

**Second 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

Wednesday, May 27, 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.

Good afternoon, everybody.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Good afternoon, Madam Speaker.

On the issue of members' statements, I'm seeking leave of the House to allow one of the government members' statements to be provided to the independent Liberal member for today only.

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to allow one of the government members' statements to be provided to a Liberal member for today only? *[Agreed]*

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill 212—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Guidelines)

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** I move, seconded by the member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino), that Bill 212, the health services—oh—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Guidelines), be now read a first time.

**Madam Speaker:** I would ask the member if she could reintroduce her bill and to indicate the seconder has to be a member that's in their seat.

**MLA Asagwara:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that Bill 212, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Guidelines), be now read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**MLA Asagwara:** Bill 212, personal-care homes—Madam Speaker, today I am proud to introduce Bill 212, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Guidelines). This bill puts into law requirements to have at least 3.6 hours of care per resident per day and requires the government to set standards on direct care hours.

Seniors and residents of long-term-care homes need our support. I hope we can collectively pass this bill, Madam Speaker.

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

And I would just indicate at this time, my apologies to the member for improperly making a reference.

Committee reports? Tabling of reports?

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable minister of—*[interjection]*—oh.

And I would indicate that the required 90 minutes notice for routine proceedings was provided in accordance with our rule 26(2).

Would the honourable minister please proceed with his statement.

#### Paramedic Services Week

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** I rise to inform the House that we have proclaimed May 24th to 30th as Paramedic Services Week in Manitoba.

Paramedics put their own health at risk to provide life-saving medical care to patients at home, in community and during transport to health-care facilities, ensuring that people get emergency treatment when and where they need it.

Paramedics are our first line of the health-care system in emergency situations, but paramedics are also involved in the health of Manitobans through a variety of innovative and dynamic community programs. They are a critical part of our health-care system, providing patient care from the moment a call for help is first made.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba has provided an additional \$12.1 million in EMS funding to allow for

the creation of about 150 new full-time-equivalent paramedic positions. We cut ambulance fees in half for Manitobans and we have continued to invest in paramedics. Last year, we invested \$10 million to purchase 65 replacement ambulances to modernize the province's fleet, ensure paramedic safety, and improve patient care.

And we promised in 2016 to allow the profession of paramedicine to become self-regulated and we are on the way. Public consultations on the practice of paramedicine regulation are now on and those consultations will continue until June 29th.

The valued contributions that our paramedics make every day is appreciated, especially during this COVID-19 pandemic, when they are often the first point of contact for Manitobans in need. Paramedics are always there for us, and that's why we are proud to be there for them by investing in hiring more of them, providing them with newer and better-equipped ambulances and delivering on our promise of self-regulation for paramedicine.

I want to thank Manitoba's paramedics for being true health-care heroes, risking their own health to help people when they need it the most. Your dedication, commitment and hard work are greatly appreciated by our government and by all Manitobans.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, the theme for Paramedic Services Week 2020 is Pandemic: Paramedics on the Front Line and it demonstrates the important role that paramedics play on the front lines of the health-care system during this pandemic.

We always value our paramedics, but during this pandemic we've been reminded just how critical their expertise is in a time of unprecedented stress, risk and challenges. With paramedics on the front lines of this COVID-19 pandemic, the work that they do day in and day out has an added element of risk.

For every call for help, no matter the situation, paramedics are having to take extra precautions to keep themselves and patients safe, though not all paramedics in the province have been adequately protected. During the peak of this pandemic, rural paramedics in the province were sounding the alarm that they were being equipped with inferior PPE, ill-fitting gear or no PPE at all.

\* (13:40)

Paramedics are constantly coming up against shortages. In Manitoba we need an increased focus on community paramedicine to increase community supports and to help keep people healthy at home and out of hospital.

Now, each of the first days of—the first five days, rather, of this week of acknowledgement has a public education focus, Madam Speaker, that's designed to educate citizens on paramedics during a pandemic health emergency. And today happens to be the education day called Protect the Protectors and Help the Helpers. A full breakdown of the education days can be found at [paramedicchiefs.ca](http://paramedicchiefs.ca).

I'd like to give a special shout-out to a couple of paramedics I know personally. Their names are Saru and Renu. They not only practise paramedicine with exemplary integrity and care for community, but they also contribute positively to marginalized and targeted communities off—in their personal time, Madam Speaker. They are but two examples of the many paramedics whose expertise and values in Manitoba help keep us all safer and healthier.

Thank you to all paramedics. We wish you and your families and communities safety and good health.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Madam Speaker, I ask for leave to speak in response to the minister's statement.

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

**Ms. Lamoureux:** I stand today to briefly discuss Paramedic Services Week.

Every day, paramedics contribute heroic actions to respond to health emergencies which contribute to the saving of countless lives here in Manitoba.

The theme of this year's week is Pandemic: Paramedics on the Front Line. This theme recognizes that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the already high risk that first responders are taking to help keep Manitobans safe and healthy.

Madam Speaker, while there are a lot of steps being taken to ensure the safety of both patients and responding paramedics, we must continue to ensure first responders have the proper supports they need to do their job safely. This includes personal protective equipment, sanitation, a decontamination process, and all of these things add extra time and intensity to an already stressful circumstance and situation.

On top of the stress at—of keeping themselves safe, paramedics have the extra concern of—that simply going to work could result in them unintentionally exposing loved ones to the coronavirus. They have shown us extreme courage, compassion and dedication.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba Liberals have been calling for years for the Paramedic Association of Manitoba to be self-regulated. After years of delay and inaction, we are pleased to finally see the government move forward on this.

I believe that it's safe to say, Madam Speaker, that all of us here in the House thank the paramedics for their service and for their incredible work they do every single day. Thank you for being here for Manitobans, keeping us safe and showing such dedication to the important work you do.

Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Portage la Prairie Bear Clan

**Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie):** I am proud to rise today to honour and recognize the Portage la Prairie Bear Clan, a newly formed, indigenous-led grassroots initiative that was born from community desire and need.

The Portage Bear Clan was officially incorporated in January and recently hired co-ordinator Manon Timshel to carry on the vision of Indigenous Women's Council and work with the volunteer leadership committee.

The concept behind the Bear Clan is really quite simple: community people working with community to provide personal security in the city in a non-threatening, non-violent, non-judgmental and supportive way through relationship building and reconciliation.

The organization offers street patrols on a community-based solution to crime prevention, providing a sense of safety, solidarity, and belongs to both its members and to the community with an emphasis on protecting our women and children.

The Portage Bear Clan held its first foot patrol in January and has been patrolling the streets of Portage once a week, reporting dangerous situations and creating and maintaining community connections.

The recently formed Needle Team, with all patrol captains trained in a—first aid and safe sharps disposal,

as well as naloxone administration and basic self-defence.

The Bear Clan encourages and welcomes all citizens to volunteer to join the organization.

I ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating the Portage Bear Clan organization for providing positive experiences, conflict resolution and improving the well-being of our community.

### Jan Sanderson

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Today I recognize a resident of St. Vital who has made extraordinary contributions to the life of Manitoba in her enduring commitment to health and well-being of young children. Jan Sanderson stands out as a shining example of how to be a mentor, a model and advocate.

Jan was born and raised in Winnipeg. Her impressive career includes working in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba provincial governments. In 2001, she became CEO of Healthy Child Manitoba and then in 2009 merged that role with her new responsibilities as the deputy minister of the then-called department, Healthy Living, Youth and Seniors.

She worked passionately to help improve the lives and health of children throughout Manitoba. In 2016 she became a research chair with the Red River College. She focused her efforts on advocating for Science of Early Child Development, which is a knowledge-mobilization initiative that makes current research available to those interested in learning about the impact of early years on children's lifelong health and well-being.

In 2018, the project was honoured by the Lawson Foundation of innovation in early child development and was the inaugural recipient of Canadian association of research administration's Public Engagement and Advocacy Award. While at Red River College, Jan has supported and led a number of initiatives aimed at supporting children living in economically challenged circumstances.

This past December, Jan Sanderson was named a member of the Order of Canada. Jan was recognized by the Governor General for her leadership within Manitoba's public service by promoting improved quality of life and health for children.

I invite all members to join me in celebrating the achievements of a lifelong St. Vital resident, Jan Sanderson, for her tremendous work to improve the health and well-being of young people in Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** Further member statements?

### Personal-Care Homes

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, yesterday the Canadian Armed Forces' report on Ontario long-term-care homes was released. Its contents are shocking and concerning.

It's apparent there was a major failure of oversight by the Ontario government. Some of the inadequate conditions, operations and staffing of personal-care homes had been occurring for many months, perhaps years. We also hear that there were inadequate provincial inspections and oversight of personal-care homes in Ontario.

It is a wake-up call for Manitoba where we have had reports of problems in some of Manitoba's personal-care homes over the last number of years. It is imperative that there are adequate inspections and oversight in Manitoba. It would also be highly desirable and timely to have an independent report on the staffing levels and quality of care in Manitoba's personal-care homes.

As well, there was a failure of the Ontario government to develop a rapid response team to move in to a home when an outbreak occurred. When a COVID-19 infection happens in a personal-care home, many of the staff may have been in contact with the affected person; such staff need to isolate or quarantine. This can suddenly leave the personal-care home drastically short of staff at the very time if the emergency due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

It's critical that there be a provincial rapid response team to address the staffing shortfall, to ensure highly trained personnel are present at the time of the outbreak and to make sure that such personnel are trained in the care of elderly individuals with dementia as well as in carrying out critical protocols with respect to infection control. There also need to be protocols in place in all personal-care homes with rooms with more than one resident to ensure single isolation rooms are available when an outbreak occurs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Miigwech. Merci.

**Madam Speaker:** Further member statements?

### Food 4 All

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, today I rise to recognize the great and important work of the community project, Food 4 All, which is based in Union Station.

COVID-19 has increased job insecurity, led to closures of basic support services and has created a need for more food security efforts throughout the province and in our local communities. Thankfully, individuals and non-profits have stepped up to generate solutions to help the most vulnerable adapt and survive during these times.

One such example is Food 4 All. The idea was first created by Raymond Ngarbouli and Melrose Koineh who created the program to help feed those at risk of food insecurity in the Central Park neighbourhood amid this pandemic.

\* (13:50)

The emergency project has now expanded and is operated by community development helpers from Central Neighbourhoods, Rainbow Community Gardens, central-West Central Women's Resource Centre and Knox United Church with support from other local partners.

Since March 30th, Food 4 All has facilitated a meal program serving breakfast and lunch outside of Knox church.

While respecting health and physical distancing guidelines, Food 4 All volunteers, consisting largely of newcomer women, have given an average of 120 food packages out daily. Each package is composed of a well-balanced, nutritious meal and some personal protective equipment, when available. They even have volunteers who drop meals off to seniors directly who are unable to leave their homes safely.

Food 4 All operates with the help of volunteers and funding from local community donors. If it's within your means, I would ask that people please donate, volunteer and help spread awareness about this amazing initiative.

This pandemic has emphasized how invaluable social services are in our communities, Madam Speaker. Our non-profit sector deserves not only our gratitude, but support to continue to ensure they receive adequate funding and the necessary resources to continue their outstanding work.

Please join me in thanking Food 4 All and the entire non-profit sector for their amazing efforts to fill the gaps in serving Manitobans.

Thank you.

### **Kaden Ferland**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Today I'd like to recognize 14-year-old Kaden Ferland from Red Deer Lake, Manitoba.

Kaden, with the support of his mom Jennifer and father Darrel, had the opportunity to take his fastball skills to the next level this past summer when he tried out and made a team from the 222's organization. The elite team consisted of 16 players from Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Kaden followed in his father's footsteps, who played fastball all his life and pitched at the Canadian westerns four years in a row during the mid-'80s.

After a 22-hour plane drive to Auckland, New Zealand, the team played a series of exhibition games against teams in both the U15 and U17 age groups before New Zealand's national tournament. The second week they travelled to Wellington, playing games daily, and still found time for team-building and recreational activities.

The perfect fastball weather coupled along with the team playing to their potential resulted in an enviable 18-0 record as they dominated the round robin. The team members were true ambassadors for Canada and for our province, and the amazing response they received throughout the tour may very well make this an annual event. This would indeed create opportunity for our Canadian youth to excel in the game of fastball.

I congratulate Kaden and wish him all the best in his future athletic endeavors.

Thank you.

### **Speaker's Statement**

**Madam Speaker:** I have a statement for the House.

We are saying farewell today to two people, and I would ask for the attention of all honourable members for a few moments as we recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of two key members of the Assembly family who will be leaving us soon.

Our hard-working and diligent Journals Clerk, Claude Michaud, has decided to retire, and his last day with the Assembly will be June 30, 2020.

Claude began his time here in December 2008 following his previous career as an educator with the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine and curriculum consultant with the Department of Education. He quickly learned his way around the thousands of

details one must master in order to become a successful journals clerk.

For any members who are not aware, the Journals Branch, located down the hall in room 249—where Claude is hard at work right now—is the heartbeat of everything that happens in this Chamber. Any and all of the crucial paperwork required to make this place work is drafted, revised and printed—and often reprinted at the last minute—in the Journals Branch office. This ongoing production can be seen as a kind of intense air traffic control exercise, with information flying in and Order Papers, motions, bills, notices, amendments and resolutions flying out.

All of this hectic activity must be executed perfectly and be ready for—up to the minute for each and every sitting day. For twelve years, with the help of his journals assistant, Claude has expertly managed this potentially chaotic situation with grace, skill and class. He always keeps the bus on the road and moving forward, and he always delivers exactly the right item when it was required every time.

Claude is universally respected in the Assembly as a great colleague, a caring manager and an all-around nice guy. He is a tenacious walker regardless of weather, commuting from St. Boniface every day to the building by foot year round. Claude is an enthusiastic supporter of the Netherlands' national football team, as well as the Arsenal Football Club in the English Premier League, and he's also a big fan of the Montreal Canadiens, cooking, whiskey and his wife, Norma—though probably not in that order.

Claude will actually remain a part of the Assembly upon retirement, given that his voice has graced our online Assembly videos, as well as the building's security alert messages, so his voice will literally echo through these halls for many years to come.

In case members are wondering, Claude elected to stay at his post in room 249 during this statement, but if any MLAs would like to wish him well you can find him down the hall, hard at work, for one more month.

Congratulations, Claude, on 12 years of dedicated and impeccable service to the Assembly. On behalf of all members, we congratulate you and wish you well in your retirement. You will be missed by members and especially missed by your colleagues who have been fortunate enough to share these 12 years with you.

