

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

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Second Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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

Monday, October 26, 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.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, on House business, I am seeking leave of the House to allow the government to introduce today, without notice, Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to allow the government to introduce today, without notice, Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act? Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**Madam Speaker:** Introduction of bills? No introduction of bills? Committee reports?

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance):** Madam Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today in the Assembly to table the Manitoba Labour Board 2018-19 Annual Report.

**Madam Speaker:** Further tabling of reports?

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table a Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan Annual Report for 2018 and 2019.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Any further tabling of reports?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** On House business, Madam Speaker, is there leave of the House to revert back to tabling of bills—sorry, introduction of bills?

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to revert back to introduction of bills? *[Agreed]*

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill 44—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I'd like to move that Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment—*[interjection]* oh, I'm sorry—seconded by the member for Morden-Winkler (Mr. Friesen), Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code des normes d'emploi, be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Pallister:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this bill, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, public health emergency leave.

This bill will amend the public health emergency provisions in the Employment Standards Code to ensure that all workers in Manitoba who are eligible for the recently established Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit can take a job-protected leave of absence to access those benefits.

It will also allow us to adapt public health emergency leave provisions by regulation, if needed, as the pandemic in Manitoba evolves.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** Ministerial statements—oh, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Ministerial statements?

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Radisson. Member statements?

#### Maya Chernichan

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, I rise today to honour one of my friends and her family, "Maya-Bear" Chernichan and her experience with childhood cancer.

Maya is the younger sister of Brielle, and a daughter of Sarah and Vince. They live in the constituency of Transcona, right across from an empty field that happens to face my house.

Maya's mom and I have known each other for a number of years, as we both worked at Polson School. I remember with clarity when Maya was born in 2016 and how happy her parents were with her arrival.

Like every young family, Chernichans were busy doing family things, raising their children, creating a home full of love and support.

Then, on August 1st, 2018, they received a scary diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, which is a blood cancer, and from that date until now, they've been fighting this disease.

When a child is diagnosed with cancer, every parent puts their aspirations and dreams for their child on hold. They begin to exist in a state of suspension that can be best described as a form of purgatory. However, due to an incredible support team at CancerCare Manitoba and the encouragement and support of their family and community, this family was able to soldier forth with courage, determination and a substantial amount of hope.

To say that Maya has had to endure a lot these past two years doesn't tell the whole story, for Maya and her family have said that they have had the good fortune of meeting and being with people that care deeply for his children and their families. From friends encouraging and engaging in fundraisers to family and neighbours checking in regularly to see where they can lend a hand, these past two years have demonstrated how blessed they are to be part of the community of caring.

Then, in late September of this year, "Maya-Bear" Chernichan rang the bell at CancerCare Manitoba. Maya still had a few at-home treatments remaining and, on October 12th, 2020, she completed this part of her life journey successfully.

Members of the House, please join me in recognizing and congratulating "Maya-Bear" Chernichan, the CancerCare Manitoba team and her family and friends and the many organizations that were part of her cancer journey.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for McPhillips. The honourable member for McPhillips, could you un-mute your mic, please?

#### **Mental Illness Awareness Week**

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** Apologies, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, October is mental illness awareness month. It provides an opportunity for all Canadians to better understand issues 'surrounding' mental health by promoting awareness that reduces associated stigma.

One in five Canadians will experience some form of mental illness during their lifetime, and the stigma associated with mental illness creates a barrier for those seeking help, and for those who live with mental illness most of their lives never get the help they truly need.

In recent years, campaigns have raised awareness and made inroads reducing the stigma of mental health issues. However, there are many individuals and families affected by mental health illness subjected to fear and discrimination in our society. As someone whose mother was institutionalized twice for depression, I am familiar with the stigma. And even—and against the backdrop of the pandemic, I think mental health is something on all our minds.

\* (13:40)

So I want to take a moment to remind Manitobans that there are resources available to them that are just a phone call away: the Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba, 786-0987; postpartum line, 391-5983; the Anxiety Disorders Association, 925-0600; the Manitoba schizophrenic society, 786-1616; Klinik crisis, 786-8686; the Manitoba suicide line, 877-435-7170; the Crisis Stabilization Unit, 940-3633; the Mobile Crisis Service, 940-1781; the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre, 958-9660; the Kids Help Phone, 800-668-6868.

Madam Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to share these numbers with their constituents. Again, in this era that we live in—a pandemic—and the toll it is taking on our mental health, I think this is information we all need.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

#### **Mifegymiso Access in the North**

**Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, for many women, choosing to have an abortion is an incredibly difficult decision that carries a lot of social stigma.

What makes the decision even harder is that many northern and rural women who choose to do so must travel far distances to Brandon or Winnipeg as there is no medical abortion services in their region. This creates another obstacle that these women must overcome, with the travel requirements being costly

and taking a lot of time. For many women, these barriers threaten their right to reproductive health.

There are other ways to get an abortion, however: most notably, using the drug 'meesogymifasen.' Unfortunately, when it was introduced, this drug was only free at clinics in Brandon and Winnipeg and it would cost women upwards of \$300 elsewhere. However, thanks to brave women, access to the abortion pill has become far easier for women in the North.

Today I'd like to acknowledge the women who came together to work on making the abortion available for free charge in the North, particularly Thompson. These women are sisters Harlie and Emily Pruder. They brought together like-minded women to fight for equal access to reproductive health in northern Manitoba.

This group of strong women fought for access to abortion services in the North and to end the stigma around abortion. Emily Pruder now makes a career out of her activism and is working on—as an abortion doula in Thompson to support people who are considering ending their pregnancy.

I want to thank everyone who has come forward to share their stories around abortion access in the North. I'd like to acknowledge that there are still barriers for women to overcome to get abortions, as 'mifogymisen' can only be prescribed by a trained professional, and training is not mandatory for physicians. Nevertheless, I am confident these barriers will be removed with the continuing fight by strong, powerful women such as Emily and Harlie Pruder.

### **Luke Hatcher**

**Hon. Reg Helwer (Minister of Central Services):** I rise today to tell you about a hometown hero. Luke Hatcher was an active 12-year-old who attended Linden Lanes School. His autism allowed his family to see the world through a unique lens. Luke was the loving son to Aimee and Kevin Hatcher and big brother to Ruby and Jilly.

Luke had a tragic accident at home on December 14th, 2019. In Aimee's words: The 14th, the day of his accident. The day before turned into after: one moment preparing for Christmas, the next dialing 911 and willing Luke to breathe, to not be dead. An ambulance to the hospital in Brandon, many tests; an air ambulance to HSC, many, many more tests until no more brain activity. The very selfless and brave decision to donate Luke's organs so that others could

regain their life and he could live on through them. December 18th: Luke's gift is complete. His kidneys, lungs, liver and pancreas were able to be matched with transplant recipients, and those lives have been changed forever with the decision for Luke to be an organ donor.

Madam Speaker, the Green Heart Project is a fundraiser founded by the Hatchers to support Transplant Manitoba and the Child and Adolescent Treatment Centre in Brandon. The logo is green as the colour of hope for organ recipients and donors, a heart representing Luke's big heart, 12 stars—one for each of the years he's brightened the world. Luke always loved seeing a dragonfly so it is appropriate that a dragonfly, or dragon-bee as he called them, is a large part of the logo.

We reached 50,000 donation decisions in Manitoba in September. Please [signupforlife.ca](http://signupforlife.ca).

Thank you.

### **Roger Cathcart**

**Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia):** Madam Speaker, on August 5th, St. James-Assiniboia lost a valued member of our community, Roger Cathcart.

Roger had a distinguished 33-year-long career in education as both an educator and an administrator, the St. James-Assiniboia School Division. Roger was a guiding light in the education of many of those living in St. James-Assiniboia, as well as their children.

I can guarantee that anyone who has come out of the St. James-Assiniboia School Division within the last 40 years has been impacted by Roger's legacy.

Roger, along with his wife Leilah, raised their children, Roger Jr., Shawn and Heather, in the heart of St. James-Assiniboia and stayed there for most of their lives.

Roger was a multi-faceted individual. In all aspects of his life, he was passionate about his community service.

Beyond his involvement in education, Roger was passionate about politics and governance. As president of the Manitoba Progressive Conservative Party, Roger showed great leadership through both opposition and government.

Roger was affectionately known as president for life due to the long terms of service.

On a personal note, Roger was a family friend. Roger and my father went through many of the wars

together, forming a great friendship. His loss will be greatly felt in his community.

Thank you, Roger, for your service to the community and governance in Manitoba.

I would ask that the Legislature recognizes condolences to Roger's wife, Leilah, and the Cathcart family. They can take great comfort in knowing that their father and grandfather served the community admirably.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### **Parkview Place Personal-Care Home Mitigation of COVID-19 Outbreak**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, we owe our seniors a tremendous debt of gratitude. They built this province. And yet, even though we're seven, almost eight months into the pandemic, this government still does not have a real plan to keep seniors in personal-care homes safe.

At Parkview Place alone, there have been 121 known cases, 92 of them residents. To date, 18 have died.

The situation—unlike what some in that Cabinet would say—this situation was not unavoidable.

The government has a moral obligation to step in and assume control of this personal-care home to ensure that there's the adequate staffing, to ensure that there's the right protective equipment and to ensure that the families of the loved ones living there get the communication that they need.

Will the Premier tell the House today that, in fact, this situation was not unavoidable? And will he take steps to help those seniors today?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Proactively addressing the needs to protect Manitoba citizens has always been at the forefront of our focus in the last number of months, and was prior to that time, prior to this unprecedented pandemic. And, Madam Speaker, I assure Manitobans it'll continue to be our principal focus going forward.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, after seven months, nearly eight months, all the Premier has are platitudes.

There is no plan to help protect the seniors in Parkview or other personal-care homes across the province. The situation at Parkview is out of control. This government has a duty to step in and steady the ship.

Today, we heard that the recent inspection found continued issues with understaffing. We heard that there's no separation of the COVID patients from others who are living in that care home. And this is after we already heard about the nasty, filthy, dirty living conditions for so many of these beloved seniors living in that home.

The government needs to step in and assume control.

\*(13:50)

Will the Premier commit today that his government will step in and fix the problems with staffing, with care and with communication to protect all the seniors in Manitoba?

**Mr. Pallister:** The platitudes seem to be coming hot and heavy from the other side, Madam Speaker. The reality is that we have taken action. We'll continue to take action to protect not only our seniors, but all Manitobans and those who must come here to visit and support their family members and relatives.

And we are doing that by adding new testing sites, Madam Speaker. We're doing that by making sure that we have introduced a more effective system for booking appointments, for example, so that people are able to save time and to get the testing they need. We have done that by launching training programs in partnership with the Red River community college to train health-care providers to make sure we're addressing staffing issues in terms of testing.

And we continue to take these actions, Madam Speaker, to ensure that we provide the maximum possible protections for all our citizens, including our treasured seniors.

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

#### **COVID-19 Financial Assistance Small Business Grants**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Madam Speaker, in addition to seniors, this government is also ignoring small businesses. There are many small businesses who are just hanging on by a thread, some of which this government ordered closed, and yet they have not offered any

financial assistance to help those job creators to be able to make it through the year, never mind this coming next month.

These businesses are suffering. They've stepped up. They have closed their doors. They are doing their part to help flatten the curve. When will this government match their commitment and offer new financial assistance to ensure that they can meet their costs, that they can meet payroll, that they can keep creating jobs in our communities?

Other provinces have done it; so should we.

Will the Premier commit today to giving new grants to small businesses so that they can cover the tens of thousands of dollars of costs that they face each and every month?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Given the NDP record of attacking small businesses in our province over a number of years, Madam Speaker, I appreciate any question from the member opposite on protecting small businesses.

I can say to the members that—and they would know this had they done the research—we have the most generous supports for small businesses across the country, Madam Speaker. We have over 10,000 Manitoba small businesses—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** Sorry, perhaps if the member for Port-Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) has a point, she might like to rise and make it at a future opportunity. In the meantime, let me share with the member, for her edification and for that of her colleagues, that we have an approval program for the gap process which has seen over 94 per cent of applicants approved; that we have ongoing letters of thanks from small businesses all over the province saying how much they appreciate the program.

And, Madam Speaker, we have partnered with the most generous job creation programs in the country, bar none, that have created over 22,000 jobs in partnership with the very small businesses that the NDP attacked on a regular basis for years in this province.

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

#### **Education Plan During Pandemic Learning Loss Prevention**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It's remarkable that under this leader,

his party has alienated the small businesses across Manitoba.

We also know that this Premier's education plan is a fail. They wasted months. They ignored calls. They ignored recommendations to help kids in class stay safe, and instead, they rush in new orders with only a few days' notice.

Well, here's the impact in the classroom: in one south Winnipeg school division alone, there are thousands of kids in the K-to-8 system who only have access to their teacher for half of the day: 50 per cent of the time they have a teacher. That's less one-on-one instruction for each and every student. Now that is being exported to school divisions across the area put under code orange.

There is no plan to help students or to address learning loss.

When will the Premier finally admit that he needs to hire more teachers, more educational assistants and rent more classroom space so every child in Manitoba can get a good education?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, just to go back to the member's preamble for a second, Madam Speaker. No other province—not one, from coast to coast—has done as much to support small business as this government has. Not one. Not one. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** In terms of job creation partnerships, Madam Speaker, over 22,000 jobs created in partnership. We have programs available now to assist small businesses to hire up to 20 new employees and to receive support from this government of up to \$100,000, plus the gap program funding of \$6,000. That's \$106,000 for an eligible small business, with approval rates in excess of 90 per cent.

Less red tape, less confusion, more approvals, more money in the hands of small-business people across the length and breadth of the province, Madam Speaker: that's how we create jobs and how we get people back to work and help them get their lives back.

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

#### **COVID-19 Pandemic ICU Bed Availability**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** To all the parents across south Winnipeg who saw the Premier fail to answer your

concern about having a teacher for only 50 per cent of your child's school day, let me say this: the Manitoba NDP will stand up for you and for your family.

We know that this government is also failing when—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —it comes to health care. This is a quote from a physician at St. B saying, quote: We have four hospital outbreaks going on now. Hospital staff are getting COVID-19 and can't work, nor can their contacts. Resources are strained. ICUs are full. We are within days of being at the limit of ICU capacity.

Madam Speaker, we know that ICU capacity is central to being able to monitor our province's response to the pandemic. Manitobans deserve to know how much capacity we have.

