

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

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The Honourable Myrna Driedger
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

Thursday, October 8, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.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.

Speaker's Statement

Madam Speaker: I have a statement for the House.

Good afternoon and welcome to the first virtual sitting in the 150-year history of the Manitoba Legislature.

As members have probably gathered by now, virtual sittings of the House are very complicated operations. There are many moving parts to this endeavour, and our staff have devoted many weeks of intense effort to make this process work as well as possible.

Before we start, I want to say thank you to all our staff who have devoted many, many hours to prepare for this process over the last few months. Putting this operation together has been incredibly complex, requiring expertise, co-operation, endless patience and above all, determination. As a result of their hard work, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba now has the ability to continue to meet despite the many necessary restrictions and limitations on life during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By providing this service for MLAs and therefore allowing the citizens of Manitoba to stay in touch with their Legislature, this team has served us all very well, and for that we should be very grateful.

In addition to the ability to participate virtually in the House sittings, in consultation with the House leaders and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), we have also made changes to how members are seated in the Chamber to ensure safe physical distancing for all members and staff in the Chamber. We have added a fourth row of seats and

spaced out MLA seating in the benches. Members seated in the fourth row will proceed to the podiums by the east and west loges to speak. The result is that about half of our 57 MLAs will participate in House sittings virtually, and the other half will be here in the Chamber.

There are many aspects of virtual sittings which will be different and a little bit unusual, but our Clerk and her team of expert staff have considered these contingencies and come up with creative solutions. Over the coming weeks and months, we will employ variations on processes which have been followed in this Legislature for 150 years, and I have great confidence in our communal ability to adapt and to continue to serve the people of Manitoba to the best of our abilities.

I know members have benefited from one-on-one and group training sessions over the past few weeks, and I would encourage all members to consult our clerks if you have any questions, and also remember to thank our team for all their work making this happen.

I would ask all members to please be patient with the clerks and with me. We will be doing our best, but we need your understanding and kindness at this time.

There will be glitches—as we said, this is a complex situation—so your support will be much needed and much appreciated.

Thank you very much.

Introduction of bills—oh.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills?

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Second Report

Mr. Jim Maloway (Chairperson): I wish to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on June 10, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building:

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report - Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2017
 - Waiving of Competitive Bids
- Auditor General's Report - Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2018
 - Waiving of Competitive Bids
 - Management of Provincial Bridges
 - Manitoba East Side Road Authority
- Auditor General's Report - Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2019
 - Management of Provincial Bridges
 - Manitoba East Side Road Authority
- Auditor General's Report - Department of Infrastructure: Oversight of Commercial Vehicle Safety - dated December 2019
- Auditor General's Report - Follow-up of Recommendations - dated March, 2020
 - Management of Provincial Bridges
 - Manitoba East Side Road Authority

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the June 10, 2020 meeting:

- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Mr. LAMONT
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Mr. MALOWAY (Chairperson)
- Mr. MICHALESKI
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Ms. NAYLOR
- Mr. SMITH (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WASYLIW
- Mr. WISHART

Substitutions received prior to committee proceedings on June 10, 2020:

- Ms. NAYLOR for Mrs. SMITH (Point Douglas)

Officials Speaking on Record at the June 10, 2020 meeting:

- Mr. Tyson Shtykalo, Deputy Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER, Minister of Infrastructure
- Mr. Tareq Al-Zabet, Deputy Minister of Infrastructure
- Ms. Ruth Eden, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister of Infrastructure

Agreements:

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Waiving of Competitive Bids of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2017.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Waiving of Competitive Bids of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Management of Provincial Bridges of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Manitoba East Side Road Authority of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Management of Provincial Bridges of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2019.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Manitoba East Side Road Authority of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2019.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Management of Provincial Bridges of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2020.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Manitoba East Side Road Authority of the Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations - dated March 2020.

Reports Considered and Passed:

Your Committee has considered the following report and has adopted the same as presented:

- Auditor General's Report-Department of Infrastructure: Oversight of Commercial Vehicle Safety - dated December 2019

Reports Considered but not Passed:

Your Committee has considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations-dated March 2017 (Waiving of Competitive Bids-concluded consideration of)
- Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations-dated March 2018 (Waiving of Competitive Bids-Management of Provincial Bridges - Manitoba East Side Road Authority - concluded consideration of)
- Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations-dated March 2019 (Management of Provincial Bridges-Manitoba East Side Road Authority - concluded consideration of)
- Auditor General's Report-Follow-Up of Recommendations-dated March 2020 (Management of Provincial Bridges-Manitoba East Side Road Authority - concluded consideration of)

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Third Report

Mr. Jim Maloway (Chairperson): I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on June 25, 2020 at 4:00 p.m. in the Chamber of the Legislative Building:

Matters under Consideration

- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014
 - Section 16 – Managing Climate Change
- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015
 - Section 1 – Managing Climate Change
- Auditor General's Report – Managing Climate Change – dated October 2017
- Auditor General's Report – Forensic Audits dated October 2018
 - Thompson District Office: Special Audit of Missing Licences and Cash Management Practices
- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2020
 - Managing Climate Change
 - Thompson District Office: Special Audit of Missing Licences and Cash Management Practices

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the June 25, 2020 meeting:

- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Mr. LAMONT
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Mr. MALOWAY (Chairperson)
- Mr. MICHALESKI
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Ms. NAYLOR
- Mr. SMITH (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WASYLIW
- Mr. WISHART

Officials Speaking on Record at the June 25, 2020 meeting:

- Mr. Tyson Shtykalo, Deputy Auditor General of Manitoba
- Hon. Mrs. GUILLEMARD, Minister of Conservation and Climate
- Mr. Blair McTavish, Deputy Minister of Conservation and Climate

Agreements:

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 16 – Managing Climate Change of the Auditor General’s Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Section 1 – Managing Climate Change of the Auditor General’s Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Thompson District Office: Special Audit of Missing Licences and Cash Management Practices of the Auditor General’s Report – Forensic Audits dated October 2018.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Managing Climate Change of the Auditor General’s Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2020.

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Thompson District Office: Special Audit of Missing Licences and Cash Management Practices of the Auditor General’s Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2020.

Reports Considered and Passed:

Your Committee has considered the following report and has adopted the same as presented:

- Auditor General’s Report – Managing Climate Change – dated October 2017

Reports Considered but not Passed:

Your Committee has considered the following reports but did not pass them:

- Auditor General’s Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2014 (Section 16 – Managing Climate Change – concluded consideration of)
- Auditor General’s Report – Follow-Up of Previously Issued Recommendations – dated May 2015 (Section 1 – Managing Climate Change - concluded consideration of)
- Auditor General’s Report – Forensic Audits dated October 2018 (Thompson District Office: Special Audit of Missing Licences and Cash Management Practices - concluded consideration of)

- Auditor General’s Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2020 (Managing Climate Change – Thompson District Office: Special Audit of Missing Licences and Cash Management Practices - concluded consideration of)

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts
Fourth Report**

Mr. Jim Maloway (Chairperson): I wish to present the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Public Accounts presents the following as its Fourth Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- December 4, 2018 (4th Session, 41st Legislature)
- August 5, 2020 (2nd Session, 42nd Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018 (Volumes 1, 2 and 3)
- Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audit dated August 2018
- Auditor General's Report – Understanding our Audit Opinion on Manitoba's March 31, 2018 Summary Financial Statements dated September 2018
- Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019 (Volumes 1, 2 and 3)
- Auditor General's Report – Understanding our Audit Opinion on Manitoba's March 31, 2019 Summary Financial Statements dated September 2019

- *Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements dated December 2019*
- *Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2020*
- *Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements*

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the December 4, 2018 meeting:

- *Mr. BINDLE*
- *Mr. HELWER (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Ms. LAMOUREUX*
- *Mr. MALOWAY*
- *Mr. MARCELINO*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. WIEBE (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. WISHART*
- *Mr. YAKIMOSKI*

Substitution received prior to committee proceedings on December 4, 2018:

- *Ms. LAMOUREUX for Ms. KLASSEN*

Permanent substitution received prior to committee proceedings on December 4, 2018:

- *Mr. WISHART for Hon. Mrs. MAYER*

Committee Membership for the August 5, 2020 meeting:

- *Ms. ADAMS*
- *Mr. JOHNSTON*
- *Mr. LAMONT*
- *Mr. LINDSEY*
- *Mr. MALOWAY (Chairperson)*
- *Mr. MICHALESKI*
- *Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE*
- *Mr. SMITH (Vice-Chairperson)*
- *Mr. TEITSMA*
- *Mr. WASYLIW*
- *Mr. WISHART*

Substitution received prior to committee proceedings on August 5, 2020:

- *Ms. ADAMS for Ms. NAYLOR*

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record at the December 4, 2018 meeting:

- *Mr. ALLUM*

Officials Speaking on Record at the December 4, 2018 meeting:

- *Mr. Norm Ricard, Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Hon. Mr. FIELDING, Minister of Finance*
- *Mr. Jim Hrichishen, Deputy Minister of Finance*

Officials Speaking on Record at the August 5, 2020 meeting:

- *Mr. Tyson Shtykalo, Deputy Auditor General of Manitoba*
- *Hon. Mr. FIELDING, Minister of Finance*
- *Mr. Richard Groen, Deputy Minister of Finance*

Agreements:

Your Committee agreed to conclude consideration of Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements of the Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2020.

Reports Considered and Passed:

Your Committee has considered the following reports and has adopted the same as presented:

- *Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018 (Volumes 1, 2 and 3)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statement Audit dated August 2018*
- *Auditor General's Report – Understanding our Audit Opinion on Manitoba's March 31, 2018 Summary Financial Statements dated September 2018*
- *Public Accounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019 (Volumes 1, 2 and 3)*
- *Auditor General's Report – Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements dated December 2019*
- *Auditor General's Report – Understanding our Audit Opinion on Manitoba's March 31, 2019 Summary Financial Statements dated September 2019*

Reports Considered but not Passed:

Your Committee has considered but not passed the following report:

- Auditor General's Report – Follow-Up of Recommendations – dated March 2020 (Public Accounts and Other Financial Statements - concluded consideration of)

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Thompson (Ms. Adams), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Crown Corporations
First Report**

Mr. Dennis Smook (Chairperson): I wish to present the first report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its First Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- October 21, 2016 (1st Session – 41st Legislature)
- November 16, 2016 (1st Session – 41st Legislature)
- May 28, 2020 (2nd Session – 42nd Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the October 21, 2016 meeting:

- Mr. ALLUM
- Mr. CURRY
- Hon. Mr. EICHLER
- Mrs. GUILLEMARD (Vice-Chairperson)
- Ms. KLASSEN
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)
- Mrs. MAYER (Chairperson)
- Mr. REYES
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Mr. SMITH

Committee Membership for the November 16, 2016 meeting:

- Mr. ALLUM
- Mr. CURRY
- Ms. FONTAINE
- Mr. LAGIMODIERE
- Ms. LAMOUREUX
- Mr. MARTIN
- Mrs. MAYER
- Mr. MARCELINO (Tyndall Park)
- Mr. REYES
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Mr. TEITSMA

At the November 16, 2016 meeting, your Committee elected Mrs. MAYER as the Chairperson.

At the November 16, 2016 meeting, your Committee elected Mr. TEITSMA as the Vice-Chairperson.

Committee membership for the May 28, 2020 meeting:

- Mr. GUENTER
- Mr. SALA
- Hon. Mr. SCHULER
- Mr. SMOOK
- Mr. WASYLIW
- Hon. Mr. WHARTON

At the May 28, 2020 meeting, your Committee elected Mr. SMOOK as the Chairperson.

At the May 28, 2020 meeting, your Committee elected Mr. GUENTER as the Vice-Chairperson.

As agreed to by the House on May 27, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the May 28, 2020 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Officials Speaking on Record at the October 21, 2016 meeting:

- Peter Hak, Acting CEO
- Polly Craik, Chairperson of the Board

Officials Speaking on Record at the November 16, 2016 meeting:

- Peter Hak, Acting CEO
- Polly Craik, Chairperson of the Board

Officials speaking on the record at the May 28, 2020 meeting:

- Manny Atwal, President and CEO, Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries
- Randy Williams, Chairperson, Board of Directors

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record at the May 28, 2020 meeting:

- Mr. LAMONT

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019

Mr. Smook: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

**Standing Committee on Crown Corporations
Second Report**

Mr. Dennis Smook (Chairperson): I wish to present the second report of the Standing Committee on Crown Corporations.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Crown–

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Crown Corporations presents the following as its Second Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building:

- June 25, 2018 (3rd Session – 41st Legislature)
- June 11, 2020 (2nd Session – 42nd Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019

Committee Membership

Committee membership for June 25, 2018 meeting:

- Mr. ALLUM
- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Hon. Mr. GERRARD
- Mr. ISLEIFSON (Chairperson)
- Mr. LINDSEY
- Ms. MARCELINO (Logan)
- Mrs. MAYER
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE (Vice-Chairperson)
- Hon. Mr. PEDERSEN
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. YAKIMOSKI

Committee membership for the June 11, 2020 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. FIELDING
- Mr. KINEW
- Mr. SALA
- Mr. SMOOK (Chairperson)
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Hon. Mr. WHARTON

At the June 11, 2020 meeting, your Committee elected Mr. TEITSMA as the Vice-Chairperson.

As agreed to by the House on May 27, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the May 28, 2020 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Officials speaking on the record at the June 25, 2018 meeting:

- Kelvin Shepherd, Manitoba Hydro President & CEO
- Marina James, Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Chair

Officials speaking on the record at the June 11, 2020 meeting:

- Jay Grewal, Manitoba Hydro President & CEO
- Marina James, Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Chair

Non-Committee Members Speaking on Record at the May 28, 2020 meeting:

- Mr. LAMONT

Reports Considered and Passed

Your Committee considered and passed the following reports as presented:

- Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018
- Annual Report of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019

Mr. Smook: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs Third Report

Mr. James Teitsma (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the third report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs.

Clerk: Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs—

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs presents the following as its Third Report.

Meetings

Your Committee met on the following occasions in the Legislative Building

- January 14, 2020 (2nd Session – 42nd Legislature)
- July 21, 2020 (2nd Session – 42nd Legislature)

Matters under Consideration

- Recommendation for the appointment of the Auditor General

Committee Membership

Committee Membership for the January 14, 2020 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Ms. GORDON
- Mr. JOHNSON
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. MARTIN
- Ms. MORLEY-LECOMTE
- Mr. MOSES
- Ms. NAYLOR
- Mr. SMITH
- Mr. TEITSMA (Chairperson)
- Mr. WASYLIW

Your Committee elected Mr. MARTIN as the Vice-Chairperson at the January 14, 2020 meeting.

Committee Membership for the July 21, 2020 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Ms. GORDON
- Mr. JOHNSON
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. TEITSMA (Chairperson)

Your Committee elected Mr. JOHNSON as the Vice-Chairperson at the July 21, 2020 meeting.

As agreed to by the House on May 27, 2020, Rule 83(2) was waived for the July 21, 2020 meeting, reducing the membership to six Members (4 Government and 2 Official Opposition).

Motions:

Your Committee agreed to the following motion at the January 14, 2020 meeting:

- THAT a sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs be struck to manage the process of hiring a new Auditor General for the Province of Manitoba, under the terms and conditions as follows:

- (a) the sub-committee consist of four Government Members, two Official Opposition Members and one Liberal Party Member;
- (b) the sub-committee have the authority to call their own meetings, the ability to meet in camera, and be able to undertake duties it deems necessary in order to fulfill its responsibilities in the hiring process;
- (c) the sub-committee must report back to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs with a recommendation that has been agreed to by all members; and
- (d) the Committees Branch staff as well as the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services staff be authorized to attend all meetings of the sub-committee.

Your Committee agreed to the following motions at the July 21, 2020 meeting:

- THAT the report and recommendation of the Sub-Committee be received.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs recommend to the President of Executive Council that Tyson Shtykalo be appointed as the Auditor General for the Province of Manitoba.
- THAT the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs authorize the Chairperson to advise the Speaker of the appointment of the Auditor General once the offer has been accepted, and to ask the Speaker to inform all MLAs in writing of this appointment as well as issue a press release prior to presentation of the committee report to the Assembly.