I would like to ask members to turn their attention to the table now where another one of our clerks is serving his last day in the Chamber.

Mr. Andrea Signorelli began his career with the Assembly in September 2011 as a Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees. An Italian by birth and a Canadian by choice, Andrea immigrated to Canada in 2008 to study law at the University of Manitoba. Armed with an ambitious intellect, in the ensuing years Andrea earned two law degrees to add to his first law degree from Italy. Along the way he also married Erica and shared the joy of the arrival of his beautiful daughter Margaret in 2018. One might think that would be enough activity for one busy man, but since September of 2011 Andrea has also served in the extremely demanding role of Manitoba Committee Clerk.

As members would well know, Andrea brought all of his skills to bear in this position. The job requires incredible attention to detail, the ability to juggle conflicting priorities, a strong work ethic, intense research and writing skills, as well as the ability to diplomatically manage a wide variety of occasionally demanding personalities. Andrea excelled in this position, absorbing his training with enthusiasm from day one and demonstrating his capacity to learn and grow every year in this place. Serving at the table is demanding for any clerk, and Andrea always met that challenge and added immeasurably to the procedural team.

Serving in committees provides another challenging environment for clerks. Andrea met that challenge and exceeded expectations regularly. Whether it was successfully managing a room full of public presenters on contentious legislation or wrangling members of the Public Accounts committee considering detailed reports from the Auditor General, Andrea always knew the right path to follow for a successful meeting.

Andrea remained a team player throughout his tenure at the Assembly, earning the respect and admiration of members, as well as being respected and admired by his colleagues both in the Assembly as well as at Legislative Counsel, the Office of the Auditor General and beyond. Andrea served on several committees of the Canadian clerks-at-the-table society, and we have little doubt that had he remained with us, one day he would have served on the executive of the well-respected clerks' professional association.

Our Clerk, Patricia Chaychuk, graciously offered to let Andrea sit in the prestigious centre chair at the table today so that he can experience the Chamber from that unique vantage point on this special day.

I understand that Andrea's parents are watching this broadcast today at home in Italy, and I would like to say hello to them on behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and thank them for raising such a capable fellow.

Andrea's last day as a Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees is this Friday, but we are pleased that he will be able to stay with us as a research assistant—pardon me, a research associate for a few more months after that, working on special projects for the Clerk's office. In September he will begin a new chapter articling for Fillmore Riley on his way to a career in law for which he is very well prepared and trained.

Congratulations, Andrea, on your accomplishments with the Assembly and best of luck in the legal world. You will be missed in this place, but know that your work here has had great value and that you played a key role in the essential work of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

\* (14:00)

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Personal-Care Homes in Manitoba KPMG Recommendations

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I want to give the departing clerks all my best, Madam Speaker.

Long-term care has been of great concern to all of us throughout the pandemic. Heart-wrenching scenes at long-term-care facilities across North America, but perhaps most acutely in Ontario, have been seared into our collective consciousness. That's why it's so disappointing that when we turn to the Premier's KPMG report—which we all know is his road map to governing—that that document, the KPMG document, suggests that Manitoba imitate Ontario's plan for managing long-term-care facilities. That would mean cutting beds. That would mean cutting services. That would mean cutting hours that each patient in long-term care receives from their caregivers.

Why does the Premier want to follow Ontario when that approach to long-term care is now the subject of investigation by the Canadian Forces, the Ontario government and even now the Prime Minister?



**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** First of all, let me add to your kind admonitions earlier, Madam Speaker, and wish Andrea all the very, very, best, and Claude, of course, and say thank you to them sincerely on behalf of the people of Manitoba for their dedication, professionalism and their patience. We appreciate it very much.

The member is quite right to raise the issue and I appreciate him raising the issue of the care of our seniors. It is a high priority for this government to make sure that we not only maintain but strengthen the care of our seniors, and we'll continue to stay focused on that very thing, Madam Speaker.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** I will table the relevant pages of the KPMG report because what they outline for long-term care in Manitoba is quiet damning.

Again, this is the Premier's road map for governing here in the province and it recommends cutting \$67 million per year from long-term-care funding. It recommends reducing spending at personal-care homes across Manitoba. It also says that Manitoba might need 1,600 fewer beds in personal-care homes. That is, of course, if the Premier implements the recommendations of his road map to government drafted by KPMG. We know that each of those moves will not help protect seniors from COVID-19.

Will the Premier commit today to abandoning the recommendations of KPMG and, instead, reversing course by investing in long-term-care facilities?

**Mr. Pallister:** No government in the history of Manitoba has invested more and more effectively, Madam Speaker, in the care of seniors than this government. We'll continue to focus on that care.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, no government in the history of Manitoba has paid more to high-priced consultants to come up with new ways to reduce public services to Manitoba seniors. It is quite damning that the KPMG report that this Premier turns to as his playbook for how to make cuts in Manitoba recommends cutting \$67 million from long-term care.

But it goes beyond that. I will table this letter from the Department of Health which recommends cutting the number of hours that each patient in a personal-care home receives in Manitoba. Cuts like these are

what led to Ontario long-term-care homes being so vulnerable to COVID-19. We see that the Premier has already begun to implement the recommendations of the KPMG report.

Will he now learn from the experience of other jurisdictions' disasters with long-term care by backing off these cuts and, instead, investing in long-term care right here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Pallister:** We saw the intransigence in Manitoba under the previous administration, Madam Speaker. We saw that the absence of a plan cost Manitobans jobs. We knew that the absence of any strategy in terms of health care caused us to rank the last in the country in most major indicators. We saw that the failure to ask or to research positive ideas and implement them caused us to be the poverty capital of the country.

Madam Speaker, we are no longer the poverty capital. We are leading in many economic growth categories and we are investing strategically in improvements in health care that are seeing real results, including for our seniors.

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

#### **Legislative Session Request for More Sitzings**

**Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition):** You see, Madam Speaker, this is why the Premier doesn't want to have any more question periods this year. He refuses to answer direct questioning about long-term-care homes. We know that his recommendations, his advisers, his high-priced consultants are telling him to cut, cut, cut. But what we've learned from other jurisdictions is that you actually need to invest to help people weather the pandemic.

We also know that democracy is an essential service, that as this government cuts jobs, as this government cuts long-term-care services, that Manitobans expect that there will be accountability delivered through our democratic institution, namely, this Chamber. Provinces across the country continue to sit through the month of June.

Will the Premier agree to come back to work next month and have more sitting days of our Manitoba Legislature?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** We have sat with more frequency than most provinces in the country, Madam Speaker, yet the member opposite forgets,

though Manitobans will not, that when he had the opportunity to raise important issues in this House he chose to blockade this House instead. Manitobans won't soon forget that behaviour.

Madam Speaker, the issues of demanding accountability are fine, but performing and getting results for people is what this government is about and we'll continue to do that.

In reference to seniors, Madam Speaker, our statistical performance in respect of responding to the challenges of COVID is second only, arguably, to New Brunswick in the country of Canada. We have perfect—we have protected seniors; we have protected vulnerable people; we continue to act to focus on addressing a national and international pandemic.

The member opposite would choose to blockade instead.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** You know, I'm not going to dignify much of the Premier's comments there except to say that the dog whistle around his neck does not suit the office of the Premier of Manitoba.

What I would say, however, is that Manitobans will remember—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —that this government, these Cabinet ministers, this Premier laid off thousands of Manitobans and then wouldn't come back to work the following week to answer accountability questions.

We have learned that Manitoba Hydro—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Kinew:** —next week will be delivering the pink slips signed by this Premier and his Cabinet ministers. So those layoff notices will be delivered next week, and yet if the Premier has his way, he won't have to answer any questions about them.

The Premier can be intransigent in this House and refuse us the opportunity to sit, but what will he say to the Manitoba Hydro employees who are losing their jobs next week and want answers from him?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, I'll accept the thanks of Manitoba Hydro employees who appreciate the fact that we're not wasting billions of dollars and jeopardizing their future job security as a consequence of ignoring the need to be accountable, as the previous NDP

government did; and, Madam Speaker, I won't stand back and accept the member's assertions that he cares about Manitoba Hydro employees when he supports blockades on Hydro projects either. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, order.

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

**Mr. Kinew:** Madam Speaker, it's clear that the Premier has no answer when it comes to the layoffs at Manitoba Hydro. We hear that his staff are running out of the building with great speed, running, coursing down the hallways, because they are trying to find an answer to hand him when it comes to long-term-care homes.

We also know that their rollout of the education announcement this past week has been met with considerable consternation and objection from both students, parents and teachers alike.

\* (14:10)

It is very clear that the government does not want to answer accountability questions, even though as we move into the month of June there are going to be issue after issue that Manitobans deserve answers on.

Will the Premier stand in his place today and commit to coming back to this Chamber next month so that he can answer questions about Manitoba Hydro layoffs, long-term-care homes and the return to school for our Manitoba students?

**Mr. Pallister:** Well, as I've relayed to the member, and he is fully aware, we have continued to sit in this Chamber and answer questions from the member, as dull and repetitive as they may be, through this entire pandemic while other Chambers across the country have not sat at all. The federal House is planning to adjourn. We are planning—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —to stay in committees, where work would be required by the members opposite if they chose to do it.

So, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that on the issues of accountability this government is standing strong and ahead of other jurisdictions, quite frankly—*[interjection]*—I'm sure that the member may have something to contribute. I would hope that she would do it in a constructive way, because what is evident here today and what has been sadly evident is that during this pandemic and at other times, the

opposition chooses to put partisan politics ahead of achieving real progress for the people of the province.

We choose the progress; they can keep the partisanship.

**Personal-Care-Home Guidelines  
Request for Support of Bill 212**

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I know that we're all horrified by the stories of neglect in personal-care homes in Ontario and Quebec. We've been fortunate thus far to have avoided a serious outbreak of COVID-19 in our seniors care centres in Manitoba. But experience around the world shows the catastrophic impact this virus can have in such facilities.

We've put forward legislation today that guarantees the standard of care in these centres to ensure our seniors receive the health care they need to be safe today and tomorrow.

Will the minister and the Pallister government support this bill?

**Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living):** I'm pleased to receive a question on COVID-19 and health care from the NDP; we haven't had one for about three or four weeks in this House. So, pleased to address the issue.

I'm aware, of course—we all are—of the very devastating report on the state of personal-care homes in Ontario. Yesterday I had a chance to get an update from that provincial minister, and that is a very significant report that deals with some very significant issues in Ontario.

We're very pleased with the fact that the kind of virus infection and devastation that's been seen in other personal-care homes across Canada has not been seen in this province.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, the minister should simply support this legislation. It ensures a standard of care for all Manitoba seniors. Unfortunately, the Pallister government has cut funding to personal-care homes not once but twice in just a few—in just the past few years.

Now, we should not be looking to Ontario as a model, Madam Speaker, as their KPMG report has urged and as the minister is following. Recent events show just how short-sighted that approach is. We need

to guarantee quality health care for our seniors here in Manitoba. Our bill does just that.

Will the Pallister government support our important bill?

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, that's erroneous. There's been no reduction in daily funding to personal-care homes in Manitoba.

But, importantly, let us say this: that when it comes to COVID-19 what have been the actions that have been undertaken to keep our seniors, who are so vulnerable, safe? Well, I would say to you that being one of the first provinces to implement these new virtual tariffs and fees for doctors to be able to provide services and care to residents in personal-care homes has kept COVID-19 out of our personal-care homes. It's been one demonstration of the kind of success that we have had in keeping our most vulnerable seniors in personal-care homes safe.

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

**MLA Asagwara:** Madam Speaker, we know that long-term-care facilities are the most impacted by COVID-19. The stories coming from Ontario show a system that is simply incapable of providing quality health care to its residents. Ontario should be no model of standards of care.

The Pallister government has cut funding to our personal hair-care homes twice. It's time for a new approach.

We need to—we need a guarantee on the standard of care in our personal-care homes, ensuring appropriate care by the bedsides of our loved ones. It's appropriate and especially important given the potential impacts of COVID-19.

Will the minister support it today?

**Mr. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, the repetition of erroneous statements don't make them any more credible.

But what are other reasons that we've had success in Manitoba in terms of being able to stop the spread of COVID-19? I would suggest that our early action to restrict personal-care home workers, one worker per personal-care home, so they could not cross-contaminate and import the virus to personal-care homes has been successful. This and careful planning by our system leaders have kept our personal-care homes safe.

So, Madam Speaker, I'd end by saying this. If they really, truly cared about personal-care-home safety levels, why was it that under their government those licensing inspections actually lapsed and have been restored and brought up under our government? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

### **Gap Protection Program Eligibility of Manitoba Fishers**

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** Our northern fishers are facing tremendous pressure because of this pandemic. The Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation is no longer buying walleye because of a drastic drop in sales. We have previously raised with the minister our concern that many fishers are ineligible for provincial supports because they don't have a business number.

I ask the minister again: Will he fix the so-called gap program so that our fishers are eligible for support?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Acting Minister of Conservation and Climate):** I appreciate the question from the member 'opposite' as it gives me an opportunity to share the steps that our government has taken to protect the fisheries throughout the entire province of Manitoba, ensuring the sustainability of the fishery and improving the quality of our lakes and streams for now and for future generations so we can support a strong, vibrant fishery in the province of Manitoba today and well into the future.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a supplementary question.

**Ms. Lathlin:** There are thousands of people in this province who operate their own business without a registered business number. That includes many contractors, farmers and fishers.

Northern fishers in particular face a real challenge. They take on debt to buy equipment; their loan payments are still due to banks and the government's Communities Economic Development Fund. They don't have a loan relief and many of them are not incorporated with a business number, making them ineligible for the so-called gap program.

Will the minister fix this mistake?

**Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance):** We did a mass amount of consultation with the business community, labour, as well as Manitobans in terms of designing a program, the gap program, that would fill

the gaps from any federal initiatives that are there. It's a \$120-million program year-to-date. We supported more than 4,100 businesses to the tune of over \$24 million.

Madam Speaker, that's real initiative, that's real money to support businesses here in the province of Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for The Pas-Kameesak, on a final supplementary.

**Ms. Lathlin:** Let's talk about fishers.

The minister has simply not been responsive to the concerns of our northern fishers. They face 'tremendous' losses this year, but many of them are ineligible for provincial supports through this so-called gap program.

It's just sad that a program named to catch those ineligible for federal support would be designed to exclude those—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Lathlin:** —who need the help most. We need exceptional supports for our fishers now.

Will the minister step forward with a plan?

**Ms. Squires:** Our government has been supportive of our fishers throughout this pandemic why—by providing supports to them.

