

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 16, 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

House Business

Madam Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on House business.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I rise to seek to leave of this House not to see the clock and not rise until such time as this Assembly passes and completes all stages of an amendment to The Employment Standards Code to update leave provisions and ensure Manitobans are able to access paid federal sick leave promptly while protecting themselves and others, as noted in the Manitoba government press release issued Wednesday, October 7th, 2020.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to not see the clock and not rise until such time as this Assembly passes and completes all stages of an amendment to The Employment Standards Code to update leave provisions and ensure Manitobans are able to access paid federal sick leave promptly while protecting themselves and others, as noted in the Manitoba government press release issued Wednesday, October 7th, 2020?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

An Honourable Member: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Point of order, Madam Speaker.

I would say that, while I appreciate the member opposite's offer—I would be happy to have the discussion with her—to sort of spring something onto the floor of the House without any discussion seems to be more about politics than about practicality, but, of course, I'd always be happy to discuss with her about how we can do things to benefit Manitobans.

I'm sorry; I didn't cite a rule, so I probably don't actually have a point of order, but I hope it was a valid point.

Madam Speaker: The member indicates that he doesn't have a point of order. He is actually accurate in that he does not have a point of order. So it is a disagreement.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Training): It's my pleasure to table Communities Economic Development Fund quarterly financial statements.

Madam Speaker: Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Portage Residential School—National Historic Site Designation

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I rise today to recognize the former Portage residential school, located on Keeshkeemaquah, which is part of the urban reserve of Long Plain First Nation, which has been recently designated a national historic site.

The Portage residential school was one of two former school sites chosen for their historic significance by the federal government, with the other being Shubenacadie residential school in Nova Scotia.

These schools were financed by the Canadian government and operated by Canadian churches.

The Portage la Prairie residential school was established in 1888 and operated until 1960. From 1961 to 1975, the building continued in use as a

student residence only. The first building was located just east of Portage la Prairie, but in 1915 the school moved to its current location in the West End. The building was designated a provincial heritage site in 2005.

The children who were sent to the former residential school came from many First Nations and other Indigenous communities within Manitoba and elsewhere. For many families, residential schools have had an intergenerational traumatic effect, and with this designation, hopefully it will help to begin healing and closure.

This historical site will provide a means to educate and bring awareness to all Canadians, and to others, of the residential school era, which was one of the darkest chapters of Canadian history and is something that Indigenous people are working to overcome even to this day.

I will—I would encourage all members to take time to tour the site, and I ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating Long Plain First Nation and all of the people that worked so hard together to achieve this national historical milestone.

Thank you.

Marilyn Valgardson

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): One thing that's been abundantly clear throughout the pandemic is that child care is essential to supporting Manitoban families and ensuring that our economy keeps moving forward. In the past year, I've had the honour of connecting and learning from many child—early childhood educators in my community, and today I am very pleased to recognize one of the best that this province has produced.

Today, I'm honoured to recognize Marilyn Valgardson, executive director of Assiniboine Children's Centre. Marilyn is the definition of a community champion, and her incredible efforts have resulted in a lasting legacy which will serve families in St. James for many years to come.

A number of years ago, the Assiniboine Children's Centre received funding to construct a new facility to expand access to child care for families in the Bourkevale neighbourhood and beyond. While the funding covered costs of constructing the building, Marilyn and her team were required to fundraise \$200,000 to pay for furnishings such as cribs and other necessities for the building. This would be an enormous challenge for any non-profit organization,

but Marilyn managed to lead this massive fundraising effort while continuing to manage her regular duties as executive director of her centre.

I'm delighted to share that they were successful in their fundraising efforts, and I'm even more delighted to share that the new building is now open and serving families across our community.

I want to congratulate Marilyn and her team for their amazing efforts in support of our community, and it's this behind-the-scenes work that too often goes unnoticed. So I ask that—I please ask that you join me in thanking her for her hard work and dedication to improving quality of life for families in St. James.

Sherry Benson-Podolchuk

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Madam Speaker, I stand before you today to recognize a remarkable individual.

Sherry Benson-Podolchuk is a retired police officer with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. She has written three books. Her very first publication was *Women Not Wanted*. This book is about her 20-year career in the RCMP and how she dealt with workplace conflict, bullying and sexual harassment. Since retiring, she works as a professional speaker, educator and consultant, focusing on workplace conflict and helping others find their voice.

Sherry was part of two federal government reports focusing on sexual harassment and bullying in the workplace, providing testimony and recommendations for changes in the RCMP. She graduated from the University of Winnipeg with a degree in conflict resolution studies in 2012 and, in 2015, Sherry presented at TEDx Winnipeg on tools to survive workplace bullying.

In November 2017, she received the Canada 150 Senate medal from Senator Grant Mitchell, for her continued efforts in helping others speak up about harassment.

* (10:10)

Her motto: The power of your voice can create positive change. Everyone deserves to feel safe at home and in the workplace.

Madam Speaker, I attended an event earlier this year where Sherry spoke. Her speech at the Gimli Ice Festival volunteer recognition gala was so moving, members of the audience were brought to tears.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Sherry Benson-Podolchuk and her

outstanding achievements as she continues to make a difference in the lives of not just Manitobans, but people across Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Justice 4 Black Lives Winnipeg

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, today I'm honoured to rise and acknowledge the work of Justice 4 Black Lives Winnipeg and their dedication to organizing one of the largest rallies in our province's history.

On June 5th, 2020, nearly 20,000 Manitobans of all races, genders, identities, ages, abilities and socio-economic status gathered to denounce the systemic anti-black racism that exacerbates ongoing inequities experienced by black people in Manitoba and around the world. It was an incredibly powerful event, one that affirmed the collective desire to advance human rights and to stand up to injustices.

The death of George Floyd may have prompted this event, but it's not an isolated incident. The deaths of Machuar Madut, Eishia Hudson, Regis Korchinski-Paquet, Chavis Carter, among so many others, have also been victims of systemic anti-black and anti-Indigenous racism.

Justice 4 Black Lives Winnipeg did not let the pandemic preclude the actioning of their commitment to the black community. Over the past many months, they have organized, rallied, lobbied and facilitated ways for community to gather as safely as possible. Their petition, Demands to make Winnipeg safe for all BIPOC, has received international support and has been signed by over an incredible 115,000 people.

As legislators, we must do more than just calling out anti-black racism, we must commit to eradicating it from all spaces, workplaces and systems. We must do our part to uplift advocates and activists who take on the tremendous burdens to make life better for all of us.

I honour the work of Justice 4 Black Lives Winnipeg—a collective of black women, black queer folks, black youth, black mothers and local black community members—for the ways in which they have brought our communities together and for their commitment to dismantling white supremacy and systemic racism in Manitoba and around the world.

Thank you.

Appreciation for Services During Pandemic

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): Madam Speaker, last night, after watching a couple of Netflix episodes in the basement, my wife and I 'trumbled'—trundled upstairs to behold a peculiar sight indeed.

There, dangling from the handle of our over-the-stove microwave, was a plastic coat hanger. And affixed to the hanger was a couple of IV bags, complete with tubes and clamps and all the whole regalia, dangling down onto the floor. Fresh puddles of liquid were visible on the stovetop and the floor.

And in any other house, this might be a cause for concern, but for us, this is part of the new normal. That's because my daughter Melannie is a third-year nursing student, and as part of her training at the University of Manitoba, she needs to do at-home virtual laboratory simulations.

In fact, since our daughter Megan graduated from high school this past June and our son Mike finished his undergrad at the U of W, we now have three University of Manitoba students studying simultaneously—all virtually—in our home. Competition for Wi-Fi bandwidth has never been more fierce.

You'd think I might be walking on eggshells in my own home. And you would be right. That's because our four-year-old son Mark is currently being home-preschooled by a fully qualified teacher, my wife Joanne. And E is for eggshells.

So the other day, my son was gluing brown and white eggshells all over his craft paper for the day and, 'leedess' to say, the eggshells didn't all end up attached to the paper.

Our other two children, Marissa and Matthew, are happily attending Immanuel Christian School every day in grade 4 and 6. And I'm grateful for the opportunity to send them to a school that actively assists us as parents in transmitting our cultural beliefs and values from one generation to the next.

And, Madam Speaker, in this new normal, despite the negativity of some members opposite, I still am truly thankful. I'm thankful for the teachers who've adapted so—to so many changes. I'm thankful for health-care workers. I'm thankful for our police service. I'm thankful for our government that seeks to do what's in the best interests of Manitoba. I'm thankful for our—my church that continues to meet together.

I'm thankful for our eternal and almighty God from all—from whom all power and wisdom come.

Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Financial Assistance During Pandemic Paid Sick Leave and Business Grants

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, we stand at a very important moment in our province's fight against the pandemic. We do expect that the government is going to announce more restrictions and more public health measures today to help us flatten the curve.

As the government moves down this route, however, they have to ensure that there are the supports there for Manitobans to actually succeed in this joint effort where we all want to eradicate COVID-19. I think one of the most important tools that is currently lacking from our tool belt in this pandemic fight is paid sick leave. Paid sick leave will help us to accomplish that super important objective of having people stay home when they are sick.

When is the government going to ensure that Manitoba workers can stay home when they're sick, while still being able to pay the bills, by implementing paid sick leave here in Manitoba?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): This is a cause and issue that our Premier (Mr. Pallister) took a leadership role with other premiers, ensuring that there is sick leave provided to people that need to stay home for a variety of reasons. That's a leadership position we took with Ottawa, and we're glad that Ottawa has responded in so many different ways.

We're absolutely committed to providing that sick leave for Manitobans.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the better part of me wants to believe that every single MLA in this Chamber and attending virtually wants to help workers do the right thing. However, as we ask workers, as we ask Manitobans to step up and pursue the public health orders with renewed vigour, we have to ensure that they have the supports necessary to succeed.

This government has talked about paid sick leave, but there has been no action behind that talk. The government—on this side of the House—they rushed in a bill to make life more expensive, to raise people's

hydro rates. They had time to draft that bill and introduce it and prorogue the government over it, but they haven't had time to do paid sick leave yet.

As the government brings in new restrictions, how long will those workers impacted by those restrictions have to wait before they can access paid sick leave in Manitoba?

Mr. Fielding: Listening to the NDP about life and making life more affordable to Manitobans is just a farce, quite frankly.

Madam Speaker, we know what the NDP did in opposition in terms of raising taxes, in terms of raising other fees, causing billions of dollars of debt in Hydro that will cause ratepayers to have increased fees.

Our government is absolutely committed to the sick leave, and that's why the Premier championed this at the federal level, and we're absolutely committed to this legislation.

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

Mr. Kinew: The government continues to force workers into making a very difficult choice between staying home when they're sick and going out with the ability to pay their bills, or going to work while sick and potentially infecting others.

At the same time, they make life more expensive by ramming through an increase to everyone's hydro rates.

That's also affecting businesses. I speak to many small-business owners every single day, Madam Speaker, who are saying that they are struggling to survive. Again, in order for them to survive this winter, they don't need more loans, they don't need more extensions. They need quick and easy access to cash.

These small businesses need grants in order to be able to survive the coming restrictions and the coming winter. When will the government bring forward new measures to help our ailing small businesses be able to survive this pandemic?

