergy, particularly those who are sensitive to latex in the air.

Since there are now alternatives which are similarly priced, this bill, which I introduce this week—on Latex Allergy Awareness Week—will prohibit the sale and use of latex gloves in Manitoba as of January 1st, 2022.

I hope it will also create awareness, understanding and more use of non-latex gloves to help those with a latex allergy in Manitoba.

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

And just for the information of the House, there have been two bills that have been introduced and authorized for distribution. Our staff will now provide electronic copies of the bills to all members participating virtually, and hard copies of the bill are also available for members in the Chamber on the tables at the back of the room.

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

Messages

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): In accordance with step 1 of the financial procedure, I'm

tabling the message for Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor regarding supplement Estimates for the 2020-21 fiscal year and supporting documents.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

Oh, pardon me. Please stand for the reading of the message.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of additional sums required for the services of the Province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March 2021 and recommends these Supplementary Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Moose Population Conservation

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): Moose are an iconic and important species for Manitobans as a source of food, as part of our family and community traditions, and as a fixture of Manitoba's natural landscapes. Although moose can be found across Manitoba and have an essential role in our ecosystems, they are also a species facing significant and growing challenges, including a changing climate, disease and parasites, habitat loss and illegal hunting.

Efforts have been under way to help the moose population recover, including conservation closures for all hunters in key moose habitat areas across the province that began in 2011. The overall trend is showing a slower-than-anticipated moose population recovery.

*(10:10)

Our moose population is at an ecological tipping point in many parts of Manitoba's southern, forested range. It will take a concerted effort by all users of this resource to ensure their survival.

This is why today we are proclaiming The Wildlife Amendment Act (Safe Hunting and Shared Management) and prohibiting night hunting effective Saturday, October 10, 2020. This act was based on extensive engagement and consultation meetings in which the provincial government held a series of over 20 informative engagement and consultation meetings.

Although these meetings focused on the public safety risks of night hunting, which are addressed in

the legislative provisions being proclaimed today, we also heard from many communities and community members about essential place of wildlife in sustaining cultural and community values, and about the common concern that all resource users share for Manitoba's moose population.

Therefore, under these provisions, we are creating a framework to work in partnership with Indigenous communities, non-Indigenous hunters and local residents to develop and recommend sustainable plans for the management and harvest of wildlife species such as moose.

At the same time, we have sought ways to reduce the impact of the conservation closure for moose on Indigenous communities, including through ceremonial hunts and, more recently, through the creation of a limited, interim hunting opportunity for up to 60 moose in the Duck and Porcupine mountains.

This interim hunt was to help address the desire of these Indigenous communities to preserve and pass on the tradition of moose hunting, while ensuring that the harvest was trackable and could take place at a sustainable level that would not hamper the recovery of moose in these areas. However, several recent developments, including organized, unauthorized moose hunting activity in the conservation closure area, pose a serious risk of escalating an uncontrolled harvest of moose.

A return to uncontrolled harvest can carry serious and irreversible risks to the recovery of moose in these areas. For this reason, our government is pausing the planned 2020 interim moose hunting season for the Duck and Porcupine mountain areas.

Moose hunting remains prohibited for all hunters in the conservation closure areas.

The government will be moving to create the first shared management committee to discuss moose within the conservation closure areas in order to provide advice on how to reopen these areas to hunting when the moose population rebounds.

We are also continuing to share moose science and survey data widely across the province, to help build a common understanding of the challenges facing the moose population and the need for a conservative—concerted, collective action to address these challenges. The department has also created a document called *Hard to Be a Moose in a Changing World*, which reveals these challenges.

While these are not easy decisions, our government has a responsibility to all Manitobans to protect and conserve our wildlife, not just for today, but for future generations.

Through these measures, and through continued work to develop a shared management approach for moose, we will work towards a strong and stable recovery of our moose population that will allow Manitobans from all communities to connect with their traditions and with Manitoba's great natural resources.

Madam Speaker, there is only one moose population in Manitoba, and therefore we need one moose recovery plan.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: For the information of the House, the required 90 minutes notice prior to routine proceedings had been provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

The honourable member for Burrows—oh, the honourable member for Keewatinook.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Madam Speaker, I—we have real concern that the Pallister's objective—Pallister government's objective in dealing with Indigenous peoples is to divide.

I recall that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) tried to invoke anger across the province, referring to what he called a race war. It's so unfortunate, but it's not surprising. This is the same Premier who went on a reconciliation ride and met with no Indigenous leaders in the communities he visited.

What we need is communication and reconciliation.

With regard to the moose hunt, we know that this delicate balance between humans and the land has been challenged because the wisdom and practices of Indigenous peoples are ignored. We know a co-operative and respectful approach to the management of moose populations is of the utmost importance in our province. We know animal harvesting, and moose in particular, is something all Manitobans have an interest in promoting and protecting.

Today, it is even more crucial that we consult and work with Indigenous peoples and nations to work towards sustainable wildlife and ecosystem management. However, this government has shown that they have no interest in respectful dialogue,

co-operation in—or in the co-management of Manitoba's moose population. Hunting of moose was put on hold in 2011 due to their numbers being too low.

Now, however, the Manitoba Metis Federation has consulted with elders who have observed that current numbers appear sufficient to resume sustainable hunting. It is clear that both the government and Indigenous peoples have a common interest in protecting Manitoba's moose population. That requires respect, that requires co-operation, that requires listening. In short, it requires a real commitment in co-management.

This government, however, does not seem to want to engage with Indigenous leaders, who say they were not consulted before the government announced that they would not allow the moose hunt. That is unfortunate. They ought to have done so.

Today, it is even more crucial that we follow the advice to Indigenous peoples to work towards sustainable wildlife and ecosystem management. However, this government has shown that they have no interest in the co-management of Manitoba moose population. This government, however, does not seem to want to engage with Indigenous leaders, who say they were not consulted before the government announced changes to the hunt.

The Pallister government's approach to this whole issue is unfortunately summarized by the Premier, who invokes conflict, describing, in his own words, quote, young Indigenous guys going out and shooting a bunch of moose because they can, because they say it's their right, that doesn't make any sense to me, unquote.

That's not going to help us all come together. And it certainly isn't going to help address moose populations. I urge the government to change its approach.

We need a government that does not sow divisions or seek to inflame tense situations. We need a government that respects the constitutional rights of Indigenous peoples while also engaging in the real co-management of our moose populations.

Miigwech.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I ask for leave to speak in response to the ministerial statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Lamont: The fact is that when it comes to the moose population, we've had disastrous mismanagement on the part of the Province. Habitat destruction, which they acknowledge, is a major cause of the shrinking moose population, yet it's supposed to be only illegal hunting that's blamed on Indigenous hunters.

I was speaking with MMF President David Chartrand yesterday about this very issue. He asked me to say hello to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), and he made it clear that the MMF were working together positively with the Manitoba Wildlife Federation and they had a memorandum of understanding over quotas and management, but the Manitoba Wildlife Federation tore that agreement up. Instead, sport hunters are now asking for the same rights as Indigenous people.

These are constitutional rights. The rights to hunt and harvest are constitutionally protected rights that belong to Metis and First Nations Indigenous people of Manitoba; they do not belong to settlers. There's a major difference here. And to make that—and to suggest that there's an equivalence is—runs against our constitution.

These are serious issues. Conservation officers are seriously understaffed. We have—and this is a bill that, frankly, takes a racist dog whistle and blows it into a bullhorn.

This government, through this bill and in its Throne Speech, continually paints Indigenous people as criminals. It—the minister should be ashamed, and so should this government.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Melita and Area Communiplex

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today to recognize a group of outstanding workers and volunteers. Actually, I'm actually in my office.

The Melita and Area Communiplex, also known—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Piwniuk: —as the Enns Brothers Place, was a community-based project that was built for the betterment of the community of Melita, Manitoba, and surrounding area. I would like to acknowledge the dedicated Melita communiplex committee for making this project a reality.

After many years of planning and fundraising, this group held their official groundbreaking ceremony on October 2018. This was a beginning to connect the existing hockey arena, the curling rink, swimming pool as one large complex, including a wellness centre, offices, new dressing rooms and a large public area.

With the help of the provincial and federal grants totalling \$2 million, and \$3.5 million raised by the community of—the Melita communiplex is now the facility that is home to the Melita and area community residents—and amenities for all, from the youngest to the oldest.

Special thanks goes out to this—hours spent—countless hours spent volunteering for their time and such—for such a prestigious project. It's people like you that had helped shape this—our communities and make our rural towns a place to call home. For the dedicated volunteers and workers involved in this project, proved that many hands make light work.

* (10:20)

Madam Speaker, on March 7th, I was honoured to be part of the official grand opening. I would like to commend all those who had hand in making this project a reality, not only for now but for the future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

CancerCare Services at Concordia Hospital

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Every Manitoban deserves to—access to quality public health care when they need it most. In northeast Winnipeg, families have always relied on the health-care services offered at Concordia Hospital to make that a reality.

But lately, accessing health care close to home hasn't been so easy for our community. Over the past few years, we've seen over 500 nursing positions cut across the province, front-line health-care services like QuickCare clinics shuttered, and local emergency rooms, including ours at Concordia Hospital, closed for good.

Now the government is trying to take their steps a cut—their cuts a step further.

On September 4th, Manitobans learned that CancerCare outpatient services are slated to be cut at the Concordia Hospital this December. Northeast Winnipeg is once again seeing health care under attack in our community, and this time it's cancer patients who are paying the price.

I've heard from dozens of constituents upset about this cut, including a woman battling cancer in East Kildonan who told me her story of living with the disease and the hurdles that she faces daily. She told me how slashing CancerCare services would mean making life harder for some of the most vulnerable Manitobans, and for many, these cuts would mean shelling out huge amounts of money for taxis across the city or spending hours on transit on a daily basis—all to access the same services that she—currently are available in their own community.

While the government at first claimed their cuts to CancerCare were being made in the best interest of patients, we now know that's not the case. The provincial government admitted that their changes are solely intended to lower costs and streamline CancerCare's fiscal performance. Meanwhile, CancerCare nurses and health-care workers have spoken out and stress that these changes are not in the best interests of patients.

While the government sides with high-priced consultants and pushes ahead on these cuts and closures, we side with cancer patients and with health-care workers. Our team will always put access—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

The honourable member for Notre Dame.

Lead Concentration in Soil

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): In December—

Madam Speaker: It appears that this site may be frozen right now. I will go on and ask for the member's statement from Dawson Trail.

The honourable member for Dawson Trail, are you able to hear?

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Yes.

Madam Speaker: You may proceed with your member's statement.

Joseph Droux

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Thank you for the opportunity to honour another Dawson Trail resident who has done remarkable things.

Today I would like to bring to your attention Mr. Joseph Droux. Joseph was born on July 28, 1920, in Notre Dame de Lourdes, Manitoba. Twice widowed, he has raised six children. He currently has 14 grandchildren, numerous great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandson.

Joseph, like most of—from his generation, started working at an early age in his father's garage/machine shop. His skills are in heavy-duty diesel mechanics. During the 1960s and '70s, he spent many years working in Winnipeg before going to work for Manitoba Northern Affairs. He worked for Manitoba Northern Affairs until his retirement.

Joseph has lived and worked his entire life in Manitoba. A veteran of World War II, Joseph was enlisted in the Canadian Army during the Second World War and stationed in Ontario. He was later discharged in 1946.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Joseph is joining a growing list of Dawson Trail residents who've reached 100-plus years. He has celebrated his 100th birthday this July. Please join me in recognizing another Dawson Trail hero, Mr. Joseph Droux.