We've also been supportive of municipalities to ensure that they, too, can support the businesses and the fishers in their municipalities, and we've also worked with the fishers throughout—all throughout the year to ensure the vibrancy of the fisheries in the province of Manitoba, unlike the members opposite, who allowed the fisheries to decline under their watch, who allowed some of our lakes to become the most endangered lakes in the world under their watch. That is their track record for building the fisheries in the province of Manitoba. We'll take no lessons from the members opposite on how to treat fishers in the province of Manitoba.

\* (14:20)

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns. *[interjection]*

Order.

### **Layoffs Due to COVID-19 Support for Women Workers**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Women are predominantly more impacted by the economic

downturn of COVID-19. Retail, restaurant and hospitality industries account for 44 per cent of job losses in Manitoba over the last two months. Industries where women are—workers are predominantly women. Many of these positions are also—that earn the least amount of money, meaning that some of our most vulnerable women are being impacted the hardest. Many of these retail, restaurant and hospitality jobs are not coming back.

We need a strategy that puts the needs of women and women workers as a priority.

What's the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) plan to support women re-entering the economy?

**Hon. Rochelle Squires (Acting Minister responsible for the Status of Women):** I appreciate the question from the member opposite on our government's plan to support women.

As we've done ever since we became elected, or when we formed government, we have supported women throughout the province of Manitoba by introducing harassment-free policies, whether in the civil service, and providing leadership in the municipalities within—ensuring that municipalities have municipal codes of conduct for all their members. That is some of the work that we've done.

We will continue to make a better environment for women whether they choose to work in the public sector or in the private sector.

We've also been supporting women throughout this pandemic and the job losses by creating new avenues, expanding various work streams to help women and all Manitobans find gainful employment now and well into the future.

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

#### **Reopening the Economy Request for Child-Care Plan**

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Madam Speaker, 50 per cent of Manitobans who lost their jobs because of COVID-19 are women. Many more women have also had to stay home to care for their children because of school and daycare closures.

With the government reopening the economy there needs to be a comprehensive plan for child care in schools.

I'll table a memo for the House that shows if child-care centres don't open by June 30th, daycares

will lose their operating grants. Madam Speaker, that isn't a plan; it's an ultimatum.

When will the Premier release a comprehensive plan on safely reopening child-care daycare spots?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families):** I want to thank all of those child-care facilities who are open today. More than 600 of them are, in fact, open. We have space and capacity for almost 7,000 children within the system right now, of which over 5,000 spaces are being utilized. There's more than 1,900 spaces that are vacant right now.

So I would suggest if the member opposite has questions about how to place those people, we could certainly—there is a website available for those individuals to go to. We'd be happy to help them find the daycare space that they need.

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** Quality child care is essential to having women succeed in the workforce and the economy. Economist Armine Yalnizyan, and I quote, has been pointing out specifically to politicians that without more support for child care economic 'recovery'—recovery will be slow, Madam Speaker. She further explains there is no recovery without she-covetry and there is no she-covetry without child care. And she's not wrong. Madam Speaker, we need an economic she-covetry for Manitoba.

Will the Premier support women re-entering the workforce by developing a comprehensive plan to safely reopen child care?

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable First—  
[interjection]

Order. Order.

The honourable First Minister.

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, I think the member makes a good point. I think we're in this together, Madam Speaker: no he-recovery without she-recovery. There's no recovery separately. We have to be in this together and that's what we are. No recovery in increasing the rights and protections of women in the workforce by seeing harassment and covering it up, as the previous government did with a Cabinet minister. No recovery possible when you do things like that.

So our plans involve supporting women and men to come back into a resilient economy: to provide the most generous gap financing for small business and

entrepreneurs, many of them women, Madam Speaker, so that we can see that recovery happen in a real way; to offer some of the most generous student supports in the country to allow women to find jobs and support themselves as they move into a new career or training for a new career.

These are the measures we're taking, real measures, Madam Speaker, so we can achieve the results that, sadly, were not achieved under an NDP government previous to ours.

### **Emergency Homeless Shelters Funding Extension Request**

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** Main Street Project, Siloam Mission and the Salvation Army have continued to work tirelessly throughout this pandemic to help our most vulnerable: 39 emergency isolation units were opened up so that individuals experiencing homelessness could safely self-isolate, self-monitor and recover from COVID-19.

With the reopening of the economy, it has been said to expect a rise in cases and some even say to expect a second wave. But this will all end June 30th unless the minister commits to extending the funding.

Will the minister commit to extending the funding today?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families):** The member opposite does make a very important point, and it is important for all of us to ensure that we have adequate housing and that we're looking after those most vulnerable in our society, Madam Speaker. And that's why we announced a \$1.2-million program to expand the capacity of our shelters, adding over 100 shelter beds in the province of Manitoba. And we will continue to work with people within the community to ensure that we look after the most vulnerable in our communities.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Now, these organizations have done really great work to rapidly scale and serve our most vulnerable people.

Again, even with the easing of restrictions, the need for social distancing has not gone away. If anything, it's more important now than ever with more people being out and about. Now is not the time to be scaling back the funding and operations of a place that helps to keep all Manitobans healthy.

Will the minister commit to permanently funding these additional shelter spaces today?

**Madam Speaker:** Before the minister answers, I would like to point out to members that use of emails and cell phones is disallowed in the House during oral questions.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** Thank you for that reminder, Madam Speaker.

And our government, Madam Speaker—despite what the member opposite said, she is absolutely wrong. We're not scaling anything back.

In fact, we just announced an investment of \$1.2 million to expand the capacity of homeless shelters, providing more than 100 shelter beds: that's \$726,000 to repurpose a vacant Manitoba Housing building on Sargent Avenue to create 31 new beds; \$135,000 to add 35 beds provided by the Salvation Army at its Martha Street location, Madam Speaker; \$75,000 to expand Siloam Mission's capacity by 50 beds; and \$22,000 per month to keep the Samaritan House shelter in Brandon open for May and June.

We will continue to work to ensure that we provide for the most vulnerable people in our society.

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

**Mrs. Smith:** Funds have not allowed—have also allowed regular shelter beds to be more spaced out to adhere to social distancing guidelines. So it would be quite odd and counterintuitive for the minister to reverse funding—which is going to end June 30th—when the six-foot social distancing rule is going to stay in place for some unforeseeable future.

By—but the reality is no more provincial funding means reverting back to 100-plus people sleeping on mats side by side and possibly being turned away every night. That doesn't keep our most vulnerable safe or help to stop the spread of COVID-19.

So again, I'll ask: Will the minister commit to extending the emergency funding for shelters for as long as it's needed?

**Mrs. Stefanson:** We'll continue to work with those stakeholders in the community to ensure that we look after our most vulnerable people.

As I mentioned, we have already invested more than \$1.2 million towards increasing the capacity of shelter beds in the province of Manitoba, over a hundred new shelter beds that are being offered,

Madam Speaker, and we will continue to work with those to ensure that we—[*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Stefanson:** —provide more for the most vulnerable citizens in our society. [*interjection*]

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

\* (14:30)

### **Education Minister Physical Distancing Orders**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** There was an article in the Steinbach Carillon last week about a chicken restaurant opening on Tuesday, May 19th, before the gathering restrictions were lifted. Featured in the photo are Ted Falk, the Conservative MP; Earl Funk, the mayor; and the story reads, quote, there was little interest in physical distancing. End quote.

There are other photos from the event, which I table, that did not run in the Carillon that showed that the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen) was also there in the crowd. While the government continues to tell Manitobans to physically distance, the government's own minister is flouting the rules.

Can the Premier explain why his minister is undermining public health orders and does he agree with Manitoba Liberals he should be fined for ignoring them?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** I'm, of course, chagrined that anyone would ignore social distancing requirements that are so clearly necessary to make sure we keep the progress we've made real, and going forward into the future, that we continue to exercise that discipline. I'm just surprised the member didn't raise the issue about the Prime Minister going to his vacation home and ignoring those same rules.

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

### **Public and Private Schools Funding for Construction**

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** We're concerned the member for Steinbach has the same contempt for public education that he has for public health orders. The Minister of Education has been meeting online with high-profile US dismantlers of public education, including Betsy DeVos and Ted Cruz. I table those documents.

The DSFM has been asking for a French school for years, but instead of building a new one as

promised, the Province will give \$13.7 million to a private school where the member from Rossmere was once principal. The old school is clearly unfit. It needs four portables and renovations to operate, and that \$13.7 million will actually fund the construction of a new private school.

Why is this government funding new private schools while public students get portables?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, again, what contributes to the member's essential growing irrelevance as an opposition leader is his inability to focus on a single issue. He's just raised seven—seven—issues in his preamble, Madam Speaker.

But let me just say his inconsistency was put on display here when he attacked this government for supporting seniors, and then six days later ignored the fact that the federal Liberal government copied our plan for supporting seniors. That inconsistency and excessive partisanship is, Madam Speaker, not actually serving the member well, and I encourage him to get on Team Manitoba and support this government, the important progress the Education Minister and our team is making help grow this province and recover from this pandemic.

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

### **Personal-Care-Home Oversight COVID-19 Rapid Response Teams**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, I table today a report on the Lions Prairie Manor personal-care home which shows that we have in Manitoba personal-care homes which are just as bad as those described in the report released yesterday on Ontario personal-care homes.

In Ontario there was a lack of adequate inspections and oversight by the Ontario government of personal-care homes. The Ontario government also failed to put in place a rapid response team to go to personal-care homes where there were outbreaks. The result was Ontario had to call in the military.

I ask the minister: Is he ensuring adequate oversight of personal-care homes in Manitoba, and when will he put in place a well-trained rapid response team to go to any home in Manitoba where there is a COVID-19 outbreak?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** The member disappoints me, Madam Speaker. I have great admiration and respect for the member, but not in respect of that question. That was an insulting

question to the people who have worked so hard to make changes at Lions Prairie Manor happen. That was insulting to a place that offered my mother her care in her final days and has—employs people who are totally dedicated to the care of seniors.

New standards have been brought into play as a consequence of the report the member cites. New training has been developed to enhance the care that's offered there. The member should not try to impugn the integrity of hard-working, dedicated, front-line civil servants in this province at this time or at any other time.

### **Disability Economic Support Program Government Announcement**

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on all Manitobans and on virtually every person around the world. While we're resilient here in our province and are well positioned to recover from the economic impact of COVID-19, it's important that we support those who are 'particular' vulnerable in this time of uncertainty.

This week our government announced direct financial support for low-income Manitobans living with a disability.

Can the minister share details of this important initiative with the House?

**Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families):** I want to thank my friend from Swan River for that excellent question.

Yesterday, our Premier (Mr. Pallister) announced a \$4.6-million investment in the Disability Economic Support Program which will provide \$200 to more than 23,000 Manitobans living with disabilities who are currently on our EIA program. Inclusion Winnipeg and other disability organizations have been in support of this program because they know it will make a big difference in the lives of many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, it's important now more than ever as we navigate through these very difficult times to support those Manitobans most in need. That's exactly what our government has been doing and it's exactly what our government will continue to do.

### **Reopening of Schools Support Staff Layoffs**

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, the Pallister government's approach to education has been

a mess and it's caused mass confusion amongst families.

The Province is now saying there will be a resumption of classroom activity on many and—on Monday, and so many parents have contacted me on this. One Wolseley parent has told me they're concerned about the safety and the dignity of their child, and simply cannot send their child back to school without their educational assistant present. Their EA was laid off because of this government's rush to save a few dollars.

I ask the minister: Can he clearly explain to this House and to Manitobans how students are safely returning to studies when so many support staff won't be there to help their learning?

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education):** Madam Speaker, under the guidance and suggestion of Public Health, a limited use of schools was approved a couple of weeks ago. There's been day camps that have been held in schools. Teachers have been working in schools. We know that under a partial reopening students will be able to reconnect with their teachers. They'll be able to have assessments done. They'll be able to prepare for September.

It is all about the students, Madam Speaker, and ensuring that our young people are prepared to succeed next fall and to catch up from what they lost this year.

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

**Ms. Naylor:** Madam Speaker, it's understandable that Manitobans are confused by the government's plans. Their own member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) disputes that over 6,000 layoffs have occurred in our schools. In fact, he took to social media calling it false, and fought with an education assistant in Brandon, calling for her to post her notice of layoff. This is so disrespectful.

I will table for the House evidence of these remarks and evidence of a fraction of these layoffs: 245 in Brandon; 163 in the Interlake; 164 in Red River Valley; 182 in Portage la Prairie; 954 in Pembina Trails; and on and on and on across the province.

Can the minister explain to the member why some in-class studies are resuming while support staff are being shown the door? *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.



**Mr. Goertzen:** In-class assessments are important so that teachers and students can reconnect before they go back in fall, Madam Speaker, so they can look at class composition, so they can see what learning has been lost, so that parents can also be part of—*[interjection]*—I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition might care about parents and students getting ready for the fall so that they can be successful.

I know that that is true for the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) and for all members in—on the government side of the House, at least—I can't speak for the members opposite in the NDP, Madam Speaker—but all of us know that we want our students to succeed, and an important part of that is reconnecting them briefly with their teachers before this school year officially ends.

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

**Ms. Naylor:** Madam Speaker, it's not a mistake that the clearest thing the Pallister government has communicated was the plan for cuts. It's their first instinct during this pandemic and they failed to be clear on the resumption of in-class learning.

\* (14:40)

Parents and teachers are still not clear on the plan and how teachers and students will be kept safe. Even the member for Brandon East was confused, for he certainly would have already apologized if he knew that his government is proposing the resumption of in-class learning at the exact same moment that 6,000 support staff are being laid off.

Will the minister clear up the confusion and perhaps apologize on behalf of the member for Brandon East?

**Mr. Goertzen:** No confusion; we're putting our students first.

#### **Paid Sick Leave Initiative Timeline for Enacting**

**Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon):** Madam Speaker, paid sick leave provisions are governed by provincial legislation.

On this side of the House we are ready to debate legislation that would ensure these benefits for Manitobans now, not some time after a fall sitting. We should be on with this business now to ensure that Manitobans have paid sick leave when they need it.

Will the Pallister government ensure paid sick leave is enacted before this Legislature recesses?

**Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier):** Well, Madam Speaker, the one thing that's predictable about the opposition is their unpredictability. They're not interested in debating bills. They blocked the actions of the House, and suddenly with renewed vigour they claim they're interested in supporting the working family and working people.

Madam Speaker, I don't believe it. I don't think most Manitobans believe it either.