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT

At the July 21, 2020 meeting of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs, the Sub-Committee presented the following report.

Meetings:

Your Sub-Committee met on the following occasions:

- January 30, 2020 at 2:30 p.m.
- February 10, 2020 at 2:30 p.m.
- May 21, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.
- July 21, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

All meetings were held in camera in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters under Consideration:

- Recruitment and Selection of the Auditor General

Sub-Committee Membership:

Sub-Committee Membership for the January 30, 2020 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Ms. GORDON
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Mr. LAMONT
- Mr. TEITSMA
- Mr. WASYLIW
- Mr. WIEBE

Your Sub-Committee elected Ms. GORDON as the Chairperson and Mr. TEITSMA as the Vice-Chairperson during the meeting on January 30, 2020.

Sub-Committee Membership for the February 10, 2020 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. MICKLEFIELD
- Mr. TEITSMA (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. WASYLIW

Your Sub-Committee elected Mr. MICKLEFIELD as the Chairperson during the meeting on February 10, 2020.

Sub-Committee Membership for the May 21, 2020 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Ms. GORDON
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Mr. LAMONT
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. TEITSMA (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. WASYLIW

Your Sub-Committee elected Ms. GORDON as the Chairperson during the meeting on May 21, 2020.

Sub-Committee Membership for the July 21, 2020 meeting:

- Hon. Mr. CULLEN
- Ms. GORDON (Chairperson)
- Mr. JOHNSTON
- Mr. LAMONT
- Mr. MALOWAY
- Mr. TEITSMA (Vice-Chairperson)
- Mr. WASYLIW

Staff present for all Sub-Committee meetings:

- Deanna Wilson, Director, Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services
- Tim Abbott, Clerk Assistant/Committee Clerk

Agreements by the Sub-Committee:

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on February 10, 2020:

- The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will deal with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Auditor General, which includes the Advertising Plan, Selection Criteria, Advertisement and Interview Questions.
- The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will conduct the paper screening of applications received and report to the Sub-Committee with all qualified candidates for review.
- The Sub-Committee will review the list of qualified candidates and determine which applicant(s) to be interviewed by the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services and one representative from each party: PC, NDP and Liberal.
- The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services will conduct interviews and report to the Sub-Committee the interview rating results for consideration and selection.
- The Sub-Committee will review the interview rating results and determine the candidate to be recommended for the position of Auditor General.

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on May 21, 2020:

- To interview the seven candidates that met the essential qualifying criteria.

Your Sub-Committee reached the following agreements during the meeting on July 21, 2020:

- Pending successful reference checks, the Sub-Committee agreed to recommend to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs that Tyson Shtykalo be appointed as the Auditor General for the Province of Manitoba.
- In the event the successful candidate declines or is no longer available, the Sub-Committee agreed to meet again to discuss further options.

Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services Activities:

As agreed to by the Sub-Committee on February 10, 2020, the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services was tasked with all the logistics and paperwork involved with the hiring process of the Auditor General.

On May 21, 2020, the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee a list of seven qualified candidates for review and selection to be interviewed.

The Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services considered applications for the position of the Auditor General as follows:

- Thirty-eight applications were received for the position.
- Three individuals were interviewed for the position on June 17, 2020.
- One individual was interviewed for the position on June 18, 2020.
- Two individuals were interviewed for the position on June 19, 2020.
- One individual withdrew from the process prior to the interview.

On July 21, 2020, the Legislative Assembly Human Resource Services reported to the Sub-Committee the interview rating results of the six candidates.

Mr. Teitsma: I move, seconded by the honourable member for Southdale (Ms. Gordon), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:40)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Madam Speaker: And I have four reports to table.

I am pleased to table the following reports: annual report of the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020, copies of which have been placed on members' desks and also sent to members participating virtually.

The second one is the report of Amounts Claimed and Paid Pursuant to Section 4 of The Members' Salaries, Allowances and Retirement Plans

Disclosure Regulation, for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020.

The third report is the Manitoba Legislative Building: updated long-term restoration and preservation and annual implementation plan for the fiscal years 2019-2020 to 2028-2029, which have all been placed on members' desks and will also be sent out electronically.

And the final one is the Auditor General's report, Oversight of Post-Secondary Institutions, dated October 2020.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Conservation and Climate—and I would indicate that the 90 minutes notice was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with her statement.

International Clean Air Day

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): Today is International Clean Air Day. We recognize how important our environment and clean air is for our overall health.

Manitobans are global citizens, and we all feel the effects of broader air quality issues from sources outside our province. We have seen an increase in climate-induced events that have recently degraded air quality as smoke travelled this summer from the major forest fires in the western United States. The reality of global degradation of our atmosphere by air pollutants is that they are driving major changes to our climate with resulting impacts such as droughts, floods, fires and extreme storms.

Since 1969, Manitoba, in co-operation with Environment Canada, has been monitoring ambient air quality in selected urban areas within the province. At present, the Province is operating four provincial monitoring stations: two based in Winnipeg and one station each in Brandon and Flin Flon.

Air quality parameter-related data is almost real time and is available online for all Manitobans. Our province is an active partner in the Canada Air Quality Health Index forecasting, which is designed to help Manitobans make informed decisions about protecting themselves from the effects of air pollution.

Compared to many other jurisdictions in Canada, Manitobans enjoy good air quality. Air quality concerns in our province usually tend to be of a localized nature, where an activity has an impact only on the local environment and residents. Generally, airborne pollutants come from industrial operations, vehicle emissions, wildfires, crop residue burning and other human activities.

My department is working collaboratively with the federal government and other jurisdictions under the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, or CCME, to better manage air quality. Since 2012, under the guidance of CCME, most provinces continue to implement the national Air Quality Management System for reducing air pollution. We are pleased to inform you that Manitoba complies with the requirements of the new Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards. We want to ensure Manitobans that our government will continue to implement air quality management strategies that keep our air clean in a sustained way and address any other air quality issues that may arise.

This government has a bold vision to make Manitoba the cleanest, greenest and most climate-resilient province in Canada, and we all must work together to reach this goal. I would like to say thank you to all of the air quality specialists in the Department of Conservation and Climate for all of their great work, and I appeal to fellow Manitobans to join me in enjoying the Clean Air Day safely with families and friends as we work together to keep our air fresh and clean for the present and future generations.

Thank you.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): What is more fundamentally human than the need to breathe? We all value—

Madam Speaker: I would ask the member to start again. The mute may have been accidentally put on, so I would ask the member to be sure she's unmuted and please feel free to start over.

We still can't hear.

Ms. Naylor: Can you hear me now?

Madam Speaker: Oh, yes.

Ms. Naylor: I think it was the headphones, so I apologize. Thank you for recognizing me and for your patience.

What is more fundamentally human than the need to breathe? We all value clean air but, here in Canada, it is something we too often take for granted. Air pollution is one of the most significant environmental challenges affecting public health, and one of the most avoidable causes of death and disease.

Climate change is contributing to worsening air quality around the world. We only have to look to the West Coast to see the dramatic impact of forest fires on air quality, a problem that will continue to grow as climate change continues. While Manitoba had a relatively quiet summer for forest fires, we can expect air pollution in our own backyard to also increase in the coming years.

Evidence shows that exposure to air pollution increases susceptibility to respiratory viral infections and pneumonia. This suggests that people exposed to higher levels of air pollution may be at a greater risk of becoming ill with COVID-19, with an increase in frequency of the most severe outcomes. This is one of many examples of how climate change is connected to public health.

While it's really nice to recognize Clean Air Day once a year, the provincial government has shown no leadership on climate action. We have no clear emission goals or targets, and we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who spends more time fighting the federal carbon tax than he does fighting climate change.

The Pallister government needs to aggressively improve its climate change strategy and, if they don't, future generations won't have clean air to celebrate.

Thank you.

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

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to respond to the ministerial statement?

An Honourable Member: Okay.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Lamont: I'll take it, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, all of us in this Chamber want clean air. It is fundamental to us as human beings. We're fortunate to have in Manitoba many places where there is clean air and for this we should be very proud.

I did want to draw the House's attention to a recent study by Folarin Solademi and Shirley

Thompson of the Natural Resources Institute at the University of Manitoba that has raised concerns about the quality of air in and around the St. Boniface Industrial Park.

As these scientists say in their paper, quote: different pollution indices all register high contamination. There was specifically contamination for lead, zinc and nickel, and they were specifically measuring air pollution, which they did by sampling these metals from the air into the snowpack in and around the St. Boniface Industrial Area.

This has been a long-standing concern, and the contamination with lead is of particular concern, as a recent report by the Manitoba Liberal caucus showed, there are serious links between learning problems in children and damage to—long-term damage to health from lead exposure.

There are many useful recommendations in the report, but I will mention one in particular that arises directly from the study in St. Boniface which recommends that enforcement and enclosure of the outdoor metal shredder—the source of the high lead in the air—should be considered to reduce the heavy metal exposure to the public.

I hope the government and the minister will today, on Clean Air Day, commit to follow—to act to follow this recommendation so that people living near the St. Boniface Industrial Area can have the clean air the rest of us can take for granted.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Westman Multicultural Festival

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Communities in our country are built on families: families with different backgrounds, different religions and different cultural practices. This is what makes Canada such a great country.

* (13:50)

With over 313 immigrants arriving in Canada in 2019, Manitoba saw just shy of 16,000 come to our great province and make a fresh 'strart'—start. Immigrants settled throughout the province, but I am extremely pleased to see a large number of immigrants call Brandon home and I am very fortunate to call many of these people my friends.

Madam Speaker, the year 2020 has turned out to be a challenging year for everyone, and we certainly understand the processes that people are going through. But fortunately, prior to the pandemic

limiting the events and the gatherings, residents from around Manitoba had the opportunity to experience the numerous cultural displays, traditional song and dance and some amazing ethnic foods as the 2020 Westman cultural festival ran at numerous locations throughout Brandon from January 23rd to January 25th.

Originally known as the Lieutenant Governor's Winter Festival and then the Brandon Winter Festival, the Westman cultural festival now continues to provide celebrations and educational opportunities that began 17 years ago and remains alive and well today.

Madam Speaker, along with the mayor of Brandon and my colleagues from Brandon West and Riding Mountain, I managed to visit with each of the 10 pavilions at this year's festival. These included the cultures from El Salvador, England, India, Mexico, the Philippines, Scotland, the Metis, the Mauritian, the Jamaicans and the Ukraine.

With sponsors ranging from the federal and provincial and many local businesses, this event breaks up the cold winter months in southern Manitoba and warms the hearts of all who attend. The festival motto of food, drink, dance, music, culture never disappoints.

Madam Speaker, there are hundreds if not thousands of volunteers that come together to make this annual event a success. I do want to acknowledge the hard work of the event organizers and ask my colleagues to join me as I thank first-year chairman, Mr. Jim McCrea, and his numerous volunteers who made this event successful again this year.

Thank you.

Alan Greeyes

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): A Tribe Called Red, Iskwe, William Prince, Don Amero, Inez, Leonard Sumner, Desiree Dorion—if you've heard of a successful Indigenous musician over the past decade, chances are they were helped along the way by somebody named Alan Greeyes.

Now, Alan is a one-of-a-kind entrepreneur and arts champion who hails from the great constituency of Fort Rouge.

Now, on any given evening you can find Alan having a backyard dance party with his elementary-school-aged daughters as well as his partner, who is

herself a very successful entrepreneur, or perhaps cheering on his son, who plays for the Dauphin Kings.

But by day, Alan is a mentor, manager and connector who has helped many, many musicians. Whether they come from the city, from rural Manitoba, from a First Nation, Alan has helped these folks turn their dreams into good-paying gigs and, in fact, careers.

All of the artists that I mentioned have won Junos, have toured the world and support themselves by plying their trade. And a big part of that is due to Alan.

Now, in addition to working directly with artists and running programs for organizations like Manitoba Music, Mr. Greeyes founded his own music festival, *sākihiwē*, which, in spite of the pandemic, will soon expand safely to Europe.

Now, recently, the Manitoba Arts Council announced Alan is the recipient of the Manitoba Arts Award of Distinction, which in addition to being a very fancy title comes along with a prize of \$30,000 cash. Now, that's in addition to winning the Kevin Walters Legacy Award earlier this year.

Alan is showing us what Indigenous excellence is all about, and we should all be proud of him.

I just want to add that he's a dear friend who has been there through thick and through thin. So I want to take this opportunity to remind my buddy about the time I lent him 30 grand.

Please join me in celebrating this wonderful Manitoban.

Alison Bodner

Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate): I rise today to honour the achievements of Alison Bodner and recognize the impact that she is having on students in Fort Richmond as the teacher-librarian at Bairdmore elementary school.

Originally, I intended to recognize Ms. Bodner in March, but in the weeks and months since then, her amazing contributions to her profession have been more relevant than any of us could ever have thought.

Alison doesn't just teach the concept of lifelong learning to her students, imparting a love of literacy and critical thinking skills in our youth, she embraces the concept in her own life and encourages the same with her co-workers and students.

Recently, Alison's efforts were recognized with the Angela Thacker Memorial Award by the Canadian School Libraries, and she was the Outstanding Teacher-Librarian of the Year for the Manitoba School Library Association last year.

As her colleagues so accurately put it while nominating her for this award: Alison has taken an active role in supporting our school goals at Bairdmore. She is a master collaborator and co-teacher who works with teachers to ensure that all students embrace literacy in all its forms, and that they have the inquiry and growth mindset skills to thrive in the 21st century.

The role of the school library has changed over the years and will continue to adapt. Gone are the days of quiet place to sit and read books. Instead, we have learning commons, where students come together collaboratively to learn and discuss. Digital literacy is a new and vital skill, and I have faith that with committed educators like Alison Bodner, our students will meet these new challenges.

I ask members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Alison Bodner on her achievement and thanking her for all her efforts in instilling a lifelong love of literacy.

Thank you.

MMIWG2S Honouring and Awareness Day

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): This past Sunday, October 4th, was Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited Honouring and Awareness Day. October 4th also seeks to draw attention to the violence Indigenous women, girls and two-spirited peoples face dearly—daily in all spheres.

Madam Speaker, even in a global pandemic, violence perpetrated against our bodies did not cease. Since April, three of our women here in Manitoba have been murdered: Marie Morin, Danielle Harper, Julie Racette. This violence is born in racist, misogynistic colonial narratives constructing us as disposable, as less-than and as beings unworthy of protection and deserving such violence.

It is within this space Joyce Echaquan, a mother of seven, spent her last agonizing moments begging for health care. Joyce had the good sense to start a Facebook Live where we hear a nurse and orderly call her stupid, say that she's only good for sex, and that she deserves to die.

I can only imagine, scared, in pain and under a barrage of racist assaults, as a mother, Joyce's thoughts would be fixated on returning home to her children alive. She did not.

Despite video evidence, the refusal to acknowledge systemic racism as the reason for Joyce's death only further entrenches this treatment and dismisses these grotesque, racist behaviours.

As Indigenous women, we are sick of the violence. We're sick of being blamed for the violence. We're sick of governments not doing anything to end the violence. It's not enough for politicians here or across Canada to say that they care about us on October 4th and not action it. We deserve better.

And, finally, Madam Speaker, to Joyce's children, family, community, we say we are incredibly sorry for your loss.

Miigwech.

Paul Hogue

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): This has been an extraordinary year in many ways, and I want to start by thanking everyone who's worked so hard in the past months to deal with the challenges we faced.

There is one individual in particular I want to pay tribute to who's been absent from the Legislature for some months and who I look forward to seeing again. It says something about his incredible diligence that he has been working in this building since 1974 and served under seven premiers, but that is what Paul Hogue has done. In the 100 years that this Legislative Building has been operational, Paul has worked here for 46 of them.