Recognition of Agricultural Production During Pandemic

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): During this season of thanks, I am grateful for all of the constituents in the Dauphin region who contribute so much to their community and this province. In a normal year, the Dauphin constituency is naturally busy with a wide array of agricultural activities, and their region hosts a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities for all ages and interests.

While this year was not a normal year, the business of agriculture continued, and the communities and the businesses that serve on the front lines of this essential Manitoba sector help out tremendously.

Manitoba producers in food production did not stop for COVID-19, and I'm thankful for the variety of crops, the vegetables, the winter feed supplies and all of the various harvests that ensure and preserve our safety and quality of life in Manitoba.

Food production takes a team effort, and I want to recognize the people fixing tires, those who deliver fuel, fertilizer and food, the mechanics, parts people in business who go out of their way to keep things rolling. In agriculture, there's always breakdowns, there's always times of elevated stress and there's not always time to give a proper thank you.

On behalf of the farmers and all those who work in the front line of Manitoba's resource sectors, I want to say thank you to the people who help produce Manitoba's crops and livestock this year—the ones pulling wrenches in the heat, in the mud and in the

stink; the ones who get the power back on; the ones running for parts; and especially those who get yelled at for not having the right part. A special thanks goes to all those on-farm service people who show up and help and work in some pretty uncomfortable conditions to get farmers going.

Madam Speaker, all those front-line team players deserve our thanks for the tremendous work they do in helping Manitoba run and grow smoothly. Happy Thanksgiving to them, to everyone, and to you, Madam Speaker. Stay safe.

Lead Concentration in Soil

(Continued)

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I'll just continue from where I got cut off.

When I walk around my constituency, I see people gardening and children playing in the dirt, despite the risks. There are ways to do this safely, but people need to know what the risks are and how to avoid them. For example, they need to know that washing their hands after being outside helps reduce their exposure to lead, or that gardening out of containers is much safer.

In order to understand this report, I sat down with a soil contamination scientist from the University of Manitoba to have him explain the report findings to me—

Madam Speaker: I think we're probably going to have to proceed and, if we're able to have her come back on at some other time, we will ask for leave to bring that statement back.

So we will proceed now to oral questions. We'll proceed now to oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Roblin Lab and ER Request to Reopen

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, health care has never been more important to our communities than right now during this pandemic, and it's never been more important to be able to access high quality close to home. But this hasn't stopped the Pallister government from moving forward with their plan to close ERs across rural Manitoba.

Now, without warning, without consultation, the Pallister government closed the Roblin lab and emergency department in early September. Now this closure of the lab and the ER means that seniors and

some very vulnerable people will have to travel longer and longer just to get the care that they need during a pandemic.

Now, these closures are part of a plan that the government has to cut rural health-care services, much like they did in Winnipeg, and we saw how that turned out: not very good. We know that plan failed.

Will the Premier stop his cuts? Will he reopen the Roblin lab and emergency department today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): First, if I could, I would just like to wish everyone here—our staff, all our members—a happy Thanksgiving, and all—to all Manitobans, to say the irony of our current situation is that with these challenges, as much as they are stressful to all of us, it does serve to remind us of the things we should be thankful for in this beautiful province: our friends, our family, the support of loved ones, the support of caring people in our civil service and in the private sector around the province, the wonderful and diverse beauty of this province. These are all things I think that perhaps in this time of stress and challenge we value even more.

* (10:30)

There's much to be thankful for, and I encourage all Manitobans to celebrate Thanksgiving carefully, in close contact only with those they normally are in close contact with, and to be sure that one of the things we can celebrate in the years ahead is that we have done our part to protect the health and well-being of others, as this government has always done with respect to emergency rooms in our province.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: We ought to be able to give thanks to have a government that protects health care, but unfortunately Manitobans can't say that, at least not this Thanksgiving.

And that's why people in Roblin are speaking out. One resident wrote to us, and I quote here: In 1970, I began a nursing career in Roblin which lasted almost 40 years. Our community worked hard to maintain a great and progressive health-care system. However, this government has decided to disregard our efforts and cut our health-care system back to the Dark Ages. Now we actually have less health-care services than we did in 1970. This is unacceptable and appalling. End quote.

Unfortunately, I couldn't agree more.

Will the Premier listen to this nurse and the many hundreds of other people who have spoken out against the Roblin ER closure and announce that he will reopen the Roblin lab and emergency department today?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I have a particular affinity for the beautiful community of Roblin, as my mother was born and raised there. And I can tell the member that we have been working and our Health Department's been working diligently to make the necessary staff corrections and hiring so that we're able to reopen the emergency facility there.

The people of the area understand that work is challenging, and they have understood that for a long time. They also understand that the NDP actually permanently closed dozens of emergency rooms around the province in their time in government.

This is a temporary challenge during COVID that we're rising up to face, and we will face it successfully, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I think what the people of Roblin know is that it is this government that closed their emergency department, and that's why they're working together, in a very inspiring fashion, I would add, to oppose this closure.

When we held a socially distanced rally there, it was very inspiring to see people taking time off from the harvest, people taking a late lunch break, people lining up their vehicles right to the highway to come together and oppose this closure.

Now, we know how important it is to get these services back because every day that the emergency department stays closed, the chances of it reopening again grow dimmer and dimmer.

Now, the people have done their part. They've identified the staff necessary to reopen the facility.

Can the Premier just speak directly to the people of Roblin today and tell them: Why is it that he insists on closing their emergency department?

Mr. Pallister: I think the member's trying to ride a dead horse here, Madam Speaker. The reality is that we're in the process of reopening an ER in Roblin.

The fact is, the NDP permanently closed ERs in Shoal Lake, Winnipegosis, Reston, Rivers, Baldur, Wawanesa, McCreary, Erickson, Rossburn, Teulon, Whitemouth, Vita, Gladstone, St. Claude,

MacGregor, Pembina, Manitou and Emerson—permanently closed them.

We're reopening Roblin. Are they asking us to reopen all the ones they closed today, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

Manitoba Hydro International Request to Remove Stop-Sell Order

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Before we move on to the new question, give the people of Roblin a reopen date.

On the next topic: the privatization of Manitoba Hydro. We know that this Premier has interfered directly in the operations of Manitoba Hydro. He's admitted it publicly in the media.

We learned yesterday, though, that there's been even more interference on the part of this government. Yesterday, we learned that this Premier, his advisers, his Cabinet, ordered Manitoba Hydro International to stop doing business indefinitely.

This makes no sense, Madam Speaker. Since 2017, Manitoba Hydro International has contributed \$35 million in profits to help keep all of our bills low. That makes all of our hydro bills cheaper.

Will the Premier stop his interference? Will he remove that so-called stop-sell order for Manitoba Hydro International today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Fascinating. Any question on Hydro from the NDP is welcomed on this side of the House, Madam Speaker. This is the former government's curse, frankly: the wasting of close to \$10 billion on unnecessary projects that didn't help Manitobans a lick and indebted Manitoba ratepayers for decades. It's hardly the way that a government should behave when it claims it's trying to protect and lower rates.

Madam Speaker, the NDP—the previous NDP government privatized 33 per cent of the Wuskwatim dam without asking Manitobans for permission. They privatized 25 per cent of the Keeyask dam. These are billion—these are \$13-billion investments they never asked Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: They can laugh about it, Madam Speaker, but Manitoba ratepayers will be paying for it for decades to come. They never asked Manitobans

for permission. They went ahead and privatized big dams in the North.

Madam Speaker, let the member explain that to the ratepayers of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Sale of Manitoba Hydro Subsidiaries Request for Referendum

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): When you open the Manitoba Hydro annual report, it says Manitoba Hydro owns the Keeyask dam. It says Manitoba Hydro owns the Wuskwatim dam. It said, at the start of a few weeks ago, that Manitoba Hydro owned Teshmont. However, by the end of that week, a private company put out a press release saying that they had bought Teshmont from Manitoba Hydro.

Now this week we learned that this Premier has ordered Manitoba Hydro International—maybe it was one of his close friends who made the order actually, but someone on that side of the House ordered Manitoba Hydro International to stop doing business.

We see what they're doing here. They're trying to set up the subsidiary to fail. Wouldn't make sense to sell it if it's profitable, but if they order it to stop doing business, at the end of this year they will say, oh, we have no choice. We've got to sell it. We've got to make people's bills more expensive.

Will the Premier commit today to having a referendum before he privatizes any more subsidiaries of Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member, again, has his facts wrong in his preamble, Madam Speaker, and asserts that we have interfered in Hydro on this issue. The fact is Manitoba Hydro management and board are evaluating their own organization, and the fact is they're doing that so they can help keep rates down. I don't know why the NDP wants rates to go up higher, but they seem to. I don't know if it's a strategy, but it's a failed one, most certainly.

The fact is that the NDP didn't go to Manitoba ratepayers and ask for permission to force Manitoba Hydro to spend billions of dollars on a line halfway around the province for no reason at all, and they still won't explain that, Madam Speaker.

So the fact of the matter is the NDP says that we didn't have to pay a penny for that line here in Manitoba, and they were wrong. They were 5 billion

times wrong, Madam Speaker, \$5 billion wrong. And the fact of the matter is that we're going to protect Manitoba Hydro for Manitobans because Manitobans are the owners, not the NDP.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: On this side of the House, we've been saying no rate increases during the pandemic. On that side of the House, they've been saying 8 per cent hydro rate increases. The only thing that stopped them was the Public Utilities Board. What are they doing now with their legislative agenda? They want to take the power away from the PUB so that they can hike rates on the people of Manitoba.

What's more, they are setting up Manitoba Hydro International to fail. They're saying, Manitoba Hydro International, you can't go out and make money. Why are they doing that? They couldn't break it up and sell it off if it was profitable, so they're saying, don't do any business whatsoever. At the end of the year, when it comes back and says, without any business activity it's not profitable, they're going to say, oh, we got no choice. We've got to sell it off. We have to sell off MHI. My special friend, please go over there and tell them to sell MHI.

Will the Premier put all this nonsense to bed and simply commit that there will be a referendum before they privatize any further Manitoba Hydro subsidiaries?

Mr. Pallister: The nonsense starts, Madam Speaker, when the member gets out of bed in the morning. The fact of the matter is he's continuing to make false assertions. He's attacking the management of Manitoba Hydro that's doing its very best to try to create a stronger Manitoba Hydro by examining its own operations internally.

And, Madam Speaker, the fundamental difference between the NDP and this government has never been more evident. The fact is the NDP even promised David Chartrand they'd give him \$70 million of ratepayers' money. They made that promise without a referendum. They made that promise without asking a single Manitoban if they agree.

And we won't make such promises, Madam Speaker, because we know who the real owners of Manitoba Hydro are, and the real owners of Manitoba Hydro are Manitobans, not the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew).

* (10:40)

**Manitoba Hydro Bell MTS Contract
Political Interference Inquiry**

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): In Hansard in 2017, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) told this House—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —Mr. Beaugard has recused himself from any relationship—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —with the decision-making process or decision related to Bell MTS. That was the commitment the Premier made, and we now know it was false. In fact, we now know that the Premier's hand-picked political staff interfered and stopped Hydro from bidding on the Manitoba Network contract and that as a result of that interference, MTS was given a \$40-million contract.

Madam Speaker, the Premier's hand-picked political staff were directly involved in this decision-making process, and the question is simple: Why did the Premier mislead the House? Why did he have Mr. Beaugard interfere? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

I don't think yelling across the room is going to help us proceed in a respectful way through the rest of this morning, so I would ask for everybody's co-operation please.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I'd like to thank the member for the question. The fact, though, that his facts are wrong and typically that's what we hear from the other side of the House, Madam Speaker.