On this side of the House we've shown our solidarity. We've shown our solidarity with working people, with front-line workers, with vulnerable people across the province. We've taken—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —a voluntary pay cut, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House. Every member of the government's done that to show our solidarity to the people who are hurt by this COVID thing, and not one member on the other side's done that.

Madam Speaker, that's an indication of a willingness and a commitment—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —to stand up for working people, to demonstrate you understand the real—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —empathy that should be exhibited—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Pallister:** —at all times, not just during a pandemic.

Members opposite have failed to demonstrate their solidarity to the working people, their understanding of the needs of working families. They failed. Madam Speaker, they're not equipped not only to be a government; they're not equipped to be a proper opposition.

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

#### **Speaker's Ruling**

**Madam Speaker:** And I have a ruling for the House.

On March 11, 2020, the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) raised a matter of privilege regarding the fact that the Auditor General has given a qualified opinion on the last two provincial budgets,

and that in her opinion the government has been misrepresenting its financial statements. She further stated that because the government has not been in compliance with the Auditor General and that it has not represented the true state of provincial finances, this has interfered with her ability to perform her parliamentary duties. The member concluded her remarks by moving, and I quote, that this matter be moved to an all-party committee officiated by the Auditor General of Manitoba for discussion. End quote.

The honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) both spoke to the matter of privilege before I took it under advisement, and I thank all honourable members for their advice to the Chair on this matter.

As the House should know, in order to be ruled in order as a prima facie case of privilege, members must demonstrate both that the issue has been raised at the earliest opportunity and also provide sufficient evidence that the privileges of the House have been breached.

Regarding timeliness, the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) made a case that the phrase earliest opportunity should be understood in a holistic and contextual manner. I was unconvinced by this argument, and given that the Auditor General released his most recent qualified opinion on September 26, 2019, the member had ample time to research this matter and raise it in the House last year. Accordingly, I am ruling that the condition of timeliness was not met in this case.

Regarding the second condition, the member argued that, and I quote, the provision of misleading information constitutes a breach of the privileges of members of this House and it is clear that this government, its Premier and its ministers are guilty of the provision of such misleading information. End quote.

In examining the matter raised, I believe this to be a difference of opinion over facts, and numerous Manitoba Speakers have ruled on many occasions that a dispute between two members as to allegations of fact does not constitute a breach of privilege.

Further, Bosc and Gagnon advise on page 148 of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Third Edition, that if a question of privilege involves a disagreement between two or more members as to facts, the Speaker typically rules that such a dispute

does not prevent members from fulfilling their parliamentary functions, nor does such a disagreement breach the collective privileges of the House.

As well, Joseph Maingot, on page 223 of the second edition of Parliamentary Privilege in Canada states that, and I quote, a dispute between two members about questions of facts said in debate does not constitute a valid question of privilege because it is a matter of debate. End quote.

I would, therefore, rule that the honourable member does not have a prima facie matter of privilege.

### House Business

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** On a matter of House business, I have several leave requests to make, and I'd like you to please canvass the House for each of these items in turn: (1) Is there leave of the House to alter the rule governing standing committee membership with the understanding that these arrangements will be in place for all meetings until further notice but can be changed by either—by leave of the House or by written agreement from the Government House Leader or the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights, or their designates, by (a) waiving rule 83(2) and reducing membership for all standing committees except for Public Accounts and Rules of the House from 11 to six, with proportional representation as follows: four government MLAs, including the chairperson, and two official opposition MLAs, (b) waiving rule 83(2) and reducing membership for the Standing Committee on Rules of the House from 11 to 8, with proportional representation as follows: the Speaker as the chairperson, four government MLAs, two official opposition MLAs and one independent MLA; (2) is there leave to waive rule 119 for the remainder of the 42nd Legislature to allow the Standing Committee on Public Accounts either by written request from the chairperson, the vice-chairperson or by leave of the committee, to call witnesses it deems appropriate in addition to ministers, deputy ministers or the chief executive officer of a Crown corporation; and (3) is there leave until further notice to authorize the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights, or their designates, to make other changes to rules governing standing committees when the House is not sitting by providing a letter to the Speaker detailing any additional changes?

**Madam Speaker:** The first request: Is there leave of the House to alter the rule governing standing committee membership with the understanding that these arrangements will be in place for all meetings until further notice but can be changed either by leave of the House or by written agreement from the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), or their designates, by (a) waiving rule 83(2) and reducing membership for all standing committees except for Public Accounts and Rules of the House, from 11 to 6, with proportional representation as follows: four government MLAs, including the chairperson, two official opposition MLAs; and (b) waiving rule 83(2) and reducing membership for the Standing Committee on Rules of the House from 11 to 8, with proportional representation as follows: Speaker as chairperson, four government MLAs, two official opposition MLAs and one independent Liberal?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

The second request: Is there leave to waive rule 119 for the remainder of the 42nd Legislature to allow the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, either by written request from the chairperson and vice-chairperson or by leave of the committee, to call witnesses it deems appropriate in addition to ministers, deputy ministers or the chief executive officer of a Crown corporation?

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

And the third request: Is there leave until further notice to authorize the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the member for River Heights, or their designates, to make other changes to rules governing standing committees when the House is not sitting by providing a letter to the Speaker detailing any additional changes?

\* (14:50)

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

## PETITIONS

### Dauphin Correctional Centre

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

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Naylor:** —of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

The DCC is one of the largest employees in Dauphin—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. Naylor:** —providing the community with good, family-supporting jobs.

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

Further petitions?

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

And this is signed by Barb Kallusky, Grant Fisher, Jody Fisher and many, many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition has been signed by Jennifer Thompson, Jeffrey Schulz and Halen [phonetic] Muntain and many other Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

Approximately 80 families will be directly affected by this closure, which will also have great impacts on the local economy.

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed Michelle Yakimisha, Anne Marie Ray, Denis Parthenay and many other Manitobans.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Sandra Olsen, Robert Amende and Kara Kerslake and many more Manitobans.

**MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly—to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

\* (15:00)

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by Michelle Martin, Lisa Higgins and Sylvia Catcheway, and many Manitobans.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

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

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

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** No, on a member of urgent public—

**Madam Speaker:** We're still on petitions.

Any further petitions?

If not, I have been notified that a member wishes to bring forward a matter of urgent public importance.

#### MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I move that, under rule 38(1), the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the need for the urgent attention of the government's refusal to discuss or provide plans for the conduct of business of the Chamber for the remainder of the legislative session.

**Madam Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), I should remind all members that under 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 Beauchesne'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's 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. Lamont:** Again, I rise with the hope that we can have an urgent public debate on the fact that we do not actually know when we'll be returning for oral questions, when we'll be sitting, when there will be votes, committee meetings and so on. There are, of course, a number of standard objections to raising these issues, namely that there are other venues and opportunities to do so, but again, the very fact that we are in a pandemic, that there are emergency sessions, that we have been unable to come to an agreement or develop or know when we are going to be able to sit as a Legislature means that there are—the venues and opportunities to do so are sharply reduced.

Again, we do not have daily oral questions. We have not had—members' statements of—are hard to rely on. Estimates have not occurred. And I would like to emphasize again that we are calling for a full debate—an emergency debate on a matter of public importance. And the nature—debate by its nature is more substantive and does not have the severe time restrictions imposed during oral questions.

And the fact is that I—as the First Minister has said many times, this is a pandemic. This is a crisis. It's—they've argued—the government has argued this is—these are unprecedented times. And yet we do not actually know what the plan is to—for this Legislature to meet, to debate, to ask questions.

There's an incredible amount of work that needs to be done. We've lost seven weeks of sitting time so far. That's hundreds of questions that have not been asked and not been answered. We have had 100 hours of Estimates where we should be able to ask questions directly to the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his ministers about critical decisions that are being made or not being made. Right now, all those decisions appear to be made entirely behind closed doors and we are—don't have the opportunity to do it and we don't know when we will have the opportunity to do it.

There are a number of—there are a count of questions we want to be able to ask about. In the last month, we've seen the Premier and ministers completely reverse themselves on issue after issue. We were told that Manitoba had the most emergency-

ready budget in Canada. Then we were told we have the highest debt in Canada and we're the most vulnerable, in order to justify cuts. We were—heard that there needed to be cuts of 10, 20 and 30 per cent. Now we hear maybe it's less, that we don't even know if that exactly is accurate—if the 2 per cent cut is accurate. We heard the Premier was going to cut—take a pay cut of 25 per cent, then it turned out to be less than 10 per cent.

Do we have any projections of revenue? No. Do we have any projections on spending? No. The government's finances are an absolute black hole.

And I anticipate the criticism that people will say, well, the federal government also has yet to produce a budget or an economic update. We know this is a crisis. But, however, the federal government is not using it as an excuse to lay people off or dismantle public services. And during that time, the Premier's statements were characterized in a way by members of the media that I can't repeat without violating the rules of this House.

\* (15:10)

There is a saying, Madam Speaker, that sunlight is the greatest disinfectant. And Winston Churchill said: The single most essential part of democracy is accountability.

The government noted that the NDP blocked the work of this House for days, starting the day that the global pandemic was declared. And today, just as the Premier has done hundreds of times in this Chamber, he justified the idea that we are not going to meet by referring to behaviour he himself condemned in the opposition. Two wrongs don't make a right.

And let's be clear, extraordinary times and the decisions that are being made during this pandemic require extraordinary oversight. The finances of the government are a black box. What's more, this has happened on—while the government has moved to shift money from the government to the purposes of partisan self-promotion: the Premier's decision to mail out letters at great public expense to take personal credit for money that is not his and sending out benefits to seniors and people who are living in vulnerable circumstances. The Premier has appointed a PC campaign manager who's been—had—has enjoyed a revolving door between government and the PC Party for years. And there has been an incredible blurring of lines between the Premier, the PC Party, the government and arm's-length organizations.

Civilian oversight of Crowns is gone. Hydro is being dictated to by this Premier (Mr. Pallister). Universities, school boards, not-for-profits—these are not all just extensions of government but—and they are not 'extense'—supposed to be extensions of the PC Party of Manitoba.

But who is now overseeing Elections Manitoba, the Manitoba children's advocate and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner? It's the Premier's former campaign manager. And he gets to choose whether those independent officers of the Legislature get funded. And this is an unprecedented politicization of the public service, which we've already objected to.

However, we have a stack of questions we cannot possibly ask. They are building up. We cannot ask questions about the changes to education, even though parents and teachers are reaching out to us and pleading with us. We cannot ask those questions. We can't ask questions about early childhood education because we are so limited in the number of questions we have: Hydro, Crown, finance, appointments, the environment, First Nations, small businesses, people with disabilities. People have been reaching out to us with hundreds and hundreds of questions over the last weeks and months but we are not able to actually hold the government to account.

The government has been pushing the recovery, but when they are not laying people off, they've been forcing people back to work. And at a time when people are desperate for answers and the government is launching phase 2, we may not meet again for four months. This is a disservice to accountability, it's a disservice to this House and a disservice to democracy.

Madame la présidente, nous avons une responsabilité de tenir pour responsable le gouvernement. Ça fait sept semaines qu'on a perdues et d'innombrables questions qu'on n'a pas eu l'opportunité de demander.

Le ministre de l'Éducation dit qu'il faut avoir—il faut que les élèves retournent à l'école pour ne pas perdre de progrès, mais il paraît que le Premier ministre veut quatre mois de vacances.

### **Translation**

*Madam Speaker, we have a responsibility to hold the government to account. We have lost seven weeks and innumerable opportunities to ask questions.*

*The Minister of Education says students need to go back to school to avoid losing their progress, but it seems that the Premier wants four months of vacation.*

### **English**

During oral questions, the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen) defended the current chaos being created in our education system and with early learning and child care by saying it's all about making sure students don't lose progress. We've lost seven weeks of session. We've—have a hundred hours of Estimates to do. The idea that we have to send back children, teachers and early childhood educators while the government shuts down the Legislature for what could be four months is not acceptable.

I also anticipate this request will be rejected because it does not conform to the current rules of the House. It is abundantly clear that in what has been called an unprecedented public health emergency and an 'unprecedented' economic crisis, that it is almost impossible for this House to have emergency debates.

Aside from the partisan games we sometimes play in this House, the decisions made in a crisis have an outside impact. They must have proportional oversight and the Legislature in session must continue.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** I am trying to take my friend, member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont), seriously. I know he has repeatedly, every week, brought forward matters of urgent public importance. I don't blame him for that. That is certainly an option that any member of the opposition can partake in. They have the right to bring forward a matter of urgent public importance. I've seen it done here in my now 17 years in the House many different times, and some of them have been, you know, very important.

The BSE debate—I remember many, many years ago, back in the early 2000s, there was a MUPI brought forward on the BSE debate, I believe, and it was entirely appropriate because of what was going on. And it was agreed to by all members of the House.

This member brings forward repeatedly—you know, last week, it was regarding the hiring of the top bureaucrat in the province of Manitoba in the midst of a pandemic; it wasn't pandemic-related at all, Madam Speaker. Today in question period he decided to use his time in question period to talk about the opening of Mary Brown's in Steinbach and Ted Cruz from the

United States. I hope at some point some history will be written on the member in terms of the kind of questions he asked during a global pandemic regarding fried chicken and a US senator. It doesn't seem like the best use of time. But now all of a sudden he feels that we should have a discussion about House sittings and to do that on the floor of the House, as opposed to negotiations, as it typically happens, between House leaders.

He didn't even ask about it in question period. It was—the issue is so important for him that he feels he needs to bring forward a matter of urgent public importance because there's no other time to debate it. But, when he had the time to debate it during question period, he didn't raise it. He talked about fried chicken and US senators. So that is clearly what his priority is. He didn't use the opportunity that he had to raise it in a way that would rise to any standard of a matter of purge—urgent public importance. If he didn't feel it was important enough to raise before, over issues of fried food and representatives in other countries, then I surely can't take him seriously now, Madam Speaker, that it is particularly important to him.

So I hope that you'll advise the member again, as you've been required to do in your high position over the last three weeks, that there are other times during this Legislature, potentially at question period and maybe even afternoon if it's related to things that are called this afternoon, to raise this issue. And I hope whenever this House does come back for a sitting and in his regularly scheduled time the member opposite might use the time he has away to try to bring forward more questions that are relevant to the interests of Manitobans that are happening at that time, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader):** I just want to put a couple of words on the record in respect of the member for St. Boniface's (Mr. Lamont) MUPI this afternoon.