Mr. Fielding: Our government is very proud of the fact that places like the Parliamentary Budget Office has identified Manitoba providing second or third most supports for people and businesses during this crisis. Our No. 1 goal is to protect Manitobans and ensure that the restart happens effectively.

We know the numbers suggest that Manitoba is leading in terms of providing those re-supports that

are there. We're committed to supporting this. In fact, we brought a budget bill yesterday to put additional dollars in supports in place as needed. We're going to consider these and we're going to make sure that businesses are supported, like we already have, Madam Speaker.

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

COVID-19 Pandemic Anti-Mask Movement

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, masks save lives. I am absolutely confident every member on this side of the House would say that masks save lives. Let every member on this side of the House stand in their place and say that masks save lives.

* (10:20)

Of course, the reason why I'm bringing this up is because, according to the Health Minister, people who oppose masks, quote, make some good points. People who claim that mask use harms children, which is contrary to the evidence, according to him, make some good points. According to the Health Minister, people who think that mandatory mask use infringes on their rights make some good points.

Let's be clear. The mask mandates infringe on people no more than a no shirt, no shoes, no service sign on the door of 7-Eleven.

Will the Minister of Health stand in his place today and condemn, without equivocation, the anti-mask movement?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, this wouldn't be the first time the Leader of the Opposition or that party would start to say something before they actually have any kind of content, so let me provide content.

There was a group that respectfully, in my constituency, asked to meet with the school division to discuss two issues in principle: (1) why their league sports—or their school sports had not resumed for the fall, and (2) what was the decision underpinning the board's insistence that a doctor's note would accompany any student who would need to have a mask exemption policy.

And I said about that group, that I also met with, that they made some good points on both of those issues.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, you know, I think any reasonable political adviser would have told the Minister of Health that his job today would be to not repeat those terrible comments that he made that support—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —the anti-mask movement.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health is doubling down on these irresponsible comments. Again, if this was simply a constituency issue, that would be one thing, but we are talking about a life-and-death matter that affects all of us in Manitoba.

There is no room for equivocation. The public health orders are clear. We need to be wearing masks. It is going to help stop the spread.

How is it that we have a Minister of Health in Manitoba who cannot unequivocally condemn the anti-mask movement?

The question was not about constituency casework.

The question to the minister was: Can he stand in his place today and condemn the anti-mask movement?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, it's really regrettable that the Leader of the Opposition continues to try to divide Manitobans when in every other province and territory—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —legislators are finding ways to come together.

Let us be clear, Madam Speaker. If that member only meets with people in his constituency that he agrees with, I assure you he is the only member of the Legislature.

Madam Speaker, we've been clear. Washing hands saves lives. Infection prevention control saves lives. Physical distancing saves lives. And masks save lives.

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

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, I am amazed that we have to even go on this little journey together

where, through pushing and pulling and dragging—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —that somehow the Minister of Health would finally admit—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —under questioning that masks save lives.

But, Madam Speaker, the question was—
[interjection]—the question was very simple: will the minister condemn the anti-mask movement?

We have seen a disturbing trend with this government where they rush up to the line of flirting with anti-science conspiracy theories that around the world are serving to undermine public health—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew: —and that are serving to advance the spread of COVID-19.

So I would simply repeat the question and give the Minister of Health a third opportunity to please stand in his place and condemn the anti-mask movement? [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

I think members would want to hear their own member stand and answer this question, so I would ask for members to respectfully listen to him.

Mr. Friesen: Yes, Madam Speaker, that dog won't hunt.

That member knows that Brent Roussin has made clear we are all in this together as Manitobans. And while all Manitobans are coming together and trying to find commonality and work through these things, that member just wants to divide on groups. He wants to divide. He wants to divide, today, Fort Rouge from Morden-Winkler. And it's unhelpful.

Madam Speaker, I understand from the school board superintendent and the trustees, that they had a very respectful meeting where they were able to find some common ground with the group who was raising concerns about the difference of desks that were two metres apart that wouldn't require masks, and desks that were 1.8 metres apart that may require masks. And they were looking for clarifications, and I understand those clarifications were received.

I will not condemn my constituents, but I will always say we can always learn from people that we disagree with.

COVID-19 Pandemic Anti-Science Views

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, it's disappointing that, rather than face down anti-science, anti-maskers, anti-vaxxers, the Pallister government is looking to curry their favour somehow. They call it reasonable; they call it good points—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: They call it absolutely anything as long as they don't have to show the required leadership to confront it on behalf of all Manitobans.

But we all have to confront it, Madam Speaker. Manitoba is now the worst-hit province in Canada for new infections. We need to use every tool available to us, and that includes using masks.

For the last time, I ask the minister: Why is he currying favour for those who reject basic science?

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, every one of the members of this government wore a mask to enter this Chamber. Every one of the members of this government is wearing a mask to—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —comply with the current orange restrictions in Winnipeg.

It's sad—[interjection]—it is sad that—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —just a few days—[interjection]

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. And it's not funny. I don't find it funny that there is a lot of heckling here. I'm trying to hear, and I'm having difficulty hearing the member.

So I'm going to allow the member to start over in his response, please. And I'm asking all members in the House, please, to show respect for the person that is either asking or answering so that we can properly hear what is being said.

Mr. Friesen: So, Madam Speaker, it would seem that there's two members on the opposition side who will

not meet with groups unless they agree with them. That's not the case for the other members of this Legislature.

We meet with broad arrays of groups, some who challenge us on issues, on policies. This is the life of a constituent—a constituency office. It's what we signed up to do. And instead of hate, we prefer hope. Instead of disengagement, we choose engagement. There is something to be learned when we talk to people even with whom—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: —we do not agree.

So while they chatter and heckle and try to shout me down, I will say again, Madam Speaker, washing hands saves lives; social distancing saves lives; masks save lives.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired. *[interjection]*

An Honourable Member: That was brutal.

An Honourable Member: It was, but she's still going to try again.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Parkview Place COVID-19 Outbreak Spread Prevention Measures

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Madam Speaker, you know, the minister continues to misgender me in this House, and I think it just shows, when the minister talks about division and what creates division, not respecting people's pronouns contributes to exactly that. The minister should be aware of that.

Madam Speaker, the minister has suggested that the infection of nearly 100 people at Parkview Place was somehow not preventable. I say that the high number is absolutely preventable.

* (10:30)

There was one case, over a month ago now, when the Province—and the Province at that time described it as low risk—those infections were not staunch, leading to growing infections to nearly 100 people. There are steps that should have been taken, could have been taken, and here are two they can do right now.

When will the provincial health staff physically attend to—

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

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I, for one, find it ironic that the same member who says that there isn't respect from the opposite party is the one who does not stop speaking when their time is expired in this House. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, order, order. Order.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, respect cuts both ways.

Madam Speaker, for all members of this House, everyone's concerned about the current conditions at Parkview Place. We were so fortunate in Manitoba to have avoided altogether any kind of an outbreak in personal-care homes for months in the global pandemic. It would have been unreasonable to think that somehow we could continue to keep that out of our personal-care homes. We are concerned and that is why we are acting.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, the minister won't take responsibility for Parkview and he cozies up to anti-maskers. He normalizes misgendering gender-nonconforming folks. He's normalizing negative outcomes as somehow inevitable, while embracing anti-science views as somehow being good points. On all scores the minister is simply wrong.

Parkview Place went from what the Province described as low-risk infection in one staff member to an infection of nearly 100 people. The minister has tools to address all of it, actually. Send in provincial staff today to inspect the facility and get front-line workers access to 'N-ninety-mive'—N95 masks immediately.

Mr. Friesen: Let's correct a number of errors, shall we. Number 1, PPE is in place and utilized at Parkview Place right now. Number 2, residents are isolated to their rooms. Meals in congregate settings have been cancelled. Group activities have been postponed. There is a dedicated physician on site. There is 24-7 leadership on site. The WRHA response team is addressing workforce issues that are ongoing. We have got nurses coming in to shore up nurse complement of staff in areas. Visitor restrictions have been implemented and the PCH has been put into red.

We are acting, Madam Speaker.

Drug Overdose Prevention Naloxone Kit Availability

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): The Pallister government is failing in their COVID response and they're further failing to address the needs of those facing addictions here in our province. They have no real plan to address it, nor was it even mentioned in their Throne Speech.

The minister can't even tell myself or Manitobans how many people have actually died during this pandemic of an overdose during the pandemic. That information should be available and it should help guide their response.

Not—now, one way that can address this crisis is to make 'naloxalone' more readily available.

Will the minister today commit to making 'naloxalone' an unscheduled drug so that people can access it without stigma?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): So, I didn't quite get the name of that drug, but naloxone is a non-prescription drug that temporarily reverses opiate overdoses. That member and all members here know that we have been active—acting on this—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Naloxone kits are distributed for free through Manitoba's take-home 'nanoxone' program. We have expanded the criteria. We now allow for two kits for families. We have registered more sites in the province, in all of our five health regions and 27 First Nations, to be able to distribute naloxone and the changes that the member refers to are actually under way already.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Smith: It's nice to hear that it's on its way, but we want to know actually when it's going to happen and when that stigma is going to be removed for families and when this minister is going to tell this House and tell Manitobans how many people have actually died as a result of an overdose during this pandemic.

This minister has yet to let Manitobans know that. We've sent letters. We've called his office. We've asked in this House many times.

And now we're asking: When are these kits going to be made available so that families can actually get naloxone on an unscheduled drug here in Manitoba? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Friesen: Well, again, Madam Speaker, no argument here. We have been working to expand naloxone eligibility, and the changes that the member refers to are actually under way already and will be here shortly.

I would say, though, that the member made the claim that somehow not enough is getting done on addictions investments, and so I would want to signal for her again that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) and myself, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart) were on hand, and others, for the new opening of Manitoba's sixth RAAM clinic, but not only that, millions more going to shore up that Rapid Access to Addictions Medicine model through the establishment of Manitoba's first RAAM hub to resource doctors all across the province and get far more people struggling with addictions to the treatment they need when they need it.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

Mrs. Smith: We know that the crisis is only increasing here in Manitoba. We know that needle distribution has increased in this province. We know that this government does—has no plan to address it. We know that blood-borne illnesses are increasing in this province. And this government didn't even say the words addiction or a plan in their Throne Speech.

So, again, I'll ask this minister—and they like to talk the talk—so I'll ask him to tell us exactly when those kits are going to be available for families without seeing a pharmacist so that they can readily get it off of a shelf without any stigma?

Mr. Friesen: Happy to oblige the member.

Addictions plan: \$3.5 million to the Bruce Oake centre to make new beds available for addictions; a \$2.5-million investment in new supportive housing units for people coming out of addictions treatment can stabilize and get the help they need; a new RAAM clinic; eating disorder program, new for Health Sciences Centre; and a \$3.5-million investment just weeks ago to expand HSD emergency 'partment and add staff trained in addictions and mental health care.

Manitobans know that this government is making the addictions and mental health investments that are

necessary to get people the right care at the right time and the right place.

**Labour Relations Amendment Act
Request to Withdraw Bill**

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Here we are, seven months into a pandemic and possibly the biggest economic crisis we've faced in nearly 100 years, and what's this government's priority? Well, it's ripping up workers' rights, it's not caring for people.