I mean, we have a contract that was signed by the former government over 10 years ago, Madam Speaker. As a matter of fact, it was signed by a member—Mr. Chomiak at the time. And I can tell you that that contract was sole-sourced and Manitobans had no say in that contract at all. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Maybe didn't—people didn't hear me just a few minutes ago. I'm asking for everybody's co-operation please.

The honourable member for St. James, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Sala: There's a clear conflict of interest when it comes to Bell MTS and Mr. Beaugard, and the Premier knows it. That's why he told a committee of this House that Mr. Beaugard would recuse himself

from any decision-making processes relating to Bell MTS.

Those are the Premier's own words, and that was the Premier's own commitment, but we now know, only thanks to FIPPA—that those words were false. Mr. Beaugard interfered in a \$40-million contract that went to his former company, Bell MTS. The Premier knew it was wrong in 2017, so why is he defending it now?

Does the Premier still believe Mr. Beaugard should recuse himself from any decision-making processes with respect to Bell MTS?

Mr. Wharton: Again, I'll attempt to educate the member from St. James on what a contract that was signed by the NDP, Madam Speaker, and where it's at.

I mean, the bottom line, Madam Speaker, is where—as we know and everybody in this House knows and Manitobans know, we're in the midst of a major pandemic, and we know that it's costing Manitobans a lot of mental angst and also physical and, of course, economic; same in government.

As we move forward, Madam Speaker, we're going to make the right decisions for Manitobans and fix the mess that the NDP put on Manitoba Hydro and the owners of Manitoba Hydro: Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. James, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Sala: These responses are an embarrassment, and it's pretty telling that the Premier left the room when the questions got uncomfortable. The Premier says one thing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. The Speaker is standing.

I would just remind the member that there is a significant rule in this House, and that rule is that the absence or presence of members are not to be mentioned in asking or answering questions. So I would ask the member to please not refer to the presence or absence of members or somebody leaving the Chamber. That is one of the rules that we do not break in this House.

So the honourable member for St. James, to continue.

Mr. Sala: The Premier says one thing—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: –and does another, but only after he gets caught.

Emails we obtained through FIPPA show Paul Beauregard directing Manitoba Hydro International to not bid on a Manitoba Network contract—a contract held by Bell MTS. Barely two months after this intervention, Bell MTS is given another \$40-million contract.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) knew his hand-picked political staff should not be anywhere near a Bell MTS contract in 2017. That's why the Premier told this House he wouldn't be. Now we know this wasn't true.

Will the Premier tell Manitobans why he misled them in 2017 when he said Mr. Beauregard would recuse himself?

Mr. Wharton: I know we'll keep repeating this deal was the Dave Chomiak deal, Madam Speaker.

Again, untendered, Madam Speaker, sole-sourced, for the betterment of who they felt owned Manitoba Hydro: the NDP.

Bottom line is, Madam Speaker, we are here to work 'collaborately' with Manitoba Hydro, their board, their executive to ensure that, No. 1, Manitoba Hydro remains in the ownership of Manitobans, and No. 2, to ensure that Manitobans get the best deal with the lowest energy costs throughout Canada.

Where the NDP failed Manitoba Hydro, we'll get it right.

Manitoba's Pandemic Readiness Health Links System and PPE Supply

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, Manitobans have sacrificed so much during this pandemic, but their commitment is not being met with the same resolve from the Pallister government.

As discussed yesterday, unacceptably long lines have built up at testing sites across the province. Unfortunately, that's also true for phone inquiries, with reports of callers having to wait two, three, even four hours just to get information. And then last night, for several hours, the overburdened Health Links system broke.

What, if anything, is the minister doing to fix the problems with Health Links, and why hasn't he added the necessary capacity to meet this challenge?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): That member, and all members, know that with Winnipeg being placed in

the orange designation as part of our pandemic response system, there is an increased volume of people that are seeking testing. This government has said that, unequivocally, it will seek immediate solutions to expand capacity. It is all hands on deck: regional health authorities, a special task force that has been deployed.

We are asking for immediate, near-term and then intermediate changes to help shore up that capacity.

I would note for all members that just yesterday the newest testing site came online in Brandon.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station, on a supplementary question.

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, it's delay, deflect, delay, deflect. That's what this government does. And last week, we saw the Pallister government at their worst. They tried to deflect blame—they tried to deflect blame, rather, for their lack of pandemic readiness onto Ottawa.

The Central Services Minister tried to deny his government's failures, suggesting the highly needed N95 masks were subject to a seizure by Ottawa. It turns out that's simply not the case.

Why did the minister mislead Manitobans about something so important: the supplies that will keep our front-line service workers safe?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services): I'm pleased to rise to address the question.

We were initially quite thrilled that the federal government would step in and provide PPE orders to provinces across Canada and we put in an order for \$35 million. It soon became abundantly apparent that they couldn't fill that order, so we had to go find out—find other places to buy product.

Again, then we had the American President that puts a prohibition on exports for 3M masks. The Canadian government signed an agreement for export to Canada—not to the provinces. We tried. We already had orders in there, but the order was denied.
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Union Station, on a final supplementary.

MLA Asagwara: Deny, deny, deflect, Madam Speaker.

* (10:50)

COVID-19 is surging in this province. The Pallister government has had seven months to prepare for this moment, to enhance testing capacity and to increase access to Health Links. They've been caught flat-footed. So their political solution was to mislead Manitobans, suggesting Ottawa had somehow seized necessary PPE. That's simply not true, and it's unfortunate.

I ask the Central Services Minister: Will he now admit to this House that there was no federal seizure and it was his own lack of preparation that left Manitoba scrambling for necessary personal protective equipment, even now, seven months into this pandemic?

Mr. Helwer: I'm quite thrilled to talk about all the help that the Manitoba government received from Manitoba companies that changed their lines of production, started producing PPE that we could not only purchase but that we could encourage other provinces in Canada to buy for their own usage, because we tried to rely on the federal government, but they weren't there for us Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

If we relied on the federal government for our PPE supply, we would've been out within a week. We had to find supplies from all over the world with the help of the Manitoba companies that stepped up to produce PPE. I thank those companies, and we continue to rely on them.

Air Services for Manitoba Justice Security Clearance Case Concern

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): At four years old, Robyn Shlachetka, from Cross Lake First Nation decided that she was going to be a pilot. She entered flight school at 18, graduating a year and a half later at the age of 19. She solely paid for her education, at a cost of \$60,000.

Robyn has accomplished what very few Indigenous women across Canada have ever done. Robyn is someone that we are so proud of, not only in our Indigenous community, but across Manitoba.

So the question is: Why won't the Pallister government allow her to serve the Province as a pilot?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do appreciate the question. It allows me the opportunity to clear the air on this particular file.

A little while ago our government entered into a tendered contract with a service provider to provide air service to Manitoba Justice. This includes court

parties, judges, Crown prosecutors, defence attorneys, as well as prisoners.

So, clearly, there's a public safety issue here at stake, and as part of that contract, Madam Speaker, each crew member has to pass—has to obtain emergency first aid, CPR level, and successfully pass Manitoba's Justice security screening—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Fontaine: Robyn has been recognized nationally as part of an all-Indigenous female medevac flight crew. She recently applied for a job flying judges, lawyers, sheriffs and prisoners to and from court hearings. She cleared all criminal record, vulnerable person and child abuse checks and has flown for the circuit court in the past.

Without explanation, she wasn't given clearance, Madam Speaker. I've sent numerous emails and texts to the minister requesting information that an end and that another opportunity be given to Robyn that she can apply.

Will the minister allow Robyn to reapply so that she can get clearance to fly the circuit court?

Mr. Cullen: I know the member knows that I can't speak of the specifics of this particular case.

I will advise, and I think the member's aware, that once I became aware of the situation, I asked my very senior staff in Manitoba Justice to review the file, that the same decision was made not to approve this particular individual. And we certainly stand by our decision and we stand by the process.

If the material changes exist and come forward, we're certainly willing to review another application.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: What the minister just said is that the Pallister government stands by systemic racism against Indigenous women.

When Robyn was featured in the news for her accomplishments, she received hundreds of friend requests on social media. She became a public figure and a role model to many young Indigenous women. Yet during her security clearance this was used against her as she was interrogated about connections to people on Facebook that she barely knows, Madam Speaker.

I've asked repeatedly: Will the minister put in place another opportunity for Robyn to reapply so that she can fly the circuit courts in Manitoba?

Mr. Cullen: Well, Madam Speaker, I take exception to the allegations made by the member opposite.

This policy is designed with—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: —safety—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Cullen: This policy is designed with the safety of employees in mind, the safety of Manitoba Justice staff—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Cullen: Madam Speaker, the window is open. If we have a material change in the situation here, we're prepared to look at another application—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I know that some issues can become very passionate in here, but I am asking for everybody to please allow those that are supposed to be answering questions to be able to answer them without somebody yelling across the room. I would ask everybody's co-operation please. I know it's Friday and they tend to be a little bit chaotic in here sometimes, or all the time, but I would ask for everybody's co-operation please.

These are important questions. We have to hear the answers. So I'm going to ask the member to please allow the minister to continue his response.

Mr. Cullen: The window is open for another application, but I will stand behind the good people of Manitoba Justice, who put public safety first day in and day out.

Post-Secondary Education Funding Level Concerns

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): At the beginning of this pandemic, the Pallister government first and only and priority was cuts, and frankly, making those cuts as quickly as possible. That's why they proposed drastic cuts to post-secondary institutions. Those do lasting harm to those institutions exactly when we need them most: during a recession.

So why is this Pallister government making these cuts to our post-secondary institutions during a critical time, right now, during a recession?

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education—I'm trying to see my notes here—the honourable Minister of Economic Development and Training.

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Training): I thank the member for the statement that he made. He tried the same thing last Friday. He called a press conference and put false information on the record. It got zero play. It's getting zero play today.

What he is is just dead wrong. There's been no cuts to the funding, and I'll have to have members—a little more response on the next question. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for St. Vital, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Moses: I'm glad the minister's looking for more information because I'm tabling a freedom information document from not just this post-secondary institution for this year but also for next year which, contrary to what the government says, clearly lays out the fact that there are cuts.

In this case, they're telling post-secondary institutions the cuts made this year will be made permanent and funding below 1 per cent will be provided for the—from the 2019-2020 school year. In other words, Madam Speaker, this is just more of the same cuts from the—to colleges and universities from the Pallister government, and this all in the midst of a recession.

Why won't the minister change course?

Mr. Eichler: The member, again, is wrong. We're adding actually \$25.6 million transitional support to post-secondary is exactly what we've been doing. We've worked continually with post-secondary institutions—not only with those institutions but the chairs as well—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: —and they're very much onside with our new program.

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Vital, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Moses: Now, our post-secondary institutions have seen, in fact, back-to-back-to-back cuts from the Pallister government. And these documents prove

that. Their budget for next school year promises more of the same.

This pandemic has really shown us that we need so much more. We need significant investment to our post-secondary institutions if we're ever going to bounce back from this recession.

So will this minister change course and invest in the future of our post-secondary institutions and their students?

Mr. Eichler: We have had several consultations with all post-secondaries, and I have to tell this House that I'm very pleased with our relationship, as a government, with post-secondaries. Not only with the institutions, but the—with their boards, as well, ensuring that we increase funding to meet the need.

So the new transitional funding of \$25.6 million is there for our post-secondaries, not only for today, but tomorrow and into the future. That's on top of our close to \$1 billion we've been giving them over the past year.

Child-Care Programs Government Position

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): In a recent interview, when asked about new child-care programs and pharmacare, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) said that we shouldn't be building a second-floor sitting room when the foundation needs work.

The Premier may want to consider that since he has seven garages at one of his homes, these comments may be used by his opponents to paint him as out of touch. Some of my best friends have many garages, Madam Speaker.