I will just agree with my colleague, the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), that perhaps the member for St. Boniface should've brought it up in question period as we have. In fact, Madam Speaker, I will point out that we've actually brought up the inability of this government to give opposition, both the NDP and the Liberal members of this House, any indication on when we are going to come back, if there will be any additional days. We have repeatedly brought that up, not only in the House during question period but also in respect of texts and

emails and even social media, to the Government House Leader.

So I think that there are opportunities to discuss the House coming back. We have been repeatedly doing that for the last four weeks.

So I do want to point out I know that the Government House Leader just put on the record that there's opportunities for House leaders to be able to negotiate coming back to the House. We haven't seen much by way of negotiations, Madam Speaker, in the last little bit. I know that we have repeatedly—and I will say as well the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) has also put it on the record that we are looking to come back to the House for more sitting days. We have only sat today a total of five days since we rose, adjourned the House on March 19th. We've only been in this Chamber five days.

Since March 19th, Madam Speaker, I suggest, and I would imagine that everybody would agree, that many, many things have happened in Manitoba, not the least the enormous amounts of cuts that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has executed on the population, on the citizens, of Manitoba, Manitobans, and we have no ability, other than the last four Wednesdays that we've had, to be able to hold the Premier and each and every one of his Cabinet to account for these cuts.

\* (15:20)

It is important that we have the ability to hold the government to account for the cuts that they have executed, but, certainly, Madam Speaker, the \$1 billion that this House gave authorization for the government to spend in respect of the pandemic, we don't know where those dollars are going. There's no accountability and there's no transparency in respect of where that one billion dollars is going, which was supposed to go in fighting and helping to support in the fight against COVID-19. We have absolutely no ability to ask this government where those dollars are in the immediate time.

We have no ability because the government is—so far, I haven't heard anything—not willing to ensure any additional sitting days, so we have no ability for question period which, as you know, Madam Speaker, is the opportunity for the official opposition to hold the government to account, so we have no ability for a question period. We have no ability for oversight and transparency in respect of those one billion dollars, as I said.



There is no ability to hold Estimates. As you know, Madam Speaker, Estimates are the opportunity for opposition members to ask ministers and their departmental staff on various expenditures and cuts and revenues and all of that. We have no ability to do that as well.

Madam Speaker, we haven't had any ability to introduce our private members' bills because, as you know, private members' business usually occurs on Tuesday mornings and Thursday mornings, but we haven't been sitting Tuesday and Thursday mornings so we've had no ability to debate and move forward our bills.

I do, just for the purposes of those that are watching and for those that will watch in the future, I want to put it on the record, Madam Speaker, the bills that we have introduced in the House, that we are very anxious to debate and get going towards a vote and, hopefully, receiving royal assent. We have the member for Union Station's (MLA Asagwara) Vital Statistics Amendment Act; we have the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor)—The Climate and Green Plan Amendment Act (Improved Climate Change Targets and Enhanced Ministerial Accountability); we have the member for Union Station—the restricting of mandatory overtime for nurses act, various acts amendment.

We have the member for Fort Rouge (Mr. Kinew)—The Louis Riel Act; the member for Union Station—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act (Personal Care Home Guidelines); the member for Fort Rouge—The Personal Protective Equipment Reporting Act; the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey)—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (COVID-19 Presumptive Coverage); the member for Fort Rouge—The Digital Contact Tracing Advisory Council Act; the member for St. Johns—myself—The Abortion Protest Buffer Zone Act, and, again, the member for St. Johns—myself—The Winnipeg Humane Society Foundation Incorporation Amendment Act.

We don't get many opportunities, Madam Speaker, as the official opposition, to push forward and move forward our legislative agenda. The only opportunity when you are in opposition is on a Thursday morning, and we have not had that opportunity for a very, very long time; actually, since almost the beginning of what would be spring sitting.

And so, you know, it's important to put on the record that the Pallister government is preventing, in

a very real way, the official opposition from doing their job.

One of the main components of the official opposition is to hold the government to account, and because the government does not want to sit any additional days and, again, I will put it on the record I have not received any indication that after today, March 27th, 2020, that we will—[interjection] May—sorry—after today, May 27th, 2020, and thank you to the Clerk for pointing that out—Deputy Clerk for pointing that out, that there is no additional days of sitting scheduled.

What that means is that actually we don't know when we're going to be coming to the House. It is solely at the prerogative of the government, more specifically, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) when the Premier wants to come back and be held to account by this on—our side here on this side of the Chamber.

So we haven't heard anything in respect of when we're going to be sitting, so I think that it is important that we do put that on the record that it's important that we sit—we come back and we sit.

I do want to just point out something, Madam Speaker, in respect of why it's so important to have question period and why it's so important to have afternoon sittings. The Minister for Health put on the record during an answer from the member for Union Station that there had been—that we had put erroneous information on the record regarding cuts, that they had not made cuts to personal-care homes, Madam Speaker. Why it's important to still have question periods and afternoon business is to disabuse when ministers and the Premier put false information on the record, as did the Minister of Health just not so long ago.

I will table for the House, Madam Speaker, that, in fact, he put false information on the record and there has been significant cuts to personal-care homes. So that is why it is important that we sit in this Chamber and ensure that Manitobans have accurate information, because you would imagine, if you were to listen just to the Minister of Health, that everything is hunky-dory in personal-care homes. And we know that it's not.

We know that this Premier and his minions, his ministers who do his bidding, are hell-bent on cuts to Manitoba, to destroy the infrastructure that was put into place for protections for the most vulnerable Manitobans in every sector, including daycare, including women, personal-care homes. We can go

down the list; we've seen in the last—you know, in the midst of a global pandemic, what did the Premier (Mr. Pallister) choose to do? He chose to cut. He chose to execute what he had planned back in 2016, which is to destroy the infrastructure of Manitoba.

And without even as so much as a little bit of concern for Manitobans who are left, because of this ideological bent towards austerity and cuts and pick-yourself-up-by-your-bootstraps kind of Conservative mentality, which means that everyone else has to fend for themselves, except for him, because he's so anxious to get to the beaches of Costa Rica and retire, he doesn't care what he does and what he leaves for the rest of us when we have to clean up his mess when we get government the next election.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I thank the honourable members for their advice to the Chair on the motion proposed by the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont). The 90-minute notice required prior to the start of routine proceedings under 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, as this is an issue that members may have a keen interest in. Unfortunately, this motion does not fit the criteria as a matter of urgent public importance, as there have been other opportunities that could have been used to raise this issue, including oral questions, members' statements and grievances.

With the greatest of respect, the motion is out of order as a matter of urgent public importance.

### GRIEVANCES

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Notre Dame, on a grievance.

**Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** Madam Speaker, my grievance today focuses on the importance of government treating seniors with dignity.

I rise today on behalf of our elders and the workers who care for them in our health-care system, in home care, in long-term care, in supportive housing and in hospital. The system that we have in place to

care for our elders and other younger adults with disabilities or chronic conditions is underfunded, fragmented and needs to be more humane for patients, residents and workers.

If there can be any good out of all the over 5,200 COVID-19 deaths of personal-care home residents in the past few months, if there could be any good from the disintegration of elderly care that's been graphically reported by the Canadian Armed Forces yesterday, and if there can be any good out of this national disgrace, it's to finally have enough public awareness on the living conditions of our elders and the working conditions of those who care for them.

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

It's easy for the elderly to be invisible and ignored. They are warehoused, out of sight, out of mind. The rest of us can go about our daily activities. It's easy for care work, which is typically viewed as women's work or low-skilled work being done by mostly racialized immigrant women to be devalued. But this pandemic has forced us to see them and what they go through. And, as public servants, we are ethically bound to see to it that our elders are afforded dignity and a good quality of life.

\* (15:30)

Right now, we can harness the public will to focus our collective resources to create a coherent, humane system for our elders and the workers who care for them. How the elderly are treated depends a lot on how the workers themselves who care for them are treated. There is a direct, evidentiary link to living conditions of seniors and working conditions of those who care for them.

When I go door to door in the constituency of Notre Dame, I meet and befriend a lot of low-income seniors who depend on their daily needs for home care. In Notre Dame, many of my constituents and their families are also employed in care work of some kind, either in hospitals, in long-term care, and many are actually home-care workers who staff private agencies or the WRHA, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Most of what I'm sharing today in today's grievance comes from my meetings with home-care workers from the WRHA and these private home-care agencies. Out of all the care workers, home-care staff have the worst working and remuneration conditions. These health-care aides have told me that their working conditions are like—and, frankly, I was shocked to see how poorly they were paid for the

staggering amount, the challenging and even dangerous type of work that they do.

Care work is difficult, and sometimes even dangerous. Workers often suffer from burnout, stress, workplace violence. It's not uncommon to get punched, kicked, bitten or spit in the face by a client suffering from dementia, and there is research that proves that low staffing levels or low care hours leads to this kind of violence.

Home-care workers experience verbal abuse, sexual harassment, exposure to contagious and infectious diseases, including blood-borne and airborne diseases, and high rates of musculoskeletal injury. As front-line workers, the care that they provide directly impacts the quality of life for patients, but this is not reflected in pay or benefits.

At private agencies, home-care workers start at minimum wage, and under the WRHA, home-care workers start at over \$13 an hour. According to CUPE, home-care representatives, currently, their collective bargain agreements have been expired for the last three years, and they are enduring wage freezes for the past four years.

There is extremely low provision for sick time. Home-care workers have a maximum of three paid sick days per year, and, in order to get another eight hours of sick pay, they have to work 500 hours to get it.

So home-care workers do not have the access to the enhanced health benefits like all other unionized health-care workers. They have no access to prescription drug plans, no physical therapy, no private hospital room, no orthotics and no ambulance insurance, and the very limited benefits that they are allowed, like prescription eyeglasses and dental care, is not even extended to their family members like their children.

At some of the meetings that I had with home-care workers, they opened up to me about their grueling work schedules. So, starting in 2010, under the previous NDP government, their workload doubled and, on occasion, even tripled from caring for eight to 10 patients per day to caring for 20 to 30 patients per day—20 to 30 patients per day.

A typical run schedule for a home-care worker would include an allotment of 30 minutes to drive to a client's house, prepare breakfast, administer medication, assist a client to the washroom, brush teeth and get the client dressed for the day: all in 30 minutes.

A typical run schedule that includes the allotment for 30 minutes to drive to another patient's house and give them a bath. After driving for 15 of that 30 minutes, a home-care worker would only have 10 minutes to get a patient undressed, bathed and then dressed again.

With the onset of COVID-19 and the short supply of PPE for all health-care workers, again, the low status of home-care workers was evidenced, as they were the last to obtain and successfully fight for personal protective equipment. They are currently apportioned only a meagre PPE supply, and, in fact, a home-care worker will need to reuse that one mask per day for the whole day even if her mask gets compromised, like when the mask typically gets wet when giving a patient a bath.

If our province is serious about ensuring dignity for our elders, we need to understand that there is a direct connection to working conditions of health-care aides and quality of life for patients, and a big part of that is ensuring that there's sufficient funding for enough time to be given for care for patients.

Now, Manitoba has 126 personal-care homes and 9,832 residents and over 1,000 seniors on wait-lists for placements, and that's 2009 figure from Sheila Novek's research.

According to the long-term-care association of Manitoba, personal-care homes in Manitoba are legislated to have enough funding for 3.6 hours of care per day for each resident. And this is one of the highest care ratios in all of Canada, but it still isn't high enough because that's still a minimum benchmark for care, due to the increasingly complex conditions that some residents have, like dementia, immobility, frailty, complex behavioural issues and co-morbidities. Currently, this 3.6 hours is a provincial ministry prescribed mix of 15 percent of care from a licensed practical nurse, and 70 per cent of that from health-care aide hours. For a better quality of life, personal-care residents need to have the freedom to have additional hours of care allotted that don't only tend to their physical needs but also to their social, mental, emotional and spiritual needs, like employing care hours for art, dance, music and counselling.

In addition to more care hours, our province needs to invest in infrastructure renewal for personal-care homes. Many elders in our province live in crowded environments with two or three residents to a room. Renovations should include installations of sinks outside of rooms to help staff prevent further

contamination. And we know that these crowded conditions directly contribute to the spread of infectious diseases and at worst, you know, just for normal peace of mind to have the dignity of privacy that contributes to everybody's personal well-being.

The long-term-care association of Manitoba is also pushing for the creation of more supportive housing spaces to be funded across the province. There are currently only 800 spaces for residents now for this type of housing, and this type of housing is ideal for fairly independent seniors and can really offer an extended quality of life for residents.

Advocates and community organizations have lamented this government's elimination of the seniors health and aging branch in January 2019, and the elimination of the Manitoba Council on Aging and the caregiver advisory council in 2017. Now, this branch and these councils had key roles, focused on research, development of policy, monitoring, community engagement for seniors, by seniors in this province. And I would urge this government to reconsider those choices and include resources to fund efficient oversight, research and policy that a department focused on seniors' issues provided quite well for many years.

And, lastly, I would urge this government to collectively join other provinces in negotiating with Ottawa to include long-term residents' care as part of core funding under the Canada-

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

Any further grievances?

Orders of the day, government-House business.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** Could you please call for debate on second readings, Bill 43, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act, and following that, Bill 11, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It has been announced by the 'honourment' Government House Leader that we will resume on debate of bill-second reading of Bill 43 this afternoon and Bill 11, and the honour of the-Bill 43, the civil servants of superannuation amendment act, standing in the name of the member for Concordia, he has 14 minutes remaining.

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

### Bill 43-The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** And I do appreciate that I do have 14 minutes left. Of course, I could start from the beginning. I think I may have heard the Government House Leader asking for that. We could add time, I'm sure, by leave, if that's something that is of interest to the House, because it is important that we debate this bill. And I-in reviewing my notes and in reviewing Hansard from the last time I was up before this Chamber, debating this bill, which now was just a couple of weeks ago, that was the thrust of my concern with how this bill has been brought forward before the House.

\* (15:40)

Now, I want to return to that theme because it remains the case that, here in this Chamber, we as the opposition continue to fight for more time, for more ability to debate bills, for more information-basic information, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I-you know, I don't need to tell tales out of school here, but it was just, I guess, one minute ago that we learned that we would be, in fact, debating Bill 43. And, as far as I know, the number of years that, certainly, that I've been in this Chamber, that is not the way that we do business here, especially in a time of a global pandemic, a time when we are being asked to all work together. I heard the Premier (Mr. Pallister) say that in so many words. I don't need to quote him directly because I don't think I would be too happy in quoting the entire quote. But I will agree with him in saying that we are all in this together. However, we are not acting that way when it comes to debating important legislation here before the House.