Bill 16 gives the employer the right to target strike leaders and other employees for termination during a strike. It removes binding arbitration from renewed contract negotiations.

This, Madam Speaker, is a big mistake. Arbitration has helped bring resolution to a number of labour disputes over the years, and it's contributed to less labour disputes.

Will the minister reconsider and withdraw Bill 16 today?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): We're very proud of our new labour legislation that provides the right balance between workers' and employers' rights by providing more accountability, more openness and transparency.

It ensures accountability by ensuring that audited financial statements are made public, union executive salaries above \$75,000 are made public to their executives, also ensuring banning unions' executive salaries to protect taxpayers that aren't included in the collective bargaining process and making sure we're consistent with other provinces in terms of certification and decertification.

Madam Speaker, it's a balanced approach to labour.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, Madam Speaker, there's a bunch of nonsense.

How is it that seven months into a pandemic the only new—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: —legislative priorities of this government are attacking workers? But I guess they've been attacking workers ever since they got elected, Madam Speaker, so it doesn't really surprise me. *[interjection]*

* (10:40)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey: There's a strike right now by bus drivers in the Winnipeg School Division. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) has worsened that strike by legislating wage freezes and directing negotiation positions for the division.

Why is the Pallister government continuously undermine the rights of working people? Why do they hate workers?

Mr. Fielding: Our government supports the rights of workers as well as employers. Really, what the NDP and some of the union leadership are proposing is really a two-tiered form of accountability when it comes to labour regulation.

We know that there's one set of rules as public servants. Great public servants have their salaries made public. That's happened for over a quarter of a century, and yet it is the exact opposite for some of the union leaders. That's a part of it.

We think this is an accountability measure. We think it makes sense and, quite frankly, it's going to be a tough, tough discussion with the union executives, with their members, to know that there's a two-tiered approach to accountability when it comes to labour legislation.

The NDP should get on board with our labour legislation to balance the process.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Lindsey: Well, Madam Speaker, we had a balanced process that protected workers, protected employers, but this government has decided to attack working people yet again. It targets strike leaders for termination. It's a full-on intimidation tactic meant to undermine the collective bargaining process.

Ripping up arbitration provisions is just going to lead to longer, more costly strikes, but the irony of this all is, Madam Speaker, it's bad for business too. But these guys just don't seem to understand that.

None of this should surprise me as they won't introduce paid sick leave provisions either. The minister should reconsider.

Will he withdraw Bill 16 today?

Mr. Fielding: Absolutely not, and the comments the member makes is completely inaccurate. What this bill does, it provides the collective balance between

workers' rights and employers' rights that weren't in place under the NDP government.

In terms of the arbitration clause the member had talked about, no other Canadian jurisdiction has provisions in their labour regulations that allows for one party to force the other into binding arbitration for a second subsequent agreement. Subsequent agreement arbitration provisions were added in 2000 by the former NDP government.

We're right-sizing. We're making sure this legislation is balanced between the rights of workers and employers.

**Temporary Child-Care Service Grant
Licensed Affordable Child-Care Spaces**

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): Madam Speaker, can you hear me?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Ms. Marcelino: Okay.

Madam Speaker, the budget implementation bill before this House gives millions of dollars to private companies for their own daycare spaces. Provisions of this bill make it so that these daycares can charge parents unregulated fees as high as \$10,000 per year. In other words, this is a straight giveaway to large private companies that simply don't need the money, and it does nothing for working families who need affordable child care.

Why is the government not prioritizing licensed, affordable child care for working Manitoba families?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): We know that members opposite take a very ideological approach when it comes to child-care delivery in the province of Manitoba. Madam Speaker, we're listening to parents out there who are saying that for many, many years under the previous NDP government, they didn't have the access to child care that they needed.

So we're not taking an ideological approach, Madam Speaker. We're working with those licensed daycares. We're working with daycares in the private sector. We're working with businesses. We're trying to expand the number of daycare spaces in the province of Manitoba. We'll continue to move in that because that's what's in the best interest of Manitoba families. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Notre Dame, and I would ask her if she happens to have a headpiece available. No? I would urge her, in order for us to hear loudly enough in the Chamber, it would be best for everybody remotely to wear a headpiece. So I would urge everybody, again, to please do that.

But moving on, then, to the honourable member for Notre Dame, on a supplementary question.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, the minister created an \$18-million fund for child care during the pandemic and, at last check, this fund had only flown less than half of 1 per cent. This funding could be—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Marcelino: —used immediately to fund licensed, centre-based spaces.

Last week, I met with child-care directors from Hamiota, three from Brandon, Wawanesa, Shoal Lake, Flin Flon and Neepawa, and they tell us that they are in real danger of closing their doors.

I ask the minister: Will she open funds from the Temporary Child Care Services Grant to shore up regulated child-care centres?

Mrs. Stefanson: We are providing supports to those child-care centres, Madam Speaker. In fact, during this COVID time, we've flowed more than \$60 million to those centres to ensure that they can remain open, especially for our front-line service workers who are working to help keep our province safe during these very difficult times for many Manitoba families.

The member opposite mentioned the partnership that we have the Manitoba—with the Manitoba chambers and the Winnipeg chamber. That created more than 100—well over 100 new positions in the province of Manitoba, daycare positions, that are needed for the—for Manitoba families, Madam Speaker.

We will not take an ideological approach, like members opposite. We'll continue to do what's in the best interest of Manitoba families.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a final supplementary. Can the honourable member unmute her computer?

The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Marcelino: Madam Speaker, we're in a global pandemic and an economic crisis. The effects of this are borne by women.

The minister talks about vacant spaces in child-care centres, but many of these are for-profit centres with unregulated fees. A working mother of two can't afford to pay \$20,000 per year on child care. It doesn't matter how many such child-care spaces the minister says are available.

The solution is straightforward: put the Temporary Child Care Services Grant towards making more licensed, affordable spaces in child-care centres.

Will the minister do so?

Mrs. Stefanson: Members opposite knows—know and Manitobans know that we're still cleaning up the mess of the previous NDP government. They are, in fact, the people that put into place the existing system in the province of Manitoba that we're trying to clean up, Madam Speaker.

So we will continue to work with the early childhood educators, we'll continue to work with those in the profit and not-for-profit sectors to ensure that we have the adequate availability of child-care spaces in the province of Manitoba for Manitoba families when they need it, Madam Speaker. That's the important thing here.

Hand Sanitizer Purchase Health Canada Recall

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): The government has been keen to blame everyone for their lack of preparedness and slow response during this pandemic, but there's little doubt that procurement has been a gong show.

In April, this government bought \$1.2 million worth of hand sanitizer from 204 Spirits Inc. In August, it was recalled by Health Canada. Not only was it made from fuel-grade ethanol, which is a health risk for pregnant and nursing women, it had none of the necessary warning labels.

In fact, I table a document that shows 204 Spirits Inc. was never authorized for sale by Health Canada at all.

How could the government buy \$1.2 million of illegal, unsafe hand sanitizer that was never approved for sale?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services): I'm please to rise in the House to speak about our

procurement efforts and the great efforts that have been undertaken by the team in Manitoba and by the private sector, as well as the public sector.

We tried to depend on the federal government for supply, and unfortunately, that was a failure, Madam Speaker. They were able to supply less than 5 per cent of the PPE that we were able to procure, including hand sanitizer. And it was at the recommendation of the federal government we procured some of that hand sanitizer.

We're working actively with all the Manitoba companies. They've just stepped up and done a fabulous job on changing their product lines to make sure we can keep Manitobans safe.

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

Second Wave of COVID-19 Government Response

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): Manitoba now has the worst active case rate in the country, and this government is flat out gaslighting Manitobans about what they've been doing.

* (10:50)

Last week, the Minister for—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —Central Services—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lamont: —the Minister for Central Services was wheeled out to hold a press conference where he accused the federal government of diverting PPE. It wasn't true, but that phony story is still on the government website.

The Health Minister is undermining public health and pandering to conspiracy theorists, and they waited 'til the last minute to respond on everything from safe schools to contact tracing. It's clear this government didn't get ready.

Did this government deliberately hold off on measures to prevent a second wave because they just didn't believe in the science?

Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services): I'm not quite sure where that question was heading, so we'll talk about trying to procure things with the federal government. Obviously, the federal government in the United States put a prohibition, a ban, on export of 3M N95 masks to Canada.

We tried to work with the federal government to bring them in, but that was not the way it would work. We are still trying to do that, Madam Speaker, and trying to get the federal government's attention on that—the requirements that provinces have, not just the federal government.

If the member has access to some of these masks, maybe he can make it available to Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on a final supplementary.

Revera Personal-Care Homes Call for Public Inquiry

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, there is a serious outbreak at Revera's Parkview Place. We called for months for the Province to be ready for the second wave, but it has not been ready.

Since Revera homes in Ontario had terrible outbreaks this spring, why didn't the government take more precautions to prevent outbreaks at Revera homes? And is the government making absolutely sure that workers at Parkview Place are not, under the loosening of the one-site rule, going to work afterwards at other Revera homes?

Lastly, major problems have been known at Parkview Place and at other Revera homes since at least 2011, when I first raised this issue here.

Will the government call a full public inquiry into the quality of care at Parkview Place and other Revera homes?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): COVID-19 in long-term-care centres is exceptionally serious, because we know that those individuals are more susceptible to the spread of the virus and that the virus can be more dangerous when entering into a long-term-care home. That's why there were over 7,000 deaths in Ontario and Quebec long-term-care homes.

There are currently 220 outbreaks in Quebec, Ontario, BC and Alberta in long-term-care homes. We're really concerned about Parkview Place and that's why we're taking action.

To the member's question, I can tell him that, yes, cautions have been taken to make sure that workforce is not unknowingly importing the virus into the facility.

Provincial Fiscal Update Public Accounts First Quarter Report

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, two weeks ago our government released its Public Accounts for 2019-2020, and the first quarter update for this fiscal year.

Can the Minister of Finance update the Legislature on the many, many, many important highlights from the Public Accounts first quarter report?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Well, thank you for the question, Madam Speaker, and I can tell you Manitobans know that after the NDP government, when—their time in office, they doubled the debt. They jacked up taxes. They depleted the rainy day fund, and that's a mistake we weren't going to make when we came to office. And that's why we decided to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild the Manitoba economy.

After a prudent government decision-making process, we balanced the budget four years in advance—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —of what we said we're going to do, Madam Speaker, and we invested \$1.3 million in things like health care, education and social services—well more than the NDP ever spent.

We know with the pandemic that there's going to be significant—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —challenges, Madam Speaker, as we go forward, and our government can be trusted to support these challenges and to support these priorities—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Children's Special Allowance Legal Recourse for Recipients

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): The government's BITSA legislation is wrong on so many levels. The omnibus bill legislation is over 160 pages long and does many harmful things, including raising hydro rates on all Manitobans. In fact, it is the second highest rate increase on—for residents of First Nations this year.

What—this legislation also removes the ability of children or groups acting on their behalf to sue the government for removing the children's special allowance.

The question is simple: If the government thinks the practice is wrong, why are they stopping people from seeking compensation for that wrongdoing?