Tens of thousands of Manitobans, and thousands of seniors, have to choose between food, rent and medication. *[interjection]* No.

Tens of thousands of Manitobans need child care to be able to work. These are not luxuries. It's not the 1950s anymore. Without child care, people can't work. Period.

Why is the Premier vocally opposing and refusing to fund programs that keep people well and working?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Well, Madam Speaker, the Liberal member here and the NDP members opposite took an ideological approach, and continue to take an ideological approach, when it comes to child-care delivery in Manitoba, Madam Speaker. And I can tell you that

that only led to further shortages of child care in this province.

That's why we're taking a very different approach. We're listening to families. We're listening to those working in the community, Madam Speaker. And we are going to create a system of child care in this province that's there for families when they need it so they can get back to work. That child-care system will be there for them when they need it.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Boniface, on a supplementary question.

Reopening the Economy Public Health Recommendations

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It is absolutely clear that Manitoba is in the middle of a surging second wave of COVID-19, as Manitoba Liberals have been warning would happen for months.

I table this letter from an assistant deputy minister of Health from September 23rd. It says that Manitoba is now in a position to ease some restrictions and support economic recovery, and goes on to say, quote, phase 4 of reopening the Manitoba economy is based on public health advice and consultation with key sectors.

We know businesses are facing bankruptcy because this government has given them a stark choice: stay open at a pandemic, or go broke.

Has the Premier been overriding and undermining public health by putting his survive-or-die, right-wing business ideology ahead of public health?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to report in terms of 'madestro'—the—Manitoba's progress, not just on health, but also on restarting the economy.

Just today, the jobs numbers came out, and Manitoba is first in private sector recovery of all the provinces of Manitoba. More than 15,000 more Manitobans got jobs last month, and our unemployment rate dropped to 7 per cent, Madam Speaker—the second best in Canada.

COVID-19 and Home-Care Services Timing of Funding Changes

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, in the name of austerity and in spite of increased spending from Ottawa, the Pallister government has made deep, deep cuts into Manitoba's Home Care program. These cuts are so severe that families who were once able to rely on Home Care for

their physically or mentally struggling loved ones now report to me that the program has essentially collapsed compared to what it was.

Why has the Premier (Mr. Pallister) eviscerated Manitoba's Home Care program at the very time when it was so critically needed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): All members of the House know that this government's response in COVID-19 came quickly; it came early; it has been comprehensive. We have even gained the encouragement from members on the other side who said, way to go, this is a good response. We've received those messages.

Those members know that we have redeployed workforce, that we have sought, right now, to restart our surgeries and procedures and diagnostics to bring those wait times down. We have done massive work to stand up capacity. We have brought co-visitation shelters to keep seniors safe in personal-care homes.

I regret the fact that the time doesn't allow me to continue to talk about all the ways in which we are expanding on our response to COVID-19.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Seine River. Can the member please unmute her system?

South Perimeter Highway Interchange Project Update

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Madam Speaker, for 17 years the previous government neglected the south Perimeter Highway and made minimal improvements. At the end of June 2020, our government announced a St. Mary's interchange project along the south Perimeter Highway as part of the \$500-million Manitoba Restart Program.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure please update the House on this significant infrastructure investment?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): I'd like to thank the MLA for Seine River for that excellent question, one of the best this entire session.

The south Perimeter safety review, Madam Speaker, was announced, released, fully funded and is now 90 per cent complete. Also, the Perimeter functional study, a vision statement, was announced. The report has been released, and I am pleased to announce, on behalf of our Premier and our government, that the St. Mary's overpass, the

highest traffic intersection in the province without an overpass, is to be built.

The Perimeter is the intersection of our east-west, north-south economic corridor. Never before have we seen investment in infrastructure in the province like now, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to say that the St. Mary's bridge, the construction will start next spring.

Thank you.

Public Health Inspectors Staffing Increase Request

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): In the middle of a pandemic, it's clear that health inspections and health inspectors are more important than ever. But these essential workers are overworked and understaffed. This government has left health inspector positions vacant for years now. Nearly 20 per cent of positions are currently unfilled. So what we need is more health inspectors doing more inspections, and we need them now.

So will the government hire more public health inspectors today and agree to pay them a proper wage?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Where the NDP did nothing to actually review the wages to public sector and public health inspectors, we will undertake that work.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

And we have the member for Notre Dame back on to a computer, and I wonder if there is leave to allow that member to continue with her petition? *[Agreed]*

The—oh, sorry, it wasn't a petition; it was a member's statement.

* (11:10)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

(Continued)

Lead Concentration in Soil

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Can you hear me?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms. Marcelino: Okay, thanks.

In December of 2019, the provincial government's commissioned report on lead

concentrations in soil in Winnipeg was released. The report found that 10 neighbourhoods had concerning levels of lead concentration in their soil.

In particular, the predicted blood lead levels for children in North Point Douglas, Weston and Daniel McIntyre were above the level of concern. The Weston elementary school field was actually closed down for three years due to concerns about lead in soil. Lead exposure especially affects children aged seven years and under as their nervous system is still developing. The effects are irreversible and include effects on learning, behaviour and intelligence.

For adults, long-term lead exposure can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney problems and reproductive effects.

When I walk around my constituency, I see people gardening and children playing in the dirt, despite the risks. There are ways to do this safely, but people need to know what the risks are and how to avoid them. For example, they need to know that washing their hands after being outside helps reduce their exposure to lead, or that gardening out of containers is much safer.

In order to better understand this report, I sat down with a soil contamination scientist from the University of Manitoba to have him explain the report findings to me, and this professor actually offered his and his graduate students' services for free to do further soil sampling and public awareness talks with the communities.

I would welcome a meeting with the Minister of Conservation and Climate (Mrs. Guillemard) to discuss the elevated lead levels not only in my constituency of Notre Dame, but in other areas of Winnipeg as well, and I am calling on this government to take action to reduce Winnipeggers' exposure to lead and to implement the recommendations proposed in the report such as creating an action plan for the Weston elementary school, requisitioning a more in-depth study and a tracking program for those tested for blood—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to allow the member to complete her statement? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Marcelino: —to develop a lead awareness outreach program and a tracking program for those tested for blood lead levels so that medical professionals can follow-up with them.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Orders of the day, government business.

An Honourable Member: What about petitions?

Madam Speaker: Oh, sorry. I'm really jumping ahead of myself there.

PETITIONS

Dauphin Correctional Centre

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read they are deemed to be received by the House.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly.

And the petition—the background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

(2) The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

(3) Approximately 80 families will be directed—directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27th, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

And this petition, Madam Speaker, is signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre in May 2020.

The Dauphin Correctional Centre is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

And approximately 80 families will be directed—directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

And as of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this position—petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.

The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

(4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba's justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Vivian Sand Facility Project—Clean Environment Commission Review

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Vivian sands project is a proposed silica sand mine and processing plant to be built in the RM of Springfield. The overall project includes mining claims of over 85,000 hectares, making it the largest claim ever given to a single company in Manitoba's history. It is larger than the city of Winnipeg, which has 46,410 hectares.

The amount of dry, solid sand mined, produced per year according to the environmental act proposal is 1.36 million tons, and much of this sand will be used in fracking.

A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, including both carbonate and sandstone aquifers, which covers much of southeastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and an abundance of wildlife and ecosystems. Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are

potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

The sustainable yield of the combined sandstone and carbonite aquifers has still not yet been established by provincial authorities.

The mine could cause leaching of acid and heavy metals and pollute the aquifer, as it will go down 200 feet into the Winnipeg formation of the sandstone aquifer. There is concern that the shale which separates the carbonate and sandstone aquifers—sand and pyrite oolite itself contain sulfites—will, when exposed to injected air from the CanWhite Sands extraction process, turn to acid.

An additional concern with the proposed mine and plant is the potential to pollute the Brokenhead River and the aquatic food chain leading to Lake Winnipeg.

* (11:20)

Residents in the area have also expressed fears of being overexposed to silica dust during production, as there has been a demonstrated lack of safety and environmental procedures by the CanWhite Sands Corporation during the exploratory drilling phase. Signage and fencing has been poor; identifying and required mine claim tags were missing; there were no warnings for silica dust exposure and no coverings to prevent exposure at the silica stockpile to the elements.

Residents' concerns include the fact that boreholes, which should've been promptly and properly sealed, were left open for a year. The drilling of hundreds of improperly sealed boreholes yearly creates significant risks of surface contamination, mixing of aquifer waters and drainage of surface fecal matter into the aquifer.

There is also a risk of subsidence around each borehole as a result of sand extraction.

There are also potential transboundary issues that need to be addressed as the aquifers extend into Minnesota.

This project should not proceed, as no licensing conditions and mitigation measures will alleviate the risk to all Manitobans with no established safe outcome. The corporation has gone on record indicating that it does not know how to mine for silica in the water supply and need to develop a new extraction methodology that has never been done before.

Contamination of the aquifers and the environment is irreversible, and there are many surface sources of high purity silica that can be extracted without endangering two essential regional aquifers.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to undertake a combined review of the Vivian Sand Facility processing plant and the mining/extraction portion of the operation as a class 3 development with a review by Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission to include public hearings and participant funding.

To urge the provincial government to halt all activity at the mine and plant until the Clean Environment Commission's review is completed and the project proposal has been thoroughly evaluated.

Signed by Sherrill Sidorski, Sharon Mihalyk, Perry Lafreniere and many, many others.

Cochlear Implant Program

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) People who suffer hearing loss due to aging, illness, employment or accident not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, relatives or colleagues, they also can experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

(2) A cochlear implant is a life-changing electronic device that allows deaf people to receive and process sounds and speech and also can partially restore hearing in people who have severe hearing loss and who do not benefit from conventional hearing aids. A processor behind the ear captures and processes sound signals, which are transmitted to a receiver implanted into the skull that relays the information to the inner ear.

(3) The technology has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic, founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The surgical hearing implant program began implanting patients in the fall of 2011 and marked completion of 250 cochlear implant surgeries in Manitoba in the summer of 2018. The program has implanted about 60 devices since the summer of 2018, as it is only able to implant about 40 to 45 devices per year.

There are no upfront costs to Manitoba residents who proceed with cochlear implant surgery, as Manitoba Health covers this surgical procedure, internal implant and the first external sound processor. Newfoundland and Manitoba have the highest estimated implantation costs of all provinces.

Alberta has one of the best programs with Alberta aids for daily living, and their cost share means the patient pays only approximately \$500 out of pocket. Assistive Devices Program in Ontario covers 75 per cent of the cost, up to a maximum amount of \$5,444, for a cochlear implant replacement speech processor. The BC Adult Cochlear Implant Program offers subsidized replacements to aging sound processors through the Sound Processor Replacement Program. This provincially funded program is available to those cochlear implant recipients whose sound processors have reached six to seven years old.

(6) The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functional or available. The cost of upgrading a cochlear implant in Manitoba of approximately \$11,000 is much more expensive than in other provinces, as adult patients are responsible for the upgrade costs of their sound processor.

(7) In Manitoba, pediatric patients under 18 years of age are eligible for funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program, which provides up to 80 per cent of the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

(8) It is unreasonable that this technology is inaccessible to many citizens of Manitoba, who must choose between hearing and deafness due to financial constraints because the costs of maintaining the equipment are prohibitive for low-income earners or those on a fixed income, such as old age pension or Employment and Income Assistance.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to provide financing for upgrades to cochlear implants covered under medicare or provide funding assistance through the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program to assist with the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

If not, then I will call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THRONE SPEECH (Second Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on the motion of the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk) and the amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable Minister for Municipal Relations, who has one minute remaining.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): With my remaining minute, I would just like to take the opportunity to wish all Manitobans and all my colleagues in the Manitoba Legislature a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

And while we may not be able to gather in the traditional ways that we normally like to do on Thanksgiving, this is a great—this will be a great weekend to get out and explore all of Manitoba's wonderful trails. And there will be more trails in the future of this province thanks to a \$7-million commitment that our government made this morning to trails—building trails in Manitoba. Very pleased about that announcement.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This concludes my remarks, and I wish you and your family a very happy Thanksgiving.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): It's my pleasure to have the first opportunity to stand in the House and start debating not only the Throne Speech, but some of the legislative agenda that we see coming down the pike from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) of this province.