And you can see this not just in my words here today and my words two weeks ago in my frustration with the situation, but you can hear it in the words of the Opposition House Leader, who continuously asks for more information, for the ability to have more sitting days, for more question periods before the House. The Opposition House Leader is asking for more engagement for the-from the media.

We are doing our level best to represent the people of Manitoba at every single opportunity. And whether that be a grievance, as was brought forward by my colleague here with regards to home care and seniors' issues-that's the kind of work that we want to be doing, and we're so severely limited in that work because of the actions and the attitude of this

government. They refuse to allow us the time—the proper time and the proper venue in which to debate bills, and especially bills that are as important as Bill 43.

And this is an important bill. This is a bill that I think every member of this Chamber wants to move forward. And we want to make sure that we do it right; we want to make sure that it listens to all Manitobans. As I said last—I guess, two weeks ago, the last time I had an opportunity to speak, you know, we want to listen to the working people of this province, we want to listen to labour, we want to listen to the public. And, as of yet, we have yet to hear from the government exactly how this bill—you know, if moved forward here in the Chamber in debate, how exactly would we accommodate that, how would we listen to the public, how would we allow for the public to have their say. That's the concern that we have.

And we have a minister who didn't have the answers that were asked of him in the question period that was offered here. He said don't—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —worry, the actuaries know the answers to those questions. Well, I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it should be the minister. The buck stops with the minister, and if he's asking us for a debate—a proper, thorough debate here in this Chamber, then it is incumbent on him to be able to answer those questions in a way that satisfies our members of the official opposition. And that wasn't done.

So we will continue to debate this. We will continue to ensure that Manitobans understand what we're talking about here today and to ensure that every member of this Chamber understands how important this is because, as I said two weeks ago, although this is an unprecedented situation, there is no room for us to in any way circumvent the democratic process here in this province. And, as I said, the government—the Opposition House Leader—future Government House Leader—has been saying that time and time again, whether it's in this Chamber, in question period, in the media and so on.

So we ask that the government give us the time to debate this. I know other members of the official opposition want to have their say, and I certainly do as well. *[interjection]* And maybe even the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen), it sounds like, might want to put a few words on the record because he keeps piping up and wanting to

have his say. And he certainly could take that time very shortly.

Bill 43 is important. It's important because Manitobans right now are unsure about their futures. They are unsure about their jobs. This government has cut at every opportunity. This government has seen cuts as their first priority—their only priority it seems like sometimes during the pandemic. And it has had real-life consequences.

As I said previously, there are a number of government services, certainly there are some which are seeing less of an impact because of COVID-19, but most certainly there are many departments in government that are working harder than ever to provide the services that Manitobans count on. Manitobans look to their public service to be a strong example of stability throughout this pandemic, and at a time when they're asking for services to be there when they ask for them this government instead has chosen an ideological path, has chosen the path to cut first and then come up with a plan afterwards, as they have done so many times in the past.

I've identified there's a number of departments which we know are seeing higher than usual volumes in terms of the work that they're doing. We know that Employment and Income Assistance is one of those. Folks who are on EIA are some of the most impacted when it comes to COVID-19. We know that the economic downturn, the job loss amongst those folks has been most acute, and so for those folks, in particular, who are already on the edges in terms of their ability to weather any kind of change in their employment, they are the ones who are looking for stability first and foremost. So we know that that department is one of the most important.

We know that the Rent Assist program in our province is so very important, a program that the NDP brought forward, wanted to ensure that there was some relief for renters—and has been scaled back by this government, has been lowered. The amount given to individuals has been lowered, but it is still very vital to those folks who receive Rent Assist to ensure that that is there. And couple that with the uncertainty that renters are feeling right now because of the—their concerns about rent increases or evictions, a question that I was able to ask last week in this House. This is a department and a service that Manitobans count on so very vitally right now.

We know that Child and Family Services—you know, one of the things that we've heard most about in this time is just the appreciation that folks have for

teachers and for schools in our communities. We know that schools are not just a place of learning for students. In fact, they are community hubs, and in many ways they are service providers in so many ways, whether that be the meal programs that they provide for students that attend their school, whether that be counselling services, whether that be other supports for children in need, and these services because of the shutdown of our schools has been absent.

So in that way Child and Family Services department has seen an uptick in the work that they're doing to ensure that they can cover some of those gaps and that they can make sure that nobody falls through those cracks. That's the work that's being done and that's the work that's being jeopardized by this government's cut-first, ask-questions-later mentality. And it is completely ideological, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is an ideological move.

We know for a fact that this government had plans. In fact, they drew it up as part of David McLaughlin's election plan, his vision for this province that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) then endorsed and brought forward to Manitobans. That, in fact, these cuts that they are bringing forward now under the guise of a pandemic, under the guise of upheaval and of a slow down in the economy that this is the only way that they, in fact, can move forward. This was already predetermined and it was already pre-decided by David McLaughlin and by the Premier. Long before we ever heard of COVID-19 they had made the decision and, in fact, had brought it forward to Manitobans in the last election.

Now, here we are. All of a sudden the exact amount that they had planned to cut is the amount that they want to cut from our civil service and from other programs. What a coincidence. Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, we know that is not the case; that is not a coincidence at all. That is their ideological bent. That is the direction that they are looking to head in and that is the worry that many Manitobans have in this cut-first and ask-questions-later type of mentality.

We know that affordability in Manitoba has become eroded over the last number of years, and that is one of the major concerns that we have with regards to any of these cuts and changes within the civil service. We know that homelessness is on the rise already in Winnipeg before the effects of COVID-19 have truly been appreciated or been felt across the broad spectrum.

\* (15:50)

We know that the number of social housing units being built by the government has been going down steadily throughout their term. We know as well that the government is proud to talk about how they're selling off Manitoba housing units; you know, not with consultation with housing advocates, not with consultation with vulnerable Manitobans. not with, you know, even letting anybody know about this.

But this is something that they want to do and have been doing. They do it behind the scenes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and at the same time that we have a deficit in affordable housing, you know, already, something that, you know, any government that wants to take this seriously would have to make serious investments in, and yet we're going in the complete opposite direction.

We know already that 300 people have been cut from the Rent Assist, and 550 people living with mental health disabilities are losing housing benefits. That's a concern, Mr. Speaker, that we all want to bring forward here. And I could go on.

The list is enormous, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The need that Manitobans have out there is enormous, and yet this government has been completely focused on the cuts.

And I just want to briefly talk about the other effect of the layoffs and the downturn that this government is bringing to Manitoba, and that is the economic impact, because we know that this is a far-ranging problem. This is not something that is simply about those services, as important as they are. This is also about how this cutback and this austerity-focused agenda is going to impact our economy going forward.

You know, this is something that has been derided by economists both on the left and on the right. It's been derided by experts across the political spectrum and across the country and across the world. Every jurisdiction in this country understands how important it is to have some stability, especially for the public service, as you move through the global pandemic.

This government missed the memo, and instead of having any one of the members opposite stand up to their Premier and stand up in caucus and make their voice heard, they have been silent. In the same way they've been silent here in this Chamber, they've been silent in the caucus and in the Cabinet, and that's shameful to Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Manitobans want a government that will stand up for them. They certainly see an opposition that is

standing up every single day, and unless this government will allow for proper debate of legislation in this Chamber, will allow us to bring those voices forward, I don't see how they think they can accomplish their legislative agenda, because this place works only when democracy is being respected and it is not being respected by this government.

They think that nobody's paying attention, and they can just move through the session—[*interjection*]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Wiebe:** —move on to a four-month break and pretend that nothing ever happened.

Well, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue to bring these issues forward. We will fight here as the official opposition. We will continue to be the ones that bring forward these issues, and we will continue to debate these bills until we get some co-operation from the government and some understanding of the importance of these issues.

Thank you—

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

Any other speakers on the debate?

**Ms. Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** I'm definitely happy to have a few words on the record to speak in support of this bill. I've actually never had to contribute to a pension plan before, so it was kind of like a trial by fire here, trying to learn about pension plans.

I looked up what the Canadian Institute of Actuaries had to say about pension plans because this was one of the folks and organizations that was recognized as supporting the recommendations that this bill proposes.

So they had to say that—about pensions plans, a number of employers in Canada offer defined-benefit pension plans to their employees. A defined-benefit, or DB, plan provides predefined income to retirees, normally based upon the employee's income and years of service to the company. So these types of pension amounts are typically payable for life and may provide an income to a surviving spouse. They may also be subject to some form of indexing as protection against inflation. And these differ from defined contribution, or DC plans, which specify the contribution amount as opposed to the benefit.

So, because the amount of a DB plan is volatile and depends on future investment returns and life

expectancy, in this case, there is a prominent role for actuaries to play in this area.

Approximately 40 per cent of these members from CIA, or the Canadian Institute of Actuaries, practise in the pension and retirement area. Pension plans can represent a significant liability to—a significant liability to the plans' sponsor, the employer, who will also need to ensure that funding is in place to provide the promised benefits. Now, actuaries are required by law to certify the valuation of the pension plans' liabilities.

And, as part of this function, actuaries must develop appropriate assumptions for life expectancy, future returns on invested assets, future changes in salaries and other factors. Actuaries are normally involved in plan design discussions. They may also provide recommendations to the plans' sponsor on funding strategies, and, consequently, actuaries are increasingly involved in the investments of DB plans and ensuring that DC plans make—meet the future needs of Canadians.

Now, a large number of public sector employees belong to a DB plan, but the prevalence of these plans in the private sector has been decreasing. Many employers have moved to a DC plan; therefore, a number of actuaries in the retirement area have been involved in alternate pension plan designs, which include target benefit plans. And this is actually a hybrid between DB plans and DC plans.

Well, Bill 43, which, on this side of the House, we're happy to support—Bill 43 makes a number of changes to The Civil Service Superannuation Act. The manner of determining the commuted value of pension is changed from the solvency method to the going-concern method, published by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries.

It also allows employees to be appointed to the board rather than elected, and it caps commuted values at age 55. So this means that once a participant of the CSSB is 55 years of age, upon termination of employment, they would not have the ability to remove their pension plans from the plan and would either receive a monthly pension at the time of retirement to defer these payments to a later date. And this is a change, again, that is being done for pensions across Canada, as suggested by the Canadian Institute of Actuaries.

So, when people withdraw their pension funds, they get it paid out based on the calculated rate of return rather than the interest rates to protect the fund

and better reflect an individual's contributions. So MGEU is currently working with government for an amendment to the act to parallel the maximum four-year term and 10 consecutive years with both employees and employers. Currently, it's just for employees to remain equitable. This bill does not materially change an individual's pension, and I think that's a very, very important point and one of the reasons why we are supporting this bill.

\* (16:00)

Changes have been made to the application process and electing a pension. This includes the Canadian pension plan integration option, is now based on CPP payments at the age of 60, and if the member does not elect a pension option, then the default option applies. Currently, the default option applies only when there is no election due to ill health or death.

The person's marital or common-law relationship status is now determined at the pension's start date, not the date that the pension is applied for, and additional amendments have also been made to the deferral purchasing or annuity of pensions.

Something of major concern to this pension plan is the cutting of civil service jobs here in this province. It means that less people are paying into the pension fund and this threatens the fund.

I'll read to you from this Winnipeg Free Press article that shows, from October 1st, 2019, that the Province has now chopped more positions than planned. The Province, at this time, had already cut 2,000 civil service jobs. It says that the Manitoba government has chopped more civil service positions than it originally planned and that this is going to be hurting an already fragile economy, and you would have to note that that was way before COVID-19 ravages to our economy now.

At this time, there were currently 12,839 active civil service employees. Again, that was roughly 2,000 fewer than in 2016, and this was coming from an annual report that the provincial civil service commissioned—commission released. The Progressive Conservative government hired the consulting firm KPMG that year and it accepted KPMG's call for a reduction of 1,200 civil service jobs, and those numbers, they don't include the jobs cut in the broader public sector, such as in Crown corporations, which have been ordered to cut management positions by 15 per cent in regional health authorities.

And at that time, we know that Manitoba Hydro had already cut at—about over 800 jobs at this time, and now, of course, we know that the report saying that Manitoba Hydro will be reduced by another 700 positions—coming up shortly. This is all very concerning for the health of our economy, for just the livelihoods of families and what it means to the average working person and their families.

So, cutting civil service means less people paying into the pension fund and, again, this threatens the fund, so we'd really like to highlight that so that the government can rethink their decisions to continue laying off public servants.

As Manitobans develop through their lifetime, they have an expectation that a time will come when they will be able to retire. When people retire, they will experience a reduction in income and a pension makes up for this loss of income in a person's retirement.

Civil servants, like all Manitobans, work hard for their wages and salaries and they want to be assured that their pensions are protected for retirement and properly managed. However, we've seen that this government has been cutting jobs left and right in the public sector. Again, in the public sector alone, to this date now, there have been almost 10,000 jobs lost in combined layoffs and job cuts. That's a staggering number.

Civil servants should know that their jobs will be protected and that they'll have the job security that they need long after this pandemic. That kind of psychological security is important for our economic development and it's not happening right now.

Pension reform can be acceptable if it is done right, but we have serious doubts about this government's ability to engage public workers in good faith, given their approach to date. Again, it's important to reiterate that cutting civil service jobs mean less people paying into the pension fund, again, which means that the fund will be threatened. And the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has continued to cut the civil service since being elected in 2016.

Over the course of this pandemic, when workers in the civil service needed financial security the most, instead this government chose to make cuts. In a statement, Michelle Gawronsky, president of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union, stated, during these unprecedented times, the critical importance of our public services is more clear than ever. This was a statement that she made to the



Winnipeg Free Press. She also said last month that we were told that the only way to avoid significant layoffs would be to voluntarily enter into work-sharing agreements where non-essential staff would have their workweek reduced to as little as two days per week.

So right now more Manitobans than ever are counting on public services to be there because more people are calling for EIA or employment and income assistance support, Rent Assist, and Child and Family Services more than ever. Cuts to public services will take money out of the pockets of families at a time when they need it most, and it will put more pressure on this strained economy that we're having because of COVID. Workers are left very concerned that the government will designate many more core public services as non-essential and thereby undermine the services that keep us and our community safe and healthy. We need to ensure that our public services remain strong and are there for Manitobans and their families who need them.

Again, this is a pension plan bill that we are supporting. And it's stated here that in Bill 43—that for—Bill 43 will take care of people later in life. But people still need to be able to have the funds that they need to allow them to live in the present. But programs in Manitoba right now that Manitobans are relying on to keep life affordable are being slashed. In housing, for example, we know that homelessness is on the rise in our city, yet this—the number of social housing units is going down and being sold off and devolved to the non-profit sector. This is going to have serious ramifications for the housing and for the folks that need that. We also know that this government has been selling off Manitoba Housing units behind the scenes, even though we have a significant deficit of affordable housing in the city.