And I also encourage the minister to visit the teepees on the front lawn and, in fact, explain to the residents that are out there why she feels they're going to take this right away.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): The member opposite will know that this was a practice of the previous NDP government by requiring that agencies and authorities remit those children's special allowances back to the Province, Madam Speaker.

We ended that in—on April 1st of 2019, so those agencies continue to accept that children's special allowance and they keep it, Madam Speaker. So the member opposite is quite wrong. This—what this legislation will do is allow us to be able to move on from there.

What we have done is we have gone to single-envelope funding, which has offered Manitoba families—we've actually had a reduction in the number of kids in care for the last three years in a row, Madam Speaker. We're moving in the right direction. Of course, there's more work to be done to clean up the mess of the previous NDP government.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, D-C-C-C, in May 2020.

(2) The D-C-C-C 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 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 Manitoba—the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the D-C-C-C 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, many Manitobans.

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

Are there any further petitions?

Cochlear Implant Program

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:

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 can also experience unemployment, social isolation and struggles with mental health.

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, the cochlea.

The technology's 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 the 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 the 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. Assisted 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.

* (11:00)

The cochlear implant is a lifelong commitment. However, as the technology changes over time, parts and software become no longer functionally 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.

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.

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 the cochlear implant 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.

Signed by Lori Denbow, Barb Lynch, Albert Lynch and many, many other Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further petitions?

If there are no further petitions, we will move on to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Resuming debate on the Throne Speech, Madam Speaker.

THRONE SPEECH (Fourth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will resume debate on the motion of the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon, who has 18 minutes remaining.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I believe where I left off the other day when I started my response to this joke of a Throne Speech was talking about seniors in the North and how they've been disproportionately affected during this pandemic in their ability to access health care.

We've got people 90-plus years old that, because of the Calm Air schedule now, the best they can hope 'flor' is to fly down on a Monday and fly home on a Wednesday. And I know personally of seniors that have had to fly down on a Monday for an appointment on a Wednesday and could not go home until Friday.

So, what has the Northern Patient Transportation Program done to help those people have their right to health care? Well, they've done nothing. In fact, when I spoke to Helga Bryant, the CEO of the Northern Health Region, she said: There's nothing I can do; it's the policy. And then the most egregious thing she said was: Oh, people choose where they want to live.

I've written to the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Friesen) to request, even if it's temporary, that some more support is provided for these folks from the North. And it's not just seniors, it's low-income people, it's any number of people that are being denied their right to health care, because they simply cannot afford to spend a week in the city. And yet, it's been a couple of weeks now, and the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living has not even bothered to respond.

That letter also went to Dr. Roussin, Lanette Siragusa. I've heard absolutely nothing from anyone because, much like this Throne Speech, Madam Speaker, this government and these ministers continue

to ignore the needs of people in northern Manitoba, and they should all be ashamed of themselves.

It's no wonder they never win a seat in the North, because they don't even know where the North is unless they can figure out something that they can cut. And that's all they've done, Madam Speaker. We've seen the Leaf Rapids Health Centre, so short-staffed that if one worker doesn't show up for work, they say, oh well, we'll just shut the place down for two weeks. What a shameful bunch they are.

Madam Speaker, this Throne Speech supposedly is supposed to lay out the game plan for the government going forward. They forgot to include the page where they said they're going to continue to attack working people in this province.

In the middle of a pandemic and a financial crisis, what do they do? Stick to their game plan that they've had right since day one when they got elected, Madam Speaker, and they attack working people. They take away working people's rights, the same as they take away people in the North's rights. *[interjection]*

And, again, they should be ashamed of themselves, and I hear somebody saying shame, and absolutely, each and every one of those members, whether they're Cabinet ministers or backbenchers, should be ashamed and they should tell their Premier (Mr. Pallister) that, you know what, we need to do better for the people of Manitoba.

And I would expect the Premier to stand in his place today and say: You know what? I'm sorry. We made a mistake. We've made a lot of mistakes, actually, but in particular, with Bill 16 and refusing to recognize anything in the North in this Throne Speech, we've made a mistake, so we'll throw away this Throne Speech and we'll do something better. We'll introduce some bills that actually help Manitobans instead of just bills that hurt them.

You know, we heard the Premier give different stories at different times, depending on which day of the week it was, I guess, that paid sick leave—well, they didn't need legislative changes. They didn't need to call us back to the Legislature to do that; the government just had the power to do that. Well, then the next story was, well, we have to make legislative changes and we're prepared to do that.

Have we seen those legislative changes, Madam Speaker? No, we have not, because protecting Manitobans is not this government's priority. The only thing this government is concerned about is money.

They don't care about people; they protect their rich friends. The rest of us, well, too bad.

And I guess the government probably believes, like the CEO of the health region, you choose where you live, so maybe people shouldn't choose to live in Manitoba anymore. Which is just a shameful way for this government to treat the hard-working people that have built this province into what it is.

You know, on the one hand, the Premier and his ministers say, well, we want to thank front-line workers for all they've done during this pandemic. How would we have got through it without their support, without them showing up to work? Oh, yes, by the way, we're going to take away your rights now.

Thank you very much. Thank you very much for everything you've done. We're going to strip your rights as workers, particularly public-sector workers. We're going to take away your rights. We're going to freeze your wages. We're going to take away your rights to stand up for yourselves.

Madam Speaker, there's more that goes on, and there's more that's important than just balancing the budget and then showing a surplus. You know, they stood in their places and really crowed about, look at us, we've balanced the budget; we've got a small surplus. Aren't we just heroes.

And the Premier, the Premier himself said, you know, we made a bunch of small cuts and nobody even noticed. Well, what a line of malarkey that is. Because people, particularly people in northern Manitoba, have noticed and notice every day of the week.

In the wintertime, when the roads aren't ploughed: it's just one of those little cuts, one of those thousands of little cuts that the Premier, coming from Wellington Crescent to work here, never noticed. *[interjection]*

You know what? They're starting to beak-off. So, clearly, what we're saying here, Madam Speaker, is actually ringing true, even with them. They're saying that, you know what, maybe the Premier is wrong, maybe the Premier is wrong in some of the thousand little cuts that nobody ever notices, because everybody did notice.

We just heard yesterday about the shortage of health-care workers in parts of Manitoba, and this is parts of Manitoba, Madam Speaker, that these guys claim to represent. And yet, their MLAs don't stand up and say, wait a minute Mr. Premier, we need to do

something. Some of your thousands of little cuts are actually affecting my constituents.

* (11:10)

You know what? They don't say that. They sit on their hands; they're just like sheep, Madam Speaker. They're so afraid of their Premier that they won't stand up and say we need to do something to help their own constituents. They just will not stand up and do anything to protect the people of Manitoba. The only thing they'll do is cower when the Premier (Mr. Pallister) walks in the room, and say, yes, boss, let's cut something else.

You know, we've talked a little bit about what's in the Throne Speech, and let's talk for a little bit about what isn't in the Throne Speech. We're seeing in northern Manitoba horrendous job losses. Thompson has gone through some of the biggest upheavals they've ever seen in job losses, and there's a hundred or so more job losses that are coming.

Flin Flon has seen hundreds of job losses, and we know that by 2022 there's going to be more job losses. In fact, that may be sooner than we expected with the recent incident at 777 mine. So, what did this government say about resource development in their Throne Speech? Well, you could look long and hard in this plan for their future: not one word about resource development. Not one word.

So what's their plan for people in the North? We realize that there's job losses happening. Have they done anything to spur exploration? Well, they've actually done away with the program that put mining companies' money back into supporting mining communities that were in trouble, and part of that money was used for exploration.

Now they've created a wonderful new fund. Just like many of the other funds, they've farmed it out to somebody else to manage. Because this government doesn't really want to be government, they hand out the money to private sector corporations or groups, in this case, the Chambers of Commerce, and they've decided that they won't be responsible for supporting mining communities anymore; they'll leave that up to somebody else. They'll put some money in this account. And how much money has been spent from that account? What's happened so far to support mining communities? Absolutely nothing, nothing whatsoever.

And yet we're seeing loss after loss, cut after cut—and nothing. At least on the Saskatchewan side they've done some things to open up exploration, so we're

seeing a little bit of activity over there, but from this government absolutely nothing.

So let's talk a little about reconciliation. It's an odd concept to this government, I know. You know, we had a flood earlier this year. Many of you, I'm sure, never heard about it because, well, it happened in northern Manitoba, so who cares, right? So, the community of Leaf Rapids, the community at Pukatawagan, they were in danger of flooding. So I'll give the minister of municipalities credit. She made sure that sandbags got to Leaf Rapids, protected their water infrastructure and did some things to make sure that people were there to place those sandbags and help protect that community.

So I asked, or I attempted to ask, the minister of Indigenous and northern affairs what she was going to do to help the people of Pukatawagan. The answer I got when I called her office was, well, she's out in her constituency and can't be reached. As it turns out, Madam Speaker, I was out in my constituency too. They have these portable devices now called cellphones that I'm sure the minister of Indigenous and northern affairs maybe carries with her. But maybe she's in one of those areas that Bell MTS doesn't service very well, that this government sold Bell—or MTS off and so we've seen no growth in cellphone service outside.

But I did finally get a letter from her, saying that, really, it was federal government's, nothing to do with them. And yet people—people—Manitobans in the community of Pukatawagan suffered losses. Docks were washed away, fishing was interrupted. All sorts of things took place. The rail line was out of service. Did the government jump in and say, let's help out, let's cover the increased cost of food, let's make sure that we're looking after those folks? No. Didn't do nothing; still haven't done nothing. Chances are they're not going to do anything because they just don't care, particularly about people in those Indigenous communities. They washed their hands of it.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Well, except for the latest story I heard, where folks in Cross Lake may have been in close contact with folks who were in the city for medical, people that now have tested positive for COVID. So they tried to access the rapid test kits that they have available in Cross Lake, and the federal government said, well, it's not up to us, it's up to the Province, but you can't have them. They're going to be saved if there's an outbreak. Madam Speaker, it seems to—or,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, sorry—it seems to me that perhaps maybe these rapid test kits could be used to prevent an outbreak.

But we've seen this government's response in other places like Parkview seniors' home and in other places: Brandon, cases through the roof, government sat on their hands 'til it was almost too late; Winnipeg, numbers are going through the roof, minister not doing much of anything. So why would we expect that they would jump in and try and help folks in Cross Lake?

You know, they talk a lot about reconciliation, but there's a lot of things that they could do every day of the week that would actually show people in those communities that they do understand, that they do care. But this government doesn't care and won't do those things that should be there to help all Manitobans.

Cross Lake trying to build a hospital—one of the fastest growing communities in northern Manitoba. The federal government has kicked in a little bit of money. They've asked the Province to help them. Nope, not going to do it. Don't believe in helping people in Indigenous communities have access to health care—well, because they don't believe in helping anybody in the North have their constitutional right to access to health care.

This government, and particularly this Minister of Health, should be ashamed of how they treat people in northern Manitoba. *[interjection]* Oh, I hear the Minister of Health finally woke up. He's got something to say about northern Manitoba. They've—*[interjection]*—yes, they've built a new emergency room in Flon Flon, Manitoba, but then they've cut every other—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey:—service in the hospital in Manitoba. It's nothing more than a nursing station now.