I'm going to focus my conversation this morning, Madam Speaker, on what is now called Bill 2, BITSA. It is particularly egregious that, in 2020, in the midst of a pandemic, I am forced to get up in the House and talk about the fact that the Pallister government is attacking Indigenous children, is taking money from Indigenous children who are in care, who is legislating the right of the government to do so.

Bill 2, in section 84, Madam Speaker, is legislating the right of the Pallister government to take the Children's Special Allowance meant for children who are in CFS care. So, not only are they taking millions and millions and millions of dollars from Indigenous children—the most at-risk, the most at-need, the most vulnerable of all of Manitoba—but they are also legislating away the rights of Indigenous children to sue the government for monies that are rightfully owed them.

They are effectively, in 2020, legislating the constitutional rights away of Indigenous children.

When folks came here on Wednesday, Madam Speaker, I'm sure members of the House would have seen the 500 signs that sit at the front of the Leg.—on the grounds of the front of the Leg. I have been out there several times. I don't remember seeing any PC MLAs going to read the signs. But what the signs say, Madam Speaker, is basically that the Pallister government is taking money from children. They're legislating the legal right to do so and that they are legislating the rights of Indigenous children away. I encourage each and every one of the members, here and virtual, to go and read the signs.

* (11:30)

The other things that folks would have seen is they would've seen teepees up in front of the Legislative grounds. The signs and the teaching—the teepees were erected by Cora Morgan, who is the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs' family advocate, and her staff.

I want to take this opportunity to just acknowledge the really good work that Cora Morgan and her staff do at the advocacy office. I have had the opportunity to go and visit many times and sit down with predominantly women in that office and listen to the work that they're doing, listen to the dedication and the commitment that they have to our children, not only bringing our children home into their families and their communities, but also continuing the fight to protect Indigenous children's rights. And they did so again and they've showed the dedication in doing so by the signs and the teepees.

What I'll share with the House, in case nobody knows—and I would suggest that they probably don't know because I don't think anybody has gone down to visit—but, as of Wednesday, there was a fast that was started in one of the teepees. And so from—every day, from now until when Bill 2, BITSA, receives royal assent, there will be community members that will be fasting in the teepees.

And so, actually, right now as we speak, Cora Morgan is there with one of her staff. They've been fasting since yesterday at 12 noon and their fast will end at 12 noon, in less than a half an hour, today. Yesterday, Grand Chief Arlen Dumas and Elder Perry [*phonetic*] also did the first fast.

So I encourage Manitobans that, if they want to support not only the fast but support the right to protect Indigenous children, to support Indigenous

children themselves, please come down safely, socially distance, to the Leg. and offer your support.

You know, Madam Speaker, I've stood up in this House many, many times since 2016 when I was first elected, and one of the things that I have repeatedly said is that every single member in this House—every single PC member—is complicit, has allowed really egregious, grotesque pieces of legislation to pass without even a peep from the other side.

They sit in their seats, they say not one word when their boss decides that—at a whim, that he's going to do whatever particular egregious legislation or say whatever particular racist thing that he wants to say. And not one single member from the PC caucus ever stands up to their boss.

And here we are, in 2020, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) just introduced again BITSA—Bill 2 now, it was previously known as Bill 34. And they know that in this bill—they know that since 2016, every year that they introduce BITSA, they know that they embed and they sneak in really gross changes to amendment—or, to legislation.

And so here, today, they know that the Minister of Finance, doing the bidding of the Premier (Mr. Pallister), introduced Bill 2 and not one of them has spoken up. Not one of them, in all the months that we have been in the midst of a pandemic and not sitting, not one of them said to the Premier, hey, you know what, Brian—oh, Pallister—the Pallister government—I apologize, Madam Speaker—not one of the members have said to their boss that, you know, Premier, I don't want to be part of a Pallister government that embeds legislation that targets Indigenous children. I don't want to be a part of that. Not one of them have done that.

They had time to change BITSA. We know that, actually, they have changed BITSA and they've made it—if that was at all possible—they've made it even worse than it was before. We'll get to some of that and I'll share with Manitobans what's going on now.

September 30th is Orange Shirt Day, and I want to share that Orange Shirt Day is about the acknowledgement of the colonial history here in Canada. It is the acknowledgement of, for generations, Indigenous children were stolen from their families and their communities. They were taken from their families and their communities and their cultures, and they were put in residential schools, and in residential schools, our people suffered unimaginable horrors, including my own family.

And on September 30th, it's a day to acknowledge our individual responsibilities to ensure that that never happens again; that it doesn't happen in all of its forms. Essentially, residential schools were an attempt to kill Indigenous children. It was a genocide. It was a cultural genocide against Indigenous children.

Over the years, Madam Speaker, that expression, that colonial pursuit has looked different over the years. And it has been a historical continuum, and so we had residential schools, we had '60s scoop, where government took and stole Indigenous children and adopted them off into white families, not only in our own territories, but even in the States—as far as the States.

And I would suggest to the House that today what we have is the continuation in the Child and Family Services. We have more children in care today across the country that rivals residential schools. It is a continuation of that process where the colonial state comes into Indigenous communities and imparts themselves into Indigenous families, and once again says that we're not good parents, once again penalizes us through our children.

And the vast majority of cases in which children are apprehended are predicated upon the inter-generational response and consequences of residential schools. And so I find it particularly gross, Madam Speaker, that on September 30th, we have members of the PC caucus who will tweet support on Orange Shirt Day, who will post videos about their responsibility to ensure that residential schools—that we learn about residential schools; that #everychildmatters.

It is so gross and disingenuous that members opposite have the gall to tweet and post videos when right now, today, this very minute, this very second, they are sitting by while their boss legislates the constitutional rights of Indigenous children away. Who does that?

Well, who does that? The member for Justice and the Attorney General (Mr. Cullen) retweeted the Minister for Indigenous and Northern Relations' tweet, her video.

The member for Kildonan-River East (Mrs. Cox)—the Minister for Sport, Culture and Heritage, the Minister for Status of Women—retweeted the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations' (Ms. Clarke) tweet.

The member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) made a video or a—not even sure what this is, maybe a

tweet—wearing an orange shirt in support of Orange Shirt Day, supposedly in support of Indigenous children, Indigenous survivors. The member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere) retweeted the Minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs' tweet.

The member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon) made a video wearing an orange shirt, asking folks to come together in the spirit of reconciliation and hope to commemorate residential school survivors and their victims and Indigenous communities.

The member for—or the Minister for Municipal Relations, the member for Riel (Ms. Squires), posted a video, as well, wearing orange, asking us to believe them when they say every child matters.

* (11:40)

Orange Shirt Day, Madam Speaker, the premise behind it, the principle behind it is that people that adhere to that believe in Indigenous children and will stand up for Indigenous children, not express breath that means absolutely nothing in the context of sitting here in this Chamber today when you are legislating the rights away of Indigenous children.

So, for the Manitobans that are watching and for the Manitobans that will watch my video later on, here's what the Pallister government is doing: the federal government gives what is called children's special allowance. It is dollars that are specifically supposed to go to Indigenous children in care. It is a monthly payment for a child who is under the age of 18, is—and who is maintained by a CFS agency.

An agency is required to apply for the CSA funding for each child. Payments can be used exclusively, Madam Speaker, towards the care, maintenance, education, training and advancement of the child. Payments are protected and not to be assigned or charged to another department or coffers.

What the Pallister government has done and what they're legislating in Bill 2 is that they are taking those millions and millions and millions of dollars directly from Indigenous children and they put it into general government coffers, revenues. And while they say that they're no longer clawing back those CSA dollars, that's exactly what they're doing.

And they're able to do it in respect of the block funding, that formula that now every CFS agency is under. What they've done is they clawed back the CSA dollars from the budget that they would normally give to agencies to take care of children. And so they are legalizing the right to do so.

And what has happened, Madam Speaker, since the introduction of block funding is that it has instituted the deficit operations of CFS agencies, and I can give you a good example. My home community of Sagkeeng First Nation—of which I am a proud, proud member—when block funding came into existence and they were given their dollars, the dollars never account for children that potentially will come into care.

Those numbers are always based on previous sets of numbers for children, and so in one week last year we had come into our CFS system five different families with five children each: 25 children that came into care within one week. The agency doesn't get any dollars to be able to support those children because they weren't calculated previously.

The agency is not able to get those CSA dollars because now the government is clawing those back and the government is attempting to make it look like they're giving those dollars to agencies, but in fact, agencies are operating at deficits even at the beginning of fiscal years.

The Pallister government, Madam Speaker, as we speak, is stealing money from Indigenous children and they're not doing it as a matter of policy, they're doing it—they're legislating it in Bill 2.

Right now, Madam Speaker, there are two provincial court cases before the courts that were filed by two different plaintiffs or groups, and both of them, in different ways, seek before the courts to stop the Pallister government from taking the child special allowance from Indigenous children.

What Bill 2 does, in section 84, is basically it says, we don't give a crap what happens in the court case. This bill will supersede our courts, so no matter what the courts decide, this bill will determine that it doesn't matter. You can't sue us. We're legislating it. We're going to make it legal that we're going to steal your dollars.

So not only is the Pallister government, not only is the Premier (Mr. Pallister), stealing money from Indigenous children, money that's supposed to go to support their education, their health care, whatever they may need, the children's special allowance—also, agencies will often give Indigenous children those dollars when they age out of care.

That's what the Premier's taking, and the Premier is saying that not only are we going to legislate that, not only are we going to make that legal, but you can't do anything about it. We're actually—we don't care

what the Manitoba provincial court system says. We're going to do whatever the heck we want to do with Indigenous children in 2020, Madam Speaker.

This isn't—we're not talking 1870, when the RCMP used to come into our communities and steal our children, regardless of whether or not we wanted to, and ship off our children and put them in the clutches of pedophiles. We're talking about 2020, right now, that Indigenous children are being stolen from and that their constitutional rights are being legislated away by the Premier of Manitoba.

And again, while he does that, every single member sits there quietly. They are complicit in what is going on today, and so, spare me your videos, your Orange Shirt Day. Don't ever put our children in your mouth again. Keep our children out of your mouth. Don't wear orange shirts on Orange Shirt Day when you're going to allow your Premier to legislate the rights of our children away forever. Do not put our children in your mouth ever again.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): It's—I would—it's not really a pleasure to respond to this Speech from the Throne. This is a bad Speech from the Throne. It's bad in many ways.

It pays lip service to the crisis we're living through while doing the bare minimum to respond. It neglects the real needs of small business, health and early childhood education and communities across Manitoba. It shows outright contempt for Indigenous people and Manitobans more generally, and it appears to use policies to settle personal scores.

In a year of incredible turmoil over racial justice and injustice, this government is choosing to escalate and double-down with language that paints Indigenous people as—unfairly as criminals. The PC government, in this Throne Speech, is promising to take away fundamental rights, including treaty rights, the right to free speech, the right to free assembly, the right to be heard in court.

It commits to giving millions of dollars to a political ally to fund a politically motivated witch hunt into political interference into Hydro, even as it explicitly commits to even more political interference in Hydro and MPI.