My work as an MLA, we know that housing—having affordable housing available to people when they need it most is like a common denominator issue that, across the board, everybody needs, that when they're struggling—it's the common denominator for many, many other problems if you don't at least even first have stable housing to begin with.

At this point, 300 people have been cut from the Rent Assist program, including 550 people living with mental health disabilities. They're also losing their housing benefits. This will definitely contribute to more homelessness in our city and more social disintegration when you don't even have the stability that housing can provide.

Now, this government allowed federal-provincial housing agreements to expire, and this drove up rates for many seniors.

\* (16:10)

Speaking of seniors, we know that it's hard for many of them to live off of a pension in Manitoba, especially when benefits for seniors keep getting cut. Many of the seniors in the Notre Dame constituency are low-income seniors. When I go door to door and I visit these friends, they tell me that they're living on less than \$8 a day for food and they have to make that \$8 a day really stretch for food, and they tell me please don't forget about us and please fight for us.

So this government, we know, also cut the seniors tax credit and cut eligibility for the education property tax rebate, and this cost seniors hundreds of dollars more per year.

We know that this government instead of cutting should be investing in our seniors. Manitoba has 126 personal-care homes and that houses 9,832 residents. But more need to be built across the province because we have 1,000 seniors on wait-lists and we know that especially in rural regions personal-care home renovations and creation of personal-care homes is a very, very important priority that this government should take seriously.

According to the long-term care association of Manitoba, personal-care homes in Manitoba are currently legislated to have enough funding for 3.6 hours of care per day for each resident, and even though this is one of the highest care ratios in all of Canada, it still isn't high enough. So this is something that the government should consider and try their best to fund and to make sure that they should be actually closer to 4.0 care-hours per day for each resident. And not just to have the funding in place, because workers will tell you that even though that those funding hours for, let's say, 3.6 hours are there, they might not actually determine that those 3.6 hours will go to the care for seniors because those paid days, those paid hours, might be going to other activities that workers are doing, including for vacation time or personal development days. And there is no current way to check and to monitor it—how many hours exactly are going to those seniors for each resident per day.

But, again, that's just a minimum benchmark for care. So, even though we're part of the highest care ratios in all of Canada, it's not high enough.

The conditions that seniors—that residents have in personal-care homes are increasingly—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I just want to remind the member for Notre Dame (Ms. Marcelino) that if you can be relevant to the bill, that bill, that No. 43, the pensions act—amendment act.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Well, we know that instead of cutting we need to fund those seniors, especially when we take a look the national disgrace that's happening across Canada right now in personal-care homes and long-term care.

Another thing that Manitobans are currently paying for right now is health care under this PC government. For example, people with cystic fibrosis now have to pay thousands of dollars for life-saving drugs; and people with diabetes saw the number of glucose strips they could receive, that was actually cut; and people who are recovering from hip and knee surgery will now have to pay for physiotherapy and occupational therapy services that are vital to rehabilitation. People who suffer from sleep apnea now have to pay \$500 for the machines. These cuts don't make sense. It would make much more sense for the Province to ensure that Manitobans aren't being gauged because of their health-care needs, instead of unfreezing pensions.

Again, this is a bill that this side of the House—at this side of this House the NDP is happy to support.

For families here, the government is making life more expensive for families in Manitoba, especially for those with young children. This government cut the child-care giver tax credit, then they also are doing nothing to create affordable child-care spaces while there's a growing wait-list that was recently published in February by the CCPA.

We know that parents are being forced to stay home from work and, in some cases, give up their careers because there are no child-care spaces and because ECEs—or, early childhood educators—and child-care assistants are getting burnt out and leaving their jobs. Staff have said that they've quit working as an ECE because they made more money working at Shoppers Drug Mart, and now that many of our child-care assistants and early-childhood educators are now laid off due to the pandemic and the closure of many child-care centres, we know that they're even making more money under the CERB from the federal government than they do as child-care workers when

they're employed, or as early childhood educators and child-care assistants when they're employed.

I'm currently on the board of a non-profit Montessori where my two sons attend. And it was a bleak last board meeting that we had when we were taking a look at our financials. We were taking a look at a \$50,000 deficit this year because of the closure of the centre and because we didn't have enough money from the parent fees that were refunded. So this is happening to our child-care centre, our non-profit Montessori. We know this is happening to other child-care centres across the province. Some child-care—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

I just want to, again, remind the member for Notre Dame that just want to be relevant to the bill about pensions—you know, the superannuation for civil servants. And if we can go back to that—I'm not quite sure, I'm trying to find the way where—how you can get back to the actual bill that you're debating here with the—going on different avenues here. But if the member for Notre Dame can go back to the relevance of the superannuation amendment act.

**Ms. Marcelino:** Thank you for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Again, you know that the—cutting the civil service, it means that we're paying less into the pension fund, and that threatens the fund. So, when the government is cutting and people are losing their jobs, then that's what is threatening the fund. And that is why this new bill is actually coming into force, so that we can help support those folks that are losing their jobs. But it's not a good idea to just keep cutting.

I think that's it for me on our end, for my notes that we have here. Thank you for this time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital):** Speaking today on Bill 43, The Civil Service Superannuation Amendment Act, and this bill does make substantial changes to the way the pensions are calculated for our civil servants, so it does take a certain level of clarity and responsibility to really delve into the depths of the impacts that a change like this would have on a vast number of civil servants in our province. So it takes the—I think it's proper that we, you know, take the time necessary to debate the bill, to look at the ramifications, not just in the short term, but in the long term as well.

First, in the short term, we'll look at where we're standing right now: in the midst of a pandemic. And we're seeing layoffs across the board in the public and the private sector, people with reduced incomes, people who have been laid off. And many of the layoffs that we've seen have been in the public sector as results of the choices that our government has made to reduce the size of the civil service. And the size of the civil service has dramatically impacted the amount that is getting paid into the pension on a regular basis.

Now, when we're looking at that size of the civil service, we ask ourselves why is this actually happening right now. Is it the result of the global pandemic that we are facing right now, that people across our country and across the globe are facing? Is it—you know, we've first seen it hit in China. We seen—devastate countries across Europe. Very prevalent in the States. And, you know, we're fortunate here, relatively speaking, in Manitoba, that we haven't had it as bad as other areas—other jurisdictions. Of course, our hearts go out to anyone who's been a victim of COVID-19, as well as their family members or others affected in any regard.

\* (16:20)

And, when it comes to the impacts that that virus has had on our economy, it's—it has also been another level of catastrophe. We've seen businesses close down. We've seen, obviously, many reduce their staffing hours, their income levels, and, in terms of our civil service, we've seen many people who would pay into a pension either—you know, have their positions lost as well.

Now, the impacts to the pension, I can tell you, have—such as that can be quite profound. And we're talking about even just, you know, a small 5 or 10 per cent reduction in the number of employees who are paying into a pension plan can have great impacts.

When you go into the world of fund and pension management, you have to look at quite a number of things. You're looking at, first, your risk level. What's your risk tolerance for the members? What is the risk tolerance and the level that they're willing to accept?

Now, that goes into consultation with the board of the management team of any pension plan to consult with their members to see what the level of accepted tolerance is and actually put that plan into place to determine how that pension is going to operate, not just functionally in a market but also meet the needs of its members.

The members of the civil service are often to, you know—the needs, in terms of globally overall for these individuals, is to make sure that they're serving the public of Manitoba, providing an income for their family, and also they want to make sure that they have a trusted source of income once they reach retirement age, and that's relying on the health and viability of our pension plan.

So it is important that we look at these sorts of issues not just from an individual standpoint and whether—how they take out, when they out, how they take out, but for the holistic global view of the viability of the pension.

And I say that one of the strongest ways to have a healthy and affordable pension is to have a great diversity in terms of the age of the payers into that pension. That means that if you have a glut of people paying into and contributing to the pension in one age bracket, then undoubtedly that age bracket will likely retire around the same time period, causing an imbalance in terms of the number of people who are contributing to the pension plan and receiving from that pension plan.

And so it should be their outlook of the civil service to, as well as provide the service for our province, but to ensure that the staff who are working for the civil service are look—are being able to provide equitable and continuous resources for that pension plan so that it will survive successfully now and into the future.

Right now we see that there are many difficulties in our markets. Pension plans these days rely more and more and some almost exclusively on stock markets and we—if anyone has followed the stock markets over the last—even simply over the last three months, you'll see the wild swings in market valuations of certain companies that I know almost every pension plan would hold a piece of. You know, namely, any—almost any Canadian bank has seen dramatic swings in their stock valuation, which I'm sure many pension plans would hold that value.

Now, how does that impact our discussion today? Well, it means that you have to have a start—smart and strategic view of how pensions should operate. It means that you want to have a pension that is both resilient to withstand the fluctuations that can occur from a massive generational shift in our economy that may take months, if not years, to recover, while at the same time being able to provide the resources to pay out the recipients in their retirement age for the years to come.

And, for me, this is a balance that is important, but there are experts who can do this, and us as legislators, need to make sure that we are providing them the tools in order to do their job. And when it comes to fund management, as well as risk that I mentioned earlier, fund managers also often look at when will this—when will the funds be redeemed on this plan. You know, managing a, you know, an—managing a mutual fund is different than, say, managing a pension plan or managing an individual RRSP or managing a TFSA because they all have different points at which the funds will be redeemed. And that is essential. You know, if I knew that I had a TFSA, for example, that was going—that I needed the money to have been redeemed in, say, March of 2020, well, I certainly hope I wasn't invested in, largely, in equity stocks because they crashed shortly after, you know, many cases of COVID appeared in North America. That wouldn't have been a wise and prudent approach.

However, you know, maybe, perhaps, if you're looking at a long-term saving plan or perhaps even a pension plan it might not have been a bad approach to have been in a largely equity-balanced stock portfolio because you're looking at a much longer term return, and it is these sorts of decisions that we not only want our pension managers to be implementing but also to be very keenly aware of when it comes to making decisions. And in order for us to determine the success of Bill 43, that thought process must be at the foundation of some of our discussions around the topic.

Now, when we also look at Bill 43, one of the main choices that the civil servants might be looking at when it comes to redeeming some of the assets for their own personal retirement early, they may consider the affordability aspects, general overall affordability, not just the value—dollar values of the pension and their potential return, whether they redeem some of those funds early or whether they choose to wait until retirement age or early retirement or a little bit later retirement. They may also be considering the affordability of everyday items and what it—is their cost going to be when they retire.

And so we must also look at this economic success of those civil servants who will be impacted by the change in the pension plan. If our economy is weak and, you know, certain merchants or other businesses are forced to increase prices to keep their business afloat, well, it'll have a negative impact on people who are redeeming money from their pension because their overall costs of living would have

increased for that individual. And so now, do they weigh the pros and cons of redeeming money early, 'potentially' getting a larger payout without, you know, proposed changes in Bill 43 and for them, you know, potentially look at a difference—different cost structure for their cost of living versus taking a risk and say what is our economic structure look like in five years if I retire and wait 'til then or if I wait to retire in 10 years?

And so these considerations about the economic stability are on the minds, are clearly on the minds, of people who are not just in retirement but are nearing retirement and who are even, you know, I dare say people who are, you know, perhaps just been hired and learning about the pension plans for the first time. I know that for myself, as I entered the workforce, I learned about the pension plan and read up on it so that I knew what my plan was in terms of the contributions I was going to make and what that meant for my retirement in terms of our family income levels. And that was a smart thing to do on my part because I wanted to ensure financial stability throughout all ages of my life and the—my family's life.

Now, I know that many members of our province are making these same sorts of decisions right now. They're weighing the affordability. They're weighing whether they may get laid off by the decisions that the government may make and the economic impact that that would have on their families. Will they lose their job coming up? Should they be saving money now? Should they perhaps redeem some of their pension early and use it to float some of their own expenses this year when we are having an economic downturn?

\* (16:30)

Now, that is a big risk to take because you're really looking at the economic stability over the long term of these individuals. Is it something that they should be doing? Well, I mean, I'm not going to comment on each individual person's financial position, but they should certainly be speaking to an expert on that. But I do think that the aspects of Bill 43 will make this a very difficult choice for some individuals who are now contemplating retiring over the possibility of having their job cut by the decisions of this government.

Now, Bill 43 specifically caps the commuted age at age 55. Now, that means that once a participant of the CSSB is 55 years of age, and upon termination of employment, they would not have the ability to remove their pension funds from the plan and would

either receive a monthly pension at the time of retirement or defer—or defer these payments to a later date.

Now, you know we are seeing some of these types of changes be made across our country, and it seems like it might be the status quo to set this age as, you know, the designated, you know, kind of, quote, retirement age, or cap in a commuted value, have making it set for individuals. There are a lot of challenges and a lot of questions to be raised regarding that, for example, working age. Generally, around here we're—the last few years we've seen an increase in the working age of individuals, which means that people are often looking to stay active and involved in their community and often work long past age 55. Now, is age 55 the best age to have in this bill? Well, you know, perhaps they should go back to many of the members in the civil service to consult with them to see whether that age should be adjusted to a more of a realistic time frame for the capping of commuted values.

Additionally, you have to also weigh that out with the burden or the cost that it would put on younger workers, and this is why it may be very important for the civil service to also look at ensuring that there are as many young workers paying into the pension plan as there are workers who are either currently receiving funds from the pension plan or about to because of the cuts that this government is making over the past few months.

Now, we see that with those affordability challenges that for people who are currently facing and making this tough decision it is also essential that we look at how the impacts of taking money out during that—for that commuted purpose and whether that is a fair ask and a fair allowance for people to be taking that out as a holistic concept with pension plans.

Let's go back to the thing about thinking about the purpose of pension plans. They're not just savings plans. You know, if you wanted a savings plan, you can take out an RRSP or another savings plan of the like. But when you're specifically talking about pension plans you're talking about providing a stable income for a worker who is now retired and looking for income for the rest of their life, not just for a small time frame, for a few years or perhaps to take a trip, not an income to do a renovation project or buy a new car. This is income to support them for the rest of their days once they've completed their career, and for that reason, it is important to be sure that we're being fair with these people, to make sure that the amount that

they're getting in retirement is going to be appropriate for them to have a quality of life in their golden years.