Imagine if, in the city of Winnipeg, you had an emergency room that did not have an anesthesiologist. What the heck is that emergency room doctor supposed to do when something's serious? The best he can hope for is one of these privatized STARS Lifelight things show up now. And we don't know how that's going to work, but the government didn't care, as long as they got rid of it, privatized it, sold it off.

So, yes, they built a building—which, you know, was actually agreed to when we were in government.

And part of the problem then or part of the reason for building that facility was if we had new facilities, new equipment, we could help attract doctors to Flin Flon.

But this government has done the complete opposite. The building is built and they've done everything in their power to make sure that doctors don't come to Flin Flon. They've done everything in their power to shut that hospital in Flin Flon down.

They don't provide obstetric services. They don't provide OR services. They don't provide urological services. There's a bunch of other services that I'm sure I don't even know that they've cut, simply because we don't have the services of a surgeon or an anesthesiologist.

So they should very well be ashamed, and instead of sitting there beaking off about one thing, let's have the government—let's have the Minister of Health actually pay attention to the health of northern Manitobans. Let's have him pay attention to some of our seniors in northern Manitoba.

I realize that this—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Lindsey:—joke of a Throne Speech refused to address anything Manitoba, but this Minister of Health can stand up today, his Premier (Mr. Pallister) could stand up today and say we're sorry, we are going to do something to protect the people of northern Manitoba. We're going to do something to make sure that the people of northern Manitoba have access to health care that they're entitled to in this country, that this government just plain refuses to allow people in northern Manitoba their constitutional right to equal access to health care.

* (11:20)

This Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living (Mr. Friesen) should be ashamed of himself. It started previously with the other minister, who's gone on now to cut everything in education; he started the cuts, now he's moved to cut education. I can't wait to see—

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

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): It's always an honour to rise and speak in this House at a Throne Speech opportunity, and I'm actually a little nostalgic today. I'm thinking back, because it was just over nine years ago that the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko),

and the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer), and myself, and the member for La Vérendrye (Mr. Smook), and who am I missing—oh, and the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), got elected on October 4th of 2011, and we always mark that anniversary in a funny way.

The five of us on this side of the House, there's always one member who will flip an email or a text message or something out to the others and say, this is our anniversary. So I have to confess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this year, I responded to one of this illustrious group of MLAs by sending back a photo from our swearing-in nine years ago.

And while the other four have aged gracefully, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the photographic evidence cannot be argued with.

So it is always an honour to be in this place, and I know even for the members on the other side of the House. I happened to notice that one of our MLAs from the opposition party yesterday in his question had his certificate proudly in the background behind him at his desk. And I pointed out to my colleague and I said, look at that, there's a certificate from his swearing-in ceremony, and that was neat to see.

So, welcome back to all the members of this House. I had the honour of giving the Throne Speech reply in that first year when I was in the Legislature. I was seated right over there in the back row. And I recall that day, and I think I had some family members here in the bench. And I can recall my dad's response after he heard me gave the Throne Speech reply, and I was really nervous and I didn't know how it all worked and I don't know what I said, but when it was all done, he said: Well, you're no Donny Orchard, that's for sure. He said: Donny would've been up and yelling already. I said, well, give me time—give me time. So—but, yes, that's my father. But it was a great opportunity then.

I was tremendously seized, on that day, with the honour of being in this place and being part of a team. And I am no less, today, cognizant of the fact that I am part of a strong team and trying to do good work for Manitobans. And that is the greatest honour that we can have in this place.

I want to thank my family, who continue to allow me to do this work that gives me energy and passion. It is—it's difficult for all of us, but the opportunity to have our voice and to have our say and to make a difference, that's what compels us. That's what leads us forward.

And so, thank you to my wife Shelley. My three children are no longer those small youngsters they were when I started this job. I have one child now studying film in Vancouver. I have one child studying international studies in University of Waterloo, and I have a third child, my oldest, who just finished a degree—a five-year program—at CMU, Canadian Mennonite University here in Winnipeg and is now freelancing and working a number of different positions. And so life goes on. But I thank them for their support for me in this role.

I also want to thank my constituency assistant, who will be mortified that I mentioned her now. Tara Braun has been in my office for a number of years already, and she just embodies the best of what it means to have a constituency assistant: always polite with the public, knows how to handle people who come into the office who are upset or not happy about something, knows how to get information for people, is prompt, is on time, is that friendly face. And especially when MLAs take on additional assignments, it's so important to have that capability there. So, thank you, Tara, for your excellent work.

Carrie Hiebert is a part-time assistant of mine in the constituency. Thank you. But also to the group that is upstairs right now and probably listening in right now and saying, don't say my name, so I will. So, of course, for Mike Ramnanan and Duncan Hamilton and my press secretary, for Mardi McNicholl, but also for Laura, Stephanie, Dana and Carly in that office, these are the people behind the scenes who are answering the phone in the Department of Health. These are the people who are corresponding back to someone who has an issue. The member for Steinbach, the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen) now, used to say in Health you could measure correspondence, at times, by the inches instead of the separate pieces of correspondence, and the—and that holds true now during a global pandemic.

It's also difficult emotionally to be in those ministers' offices for staff, and we must acknowledge that, and we must take the care that we can to check in. Balex Kabamba was my former assistant who just went off now to a new position, and we wish him well in his role, but he also said how important it was for him to check in with staff at the beginning of the week, see how they're doing, and that's exceptionally important.

If Nathan Clark is listening in from Ontario, Nate Clark was one of the longest standing special assistants, you know, our version of a chief of staff in

a major office in the Legislature: two years with me in the health-care role and the executive assistant to the Minister of Health previous to that. We wish him well in his new pursuits—working as he is in the east, back home with family, back with Nicole and living in the same province—and we thank him for his many contributions to the citizens of Manitoba. On the last day he was working, we were outside, and I pointed to the city around him. I said, you know, we spend so much time in this building, under this roof, working on the policy issues, working on the legislative issues, working on the bills and correspondence and stakeholder relations, but this is the community we've been more broadly serving that we don't see every day, and it's important to keep that in mind.

Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were proud as a government to have the Lieutenant Governor read this Throne Speech and to affirm our plan to move Manitoba forward, and I've been so pleased to hear my colleagues speak about the kinds of protections that we are going to continue to bring to Manitobans: protections for their finances, protections for their jobs, protections for their health care and their education, protections for social services, protections of the economy, protections for how we move this province forward in paying off debt and making good investments and keeping life affordable for Manitobans.

So it is my honour to speak to a few of these things, too, in this response to the amendment in the Throne Speech.

And I would want to say, first, that when it comes to protecting Manitobans and their health care—I want to dwell on this for just a bit, being cognizant of my time—and I want to say this: that in Manitoba our response in this province on COVID-19 is clearly being closely scrutinized, and that is appropriate and that is good, and it should be that case.

And we know that people will be asking tough questions every day, but I want to take this moment to say that we have been well-served in Manitoba by the many, many people on the front line who are those doctors and those nurses and those health-care aides and those laboratory technologists and those diagnostic specialists and those paramedicine professionals, so many places across the system where the public is interacting with health-care professionals, and these people have been on the job and courageously reporting for duty and doing the work to keep all of us safe.

Many of these people were redeployed. Many of these people went and took new positions in the health-care system. They are at screening sites, they are otherwise deployed in health-care systems, and we have been well-served.

I also say we have been well-served by those people who are working in administration and leadership. I think today, of course, about our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin; I think about Jazz Atwal, the deputy; but I also think about that whole public health apparatus. I think about our health incident command structure. I think about the leadership in the regional health authorities and at Shared Health and at CancerCare Manitoba, at Cadham Provincial Laboratory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are the places where, every single day, people are reporting for duty. I received correspondence yesterday from people at Cadham lab that were reminding me of how hard they've worked through the summer and taking extra shifts, and we want to acknowledge those people and say thank you. Those numbers that we see every day—and we're hitting some major milestones for things like the daily test results—those numbers are only the consequence of the hard work of people who are working to get those lab samples tested, but to find better ways of doing it. We thank them for that work.

* (11:30)

We've been well-served in Manitoba. It doesn't mean we've answered every problem. There have been questions today about PPE, the personal protective equipment, in the province of Manitoba, and the Minister for Central Services answered those questions well. But if he had had more time, he could have expressed how dismal things looked in February and March. How incredibly dried-up all of those conventional supply chains were.

We heard the federal minister of procurement suggest that it was the wild west out there, and someday when that member writes their, you know, their memoir, whatever they can write, there will be more information for Manitobans about the heroic efforts of the minister, the department, of all those individuals at Shared Health that worked overtime and behind the scenes, secretary of the Treasury Board and Treasury Board staff working to try to secure for Manitoba what could not be secured by the federal provinces, we had to do it ourselves.

And I have to say, to Manitobans, to the businesses, to the industries, to the Hutterite colonies,

to the non-profit agencies, to those those groups who stepped up, to the individual private citizens who stepped up and helped: thank you.

We have done a lot in this province. We worked very quickly to make our personal-care homes safer. We worked to redeploy staff. We worked more recently now to find a way to bring all the surgeries and procedures back online that were cancelled as a result of the pandemic, and we have made the commitment that we're going to have that backlog largely cleaned up by the end of this fiscal year. And that's just incredible.

And behind the scenes, we have so many people working hard to make that happen. Cataract surgeries, and back surgeries, and outpatient procedures, and things like thoracic and pediatric procedures—all of these are coming back online. And anecdotally, we are all hearing from people saying: I don't know what happened, I got a call, they scheduled me, I'm back in, I'm back on that list, and I'm getting that surgery and procedure done. And we're pleased to see that happening.

We've worked hard to keep our personal-care homes safe. And right now we know we're living through an outbreak in at least eight centres, no more—nowhere more crucial right now than in Parkview Place. And we have this system responding there, we are working hand-in-hand—metaphorically only, during a pandemic—but we are working in collaboration, closely.

The WHRA, the service provider; Parkview Place administration, management and workforce; nurses and health-care aides. We have a doctor on site, we have 24-7 presence of leadership there. Inspections, as we've said today, will be part of that response for Parkview. We have a sacred responsibility to help those who are most vulnerable through the pandemic, and this government takes that responsibility so incredibly seriously.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I won't be able to say everything we're doing to respond, but there's been concerns on wait times for screening sites. And we saw just this week a new site at Nairn come online. I've been advised that, as of today, 400 unique test will be performed at that site.

But there's more: tomorrow, in Brandon, at the Keystone Centre, there will be a new drive-up facility opened up. And within the space of just a number of additional days, we will also have a new site open in Winnipeg again.

And we just passed rules, with the support of the college of nurses and the college of physicians and surgeons in this province, that will allow us to take that activity—the ability to administer a nasal-pharyngeal swab that was formerly only done by a nurse or doctor—and now Red River College will have a one-day up-training course whereby a broad array of medical providers—occupational therapists and physiotherapist and second-year-and-up medicine and second-year-and-up nursing students—can do that work, and others as well. And we're bringing international medical graduates in to be able to perform that work so that others can perform that screening activity of administering the swab.

We are reducing those wait times. We are answering the call. We are standing up that capacity so that Manitobans have that good result.

Our pandemic response system has been working—that ability to raise protections or lower them on the basis of evidence and science. And we know that, right now in Winnipeg, at orange, we will be announcing today additional measures that are designed to reinforce that message to people.