Growing up, Paul was a bowler, a curler, a fan of hot rod and antique cars, which came naturally since his family ran an auto shop. He's also a fighter. He is one of the longest surviving kidney transplant survivors in Manitoba; he received his new kidney 32 years ago.

Over the years, as Paul slowly lost his sight, he shifted to new tasks, running through training courses with his colleagues, and every morning, he—at 6:30, he was on Handi-Transit, and rarely missed a day of work.

I first met Paul as he was working on recycling duty in the halls. He was friendly and talkative and kind and thoughtful.

* (14:00)

Last year, he broke his leg and had to take time off work and had every intention of returning in March. Because of the pandemic, he could not return. I spoke to him on the phone the other day and he has—still has plans to return when he is safe.

Madam Speaker, we all know this is a special place where history happens, but none of us work alone. All of us depend on each other for our achievements. Sometimes we challenge each other, sometimes we carry each other, and everyone here plays a role in making that happen.

I hope you will all join me today in saluting Paul Hogue for his many years of service and wish him the very best until we meet again.

Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some very special guests to introduce to you.

I would like to take this time to advise you of the six individuals who are serving on the Manitoba Legislative Internship Program for the 2020-2021 year. They are listening to their introductions from their respective offices, and I would just say hello to all of them from all of us here.

In accordance with established practice, three interns were assigned to the government caucus and three to the official opposition caucus. Their term of employment is 10 months. They will be performing a variety of research and other tasks for private members.

These interns commenced their assignments September 14th, 2020 and will complete them in June. They are, working with the government caucus: Mr. Yoni Coodin, of the University of Manitoba; Mr. Alexander Guertin, of the University of Manitoba, and Ms. Claire Normandeau, of the University of Saint-Boniface.

Working with the caucus of the official opposition we have Ms. Julia Antonyshyn, of the University of Winnipeg; Ms. Alexandra Koslock, of the University of Winnipeg, and Mr. Rylan—pardon me, I'm going to say this correctly—Ramnarace, of the University of Manitoba.

Professor Kelly Saunders of Brandon University is the academic director for the program. The administration of the program on a day-to-day basis is carried out by our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk. The caucus representatives on the internship

administration committee are the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt), and the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members to congratulate the interns on their appointment to the program and hope that they will have a very interesting and successful year with the Assembly.

I am pleased to introduce to the House the 10 students who have been selected to serve as pages for this session. I would ask members to hold their applause until I have completed the introductions.

To my right we have Ms. Addison Franklin, Murdoch McKay Collegiate. To my left, we have Mr. Justin Harms, St. John's Ravenscourt School, and at the North entrance we have Ms. Laura Boyd, Collège Churchill; Ms. Jordan Glaspey, Stonewall Collegiate Institute, Ms. Taryn Klippenstein, Westwood Collegiate, Ms. Ruofan Lin, Fort Richmond Collegiate, Ms. Maggie Rodger, Oak Park High School, Mr. Alex Rogers, St. Norbert Collegiate, Ms. Trinity Sperling, Steinbach Regional Secondary School, and Ms. Erin Van Veen, Immanuel Christian School.

On behalf of all members here we welcome our pages to the Manitoba Legislative Assembly and I would tell you that we have one of the best page programs in the country, so we're pleased to have them with us.

ORAL QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Pandemic Testing Wait Times

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, I just want to take a moment to welcome our pages and our interns. I hope you learn a lot here, even if it's sometimes what not to do, from our examples.

Over the past seven months during the pandemic, Manitobans have banded together. They have shown a tremendous commitment and just how strong our province can be. It is long past time that they have a government that matches their commitment by standing up and making their life better.

But yesterday we saw just how out of touch that this Premier and his Cabinet really is. Their Throne Speech missed the mark completely.

Manitobans want to know, after seven months, why are there so few COVID-19 testing sites across

our province? Why can't every Manitoban book an appointment for a test so seniors don't have to wait hours outside? Why is it taking five, six, sometimes even longer, in terms of days, to get your test result back? It's incredibly disruptive, Madam Speaker.

The Premier knew these problems were coming and yet he did nothing to fix them.

When will the Premier present a real plan to fix a broken COVID testing system in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, first of all, also to echo my honourable colleague's comments, I want to welcome, on behalf of all of us, the interns and the pages to their challenges. This will be a year that they will remember, I'm sure; an exceptional year with exceptional challenges, and I know that they'll rise to them. So I wish them very much success and learning opportunities that you will, I know, Madam Speaker, and all of us will assist in making abundant.

And I also want to say welcome back to all our members here and those participating remotely, and say that I agree with the member's assertion that we must all continue to work together as we have been doing, as we must continue to do, in the best interests of Manitobans. That's precisely what we're focused on doing, Madam Speaker, as a government, and we will continue to do.

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

Education Plan Request

Mr. Kinew: And Madam Speaker, we'll keep demanding a fix to this broken COVID testing system in Manitoba.

We know that the education of many young people across the province has been turned upside down. Students, parents, educators, they've all sacrificed a tremendous amount. Last academic year they gave up graduations. This year there are many students who are not even in class each and every day.

Yet this Premier and his government has not taken simple steps that could have helped to address these issues. They could have hired more teachers; they could have rented more classroom space. That would have allowed more children to be in school each and every day for that face-to-face, one-on-one instruction that we know is so crucial to the success of a young mind's development.

Instead, we are seeing the COVID generation's education be disrupted, and that is something that will harm our province for many, many years to come.

What did the Premier offer yesterday? Simply dusts off a review that is irrelevant because it was written before the pandemic.

When will the Premier bring forth a new plan for education to help Manitoba students?

Mr. Pallister: Constructive comments and criticism are well-placed and will be well-received by this government, as they have been throughout this pandemic from all Manitobans, but destructive comments will not be welcome, nor should they be.

The member has just raised rather harsh criticism, not just of our government, but of the entire team that prepared the educational transformation packages that allowed Manitoba students to get education in a distance environment on very short notice in the spring's concluding year-school year, and will continue to benefit our students mightily in the year ahead.

We hope for not much longer, Madam Speaker, in the sense that we want our students to be able to be back safely in schools, but the adaptive work that was done by our minister, by our educational staff and leaders around the province, by our teachers, is worthy of note, and we celebrate that on this side of the House, far from criticizing it.

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

Small-Business Support

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, we also know that many small-business owners have sacrificed a great deal to try and get our public health strong enough to weather this pandemic, but whether it's in Fort Rouge or in Bridgewater Centre, or anywhere across the province, many of these business owners are hanging on by a thread.

And it should be no surprise to anybody that the Premier's economic plan, which only consisted of laying off 10,000 employees during the pandemic, didn't actually help any of those small-business owners.

We know what they have been asking for. They've been asking for a rent-relief program that would actually go to the tenant instead of the commercial landlord. They've been asking for quick and easy access to capital. They've been asking for

assistance in the procurement of protective equipment, and yet the Premier has failed to bring forward these concrete measures to help the small-business owners.

Will the Premier listen? Will he do his part to ensure that there is direct financial assistance, that there is commercial rent relief, and that there is access to protective equipment so that our small-business owners and job creators can survive the pandemic?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I would have hoped that over the balance of the few months the member was away he was able to do some constructive research and observation in a less subjective manner. Unfortunately, he has failed to do that and is coming up with retro rap here in the Chamber already on the first day of question period.

* (14:10)

The reality is that we have, in this province, the most ambitious small-business community that is recovering and leading in its recovery, in part because of the supports of this government, which are the most generous in the country of Canada and have assisted thousands and thousands of Manitoba businesses in staying on their feet and, hopefully for all of us, rebounding and recovering as we get this pandemic defeated together.

I want to conclude, Madam Speaker, as I was negligent in not doing so earlier, of acknowledging the presence today of a member from Transcona who has, in the midst of a pandemic, also been victorious in a monumental challenge. And we welcome him back and we wish him the very best in his recovery.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Manitoba Hydro Subsidiaries Privatization Concerns

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, for many years we warned about the dangers of the privatization of Manitoba Hydro.

You know, the case against privatization is really very clear. It leads to higher bills for families and for businesses right across the province of Manitoba. It will mean the loss of good jobs in communities right across the keystone province, and it will mean that profits leave this jurisdiction and go to big

corporations with headquarters in other parts of the country, or even other parts of the world.

Nonetheless, this Premier and his Cabinet and his advisers sold off Teshmont, which is—was, I should add, a profitable subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro. Now it looks like they are making moves behind the scenes to sell off other subsidiaries soon.

Will the Premier tell us today: Which Manitoba Hydro subsidiary does he plan to sell off next? Will it be Manitoba Hydro Telecom? Manitoba Hydro International—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Even NDP members must be disappointed, Madam Speaker, as the Leader of the NDP promised he was new and he was going to revitalize the party. He just dusts off old, tired, worn-out rhetoric close to Halloween to try to be the bogeyman of our province and scare people.

Madam Speaker, the difference between the NDP government and the NDP opposition, apparently, and this government is that they believe and they behaved as if they believe they were the owners of Manitoba Hydro.

On this side of the House, we know who the real owners are. They're the people of Manitoba. And that's how it's going to stay.

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

Sale of Manitoba Hydro Subsidiaries Referendum Inquiry

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Madam Speaker, the privatization bogeyman rears his ugly head again.

On September 30th, Manitoba Hydro tabled their annual report, which said directly, Manitoba Hydro owns Teshmont. Two days later, a private company announced that they had acquired Teshmont.

What at the start of the week was owned by all of us here in Manitoba, at the end of the week was in private hands.

It is black and white, it—as clear as could be. This government has privatized a profitable subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro.

The Premier just refused to answer which is next on his privatization hit list, so I would ask him the following: Can he commit that there would be a referendum not just for the whole of Manitoba Hydro,

but would there be a referendum before any subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro is sold off?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, nothing new over there, Madam Speaker.

The member just criticized the management of Manitoba Hydro on a decision the management of Manitoba Hydro made. And that is exactly the same behaviour that saw the previous NDP government overrule the people of Manitoba Hydro and force a billion-dollar boondoggle down the throats of Manitoba ratepayers by putting a line two thirds of the way around the province that shouldn't have gone there.

This is the problem with the NDP position, Madam Speaker. They like to act like they own Manitoba Hydro, and we know they don't. But when they act like they own Manitoba Hydro, they forced billions of dollars of additional debt onto Manitoba ratepayers and make the rates high.

We're going to address the problem they created, Madam Speaker. But while we're doing it, the member shouldn't be pointing at the floor and saying we missed a spot. We're going to continue to clean up the NDP mess and we're going to respect Manitoba Hydro when they attempt to do the same thing.

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

Mr. Kinew: You know, I'd just quickly point out that the Premier did not promise to hold a referendum before his next privatization of a subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans for decades have built up our most important Crown corporation. Whether you are rich or poor, working class, well off, whether you live in the North or the south, you have invested in Manitoba Hydro so that it can be strong, reliable and provide us with clean electricity.

This government has no right to sell it off, in whole or in part, and it is a poor vision for the future of Manitoba Hydro that they would break it up and sell off the intellectual property, sell off the aspects that generate revenue for the bottom line and sell off the good jobs so that they can be shipped out of province, Madam Speaker.

Again, will the Premier commit to holding a referendum before he sells off any more subsidiaries of Manitoba Hydro?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I know that the member was quick to push Greg Selinger under the bus as soon as he could. He is also, of course, attempting to dislodge himself from any of the mistakes of the previous administration.

In respect to Manitoba Hydro, one of the major mistakes that they made was they disrespected the people who run Manitoba Hydro and decided they'd run it politically instead. And, Madam Speaker, that's what they did. And they added over \$10 billion of additional debt. Far, far out of control from what they originally projected.

The NDP told Manitobans—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister:—they wouldn't pay a penny for a bipole line that's going to cost them a billion extra and close to \$4 billion in total.

Madam Speaker, this is the legacy of the NDP: never going to Manitobans and asking for permission to dig a giant debt hole. That's not how we operate over here. We know who owns Manitoba Hydro. We'll always respect them, and we'll maintain Manitoba Hydro in the hands of Manitobans, where they tried to give it away.

COVID-19 Pandemic Testing Capacity

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): COVID-19 testing sites are swamped, but in the last few days, the minister's presented access to testing as an either-or choice. To him, either we address the backlog of hip-knee surgeries or provide necessary COVID screening. It's a false choice. We can do both.

The Province has had seven months now to prepare for this moment. Unfortunately, this minister and this government are failing.

I ask the minister: Why wasn't he ready for this moment? Why isn't there additional testing capacity right now when we need it?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I thank the member for the question.

I welcome all members back to the House.

I will—intend to answer the member's question to their satisfaction. I would first want to take this opportunity to say that—to the family of the deceased elderly patient at Parkview Place, to the family of the Winnipeg resident who was in his 70s, and to the

family of the member that was—of the Stonewall community that was in their 60s, I believe I speak for a members in this House when we extend our condolences to those families.

We continue to say COVID-19 exacts a very real cost, and that is why we are doing all we can to protect Manitobans.

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

MLA Asagwara: The minister and the Premier wasted seven months. Capacity should have been built and in place right now when we need it.

Families are waiting hours in long lines in their cars and on the phone. The government was not prepared for this moment. The Premier says he agrees, saying, and I quote, he's not happy with the lack of action on the government's own part. But the Premier's unhappiness isn't what concerns me, Madam Speaker, it's the unacceptably long wait for testing at sites that are booked up right after 9 a.m. in the morning.

Addressing this requires planning, it requires foresight and it requires a government that puts the needs of people first.

The Premier and this minister may be unhappy with their performance, but when will they do something to address this urgent issue?

Mr. Friesen: The member asserts that the last seven months were wasted. Let's review the last seven months. Manitoba was one of the first provinces in Canada to actually reorient its health-care system, to redeploy its workforce, worked 'tirely' to bring PPE into this jurisdiction for nurses, for doctors, for patients, when other jurisdictions were first scrambling for those things.

* (14:20)

We closed our personal-care homes and maintained one worker per site, and we kept thousands of people alive when Quebec and Ontario ramped up thousands of deaths in their facilities.

We are proud of the leadership that continues to be put into place every day, not just by government members, but by the entire team, by front-line workers and the leadership of this province, and we will not apologize for how we have kept Manitobans safe.

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

MLA Asagwara: And while the minister won't apologize, city residents are driving to other cities to get tests. Manitobans with young children are waiting in their cars all day just to get a test, and they're waiting on the phones for hours with Health Links, trying to get results. It's totally unacceptable.

The Premier and the minister promised months ago that the Province would be able to administer and process 3,000 tests per day. They've known all along that this capacity would be needed. It's not in place all these months later. It's a failure of planning, and it's a failure of leadership to meet the targets that this government knew they needed months ago.

When will the government regularly administer 3,000 tests per day, as they promised, and when will they have the staff in place so that Manitobans aren't waiting all day in lines?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, we are not satisfied that people are waiting too long in lineups. They aren't satisfied in Ontario and Alberta and Saskatchewan either. We're working very hard every single day.

That member and all NDP members know that in the beginning of July we were averaging 500 tests per day. Three months—three weeks ago we were averaging 1,400 tests per day. This week we are averaging 2,000 tests per day, with the highest number of daily tests logged, just yesterday, at 2,700 tests.

Manitoba Hydro International Request to Remove Stop-Sell Order

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): Manitoba Hydro is our most important Crown corporation, and this Premier seems dead set on breaking it up and selling it off.

Over the past month we've learned of a Hydro sale of their profitable subsidiary, Teshmont. We've learned of his interference in Manitoba Hydro International's business. And we've learned that contracts are being taken from Manitoba Hydro and are being given to Bell MTS, without tender, by the Premier's hand-picked staff.

These are truly ugly examples of political interference, and they need to stop.

Will the Premier remove the stop-sell order on Hydro International today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): The member can raise the phony-baloney bogeyman stuff all he wants with me, Madam Speaker, but he's got to lay off our provincial civil servants. It's not acceptable, it's totally inappropriate—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: It's got to stop. Madam Speaker, it's got to stop.