It undermines local democracy and democratic institutions. It undermines free inquiry, research and higher education, and as its centerpiece, it promises a policy that will increase our debt, shift the burden of

taxes even more to people who work for a living and to businesses. It will make housing less affordable, undermine education funding and drive up the cost of living and doing business in Manitoba.

It is a Throne Speech whose policies will hurt Manitobans in every single constituency in this province. It is a Throne Speech from a government that misleads, misdirects and then denies responsibility for its own actions and a budget bill that absolves the Manitoba government of taking hundreds of millions of dollars from the most vulnerable Manitobans: children in care. This is legalized theft.

Now, I want to say that this spring, after the pandemic was declared, we worked in good faith with this government. We shared ideas and constructive suggestions and the complaints that we were 'indated' with from Manitobans in our constituencies and beyond. In mid-April, we had an agreement with all three parties to work together to pass urgent bills.

The government seemed to be signalling that they were going to do something to help the economy, but as we sat in that Chamber, debating and voting on \$5 billion in new borrowing, and the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and ministers were sending out missives across the province demanding cuts of 10, 20 and 30 per cent.

* (11:50)

In the midst of this crisis, when trust was all-important, when the economy and health of Manitobans was in the balance, this government chose to pull a fast one, and it destroyed the trust we had. And there were real consequences: the cuts that were proposed at that time would have closed the University of Winnipeg, Brandon University, the Manitoba Museum and many other institutions besides.

And I thought then of the word that U.S. Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon, who took a stark market crash at the beginning of the Depression and turned it into a depression because he clung to the same conservative economic superstitions that this government does. Mellon told the President of the US at the time: Liquidate labour. Liquidate stocks. Liquidate the farmers. Liquidate real estate. It will purge the rottenness out of the system.

None of that happened. It made everything worse. Yet that is exactly what this Throne Speech promises.

A pandemic is no time for delusions or denial, but that is what we're seeing from this government.

Federal health funding is up. This government froze funding, closed ERs, sold off lands.

The Lake St. Martin project has been delayed because the Province bungled the proposal. Aside from messing up consultations with First Nations communities, there wasn't even a map of Lake St. Martin in the submission.

The entire foundation of this government's messaging is based on a denial of responsibility that everything is someone else's fault. In this government's second term, they are still blaming the NDP, and they make claims about federal funding that are not true.

Why do they do this? So the Premier and his ministers can claim that they don't have a choice, that their hands are tied, that if they are closing ERs or firing nurses or selling off labs or freezing wages, it's all someone else's fault.

The Premier says he is cutting health care because he does not have a choice. The reality is that this government has been cutting health care and infrastructure and more because they want to. In a democracy, this lack of accountability is corrosive, and this Throne Speech and this government is built on evading responsibility or justifying wrongdoing by continually saying the NDP did the same thing as well.

The government members railed on the NDP for political interference with Crowns, but this Throne Speech explicitly promises political interference with Crown corporations.

This Throne Speech pays lip service to Indigenous relations and promises, too, blatantly divisive measures that deny constitutional rights.

And I will say, one of the centrepiece promises of this government, the claim that they will lower education property taxes, is an incredibly damaging proposal. The original cut was promised to be \$850 million a year. That's \$850 million a year out of the education budget every year, Madam Speaker, \$8.5 billion over 10 years, and there was a promise it wouldn't happen until the budget was balanced. So that is why we have this ridiculous, retroactive balancing of the budget, cooking the books to justify going ahead with this promise despite a deficit this year of at least \$2.5 billion.

Now, a few things about this education property tax promise: we are running a deficit right now. People who own property, generally, are people who

are better off than people who don't own property. And the more property you have, the more you pay in taxes. So right now, the PC government is proposing to borrow money, at interest, to give people who are generally better off a tax cut. There will be less money for education. We're going to go deeper into debt for this.

And it means shifting the tax burden away from people who own property to people who don't. People who pay income tax. People who pay PST. People who pay business taxes. If you ran a business, would you take out a loan so your big-spending clients would spend less at your store? Your debt goes up, and your revenue goes down. If the PCs were running a business, they would be going into debt to pay people to shop less at their store.

So that's the first problem. The other is, who really benefits from that property tax cut? The PCs will tell you that it's on your kitchen table or in your pocket, but there's someone else out there who wants that money: the banks.

The banks figure if you're not spending that money on public schools, you can spend it on a higher mortgage payment, and that's exactly what happens. When you lower property taxes, the price of land goes up. And that money you thought you were going to save, the bank wants it. And they will lend you even more to make sure it gets out of your pocket.

Now, this Throne Speech talks specifically about how it's good when prices go down. Now, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) didn't have a problem with prices going up when Bell—the Bell MTS merger happened, or tuition going up or life-saving drugs costing more.

But there's another exception about the price going up, and it's a big one—it's property, because property taxes keep property prices lower. Those taxes go to education, so it is plowed right back into the one of the best investments we can make in the younger generation, right in your community.

When property taxes drop, the money goes to the bank, which probably isn't in Manitoba. For some people, higher property prices might seem great: banks, real estate, insurance agents and property speculators. Because when property prices keep going up, the banks, real estate agents and insurance salesmen can keep making more and more money even if they're not doing any more work.

But there's a problem for everyone else, for everyone who has to pay higher property prices to buy a new house—especially first-time homeowners,

businesses, start-ups—because that high property price and that high mortgage is overhead for every family, farm and business in this province. That high overhead means people need higher wages just to put a roof over their head. Rents are higher, debt is higher, the cost of living goes up, the cost of doing business goes up and it makes us less competitive.

The money you were paying to run public schools, which stayed in the community paying teachers and EAs to educate our children, will be funnelled off into the coffers of a bank on Bay Street. This is an incredibly bad policy.

And again, consider the downsides of what this government is proposing. The Pallister government is going to borrow money with interest, growing the deficit and the debt in order to give that money to property owners, so anyone who doesn't work and own property is going to have a bigger share of that debt to pay off in the future.

Banks will eat up that tax break and increase your debt and property prices—more mortgage debt, higher costs of living in doing business in a less competitive economy—and the money leaves the province instead of staying here in the community.

It's bad for just about everyone. But who is it good for? The Premier himself, who would not only get a property tax cut but who would, as the owner of an insurance business, be able to sell bigger policies and make more money with no extra work.

Now there are many statements in this Throne Speech that are, to be polite, completely divorced from reality. It repeats many of the same exaggerations and manipulations we've heard over and over again from this government.

And it happens that I come from a generation where my parents and grandparents lived through crises. Both my grandfathers lived in the First World War. My grandmother's father died in the Spanish flu epidemic, leaving five children and a pregnant widow behind to a very hard life.

My father was born in 1933 in the depths of the Depression. He grew up the youngest of five children in a converted granary on a Headingley river lot next to the jail. My mother was born the year before the outbreak of the Second World War. When my grandfather went off to serve in the Second World War, he left his wife and two children behind and they endured 18 years of rationing in the UK.

And we sat around the kitchen table as a family talking about the Depression and the war. And so when I hear the Depression invoked, and I think of the hard life and hard lessons that my family and millions of others had to endure under politicians in governments who did not know any better, I find it insulting that we have a Throne Speech that goes out of its way to make life worse for so many Manitobans. And I mean that.

There is something in this Throne Speech to hurt Manitobans living in every single constituency in Manitoba, some more than others. It is a Throne Speech that pays lip service to events of colossal suffering while having learned nothing from those events whatsoever.

This Throne Speech—and indeed the entire agenda of this government—is based on inflicting pointless misery on people, many of whom endured that same misery under the NDP. The misery of a depression and two world wars brought Canadians and countries around the world to a realization that we needed a new deal because the ideas they had taken to that point had failed.

Because, for all that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his decisions may sometimes be—seem erratic or hard to understand, it is quite clear to me that there is method to the Premier's madness. There's a pattern to the far-right ideas this government continually presents in legislation. It's in conservative ideology that the Premier and his acolytes subscribe to, and it's based on ignoring and tearing down every progressive achievement of the new deal—the very things that got us out of the Depression and built modern Canada.

Dismantling regulation that keep people safe, crushing the bargaining power of the unions for the sake of cheap labour but also to undermine political opponents, undermining universities and colleges so that only people of means can attend—there is nothing bold or new about this.

* (12:00)

This represents the action of conservative politicians who've spent a lifetime reaping the benefits of the sacrifice of earlier generations and public programs and they're now kicking the ladder away for the rest of us.

So it will come as no surprise we do not support this Throne Speech and we offer the following subamendments.

I move, seconded by the member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux),

THAT the motion be amended by adding after clause (bb) the following clauses:

- (cc) failed to adequately prepare personal-care homes in Manitoba for the second wave of the pandemic, resulting in too many cases and deaths in personal-care homes; and
- (dd) failed to adequately test some COVID-19-related supplies like masks so that a large amount of money was spent wastefully in paying for substandard PPE; and
- (ee) failed to maintain adequate home-care services during the pandemic, with the result that some seniors have not been sufficiently supported at home and have had to go into personal-care homes, where they are at greater risk of getting COVID-19 infections; and
- (ff) failed on basic due diligence on the safety of health products, resulting in the purchase of a—\$1.2 million in hand sanitizer made from fuel ethanol that was a health hazard; and
- (gg) failed to provide support for Manitoba businesses, many of whom still face bankruptcy, thanks to the provincial government—will not compensate them for forced closures; and
- (hh) failed to provide supports for workers who have been hardest hit by the pandemic or to provide compensation for self-isolation; and
- (ii) failed to respond to the crisis in early learning and education, choosing to follow a failed model of piecemeal private care instead of a strong public system where all educators are paired—paid fair wages while being recognized under the Education Department; and
- (jj) failed to protect students, families, teachers and staff in the education—by forcing a back-to-school plan that was initially unfunded, and refused to commit to essential safety measures against COVID-19 in the public school system; and
- (kk) failed to protect French language rights and services by not having communications materials or COVID-19 questionnaires in French; and

- (ll) failed to adhere to basic principles of justice and morality by introducing bills that usurp the power of the courts by cancelling court cases and voiding legal contracts while depriving plaintiffs of their day in court and shielding ministers from responsibility and accountability; and
- (mm) failed to follow the basic duty of upholding the law and the constitution by introducing bills that undermine fundamental constitutional rights, including the rights to free speech, freedom of association and collective bargaining; and
- (nn) failed to advance reconciliation by refusing to work in partnership with Indigenous communities and instead introducing bills that infringe on constitutional Indigenous rights; and
- (oo) failed, again, to articulate any vision for growing Manitoba's economy other than yet another plan to plan; and
- (pp) failed to provide access to children with disabilities, including learning disabilities in the K-to-12 education system; and
- (qq) failed to achieve the eco-certification of the whitefish fishery on Lake Winnipeg and other lakes in Manitoba in order to enable better markets for Manitoba whitefish, at the same time ensuring the fishery is sustainable; and
- (rr) failed to support municipalities in their efforts to represent the will of their citizens by promising to force private sector infrastructure projects which satisfy Progressive Conservative donors; and
- (ss) failed to ensure conflict of interest legislation was in place to prevent a former minister, within months of being defeated in the 2019 election, from being able to get a job with a private company that was recently awarded a very large contract from the provincial government to deliver crucial health-care services to remote and northern Manitobans; and
- (tt) failed to ensure that government officials abide by basic conflict of interest rules, allowing them to run side businesses, including working on political campaigns
- that under any—undermine any pretense of being impartial; and
- (uu) failed to adequately address the issue of contaminated sites and lead exposure in St. Boniface and Weston in Winnipeg after years of reports which were not disclosed; and
- (vv) failed to commit to systematic testing of blood lead levels in children aged one to three years of age in areas where known lead contamination exists from past or present industrial activity, older homes with lead paint and/or lead water pipes; and
- (ww) failed to commit to community and employee input and evidence-based outcomes for health-care changes, and placing insulin pumps, hearing aids and life-saving drugs and devices under medicare; and
- (xx) failed to commit to implement the Diabetes 360° strategy developed by Diabetes Canada to help treat and prevent further diabetes in the province; and
- (yy) failed to present a mental health and addictions strategy to address to the methamphetamine and opioid crises by covering mental health care under Medicare to address the needs of vulnerable Manitobans; and
- (zz) failed to commit to address the urgent need for First Nations housing or developing emergency management protocols for northern and remote communities; and
- (aaa) failed to mention the importance of immigration to Manitoba's economic and social fabric, which can largely be attributed to the Provincial Nominee Program; and
- (bbb) failed to commit to reversing the decisions to dismantle collaborative health-care teams and increase senior management positions in health by expanding another bureaucratic arm of the provincial government with Shared Health Services; and
- (ccc) failed to commit to improving issues relating to independent living, hospice and personal-care homes or reversing the decision to raise costs on senior-home programs; and