They must return to the fundamentals, and there's been some loss of that willingness to comply. We need people washing their hands. We need people coughing into their sleeves. We need people to stay home when they are sick and not leave their house. We need people thinking differently about the size of groups that they interact with. We need people wearing masks and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need all of these things because we place the safety of Manitobans first and foremost.

I would also just want to say that other changes are coming, and I can announce today that that RFP that we've talked about for public health contact tracing and daily follow-up and case investigation has been awarded. It's been awarded to the Canadian Red Cross, and officials are at work now with the Canadian Red Cross to bring their workforce into Manitoba to school them and to educate them as how this will work. We're working hard to know how to make their systems interface with ours, and this is going to mean more boots on the ground for Manitoba.

In addition to that, the Prime Minister has stated earlier this week that they are there to help and they want to be here to help on additional contact tracing. We believe that they have some—they've suggested that some resources could be made available through Stats Canada that they are making available to the

provinces, and we would say this: we welcome those investments, if the federal government is able to make them.

We hope it will not be a repeat of the PPE situation with the federal government, where they first promised and then did not deliver, but we need it sooner, not later. And so we continue, at an officials level, to interact with our federal counterparts to indicate how important it is that they are responding soon.

Let me say just a few things about my constituency of Morden-Winkler that I represent. We saw in this Throne Speech a commitment to eliminate the education portion of property taxes. As the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) said today, our government can be believed because we've been keeping our promises, and that is the best test of sincerity and integrity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say that my area of the province would welcome the removal of property taxes—of the education portion of property taxes in the area that I represent—with farmland prices going through the roof. It has created an imbalance that we have heard about again and again.

I know the Minister of Agriculture, the member for Midland (Mr. Pedersen), has heard this again and again from people talking about the imbalance and how the balancing needs to be reset. This is a task that the NDP did not take up. They kicked the can down the road every single year. They promised and then did not keep their word on things like the tax rebate for the education farmland rebate.

And so we know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, more is necessary, but my constituency and others will also appreciate from this Throne Speech the restatement of our commitment to build schools in this province, and we know that schools are necessary.

It's part of our overall commitment to improve education, but we know that in the city of Morden for a long time that that city has been advocating for a new school. The community is growing. In a matter of years they've grown by 30 per cent in size.

And so we continue to say, as a government, we will make evidence-based decisions about where to locate new schools, but clearly growing communities will be factored in because that's good evidence to keep in mind.

Highway construction budget is being increased to \$400 million per year over the next four years, and

that is welcome news. There are so many Manitoba highways and roads in urban settings and rural settings where there's been pylons and limited speed zones this summer, and that is short-term pain for long-term gain.

And I can tell you that my community has welcomed the Minister of Infrastructure's (Mr. Schuler) announcement of the prioritization of Highway 32, a four-lane project through the city of Winkler. I was able to provide an update yesterday to the community and indicate we are 80 per cent complete on that project and looking to complete the project within the next two weeks.

In my community as well, two new child-care centres since our government has come to power, and the community has welcomed those investments at Pine Ridge school and also a new community daycare centre in the city of Morden. Those are welcome additions, welcome investments.

This morning in question period, members were saying that there wasn't enough investment in child care, and yet we've made such incredible investments in child care and we will continue to do so. And we thank the minister for those things.

* (11:40)

There is so much to say about the Throne Speech, but I will wrap up my comments today to say we are proud to be part of a team that is keeping its word, that is fixing the finances, repairing the services and rebuilding the Manitoba economy. We are working hard every single day on this pandemic response.

We continue to call on the opposition parties, as other provinces have done, to collaborate more. We know they have a role to play, and we know they have to ask hard questions. But that door is open for collaboration. We have seen it done better in other jurisdictions.

Now is not the time for the conventional, old-style partisan attacks. Now is the opportunity for the opposition party to filter in good ideas as they have them, not to do this painstaking credit taking and name-blaming. Instead, to come alongside and make this a proud pandemic response that all Manitobans can be proud of.

Let us make this place a proud and important deliberative body of democracy each and every day.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I want to begin my speech by recognizing Manitobans pursuing resilience during this time. The COVID-19 pandemic

has changed our lives in a way that we would never imagine.

Thank you to our front-line workers, who have served tirelessly in their various capacities. Thank you to small-business owners, who have adapted their services to support the local economy and provide jobs to individuals. Thank you to the taxi industry for endlessly providing transportation and delivering quick, reliable and timely service against all odds. And also thank you to the truck drivers. We don't, sometimes, think of—when the truck is going by, we think, just another truck driver going by. But, only today, we are realizing that over—like—how important the trucking industry is. They are not only important to our economy, but they are important to our lives too.

To the parents: I applaud you for making the best decisions that you possibly can to support your children's education in spite of this government's lack of planning. To young people across the province, thank you for doing your best to follow public health guidelines, putting the health of others before your immediate needs. It will take a constant, collective effort among all stakeholders in our community to get through this pandemic.

As stated in our alternative throne speech, this government had time to develop a back-to-school plan that would also ensure that teachers and students are kept safe. They had time to implement paid sick leave programs so the workers who are—workers protected even while observing public health guidelines. They had time to adequately provide assistance to small-business owners. They also had time to expand testing capacity in anticipation of the second wave of COVID-19. What did they do during this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Nothing.

The previous NDP government had approved funding to upgrade The Maples Community Centre in the tune of 8 and a half million dollars. What this Pallister government did: they cut the funding. Then the government closed the Seven Oaks ER room.

Now they are closing CancerCare outpatient services. Manitobans have come to appreciate these services provided by CancerCare Manitoba. At a time when these services are needed most, Pallister and his government choose to remove outpatient CancerCare Manitoba from Concordia and Seven Oaks hospitals.

Residents in The Maples have expressed deep disappointment in the removal of such vital services further away from our community. Residents living

close to Seven Oaks can no longer seek care near their homes. Cancer patients need to be able to access health care close to home. Manitobans in need of outpatient service in north Winnipeg and other surrounding areas will have to access care further from their home. At a time when the government must make life easier for patients, this government continues to make it even more difficult. It is clear that this government continues to prioritize saving money over providing good health care for Manitobans.

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our health-care system showed clear signs of being overburdened. With the staffing shortages and calls for reduction in health-care systems across Manitoba over the past few years, the pandemic has shed more light on the urgent need for better health care in Manitoba.

With COVID-19 being the main issue at hand, Manitobans are desperately calling for a more effective plan to fight off the COVID-19 pandemic. In recent weeks, we have heard news reports of big wait times at testing sites—long waits at testing sites. Manitobans have been turned away, have had to give up their spots in line. Even seniors and mothers along with their young children have been subject to these circumstances. We need to provide better care and better service for Manitobans. We need to protect health care and the well-being of seniors. They deserve better.

This government was aware of the fact, once fall hit, there would be an increase in the want for tests. The reopening of the schools made it even more evident. The backlog in test processing and reports—reporting has left Manitobans with the dilemma of choosing between a week's pay and following public health guidelines. All Manitobans should have access to free, accessible and time-sensitive testing.

The Throne Speech thanks the front-line service providers but makes no commitment to hire any new nurses or even—or health-care aides to beat the challenge of the pandemic.

Since this government have failed to address the current pandemic, the NDP has some suggestions on how the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and this government can go about it. One of them was the government must focus on rehiring recently retired nurses. There are many individuals in our province who are well qualified. Unfortunately, due to the lengthy credential process, many of them have been unable to work in their field for a long time. Now is the time to fast-track the recognition of international credentials. We need

these health-care professionals. Manitobans know they will play a vital role in lifting a current burden on COVID-19 testing.

It just surprised me that, despite the clear evidence of our need for more health-care services, this government has proceeded with more health-care cuts. The rural municipality of Roblin just recently lost their lab and ER services. Phase 2 of their health-care cuts should have been brought to a stop when this pandemic began. Manitobans need more health-care services, not less.

Manitoba seniors deserve care and respect. They—Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government seem to content with providing seniors with substandard services. The Pallister government is working tirelessly, but it seems their efforts are going towards making life harder for Manitobans. Seniors have a—made enormous sacrifices during this pandemic, but this Pallister government is not honouring their sacrifice; instead, they increased personal-care home fees, cutting home-care services.

* (11:50)

We also believe that we need minimum staffing levels in our personal-care homes. As we can see, Parkview Place, their staff shortage right now, and now we have to bring it from the other personal-care homes. So when they will go from one place—personal-care home—to another place, there's more chance of the virus be—getting spread.

I have been receiving calls from seniors that they have waited two to three hours to get their bloodwork done at Dynacare. Imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's summertime right now—well, it's fall time right now. People, when it's -25° or 30°, how will they wait outside? And imagine this 80-year-old, and they also have needs that they have to go home. They might be—they have to take medicine, but they're waiting out there two hours, and in -25°. I don't know how they will survive.

Is there any plan coming for—to increase the Dynacare services? We don't know. There was other facilities earlier available in the area, in the—especially in The Maples area, but they're all closed. Now there's a supersized—it's called a super Dynacare. The lineups are so big, they go all the way across to the Garden City area.

As far as back the '90s, Manitobans were against privatization of home-care services. Their stance on this issue is no different today. The news, including the public health press conferences, have sounded

alarm of what is going on in personal-care homes. Our seniors are facing more risk at each day goes by, and yet the government seems to be comfortable with their lax approach to fixing ongoing problems at long-term care and personal-care homes.

The end of August was marked with anxiety for children's parents across the province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, residents in The Maples found it concerning that the government did not have a clear plan to get children back into their classes safely. This government had five months to come up with their solid back-to-school plan. Educators, parents and 'administrators' were ready to provide assistance in this process.

Will this government—asked anybody's assistance? Or they were just making their plan sitting at home, these ministers? We have no idea because there was no plan. There was no central plan from the provincial government. It was left up to the school divisions to come up with their own plans.

Strangely, Pallister and his government took a last-minute approach. We all know that that does not work, especially when it comes to planning for the smooth running of a school system in the midst of global pandemic. This government failed to make a stance on mandating masks in schools, regardless—endless calls to mandate masks in schools.

Across the province, parents and many other school personnel and sports staff called for increased investments for a safe return to school. As this government always does, they choose to ignore the pleas of Manitobans. They waited until the very last minute to invest in schools, and still ignored the call to reduce class sizes.

Madam Speaker—sorry—Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been receiving calls, as there was a case at Amber Trails school and the parents are wondering that we, as a grownup, have a two-metre distance in the Leg. here, and the children can't even have a one-metre distance in between them. They want to know what the government did for the last five months—seven months now.

Not only that, this also: like, online learning that could have been provided to the students. This was asked by the parents, lots of parents. As I told you, there was a case last week at Amber Trails school and it's also in the Winnipeg Sun that we saw that schools might close. Some of them may go online. This option should have been available at the beginning of the school year.

There's a class at the Amber Trails school, only 11 kids were missing yesterday because parents are worried. Why they are worried is they have a legitimate reason. They—the kids are worried about their parents and also their grandparents. There's so many kids in The Maples who are living with their grandparents—parents and grandparents.

At the Amber Trails school, they have 891 students. It's a small school, but there's 891 kids. How are they going to keep a one-meter distance?