Will the Premier commit today to telling Manitobans how many ICU beds are available going forward?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I would have to say, with due respect to the member opposite, he has a better record of standing up to people than he does for them. And I would say the same of his colleagues; they stand up to each other, Madam Speaker, but never for—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —Manitobans.

Our budget for education, Madam Speaker, this year alone, began at 300-plus million dollars more than the NDP ever invested in education. And to that, we added an additional \$100 million for safe school funding, to assist.

Madam Speaker, the member speaks with disrespect to educational leaders throughout the length and breadth of our province's educational structure. He speaks with disrespect to the plans developed in partnership with school leaders across the province. Superintendents, trustees were involved; parent-teacher councils were involved as well.

Madam Speaker, this is a partnership the member decries and criticizes today, as is his wont, but he does it at his own peril. This is a team-building minister and a team-building government. We'll stay that way.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Every single member of this Cabinet knows that their government is failing to respond to

the COVID-19 pandemic, Madam Speaker. They all know it.

There are seniors dying in personal-care homes, in homes that are overrun with cockroaches. There are K-to-8 students who have a teacher for only 50 per cent of the day. There are small businesses who are going to close their doors because of this government's 'half-azard' and ignorant approach to supporting them. The list goes on. There are outbreaks in Manitoba hospitals.

We're asking simple questions about financial assistance, about classroom time, about ICU bed capacity, about the response in personal-care homes. This government has no answers.

Simple question to close my set here: Will the Premier commit today to letting Manitobans know how many available ICU beds there are in Manitoba going forward?

**Mr. Pallister:** According to Statistics Canada—the member might like to do some research and consult Stats Canada numbers on this—we are leading the country in economic recovery. We are leading the country in getting people back to work. And we're doing that by partnering—*[interjection]*—by partnering with the small-business community effectively.

**An Honourable Member:** People losing their lives.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** The member's attempts to lament are typical of one who doesn't have any ideas, Madam Speaker. We have ideas, that's why—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** As the member fails to make his point during the question, I'd encourage him to pose another question and try again.

In the meantime, we've added new testing sites while he plays partisan politics, Madam Speaker. In the meantime, we've developed a new appointment booking system to save Manitobans countless hours while he plays partisan politics. We've worked with Red River to train people to assist in front-line work while he plays partisan politics. And we're working with Doctors Manitoba to use available clinics to take additional loads off testing sites and we've contracted with the Red Cross to do additional tracking and tracing, too.

\* (14:00)



While he plays partisan politics, we address the problem of an historic pandemic. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order. Order.

### **Parkview Place Personal-Care Home Government Oversight of Facility**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, these are the facts about Parkview Place: 121 known cases, 92 residents, 29 staff, and to date, as of today, 18 residents have died.

Over 40 per cent of the residents at this care home have contracted COVID, but this minister has avoided questions and hidden from accountability for over a week. He has refused to face scrutiny and when he does, he misleads Manitobans.

He says there's a full-time doctor at Parkview when there isn't. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** He says the situation was unavoidable, when every expert—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —says that's just not true.

The minister knows the for-profit company—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** —Revera is failing the residents of Parkview.

Will the minister take over care of Parkview today?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Well, Madam Speaker, we will continue to say these are the facts when it comes to Parkview Place: that there is a full-time doctor at the facility, there is leadership from the provider on-site 24-7. We understand the vice-president of operations is now on-site. We have had a full response from the WRHA response team. N95 use is in place all over the facility.

The Leader of Opposition is dead wrong when he suggests that there is not cohorting going on. That's just another misstatement put on the record.

There's a pause on new admissions, there is cohorting of residents and I assure you that all front-line workers and administrators are working hard to keep their residents safe.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, we owe a debt of gratitude to our seniors and our seniors need proper and dignified care. We have a bill before this House to guarantee the legislation of minimum direct-patient-care hours, but the government refuses to pass it. And now we learn today that residents at Parkview are only receiving 3.1 hours of care. That's shameful. No resident is content with receiving that level of care, and no minister should be either.

Instead the minister claims the situation was unavoidable. That's false, and that clearly shows he's violating his own government's standards.

Will the minister take over control of Parkview today and present a plan to this Legislature to properly staff the home?

**Mr. Friesen:** There are more facts in respect of Parkview Place. The Licensing and Compliance Branch, of course, conducted an unannounced visit. That branch continues to audit progress at the site, on a daily basis, through virtual tours conducted at the facility. More stringent cleaning and disinfection procedures in place; daily staff screening; everyone provided with a needed and necessary PPE; single-site safe protocols are in effect.

Madam Speaker, everyone is working very hard to keep the residents and staff safe in some very difficult conditions that we have faced here just like others have faced across the country.

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

### **Long-Term-Care Homes Construction Inquiry**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, virtual tools—tours, rather, is not staffing. I'll take the minister's answer to mean no to that question.

We know this government has no plans for long-term care in this province. The only plans have been to cut and to close. They haven't built a single personal-care-home bed since coming into office in 2016, and FIPPA documents show that there is not one personal-care-home bed under construction right now in Winnipeg, even while this pandemic causes such hardship in our long-term-care homes.

I'll table this document for the minister. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**MLA Asagwara:** One straightforward solution to stopping COVID in long-term-care homes is to build some.

Why has this minister refused to invest in long-term care? Why is there zero personal-care-home beds being built in Winnipeg today? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Patently false, Madam Speaker. The fact of the matter is that we have members in this side who have toured the new beds in the new facilities that our government has 'ofered'—opened. When it comes to personal-care-home beds—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Friesen:** New personal-care homes opened, more personal-care homes pledged, additional workers coming into those sites, operational capacity expanded.

But, Madam Speaker, returning to the issue of preparations for Parkview Place, the system continues to respond, the system continues to make contingency plans. We have gauged, through that Licensing and Compliance Branch, with residents themselves who say that they are being taken care of and that they believe that the care is adequate.

We continue to monitor to know that that is continuing to be received as evidence.

**Madam Speaker:** I just have some information that I would like to impart with all members in the House, and I would just remind you that COVID is spread easily from person to person through respiratory drops. Evidence also shows that speaking loudly makes those drops increase in numbers and they are moving further into a room. So that as everybody here is raising their voices, keep in mind now what you are doing is projecting the respiratory droplets forward. And it can even get, you know, if your voice is loud enough, it can even get around your mask too. It doesn't—your mask isn't necessarily going to keep all of those droplets in place.

So this is just a reminder to everybody here, and I would tell you that in Newfoundland—*[interjection]*—in Newfoundland they do not allow—*[interjection]* Obviously nobody thinks this is important enough to listen to. In Newfoundland, they are not allowed to stand to ask questions and provide answers. They have taken the level of protection down to the fact that

everybody remains seated and voices are to be kept lowered.

So, keep that in mind as people start to want to yell across the room, mask on or no mask on, that there is going to be an enhanced projection of droplets flying through the room in case anybody happens to have any symptoms.

So it's up to you, it's up to all of us to protect ourselves and each other and everybody around us. So I just want to put that on the record for everybody. It's your choice, it's your decision, but it's some information for you.

### **Education System During Pandemic Physical Distancing Plan**

**Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona):** We know the best way to suppress the spread of this virus is to keep our distance. Here in the House, and in workplaces across the province, we have done the same. That's why it really is unfortunate that the government has not had the foresight to ensure children are properly distanced.

Thousands of schoolchildren, teachers, support staff went back to school without two metres distance. Only now, eight weeks into school, has the Pallister government said that maybe we should have done that in the first place.

Will the minister admit his mistake, and, more importantly, will he provide resources to actually ensure our classrooms are properly distanced?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education):** The member will know, or at least he should know, that our government provided \$100 million, collectively, so that school divisions could prepare for the fall. That is one of the highest per capita amounts of investment for preparation for COVID of any province in Canada.

In fact, Madam Speaker, that money can be used for such things as hiring personnel, hiring teachers or other resources. It can be used for additional spacing, and it is a plan that was developed with—in consultation with public health and Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, who I have tremendous confidence in.

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

**Mr. Altomare:** The Pallister government uses phrases like, to the greatest extent possible. But without adequate planning and resources, we just can't keep kids distanced.

For example, on Friday, the DSFM sent around a notice to parents that they are still unable to guarantee two metres of distance due to lack of space. So they will continue as they have been before.

As we have said for months now, we need a plan and we need resources. Instead, families are facing, from this government, a disjointed plan without resources to make it happen.

\* (14:10)

Why wasn't there a plan in place months ago? And will there be actual resources for new teachers and more spaces to keep our children safe?

**Mr. Goertzen:** In fact, Madam Speaker, there was a plan in place months ago. It was co-ordinated together with public health and Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer. In addition, before school reopened in the fall, there was \$100 million that was committed to and allocated specifically for COVID response within our schools, and that funding can be used, of course, by the school divisions for human resources or other needs that they need.

I would quote Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Roussin, who said last week: We know that our schools in Manitoba have proven to be safe and low-risk for transmission of the virus. We have seen minimal school-based transmission.

Madam Speaker, that is the words of our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer. I was—as much as I respect the member for Transcona, I'll take his word over the member for Transcona, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Altomare:** Well, Madam Speaker, it looks like this minister's now imposing his style of pandemic response onto school divisions, which is very little.

But I will also continue to say that distance is the key. That's what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has said on many occasions and over the past several months. Yet, the return to school was done, in many instances, without the proper distance. Only now, as we ascend the second wave, has the government even thought about doing more.

Now parents are scrambling; schools are scrambling; teachers are scrambling. Between March and September a coherent provincial plan could have been put together instead of the patchwork we have throughout the province. Instead we are—left our school divisions to rush out new changes that should

have been done months ago. It's a failure of this minister's part and on this government—

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

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, I'm disappointed and somewhat shocked, given that I know the member for Transcona is an honourable individual, but to say those things about a plan that was developed in co-ordination with school divisions, together with public health, with Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer and the Department of Education, to suggest that those individuals and relying on public health advice isn't a wise thing to do during a pandemic, I think is wrong. We need to rely on our Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, their advice. We've done that. We've provided the resources, and according to him, the results have shown that there's very little transmission happening in Manitoba schools, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I would just like to indicate to the House that I am going to ask the table officers to add one minute and 55 seconds to the clock. It was the amount of time it took me to indicate the message to everybody about talking loudly and spewing forth virus droplets. So I'm adding one minute and 55 seconds to the clock.

#### **Sale of Provincial Parkland Government Intention**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Through freedom of information we have received truly horrible news. The Pallister government's intentions aren't for vague proposals for increased revenue or sustainability in provincial parks.

Unfortunately, in the briefing note that I will table today, the minister's own staff make it clear that the government has directed the Department of Conservation and Climate to develop a plan to sell off parkland. Our parks should not be for sale.

Will the minister tell us why the Pallister government is selling off provincial parkland?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, it's a phony accusation, Madam Speaker, so I really can only say that partnering with the private sector and philanthropic organizations to add investments to parks is a good strategy. I hesitate to say that because the NDP actually did it 177 different times while they were in office.

So, Madam Speaker, I guess, in this instance, we are doing what the NDP did, only we're going to do it better.

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

**Ms. Naylor:** Madam Speaker, parklands are protected from sale according to The Provincial Parks Act, but it looks like the Pallister government is going to ignore that or just rewrite the rules. Instead, over the next two years, they are going to develop a strategy that, according to the briefing note written by the minister's own staff, will, and I quote, fulfill government direction to achieve a system for the sale of leased provincial park cottage lots.

The minister wants to sell off land in our parks. Full stop. This is a huge and irrevocable mistake. It is certainly not what Manitobans expect.

Will the minister abandon her plans to sell off parkland?

**Hon. Sarah Guillemard (Minister of Conservation and Climate):** I'm curious to actually see this advisory note that the member speaks of and has said that she has tabled today, because I am unaware of any plans at this point that I have certainly seen for selling off parkland. And I will note that there have been many private owners of land within our parks, and that was pre-dating parks creation.

And I will tell Manitobans that we will explore every avenue to increase their experience as well as protect the environment and keep our protected parks beautiful for years to come and generations to enjoy.

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

**Ms. Naylor:** Madam Speaker, selling off cottage lots in parks will mean only those people with tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of dollars can buy those lots. We should be doing more to protect parklands and to ensure Indigenous-protected areas of Manitoba. But if parklands are sold into private hands, those lands are gone forever, and this is a grave mistake.

Through freedom of information, we know their plans include government direction to achieve a system for the sale of leased provincial park cottage lands.

Will the minister tell us today that she will keep these parks public and renounce this approach?

**Mrs. Guillemard:** You know, I think over the past few weeks, we have noticed that the members from opposition parties, including independent members,

have really tried to stir up concern and fear mongering amongst Manitobans.

This is the wrong time to do so and is completely 'falsy' assertions that the member is making.

Madam Speaker, I want to point out that we have partnered with many businesses. There's been many private investments within our provincial parks, which has kept them at a useable level. And we look forward to enhancing the experience of all Manitobans.

Some of the park—the operators that we've been working with have been in Nopiming Lodge, Windsock Lodge, Quesnel Lake Caribou—I have a whole list, Madam Speaker, of private investment within our parks that I'd be glad to table for the members opposite.

### **Manitoba Hydro Rates Independent Review**

**Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry):** Madam Speaker, Manitoba Hydro turned a \$100-million profit last year, and the most recent budget update from September shows a projected \$50-million profit for this year.

Any rate increase application should be reviewed objectively by a neutral third party, as has been done for decades in this province. Instead, the Pallister government intends to bypass this process to give Manitobans higher hydro rates just in time for Christmas.

Will the Pallister government withdraw these plans to increase hydro rates of Manitobans?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance):** We know that the NDP spent billions of taxpayer and ratepayers' dollars on building dams we didn't need, Madam Speaker. We also know that the consultation or intervenor process costs four times more than other processes.

What we're trying to do with the rate is a transition year. And, Madam Speaker, with the Public Utilities Board, we want more effective process—a process that's going to provide some protection for rate-players, aligned with government priorities as well as regulatory reform.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a supplementary question.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** This minister continues to dodge the question, and Manitoba's now in a recession.

Madam Speaker, according to the Free Press, over 75,000 customers are in arrears for their gas and electric bills, and the similarly late utility payments with the City have increased 118 per cent. With tens of thousands of people behind on their utility bills, now is not the time to increase the rates. That's why it's so important that these rates are independently reviewed.

So, why would the Pallister government bypass this process to impose rate increases when so many Manitobans are suffering already?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Why would the NDP proceed with \$10 billion of ill 'invised' investment and circumvent the Public Utilities Board process unless they thought they owned Manitoba Hydro?