Members opposite have no right to go after our civil servants in these debates. If they want to attack me, I'm ready to take it on—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —but the people in our civil service are better than that. The people in our civil service deserve better than that, Madam Speaker. They are put in positions where they are acting on the advice and recommendations of our Crown—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —corporations, of our schools, of our universities and of this government. And, Madam Speaker, they do not deserve the criticism of members opposite.

Show some respect. Show some class. Grow up.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: I didn't think we'd get here this quickly. But I would ask for everybody's co-operation. I have to be able to hear the questions and answers, and if members are yelling I cannot hear that. And if you want me to rule accordingly and properly I need to be able to hear. So I would ask for everybody's co-operation, please.

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

Manitoba Hydro Bidding on Network Contract

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): The Premier suggests that we should lay off the civil service, but according to his own words, he interfered in Manitoba Hydro to stop them from bidding on a Manitoba Network contract.

We discovered through FIPPA that his hand-picked staff, a former Bell MTS executive, did this dirty work for him.

It's deeply concerning that Bell MTS was ultimately given an untendered \$40-million contract because of this interference.

The question for the Premier—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sala: —is simple.

Why did he have his hand-picked staff order Hydro to avoid bidding on the Manitoba Network contract? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Shameful conduct does not deserve a response in this Chamber, Madam Speaker.

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

Manitoba Hydro Contracts Political Interference Inquiry

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): It seems that the Premier is having a hard time owning up to his actions here.

Let's be very clear, the Premier's hand-picked head of Treasury Board, who was previously an executive with Bell MTS, gave direction to Manitoba Hydro that directly resulted in them getting a \$40-million contract extension.

This is after the Premier stated very clearly in 2017 that Mr. Beauregard would recuse himself from any and all decisions relating to Manitoba Hydro and to Bell MTS—sorry—to Bell MTS.

At this point, Madam Speaker, it's pretty clear that the Premier has misled this House.

Why is the Premier's hand-picked staff interfering in Hydro when the Premier committed that this would not take place?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I encourage the member to do his research.

COVID-19's Effect on Women Request for Economic Support

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on women. The facts are staggering.

More women work in sectors like retail and hospitality that were the hardest hit by this pandemic. Millions of women are juggling child care and work. And too many women have dropped out of the workforce because of these pressures.

And what did we hear from the government in their Throne Speech about how they're going to help Manitoba women? Absolutely nothing, Madam Speaker.

So, Madam Speaker, the question is: What will the Premier be doing to offer supports for women to overcome this recession?

Hon. Cathy Cox (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Well, Madam Speaker, our government recognizes that COVID has an impact on individuals across the entire province.

I was able to visit many of the shelters over the summer months and personally extend my thank you to each and every one of those shelter workers who work so hard to ensure that they provide support and resources to women who are quite often facing some of the very darkest days in their entire lives.

So I want to say thank you to all of those shelter workers who are doing so much for us here in Manitoba as we do face this pandemic.

We are all in this together, Madam Speaker.

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

Child-Care Centres Operating Grant Freeze

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): While visits are great, thousands of women have been forced to drop out of the workforce altogether due to the disproportionate impact of this pandemic.

The single best support that this government can offer working women is affordable, accessible child care. Yet the government's record has been dismal and an absolute failure, Madam Speaker. Unspent money and threats of cuts have replaced any plan to help working mothers, and no new funds for centres that are at risk of closing.

Will the Premier (Mr. Pallister) today commit to ending his freeze on operating grants for child-care centres?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I want to thank the member for the question.

I particularly want to thank all of those who work in our child-care centres, those families out there that are going through very difficult times. All Manitobans are going through very difficult times, and it's important that we step up. And we know that those in the child-care field have stepped up to really help those heroes, those front-line health-care workers, those front-line service workers out there who have been helping to keep Manitobans safe, Madam Speaker.

The member opposite is very wrong. We have invested very—a lot in child care, in the sector, Madam Speaker: over 73,000 individual PPE items, including masks for all workers; \$1.4 million for the Risk Recognition Program for over 1,000 eligible child-care workers. And I will continue to go on after the member asks her next question.

* (14:30)

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

Ms. Fontaine: Thanks and visits aren't going to cut where women are currently situated here in Manitoba.

And we know, Madam Speaker, that one key to our economic recovery will be to get women back in the workforce. One of the most single important pieces of that project is strengthening our child-care system. It will help working moms, children and our economy.

It's been seven months since the pandemic hit in Manitoba and we have seen absolutely no action from this minister or this Premier.

Will the Premier end his funding freeze on child-care centres and do something today to support Manitoba women get back in the workforce?

Mrs. Stefanson: The member opposite and members opposite have taken an ideological approach when it comes to child care in the province of Manitoba. And hitting—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —the pandemic has just shown exactly why that child-care system doesn't work.

That's why we're making significant changes to offer more supports for Manitoba families, to offer more choice for Manitoba—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Stefanson: —families.

I know members opposite don't like to talk about Manitoba families, Madam Speaker, but that's what we need to do, is ensure that the child care is there for those Manitoba families when they need it. That's what we're doing.

They took an ideological approach Madam Speaker. That's not what we're doing. We're working with families to 'enshul'—ensure that the child care is there for them when they need it.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Transcona, and I would say, welcome back.

Education Funding During Pandemic Class Size Cap and Staffing

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I'll just take a couple seconds. I'll just say I've never been so happy to see an Order Paper. But thanks again to everybody. It's great to be back, so let's get right into it.

Madam Speaker—excuse my voice; it will get better. It will get better.

We as legislators have taken great care to provide space between us of more than two metres. This physical distance keeps us safe. The message is clear. The way to beat this pandemic is to keep our distance and suppress opportunities for the virus to spread.

But for hundreds of thousands of Manitoba schoolchildren, teachers and support staff, two metres of distance is not in place. Many classrooms are too full; appropriate physical distancing is just not possible.

But it's not too late to address this challenge. We have faith. The government can put forth the resources to cap the class size at 15—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): I want to echo the comments of the Premier and others. It is a tremendous pleasure to see the member for Transcona back in the House here today, asking his thoughtful questions—and they are always thoughtful. I enjoyed our conversations over the summer, some by text, some personally. I was pleased to offer him a briefing on the reopening plan that he was able to attend, and I also know that our department appreciated his input into those plans. He always brings good advice, Madam Speaker.

We also listen to advice, and the advice of the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer was critical in bringing forward the plan to reopen schools which is now under way Madam Speaker, and we appreciate the advice and the support of public health as we reopen schools.

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

Mr. Altomare: Madam Speaker, yesterday's Throne Speech was a missed opportunity to address the real challenges faced in our schools right now.

We watch what the Pallister government does over what they say, because over the last four years they have underspent education by \$161 million and have not kept up with inflation. Even now—even now—a month into the school year, the minister has given no indication as to where that \$85 million from the federal government will be spent.

The Pallister government can take steps right now, even at this late date, to make the right investments to improve our children's education and to keep them safe, including the—capping classroom size and hiring more teachers and support staff.

Why won't the minister make this commitment?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, across Canada, there are 1,600 schools that have had COVID identified in those schools. Less than 1.8 per cent of those schools are here in Manitoba. There's been very good work done by teachers, administrators, others who are working on the front lines within our schools to ensure that young people remain safe.

That includes parents, who also have a responsibility to ensure that their students aren't going to school if they are sick, Madam Speaker. It also includes public health, who's done a very good job, where there are cases in Manitoba schools, to connect with those parents and others within the school community to ensure they have information.

It is truly a team effort. We know that there is more that we're going to continue to do, and we will do it as a government, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Altomare: So no answer on \$85.4 million, even though—even though—the government of Alberta has even itemized, to the school, where that money is going.

So I want to ask the minister: Where is that federal money going in Manitoba?

Mr. Goertzen: I'm glad to see it only took three questions; the member's in full flight. I'm actually really glad to see that, Madam Speaker.

Well, we've already indicated that there's a \$100 million that been provided by the Province of Manitoba and the school divisions to ensure to that PPE is bought, to ensure that sanitization is bought, to help with staff and other needs. That's a \$100 million that's already being used to ensure that safety is within our schools.

We've indicated that the federal government, we'll be using some of that money for a broader remote learning strategy. That work is already undergoing, and it's already being implemented, Madam Speaker. So I appreciate the member opposite and his passion that he's brought here. I'm glad to hear the passion.

Madam Speaker, \$100 million from the Province of Manitoba; we'll be allocating more from the federal government, but the most important part isn't money. It's keeping our students safe and that, so far, is working, Madam Speaker.

COVID-19 Pandemic Personal-Care-Home Supports

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): On March 2nd and many times since then, Manitoba Liberals have warned this government they needed to get ready for a pandemic, especially protecting personal-care homes. Now, active cases per capita in Manitoba are the second worst in the country.

There are 24 positive cases and four people are dead in Parkview. A constituent called me to tell me he's trying to pull his father out of there so he won't die of COVID, and they won't return his calls. The Free Press is reporting—and I table the article—that staff shortages are being filled by casual staff from agencies. Nurses, the long-term-care association and others have all been pleading with this government to help them pay for COVID measures.

Why didn't the government provide it?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): This gives me the opportunity to say a special and sincere thank you to our Health Minister, his team, our front-line workers: the people who work throughout our system have done an incredible job of creating a safe environment, of maintaining that safe environment.

We've taken initiative early on to make sure that we were protecting, as much as possible, our seniors. We've taken criticism from some for doing that, Madam Speaker. We're prepared to take that criticism because we value our seniors as much as any of our citizens.

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

Request for More Testing Sites

Mr. Lamont: This is what the Premier had to say yesterday, quote: I want to assure Manitobans that our

government's not happy with the lack of action on our own part.

Perhaps the Premier will give whoever's in charge a good talking-to, but in the meantime, will he actually open—commit to opening more test sites and making sure that Manitobans don't lose income waiting for results?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, that member knows that, throughout Canada right now, this is creating a problem as more people seek testing, but that member also knows that this government has been acting.

We brought in a third party to look at our whole system from the top to the bottom to suggest improvements. We've arranged a task force with an immediate mandate to find and increase testing capacity. I'd be only too happy to answer the member's next question to talk about where and how and how soon that is all going to occur, and I would just have him reflect on the fact that even just five days ago, a new testing site in Winnipeg came online that is now doing 10 per cent of all of Winnipeg's tests.

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

Health-Care System Federal-Provincial Funding

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): For years, the Premier has been blaming the federal government for changes to health-care transfers that Conservative governments brought in. It was the Harper Conservative government that, in 2011, unilaterally changed health-care funding increases from 6 per cent to 3 per cent and froze Manitoba's total transfers for six years straight.

* (14:40)

As a Conservative Member of Parliament, the Premier himself voted for a major change to health-care transfers that, in 2014, saw Manitoba lose, along with every other province but Alberta. And now he's asking for more federal funding.

When asked on CBC's The House whether he could guarantee that funds marked for health care would be spent on more health care, the Premier said, that's not a hard guarantee for me to give.

If the federal government offers more secure and earmarked funding, will the Premier guarantee that he will spend it and not cut?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I might even be forced to put on a Justin Trudeau hockey jersey. If the federal government stepped up, it would be wonderful. Every provincial government, every provincial premier across all the political spectrum—Liberal, NDP, Conservative—agrees that this is a No. 1 priority.

We've asked the federal government to step up. They've let their contribution percentage slide at a time when health-care demands are growing and every opposition leader in the country—with one exception, the NDP leader—has spoken in favour of that priority. Only the NDP stand up and say, make wait times longer. Tommy Douglas would be ashamed, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Education Property Tax Elimination Announcement

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake-Gimli): Our government is committed to protecting Manitobans' incomes. We've kept our word by lowering taxes and leaving more money on the kitchen table.

As part of our 2020 tax rollback guarantee, yesterday's Throne Speech confirmed our government's commitment to begin the phase-out of education property taxes in Manitoba.

Can the Minister of Finance tell the House why this tax relief is so important for Manitoba families and businesses?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Thank you for the question.

Given the challenges we face with COVID-19, Manitoba needs tax relief—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —sooner—sooner, Madam Speaker—rather than later.

By eliminating the portion of the property tax bill, Manitoba families and businesses will have significant savings on their property tax bill.

Madam Speaker, instead of imposing higher taxes that the NDP loved to do, our government is taking a balanced approach to protect Manitobans and provide tax relief in this unprecedented time.

First Nations in Northern Manitoba COVID-19 Outbreak Concerns

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): The pandemic has really exposed the inadequacy of public health in northern First Nations.

First Nations simply don't have what they need to deal with an outbreak of COVID-19. That's what they're telling this government, and the chief public health officer says there's a heightened chance of an outbreak should COVID-19 make its way into our remote and isolated communities, like what we are seeing in Little Grand Rapids.

Will the minister put forward exceptional supports to address the concerns of our northern First Nations?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I don't accept the preamble of the member's question. That member should know that it was exactly the use of the GeneXpert COVID-19 pandemic gene tests, that IT technology was used exclusively in the North to keep northern communities safe. For the first six months of the pandemic, we were the only Canadian jurisdiction that did not have an outbreak on First Nations or northern areas because of this.

I can tell you that right now the Red Cross, the First Nations Indigenous health branch and our public health has boots on the ground in Little Grand Rapids, responding, keeping people safe, moving them into isolation. They'll continue to do so.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Dauphin Correctional Centre

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

MLA Asagwara: The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Michelle Gaudry, Chad Gaudry and Betty Shewchuk.

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

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: And just a reminder to members that in most cases, we are moving through this alphabetically, but I'm certainly prepared to look at if

there might be some changes. But the way this is set up in order to make all of this work virtually, I'm just going to call out the names as they're indicated on the Order Paper in an alphabetical manner. So the next one is the honourable member for Keewatinook.

The honourable member for Keewatinook?

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: We're just having a little glitch here.

Mr. Bushie: I wish to present the following petition—
* (14:50)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Keewatinook—no?

Mr. Bushie: Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: We might have it.

Mr. Bushie: Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Bushie: I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by many Manitobans.

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 ageing, illness, employment or accident not only lose the ability to communicate effectively with friends, relatives, or colleagues; they also can experience unemployment, social isolation, and struggles with mental health.

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 has been available since 1989 through the Central Speech and Hearing Clinic, founded in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The surgical hearing implant program began implanting patients in the fall

of 2011 and marked 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 process.

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 that 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 replacement 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.

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

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

under the Cochlear Implant Speech Processor Replacement Program to assist with the replacement costs associated with a device upgrade.

Signed by Scott Wegner, Brian Greese, Brian Kuzuwski [*phonetic*] and many others.

Vivian Sands Project—Clean Environment Commission Review

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

(2) The amount of dry, solid sand mined and produced per year according to the EAP is 1.36 million tons, and much of the sand will be used in fracking.

(3) A major concern of the proposed mine and plant is that, if developed, it could contaminate the Sandilands aquifer, including both carbonate and sandstone aquifers, which covers much of southeastern Manitoba. It has excellent water quality and is the water source for tens of thousands of Manitobans, including many municipal water systems, agriculture, industry, private wells and an abundance of wildlife and ecosystems. Further, people in the Indigenous communities that are potentially affected by this were not afforded the required Indigenous consultation from either federal or provincial government officials.

(4) The sustainable yield of the combined sandstone and carbonate aquifers has still not yet been established by provincial authorities. The mine—

(5) The mine could cause leaking of acid and heavy metals and pollute the aquifer, as it will go down 200 feet into the Winnipeg formation of the sandstone aquifer. This is a concern that the shale, which separates the carbonate and sandstone aquifers sand and 'puride' oolite itself contains sulphides will, when exposed to injected air from the CanWhite Sands extraction process, turn to acid.

(6) An additional concern with the proposed mine and plant is the potential to pollute the Brokenhead

River and the aquatic food chain leading to Lake Winnipeg.

* (15:00)

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

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

(9) There's also a risk of subsidence around each borehole as a result of sand extraction.

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

This petition has been signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by many Manitobans.

Ambulance Service Charges

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) The provincial government charges more for ambulance services than any other jurisdiction in Canada, which is incommensurate with Manitoba's median income.