At the Maples Collegiate, there's 1,600 kids. They go school one day and the one day is off. How are these students will learn going to school only two days a week? In The Maples, we have had discussions regarding overcrowding classrooms way before the pandemic began. Now more than ever, it should be a top concern.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many small businesses have suffered losses to the extent that some may not seem revival in their service long after COVID-19 is over. Individuals have been laid off and left without a source of income. Once again, the Province has failed to provide adequate support for local businesses.

There's so many small businesses, Mr. Deputy Speaker, called our office. They were looking for a rent assist, and it wasn't there. That was their biggest cost.

We talked about Amazon coming to Manitoba with a supersized facility. I don't know how much funding or the support the government will provide to those businesses—that business, but our support—but until we start supporting the small, local businesses, our province will not be thriving. We need small, local businesses get support first.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some of the programs this Premier's (Mr. Pallister) government introduced have not done much to support individuals and businesses. We hear a constituent not being able to access support even though they met eligible criteria. Small-business owners are grappling with possible of going into debt as a result of a significant reduction revenue.

And Manitoba businesses need cushioning support from the provincial government. This must come in the form of a rent relief program, programs allowing businesses to purchase PPE, and a one-time winterizing grant for their tourism and hospitality sector. If our economy is going to thrive, it will be at the hands of local governments to support our local businesses.

In The Maples, constituents have shown concern for the taxi industry, noting the lack of financial support for taxi drivers in light of increased costs as individual—the industry adopts rigorous cleaning processes. A few months ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen Uber arrive in Winnipeg. None of the cab drivers are against Uber, but they also want to know what kind of special concession is provided to the Uber industry compared where the local industry's hurting, but there's no support for the local industry.

* (12:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Pallister government called Manitoba Hydro a Crown jewel, yet it is in the midst of hacking off pieces to sell the highest bidder. Teshmont is sold. What is next?

I think—so there's no support to the local industry, no support for the individual people, so I won't be supporting this Throne Speech.

Thank you.

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

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Manitobans stepped up during the pandemic. In the Wolseley constituency I saw so much evidence of community members reaching out to help others, from individuals, businesses donating food to people volunteering, calling—people calling to check on community members, teachers showing up on the sidewalk to read outside of children's homes and families going out of their way to show appreciation to essential workers.

Sadly, the Throne Speech highlights what we already knew: just how much the Pallister government has stepped back and left it up to Manitobans to help each other, knowing they simply cannot count on government to step up at such a crucial—at such a critical time.

I want to take a moment to highlight a recent example of this. We heard earlier today in the House how the Health Minister is not willing to unequivocally tell anti-maskers that they are threatening public health, and there's a very real outcome to this serious issue.

Right now, right this minute, approximately 150 people from the Winkler area are meeting in a conference room in Hecla. They are not masked, they are not distanced, and they're singing, something that has the potential to be a superspreader event. When asked, a participant identified that this group is from Winkler.

I would suggest that the Health Minister needs to buckle up and get prepared for what's about to hit his constituency and start to give a clear, 'unequivocal' message to Manitobans about the importance of wearing masks, distancing and following all public health orders.

This government has had seven months to develop plans to address the challenges of this pandemic, but the Throne Speech simply shows they don't have a plan. The Throne Speech was a missed opportunity for the Pallister government to address the real concerns of families and individuals and to honour the commitments, sacrifices and generous actions made by so many Manitobans. There's no plan to meet the enormous challenges of students, workers, seniors and small businesses, the things they've taken on during the pandemic; there's no recognition of the sacrifices people have made.

The Pallister government has made life harder for Manitobans during the pandemic, cutting thousands of jobs, ignoring seniors, failing to make schools safe, refusing to give families and local businesses the help they need and allowing testing lines to get longer every day. It appears that the greatest pandemic priorities are carving up and selling off Manitoba Hydro, piece by piece, and cutting funding for the education system.

In the Throne Speech, the government talks about protecting seniors being a foremost obligation, yet during the pandemic many seniors struggled in poverty, lacked safe transportation or the home care they needed. Many were very distressed by the 30-day limit on prescriptions, which cost them more and required more frequent trips out of the house. Now seniors who are feeling ill are waiting in line for hours for a COVID test.

Earlier in the pandemic, this government decided to send all seniors in Manitoba a cheque for \$200. Oddly, every senior in the province—including those with healthy pension plans, generous investment plans or second homes—received exactly the same-sized cheque from this government.

There was no consultation with seniors about their needs or evidence that issuing a cheque to every senior in the province would help those that need it most. Many seniors in my constituency are desperate for adequate home care, for safe transportation, for access to groceries—they didn't even have a credit card to place an online order.

One woman in my constituency is entitled to have two baths a week with her limited home-care service. This is just basic hygiene and dignity. This service was cut in March and was not reinstated until September, after there was intervention from my office. I dread to think how many more seniors are suffering in this way but did not have the resources or energy to reach out to find an advocate.

If this government really wants to help seniors, they will stop their plan to raise hydro rates this fall. If they're serious about caring for seniors and treating them with respect, they would do better to pay home-care workers and personal-home-care staff a living wage that reflects their value and the importance of their essential work.

This government needs to incentivize work that is often very challenging and can be unsafe. Workers need to be allotted enough time to travel between homes or to spend an adequate amount of time with each patient. If these workers felt valued, if they were not overworked and if they were treated with respect themselves, they would in turn be able to provide even better care to the seniors entrusted to them.

And while I'm talking about a living wage, let's think about how many Manitobans are living in poverty, including Manitobans who work full time. At the height of a global pandemic, with many Manitobans out of work and many more with reduced hours, as well as many working on the front lines for minimum wage, the government saw fit to continue with its plan to raise the minimum wage to merely \$11.90 an hour.

A young adult trying to become independent or one who is forced to leave home, a student trying to pay their tuition, a single parent trying to raise a child, or any other Manitoban is unlikely to be able to pay rent, transportation, groceries and medical needs on this shamefully low wage.

Minimum wage jobs rarely have sick pay or medical benefits of any kind, so the lowest paid people in our society are often working at some of the most high-risk front-line jobs during a pandemic. Jobs like child-care providers; cleaners in hospitals, health-care settings; home-care workers; store clerks are the least likely to be able to take time off when they don't feel well and are the least likely to be able to pay for subscriptions, flu shots, mental health counselling or other services to benefit their wellness.

A true investment in students and working families would include a plan to raise the minimum

wage to at least \$15 an hour and to legislate paid sick leave to release the—and to release the information—sorry—the funds earmarked from the federal government for paid sick leave for all workers across all sectors.

Minimum wage workers are not the only workers left behind by this government. Many of my constituents felt left out of the risk-benefit program. The rules changed, late in the game, of who could apply, so some folks simply didn't know they could apply and this was available to them until it was too late. Others work in fields considered essential during the pandemic, but were not considered front line, and therefore didn't qualify.

During the pandemic, thousands and thousands of Manitobans were laid off, including many government workers, and 6,000 more were forced to take unpaid leave. When the federal government stepped up to provide financial relief, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) shamed Manitobans who fed themselves and their families through these programs and complained that he was fighting against the program because it was keeping people out of the workforce.

To be clear, throughout the pandemic, the Premier has done what he does best: slash and cut funding to public services. During this time, he continued to freeze or cut funding to child-care centres and has used the pandemic as an excuse to make even deeper cuts to Manitoba's child-care infrastructure.

Clearly, the pandemic has deepened pre-existing inequalities and exposed vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems. This is true for the most impoverished members of our society. It's true for those living with disabilities, addictions or mental health concerns. It's true for those living with the impacts of generational trauma, residential schools and colonialization. It's true for those who are newcomers to Canada and for those Manitobans who experience the barriers and mental health impacts of systemic racism or homophobia.

It's also true for women and girls. The economic impacts are felt especially for women who are generally earning less, able to save less and holding low-paying caregiving jobs. We also know very well that unpaid care work has increased with children out of school for many months, heightened care needs of older persons. And this grows even worse as a rising number of COVID cases begins to overwhelm health services.

Economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation has led to the increase of violence against women. Many women have been forced to lock down at home with their abusers at the same that services to support survivors are being disrupted or made inaccessible.

Trans, non-binary and queer kids have also been forced to lock down with families who are sometimes not supportive, or in temporary shelters where they may be belittled or otherwise caused harm. This government has been silent on the impacts for these Manitobans and did not bother to address these very significant inequities in the Throne Speech.

* (12:10)

A report from the United Nations recommends that governments ensure women's equal representation in all COVID-19 response planning and decision-making. Evidence across sectors, including economic planning and emergency response, demonstrates that policies that do not consult women or include them in decision-making are less effective and can even do harm.

Beyond individual women, women's organizations, who are often on the front line of response in communities, should also be represented and supported. Manitobans would love to hear from this government which women's organizations, along with which queer-led, Indigenous-led, black-led, or other organizations serving the needs of racialized people, have been consulted in COVID-19 response planning.

What I know for sure is that this is a government that does not consult Manitobans. There's no better example of that than the antics of the Education Minister over the past year. On Monday, March 9th, the Minister of Education told this House he had just received the education commission report on the previous Friday. On that same day, he committed to this House that the report would soon be released for Manitobans to review.

It's now seven months later and no one has seen that report outside of the government. No parents, teachers, school administrators or school boards have reviewed that report.

The government claimed initially it would delay release of the report due to COVID-19, but the pandemic did not stop them from cutting hundreds of positions and thousands of dollars from the education system throughout the spring, instead of stepping up and providing funding to support distance education, funding learning devices for students at home,

funding Internet for those families who go without and funding the additional support of EAs to help meet the challenge of teachers working with 25 to 30 children at a home—at a time.

EAs were instrumental in getting learning packages to children without Internet or computer access. Regardless, the Province just slashed hundreds of EA positions—oh, sorry, thousands I think, and put no additional money into education.

Now that students are back in schools and have been for a month, it's confusing how much money the Province has actually spent and—of the federal dollars that they are sitting on that was earmarked to help schools. It's confusing because they simply will not disclose the answer to school divisions or to this House.

We have an Education Minister who actively promotes private and home-schooling options, going so far as to speak on international panels with other politicians known for their efforts to dismantle public education. While these schooling options are valid choices for Manitoba families, a healthy, vibrant, well-funded public school system is the backbone of a healthy and thriving society.

Instead of ensuring that public schools were safe for all students and all staff, and investing in more staff, more learning spaces and PPE, this government seemed to be encouraging families to keep their children at home, further disadvantaging the economic recovery for families and, in most cases, hindering women's ability to return full-time to work.

But back to that mystery report, the education commission report, that has never been seen by any Manitoban outside of government offices. Yet the Throne Speech clearly indicates the plans have been made. The report's not being made public. We're seeing more and more evidence that the changes coming to education were decided before the education review was ever launched.

So, for all we know about the government's education plan—sorry, so far, all we know about the government's education plan is a claim to be directing money into classrooms and schools, and failure to mention that the vast majority of education dollars—more than 97 per cent of all education dollars—already goes straight into classrooms and schools.

They announced that they will cut property tax dollars for education and there are good arguments for making a change to the funding model, and many ratepayers may welcome this change. But until we

know what the alternative funding plan is, we all need to be wary. Are they prepared to replace the millions of dollars that currently come from property taxes?