Madam Speaker, they don't. Manitobans do.

\* (14:20)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Fort Garry, on a final supplementary.

**Mr. Wasyliv:** Well, if Manitobans own Manitoba Hydro, they should get a say on their rates.

Now, through the freedom of information, our party has found that the Pallister government is allowing rent increases to go up at an astonishing rate: 100 per cent of rent increases outside of the rental tenancies' limit were approved this year. That means renters are paying as much as 30, 40, even 50 per cent more for their rent; 20,442 rental units saw increases above the guidelines.

Why is the minister forcing up rent and hydro rates in the midst of a recession and a pandemic?

**Mr. Fielding:** The member should know that this is a non-political process that's in place. The Residential Tenancies Branch gets information and it's actually the Residential Tenancies Commission that makes the final decisions on appeal.

So I did some homework, Madam Speaker, and, you know, we want to find out who some of these powerful commissioners are. You know what I found out? We have one in the Chamber. It's the member from Fort Garry that has been a member for the last 10 years on these commissions, making these points.

#### **Parkview Place Personal-Care Home Response to COVID-19 Outbreak**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Doctors are now saying our health-care system is on the brink and

we are days away from running out of ICU beds. The Minister of Health's been actively undermining public health because this government is too spineless to stand up to far-right conspiracy theorists whose views are a public-health hazard.

At Parkview, where there have been 18 deaths and 40 per cent of the residents have tested positive, it has taken six weeks for the facility to start testing everyone, and people who tested positive weren't being isolated. This is a failure that borders on criminal negligence.

The Minister of Health said there was a doctor on site. It wasn't true.

Why didn't this government step in to address the failures at Parkview Place weeks ago?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, first of all, let me congratulate the member on his solid endorsement from the Liberal members for continuing his leadership here and thank him for his intervention.

Let me say that the charge of bordering on criminal negligence is one that I think, if it's continued to be made by the member, will put him in an even more desperate political circumstance than he finds himself and his party now.

The fact of the matter is that we continue to place the protection of our seniors at the highest possible level. We'll continue to do that, Madam Speaker, and I'd encourage the member to be more thoughtful in his interventions in the future.

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

#### **Changes to Health-Care System Impact on Pandemic Response**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** In January, the Manitoba Nurses Union said the health-care system had no surge capacity after years of cuts and freezes. This government sold off labs to a private US operator, Dynacare, who then closed dozens of sites across Winnipeg. They've closed ERs across Manitoba and justified it by saying the NDP did as well.

The deputy minister of Health wrote a memo in September, which I table, acknowledging that 50 layoffs and hundreds—hundreds—of other position changes would be disruptive. All program directors and site chief administrative officers—CAOs—are on the chopping block. We've heard that front-line

workers are seeing their caseloads double because of these layoffs.

Why did the PC government think that disruptive health-care cuts were more important than preparing for the second wave of a pandemic?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** Well, a lot of misinformation by the Leader of the Liberal Party, but it was also misinformation and scattered responses that we saw from him on Friday when he thought, helpfully, he would go to CJOB and suggest what should be done at Parkview Place. But within 30 minutes, the Leader of the Opposition from the NDP side said the exact opposite of the member from the Liberals.

So even when they're trying to be helpful, they don't have expertise and they don't have, obviously, a knowledge of what's going on in the system. We do, and we trust the leadership of public health, not them.

#### **Seniors Advocate Position Request for Government Support**

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Since 2016, my constituents have shared stories with me about concerns related to seniors, specifically to home care, needed renovations, prescription medications and placement in care homes. I've since been calling on support of my MLA colleagues for a seniors advocate. Now, Madam Speaker, last week, the NDP decided to support this idea, and I'm incredibly grateful that they are.

So I'm coming forward again to ask: Will this government create a position for a seniors advocate here in Manitoba?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, now that we see this unanimity among the opposition organizations, Madam Speaker, perhaps we can get them also to agree with us that it's time for the federal government to step up and resume its rightful role as a full partner in funding health care in our country. Our wait times have tripled in many categories while this neglect continues.

As demands rise at a record level for health-care services for seniors and for all others, in fact, Madam Speaker, it would be time for us to pass a unanimous motion in this House that demonstrates our support for the federal government stepping up and doing the right thing and becoming a partner in health-care funding in this country for the benefit of all Canadians.

#### **COVID-19 Testing Capacity Government Initiatives**

**Ms. Audrey Gordon (Southdale):** Would the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living please inform the House about steps being taken to strengthen and expand COVID-19 testing in Manitoba?

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

I—in partnership with Red River College, a new training course has been created that is expanding the number of people who can actually assist at screening sites. In addition to that, we've added more sites, extending locations and hours in Winnipeg and Brandon, more locations on the way for Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, Winkler and Dauphin.

And that new appointment-based system—

**An Honourable Member:** Virtually.

**Mr. Friesen:** If the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) wants to take this answer she can, but I don't think she has the information, so I'll keep going.

When it comes to reducing wait times, I'm told that on day one of that appointment-based service, 700 appointments were made and no one waited longer than 10 minutes for an appointment.

We're proud to say that we're expanding capacity and faster access for COVID-19 right across the province.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable—[interjection] Order.

#### **Correctional Facilities COVID-19 Spread Prevention**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I spent the last five or six days speaking with staff and family members of folks who are currently housed at correctional facilities across Manitoba, families as far as BC, Madam Speaker, who are very concerned about their loved ones who are in the midst of an outbreak at Headingley.

Contrary to what the minister put on the record multiple times, including this morning, that folks, once they get a test, are isolated, I have been told repeatedly from family members that that's not true. I know of eight individuals who tested positive and while they were waiting for their test for two days were in general population.

What will the minister do to protect Manitobans currently housed in correctional facilities?

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Well, Madam Speaker, we've been working very closely with public health officials here in Manitoba and Manitoba Justice staff. We have developed a plan over the last number of months. In fact, we held a technical briefing this morning to explain that to the media.

I will—I know the members opposite don't believe we actually have a plan, and we have a plan we've worked with public health officials.

I will table this document, talks about 15 issues. This has been—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cullen:** —in place for months and months. I know the opposition doesn't want to believe it. The opposition will run on a campaign of fear. They're playing politics with this issue. We will work with public health officials, our staff to make sure that inmates and staff remain safe.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Speaking of staff, I want to share with the House what some staff members are writing on social media: We don't have enough PPE to the point that corrections is directing staff to share PPE. We don't have enough staff. We don't have enough supports. Their original sanitizing protocols put us at increased risk due to a lack of PPE. We do not have any confidence in how this is being handled by the minister and this government.

That is by staff, Madam Speaker. That is by staff only an hour ago. The minister either doesn't know what's going on in his department or he simply doesn't care.

But he has to show commitment to staff and to Manitobans that are currently housed there to protect them and make sure that they're safe and make sure they have what they need not to transmit COVID-19.

\* (14:30)

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I'll give the respect to social media research, all the respect I can, Madam Speaker.

That being said, I want to say thank you and say a special thank-you to someone who served the public of Manitoba and surprised us all with an

announcement that they were not planning to seek office again, for the service to the people of this province. And I want to wish Ralph Groening of the AMM all the best. After 25 years of public service, he's stepping down and not seeking the position again at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

We wish Mr. Groening and his family all the very, very best as he ends his career of service to the people of Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions? Are there any petitions?

If there are no petitions, then we will move on to the next item.

I have been notified that a member wishes to bring forward a matter of urgent public importance. The honourable member for saint—for River Heights.

#### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I move, under rule 38(1), that the ordinary business of this House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the need for urgent attention to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Manitoba, with a worsening situation with increasing numbers of cases, with outbreaks in personal-care homes and concerns about Manitoba's hospital ICU capacity. And that is seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park.

**Madam Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable member for River Heights, I should remind all members that under rule 38(2) the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other recognized parties in the House are allowed not more than 10 minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

As stated in Beuchesne's citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Madam Speaker, a matter of urgent public importance must be raised at the first possible opportunity, must be such that there's 'nother—not

another time to adequately debate the issue and must be of urgent—very urgent public importance.

I'm—raise this matter at the first possible opportunity because the situation with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic has deteriorated dramatically in the last 10 days. There's been a major increase in cases of COVID-19. There's a very serious outbreak in Parkview Place personal-care home, with more than 120 cases related to the outbreak and at least 18 deaths. We have a physician alerting us that the ICU capacity could be overwhelmed in the near future. As well, we have a minister suggesting the situation is under better control than it is.

Second, this matter is of such seriousness and so life-threatening that it needs to be debated as a matter of urgent public importance today.

Third, I will discuss why the situation we face today in Manitoba with the COVID-19 pandemic is so serious as to need this debate now.

The number of COVID-19 infections in Manitoba has escalated rapidly in the last 10 days. There were 163 cases on Friday, 153 Saturday, 161 Sunday and 100 today. For months, we've called on the Pallister government to be well prepared for the pandemic's second wave. Sadly, the government has not been well prepared.

The big gaps in preparations are now resulting in a dramatic increase in infections.

A major problem has been the long time it takes to get a test, and even more importantly, the long time it is taking to get results and to do the contact tracing. We know that a person who comes into contact with a person who is infectious with a COVID-19 infection can become infectious in four days. It is absolutely critical that, when a person is tested, that the results are available in 24 hours and that contact tracing is done quickly within the next 24 hours.

When each of these steps is done in 24 hours, that gives an additional 24 hours in case of what should be a rare delay in one—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —of the steps. [*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** Contact tracing and quarantining or isolating contacts must be completed before a person becomes infectious—that is, before day four—if it is to be successful in reducing the spread of the virus.

Let me illustrate: suppose a person who's infectious comes into contact with 10 people while he or she is infectious. When the testing results and contact tracing are all done in two days, the individuals who are contacts are now able to start isolating before they become infectious.

In contrast, when the test results and contact tracing together take eight days or more, as has been happening often recently, most particularly during the week of the Throne Speech and immediately afterwards, then the 10 people who are in contact with the original person, with the COVID-19 virus infection, can then themselves become infectious on day four for them—and this is often without knowing it, as the first day is often asymptomatic.

If these individuals each come into contact with 10 people while they are infectious, then by day 10, we can have 100 people with a COVID-19 infection. Under this circumstance, the COVID-19 infection is now rapidly spiraling out of control. This is, in fact, essentially what has happened in Manitoba since the beginning of September.

The government, as it often does, spends time blaming others. The government needs to realize it was and is in their power to drastically reduce the impact of the second wave by ensuring that test results are available in 24 hours and that contact tracing is completed in the next 24 hours.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 infections—because this government has failed to ensure this—is a major reason why we in the Manitoba Liberal Party have been so critical of the government's response to the second wave and why we have called for the Minister of Health's resignation.

But that is not all. There are additional government failures in preparing adequately for the second wave of the pandemic. Manitoba Liberals called, starting in early March, for particular attention to personal-care homes as a location of very high risk for deaths from the pandemic. The Minister of Health, in his statement, has called the deaths in personal-care homes unavoidable.

The minister's statement was immediately criticized by Dr. Nathan Stall, a very prominent and respected physician. He said these deaths in personal-care homes are avoidable and that the minister's attitude is ageist. Put simply, the Minister of Health was wrong to say that there was nothing he could do to avoid these deaths; now at least 18 in just one personal-care home and more than 25 in all personal-



care homes, about half of all the COVID-19 deaths in Manitoba.

What should the minister have done to prevent these deaths? First, as Jan Legeros with the Long Term & Continuing Care Association of Manitoba, the leadership of the Manitoba Association of Residential and Community Care Homes for the Elderly and Manitoba Liberals have been calling for months: the government should have assured adequate staffing of personal-care homes by requiring the recommended staffing of 4.1 worked hours per resident per day.

Second, the minister should have done better in ensuring all workers in personal-care homes had adequate training with respect to looking after residents and, in particular, the extra care measures needed during the pandemic.

Third, the minister should have moved much more swiftly to cover the extra costs of personal-care homes accrued due to the pandemic and ensured that all homes had adequate levels of masks and other personal protective equipment.

Fourth, the minister should have put in place a rapid response team of well-trained professionals to react quickly when an infection occurs in a personal-care home. We called on the minister to do this in May. He failed to act. It was clear from the experience this spring in Ontario and Quebec that when one person in a personal-care home tests positive, there are often many other staff who have to quarantine or self-isolate and there is an immediate shortage of staff at the most crucial time. The rapid response team would have addressed this issue quickly, to be on top of this situation and to prevent it from further deteriorating.

Fifth, the minister should have implemented protocols, as are being used elsewhere, to test all staff and all residents in a personal-care home immediately when the first positive case in the care home is found.

\* (14:40)

Sixth, the minister should have, as I've indicated above, ensured that results of tests and full contact tracing are both completed within two days to stop further spread.

Seventh, the minister should not have equivocated on the use of masks. Masks decrease the virus's spread. The minister should have been firm and clear from the start that masks are needed to reduce the

pandemic. The minister has failed again and again to put in place measures that should have been in place.

Indeed, what is even more troubling is that the minister is not only deflecting attention from his actions by saying that the deaths in personal-care homes were unavoidable, the minister has repeatedly said that there was a dedicated physician onsite at Parkview Place personal-care home. And now this morning we hear that this is not the case, as a Revera spokesperson has made clear.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, on a very sad note. I received a message this morning from the daughter of a mother in a personal-care home. She called her mother this morning. She says this morning she answered the phone without saying hello. I just heard her crying. I said: Mom, please don't cry. Tell me why you're crying right now. Her mother replied: because it's another day of hell.

Madam Speaker, we are Manitoba. We can do better than this.

For all these reasons, we need a full debate on this matter of urgent public importance. The lives and well-being of Manitobans are at stake. We need this debate today.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Just to reply briefly to the matter of urgent public importance raised by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard): there are two essential criteria that have to be met for this to qualify as a MUPI under the rules of the Manitoba Legislature.

The first being that is a matter of such urgent public importance that essentially the public interest would fail if it wasn't discussed here, in the Legislature this afternoon. And I would not for a second dispute that this is an important issue. Clearly, what is happening with COVID-19 in Canada and around the world is the most important and pressing matter of our time and of this moment, so there is no dispute that this rises to that first qualification of being a matter of great importance.

However, the second issue is whether there are other opportunities in the Manitoba Legislature to debate this issue. And certainly, question period just having concluded, I would say that virtually every question, if not every question, was related in some way to COVID-19 and to the pandemic. So clearly, there are other opportunities and the member will know, as I've indicated to him,

and I'll indicate shortly, that it is our intention to debate a sick-pay provision in a bill that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) brought forward for first reading today, which is also clearly related to COVID-19 and the pandemic.