And I know that, as was mentioned by the Premier (Mr. Pallister) earlier today, he is very, very thoughtful of seniors and wants to ensure that they, you know, have respect. And I know that, you know, respect is a very important to myself to me as well and I think that is important to ensure that our pension plans are funded properly, like, properly funded completely so that people who are retired have the full confidence and are, frankly, not worried in the slightest that their pensions would be at risk. Because for so many people it is not just money that's coming in for, you know, for the luxury items. This is how they survive, and for us to go—you know, for anyone to go willy-nilly making changes to a pension plan is inappropriate. It does deserve and requires the needed level of thoughts and diligence to ensure that it is a—can be counted on and can be a trusted source of income for so many Manitobans.

Now, when we waive the actual amount that our retirees and—are receiving from the pension plan, it is important to look at whether they are receiving a, you know, commuted value that has been taken out before the age and to receive in a certain amount and how that complies with the fairness to the younger workers.

*Madam Speaker in the Chair*

So, you know, we see that if, you know, certain amounts of, you know, under a certain calculations currently had in a—in the pension plan could allow for certain individuals to receive more money if they were able to take money out of the plan versus the employees who maybe don't have that ability to take that out at the commuted value and perhaps have to wait until a later retirement age.

And, when we see that we ask ourselves, is this fair to all contributors into the pension plan? You know, everyone, obviously, contributes what they're able based on their salary. The civil service make their contributions and each member does their own. They—each member has their own amount that they are to receive as part of that pension plan, and when we're looking at that they may be looking at, hey, while I could take this amount early out of my pension plan it might, you know, benefit me as an individual, but what does that say about the fairness of the pension plan to all its members?

Remember, this is a pension plan that is meant to serve the entire civil service, and like so many other

plans that are group plans, the viability of that plan should be considerate of the interests of all members, not just a few who either have the knowledge or the interest to delve into the ability to get a little bit more for themselves as individuals. But the plan should really be looking at—and it's hard—the ability for all members to be successful for all stages of that plan. That includes having an affordable amount paid up as you're an early employee, so that you're not, you know, risking your current affordability levels to pay for, you know, your housing and your food, but also that it has a substantial amount to live on when you're in your golden years.

So that balance between having that fairness and that justice of allowing members of that pension plan to take money—more money out early than they otherwise would get under a certain calculation of the pension plan, and the amount that would needed—needs to be made up by younger payers into that pension plan is a strong consideration. I mean, in terms of fairness it's—it really does seem fair that most members should be paying, you know, the proportionally their same amount as everyone else so that it's the same pension plan, that the plan is, you know, funded, is funded properly, that it—it's grown and managed, you know, with equity and that all members, when they come to the time of retirement, don't have to choose between taking a plan out early, risking, perhaps, having their job cut by, you know, pending cuts that are, you know, have been suggested by the government, or waiting until a later age to actually redeem their full pension.

We—these questions shouldn't be here. We want to make sure that our pension plan is actually set up properly and fairly so that members can—members of the pension plan can actually have ease when they're paying into it, that they know they will be getting a full and fair amount when they're in their retirement.

\* (16:40)

Now, this comes down to a few things—this comes down to a few things in terms of the members of the pension plan having trust in the administrators of their pension plan. The fund managers and the pension managers that—the team who does that has to have responsibility in terms of that plan's success. And when you look at that, we certainly hope that not only do they have the free reign to actually buy that pension plan by the direction of the members, but also that the makeup of that board is equitably derived, that it comes from within their own membership of the people who are impacted—the civil service

membership—as well as has a level of expertise that is required to do the due diligence in ensuring its viability.

And we're seeing that, you know—and a third—the third part on top of that is that there also has to be a certain level of trust within the membership to trust the government is going to do their part and adequately fund their portion of that pension plan.

Now, you know, unfortunately, in other jurisdictions, we've seen, you know, we've seen pension plans over the past, you know, be drawn down and, you know, taken risks, taken a little bit too much. And as a result, you know, we've seen many pension plans that, quite frankly, should have been fully funded, should have been completely viable and successful parts of our civil service and their income—but we've seen many of those in other jurisdictions become, you know, less valuable. They've either had to convert to a defined contribution instead of defined benefit, or they've had to make other sorts of changes to the contributions amount because there wasn't proper management—and not just from the board, the pension plan management group, the team doing that, but also from the amount that the government is actually putting into these pension plans.

And so, you know, it's having that—the civil service having that same level of trust in this government. And I—and I'd say that, you know, it's hard to trust people if we're seeing these continuous amounts of layoffs by this—by—of civil service members. Members get nervous when there's layoffs. I've been in organizations where there've been layoffs and there've been cuts. And people around here not only get distrustful of that organization, but, you know, the government that may be behind it because of some of the decisions that they're making.

You know, they see people work around them very hard every day. They see the impact and the positive impact that it has on our Manitoban community and they want that to continue. However, when governments make decisions to not fund pension plans as much, it could have an erosion of trust within the civil service. And for that reason, members may become distrustful of whether they should be able to rely on a pension plan when they retire.

And so it's for that reason, when many members are seeing people get their—have their job losses, and cuts come one after the other, whether, you know, it's Hydro, whether it's, you know, other civil service areas where cuts have been mentioned. Regardless,

when they see that erosion of trust and they're coming to nearer retirement age while they're looking, do I rely and wait and hope that our retirement plan is going to be here for me in five years when the person I'm relying and hoping on has been eroding that trust through cuts that, in my mind, may not be appropriate, or do I take my money out now, maybe help myself out with a few more dollars and make it more difficult for the people who are left in the plan and have to pay more into the plan to make up for the amount that I took out.

That might not be the most fair way to treat our civil service workers and might not be the most fair way to treat individuals and our public as a whole, to know that this type of thing is going on right here in our government.

And so, with Bill 43, you know, we do really want to look at a few things, as I've mentioned. The three key points that I've been looking at have been trust—making sure that that civil service is truly trusting in its government, in its management of the fund so that it is going to be stable now and into the future. We want to make sure that this is a fair plan in terms of its equitability between different age groups, that people who are nearing retirement aren't going to take advantage of the—of different calculations in the plan now versus in earlier—younger employees who now have to pay into that plan for many, many years in order to redeem it, because it is for pension. And, of course, we want to mention the affordability of that plan, that people who are in retirement actually will have the money they need to live and survive, but also that the amount that they are paying, in terms of cost of living, is actually going to match what they're receiving in that pension plan.

And, you know, with the uncertainty in the economy that we're seeing—notwithstanding, you know, the pandemic of COVID-19—we want to ensure that anyone who's receiving a pension from the civil service has some, you know, has some sort of confidence that the year—that their amount of a full pension will be able to support them in a good quality of life, living here in Manitoba, without skyrocketing cost-of-living increases which would impact their retirement income, not necessarily because of the money from the pension plan, but just because of rising costs of the cost of living.

Now, these are essential things to be considering and as, perhaps, those cost of living increases, you know, continue over the years, you know, the funds that are invested into the pension plan perhaps should

be evaluated by the Speaker so that there is some sort of stability and reliance that, you know, that these members of the pension plan can count on in their retirement years.

Now, we're, you know, we're seeing many, I think, groups have been consulted or should have been consulted on this, and I think that it's important, not just consult with, you know, with, for example, MGEU and these types of people but it's—you know, we get emails and we get calls from individual members to talk about their specific cases and how this change in Bill 43 will impact them, either positively or negatively.

And it's important for us to listen, to really listen and hear each one of these opinions because it's not just their income now. It's not just their income in their working days. This is the income in their retirement, when they're—they are not prepared or interested or looking to work further in our economy.

And I think that is part of a respectful government; we should all be doing our part to ensure that people who are nearing retirement have the trust that they are looking for in their pension plan.

And so, with that, Madam Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on Bill 43.

Thank you.

**Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas):** You'll have to forgive me. They cleaned my chair and it takes about five minutes for this to dry and, of course, you don't want sit on somewhere that's wet and potentially have who knows what.

So I've become very used to being disappointed in this government, you know, being disappointed by our Premier (Mr. Pallister) here. And the blatant attacks that they've had on workers here in our province of Manitoba, workers that during a pandemic, rely on their jobs, rely on an income to be able to contribute to their pensions, but now that they're unemployed, they're no longer able to contribute to these very pensions.

And it's obviously extremely telling that the Minister for Central Services couldn't even answer or wouldn't even answer single direct questions regarding the details of Bill 43 just two weeks ago in this very House when the minister introduced it. It's another sign of blatant abuses of power of this government and them not wanting—and the government not wanting to be accountable to Manitobans—who are actually their bosses, not the

Premier (Mr. Pallister) of the Conservative government, but actually Manitobans who elected them to be in this House to look after their very interests.

And these ministers and backbenchers that are, you know, chirping on the other side that don't want to stand up for their constituents, that don't want to stand up for the jobs of Manitobans—*[interjection]*—and I hear the member from Lac du Bonnet speaking, and he can get up and speak to this bill. He can talk about Bill 43 and not standing up for workers and their pensions and allowing people to lose their jobs.

\* (16:50)

But next week we're going to hear the fate of 700 Hydro employees. These are employees that actually pay into a pension, that are actually going to lose their job and aren't going to have incomes to contribute to our economy. And we're in a crisis right now, a pandemic, and this government, what do they do? They try ram legislation down the throat of Manitobans.

If this government was so worried about Bill 43, that would have been one of their selected bills, would have been one of their specified bills. Was it? No, Madam Speaker, it wasn't one of their specified bills. Only three—two weeks ago in this House was this bill introduced, and then they wanted us to pass it and just go right through and say, yes, tickety-boo, we're going to, you know, allow it to pass without the very workers who this is going to affect be given the proper education and the time to ask questions about it.

And you know the member from Lac du Bonnet keeps talking and he's not standing up for these very workers. You know, people in his constituency are Hydro workers, people in his constituency are teachers, are educational assistants, the very people who are being laid off and losing their job. And has that member stood up for them? No; I have not heard him once stand up in this House and say I'm going to stand up for workers' rights. I'm going to ensure that people keep their jobs and I'm going to ensure—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —that students in my constituency are properly supported during their learning at home. No, he has not.

So, with that in mind, you know, Madam Speaker, it puts things into perspective. It really does explain why this government thinks that attacking workers

with an agenda of austerity and choosing to restrict pensions instead of addressing real problems is a good use of their time. And, in fact, the minister said last week that it was a good idea to lay off workers, that he stood by that decision—700 workers out of Hydro are going to lose their job next week. We're going to find out what that actually means, and that's related to their pensions. They can't pay into pensions if they're not able to bring in an income.

So it doesn't constitute putting Manitobans first, Madam Speaker, which we're supposed to be doing in our job. We have a duty to consult the very people who this Bill 43 it's going to impact.

So we're now into week two, going into week three, possibly, and as long as we need to, ensure that we are standing up for Manitobans and their pensions and ensuring that people that pay into these pensions and that are union members have the time to get educated on what that's really going to mean for them in the long term. They've been paying into this for years and years and years.

I'm also a pension-plan payer. When I worked in the school division, I paid into a pension. When I came to the Manitoba Legislature, I paid into a pension. I was an EA for 16 years; I paid into a pension. And, as a person who, you know, has money in certain places, I want to know, you know, what is happening with those funds that I'm putting in. And this government wanted to just kibosh that and not allow there to be any time for workers to figure that out, for people to come forward to hear about these planned changes and actually understand what it's going to mean for them in the long run, when they do take their pensions out or if they retire early or they have to withdraw their money early, whatever that means.

But, beyond that, Madam Speaker, the minister from Brandon West even had the audacity to stand in this place two weeks ago and tell this House and the people of Manitoba that if they were concerned about any potential destructive results of government legislation then they should simply shell out money for a financial planner. Well, not everybody has that luxury.

After the Premier's optimist—opportunistic campaign of cuts and austerity, that may not be possible. Like I said, many people have lost their jobs. They don't have an income anymore. They can't contribute to the economy, nor could they go and get a financial planner that they have to pay to, you know, help them understand what's going to happen with their pension.



So, after this Premier (Mr. Pallister), with the help of his ministers, cut thousands of good-quality jobs here in Manitoba during a pandemic when people are suffering, when people are struggling just to pay a bill, maybe one person was laid off—now what this government is doing is now they're laying off the second person that's the breadwinner in their family, and now they're not going to have enough income to, you know, pay into a pension.

They're causing great harm to our economy and people not be able to, like I said, pay their rent, pay their bills—*[interjection]* Good, how are you?

So Pallister also—or the Premier also paid millions in Manitoba tax dollars for private advisers to tell him to ship out Manitoba jobs to private companies in Texas. Well, Madam Speaker, I can tell you I've got probably hundreds of emails from Manitobans very upset with this new change. You can't use a Visa debit from Canada to get your park pass or your fishing pass because you have to have an American credit card. So Manitobans are like, how am I supposed to do that? Seniors have emailed me, how am I supposed to print out my park pass or my fishing licence when I don't have a computer? Where are they supposed to do that?

So what are people choosing to do? They're not going to get a park pass now. They're going to drive, they're going to park on the highway, and they're going to bring their bike and they're going to ride their bike into the park instead—*[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** —because this government has made it harder. *[interjection]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Smith:** And what else have they done? They're now charging the—Manitobans \$4.50 more to get their park pass. They can no longer go to the gate of a provincial park. *[interjection]* And, you know, the backbenchers on the other side can get up and speak to this when they have their chance.

So Manitobans are already struggling. What does this government do? Oh, they charge another \$4.50. Manitobans don't have another \$4.50 to spend on a park pass.

Madam Speaker, you can't even go to any provincial park. You can't go to Grand Beach. You

can't drive up to that gate. You can't say to the person who is at the park gate, I'd like to buy a yearly pass. You can no longer do that. You can buy a weekly pass, you can buy a daily pass, but that's it.

Now it has to be connected to a licence plate. Well, some people rent cars to actually take their families camping because they can't afford a car. They don't have cars that they keep forever. They have a car that they have for a week, and then, you know, they take it back. So now they can't get a yearly pass because it's connected to a licence plate, and not everybody has a car with a licence plate.

So, you know, I think—and apparently everywhere except for here—

**Madam Speaker:** Is the member concluding her comments?

Is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 43, the civil service superannuation act.

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

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill 11—The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019

**Madam Speaker:** We will now proceed with Bill 11, as indicated earlier today, and that is The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019.

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education):** Well, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister for Crown—for civil services—Central Services, Bill 11, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2019, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Madam Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m., this House is now—*[interjection]* Oh. The hour being 5 p.m., the minister will have unlimited time when the matter is called again.

So, the hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until the call of the Speaker.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Wednesday, May 27, 2020**

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