- (ddd) failed to commit to raising standards for ethics, integrity and conflict of interest for senior members of the civil service; and
- (eee) failed to commit to enhancing the protection of children under the care of Child and Family Services; and
- (fff) failed to provide the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth with expansive investigative powers needed to properly advocate for children and youth; and
- (ggg) failed to implement plans to reduce poverty by replacing Employment and Income Assistance with a jobs and basic income program to help those in greatest need; and
- (hhh) failed to commit to ending the extraction of natural resources—mining—in provincial parks; and
- (iii) failed to update—implement the duty-to-consult framework for Indigenous committees, resulting in the delay of major projects such as the Lake Manitoba-Lake St. Martin flood outlet channels project; and
- (jjj) failed to respond adequately to states of emergency declared in rural municipalities after significant drought conditions have hindered 'farmeries' abilities to operate successfully; and
- (kkk) failed to address the unacceptably long delays for northern Manitobans to get bail in the criminal justice system; and
- (lll) failed to work with the federal government on the development of a national pharmacare program to address the high cost of pharmaceuticals, especially for seniors and vulnerable Manitobans; and
- (mmm) failed to commit to not dismantling Manitoba's school divisions and keeping community input in education systems; and
- (nnn) failed to commit to stop charging Manitoba Hydro exorbitant fees which increases the debt level and prevents the corporation from returning to financial health;
- (ooo) failed to commit to providing fiscal stability to strengthen provincial government revenues and develop a credible plan on growth and investment instead of cuts;
- (ppp) failed to commit to spending locally and stop hiring consultants from outside the province; and
- (qqq) failed to commit to developing strategies to work with the federal government, Metis and First Nations peoples to ensure that all Manitoba First Nation communities have better access to improved 'nurthing' stations, health-care initiatives such as the Nuka program, clean running water, Internet and phone connectivity, teachers and land air and—teachers and land and air transportation; and
- (rrr) failed to commit to fulfilling the provincial government's election promises of raising the personal tax exemption to the national average, fast-tracking the construction of 1,200 personal-care-home beds and to work positively and respectfully with Indigenous people and communities on—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

I—the member has—had varied his text slightly from the written version that was submitted, and I would ask, is there leave to consider the motion as written? *[Agreed]*

THAT the motion be amended by adding after clause (bb) the following clauses:

- cc) failed to adequately prepare personal care homes in Manitoba for the second wave of the pandemic, resulting in too many cases and deaths in personal care homes; and*
- dd) failed to adequately test some COVID-19 related supplies like masks so that a large amount of money was spent wastefully in paying for substandard personal protective equipment; and*
- ee) failed to maintain adequate home care services during the pandemic with the result that some seniors have not been sufficiently supported at home and have had to go into personal care homes where they are at greater risk of getting COVID-19 infections; and*
- ff) failed on basic due diligence on the safety of health products, resulting in the purchase of \$1.2-million in hand sanitizer made from fuel ethanol that was a health hazard; and*

- gg) *failed to provide support for Manitoba businesses, many of whom still face bankruptcy because the Provincial Government will not compensate them for forced closures, and;*
- hh) *failed to provide supports for workers who have been hardest hit by the pandemic or to provide compensation for self-isolation, and:*
- ii) *failed to respond to the crisis in Early Learning and Education, choosing to follow a failed model of piecemeal private care instead of a strong public system, where all educators are paid fair wages while being recognized under the Education Department; and*
- jj) *failed to protect students, families, teachers and staff in the education by forcing a back-to-school plan that was initially unfunded, and refusing to commit to essential safety measures against Covid-19 in the public school system; and*
- kk) *failed to protect French language rights and services, by not having communications materials or Covid-19 questionnaires in French; and*
- ll) *failed to adhere to basic principles of justice and morality by introducing bills that usurp the power of the courts by cancelling court cases and voiding legal contracts while depriving plaintiffs of their day in court, and shielding Ministers from responsibility and accountability; and*
- mm) *failed to follow the basic duty of upholding the law and the constitution, by introducing bills that undermine fundamental constitutional rights, including the right to free speech, freedom of association and collective bargaining; and*
- nn) *failed to advance reconciliation by refusing to work in partnership with Indigenous communities and instead introducing bills that infringe on constitutional Indigenous rights; and*
- oo) *failed, again, to articulate any vision for growing Manitoba's economy other than yet another plan to plan; and*
- pp) *failed to provide access to children with disabilities, including learning disabilities in the K-to-12 education system; and*
- qq) *failed to achieve the eco-certification of the whitefish fishery on Lake Winnipeg and other lakes in Manitoba in order to enable better markets for Manitoba whitefish, at the same time ensuring the fishery is sustainable; and*
- rr) *failed to support municipalities in their efforts to represent the will of their citizens by promising to force private sector infrastructure projects which satisfy Progressive Conservative donors; and*
- ss) *failed to ensure conflict of interest legislation was in place to prevent a former minister, within months of being defeated in the 2019 election, from being able to get a job with a private company that was recently awarded a very large contract from the Provincial Government to deliver crucial healthcare services to remote and northern Manitobans; and*
- tt) *failed to ensure that government officials abide by basic conflict of interest rules, allowing them to run side businesses including working on political campaigns that undermine any pretense of being impartial; and*
- uu) *failed to adequately address the issue of contaminated sites and lead exposure in St. Boniface and Weston in Winnipeg after years of reports which were not disclosed; and*
- vv) *failed to commit to systematic testing of blood lead levels in children aged one to three years of age in areas where known lead contamination exists from past or present industrial activity, older homes with lead paint and/or lead water pipes; and*
- ww) *failed to commit to community and employee input and evidence based outcomes for healthcare changes and placing insulin*

- pumps, hearing aids and life-saving drugs and devices under Medicare; and*
- xx) *failed to commit to implement the Diabetes 360° strategy developed by Diabetes Canada to help treat and prevent further diabetes in the province; and*
- yy) *failed to present a mental health and addictions strategy to address to the methamphetamine and opioid crises by covering mental healthcare under Medicare to address the needs of vulnerable Manitobans; and*
- zz) *failed to commit to addressing the urgent need for First Nations housing or developing emergency management protocols for northern and remote communities; and*
- aaa) *failed to mention the importance of immigration to Manitoba's economic and social fabric, which can be largely attributed to the Provincial Nominee Program; and*
- bbb) *failed to commit to reversing the decisions to dismantle collaborative healthcare teams and increase senior management positions in health by expanding another bureaucratic arm of the Provincial Government with Shared Health Services; and*
- ccc) *failed to commit to improving issues relating to independent living, hospice and personal care homes or reversing the decision to raise costs on senior care programs; and*
- ddd) *failed to commit to raising standards for ethics, integrity and conflict of interest for senior members of the civil service; and*
- eee) *failed to commit to enhancing the protection of children under the care of Child and Family Services; and*
- fff) *failed to provide the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth with expansive investigative powers needed to properly advocate for children and youth; and*
- ggg) *failed to implement plans to reduce poverty by replacing Employment and Income Assistance*
- with a jobs and basic income program to help those in greatest need; and*
- hhh) *failed to commit to ending the extraction of natural resources (mining) in provincial parks; and*
- iii) *failed to update and implement the "duty-to-consult" framework for Indigenous communities resulting in the delay of major projects such as the Lake Manitoba–Lake St. Martin Flood Outlet Channel Project; and*
- jjj) *failed to respond adequately to states of emergency declared in Rural Municipalities after significant drought conditions have hindered farmers' abilities to operate successfully; and*
- kkk) *failed to address the unacceptably long delays for northern Manitobans to get bail in the criminal justice system; and*
- lll) *failed to work with the Federal Government on the development of a national pharmacare program to address the high cost of pharmaceuticals, especially for seniors and vulnerable Manitobans; and*
- mmm) *failed to commit to not dismantling Manitoba's school divisions and keeping community input in education systems; and*
- nnn) *failed to commit to stop charging Manitoba Hydro exorbitant fees which increases the debt level and prevents the corporation from returning to financial health; and*
- ooo) *failed to commit to providing fiscal stability to strengthen Provincial Government revenues and develop a credible plan on growth and investment instead of cuts; and*
- ppp) *failed to commit to spending locally and stop hiring consultants from outside the province; and*
- qqq) *failed to commit to developing strategies to work with the Federal Government, Métis and First Nations peoples to ensure that all Manitoba First Nation communities have better access to improved nursing stations,*

health care initiatives such as the NUKA program, clean running water, Internet and phone connectivity, teachers and land and air transportation; and

- rrr) failed to commit to fulfilling the Provincial Government's election promises of raising the personal tax exemption to the national average; fast-tracking the construction of 1,200 personal-care-home beds; and to work positively and respectfully with Indigenous people and communities on many issues; and*
- sss) failed to cooperate with the City of Winnipeg and Rural Municipalities to implement an accelerated process to address sewage discharge into the Assiniboine and Red rivers in order to improve the health of Lake Winnipeg; and*
- ttt) failed to commit to ensuring that full fire prevention and community protection plans are in place for all First Nations communities, including firebreaks where needed; and*
- uuu) failed to commit to improving the outdated technology systems utilized in Provincial Government departments; and*
- vvv) failed to act swiftly to protect the Sandilands aquifer from a mining development which threatens the future quality of the water for Eastern Manitoba, including the Brokenhead River and Lake Winnipeg.*

And it has been moved by the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), seconded by the honourable member for Tyndall Park (Ms. Lamoureux)

THAT the motion be amended by adding—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

The subamendment is in order. Debate can proceed.

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations): I'm very pleased today to have the opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech. It's been quite a while since I've had the opportunity to address my colleagues in this Chamber and a very

long time apart since COVID-19 hit us in—back in March. So I will speak on a more positive note this morning.

The past seven months have been like no other timeframe in my life. It's been a very unique experience to conduct constituency business as well as the Department of Indigenous and Northern Relations from my home office in Gladstone. Thank you to the technology: it worked. And thanks to my dedicated staff for all your support. They worked extremely hard and it went very well. Government business has never slowed or stopped.

We've been able to conduct hundreds of meetings with partners and stakeholders. For the first few months, those calls and meetings were seven days a week and whatever time of day or night, as required. I was able to provide support, updates, and communicate on a regular basis with First Nations leadership, the Manitoba Metis Federation and the executive of the Northern Affairs leadership councils and board. They have always had the opportunity to contact me on a 24-hour basis if there was an urgent manner that needed my assistance, or any other department of our government. They do not have to make numerous calls to reach someone who listens or is willing to help. They have never abused this contact information and, to me, this is a true indication of trust and respect.