So there will be an opportunity this afternoon to debate many of the issues that the member has raised within his matter of urgent public importance. So while it is clearly a matter that is incredibly significant, there are many other opportunities, and they've already been used this afternoon to debate this issue. So I would say that, respectfully, it fails on the second of those criteria.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** I am happy to have the opportunity to speak to the matter of urgent public importance that was brought forward and put a few words on the record in regards to this government's failure to adequately respond to the needs of Manitobans during this unprecedented pandemic.

I'm—I reflect frequently, actually, on the Throne Speech. And, you know, now with this matter of urgent public importance, I think it's essential for us to also reflect on that, in that, you know, they mentioned in that Throne Speech that foundationally they were—they would be protecting, that the government would be protecting Manitobans. I think that an urgent matter, right now, for us to look at is this government's failure to protect all Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

In fact, you know, on this side of the House, very early on in this pandemic, we were calling on the government to make investments and decisions, pour resources into areas of the health-care system, our public health-care system, that we knew were necessary to mitigate the harms of this pandemic. And, unfortunately, the government failed to do so.

And as a result of that failure, we are now seeing these spikes, consistently high, record-breaking numbers of COVID cases in our province. We are seeing increasing numbers of people dying from contracting the virus that is COVID-19. We are seeing communities being left behind in this pandemic by this government, seemingly folks who would be an afterthought actually to this government.

I think of those working in home care, health-care workers who've had their wages frozen now for several years, who don't have the right to collectively bargain, who are burnt out.

I know that I hear from constituents in Union Station who work in health care who are doing their absolute best to provide adequate care to everyone they come across in their work, and, unfortunately, they are reaching the point—and we've heard this now significantly over the past couple of days from those working in hospitals—they're reaching the point of feeling extreme fatigue and burning out, Madam Speaker.

We see what's going on in terms of long-term care, and while the Premier stands in the House today and thinks it's appropriate to brag about Manitoba's economic recovery, to me, Madam Speaker, what that really highlights is this government's ongoing priority of profit over people. And ultimately, it's Manitobans who are paying the price, and they're paying that price with their health. They're paying that price with their lives right now.

Manitoba is seeing rates of COVID-19 that other 'jurisdictions'—other jurisdictions in the country, rather, are not seeing. Manitoba had an opportunity being a jurisdiction that saw our first COVID case weeks after others to get ahead of this pandemic. The government has failed to do so.

Madam Speaker, I will echo other folks who have already spoken to this, but the fact that during this pandemic, and very recently, while these COVID case numbers have skyrocketed and while people are—unfortunately are dying as a result of this pandemic, the minister actually said that the deaths in long-term-care homes were unavoidable.

I think that we all knew immediately that that was false. We all knew immediately that that comment is ageist, that that comment is inexcusable to come from a Minister of Health. And I was really glad to see doctors in other jurisdictions condemn that comment.

And, Madam Speaker, quite frankly, the Minister for Health owes Manitobans an apology. The minister has not extended not a single apology to any of the families who have lost a loved one in long-term care. The minister has doubled down on those terrible remarks. The minister continues to fail to provide a clear plan, to reassure families that have loved ones and elders in long-term care.

Instead, the minister is defensive and misleads Manitobans in terms of what is happening in long-term care, going as far as to say that there's a full-time doctor at Parkview Place, where we've seen 18 deaths and over 120 positive cases amongst residents and staff. Revera, who owns the home, came

out and said there isn't a full-time doctor. Today was the opportunity the minister could have corrected his remarks, could have apologized for misleading Manitobans. He failed to do that, too.

Madam Speaker, this is a matter of urgent public importance. It is. And I say that because when we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister), when we have a Cabinet, we have government, we have Minister for Health that minimize the significance of this pandemic on Manitobans and the impact it's having, when they refuse to apologize for misleading Manitobans, when they refuse to apologize directly to the families who have seen the most devastating outcomes as a result of COVID-19: that is unacceptable. It is shameful. It is not Manitoban, Madam Speaker.

\* (14:50)

And I also think of in what's going on right now. I think it's important for us to talk about mental health of Manitobans, Madam Speaker. That is an urgent situation right now that we're seeing so many people of all ages struggling to navigate increasing mental health issues that are directly related to this pandemic.

I hear from people on a regular basis who are struggling to have their mental health needs adequately addressed, Madam Speaker. Interestingly enough, I had a conversation with my colleague, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) just last week and we discussed the fact that folks who are trying to access the mental health services that this government decided to hand over to a private corporation, not Manitoba-based, that those folks who are reaching out to access what is available are making that call—very bravely and courageously making that phone call—are being met with people who, according to the folks on the other line are saying, actually, the information on the government website isn't totally correct. Actually, I can't help you even though you called me today to try and access a service that a company's making millions of dollars of Manitoba's money to provide. I can't help you. Thank you for calling. Go download this app.

That's what people are being told. Barrier after barrier after barrier, Madam Speaker: that's what we see from this government in addressing COVID-19. Barriers for folks who own small businesses; barriers for folks in health care who need access to PPE; barriers for families who need to contact their loved ones in personal-care homes; barriers for folks who want to get COVID testing; barriers for folks who have kids and need to get COVID testing: barrier after barrier after barrier.

It is inexcusable eight months into a pandemic—eight months into a pandemic—that Manitoba had the benefit, the advantage of being able to learn from other jurisdictions how to get ahead of it, how to avoid what the Minister for Health calls unavoidable.

Madam Speaker, with the little bit of time I have left, I want to say that it's evident—I think it's obvious that the government lacks plans. The government doesn't have a clear plan on education, backpedals, takes some of our ideas over here and then calls it their own. The government lacks a plan in terms of health care.

We're hearing from folks at St. Boniface that the same chaos they were navigating before the pandemic is even worse during the pandemic—no plan from the government, says that the concerns we hear from our constituents and we bring into this House is social media, anecdotal, insignificant, from the Premier today.

I would extend to the government that perhaps listening to members opposite who are listening to Manitobans and actually working collaboratively will see the outcomes immediately that Manitobans deserve. I would extend that, Madam Speaker, because while this government hides away and uses the public health orders, physical distancing, as a reason to not face Manitobans, on this side of the House we do everything we can to do just that, to face them, to listen, and to action.

So I would extend that, Madam Speaker. I support this matter of urgent public importance.

Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for a matter of urgent public importance. The 90-minute notice required prior to the start of routine proceedings by rule 38(1) was provided, and I thank the honourable member for that.

Under our rules and practices the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if the matter is not given immediate attention. There must also be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter.

I have listened very carefully to the arguments put forward. Although the COVID-19 pandemic and responses to the pandemic are indeed serious matters, members have had the opportunity to put comments on the record earlier today during oral questions. It has

also been the topic of commentary during Throne Speech remarks and members' statements.

Therefore, for the purpose of today, I do not believe the public interest will suffer if the issue is not further debated today. So with the greatest of respect, I rule this motion out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** On House business, I'm seeking leave of the House for several items: (1) to waive rule 47(2) to allow a third interruption today of the debate on the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne; (2) to waive rule 47(6) to allow the questions to be put on all motions relating to the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne this Wednesday, October 28th, 2020; (3) to consider today all remaining stages of Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, including (a) allowing the bill to be referred to the Committee of the Whole immediately following the passage of the second reading motion, and (b) allowing the House to not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted for the bill.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House: (1) to waive rule 47(2) to allow a third interruption day of the debate on the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne; (2) to waive rule 47(6) to allow the questions to be put on all motions relating to the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne this Wednesday, October 28th, 2020; and No. 3, to consider today all remaining stages of Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, including (a) allowing the bill to be referred to the Committee of the Whole immediately following the passage of the second reading motion, and (b) allowing the House to not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted for the bill?

Is there leave?

**An Honourable Member:** Agreed.

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, I wonder if there is will of the House to take a brief five-minute recess so that members of the House can confer with their respective House leaders.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to take a five-minute recess for further discussion with the House leaders? [Agreed]

And there will be a one-minute bell that will occur towards the end of that five minutes.

*The House recessed at 2:57 p.m.*

*The House resumed at 3:03 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** The House is now in session.

**Mr. Goertzen:** I want to thank the Official Opposition House Leader (Ms. Fontaine), the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) as well for discussions during the recess.

I'm going to re-put a leave request, Madam Speaker. I'm seeking leave of the House for several items: (1) to waive rule 47(2) to allow a third interruption today of the debate on the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne; (2) to waive rule 47(6) to allow the questions to be put on all motions relating to the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne this Wednesday, October 28th, 2020; (3) to consider today all remaining stages of Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, including (a) allowing the bill to be referred to the Committee of the Whole immediately following the passage of the second reading motion, and (b) allowing the House to not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted for the bill.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House: (1) to waive rule 47(2) to allow a third interruption today of the debate on the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne; (2) to waive rule 47(6) to allow the questions to be put on all motions relating to the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne this Wednesday, October 28th, 2020; (3) to consider today all remaining stages of Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, including (a) allowing the bill to be referred to the Committee of the Whole immediately following the passage of the second reading motion, and (b) allowing the House to not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted for the bill?

Is there leave?

**An Honourable Member:** Madam Speaker, we just have a slight change.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay, leave has been denied. [interjection] Oh.

**An Honourable Member:** I didn't say no.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay.

**An Honourable Member:** Which is why I'm just asking if we can have a little change.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to have a change to the leave request?

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen).

**Mr. Goertzen:** I'm not sure, Madam Speaker, if this is within the rules, but perhaps we could have another brief five-minute recess before you put the question on leave.

**An Honourable Member:** You're going to be fine with it.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there—

**An Honourable Member:** This is a trust-me moment, is it?

All right. I'll take the opportunity.

**Madam Speaker:** Okay, the honourable Government House Leader has indicated he will allow the official opposition member to pose her change.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** Miigwech to everyone.

So the only thing that we would request, actually, Madam Speaker, is that we are still fine with the Throne Speech vote tomorrow. So we don't have to push it back until Wednesday.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable Government House Leader have any comments?

**Mr. Goertzen:** I do [*inaudible*] take a recess to discuss this, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave, then, to take a five-minute recess with a one-minute bell at the four-minute mark? [*Agreed*]

So the House will be recessed for five minutes.

*The House recessed at 3:07 p.m.*

*The House resumed at 3:12 p.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** The five-minute recess has ended. The House is now back in session.

The honourable Government House Leader—third try.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Yes, Madam Speaker, it's like Casey at the Bat. We'll see if I strike out a third time.

I'm seeking leave of the House for several items. One is to waive rule 47 to allow a third interruption today of the debate—of the address to the Speech from the Throne, with the understanding that the questions will be put on all motions relating to the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne tomorrow, Tuesday October 27th, 2020; and to consider today all remaining stages of Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, including (a) allowing the bill to be referred to the Committee of the Whole immediately following the passage of the second reading motion, and (b) allowing the House to not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted for the bill.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House, (1) to waive rule 47(2) to allow a third interruption today of the debate on the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne with all motions relating to the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne tomorrow?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I'm hearing there's already a no. Leave is being denied.

Can I continue with the rest of the leave notice and separate it into two parts?

Okay. So then the second part would be to consider today all remaining stages of Bill 44, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, including (a) allowing the bill to be referred the Committee of the Whole immediately following the passage of the second reading motion, and (b) allowing the House to not see the clock today until royal assent has been granted for the bill.

Is there leave?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** Leave has been denied.

**Mr. Goertzen:** Madam Speaker, could we debate the Throne Speech today.

### THRONE SPEECH (Fifth Day of Debate)

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that we will resume debate of the Throne Speech, put forward by the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), and the amendment and subamendment thereto, standing in the name of—oh, the debate is open.

**Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows):** Before I start my response to the Throne Speech, I would like to take a moment to remember our community member, Muninder Sidhu, who left us forever a few days back. Muninder was very active in the community politically, socially and also in religious activities. So we send our condolences to the family for this loss.

Madam Speaker, we are going through very difficult times, through a pandemic, and people on this planet, they're fighting against COVID-19. Things are not great in Winnipeg, things are not great in Manitoba, things are not great in Canada, all other countries, not even in Costa Rica. Things are not great.

*Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

During this pandemic, Manitobans were expecting a lot from this government through this Throne Speech. Unfortunately, this government failed to meet their expectations. The people living in Manitoba, they have made so many sacrifices, especially during the pandemic. But the question is, did the government make sacrifices matching the sacrifices Manitobans made?

We start from the children. Children made so many sacrifices during the lockdown. They had to miss their school time. They had to miss their sports activities. They had to miss their recreational activities, their dance classes, their art classes.

And this impacted their parents as well. Kids being at home meant that many of the parents had to stay home, sacrificing hours of their work, making arrangements for their care in the absence of daycare. Many parents had to spend extra time on their homework because in-person class teaching was not available.

\* (15:20)

The kids had to stay at their home. Parents were not letting them to meet their friends, mingle with them, play with them on the streets, in the playground. So this is a sacrifice that our children made. Many of the parents who had to quit their jobs were laid off during this pandemic, and they unfortunately didn't get the support—financial support from this government as they expected. Many of them survived because of the federal programs available for their survival.

I was contacted by so many families in Winnipeg—even from outside of the Perimeter—that their family members are stranded abroad. They

couldn't fly back to their families because of COVID restrictions. There were people whose little kids, they had travel plans to their country of origin. Those kids, in spite of the fact that they were citizens, their grandparents who took them to their home country, their country of origin, they were stranded together. But the system didn't allow for those grandparents to take those kids back to Canada because those grandparents were on visitor visas. So those families suffered. They sacrificed. They sacrificed their time that would have been spent with their kids.

Let's talk about school teachers, educational assistants, bus drivers, supporting staff. So many of them were laid off during this pandemic. Even when the schools were reopened, they were not hired back. That's the sacrifice they made. And who doesn't know how much sacrifice of our health-care staff including nurses, doctors, home-care staff made and fought for us during this pandemic.

Front-line workers: grocery stores were open. We didn't fast during this pandemic. There were people who were helping us to buy groceries, to make sure the shelves are full, where we can pick our items from.