(2) Exceptions are made for veterans, Indigenous Manitobans, people on social assistance and people whose employers include the service in their collective agreements so that they do not need to pay ambulance fees directly.

(3) It is discriminatory to force people with innate physical conditions, such as those who are disabled or pregnant, to pay out-of-pocket fees for ambulance services.

(4) These people may also be forced to pay a premium when purchasing ambulance insurance due to pre-existing conditions and/or lack of access to group insurance.

(5) It is fair and reasonable to expect that lawmakers provide the public with the same level of universality and accessibility to health services they provide themselves.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living to provide ambulance services for all Manitobans without a deterrent fee, or else to provide a means by which people with innate physical conditions, disabilities, or who are pregnant will not be required to pay the fee out of pocket.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

The DCC is one of the largest employers in Dauphin, providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs, and approximately 80 families will be directly affected by the closure, which will also impact the local economy.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Madam Speaker: I would indicate that the screen seems to be frozen. We're going to move to the next member, for St. Vital, and if we get her back, we will have her complete her statement.

So, the honourable member for St. Vital.

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

The background to this position is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley. The honourable member for Wolseley?

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

*(15:10)

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to immediately reverse the decision to close the DCC and proceed

with the previous plan to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanded courthouse in Dauphin.

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

The United Church of Canada Act

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background of this petition is as follows:

(1) An act to incorporate the United Church of Canada was assented to April 5th, 1924.

(2) The United Church of Canada Act, SM 1924, c. 100 was re-enacted by The United Church of Canada Act, RSM 1990, c. 200.

(3) The United Church of Canada has undergone a restructuring process in accordance with the restructuring motion adopted by the United Church of Canada's 42nd General Council on August 14th, 2015, and the results of the remit process undertaken thereafter, as confirmed by the United Church of Canada's 43rd General Council on July 22nd, 2018.

(4) The restructuring requires certain amendments to the governing legislation to reflect the church's new governance structure.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To amend The United Church of Canada Act, RSM 1990, c. 200 to reflect the new governance structure of the United Church of Canada and to make other incidental changes to the act.

This is signed by Nora Sanders, general secretary, general council; and Cynthia Gunn, legal judicial counsel.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

So we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this is signed by Michael Zan, Sharma Katenos [*phonetic*] and Richard Ricketts and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

It reads as follows: To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this 'postition' is as follows:

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

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

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

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

And we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

Madam Speaker: Just for the information of the House, we haven't been able to reconnect with the honourable member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino), but if she does happen to come back on, she can—we can probably ask for leave at some point today for her to continue with her petition, or she can certainly bring it up tomorrow.

So that is one of the technical glitches that we are going to see, but everybody's working really hard to resolve those.

I just do want to say to everybody that joined us virtually today, great work. Everybody really did a really good job on joining us virtually, and I'm sure everybody was a little bit nervous. And to everybody here that was all part of this, great work today, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Acting Government House Leader): On House business, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Mr. Pedersen: I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, October 14th, 2020 at 6 p.m. in the Chamber to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office for the year ended March 31st, 2017; Auditor General's Report,

Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018; Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019; Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020; Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Audit, Strategic Priorities Planned for 2019-20 and 2021-22; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated May 2014, section 17: Personal Injury Protection Plan; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated May 2015, section 7: Personal Injury Protection Plan; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Recommendations, dated May, 2016: Personal Injury Protection Plan. Witness to be called, Auditor General of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—*[interjection]*

It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Wednesday, October 14th, 2020 at 6 p.m. in the Chamber to consider the following reports: Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office for the year ended March 31st, 2017; Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018; Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019; Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020; Auditor General's Report, Operations of the Office, Strategic Priorities Planned for 2019-20 and 21-22; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated May 2014, section 17: Personal Injury Protection Plan; Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Previously Issued Recommendations, dated May 2015, section 7: Personal Injury Protection Plan; and Auditor General's Report, Follow-up of Recommendations, dated May, 2016: Personal Injury Protection Plan. Witness to be called, the Auditor General of Canada—sorry, the Auditor General of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: Madam Speaker, may I read my petition?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to revert back to petitions? *[Agreed]*

Leave has been granted. I would ask the member to begin her petition, maybe from the beginning.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*(Continued)***PETITIONS***(Continued)***Dauphin Correctional Centre**

Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: And just so the record is clear, that was the honourable member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino) that was completing her petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY*(Continued)***GOVERNMENT BUSINESS***(Continued)*

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, let us begin with the Throne Speech Debate.

THRONE SPEECH**(First Day of Debate)**

Madam Speaker: The House will now consider the reply to the Throne Speech.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): I move, second by the member for Riding Mountain (Mr. Nesbitt),

that the following address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor: We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at the Third Session of the 42nd Legislature of Manitoba.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wowchuk: Thank you Madam Speaker. I rise in the House today with great honour to move the Throne Speech for the Third Session of the 42nd Legislature— or Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

First, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome everyone back to session. While I can't see the smiling faces of my colleagues, I trust we're all happy to be back in the Chamber after a summer like no other. Our House leaders and our clerks have faced tremendous challenges as we find a new stride in virtual sittings.

Thank you to everyone here today and behind the scenes that have worked tirelessly to make sure we could all be here today. The history and tradition of this Assembly are spectacular examples of the work ethic of Manitobans, from the original log cabin on the bank of the Red River to the Chamber we sit in today underneath the iconic Golden Boy.

Manitobans have never turned away from a challenge. This year is no exception to the rule. Last week we celebrated the accomplishment of balancing the budget, an achievement made just in time to prepare us, to strengthen us to face new unprecedented challenge, protecting Manitobans in our fight against COVID-19 and planning for the future, continuing our work to fix the finances, repair the services and rebuild our economy while pursuing a two-term balanced-budget plan to eliminate the COVID deficit while investing in the services Manitobans depend on, all while protecting health care, protecting jobs, protecting incomes, reducing taxes, protecting education and child care, protecting finance— or financial and environmental investments and the future of Manitobans.

From the shores of Lake Winnipegosis to the Porcupine and Duck mountains, the Swan Valley is a spectacular place, and I'll always call home. I'd like to thank the communities within my constituency that entrusted me to represent them. I want to say it's an extraordinary honour to engage with you all on a regular basis. Engaging with my constituents is the light of my day, the butter to my bread. Seeing the difference that I can make within these communities is really what keeps me going: Swan River, Minitonas, Cowan, Camperville, Mafeking, Benito,

Bowsman, Birch River, Pine River, San Clara, Ethelbert, Roblin, Inglis, Russell, Rossburn, Binscarth, Wuskwi Sipihk First Nation-Sapotaweyak Cree Nation, both part of the Swampy Cree Tribal Council, Waywayseecappo First Nation, Pine Creek First Nation.

I want to acknowledge our seniors. Seniors build our province and have provided so much of what we have in this beautiful province, ensuring that more Manitoba seniors are better able to age in the community they call home, with the supports they need to be comfortable, and know their efforts are appreciated.

* (15:30)

As someone who worked in the Swan Valley School Division for the majority of my career, I take our government's mandate in education very seriously. The educators across our province have faced a September back-to-school like no other. The innovation and the creativity being channelled by our educational profession or education professionals is something that should inspire us all, from the YouTube tours of new distancing protocols to the use of colour in cohorting.

Mr. Derek Johnson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Swan Valley regional school has always been a hub in my community. It brings students from across the valley, not just literally. Providing an annual increase of over \$1.6 billion more in education funding over the next four years is critical to continue to grow these programs in rural Manitoba.

Partnerships with the university of Brandon and the University College of the North to offer university courses to our grade 12 students; this is instrumental in building a strong economy. This will allow students to not only take advanced placement courses, but also level university credits. This will help build equity within our provincial education system, as these courses are rarely offered in rural Manitoba. This partnership allows rural students to enter on the same playing field as their urban counterparts. This partnership strongly encourages academic excellent.

This all being said, academic excellence is not only a skill that students will be able to leave SVRS with, and the other high schools with the region. SVRS is one of the province's premier vocational high schools. We offer integrated programs in electrical, carpentry, heavy duty power mechanics, automotive, culinary services, cosmetology, graphic arts, environmental management. Many of our grade

12 students graduate with a high school diploma and a certified first level in a trade of their choice.

We have grown these programs to better fit our community by allowing adult students to enrol in vocational training at a small tuition fee. This allows skilled individuals to stay close to home, while expanding their education or retraining for a career. This transforming and 'modernizing' apprentice training enable more Manitobans to become skilled journeymen, particularly in rural and northern Manitoba.

The Swan Valley regional has worked very closely with University College of the North in The Pas. The Swan River regional centre satellite opened back in November of 2011 and is—following certificate, diploma and university-level programs have been delivered with instructors and university faculty training on-site in Swan River. The introduction of Licensed Practical Nursing program at this satellite campus has brought monumental change to our health-care facilities, with 15 grads coming from the program every year. These graduates, they enter in the practical field within our health-care facilities. When the program opened in 2016, it quickly filled up with local students who'd been waiting on a waiting list, trying to enter the faculty of nursing at U of M. The program has a waiting list since its inception, bringing students from across the valley in Manitoba to move to Swan River to grow their skills. Due to the high demand, this program gives preference to Manitoba-Saskatchewan residents.

These initiatives are developing Swan Valley into a vocational hub in rural Manitoba, preparing Manitobans for the jobs of the future and ensuring workers get the education and labour market training they need to be job-ready. This is such an important goal for the communities.

The Swan River constituency is a gem for tourism, with world-class trout lakes in the Duck Mountains, Goose Lake in Roblin and numerous lakes in Russell and Rossburn surrounding area.

I want to acknowledge Stacy Grindle and her office right behind the big swan in Swan River. It's often one of the first places people stop in town. Stacy is manager of the Swan Valley Chamber of Commerce, and her bright smile at the tourism office in Swan River welcomes everyone from near and far.

Thank you, Stacy, for sharing your knowledge and love of the community. Stacy was one of the

locals who started an initiative to take over 110 hiking trails, mapped and updated, on internationally, the recognized site, alltrails.com, highlighting the vast ecotourism of the region.

Fish enhancements initiative to place and mark fishing docks and access points; many of these were known to locals only by the tire tracks. Now these local hidden gems are drawing tourists from all over Manitoba.

I want to acknowledge Snoman and North Mountain Riders. These groups of volunteers dedicate countless hours to maintaining over 775 kilometres of snowmobile trails. These are groomed, signed and mapped to Snoman's standards. All trails have warmup shelters equipped with wood stove firewood and seating. In most recent years, the group's advocacy has led the Swan Valley and surrounding area to be named the most popular snowmobiling destination in Canada thanks to the extensive infrastructure built by these volunteer groups.

In addition, Lake of the Prairies in the beautiful Asessippi valley has everything to offer for an outdoor enthusiast. With numerous campgrounds, world-class fishing, it is a sportsman's paradise where one can enjoy family time and explore the great outdoors Manitoba has to offer.

I can't forget about the Asessippi ski hill, a world-class ski hill in the middle of the Manitoba prairies during the winter and a mountain biker's paradise in summer. When there, stop at the Asessippi park concession and try their delicious breakfast specials.

This summer, we got to see how the reduction of red tape has helped private enterprise. The red tape on business and provincial parks were previously crippling. With new owners at the Wellman Lake Lodge this spring, we watched the lodge flourish in front of our eyes from lunch specials to a full functional patio bar.

An Honourable Member: Good food.

Mr. Wowchuk: Yes.

The lodge has once again become a centre of the community at Wellman and Glad Lake, welcoming folks from all across Manitoba. Yes, Arch and Dawn at Blue Lakes Lodge also welcome you to world-class trout fishing and their hospitality. Childs Lake is also a great tourist attraction as well as Goose Lake in Roblin.

While so much of the population around the Duck mountains have enjoyed a peaceful season, this hasn't been the case for some of the most important stakeholders we have in our ecosystem: an icon of Manitoba, our moose. Although populations are slowly recovering, they are extremely fragile. All stakeholders must work together for a common cause to have a sustainable population.

It's tough to be a moose. With brain worm, winter ticks as a result of climatic conditions, predators and an increased demand for their meat, this species needs our help. We will work with all stakeholders toward the common goal of ensuring sustainability for generations to come. It's more important than ever to save this icon of the boreal forest. We'll also work diligently with everyone on the landscape.

In conclusion, we have to put our differences aside to work collaboratively with all of the stakeholders in my area. We are the government and the team that Manitobans can trust to keep its word and get the job done. Forging positive, respectful and inclusive relationships with Indigenous and northern communities is fundamental to Manitoba's economic prosperity.

* (15:40)

I am proud to be a part of our team, to work hard for all Manitobans as we move forward in these unprecedented times to fix the finances, to repair the services and rebuild our economy.

Never before has it been more important to build positive relationships. This will be the key, and together, Manitobans, we can do it.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): I am truly honoured to once again represent what I know to be one of the most beautiful constituencies in Manitoba: Riding Mountain. I'm also very proud to be asked to second the Speech from the Throne that opened the Third Session of the 42nd Legislature.

When the electoral boundaries commission released its final report nearly two years ago, the Riding Mountain boundaries changed, as did many in Manitoba. My constituency changed considerably, as the northern portion of the former Arthur-Virden constituency was rolled in and areas to the west like Rosburn, Russell and the Asessippi area moved to Swan River.

I have been blessed with the opportunity to continue to represent Riding Mountain and work towards building upon and supporting every sector to

ensure my constituents are able to continue to move forward through these uncertain times.

Right now, Manitobans have seen the world turned upside down, and I believe we have shown that we know what it takes to keep weathering the COVID-19 storm as a province and as a government. The COVID-19 pandemic is unlike anything we have encountered before, but with unique obstacles comes creative solutions.

The people of Manitoba have, time and time again, stepped up to plate when it comes to cracking down on this virus and working to flatten the curve by following the critical public health protocols.

I want to thank the residents of the Prairie Mountain Health region who stepped up to the plate in August when public health declared code orange in the region. And they continue to remain resilient to this day to flatten the curve. And I applaud all Manitobans who continue to fight to contain this virus for each other, for their businesses and for Manitoba as a whole.

The Prairie Mountain Health region was only elevated to the orange level on our pandemic response system from August 21st to September 18th: less than just one month, due to an incredible effort by the people of the western and Parkland regions. After only a week of tightening the restrictions, the case numbers began to drop significantly.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

The mandatory mask rules and limiting gathering sizes appear to have worked to reduce the active caseload. This allowed for retail businesses, restaurants and bars to re-expand capacity limits as the region returned to code yellow. Well after the code orange protocol was lifted, individuals in the region continue to adhere to public health measures to keep numbers down. I see many of my constituents wearing masks on a regular basis.

Madam Speaker, the Province of Manitoba is working to ensure that personal-care home residents are able to continue to visit with family and loved ones safely during the COVID-19 pandemic. For a while, at the beginning of the pandemic, it was hard to know what was worse: the pandemic or the mental stress on those who were not able to visit their loved ones.

It's human nature to be able to comfort those who we care about the most. Our government has made great strides in capital investment in personal-care homes, and during these tough times, it is important

to allow our citizens to visit those who are most vulnerable. Manitoba Health is working as we speak to facilitate the placement of temporary visitation shelters outside personal-care homes across Manitoba. Five of these shelters are in the Riding Mountain constituency. These shelters will allow Manitobans to visit their loved ones during inclement and cold weather in an enjoyable and safe environment.

We as Manitobans know what we do to keep the numbers down, and by listening to our outstanding health-care professionals who work tirelessly to come up with creative and innovative solutions to problems such as this, we will get through this pandemic together.

I encourage all Manitobans, especially over this Thanksgiving weekend, to continue to stay home if they are sick, physically distance yourself from others when necessary, and wear a mask when required. We all want to get back to our normal lives, but for now it is important that we all work together to fight COVID-19 and show that Manitobans know what to do.