* (12:10)

I want to express my sincere appreciation on behalf of our government to Manitoba chiefs and councils for keeping your communities safe from COVID-19 for the first six months of this worldwide pandemic. You are to be commended for ensuring your families had cleaning supplies delivered to their homes, as well as food hampers to assist in feeding their families. I was so impressed by the young men that went daily hunting and fishing and provided fresh meat to the elders and anybody else in the community that needed it. It was a time of support to each other and a sincere show of respect.

I was humbled by all the good acts of kindness that 'continued' over a very long period of time and it still continues today. You took this deadly virus serious and you locked down your communities for their protection. This did not come without controversy in your communities, but you showed true leadership. You did the right thing and you stuck to the decisions you knew were in the best interests of your people. I'll not forget what you have done in a time of chaos and fear. Well done, to all of you.

We know that there are First Nations communities now that are feeling the effects of COVID in your community and that was bound to happen. No community, no person is immune to this virus and no one goes to another home or community to knowingly affect others. We are taking steps to keep our communities safe and healthy and efforts to feel those who have become infected.

I'm grateful to the team of health-care providers that responded quickly to these First Nations, to the needs of their communities, and we will be there for you every step of the way until COVID-19 is just a memory.

During this time, many First Nations have also had elections and others have elections in the near future. Congratulations to all the newly elected and the re-elected, and good luck to all candidates and to those who have elections coming in the next week.

I also want to recognize the Manitoba Metis Federation as well as President David Chartrand. You have also provided, not just for your own people, but for anyone who needed assistance, with very generous food hampers on a regular basis. Your regular media updates were viewed and followed by many and the entertainment you provided every week lightened the stress and the fear of so many that were facing hard times.

It takes caring hearts and a lot of volunteers to carry out all these acts of kindness. Thank you for all you've done and all you are doing.

I also want to acknowledge Manitoba's 11 friendship centres. You have gone above and beyond your regular programs and daily support these past months to take care of people in need and those who had absolutely nowhere else to turn. I know these needs have increased dramatically since COVID arrived but, as usual, you have stepped up to the challenge and you have done what you always do. You do it quietly and you do it without recognition. I know what you have done and, on behalf of all Manitobans, I want to say thank you and God bless you for your never-ending compassion and hard work. We are a much better province because of your services.

In the past 12 months, many but not all Manitobans have endured more than their share of historic disasters that have disrupted and caused immense stress to so many. It started a year ago, and I remember it very well because I drove home on a Thursday night, after our session, in this storm and

I was so grateful and so thankful when I arrived at home.

It literally shut down many areas and it displaced many people. I had the unique opportunity to work on the front lines with people, First Nations, municipalities and government staff for more than a week. I spent that week meeting with the chiefs and their staff and their displaced communities. Once again, what I saw was people going above and beyond to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their family, friends, neighbours and strangers.

I have to admit it was exhausting, but it was overwhelming and it was Manitoba at its best during the most difficult times. But that's who we are. We're strong and we're resilient and we don't retreat when there's danger or people in need. We always do what's right. That makes me incredibly proud to be a Manitoban. It stands for something: pride, trust and compassion.

COVID-19 arrived abruptly in March. I was ready to come—I believe it's the morning of the budget, and I was all dressed, ready to go, very excited about the day. I still had my TV on and I was kind of numb when I heard that someone had been diagnosed with COVID-19 at a recent conference that I had attended. I knew that—what that meant for me, and I was absolutely right. I got a phone call about two minutes later. I've been through isolation, and I was lucky. The outcome could have very easily been quite different.

Then, again, without any warning, in June of this past year there was a destructive windstorm in many parts of my constituency. In that same time frame, there was an extreme rainfall in the southeast parts of our province that resulted in damaging overland flooding.

Only a couple of week later, the heavy rainfall was very close to me and affected a good portion of my constituency. Many homes and businesses were badly damaged from fast-flash-flooding and the financial cost to homes and landowners, businesses, egg producers, has been extreme. I want to acknowledge Minister Schuler for getting out to these communities very quickly to offer whatever help possibly could be done on behalf of our government.

There is a Hutterite colony in my constituency that could have lost many lives when a dike was breached in the middle of the night. They literally carried women and children on their shoulders, including the elderly, in the dark through chest-deep

high flood waters to a two-storey school where these people would be safe.

Listening to their recollection of what a horrifying night it had been was gruelling. Once again, the leadership of the community made every effort to protect their people. They lost their communal kitchen, but they never went without a meal. The surrounding communities delivered an abundance of food to feed their community of about 130 people.

The same people who did that also delivered food to the volunteer sandbaggers in the Neepawa area that had also been severely flooded. Other Hutterite colonies also came to their aid because, again, this is what Manitoba colonies do: provide for others in their time of need.

To say that the past 12 months has been overwhelming and a life experience is an understatement. I could literally write a book on the many conversations, events and heroic individuals who have given selflessly of themselves to others. I feel honoured to have been a small part of so much, but we know it's not over. We don't quit until we know without a doubt that everyone is safe and we have done everything possible.

This worldwide pandemic has created a lot of inconvenience, fear, stress, anxiety and total exhaustion to many people. Tomorrow is unknown and we are learning every step of the way. Some fear the virus why—others think it's just a hoax and inflicted by governments across the world to control their lives. These are the messages we receive daily.

As elected officials, we have to stay focused on positive and healthy outcomes for everyone. We have to ensure that as the virus diminishes or a vaccine is available that we make well-thought-out decisions that will ensure the economy of Manitoba is sustainable and that we are able to recover quickly.

This was clearly outlined in this Throne Speech. It's so easy for members opposite to criticize and disrespect these decisions, but I hear no options offered to work collaboratively to keep Manitoba on track, to keep our children healthy at school, to support our doctors, nurses and health-care providers and in our prayers as they work tirelessly to do everything they can.

These are not easy times, but we were elected to predict—protect and make decisions that keep Manitobans safe and our province functioning even during the most difficult situations have—we have experienced the past 12 months.

I want to acknowledge Premier Pallister, ministers Friesen, Stefanson, Cullen, Goertzen and Eichler for their—

* (12:20)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just remind the member that using personal names isn't allowed in the rules, and I would ask the member to use the titles that those folks she's trying to acknowledge—use their titles in her comments.

Ms. Clarke: My apologies, Madam Speaker. Sometimes the nights get very late and one's mind wanders.

There are many individuals and I want to thank them for their dedication and outstanding leadership. They have carried a heavy load of responsibility during the COVID-19 pandemic, day after day. There are also hundreds, thousands of stakeholders—partners, organizations and staff—that work with all of us every day and make sure all information is available, up-to-date and accurate. These individuals are not seen, but their efforts are imperative to our daily proceedings. They do not watch the clock or worry about the day of the week when there are emergency situations to be dealt with.

I also want to thank Dr. Roussin and his medical team for doing an amazing job of guiding Manitoba through our most difficult days.

Manitoba has done well and we will continue to encourage everyone to follow the health protocols that are in place to protect everyone in the coming weeks and months ahead, and we will continue to do that as long as it takes.

I want to acknowledge the leadership, also, of the colonies and the municipalities for coming together as communities and ensuring the safety of their residents and for their innovation in finding different ways to reduce the stress and to keep people functioning in the most normal way possible.

I want to close this by adding just a personal side of this. Back in March, when the state of emergency was declared, there were a lot of people on Facebook and other social media that were in absolute fear. They didn't know what a state of emergency was; they didn't know what to expect. It created a lot of stress. So I responded on my Facebook page—my personal Facebook page—to explain what that—what a state of emergency actually meant for Manitoba and other areas that were calling a state of emergency—the First

Nations did so themselves and there were communities that had to do that as well.

Well, that post—after I saw the responses to it, I realized the fear that was out there and the anxiety and I continued to post inspirational, positive posts every day. In just a couple of days that will be 200 posts. It—I thought I was doing it for the people, but I—it's been a big inspiration to myself. It also made me realize that people don't just struggle during tough times; they struggle every day. There are people struggling everywhere that don't have the ability to deal with the day or to deal with their life, and we need to support these people.

There is no legislation, there is no policies, there is nothing, but these people need to be supported in every way possible.

So I've continued to do that post, and I kind of enjoy it. It connects me with a lot of people. But every once in a while, you get something back that kind of tells you that things are going in the right direction.

So very early this morning, I got a message, and I'm going to take the liberty to share it with everyone here today, because it speaks of what goes on in our worlds: Good morning, Eileen. Thank you for all your supportive posts and quotes. I do look forward to them and often reflect on how they adjoin with my situation at hand. We are all just people trying to help others be better.

My position carries so much more than I ever expected. I have advocated with Members of Parliament, MLAs, through my position with Indigenous Housing Caucus, to keep fighting for the people, to keep them off the streets and food on the table. I recently—actually, just yesterday—have never had such an appreciation for our paramedics and RCMP, and it made me reflect how important they are in our lives.

I work in housing, and I was taking a new young girl a hamper and was going to meet her to ensure I could help her get settled. She has had some psychological issues and treatment. I walked in and I was told she was very tired all day. When I went in, she was still sleeping and I noticed a suicide note, and her pills were all gone.

I called 911, and think of what if I hadn't done this. How important they are.

I have to say, I've been a counsellor and an advocate, wondered how and why this path is mine. I

don't have formal training and always hoped that I'm doing the right thing.

I often wonder yesterday about this young girl—she's the same age as my daughter—and why she would try and commit suicide and why I was there first.

I guess this is why it makes it so hard and so easy to say this: could be my child, and that is why and where has your life been and that a person feels it needs to be over.

At these times I do thank a God and his spirit, that he put me in this path to help her. There are times that I do come home and say, why, oh, why, as I'm sure you do as well. There is a reason, and we all just have to hope that we are on the right path.

Take care and truly enjoy your Thanksgiving. My children are home and I will hug them very tightly.

Thanks again to you, our many important social services people as well.

So with that I want to wish everyone a very happy Thanksgiving. We live in a great province, and it gets upsetting to hear old 'negativity' here, but I will spend the rest of my days looking for the positive. *[interjection]* Sorry, Siri wants to jump in.

Anyways, it's a pleasure to be here, and I do feel I'm on the right path being in this Chamber.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I would just ask the member, as she was reading from some private correspondence, it is the rule of the House to table what is being read from private correspondence.

So I would ask the member if she could please table three copies of that private correspondence. Thank you.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Hopefully when I continue this on Monday, my voice will be a little bit better.

I want to thank the members of the House, the Premier (Mr. Pallister), member from Steinbach, member from Brandon West, all my NDP caucus colleagues, the Liberal independent members, for reaching out to me throughout the past year.

I want to thank my leader. My leader sang me a healing song in October of 2019 when I began this journey that I've been on for almost a year. It meant a lot, continues to mean a lot; continues to mean a lot to me to see our members, my constituents, our

community reach out during this time for me and my family.

I also want to acknowledge my father. My father just passed away, actually six weeks ago. You could say, how can 2020 get any worse? Well, as we can see, it can. I was going to tie that into the Throne Speech too, but I won't do that. As my dad was a—my—he was a bit of a joker, and even right to his last day he said, you know, Nello, make sure you continue to hold this government to account because there's a lot to be held to when we move forward.

But I want to talk about just a bit of a cautionary tale because I know my time's going to run out. I want to say to Manitobans that when you're sick, you need to take care and make sure that you take advantage of all the services that we have available to us. I made the mistake of not doing that. In early April, when I

finished my chemotherapy, I was at home thinking I was done, thinking I was feeling better, but I wasn't. I wasn't listening to my body, and unfortunately I had to—I collapsed. I collapsed at home, and my wife had to call emergency.

* (12:30)

I will stop at that point and continue on Monday because this cautionary tale needs to be said, but it's 12:30.

Madam Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 17 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 9, 2020

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