And who got those items to us from various parts of the world? Truck drivers. Is there anything in this Throne Speech that makes our truck drivers happy, our truckers happy? There are employers in this field, trucking industry, who approached me about the delays in the processes at Manitoba Public Insurance. They were upset with this government not putting up enough resources to this department to fasten the licensing process, while making sure that we meet all the standards. They are upset with this Throne Speech because this Throne Speech has nothing to offer for the truck drivers.

Taxi drivers: right when we entered this tough time in our lives in March, April, none of the taxi drivers stepped back. They helped people to go from point A to point B. They fought like soldiers. Are they happy with this government? Did they get any support from this government? There were no programs to make them happy.

Talk about farmers, the sacrifices the farmers made. There were so many outbreaks at meat-processing plants in various parts of North America, especially in Alberta, in Ontario. What that means is the supply chain was interrupted. And those farmers couldn't sell their cattle to the feed lots, and they had to suffer.

Some of them who were in real need of money, they had to lose hundreds of dollars per cow to make both ends meet because they had to feed their kids. They needed some money to buy groceries for their household needs. They could not wait 'til the prices are suitable and sell their cattle after.

Small businesses. As many of the members in this House already raised this point that small businesses suffered a lot. They didn't have the capacity to pay their employees or retain their employees and run their business because the sales came down. Many of them had to shut down their business. Many of them unfortunately had to wrap up everything and think of new plans for their life. Many of them even had to leave this province. This is painful.

Is there anything in this Throne Speech that makes such people feel a little bit good? They went through stress. They went through mental problems. They had to access the health system and, again, due to the policies that were not very good, we had more burdens on our health-care system.

And there are so many nice people who stood up for all of us. I have been associated with so many organizations, and many of them that I know—I couldn't work with them, but I know that they stood up—they stepped up, sacrificed their time, spent money from their own pockets, from their own savings, to feed who needed to be fed during this pandemic.

But the people expected that the government we chose, we sent in power, would take care of us. But instead, these people, like Inner City Youth Alive, Bear Clan Patrol, they fed people. They went door to door to distribute food hampers. Such a kind move.

Let's talk about Sscope. That's an organization that used to run a thrift store, lawn-care services. During this pandemic, they decided to convert their facilities, after closing the thrift store, to house 20 homeless people and feed them, take care of them. That was a kind act.

And that organization requested this government to give them some money to run that project. They approached me. They approached the concerned minister. They approached our Premier (Mr. Pallister). But, unfortunately, their request was denied.

\* (15:30)

There were so many people, so many members from this Chamber, who drove their own vehicles

door to door to deliver food to the people who needed it. The member from St. Johns, the member from Point Douglas, the member from The Maples, the member from Notre Dame, myself, the member from Southdale, I have seen these people distributing food to the needy people.

Khalsa Aid Winnipeg, Guru Nanak Darbar, Guru Nanak Mission Centre, Singh Sabha on Sturgeon, South Sikh Centre, all these people were so kind to help and sacrifice their time and resources to fight this pandemic because this government failed to do their part and this government failed to offer such support in their Throne Speech.

Punjabi food saver, Winnipeg School Division, Seven Oaks School Division—I got a chance to go to Elwick Community School in my constituency and volunteer with them. They had a very nicely planned project. They had very nicely prepared food hampers that they distributed door to door.

I just want to say thank you, thank you, thank you, many times, to all these kind hearts who fought together against this pandemic and for our people in Manitoba.

Our caucus members, we proposed so many things. When the kids came back to schools, we proposed to maintain—to make sure we maintain two metres of distance in classrooms. We proposed to let us work together on reducing the class size to 15 students. We suggested this government to hire teachers, EAs, substitute teachers so that we can handle this pandemic and our classes and our kids in a better manner. We suggested to improve infrastructure, to rent more space for the schools. Now we are seven months into this pandemic, and it's this week that this government is asking school divisions to make sure the kids are two metres apart. And we have heard this morning, in this Chamber, that there are so many schools who are unable to make sure that kids are two metres apart from each other.

There is a single teacher, there are two rooms, and a class is split into these two rooms, and the teacher is jumping upstairs, downstairs to take care of both the groups that belong to the same grade, same class, same group with just one educational assistant assisting her. What that means is those kids are not getting the time and attention that they deserve. Is that not impacting—is that not impacting—those kids' lives? Yes. Why? Because this government failed to address these issues in their Throne Speech.

Let's talk about Hydro. This government is raising your hydro bills—I'm addressing to the Manitobans, all Manitobans—almost 3 per cent starting December, and this is a unilateral decision. And the fact is that our—Hydro is making huge profits as of today. And this government is selling parts of Manitoba Hydro—rather, sold Teshmont, which is a profit-making subsidiary of Manitoba Hydro. Why did they need to sell?

I can go on and on and on on various parts that were missing in this Throne Speech, but due to lack of time, I don't think I—

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

**Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson):** Today I—Thank you, Deputy Speaker. Today, I rise to address a Throne Speech that does not reflect the realities that Manitobans face.

Manitobans did their part. They gave the government time to develop a pandemic plan. And what did they do with that time? They did nothing.

With each outbreak, we've seen this government scramble to set up testing sites with people waiting hours and hours to get tested. As cases continue to rise throughout the regions, there is a lack of testing sites and 'libited'—of incomplete information about where the outbreaks are and very few isolation supports.

In my home community of Thompson, there is a current increase of COVID-19 cases, and the government can't provide me with their plan to deal with the increased need for testing. We know northern Manitoba is at a higher risk of COVID-19 due, in part, to the systemic underfunding of First Nations communities by past and current federal governments.

This Premier (Mr. Pallister) supported the cuts to First Nations' housing, health care, while he was in Harper's government, and he continues to—cut after cut for services in the North instead of getting ready for the second wave, which we all knew was coming.

The government used—has used this pandemic as a cover for their cut-and-slash agenda. This government is too concerned with secretly trying to sell off Manitoba Housing, Manitoba Hydro, and Manitoba Liquor Marts to worry about people of the North.

I'm very proud of Indigenous leadership who, without supports from the provincial government and minimal supports from the federal government, are working hard to keep their communities safe. They are

developing grassroots fixes to systemic issues, and I will continue to bring their voices to this House.

This government is unable to deal with the realities of COVID and putting Manitobans' lives at risk with their poor planning. I've always believed that when someone shows you who they are, you believe them. And they have shown us who they are.

This government has cut health care, education, housing, child care, and have failed seniors. They've attacked workers, they've attacked Indigenous people, and I believe it shows us that they're only in it for their rich friends.

If we invest in health care, everybody in society is better, but this government has chosen their own path. They have closed ERs; they've closed obstetrics units; they've closed the surgical unit in Flin Flon. In my home community of Thompson, they didn't even replace the HVAC system after it leaked and rained into the Thompson surgical unit. Most people would tell you it's better to replace the HVAC system when the walls are down and easy to access, not when the walls are up and everything is put back together.

The lack of supports in the North are felt all over the—are felt all over. When patients are forced to travel to Winnipeg for medical services, it puts extra pressure on an already-taxed southern resource and, to add insult to injury, this government has made cuts to northern patient transport, making it harder for northerners to travel for medical appointments.

What has this government done when they should have been working to develop a pandemic plan that works in my region of the North and other provinces? They started privatizing mental health in Manitoba by giving our tax dollars to a private company who is not even based in Manitoba and uses employees that don't live in the province while laying off hundreds of Manitoban workers.

They've pushed for more private health care, like being able to call and pay for a COVID test and have it delivered to your home. They've privatized Lifeflight, which has put northern lives at risk.

\* (15:40)

The government—the choices this government has made has already cost people their lives. These policies will continue to cost Manitobans their lives and livelihoods as this government supports their corporate friends and ships our tax dollars out-of-province, instead of investing in Manitoba and assisting with the pandemic restart.



While all of this is shocking, it doesn't surprise me, especially after this government boasts about taking advice from the government of Alberta, who thought it was a good idea to fire doctors at the start of a pandemic.

Now, this government says they're planning on cutting the CancerCare units at Concordia and Seven Oaks hospitals. How does that benefit Manitobans?

Let's look at what they've done with child care: this government—towards ordinary Manitobans can also be seen with how they treat child-care professionals. They are saying they're championing child care when the reality is they're doing everything in their power to break the—to make the public system unworkable.

Before the pandemic, there was over 16,000 kids on the wait-list—the child-care wait-list. Now this government is saying there's a surplus of spaces. They arrived at this conclusion using numbers gathered in the middle of a pandemic, when only essential workers were working.

If the government can get the virus under control, return of employment to pre-pandemic levels, there's no question the wait-list would go back. What has this government planned to create more spaces? They earmarked \$18 million to be given out by the local chambers of commerce to support the development of home daycares. Only 0.1 per cent of that money has been spent, which is not surprising, given that they were asking people to open their home up to strangers and take in strangers' children while public health officials were telling us we couldn't have our close friends and family over for supper. That makes no sense.

Child-care centres around the province are having difficulties recruiting ECE IIs. I have no doubt that it would be a difficult job to convince people who are working—who have a two-year diploma to come and work on the front lines of a pandemic while barely making minimum wage.

This government's response to the pleas of help from daycare operators is to offer conflicting and often contrary policy updates and attacking those workers by saying they need to step up without considering workers or their families might have underlying health issues would make it hard for them to work on the front line—unrealistic.

Rather than increasing centres' funding to allow centres to adequately come up with wage increases and buy the necessary PPE, they continue to

hold funding levels to 2016 levels, which equals a 10 per cent cut. Any increase this government has claimed is thanks to the federal dollars, not theirs.

This government talks about the goal of opening up more spaces, but more spaces equals more ECEs and more ECEs are leaving the field. Currently, this government's cut to Assiniboine Community College has meant that college is no longer able to provide ECE training, which means this government is using the Field of Dreams approach when it comes to child-care: If you build the spaces, the ECEs will come.

Given that most health-care workers, teachers, social workers, food service workers, require reliable child care, our pandemic recovery depends—regaining the trust of the child-care system. They need a real commitment from this government to provide centres with the funding they need, like paying ECEs—the professionals that they are. The government needs to commit to funds to ensuring training and upgrading courses are easily available and workers in all regions of the province.

This government is working toward selling off the housing stock currently owned by Manitoba Housing. I'm extremely concerned about this policy and believe it should trouble all Manitobans. We know families do better when they have safe, secure housing. What actions did this government take to ensure Manitobans had a roof over their head during the pandemic? They left 1,900 units vacant and requested an assessment on all properties. I ask you, Deputy Speaker, how does that benefit Manitobans?

If you look at other jurisdictions, you will see that elsewhere, where they rely on the private market for rental units, it's a much higher cost per unit. Once again, how does this benefit Manitobans? It only benefits the government's rich friends who are looking to buy up these housing stocks.

This pandemic had caused unbelievable hardships for many Manitobans—in particular, difficult for families and seniors. Okay—and look at what they did for seniors: instead of allowing direct deposits or reissuing cheques, they said you can get it on your taxes. For seniors who needed help now, the thank you note they got from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) does not help.

This government could've issued cheques if this—if there was an income cut-off. I ask, does the Premier and his rich friends need the \$200? The answer is simple: it's no. But one of my constituents had to move out of her home due to medical—due to health reasons,

needed the money. And she was—when she asked if the cheque could be reissued, she got told no, it would be on her taxes. Why did this government spend millions of our tax dollars on a vanity project for the Premier?

This government left EIA recipients without any support, as the cost of things were going up and harder to access—foodbanks and other supports at that EIA recipients rely on. Due to either closed doors or reduced hours, EIA recipients were left on their own.

This government is now making it harder for EIA recipients who applied for CERB to—now being told they have to pay back CERB, plus this government considers CERB income—and are being forced to pay back benefits they received on EIA. I ask you: if CERB is considered—how can it be income if you have to pay it back? To me, this highlights that better—more supports and better supports for our most vulnerable.

Manitobans who are disabled were also forgotten during the pandemic. There was no supports for day programs that were closed, no extra funds for people on EIA disabilities, who had to take cabs to get to appointments or supplies because of reduced bus service or underlying health issues. Many of the programs they were—they rely on were cancelled, leaving them on their own.

Now, we've seen how upset the other side of the House gets when we're not buying their stories about Manitoba Hydro. Why aren't we buying it? We've heard it all before. In fact, we've heard it with MTS. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) was in Cabinet, and the minister responsible, when they were telling Manitobans they weren't going to sell MTS. And what did that government do? They sold MTS. And what happened when they sold MTS? Service went down and costs went up.

I am proud to be from Thompson, where former MLA Steve Ashton stood in this Chamber for over 24 hours to—trying to stop the sale of MTS because it would not benefit Manitobans. In fact, I stood with other Manitobans in the dead of winter, trying to stop the sale of MTS. I ask, who benefitted from the sale of MTS? Was it Manitobans? No, it was the PCs and their rich friends. In fact, former Premier Gary Filmon benefitted the most because he became the chairman of the board. That's why Manitobans aren't buying it.

Now let's look at what they're doing with Manitoba Hydro today. They were hoping you weren't paying attention, and it was only after the annual

report came out that it—we found out they had sold Teshmont, a profitable subsidiary for the government. This government claims to be good business people, but I don't know anybody that would sell a profitable subsidiary unless they were looking to slowly divest.

I'm also troubled in the last number of days as I've heard this government attack the Keeyask partnership agreement. The Keeyask partnership agreement, while not perfect, was entered into in good faith by the First Nations of Fox Lake, Uatathdek [*phonetic*] and York Factory and War Lake First Nations to be partners in their traditional territories that would affect their their way of life with hunting, fishing and trapping.

I think this is why the government doesn't like the deal: because the communities are demanding to be treated like the true partners they are. This was evident in the early parts of the pandemic, when Hydro would not meet with community leaderships to discuss the replacement and the ramp of the—up of the workers at the dam site. All the communities wanted was a conversation. They weren't saying no. They wanted to be part of the discussion, to make sure their communities were safe. Because of their hard work and—their hard work, Hydro did meet with the communities.

But we've seen what happens when an outbreak happens, how quickly it can spread. Look at what going—what went on in Brandon and Little Grand Rapids. What happens is—the level of disrespect this government showed to the four First Nation partnerships was unacceptable. It's showed this government does not believe in or support reconciliation, and their actions show it.

This government does not believe in only—directions—but when the Premier was in the Harper government, he supported all of the Prime Minister's taking First Nations to court. FYI, he lost every time and wasted millions of tax dollars on that. The level of racism that this government shows is staggering. They are upset when Indigenous people gather to protect their rights and their communities. This government calls them criminals. But when non-Indigenous people have an anti-mask rally, breaking the health orders on the Leg. grounds, it's okay; they're practicing their freedom of speech.