This government claims that their plan will give families more choice and more control, but right now, community members, or ratepayers, are funding 40 per cent of the education system and have a direct say in how those dollars are spent.

Individual school divisions have different priorities and different needs. The Wolseley constituency has a number of schools with a variety of socioeconomic realities but, overall, there is a high need for meal programs, crossing guards, Indigenous elders, summer English-as-a-second-language programs for newcomers, and mental health supports. And because those are the needs and these needs are reviewed with families every year, that is exactly where those property dollars go.

This government likes to say that these are wasted dollars, somehow disappearing into useless administration costs, but in fact, these dollars provide some of the most important supports to learning, to make sure that children are safe, cared for and that no learners are left behind.

In another division, parents and community members might decide their priority is on something else, based on the demographics of their community. Those are choices that will be taken away by this government. It's incredibly short-sighted for this government to think that the needs of a rural school with 120 students is the same as an inner-city one with 600 students or an urban school in a new, affluent development.

From the day the education review was announced, I have been afraid that the most marginalized students will be left behind and that local school boards will be silenced. It is arrogant and authoritarian to use the Throne Speech to announce a plan for an entirely new education system and funding model when Manitobans have not even read the report that these plans are based on.

While I have many other concerns with what is missing from the government's plan to combat the economic, psychological and educational impacts of COVID-19, it's important to also use this opportunity to talk about the environment and the climate concerns.

A strong leader and a competent government can manage and respond to more than one crisis at a time. It concerns me that environment and climate issues

have taken a back seat to the pandemic across the country. But here in Manitoba, those issues were already in the back seat.

The pandemic seems to have been a convenient way to take the focus off, and therefore the pressure off, of this government. But the official opposition is back in the Legislature, and I promise you the pressure is back on, and we won't let up until we see results.

Let's review where we were at before the pandemic. The North End treatment plan is the largest single-point emitter of phosphorus into Lake Winnipeg, but the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has brought nothing new to the table to get this project done. He withdrew from legal action with North Dakota, allowing waters to flow into Lake Winnipeg without proper assurances about the quality of water or the possibility of new invasive species.

He directed the City of Winnipeg to use \$34 million dedicated for North End waste-water treatment upgrades on other infrastructure projects last year. In August, the Conservation Minister made a funding announcement that was reiterated in the Throne Speech. This amounts to less money than what was previously committed, and to be clear, this government is not bringing anything new to the table.

The province's greenhouse gas rates are at an all-time high, and they're growing faster than ever under this government. The Pallister government won't show leadership and accept their responsibility for emissions in the entire province.

Their so-called plan does not set out any emission reductions, goals or targets. Manitoba's not on track to meet our targets under the Paris climate accord or the recommended international targets put forward by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Furthermore, the Pallister government is breaking its own law. Their own climate and green plan implementation act states they are to produce an annual report, but we have seen no report for 2018, 2019 or 2020 to date. The Premier's Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan has been a bust, and he continues to flip-flop on the carbon tax, creating uncertainty and confusion for Manitobans.

The Premier has spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on another lawsuit instead of taking real action on climate change. He submitted a 57-page legal argument in federal court to try to strike down the carbon tax, but still can't produce a meaningful alternative plan to fight climate change.

Budget 2020-21 was supposed to implement a carbon tax, but then they chose to delay it a year. With all the flip-flopping, who can guess what will really happen?

In addition, it appears that the Pallister government is ideologically opposed to organizations dedicated to fight for climate change. During the pandemic, they cut hundreds of thousands of dollars for environmental organizations; in particular, these cuts happened to organizations whose primary role is to educate, engage and motivate citizens to increase behavioural and systems change for climate action.

Like the education review, this government's plan to do their part in fighting climate change remains a mystery.

So I will conclude by saying I reject the Throne Speech. It ignores the very real needs of seniors, of workers, of women, of families, of black, Indigenous and people of colour. It ignores the very real needs of the education system and of the climate.

* (12:20)

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): I appreciate a few minutes to just say a few words regarding the Throne Speech and to have some personal reflections, as is often the tradition during a Throne Speech.

I want to quickly—although the brevity is not a reflection on the work that was done—thank all of those in the Legislative Assembly: the Speaker's office, the Clerk's office, all of those who are involved with making this Assembly work in this way, virtually.

And I know it's only been a little over a week, but I think it's gone remarkably well, and it's really a testament to the great work that's been done, the planning throughout the summer for this historic sitting of the Legislature. I'm sure we'll learn many things, so thanks to all those who were involved.

I want to acknowledge, this being October, is Pastor Appreciation Month in October. I want to thank all of those faith leaders who have, over the last several months, been working with their congregations and those who are in their faith assemblies to continue to give them support, sometimes in a different way, maybe a virtual way like some are participating here in the Legislature. And during this Pastor Appreciation Month, we thank them for all the work that they're doing to help those

who are struggling, generally sometimes, maybe specifically because of the pandemic.

I also want to acknowledge, as others have already, my family: my wife, Kim, who over the last several months, while she had a work reduction for a little while, really stepped up, as she always does when there are times of need in our own household, to help with our extended family and others who are older in our family but who needed support. And she really showed the heart that she has for the community and for our family, and I truly appreciate everything she does, always, in supporting myself and the work that we do in the community, but particularly during this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We had the opportunity this summer, in a way that we haven't before, to really travel throughout Manitoba. And whether that was the Spirit Sands or hiking in Falcon Lake or going to Hecla, it was a unique opportunity to explore Manitoba and to see what a truly wonderful province it is. We've known that, of course, through the different things that we've done in our elected and other duties in life, but this was a real opportunity to have a dedicated focus on exploring Manitoba, as many Manitobans have.

My son Malachi, who is 14 years old, went through some of the challenges that many young people, many students have over the last several months. He was at home, of course, in the spring, doing at-home learning, and I think did quite well. I really commend him for how he has adapted during these difficult times.

He very much was looking forward to going back to school in September and is back in school, and every day tells me how he enjoys being back in school. It's his first year of high school, so he's getting more homework, so he doesn't enjoy that so much, but really does appreciate being back in class and back with his classmates.

He too has shown tremendous resiliency. Sadly, last week we lost our family pet, our 14-year-old miniature dachshund passed away, Keiko, and so that was difficult for the family, and particularly for Malachi, because he's grown up with Keiko. But I'm amazed at the maturity that he is showing in the difficulties that have come over the last year, and as a father—as we all are, as parents—when our children go through hardships and do it well, we are proud, and I'm very proud of my son Malachi.

I want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I have the opportunity, that those who are working in

our education system now are going through unprecedented times. I think we're all tired of hearing the word unprecedented and we look forward to precededent times again, but the teachers and the EAs and the support staff really have stepped up in a way that we thought they would and we knew they could, but until you actually see it happen, you certainly hope that it will go well.

And while there, of course, have been cases of COVID in schools, because there's COVID in the community, clearly—and we'll hear more about that this afternoon—we haven't seen—and Dr. Roussin confirmed this yesterday—haven't seen transmission within the schools in a way that public health might have been concerned about seeing. And that really is a testament, not just to the plan that public health helped to put forward, but also, of course, to the teachers, to the EAs, all those who are working in the school system.

I didn't actually get a chance to get an education question this week in the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Maybe that speaks to how well the teachers are doing and how well the EAs are doing and others in the school system. *[interjection]*

Oh, there's lots of talking now from the opposition. So all of the questions that they didn't have this week, apparently, are now being thrown out through heckling, but maybe they'll, when we return to the Assembly, actually have some questions about the education system.

And when I have that opportunity to speak to them at that point, I will again commend all of those who are within the education system who are making the system work as well as possible during a very, very difficult time where there are lots of new things that are being learned, not just, of course, in terms of academics but in terms of procedures and protocols.

And really, you know, the young people as well. You know, we always forget how adaptable young people are. We recognize that within our own families, when we watch our children grow up and they go through different things. As I mentioned a little bit earlier, I think we forget how adaptable children are, and they really have shown that in this unique environment, and we think that they're going to continue to do well.

Overall though, of course, within society, Mr. Deputy Speaker, fall may be difficult. And, I think, there was always a concern, even during the summer, when our numbers were particularly low,

and in a happy way they were low in Manitoba, I think there was always that feeling that it could be difficult in the fall.

We've seen—and there's a lot of talk about a second wave, and we've seen experiences, and history has been written about the 1917 pandemic, and there was concern about fatigue that people would have following the different health protocols and following the different advice.

I think that all of us, as Manitobans, have to bear in mind that—and I've said this before and it's a phrase that I've borrowed—but while we are all in the same storm, we are not all in the same boat. There are different people who have different circumstances that they're going through. They might be being caused by the pandemic. They may have been circumstances that they had prior to the pandemic. They might be difficulties that have arisen not directly because of the pandemic but are now happening during the pandemic, whether that's an illness or something else. And we can't always see that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is true all of the time.

We can't always see something that an individual might be going through. They don't always necessarily wear it, and you don't always know unless they were offering up or telling you about it. But we should always assume that somebody who we're meeting, who we're talking to, that they might be going through a difficulty that we don't quite understand, and we should approach them with empathy and approach them with understanding at all times, but particularly during this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

More than ever, the goodness of Manitobans and that friendly Manitoba that we hear about or we see on the licence plate, should be demonstrated more than ever during this time.

There is going to be a time and we're going to be on the other side of the pandemic, and nobody knows exactly when that's going to be. And we're all going to be accountable to look back and ask ourselves how we handled it. How did we handle it with our families? How did we handle it with our neighbours? How did we handle it with each other?

And I hope that we'll be proud to say that we did it with kindness and with compassion, and even if we had difficulties, that we helped others through their difficulties. And if we can say that, then I think we will all, on the other side of this, find that we're stronger for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Because Manitobans have always done that. Whether it was the flood of 1997—oh yes, we remember the high waters, of course, and there are books that show those pictures, but more than that, we remember how people, you know, came to different homes of people they didn't know and helped them sandbag, or, for those who couldn't sandbag, who brought food and sandwiches to help those who were sandbagging—all of the different ways that people rally together.

So, this is different than a flood. It's going on longer, obviously, than the flood of 1997, but the spirit is still the same. And so, as we go now into the fall and into the winter, this is going to be a challenging time. It is going to be a more difficult time, obviously, than I think the summer was, not just because of the COVID numbers, but because we're going to be dealing with winter as Manitobans often, of course, have to deal with every winter.

That is going to be a bit of a challenge, but we can get through it by not worrying about the coldness of the winter but looking at the warmth of our hearts and thinking about how we can help our communities and help our neighbours.

And ultimately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that when we look back, whenever the pandemic is over, I hope that that'll be the enduring memory. There'll be a lot of other things that people remember but, hopefully, the most indelible part of that memory will be how we, as Manitobans, stepped forward and treated each other. And that is one of the fundamentals that we need to remember: kindness. Kindness should be a fundamental while we're looking at the pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to say a few words on the Throne Speech.

I wish everybody well in the week ahead. Stay safe and be kind to each other.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay. When the matter is before the House, the debate is open for the next speaker.

The—order. The hour being 12:30 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, October 26, 2020.

Everybody enjoy your break week in your constituency and stay safe. Have a good weekend.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, October 16, 2020

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