Madam Speaker, in 2016, our government promised to balance the budget and we have delivered on this province. The Manitoba government will continue to protect Manitoba's financial, environmental and energy futures with a promise to again balance the budget by eliminating the COVID-19 deficit while still providing strategic investments in health care, education and families.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Manitobans have been resilient, and nearly 70 per cent of those who lost their jobs in March and April have been re-hired. Our job creation program has had a tremendous uptake but our work is not done. With this government, promises made are promises kept, and we will continue to work diligently to not only take care of the present, but to ensure that we have set Manitoba up for the future.

As an investment in the future, we will look at the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, which invites international skilled workers and student graduates through various immigration streams. Programs such as these feed into the growth of jobs and skilled tradespeople in rural Manitoba. I have seen this first-hand in rural areas like my constituency of Riding Mountain.

Our government has pledged \$120 million to fund the Manitoba Gap Protection Program, which

provides a one-time \$6,000 non-interest-bearing forgivable loan to small and medium-size businesses. This is essential for the growth and recovery of the economy and to show our commitment to small businesses across the province. I am pleased to see the tremendous uptake in this program, which is among the most generous in Canada. Madam Speaker, \$120 million has also been earmarked for the back to work summer initiative and the Summer Student Recovery Jobs Program. The next generation is growing up in a world unlike any other that has been seen before, and we will continue to work with youth to ensure they have the tools to push forward and adapt to whatever challenges are ahead.

We have individuals finding opportunities across rural Manitoba to diversify and adapt to the unsettling world we have found ourselves living in. The agricultural and farming communities are more vital now than ever for the growth of Manitoba as a whole. Manitoba's research and innovation program is another example of how the government remains focused on reaching out to our communities, civil servants and various enterprises to come up with creative solutions for the diverse problems facing us.

We now have a \$3 million cost-shared Canadian Agricultural Partnership program to help agricultural processors mitigate the spread of COVID-19. This financial assistance has been provided for various PPE and sanitation supplies, which we know has put a strain on people's lives and businesses. This program also provides assistance for the business continuity practices, training and resources to support COVID-19 mitigation.

With these new partnerships, we open the door for investment from all over the country and it's just one way to put Manitoba on the map and prove ourselves. Prove we have what it takes for businesses to thrive, tourism to grow and people to produce within our communities in preparation for the post-pandemic era.

* (15:50)

Our government's plan is to continue to also give real, meaningful tax relief to all Manitobans who, for 17 years, paid higher and higher taxes under an NDP government. Manitobans told the NDP they were tired of their tax-and-spend mentality. Voters made the decision to make their life more affordable by re-electing a government last fall that believes in leaving more money on their kitchen table so they can decide where to spend it.

We know that Manitobans are full of ideas, and our government has its ears and eyes open and truly listens. Through innovative initiatives like the Engage Manitoba portal, we have communicated with more Manitobans than any past government, and we will work together to make informed decisions. The Engage Manitoba system is designed to allow Manitobans to share their thoughts and have a direct impact on the government decision-making process every step of the way. Our investment in this sort of technology puts Manitoba at the head of the pack for community engagement and citizen-to-government discussion, because who is better to share ideas, stories and knowledge than Manitobans themselves? We know the problems, and we will work together for solutions.

Madam Speaker, we have all heard the phrase explore Manitoba, but what does it actually mean to explore Manitoba, and why is it significant now more than ever? Before the COVID-19 pandemic, you may have flown across the world to explore somewhere new, gone on road trips to beautiful British Columbia or to Ontario to see the great Niagara Falls. But not this year. This year, we have explored new heights and gone to great lengths to discover countless hidden gems across our beautiful province.

Normally, Manitoba draws tourists from all over Canada and the United States, but this year we have found ourselves to be the tourists in the very place we call home. I, myself, have heard first-hand how fellow Manitobans have learned to understand and see what makes this such a beautiful province to live in. In fact, Madam Speaker, I was speaking with our new intern in rum-room 153, Al Guertin this morning about how, for the first time ever this summer, he had taken a staycation in Manitoba to explore Riding Mountain National Park. He described how he believes the next generations of Manitobans have discovered a new appreciation for the amazing parts of Manitoba they never knew existed.

From the great Mantario hiking trails to the vast landscape of Riding Mountain National Park, they—these are new locations Manitobans have never explored. Riding Mountain National Park in particular has always been near and dear to my heart. Each year, I see the bison herd graze in the park with such elegance and grace. And now, each spring we see the birth of new calves and are hit with an appreciation of the new life to our astonish and diverse ecosystem. Once you step into the thick, green, seemingly boundless park, it is like entering a whole new world.

Madam Speaker, our government strategies, initiatives have always been for the growth of Manitoba and then for the benefit of all Manitobans. We will continue to fight through this interesting time and will not sway in our commitments. Now is not a time to cower and expect issues to resolve themselves. Now is the time for action and to push forward with the plan we have presented in this Speech from the Throne. Our government will persevere through this strange new present and will continue to plan for the betterment of the future.

I want to thank our Premier (Mr. Pallister), all of our ministers and Treasury Board members for all the work they have done and continue to do to create a better Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I want to take this opportunity to thank you, as well as all the Legislative Assembly staff and the clerks, for working so hard to make this hybrid session possible. And I think all of us, since the pandemic started, have endured many, many Zoom calls, and I would suggest that today's went a lot more smoothly than many of those other things that we've participated.

And I do want to thank my colleagues, as well, from the Wolseley and from Notre Dame. Maybe little hiccups here and there, but you did quite well in rolling with it and still doing the important work that our constituents have sent us here to do.

I want to begin my remarks in reply to the Throne by talking a bit about some of the stories that have really moved me since the start of the pandemic. Some of them are close to home—very, very close to home. Others I've encountered in the course of talking to constituents and even people that I work with.

Some of the most moving stories that I've heard recently since students went back to class centre on the grandparents, actually. For many families, including some that all of us here in the Chamber would know quite well, a lot of the grandparents are making some significant sacrifices. And what I'm talking about is that there are many grandparents out there who have not seen their grandkids since the school year started.

Now, they're making this sacrifice because they want to protect their own health, but I think they also believe in something greater than that as well. They're also giving up that valuable family time that I'm sure means so much to them to also do their part to stop the

community spread, and so they're making a sacrifice for something bigger than themselves.

When we talk about kids going back to school, I think we also need to acknowledge the sacrifices that this COVID generation is making, as well. In my own home, my oldest son is only in class one out of every three days, and you cannot tell me that that is not having an impact on his education. And I do seriously worry about what that's going to mean for him five years from now when he's in post-secondary. What's it going to mean for him 10 years from now when he's out in the workforce? What's it going to mean for him 15 years from now when hopefully he's running a business or pursuing his dreams?

And I do hope that we all work together as a society, across party lines, to make good on the sacrifices that we're asking of these young Manitobans today.

So, whether you're the high school kid who's only there half time or one third of the time, whether you're the middle school student who doesn't get to do the enrichment activities or the field trips, whether you're the early years student who doesn't get to socialize or learn those interpersonal collaboration skills that we know are so important for young minds to develop fully, we know that all students in Manitoba are being made worse off by this pandemic.

And yet, whether they know it or not, those young people are making those sacrifices for something greater than themselves too. They're making those sacrifices to help stop community spread, to give our health-care system a chance to be able to cope with this devastating coronavirus. And hopefully, if things turn out well, as they have, you know, in some respects to date, then perhaps their sacrifice would actually prevent greater suffering.

And in my community of Fort Rouge—which I'm sure everyone knows, half the MLAs live in my constituency, even though they claim to come from different parts of Manitoba—there's tons of great businesses in Fort Rouge: great restaurants, great coffee shops, retailers, many small local business owners right there alongside some of the chains as well like the Safeways and the Starbucks and whatnot, we also have the Little Sister, the Cornerstone, you know, the Carlos and Murphy's, many great businesses.

And yet, since the start of the pandemic, I've heard from so many of those business owners that they're just hanging on by a thread, and were it not for

the wage subsidy here or perhaps some targeted interventions there or a financial lifeline from a financial institution in this other area, many of those businesses may have already failed.

But as they are faced with the prospect of further public health restrictions, as they're faced with the prospect of this increasing second wave, potentially even a slow-burn situation where the virus pandemic plays out for many, many months and potentially even years—I hope it's not years, but it could be years to come—these business owners are facing some really, really tough times.

But I want to acknowledge their sacrifice as well. They shuttered their doors to help keep us safe. They put their capital at great risk in opening their businesses and even though it's still at risk, they have put that in an even more precarious position to help all of us in the province to be able to weather this storm.

And I know Manitobans out there, whether it's on the child-care front; whether it's on the business front; whether it's on working from home; whether it's from, you know, not seeing friends and relatives, you know, curtailing social activities—all these things; I'm sure you could ask anybody in this province, and they would tell you that the one thing that they can say about 2020 is that they've had to make sacrifices. All of us have had to make sacrifices this year.

* (16:00)

But when I turn to the government's Throne Speech, when I turn to the government's actions over the past seven months of the pandemic, I would ask you: if Manitobans have sacrificed this much, can we honestly say that the government has matched that effort with an equivalent impact in making their lives better? I don't think we can.

And I'm saying that objectively. I'm saying that not from a partisan place.

That business owner—have they been given the direct financial access and support that they need, the quick and easy access to capital? No, they have not.

That senior who has not seen their grandkid from the start of the year, has they—have they seen investments in our education system that would have mitigated COVID in the classroom to the extent of allowing two meters in between every child? No, they have not.

And that student, there's no way you can tell me the student who's only there half the time or one-third the time has seen anywhere near the necessary level

of effort from this Education Minister, from this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and from this Cabinet.

So, again, it is time that Manitobans have a government that matches your commitment with an equivalent level of effort to help make your lives better.

And so we are all in this together. Manitobans are making great sacrifices because we believe in something greater than ourselves. Whether it's believing in our family, believing in our community, believing in our province, we are setting aside aspects of our own well-being or self-interest or even some of the dreams that we have this year so that all of us can live to see 2021 and further.

And so it's time for this government to step up in some important ways. And we've begun to articulate these ways over the past months. We're very happy to be back here in the Legislature to have an opportunity to share these ideas face to face with the government and, of course, with the people of Manitoba.

So earlier this week, we released an alternative Throne Speech document. And, again, there's five key areas that we focused on here, the first of which is an improved response to the COVID pandemic. We know that Manitobans have been making a lot of these sacrifices. In Prairie Mountain, they were asked to go to that code orange not too long ago. More recently here in Winnipeg and then, I guess, the metro region surrounding the city, we're being asked to do the same thing. And I really do support these moves by Dr. Roussin and the public health officials.

And I would ask that Manitobans take that seriously, you know, and I would ask that, you know, that gathering you're going to go to—is it worth it? Could we wait a month? Could we wait three months? Could we wait six months and maybe see our friends? Could we wait for the brews with the boys after hockey—could that maybe wait 'til next season? Could we not have the big after-hours gathering until next New Year's Eve? Maybe not New Year's Eve 2020?

And I do think people are good-natured. And I think people have learned a ton about epidemiology and pandemics and viruses this year. And so I think people are understanding why it's necessary to make those sacrifices.

But as we ask Manitobans to make those sacrifices, how can we not match their commitment by doing simple things like improving testing capacity here in Manitoba, by making sure that our health-care system is strong enough to withstand this second wave

that we appear to be in now, and, of course, by ensuring that everyone in Manitoba, whether you live right here in Winnipeg, whether you live in a rural community like Roblin or whether you live in a First Nation, that everyone has equal access to health care and then an ability to stay healthy at home.

When we go back to the August long weekend, I think so many Manitobans were just excited to have summer here. After spending so much time indoors during the spring, so many Manitobans were excited to have summer. We ventured outdoors, people were at Clear Lake, Riding Mountain, Mantario Trail, Gimli, Hecla, you name it. However, we did start to see cases increase after some of that activity. And that's why our team was very proactive in terms of making proposals and sounding the alarm, even, you might go so far as to say.

We forwarded an education plan at the end of July. We presented it to the people of Manitoba and said here are some of the common sense investments that we can make to keep kids safe once we go back to the classroom. But, at the same time, we also said, you know what—or, you know what, Mr. First Minister? *[interjection]* That was quite close and I apologize for—not having been in here for so many months, at the prerogative of the government, I'm almost a little rusty when it comes to my parliamentarianism.

However, I digress. At that time we said to the First Minister, to the Cabinet, you know what? There is going to be a surge in testing demand once kids go back to the classroom. We all know it as parents. Everyone who's had a child in school or daycare knows that the runny noses, the colds, all that, you know, germ factory stuff basically, it increases once kids are in close proximity to one another.

So, even if the child doesn't contract the coronavirus, the symptoms are going to be there, and we know that the testing capacity has to be ramped up to match.

Unfortunately, this government did not heed those warning signs. They have essentially abdicated responsibility, vacated that space, and handed it over to a private company, Dynacare. Now, of course, at the same time, Dynacare was selling access to private tests for individuals who could afford it, and I would very much love to see a graph that correlates the number of tests that Dynacare was providing to the public health-care system against the tests that they were providing to private individuals, because I think, perhaps, that might be very illustrative and very

illuminating for those of us who have been wanting to see more testing capacity for all Manitobans.

Again, we're in a state of emergency. The government has given themselves extraordinary powers, extraordinary emergency powers. Why are we in this emergency? Because it's a public health crisis. What is more crucial to solving this public health crisis than having public access to tests to figure out who does and does not have this coronavirus?

And yet, even though they have declared a state of emergency, granted themselves extraordinary powers of the purse, the government still was not able to ramp up testing adequately.

This warning came months ago. Scientists, other experts were making these warnings even before that. August went by; September went by. We're now approaching mid-October and only this afternoon, after question period, does the First Minister and his government see fit to announce that yes, we're working on a few things.

I would remind the House that earlier this week, the Health Minister was asked what are you working on to improve testing capacity, and his response—it lacked. It lacked for substance; it lacked for credibility; most of all it lacked for compassion for those Manitobans who've been waiting in line for hours to get a test and then have been waiting for days and days at home, taking time off work, disrupting their personal lives, giving up on the opportunity to have some sense of normal right now, simply because they won't make the necessary investments.

When he was asked, the Health Minister, earlier this week—oh, we're working on a lot of creative things. What are they? Oh, they're so creative I can't even tell you what they are. It seemed to me as though there were no ideas in the works.

This afternoon the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—oh, we're working on training some more people. When? Uh, soon.

It's not good enough. We have been sharing ideas publicly. Let's fast-track the international accreditation of nurses, at least on a temporary basis, so that they can work in the COVID testing sites. There are many, many people who worked as nurses in other countries—the Philippines, as an example. These folks have the skills. They have the ability to work in these centres. Why don't we work with the college? Why don't we work these individuals,

accredit them to work in this limited situation, at least on a temporary basis, to address the backlog?

Earlier this year, in spite of whatever rhetoric this government wants to spout about 'extractionism' and, you know, do their dog-whistling politics, everyone in this Chamber knows that we stood together to grant this government the power to bring retired nurses back into the workforce to help us fight the pandemic even though—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Kinew: Yes.

So why aren't we calling on retired nurses—recently retired nurses—to come and help us out and deal with this testing fiasco, right? We should be doing that. We know that they're out there. Under this government's time in office, according to the Canadian institute of health information, there are 500 fewer nurses working in Manitoba—500 fewer nurses. Under the provisions that were implemented during the pandemic, 27 nurses have returned to the workforce.

* (16:10)

So, again, there's a potential capacity there of hundreds of nurses that we could be calling on. What is lacking is a willingness on the part of this government to hire people to work in the public sector to help us advance public health and to serve the public interest of Manitobans. It's an ideological conviction of this government, Madam Speaker. They want to reduce the number of people working in the public sector at all costs, even during a pandemic. We saw that on great display when 10,000 people were laid off at the beginning of the worst recession any of us have ever seen in our lifetimes.

We all know that government has a special duty, a special role, to keep the economy moving during a recession. Everyone knows this, including former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who no one would accuse of being a progressive, of being a Keynesian or of being somebody who liked to spend public money. Even he said during the 2008 global recession that government—economic history teaches us, he said, governments have to keep the economy moving during a recession.