\* (15:50)

For a government who claims to be transparent, they don't seem to be transparent. They're trying to do a rate increase, in an omnibus bill, that will cost

Manitobans more money. They aren't taking it to—for public hearings. They're doing it with the stroke of a pen. How is that transparent? If you believe in this rate increase, I challenge you to take it to the PUB.

Manitoba worked with teachers and EAs to have their kids work from home. The parents gave this government seven months to come up with a plan. The Minister of Education was more focused on getting the kids back to classrooms in June than coming up with a plan for September. And it wasn't better for children or teachers. They wanted the kids back in school in June so parents could go back to work.

This government's back-to-school plan is not child-focused. Its sole purpose is to get parents back to work. Their poor planning is putting our kids at risk. We offered a way for the government to open schools safely. The government ignored those suggestions. We need smaller class sizes. We know that under the—our education system in the past four years has been cut. The minister did not provide leadership during this time and instead presented Manitobans with a bare minimum standard, and showed that within the first couple of weeks there were outbreaks in schools.

But the only—by only providing a minimum standard and no leadership, it means school districts with more resources can offer different levels of support, and we've seen that in our school districts. Our children need to make sure we're making the best choices for them. Children need to know that the government is making sure they have the best access to education, given the current health crisis. It's not too late. I would urge this government to invest in our schools and cap kids at 15 kids per class and hire more EAs so there's more supports in place.

The government also has failed small-business owners. We know, before the pandemic, Manitoban wasn't open for business. The net interprovincial migration rate shows Manitoba saw the biggest departure since 1988. Under this government, CEDF hasn't loaned out money in the last three years. We know northern Manitoba is hurting and needs investment. CEDF is the perfect place for that. I know, personally, many people who are not able to open their own business because CEDF wasn't able to loan money.

The North needs supports now. The newly created Manitoba Mineral Development Fund has been created for over a year and has not spent a single dollar on a business or a community. During the pandemic, small businesses were left with questions of how they were going to pay rent. I know the North,

many tour operators, trappers and fishers were ignored by the government and left on their own. Businesses and non-profits were left to purchase their own PPE. Many programs put forward to help them have been underspent by millions and millions.

Like all other government programs, this government likes the headlines, not actually helping people. We need a living wage in Manitoba. I'm proud to be a supporter for the fight for \$15 an hour. We saw during the pandemic how many minimum wage workers were deemed essential, from grocery store clerks to gas attendants. This pandemic has changed the way essential workers are thought of. Now, more than ever, workers in Manitoba deserve a living wage.

I have seen first-hand how this government treats workers in this province, and what they do to start the pandemic was laid off hundreds of public servants. The Premier (Mr. Pallister) himself blamed workers for not going back and said it was because they were making more money on CERB. To me, that says we need to start raising wages, not attacking people for doing what is the—in their best interest. I also—we also know that everybody—not everybody's situation. We know some people are unable to return to work because they are—underlying health issues or caring for people with underlying health issues. And it doesn't help when this Premier and this government is blaming them.

So I would urge this government to stand up and work for Manitobans and not for themselves. Thank you.

**Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry):** Manitobans have sacrificed much during this pandemic, and they did so without complaint and without reservation, because they wanted to ensure that they, and their families, and their community, was safe. They did it to ensure that their life would get back to normal as quickly as possible and as safely as possible.

But we know the pandemic has not affected all Manitobans equally. We know that the inequality and unfairness that exists in Manitoba, which has been exacerbated by the policies of the Pallister government, is getting worse. And the pandemic has brought it out.

Many workers can't work from home. That's not an option for them. Many workers that this government doesn't seem to value are now deemed essential. These are the people that actually get things done in Manitoba and keep our economy going. Many of them are low-wage workers and have wages close

to minimum wage without benefits or sick leave or any other protections that many Manitobans take for granted.

We have many Manitobans living in dense housing situations, overcrowded, because they don't have adequate and proper housing in Manitoba.

And of course we know that the pandemic has disproportionately had negative and harsh effects on women in Manitoba. Many families have had to leave their work situation or cannot return to work because we do not have adequate child-care systems in Manitoba. It was in crisis, and it was in chaos before the pandemic, and the Pallister government's cuts just made things that much worse.

We know seniors have been adversely affected. They've been sacrificing for their families, they've been staying away from their loved ones and their supports in order to keep themselves and others safe.

So the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is, has this government matched the sacrifices of Manitobans? Has this government met this moment?

Well, Manitoba, including the most vulnerable and the most affected by the pandemic, would say no. After seven months—they had seven months to develop a plan, to address these challenges, and it's clear that we're no further ahead than we were in April. And many of these government policies have made things worse.

So I want to talk first about the COVID programs, the responses, and, in a word, I think the politest thing you could describe them as: ineffective. I think that's pretty much how you could describe most of what the Pallister government does. It's government by press release. And it's a consistent, malignant pattern of this government that they announce programs with massive price tags, and then they turn around and make the criteria to actually access these programs impossible to meet.

So they don't actually have to spend any money, nobody can actually access any of their programs, and nobody gets the help that they need. And it's clear that this government really has no intention of helping Manitobans, and they just need a headline for a press release.

And when Manitobans struggle, this government just sits on their hands and go, well, you know, it's too bad; you should have been born rich.

The other thing that this government does is that they're one of the leading reasons why we have a

recession right now. They are one of the—leaving aside the pandemic, the Pallister government is responsible for some of the largest job cuts during this pandemic.

This government has cut 10,000 good-paying middle-class jobs at the beginning of a recession. They are taking money out of Manitobans' economy. They are squeezing businesses. They are making it harder for employers to sell their products, because if nobody has money, nobody can buy your products, and then if nobody buys your products, you're buying less from suppliers and from other vendors, and it's this whole vicious pattern that they have done and with less people spending, there's less business, less taxes and we are all poorer.

And they have put this toxic economic 'treadmill' in place. And it's made it harder for Manitoba to weather the storm.

Let's talk about federal transfers. This is interesting. The federal government has given Manitoba \$417 million in funds to deal with COVID. And the pattern with this government has been before the pandemic is they get these federal transfers and then they don't spend it. They just throw it in the bank or in their rainy day fund or in their internal adjustments, and they don't actually spend it on what it's intended to do.

\* (16:00)

We don't have any proof that this government has 'actly' spent the \$417 million of federal money in order to protect Manitobans. This is not the government's money; this is the money for the Manitoba people paying federal taxes, and they deserve to have that money spent on what it's intended, on programs meant to protect them in this time of crisis.

I think probably one of the most callous examples of this is the \$109 million the federal government gave to expand test capacity. This government has not shown to the public that they have spent \$1 on contact tracing and testing from that federal \$109 million. And I suspect the reason why they haven't shown that is they actually haven't used that money.

And so this government can explain to Manitobans who are waiting seven hours in a testing lineup why they are not spending the money intended to make it a reasonable line. They can explain to that family who is scared that their child has been tested and they have to wait five days for an actual result. All this was intentionally meant to be avoided, yet this government does nothing.

We hear that there's \$80 million going in federal funds to the classroom. This government refuses to commit to actually spend that money in schools. They, over and over, talk about their hundred million that they're putting in, and they never mention this \$80 million at all. Why? Because they have no intention of actually directing it towards schools, and they have shown no evidence that they are going to do so.

So it takes some nerve for this government to say the federal government doesn't give them enough money when they don't actually spend the money that they do get.

And then, of course, let's look at the Pallister government economic plan, if you want to call it that. It amounts to two things: reducing taxes for the wealthy. And that's fine if you have a job and you actually pay taxes, but in a recession, that means people don't have jobs, aren't working and aren't making money, so they can't get a tax cut of nothing. And then the tax cuts they propose, any serious economist will tell you, will do absolutely nothing to stimulate the Manitoba economy, that—we know, again, that in this pandemic, that wealthy Manitobans have actually done well and some have actually profited. So by cutting their taxes you will not see any measurable benefit for the Manitoba economy.

What does start an economy is a government that invests in its people, replacing the missing private investment and to create jobs by doing that, so that more people have money to spend and that the businesses, then, are busier that are now paying taxes and you create even more jobs.

So the government's approach of firing people, making sure that nobody has any money, that there's no spending in our economy and businesses are going under and even less jobs as a result, certainly, that's the wrong way to go, and we know that and we see that.

But, secondly, they have no plan. Their entire economic plan for a recovery in Manitoba is appointing a board of wealthy friends and donors to advise Manitoba about what they should do. Well, I mean, we know what we have to do. What we don't see from the Pallister government is the political will to do it.

And, of course, we're saying with this government that they are intent—in a crisis—to make life less affordable for Manitobans. They're raising tuition each and every year. So, we need skilled and

knowledge workers, and raising tuition and making cuts to post-secondary institutions creates barriers for Manitobans being able to access education. It creates barriers to creating a skilled workforce. It does the exact opposite of what needs to be done.

So, you know, the Pallister government loves to raise taxes; they just don't like to raise it on wealthy people. But when you raise tuition, you're raising taxes on the middle class; that's a direct taxation of the middle class, who cannot, as a proportion of their income, afford it as well as wealthy people can.

So, they've—also planning to raising your hydro rates by 2.9 per cent, just in time for Christmas. And, again, that's a tax increase, and it's a tax increase that will disproportionately affect working and middle class Manitobans, to the detriment of the economy. They are already hurting, they are already struggling. There's over 70,000 Manitobans who are in arrears in their utility bills, and raising their utility bills at this time—especially when Hydro doesn't need the money—they're not asking for the money and they're not prepared to go to the Public Utilities Board and make a case that they do. But somehow, the Pallister government believes that their Hydro rates aren't high enough and that they need to raise them, just in time for the holidays.

Then we have them raising rent, because renters, apparently, don't pay enough in rent in Manitoba, so they've taken upon themselves—over 20,000 units in the last year, they have approved—their government-appointed commissioners, and at this point, they all are Pallister government appointees, after four or five years—they have 100 per cent approved raises well above the scale in Manitoba, sometimes equaling up to 50 per cent hikes. And that is devastating for middle and lower class—that is a tax hike.

Then, of course, we have the privatization of Hydro. So, we know that this government believes in privatization. They don't believe that government should be involved in providing these type of services. But we've seen this movie before and it doesn't end well for Manitoban taxpayers. When they privatized MTS, our service went down, our rates went up. And then, of course, they moved to—bought out by Bell, and so many of our high-tech jobs then get moved out-of-province. So we don't keep the technology here. We don't do any innovating here and our money gets sent to Ontario and any sort of innovation from MTS goes there as well.

And that's the game plan for Hydro as well. And we will see—you know, we have the cheapest hydro

rates in North America, but if this government gets their way and privatizes, it will see a huge jump in rates and make it less affordable.

And we have, of course—this government has shown their tax cuts. This is a government that's projecting a \$2.9-billion deficit this year, although they have been known to cook the books, so I doubt that's the real number. But they're going to—27,000 Manitobans right now are not working due to this pandemic.

This government has consistently underspent infrastructure dollars and they have spent a fraction, compared to the previous government, on building up Manitoba. Manitoba has an \$11-billion infrastructure deficit and it's growing. And at this time that they claim that we're going to borrow \$2.9 billion this year, they're saying now's the time to cut taxes.

And let's look at the taxes that they want to cut. They want to cut probate fees—well, that's basically our wealth tax in Manitoba. That is the closest thing we have to an inherent tax. It only affects a tiny, extremely wealthy portion of Manitobans and the government says, well, you know, wealthy people are struggling in Manitoba, so we have to give them \$10 million. And we're going to borrow money to do it. And the middle class and working class Manitobans are going to be paying interest for years, so that the Pallister government campaign donors can get a tax break.

Then let's look at the other big tax that they're bringing in: they're cutting tax on accounting fees, PST. Nobody's asking for this. And if you are paying major fees in accounting, it means that you are doing very well, either personally or your business. This is another \$5-million handout to wealthy Manitobans, because most people go into H&R Block, getting their \$50 tax return are not going to see a benefit from this. And, again, you're going to borrow public money to give a direct wealth transfer to Manitobans who need it the least and it will have no impact on getting this economy moving.

\* (16:10)

So, this is a government that gives help to those that need it least, abandons the most vulnerable Manitoba who need it most and, in the long run, they're making us all less safe and certainly poorer. And I think if you characterize this government and what's been happening in Manitoba, we are sicker as a province, we are poorer as a province, and we are well less equal as a province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Thank you.

**Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook):** It is my pleasure to take this opportunity to put a few words on the record. Before I get into the response to the Throne Speech, I'd first like to take this chance to thank all the front-line workers, not just in my constituency, but across Manitoba for their commitment, their sacrifice, and their due diligence to do what's right by Manitobans, to do what's right for their communities, for their families. And it comes at a great sacrifice for some, sacrifice in terms of watching loved ones actually succumb to this pandemic, but they still, day in and day out, do what's right for the future of not only their families, but for all the Manitobans.

I'd also like to thank specifically First Nations communities and First Nations leadership for what they bring to this table, for what they have brought to this province to protect their communities, to protect their people and to protect their way of life, and it's something that hasn't gone supported by this government. They sit and tout how they've negotiated, they've talked to, they've consulted with First Nations communities, and in this—speaking specifically to the pandemic and the COVID-19 and how it's affected communities, and that's just simply not the case.

When you get out there and talk to community leadership, grassroots people in those communities, the support's just not there. But you see in the media, you see on press releases, you see questions answered in this House that this government is doing their due diligence, they're doing everything they need to do to support those communities, and, in fact, that's simply just not the case.

So I'd like to applaud those communities for doing what's best for themselves and taking the initiative to be able to do that on their own and, in some cases, with little to no help from this provincial government.

Specifically, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the chiefs organizations, MKO, MMF, those communities and their pandemic response has been outstanding to this point. In the beginning of this pandemic, they took a lot of pride in limiting the impacts of COVID-19 in their communities, and that could have been supported even more so we wouldn't be having outbreaks in communities, in remote communities, and that's something that, time and time again, people are just falling between the cracks on.

Communities like Sagkeeng pride themselves on being able to respond quickly, efficiently,

professionally, to any potential cases in their communities. Similar to go with the Island Lake communities, southeast communities, and they've done an excellent job to this point. But when help is needed and help is asked for and help is requested from this provincial government, they're instead pointed to the federal government and federal responsibility.