So everyone knows that except, apparently, for this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his Cabinet. At the start of the worst recession in our lifetime, they laid off 10,000 people. These are people who work for school divisions. These are people who worked for

Crown corporations, like MBLL. These are people who were earning paycheques that could've been spent at those small businesses that were struggling just to hang on. It's a shameful legacy: 10,000 people laid off during the worst recession that any of us have seen in our lifetimes.

So that, again, it speaks to the lack of an economic plan. You know, they wonder why businesses are struggling. They wonder why there's a recession on. They haven't done anything to help, and they laid off those people who could've been the paying customers to support those businesses on hard times.

An Honourable Member: Shame.

Mr. Kinew: Yes, it is a shame, Madam Speaker. It's a very shameful situation that this government has created here.

But, again, when we look at the issue of testing, it is something that could be addressed with the necessary investment. We currently also stand on the precipice of, you know, putting further strain on our health-care system. And so we know that there are further interventions that are going to be necessary to protect public health here in Manitoba, and our team stands ready with a plan. We are going to hold this government to account. In the coming days you will see us press this government on releasing the necessary information so that Manitobans can make the right decisions. And then following the release of that information I hope—should they, of course, agree to provide it—then we can make the case to Manitobans about how we can have a targeted, smart, but, most of all, compassionate approach to protecting Manitobans from this terrible virus and this awful disease that it causes.

We also know that seniors need to see real investments. Simple idea right now that the government could do would be to cover the high-dose flu vaccine fully for all Manitoba seniors. This would not only help to protect individual seniors and keep themselves safe; they could help our society achieve herd immunity when it comes to seasonal influenza and hopefully avoid that dreaded twindemic scenario.

There are many seniors in long-term care. I think we were all moved about seeing what was happening in care homes across the country, and unfortunately we see that continue to play out here in Manitoba, even in Winnipeg. Parkview Place, very moved to see that outbreak. My late uncle actually used to live in that facility, so I know it well, and my heart really does go out. I can relate to the families who were

worried about their loved ones, and, of course, my condolences go to those who've lost their elders, their seniors, their grandparents in those facilities.

But what the pandemic has revealed is a lack of investment in these facilities that must be addressed. And so I'm very happy that our colleague has brought forward a piece of legislation that would ensure that each senior in one of these homes would get the necessary one-on-one care, that direct bedside health care, to ensure that they can stay healthy. And, of course, the House has had an opportunity to consider this legislation before, but without saying any more specificity than that, we do intend to encourage our colleagues to bring such a bill back because this is the time to get long-term care right.

I would point out yesterday, the long-term-care association spoke ill of this government's Throne Speech: lacked the necessary commitment.

Again, it shouldn't just be running from fire to fire and trying to put out fire after fire. We should be looking with an intelligent, compassionate mind and a warm and open heart to these issues and asking ourselves how can we marshal the resources of the Province of Manitoba towards fixing some of these issues—not just for during the pandemic, but also for the years to come.

And I would suggest to you that investing in the bedside care of seniors in long-term-care homes would help not just today, not just to see us through the pandemic, but would help to ensure that those folks who have built this province would receive the dignity that they deserve for all time.

When we get to education, of course, we know that a strong education plan starts with child care. We call it child care, we call it daycare, and it has the strange connotation of almost trying to demean the profession to be something like babysitting. It is not that, Madam Speaker.

We're talking about early-childhood education. We're talking about the pivotal moments in the development of a young mind that will determine whether somebody has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

So yes, there's an economic conversation that we can have—and we should say, first off, when we have that conversation about the economic impact of child care that the women of Manitoba have subsidized this industry for too long, and we need to have the investments to ensure that this government doesn't just go to the women of this province and say, well,

you'll just cover it, right? Like, if we don't do anything to fix the problems that face you, that you'll just stay home and give up opportunities and give up work? We can't accept that. We can't accept that status quo attitude.

Like many fathers, like many guys out there, I do try to do my part when it comes to child care, but I have to honestly say that I think we all know that the impacts of a lack of a working child-care system are borne disproportionately by women in this province and that there is a gendered impact.

So this government has \$18 million on the books. It's—they're already counting it as spent because they sent it over to the Chambers of Commerce. That money should be taken back and it should be given directly to the child-care centres—the existing ones—to ensure that they have the ability to pay their staff a living wage so that they can help that crucial early-childhood development and help all of our young kids succeed and to help all of our families be able to return to work so that we can all weather this pandemic and the recession that it has caused together.

Now, when it comes to businesses and workers, you know, of course, I did condemn the damage that has been wrought to the economy that could have been ameliorated or at least mitigated had this government not laid people off. But we know that this government does need to step up with some targeted assistance for those businesses which are being harmed right now.

Direct financial assistance, access to capital and, of course, a commercial-rent-relief program that is not directed to the landlords and then thereby leaves the commercial tenants at the mercy of what can sometimes not be the best relationship, but instead goes directly to the job creator, goes directly to the small-business owner and ensures that they will be able to see it through the winter.

And, again, this is a program that, you know, the federal government has currently vacated the space from, but there is nothing preventing this government from stepping up and helping our small businesses. Well, there is one thing: it is the apathy and it is the inability to work creatively, collaboratively and compassionately to help Manitobans who are on hard times. So, again, those are the things that stand in the way of this government.

We've got to keep Manitoba Hydro public. Those of us on this side of the House, we know that. During question period, I was very surprised to see that the Premier (Mr. Pallister), even though the issue has

been in the media for the past three weeks, is still unprepared to make a commitment to not privatize any more subsidiaries of Manitoba Hydro and is still not even prepared to put the question to Manitobans, to call a referendum.

*(16:20)

So we're prepared to do that. We'll bring that idea forward. We'll ensure that there's at least a debate for this before this House to ask the question of whether Manitobans should have the final say before they sell off any other assets of Manitoba Hydro, as they did with Teshmont. And, of course we'll have plenty more to say on that, we'll dive into that issue with great specificity and—approaching the issue like a surgeon, which is that we need to excise that damaged part of this government and coolly, calmly toss it out, because Manitoba Hydro belongs to the people of Manitoba.

There is, of course, the argument that we need to keep people's bills affordable. What was previously called Bill 44—and I'm sure we're about to see reintroduced under a different bill number—will do just the opposite: it will make bills more expensive.

There is the argument that all of us here in Manitoba built Manitoba Hydro up for decades by paying into it—whether you're rich or poor, whether you're working-class or whether you're well-off, whether you lived in the North, whether you lived in the south—that all of us, over the past many decades, built Manitoba Hydro up to being a clean, reliable, affordable source of hydro-electricity. And I would pause there to note that the people of northern Manitoba First Nations and flood-impacted Interlake First Nations paid an even higher price than that to help us all build Manitoba Hydro.

And so this government has no right to privatize Manitoba Hydro in whole or in part. And so we will stand strong against that.

And I would offer this to the younger generation of Manitoba: it is a very dim view of this province's future. Some of these subsidiaries that they are looking at selling off own intellectual property. They designed special computer-aided design software which is used the world over as an industry standard in the design of hydro-electric projects and the design of transmission grids. Some of these companies employ highly technical, highly specialized talent, people who have wonderful, high-tech, knowledge economy jobs right here in Manitoba. One of these subsidiaries owns a fiber-optic backbone that could

connect every single Manitoban—including in the North, including on First Nations, including in rural Manitoba—to high-speed internet, to 5G should we go in that direction, to better cell service if you're living in the Parkland or the Interlake. There are the parts of Manitoba Hydro that this government is looking to degrade, to divest or to sell off.

And so what kind of economy are we building here if we're going to sell off and hive off those parts of our economy that are best suited to succeed when it comes to innovation? Right now, we have a huge competitive advantage in these: Manitoba Hydro International, Manitoba Hydro Telecom, until a few weeks ago Teshmont. In owning these subsidiaries, we as Manitobans had a foot into the knowledge economy space. Now this government wants to sell it off, and we're all going to be poorer for it.

They want to create a knowledge deficit here in the province. They are creating a situation where we will be paying higher and higher hydro bills, but the profits will leave the province. The intellectual property will be owned by somebody located out of Manitoba. The revenue will flow out of Manitoba, likely to Bell, likely to headquarters of Teshmont that will probably be relocated shamefully soon enough.

And so again, this is not the approach to building an economy that succeeds in this millennium. We ought to be celebrating intellectual property, building it up, protecting it and ensuring that it stays in the control of Manitobans so that the benefits, the revenue and all of the ancillary goods that are created of it—like jobs—stay here for the benefit of the people of Manitoba.

So again, it's a shameful attitude when they want to break it up and sell it off, when in reality it should be held here for the people of Manitoba. *[interjection]*

I hear a colleague talking about Amazon. What I would say is this: Amazon is going to come here and create 200 jobs that pay slightly above the minimum wage while paying very little in taxes. We know that this is their business model. But all of the profits, all of the intellectual property will continue to flow south to Washington state. What we ought to be doing here—what a real IP strategy for Manitoba would mean—would be to bring the server farms here, would be to bring the software development here, would be to bring the knowledge incubator, start-up incubators here in Manitoba so that we could build the next SkipTheDishes. And I believe it was a former minister by the name of Kevin Chief who happened to play a very large role in the successful scale-up of

that start-up. And, again, we need to see more home-grown success stories like that, but it's not going to happen with this government that wants to keep this market hostage, paying higher and higher bills and then give the profit and the opportunity to their wealthy friends who, of course, live outside this province.

So, when we get to the question of education, again, Madam Speaker, I feel a tremendous amount of compassion for the young people. The same way that we look at that generation that fought in the world wars, I think we have to start recognizing the sacrifice of young Manitobans, right? They stood up, that previous generation, to fight Nazism, to fight fascism. They stood up for our way of life and they delivered it to us. They allowed each of us in here to sit in this hallowed hall of democracy, to embrace the liberty, to have the freedom to be able to give a concise, impassioned, truthful address such as my own, or to be able to spout the falsehoods and the heckling that you hear on the other side of this Chamber.

These are the liberties and the freedoms that that generation delivered to us. And so I want to acknowledge the sacrifice that they made. But today, we have to start thinking about this generation that's in our schools—whether it's in the K-to-12 system or the post-secondaries—who are not receiving the same level of education as those generations before, like ours did. You can't tell me that the educational experience you're receiving right now is equivalent to what it was in the past.

And so we have to be able to commit to these young Manitobans that we are going to make it right. We have to look into the eyes of that young person watching along at home and tell you we are going to follow you through the rest of your educational career, including to post-secondary, and we will be there with the investments, with the tutoring, with the scholarships and whatever else you need to ensure that you can reach your full potential.

These are the things that we need to deliver to the people of Manitoba, so we must be able to be able to deliver these things to the children of Manitoba, to the young people of Manitoba.

What did the government bring forward in their Throne Speech? Well, Madam Speaker, they dusted off the same education review that was written before the pandemic even started. They have to be able to do better than that. Anyone who has a child in the Manitoba school system has seen the remote learning experience, who's talked to a teacher or talked to a

principal knows that education has been turned on its head since the month of March.

Spoke to educators in the Parkland region who told me, you know what, we are being asked, because of public health directives, to have our students wash their hands multiple times a day; I got a school of 400 children, but I have two washrooms. There's an example of how the physical infrastructure in our schools do not account for the new reality that we face in this pandemic period.

We have tens of thousands of Manitoba high school students who are only in class a fraction of the time. We have many thousands of teachers doing a heroic effort to try and teach them, but simply because this government was too cheap to hire more teachers and rent more classroom spaces, they are not going to be able to get the same one-on-one attention that they would have in any other year.

And, of course, we know that as our education system was on a path towards moving towards collaboration and the development of so-called skill-soft skills, interpersonal skills that we know are going to be crucial to the success of young people in the knowledge economy, all of a sudden, that's been blown up by COVID, where children can no longer sit across from each other at a desk and begin to develop that collaborative mindset and to even develop those roots of empathy, one might say, when it comes to being able to work together.

*(16:30)

And so a pro forma, written-by-template education review that was half a hangover from the Filmon '90s and half borrowed and copy-and-pasted from Nova Scotia's disastrous experiment with teacher strikes and all that—they want to bring that back here to Manitoba and claim that, somehow, that's going to be adequate to meeting the challenge of the day. It's nonsensical, Madam Speaker.

They should scrap the education review, begin a new consultation process and ask teachers, parents and students, in light of how education has changed since the start of the pandemic, how can we improve education in a realistic way now, and what do we need to do going forward. I would add that this is a work that we are committed to doing, and we will do it in spite of the failures of this government.

So, again, this government has brought forward a Throne Speech that is not suitable for the historic moment that we find ourselves in. This is a moment that calls for leadership, that calls for boldness,

that calls for creative approaches. What we saw, essentially, was a copy-and-paste job from previous speeches from the Progressive Conservative Party, and very little of it had anything to do with responding to the new reality that we face here in 2020.

So I guess what I'm getting to is I don't support this Throne Speech, and so I will not be voting for the Throne Speech unless, of course, the government is willing to consider some amendments.

But I just want to say before I move this amendment, to the people of Manitoba: I know that you have sacrificed so much this year. I know that you have gone without. I know that you've put up with sometimes conflicting and at other times confusing advice, and I know, more than anything, that you've done it because you believe in something greater than yourself.

For some people that might be a religious sentiment. For others it might be a belief in keeping your family and community healthy. And still for other people, perhaps it's just the belief in our shared humanity and the fact that we have to support each other through this difficult period.

And I would say unequivocally it is time that you have a government that matches your commitment with an equivalent effort to make your life better. And while we may not see it from the members opposite, I can tell you that our team is one hundred per cent committed to delivering you what you need to make your lives better and to match your commitment.

So that was the introduction. Now I'll get on to the body of my speech. Just kidding.

Okay, so here's the amendment.

I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

THAT the motion be amended by adding at the end the following words:

But this House regrets that the provincial government has:

- (a) failed to match the commitment Manitobans have shown in fighting the pandemic and recession with an equivalent effort to make things better for families, workers, seniors and business across the province; and
- (b) failed to develop or implement a real and comprehensive plan to address the health-care and economic needs laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic and has instead pushed

forward on a path of cuts, privatization and attacks on workers; and

- (c) further undermined the health-care system by refusing to invest in increases to testing capacity, testing sites, supports for patients waiting to obtain a test, and refused to arrange a system for test bookings to alleviate wait times; and
- (d) failed seniors and elders in Manitoba by raising fees on residents of personal-care homes during the pandemic, cutting home-care services, freezing personal-care-home supports for years on end, and limiting access and increasing costs for seniors to obtain prescription drugs while shifting the burden of care for this vulnerable group of Manitobans by pushing more responsibilities to families; and
- (e) continued to privatize essential parts of the health-care system by refusing to invest in public health care and instead providing millions in contracts to for-profit corporations; and
- (f) continued to undermine rural health care by moving ahead with their plan to close EMS stations across the province in communities like Grandview and closing ERs and labs in communities like Roblin and Shoal Lake; and
- (g) cut northern health-care services such as closing the Flin Flon operating room during the pandemic and moving ahead with the privatization of Lifeflight services; and
- (h) refused to guarantee that all federal funding for health care is spent at the bedside rather than on the provincial government's other priorities; and
- (i) refused to address the public health crisis by failing to provide long-term investments to community organizations and offer harm reduction initiatives with—which help Manitobans dealing with mental health and addictions get the help they need and reduce blood-borne diseases; and
- (j) failed to offer any acknowledgement of the needs of black, Indigenous or people of colour, BIPOC, Manitobans in the Throne Speech, and presented no comprehensive plan to help reduce and end poverty, and no

- real plan for community safety in Manitoba; and
- (k) refused to recognize the disproportionate impact the pandemic has had on women in particular and refused to end the funding freeze for child-care centres across Manitoba, putting many centres at risk of closing their doors, further harming Manitoba women, children and families; and
 - (l) diverted needed funds for child care to high-priced consultants while early childhood educators have gone years without any wage or funding supports from the provincial government and continued to push the privatization of early learning and child-care services in the province instead of investing in public, affordable, accessible and high-quality child-care services; and
 - (m) offered no real or effective programs for small businesses to survive the pandemic, with no programs to help meet rent or cover costs associated with the purchase of PPE as many small businesses face the prospect of closing their doors; and
 - (n) continued to freeze funding for municipalities, forcing large communities like Winnipeg, Brandon, Thompson, Dauphin and Selkirk, and smaller communities like Gimli and St-Lazare to make difficult decisions on cuts to public services and programming that keep communities safe and welcoming; and
 - (o) failed again to present any commitments to build new social or affordable housing despite being able to access funds from the federal government, and made the situation worse by selling government housing units; and
 - (p) continued to put the long-term success of Manitoba students at risk by pushing ahead with an out-of-date review of the education system, having already eliminated small class sizes, slashed support services, fired education assistants, cut education funding and frozen teachers wages; and
 - (q) refused to offer a safe back-to-school plan to address the concerns of teachers, educators, students and parents by ensuring small class sizes, more supports in the classroom, using new and creative spots for classroom learning
- and failing to ensure federal money earmarked for education actually makes it to the classroom; and
- (r) continued to increase tuition for post-secondary education during the pandemic while demanding millions in cuts from provincial colleges and universities after having cut important programs in colleges, such as 75 nursing spots at Red River College; and
 - (s) interfered with Crown corporations numerous times, most recently by directing Manitoba Hydro to break up and sell off subsidiaries owned by the corporation, including Teshmont, Manitoba Hydro International and Manitoba Hydro Telecom; and
 - (t) failed to offer a plan to actually use the telecommunication assets of Manitoba Hydro to bring broadband to rural and northern Manitoba, instead pushing for these assets to be sold off; and
 - (u) failed again to listen to Manitoba producers who have overwhelmingly said that their approach to leasing Crown lands will cause irreparable harm to family farms in Manitoba that are already dealing with serious challenges due to climate change while also failing to provide them with insurance supports during a time of need; and
 - (v) continued to underspend highways infrastructure by hundreds of millions of dollars while also continuing to pursue the selling off of and privatization of infrastructure services; and
 - (w) cut supports for French language services at the Université de Saint-Boniface, Santé en français, and translation services, and eliminated the assistant deputy minister for the Bureau de l'éducation française; and
 - (x) failed to meaningfully consult with Indigenous leaderships for another year regarding the Lake St. Martin outlet channel and other initiatives that affect Indigenous rights, and refused to properly recognize the legitimate rights and roles of Indigenous leadership on matters of harvesting and management of resources; and

- (y) failed to implement a living wage, offered no supports for health and safety in workplaces and are pushing ahead with a defence of a wage freeze law that was ruled to be unconstitutional; and
- (z) ignored the needs of the northern communities who have lost hundreds of mining jobs by the failure to release any funds devoted to supporting mining communities; and
- (aa) failed to take any meaningful action on climate change by continuing to pursue a wasteful challenge to the federal government's carbon tax, cutting support to local environmental groups, investing in programs for green jobs, or actually making—or actually make progress on important projects like upgrades to the North End Sewage Treatment Plant; and
- (bb) failed to offer any supports to newcomers in the province, especially those newcomer workers who work in agricultural and manufacturing sectors every day.

As a consequence of these and many other failings the provincial government has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

* (16:40)

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew), seconded by the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe),

THAT the motion be amended by adding at the end of the following words—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

The amendment is in order. Debate can proceed.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Municipal Relations): I am proud to stand today and talk about some of the highlights of our government's sixth Throne Speech that was tabled yesterday and to highlight some of the very important facts that our government has done to move Manitoba forward.

But before I begin talking about yesterday's Throne Speech, I do want to take a moment to recognize and commend all the people, front-line workers, and all the people in Manitoba who have helped move forward in flattening the curve as well as

keeping Manitobans safe and showing up for work day after day.

I think about the numerous people in my constituency of Riel and all throughout Manitoba who went to work each day to deliver services or provide necessary equipment or to keep us safe. I want to thank all the doctors, the nurses, firefighters and paramedics, all of our teachers, our child-care workers, police officers and especially the retail workers who, at the height of the pandemic, were showing up helping us get the groceries that we needed, to buy the products that we needed in our homes. And they did this without reservation. They did this at the beginning, before protocols were in place, as we were learning alongside the rest of the world what we can do to make sure that these businesses can operate safely and effectively, and just want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of them.

I also want to thank all of my constituents and all Manitobans who have complied with public health orders, sometimes at great expense to their businesses and their livelihoods and their sense of well-being. We're asking a lot of people as we repeat the message to stay home whenever possible. We've asked people to forgo their visits with their family on—even on special occasions, and as we're coming up to another Thanksgiving weekend. It is a time, I know, in my house I'd like to have all my family members—and there are many of them—gather around a table and celebrate and break bread together, and we know that this year will be unlike any other Thanksgiving where we are doing things differently as we try to maintain relations with our family members and our community while keeping one another safe.

I also think about the many people who have loved ones in personal-care homes and who have had to forgo some of those visits with their loved ones in personal-care homes. And that's why I was really proud of our Minister of Health and our Minister of Central Services (Mr. Helwer), who worked diligently to get these visitor shacks built in many communities and personal-care homes throughout our province.

In Riel there are two visiting shelters that are being erected right now, one at the Golden Links Lodge and another at Actionmarguerite. And I know that these will allow an opportunity for family members and loved ones to come and visit their loved ones in the personal-care home and do so in a safe manner. And throughout the cold winter we know that it is just not—there's no opportunity to visit outdoors where we know it is safer to do so and therefore very

grateful for these visiting shelters to allow those visits to carry on safely.

Yesterday's Throne Speech showed our government's commitment to moving Manitoba forward. And, like I mentioned earlier, it's our government's sixth Throne Speech. When we took office nearly five years ago, we had a mess to clean up, almost a billion-dollar deficit leftover from the former NDP government and a lot of things that weren't getting done in this province.

We were not only able to clean up that deficit in just under four years, we were also able to do—reduce taxes for hard-working families to keep more money in Manitobans' pockets and—while protecting services and improving the lives of many Manitobans.

Amongst other initiatives that our government is now committed to, we know that rebuilding the province will take a lot of work after this pandemic. And that is why we committed to a \$500-million investment in public infrastructure through our Manitoba Restart Program. That was something that we had done months ago, and we know that this major expansion is on top of our already very significant planned infrastructure investments of over \$3 billion over two years.

We know that these—that this infrastructure commitment will help rebuild our economy and get Manitobans back to work. And this Manitoba Restart Program includes funding for municipal infrastructure priorities plus \$50 million in municipal water and wastewater projects through the Manitoba Water Services Board, which will benefit communities throughout the entire province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I wrote a letter this week to the mayor of Lynn Lake and assured him and informed him that our government would be flowing \$4.6 million to the community of Lynn Lake to upgrade their water treatment plant. This water treatment plant was a project that—priority for the community of Lynn Lake for years that—they were ignored under the NDP government.

They said that they needed clean water. They were put on a boil water advisory in 2012. They asked for assistance and support in getting off a boil water advisory and getting their water treatment plant done. They were ignored by the NDP in 2012 and 2013, 2014. This community languished. Very, very pleased that this government is helping the community of Lynn Lake get off that boil water advisory and have

clean, potable water and—with the commitment of \$4.7 million in their water treatment plant.

Another community that has suffered with the lack of a lagoon expansion which has greatly impacted their ability to grow is the community of The Pas. And this week, I was also very pleased to write to the mayor of The Pas and to assure him that we are sending money to help them: \$6.8 million we're sending for The Pas lagoon expansion project to help that community address their sewage treatment requirements so that they can grow their community and also ensure that they are doing their part to clean up their watershed.

We are also giving \$2.25 million to the community of Neepawa for a water treatment plant reservoir expansion.

We know that these are really important projects. If we want to clean up the environment, which is something this government is committed to, unlike the previous government, we have legislative targets for emissions reductions, but we also know that in Manitoba, with the—being the watershed that we are, we know that we will not be able to—there are no—there is no greater environmental urgency than cleaning up our watershed, and it starts with projects like this, of cleaning up water—helping communities build water treatment facilities and ensuring they've got clean drinking water for their communities.

So this is all part of our government's plan to adapt to a low-carbon future and cleaning up our watershed.

Speaking of cleaning up our watershed, that leads me to Lake Winnipeg, one of the most precious resources in this province. In 2003, my current Member of Parliament, Terry Duguid, was the Clean Environment commissioner, and he said to the NDP in 2003 that they need to invest in the North End Water Pollution Control Centre. That request was ignored in 2003 all the way throughout their entire mandate. They didn't commit to putting in a dollar into that North End Water Pollution Control Centre. They allowed that sewage treatment plant to continue to—even though they knew that they would be out of compliance with their nutrient removal requirements, they failed to invest in that infrastructure, even when the project costs would have been significantly less than what they are today.

Today, the number is staggering, but our government is not going to do what the previous government did and allow that watershed and allow

Lake Winnipeg to continue to be the most endangered lake in the world.

* (16:50)

So our government has committed to \$268 million, which is our commitment for phase 1 and phase 2 of the North End water pollution control centre, and we're working with all of our partners, the City of Winnipeg and the federal government, to ensure that we get that project done so that we can preserve Lake Winnipeg now and well into the future and that future generations can enjoy the beauty and the splendor of that gem in our province.

We feel that it is incumbent on all of us to ensure clean drinking water and that our lakes are protected for now and well into the future.

En ce qui concerne les affaires francophones, les entités publiques du Manitoba continuent à travailler de façon très dure pour améliorer la qualité de leurs services en français. Je suis ravie que, dans toutes les secteurs d'activité gouvernementale, les entités publiques consacrent leurs efforts afin de créer les supports pour atteindre les objectifs de la Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine.

Nous avons également amélioré notre capacité de publier de l'information bilingue au sujet des programmes et des services gouvernementaux. Au cours de la première année de notre nouvelle structure opérationnelle, les services de traduction ont produit plus de 535 000 mots de plus que l'année précédente. Cela représente une augmentation de 17 %.

Translation

In regards to Francophone Affairs, Manitoba's public entities continue to work hard to improve the quality of their French language services. I am pleased that in all activity sectors of the government, public entities focus their efforts on creating the supports required to reach the objectives of The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act.

We have also improved our capacity to publish bilingual information on government programs and services. In the first year of our new operational structure, Translation Services' production increased by over 535,000 words, which represents an increase of 17 per cent over the previous year.

English

Our government is committed to working with our municipal and economic development partners on

a planning framework that will build a stronger, better Manitoba. Manitoba is currently an outlier among provinces regarding our planning approvals and appeals process.

The former government knew that Manitoba municipalities were falling further behind, and what did they do? Well, they called them howling coyotes and they forced an amalgamation on them.

Unlike what the former government did with their relations with municipal leaders, we are working collaboratively to ensure that we've got a growth plan that is for the betterment of all Manitobans. We have created an arm's-length appeal mechanism on planning and zoning matters which we know are the norm across Canada.

In fact, just last week, there was a benchmarking study that came out by the Canadian Home Builders' Association that showed municipalities that had this arm's-length appeal mechanism had a more robust planning framework. And one of the consequences of having a more robust planning framework is more affordable housing, and we know that that is a strong party of our government to ensure that we have housing for all Manitobans. And we do believe that this is another initiative that will help achieve affordable housing here in Manitoba.

We also know that every other jurisdiction with the exception of one other province has this arm's-length appeal process in their planning framework, and that they have a more collaborative approach to planning that it creates better economic benefits for all.

Here in Manitoba, there is a negative impact of \$2 million a day to provincial and municipal treasuries that do not have that proper planning framework. And so we are going to move forward with a plan that will ensure transparency, accountability and consistency in that planning framework. We are looking forward to this growth plan that will be to the betterment of all Manitobans.

So, Madam Speaker, as I had said earlier, it was our government's sixth Throne Speech that was introduced yesterday. And we feel that there were so many initiatives in there that was addressing how our government is responding to the pandemic, how we are going to keep Manitobans safe and how are—we are going to rebuild the—our province for the betterment of all, whether it's in regards to working with our municipal leaders and ensuring that we've got a collaborative plan in place to ensure future growth—

and, in fact, having a growth plan is one of the significant initiatives that will ensure that we have a plan to get back on track when we're through on the other side of this pandemic. When we are able to refocus on the economy, we know that having proper planning place-planning framework in place will put us miles ahead of other jurisdictions.

And that was a quote from Dr. Murray, who was successful in implementing such a planning framework in the province of Alberta, who has been providing advice here in Manitoba on how to move forward. And he said that we will be well positioned to move Manitoba forward in this regard.

So I believe that yesterday was a very significant day. It was a very significant Throne Speech, one that addresses many concerns that face Manitobans. And I do believe that with the commitment to addressing the cleanup of Lake Winnipeg and the investments in the water projects throughout this entire province—whether in the municipality of Lynn Lake or with the Lake Winnipeg—we know every Manitoban, whether they live along the particular watershed or not, they're invested and committed to cleaning up this watershed because we want to ensure that we have clean drinking water well into the future as well as making sure that sustainability of that lake and all of our lakes.

We need to remove the nutrients that are flowing in there unabated and ensure that we're doing our part to make Lake Winnipeg a gem for future generations; unlike what had happened six years ago when, under the former NDP—thanks to their mismanagement of that lake—it was named the most endangered lake in the world.

And so we do not believe that that is—that that was—that that is—we are not going to repeat the mistakes of the past. We have learned from the mistakes that the NDP had made in terms of how they managed their natural resources, how they managed their relations with municipalities and how they disregarded the environment and disregarded the environment impacts of ignoring vital work that needed to continue.

So although it would've been a lot better if, in 2003, when the clean environment commissioner had recommended that Lake Winnipeg cleanup commence, we cannot go back in time and go back to 2003 and take that advice, so we're acting on that recommendation right now and very pleased that we will be getting real meaningful action on Lake Winnipeg.

And so with that, Madam Speaker, I am very proud of our government's commitment that was demonstrated in yesterday's Throne Speech and very, very proud of the work that this government has done and very pleased to be back in this Chamber with all of my colleagues and very pleased.

As well, I do want to extend my greetings to the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare). I did have an opportunity to see him at an event. We were announcing together, opening of a playground in his park. And I was pleased that through our government's enhanced Building Sustainable Communities fund that I was able to give a contribution to that playground.

And I got to spend some time with the member and his beautiful community members as we cut the ribbon on that park. And I can say I was quite impressed with the number of children that came out. There were probably—I haven't seen that many children on a playground in a very long time. And so that is testament to how needed that playground was for that community.

And even though, on that particular day, we were standing there, all of us, all of the politicians had gathered and we were ready to do our greetings and then these rain clouds came in and a cloud burst over our heads, and so we had to huddle from a socially distant manner under some tents and under umbrellas. But everybody stayed because they were so excited about this playground.

And then the rain clouds went away and the member for Transcona, as well as my colleague, the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), was there—this project was very important to him—and other city council colleagues were there, and we were able to cut the ribbon. And I certainly hope that the children of Transcona are still able to enjoy that wonderful playground.

And we know that this year, more than ever, our—we're seeing Manitobans getting into the great outdoors and exploring, whether it's our trails or our parks or our playgrounds. And that is why our government is really also committed to investing in these community structures. And through my department, Building Sustainable Communities, which we supersized this year, we made it \$10 million so that we could continue to flow money to these projects.

Almost every community, every constituency—I know the MLA for St. Vital has a wonderful—the first

accessible play structure in all of Manitoba is going up at the Norberry-Glenlee centre in St. Vital, and I was very pleased. In fact, on Saturday, I'll be there cutting the ribbon on that accessible playground that our government has helped fund.

I'm certain that in—the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that there have been playgrounds and investments in our—in his community thanks to the

Building Sustainable Communities fund. Very pleased with that, thank you.

Madam Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable minister will have one minute and 30 seconds remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 8, 2020

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