Now, while I'm still new to this business of the Legislature, for instance, Throne Speech debate, my definition of debate is to ask a question and you debate the issue. By that definition this is not a debate because the Premier (Mr. Pallister) is ignoring the issue, denying the issue, and, quite frankly, has his head in the sand on the issue. Many of my constituents asked the question, what does a Throne Speech mean? What does it do for me? What does it do to me? The fact that people have to ask themselves these questions speaks to the failures of this government.

We are all in this storm together. We are all in the same storm. While we may have—while we may all be in this together, we are in a multi-tiered system based on your demographic, your social standing, your income, and, most disappointingly, whether you are in the Premier's favour or not.

So while we all may be in the same storm, we are definitely not all in the same boat, and those are direct words from the government's own ministers. At least it's somewhat comforting to know that they can tell an accurate fact from time to time because, clearly, we are not all in the same boat.

The Throne Speech is so very out of touch with the needs of everyday Manitobans. There is no mention of systemic racism and those kind of things that are going on day in, day out in our province. There is no talk about health care for First Nations, health care for Indigenous communities. Instead we are pointed towards federal responsibility.

I table a document that is set, I guess, virtually now, we do it to the moderator, and in that document, it's a proposal from the Island Lake Tribal Council. And the Island Lake Tribal Council is made up of four committees: St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack, Garden Hill, Red Sucker Lake. And in that document, they ask for a Winnipeg-based quarantine facility proposal.

Setting up a field hospital in the Island Lake area. Access to medical equipment and testing sites. Accessing appropriate personal protective equipment. So the fact that these communities have to write their own proposal just to get essential services that should

be made available to every Manitoban speaks to the failure of this government and their inability and out-of-touch with exactly what is needed in Indigenous communities.

In one of my visits to Indigenous communities, we went by boat. And in that same boat was a dialysis patient in a wheelchair. There was myself, him and the boat captain. And that was how he went from one community to the next, just to receive his dialysis treatment.

Now, if we were sitting in Morden, if we were sitting in Steinbach, we would be appalled that a patient had to go through that just to get access to simple medical care that's required and needed for—to survive, to live.

In a community of—in an area of 10 to—10—anywhere between 10 to 15,000 people, which the Island Lake area is, why is there no hospital? Why is there no talk of a hospital facility up there? As I mentioned earlier, if that happened in any other part of this province, and there was a demographic and a population of that size, they would have so much more access to all that infrastructure that's needed to just simply survive as an everyday Manitoban.

Also, in that road—in that way of thinking, when it comes time to people falling between the system, and what they are, and what we are as Indigenous communities, we are still Canadians, we are still Manitobans, but we're not treated as such. So when I ask about what kind of assistance is going to be brought to the Island Lake area by this provincial government, I don't mean to point them to the right federal department. That's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about what your responsibility as the governing body in Manitoba is to the people of Manitoba, and First Nation communities are still population of Manitoba, and they should be treated as such.

In this Throne Speech, there's little to no talk about all-weather roads, all-weather roads to link our communities—to link our remote communities—again, to have them have access to simple, everyday things that everybody takes for granted. Everybody who lives in the southern part, which I know the Conservatives are part of that, and not realizing that we are north of Swan River, and being able to go to the store and receive a jug of milk for the price that you pay in Winnipeg, as compared to the price

you'd pay in a northern isolated community of \$10 compared to \$5.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

There's been no commitments on the environment; instead, the MO of this government is to blame the feds; blame the NDP; no acceptance of responsibilities; there's been numerous rallies on all these issues; but no, for some reason, we're all wrong. All the Manitobans are wrong. All the thousands of people that are outside this building here talking about climate change, talking about systemic racism, they seem to be all wrong. And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) seems to think that he is right on these issues. That sounds pretty much like a dictator to me.

These are all issues that the government had before the pandemic and has done nothing but push them aside. A few weeks ago, we were one year into our term. So what has the government done? They've dropped the ball on all these issues I just talked about, and then COVID hit. And I don't know what other term describes further dropping the ball; perhaps dropping the ball, covering our eyes so you can't see, tying your feet so you can't walk, laying down so you can't stand, curling up in a ball and hoping that 'somethingly' magically make things okay. An out-of-sight, out-of-mind mentality.

That is what the government has done on these issues. Manitobans have stepped up during this pandemic, but the Throne Speech shows just how much the Pallister government has stepped back.

When we talk about giving and giving and giving, one of the things when we talk about health, and it's particularly health in the Island Lake area, the Premier went to Ottawa hat in hand asking for more federal money for health and was simply just asked a question, well, are you truly spending what you have in your province on health care?

And what happens then? Shuts down the press conference. Doesn't talk about it anymore. Instead, blames the federal government for saying, they only want to do that so they can take credit for it. Keep in mind, this is the same Premier that gave our seniors \$200 with a personal letter signed by himself. So is that not wanting to take credit, for \$200?

\* (16:20)

**An Honourable Member:** Like it's his money.

**Mr. Bushie:** Like it's his money and that's something that—and signed by him. My own parents looked at that letter and they just laughed. They said, what are

we going to do with this? Is this a payoff of some type? It's hard to tell, but maybe that's the case.

When we talk about failing, and the government's failing in what they've done and what they haven't done, they've done so many things wrong, and, in particular for—my passion is Indigenous communities and the rights of Indigenous peoples. There was a report brought out about the diabetes and—the diabetes rates and particular First Nation communities and also First Nation children. Again, that's just brushed off to the side as something that's federal responsibility, and things like that are just absolutely unacceptable.

When we talk about the rights and the basic things that First Nation communities want and First Nation communities think they should have as citizens of Canada, as citizens of Manitoba, there are things that are privileges and there is things that are rights. When we talk about being able to bring those things forward, hunting rights is something that's a right, an inherent right; it's not a privilege. A non-Indigenous hunter has the privilege of being able to go and hunt. An Indigenous hunter has the right to go and hunt, to go and right—that right to go and hunt, to provide for their families, to put food on their tables. And keep in mind, that's the exact same kitchen table that this government talks about wanting to put more money on.

Well, I not only want more money on that table, but I want to be able to put food on that table to support my family, not without being able to go out and hunt for sustenance, hunt to support my family. And instead of being supported by this government, instead of working together with this government, they spend all of their money and all of their resources on enforcement rather than being able to say we're going to support what's going on in those communities. And that's just unacceptable.

When I sit there and I think about the Throne Speech response and the things that were said and things that were passed back and forth, it's almost like a running routine on that side of the Chamber. Here's two minutes; you can say what you want to say, but spend the rest of your time patting the Premier on the back. It's almost a script that they're given.

When I sit there and I talk about the Indigenous relations minister and paid close attention to her speech, I just found it odd that all it talked about is the things they've done in the past, the things they're going to do, the great thing they're in a pandemic; it's all huff and puff and let's pat each other on the back; let's say we've done all these great things. But what in that



speech was there going forward? What was there going forward for Indigenous communities? And I don't think there was anything in there, because there's just some things that's simply just not there.

If all of these consultations were taking place, why would we have such an uproar from the Indigenous communities about what's going on? We talk about the channel project. The channel project involves Infrastructure; the channel project involves consultation—involves Conservation; it involves a number of different departments on that side of the floor. But the Indigenous relations minister is the one highlighting and heading up the consultation process.

Why is Infrastructure not doing that? Why is Conservation not doing that? And it's quite simply because that's not a department they want to go through. They don't want to talk to those people. They don't want to talk to those communities for the simple matter of they know that it's not right. And if all the consultation is happening in the proper way like the government claims, is happening in significant ways like the government claims, then why are they being taken for—to court for the lack of consultation? Not only being taken to court, but losing in court when it comes time to the injunction process and the lack of consultation that happens.

So, again, who's right, who's wrong? Apparently, everybody else is wrong and the government is right because of what they do.

I sit there and I hear about the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) analogies when he talks about telling stories and relating things to a different way, and he talks about sports analogies. So let's do that for a second here. Let's talk about the sports analogy. And I know the Premier is a baseball player, and those are great things that he hypes, and that's fantastic. But imagine being the pitcher on the baseball team—I don't want to say being the captain because the captain shows leadership, and that's not leadership that's happening here, so I'm not going to call him the captain. But at the same time, let's say he's pitching, and at bat is Indigenous communities, Indigenous rights holders.

First ball there he throws says consultation on it, throws it tight and inside, and what happens? Knocks the batter down. What do they do as Indigenous communities, because we're very forgiving, we just get up, dust ourselves off, get back in the batter's box. Next pitch comes, illegal blockades written on there, throws that ball, again, knocks us down as Indigenous communities, Indigenous peoples. So what do we do

then? We get up, dust ourselves off, get back in the batter's box. Finally, third pitch comes. What's on that ball? Inherited rights. Throws that, knocks us down. But what happens then? We don't get up, we don't get back in the batter's box. We get up, we now charge the mound because we're ready to fight for those rights and be able to fight for what we stand up and what we believe in.

And that's exactly what's happening today, and our communities need to be deserved and treated as such. So when the Premier talks about illegal blockades, make no mistake about it, it was an attempt to have people look at Indigenous peoples as the enemy and incite racism. He made mention of when your rights infringe on other rights, there will be consequences to those actions. That's a direct quote from the Premier in the media. So is that not what he is doing by legislating away that right and infringing on that right, is that not what he's doing? So then I ask the Premier then, so what is your consequence for that action? There is none, because you're trying to hide that in legislation and tried to be able to skirt the ability of First Nations people to be able to come up and come to the table in a true and meaningful way.

And if this government truly believed in respect, reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, their actions would speak volumes. Instead, they're quite opposite. He's trying to make the term blockades synonymous with Indigenous people. So—but if these consultations are so great, then show us. Show us exactly what kind of consultations you've been having. Show us those names, with who, on what issues; provide the people's names. Are they just participation lists, are they just email lists, are they just phone calls to an answering machine, and now you can check off that box and say, well, no, we've consulted on them. And again, I'll ask the question: If consultation has been going so great, in particular with the channel project, then why are you being taken to court, and why are you losing in court for lack of consultation?

Instead, it's blame, blame, blame. Blame the feds. Blame First Nations. Blame the Metis. Blame the farmers. Blame the landholders. Blame the environment. Again, it's everybody else's fault. Well, here—for the Premier, here's another analogy: when someone tells you that there's always one self-proclaimed know-it-all, self-centred, paternalistic individual in every government and you can never find him? It's because it's you. And I would never hazard a guess to say the Premier has never found that person, but that's just me.

After all, this government knows what everybody wants without actually asking the people and the stakeholders involved what they want. The member from Swan River, in his Throne Speech, said, it's not easy being a moose. So now they even speak for the animals, because they know what they want better than the animals themselves, which is just ridiculous.

Not one person on this PC team has the guts to stand up to the Premier when he's dictating the agenda. To be able to stand up and say, this is wrong. What you're doing is wrong. What you're wanting us to speak for, what you're wanting us to support for you is wrong. So as I mentioned, and this can't be said enough, when it talks about infringing on the rights, infringing on inherited rights of our communities, being able to take that away is just absolutely wrong and I hazard, and I ask every member on that side of the Chamber to go visit an Indigenous community. Not just through your minister. Get out there and talk to those communities, talk to those people.

I can almost guarantee for certainty that no one on that side of the Chamber has visited those two teepees outside this building right now. And I see heads shaking across the way, because that's simply just not the case, to be able to go out there and talk. My esteemed colleague from St. Johns made a point of pointing out Orange Shirt Day and the hypocrisy that happened on that side of the Chamber on those exact issues and being able to bring that. You're told that Orange Shirt Day is to represent the children, to make sure all the children are remembered, make sure they're not forgotten, make sure somebody's speaking up for them; and who is speaking up for them on that side? There are a lot of people speaking up for them on that side, but definitely not with their best interests at heart, which is just ridiculous.

So when we talk about the government missing opportunities, there's not a missed opportunity on the—on behalf of the government because it is with full intention that they just absolutely disregard it. So a missed opportunity means you had the chance and you didn't even take that chance. You choose to just not do anything with it.

\* (16:30)

So to close, I'd like to say, again, thank you to all our front-line workers in our Indigenous communities and the things that they brought to the table.

And I will close with this, to tell all the people of Manitoba: we, on this side of the House, are with you and we are in this together. Twelve Manitobans, our

NDP caucus, tells you: well, we are most definitely in the same boat with you, and we will get through this storm together.

Miigwech.

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Well, I see have some—I still have some fans around this place.

Madam Speaker, I want to begin by thanking the people of Elmwood, for, actually, their patience over the last seven, eight months now. Certainly, my office has gotten a lot of responses on a number of issues over that time. We've endeavored to get back to them immediately with suggestions and I think we may have gotten some resolutions along the way, by referring some of the people directly to the Health Minister and to the Premier (Mr. Pallister). And there may have been some positive resolutions. But, certainly, it's been a tough eight months for the people of Elmwood, in fact, the province of Manitoba, the entire country of Canada and, it looks like, increasingly, the world.

Now, you know, back in January, I recall listening to a CBC—I think it was Passionate Eye—program, interviewing one of the doctors from Wuhan. And he took considerable time to explain that in China, that half of the infections were being caused in the home environment. And he had a new pregnant wife with him, sitting 15, 20 feet away, and he was explaining that once you gave up your guard—it was alright to take precautions at work and other places, but you had to extend that to the home environment. And that's actually not been done very well in—on a bunch of—a whole different bunch of areas.

And, in fact, Dr. Birx in the United States—I don't know whether people know who she is, but she recommended, maybe a month or so ago, that, in fact, that was going to be the next stage: that people were going to have to come to grips with the fact that they were going to have to stay six feet apart and wear masks, even in the home environment. Because it made no sense to me to—I understand why we sent the infected people away from the hospitals. In the case of Italy, we had many doctors infected, and nurses infected, because they didn't understand at that time that it was not a good idea to send the infected people into the hospital environment. You had to protect the hospitals, protect the doctors, protect the nurses. So what we did was an improvement over that. We made certain from the very beginning that we didn't send infected people into the hospital environment.

Well, what did we do? We sent them home. And Chris Cuomo's a good example—the governor of New York's brother, who's on CNN every night—got infected and he did his show, live. And you notice, at the time that he did it, he stayed in his own house, where—and he's in the basement. He thought he was going to be safe in the basement and at the end of this period of two or three weeks that he was recovering, he managed to infect his wife and infect one of his kids.

So it's pretty clear that we have—when we've got people that have got infected, they should be taken out of the home, not sent home to infect their families—which is what we've sort of been doing here—but they should be put into an isolation area, which, by the way, we do have here in Manitoba. We have a facility that we have a number of people in and have had them in for a number of months now. There's one on Sargent Avenue, where people that are homeless are put in this facility. There is also another facility—I think it's a hotel—that was quietly announced back in the beginning of the pandemic, where people who don't present a proper plan to the health authorities are put in there. If they don't feel—if you don't feel you can isolate at home, then you are provided with this facility courtesy, I guess, of the government.

Well, the question is, why aren't people using this facility more? Where is the government and where is the health authorities in this particular issue? Are they just allowing people to head home and infect the family? Because that is, in fact, what's happening here. We could probably cut our infections in half if we were to deal with that issue.

Now, there is a lot of inconsistencies. You know, I guess scientists everywhere have difference of opinions on things too, but they managed to confuse the public quite a bit in the beginning when some said it was a good idea to wear masks and others said, well, no. We had a—we have the federal—our federal health authority saying, well, no, we shouldn't be wearing them, they're not that effective.

And so people, as a result, got a lot of mixed messages out of this. And I'm glad to see that it's finally coming around to the point where people, at least in Manitoba anyway, have common sense, and you are seeing masks everywhere you go, even though the government hasn't made it a mandatory situation, but it is a common-sense situation.

But out in the environment people are also misunderstanding the effect of the masks. Because they were told to stay, you know, six feet apart, and

they were doing that at shopping malls and places like that, following those little feet in the shopping malls.

And then as soon as they started to don their masks, they're running all over the place. They think that it's okay to be a foot away from somebody just because they're wearing a mask, when, in fact, the reality is you've got to stay your six feet apart, plus wear the mask, plus do the handwashing and all the other procedures.

So it is—you know, I don't think we have enough money and people to be out there enforcing all this behaviour that we're supposed to have. And sometimes people just forget. They—it's not intentional on their part. They just forget and they walk right in front of you at Polo Park.

So this is—so I wanted to draw back now to something very instructive, and that was the Spanish flu of 1918. You know, I'm always looking for parallels here. There are some, but the fact of the matter is that in 1918 there was a mild—it was 26 months was the duration of the pandemic, and there was, like, 50 million to 100 million people died in that particular flu.

And, in Winnipeg, which only had about 160,000 people in those days, the first wave was similar to this wave. It was in the spring, early spring, and it was mild. And then, of course, the second wave hit—and people weren't sure there was going to be a second wave this time, I don't know about then—but the second wave hit and the first person died in Winnipeg was October, I think it was the 8th. Well, here we are in October right now.

But we had a lot of people die in that pandemic compared to where we are right now. But in those days, people didn't know what the virus was. It was being spread by the troops returning from the First World War, and the troop trains were coming across the country and letting the soldiers off, and they were packed in those cars. And when they got out of those cars in the little towns, they managed to infect the town very quickly. And people were dying very quickly in those days.

But that's not the situation we have in this situation because we know a lot more about viruses in general. And as a result, there was an effort made—January the 8th was the day that the Chinese put the gene sequence for the virus out there for the world to see so that 'wha' didn't have to waste six months trying to figure out the gene sequence. And all the labs in the

world got that on January the 8th. And they went to work, working on a vaccine.

\* (16:40)

In the beginning, we had a lot of scientific people say, well, you know, it might never happen. In AIDS it took 25 years. We still don't have a vaccine, and that's how, you know, nervous science was at that time. Maybe it was going to take a long, long time.

In the United States, they set up a program called warp speed, and they made plans to develop these vaccines as quickly as possible, but not only that but go to another step that when you could get it past phase 1 and phase 2, even before you went into phase 3 trials, you would start manufacturing the vaccines. And that's, in fact, what's been going on. And so the military in the United States has been put in charge of administering the vaccines, which they will start doing as soon as any of them get approval.

And there's one of them—I think Moderna—may be ready in three or four weeks. And the manufacturing has been going on for months because they started the manufacturing based on the level 1 and the level 2 studies. You don't spend millions and millions of dollars on a false effort, so they do the tests initially in primates and they find out if it works on monkeys and other primates, I guess. If it doesn't work, they go on to something else. That's the whole idea here.

So what happened was particularly like the Russian vaccine but others too, they're looking for antibodies and they're looking for T cells, and in the case of the antibodies, these vaccines were like right off the charts. I'm talking about a whole bunch of them. There's about six or eight of them now that are in stage 3 trials in the States and I think there's only one that have—has an efficacy at 50 per cent like the normal flu that I got—flu shot that I got on Saturday. That's—I'm lucky to have 50 per cent on that flu shot.

This virus has been so stable that they've been able to have the antibody—they'll be able to do the antibody test and find that they were getting a response in 100 per cent—100 per cent on the Russian test, the Sputnik vaccine, and they have two or three, but they got like 100 per cent response on it that it was giving antibodies.

And then the T cells—that's the indicator of how long the thing is going to last. A matter of fact, there's a person in Winnipeg here who got the virus in March in Mexico and went for studies at University of Manitoba—serology tests, right? And they showed that he was—he had antibodies but only for a month. He

tested every week for a month and then they said, don't come back anymore because you are—you're not—you don't have enough antibodies, okay. His wife had enough antibodies for only three months. They tested her for three months. So now both of these people can get—re-get the—they can get the disease again, okay.

So we don't want a vaccine that's only going to be good for three months or that's going to be good—or, sorry, one month and certainly—or three months. That's pointless, right? Because these are two-stage vaccines, most of them anyway, right?

So at the end of the day, the T cells on that Sputnik vaccine were like 100 per cent as well, which means that you're going to have lifetime immunity. So as soon as we start, you know, looking at these vaccines that are coming up—not one but there's like 140 in total but there's maybe a dozen of them in stage 3 right now and they're all in that kind of category. This should give us cause for a lot of happiness that this thing is going to be, you know, at the same time as the Spanish flu was finished in 26 months, before that time here we're going to have proper vaccination program if we can convince everybody to take the darned things, right, you know.

But I can see that happening because, you know, airlines won't let you fly unless you have a vaccination certificate and I'm sure that the, you know, the professionals, the medical professionals will take it. I know that, in Russia, they have been inoculating people since the third week of August.

And the Chinese are even ahead of them. The Chinese started quietly; they've got three or four vaccines as well, and they have been inoculating their army, I guess it is, as early as July.

So you see that there is a lot of international politics in vaccines. The Russians that made their announcement and then they went out and they signed contracts with Nepal, they're in Nepal, they're in—they're doing stage three trials in Mexico.

The Chinese, not to be outdone, had a team go into Peru in the first week of September, you know, and the Americans are not going to wait around while these other two countries are eating up all their markets for them because, you know, nobody does anything for free in international politics, or anywhere for that matter, and before the Chinese were going to provide their vaccines, at least said they were going to give them to Canada, they'd want to have—see some results, like 5G contracts signed and stuff like that, right?

So you know that's what's going on here in the international political ring. So—and of course in the United States, too, their vaccines are well on their way, too. We haven't even talked about the antivirals. I mean, we have huge improvements in those. You know what happened in the Spanish flu 100 years ago, the reason why they did die in 26 months. Why was it dead? You know why? Because people either had the disease and recovered from the Spanish flu, or they were dead. There was only two options in those days.

And right now we have all these vaccine options coming up plus the anti-viral options, and the other option that we understand now: don't get the disease in the first place. Which means wear the mask, separate, you know, wash your hands and do all those things you're supposed to do.

So, I don't know why we wouldn't be—have a certain amount of happiness about, you know, what—how things have transpired. So not that anybody wanted to be faced with a pandemic, and we've gone through an awful lot because of this pandemic, and we're not out of it yet, but it's certainly not the time to be, you know, tearing the economy apart and causing all kinds of disruption in society, and that's being caused all over. You see it in the United States, big time, for sure.

So—and I also, you know, I'm almost done here and I haven't really even started, because I did want to talk about opportunistic governments that have called elections, and there's like BC now is resolved, New Brunswick. The federal Liberals are trying to get out there and have an election, but more to the point, the governments, like even the one here, sees like all kinds of opportunities here, right?

While people are, you know, are not thinking about what they're up to, they're out there pushing their agenda and, you know, we can see it's hard to get your message across to the public because the public's so concerned about all this coronavirus, all the coronavirus issues.

So, the government can be sneaking all kinds of things past them and selling things and closing things and yes, and the Minister of Infrastructure (Mr. Schuler) just wants me to get mixed up in the—some of the things that he's no doubt been up to, but I guess that will have to wait for my next speech.

But the reality is that, you know, Dr. Roussin in Manitoba here has done, I think, a pretty good job, but even he's got some inconsistencies in his approach.

He's telling people don't go down and get tested and show—until you show some symptoms. Right?

And we all know that there's asymptomatic spread. That's supposed to be a big issue. There's supposed to be all kinds of people getting infected. And he's telling people, don't come down here until you've got two, you know, give us two reasons why you're here, and meanwhile you've had the virus for three—you don't even show symptoms until the fourth day.

\* (16:50)

So, how much damage can you do in those first three days, and now he's telling you have two symptoms before you come and get tested, right. Don't come down here on one. And so you can see where that is a divergence of opinion on the science, right? Because if you believe that it's—you can have asymptomatic transmission then you'd be more aggressive in your testing.

And, by the way, these guys are doing a terrible job on their contact tracing. That is a total mess, total disaster, and I would suggest that the Minister of Infrastructure get to work and start improving that system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. [*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Good afternoon to my colleagues. I'm happy to be speaking with you today a little bit about the Throne Speech in the few minutes that I have, and I also want to say thank you to all the people who worked so hard over the last few months through the trying and difficult situations that we've all found ourselves in.

Thank you so much to the front-line workers in health care, in our food services and all our industries and throughout education. It kept our—kept us running. It kept us going when we were looking at some of the most difficult and challenging periods that we've had in Manitoba, certainly in a few generations.

And so I want to say thank you specifically to those folks who, undoubtedly, spent a lot of time and effort to make our province continue to run, in spite of the challenges—but not only the front-line workers, but some of the folks who have worked behind the scenes. You know, those folks in public health, the folks who, you know, have put in the effort to make sure that people stay as safe and as healthy as possible and maybe won't get the recognition or the notice that are often due to them.

Including—I want to say thank you to people in my constituency in St. Vital, who have done their best to follow the guidelines put forward by our public health officials: continuing to wear masks; social distance when they can; stay at home if they feel sick or, when they're able to, avoid large crowds; wash their hands frequently; all the guidelines that are recommended. Thank you those people who have done that.

Thank you so much to the people around the province who have done that. You've taken the steps to keep us all safe. You've thought about more than just yourself. You've thought about the best interests of our community and of our province, and you've sacrificed and, frankly, thought about other people. And I think that that is the most important thing that we could do.

You know, in these challenging times and in the times of any difficulty that people face, whether it is the COVID-19 disease, the corona virus; whether it's other difficulties that people have faced throughout their life. Over the generations—whether it's war, famine, disease—the greater the challenge, the greater the leadership is required to overcome that challenge.

And so that's why it is demanded of us, at this time, as leaders, to step up and to be part of the solution and, frankly, be creating the solution and leading our province through this difficult period. That's why I do find it such a—so disappointing to see the Throne Speech as it was written, because it didn't provide Manitobans with the level of commitment, level of dedication that they deserve.

They have been through so much. We have all been through so much, and it is time that we have a government that truly understands what Manitobans have been going through; listens to them and respects them; and offers a vision and a solution; and, quite frankly, the effort—the same level of effort that they have put into adjusting their lives over the last seven or eight months, into adjusting the way that our Province can actually work for them. And that has not happened.

You know, when I heard that there was going to be a Throne Speech, I thought, well, this is the time that our government in Manitoba can actually step forward and actually put forward a vision of what our recovery can look like, could actually offer a solution to what our province could look like after the pandemic.

But, sadly, that was not the vision that was put forward. It was more of what we've seen from the past,

from what we've seen before the pandemic hit. You know, it's more of the same types of cuts, the more of same types of policies that, quite frankly, in my opinion, were inappropriate for our province before the pandemic, but, quite frankly, now that we are in a completely different world, with completely new challenges, this type of vision is completely ill-suited to the people of Manitoba, and they deserve so much more.

And so I think this Throne Speech is really something that is—doesn't work for the best interests of any Manitoban.

Now, I'll drive—I'll go to specifically into the biggest issue that we've all been facing, and that is the pandemic and the effect that it's had on people's lives.

I've heard directly from people who have been affected, family members affected by COVID, caring for loved ones who are in isolation, relatives who are in personal-care homes, and they've said consistently that they would wish to have a government that had their back, that had—would put forward resources to actually support them in their needs. We haven't seen that.

I've spoken with parents over the spring who lost child care, were looking for spots and couldn't find that because this government put forward no plan to assist parents who needed child care, who wanted to go back to work—child care was too large for them to overcome—and had no help from their representatives.

I spoke with people who, in my constituency, struggled with affordability, who were looking at choices between medication, rent, food or supplies for their children to go back to school. Those choices are not easy for anyone to make. They're not easy choices for anyone to deal with and especially not when we're going through a global pandemic.

And where was this government to help those folks out? They weren't there. They weren't around to make life more affordable for them. Look at the hydro rate increase that's been proposed: 2.9 per cent. How does that help a family in St. Vital who is struggling with affordability right now?

We look at affordability in terms of rent where we see that 100 per cent of over-guideline rent increases were approved. I think that shows a couple things, that this government simply doesn't understand the affordability challenges of people that live in my constituency in St. Vital and around our province. But it also shows that they're either unwilling or don't have the interest in making life more affordable for people,

for regular Manitobans. This is simply, quite frankly, unacceptable when we're dealing with the largest economic challenge that we've seen in generations.

I do briefly want to speak about an issue that we've faced, that I've personally faced, and that is racial injustice. And I speak from this both personally but also from a standpoint of people that I've spoken with, constituents, who have faced this. And I would hope that our government would take these issues seriously and actually show up to the discussion and the debate on making racial–racism a thing of the past, to find ways and concrete steps to stamp out systemic racism because it's not just a passing issue; it's not just something that can be dealt with once and then move on to another one. It is something that's constant. So I urge all members to talk to your Cabinet ministers,

to talk to other members and people in their constituencies about issues like this, make it a priority and for you to find ways to work together to put forward concrete solutions. Whether it's here in the House with your own caucus and team or whether it's back in your own constituencies, issues of inequality don't go away without us taking concrete and deliberate steps to put it away.

\* (17:00)

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have 11 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, October 26, 2020

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