

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 31—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Families (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 31, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: I am pleased to introduce this legislation that will streamline the processes and services offered by the Manitoba Human Rights Commission and the Manitoba 'uhan' rights adjudication panel.

The human rights amendment act makes amendments to The Human Rights Code. Historically, it has taken far too long to resolve human rights complaints. This legislation will empower the Manitoban Human Rights Commission, clarify its mandate and standardize the hearing process, thereby speeding up the adjudication process.

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

Bill 32—The Administrative Tribunal Jurisdiction Act

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Cox), that Bill 32, The Administrative Tribunal Jurisdiction Act, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cullen: I'm pleased to introduce this legislation that will allow government to clarify which administrative tribunal has jurisdiction to hear Charter matters in Manitoba. The Administrative Tribunal Jurisdiction Act will ensure that Charter challenges are heard by tribunals which are properly resourced and have the necessary expertise to hear and render just decisions on these matters.

Our government is committed to ensuring that Manitobans have timely access to justice services, and this legislation will improve that.

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

Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to table the following report for the Department of Justice. This is the Annual Report of the Manitoba Human Rights Commission for the fiscal year 2018.

Madam Speaker: And I also have a report to table.

In accordance with section 52.6.1 of The Legislative Assembly Act, I am pleased to table the Members' Allowances Compliance Report for the period April 1st, 2016, to March 31st, 2019.

Ministerial statements? Minister—or members' statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Agnes Street Fire

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Early in the morning on December 26th there was a devastating fire in the Wolseley constituency at 578 Agnes St. This 13-unit building was immediately demolished, displacing 31 residents and temporarily displacing the residents of the house next door.

I want to acknowledge the support that was provided by the City of Winnipeg and by the Red Cross, while also acknowledging the gaps in service. Rooms and meals were provided for the first 72 hours after the fire, but due to many services being closed over the holidays, private donations were required in order to keep people housed and fed.

Residents of 578 Agnes St. lost everything they had: Christmas gifts and keepsakes, identification, health cards, bank cards and cash. Some were left without essential medications, dentures, hearing aids and mobility devices for days after the fire. And they waited many days for government services to help.

I had the pleasure of working with Leah Gazan, the member for Parliament in Winnipeg Centre to

support these Wolseley constituents. Together, with our volunteers and community contacts, we ensured that the evacuees were not displaced to the street after those initial 72 hours.

Lorie English, the director of West Central Women's Resource Centre, called in her housing workers to meet with evacuees, and I was so moved by the dedication of these workers, who gave up their holiday and family time in order to help. Thanks to them, 29 of 31 evacuees found permanent housing.

I rise in the House today without blame, but to share this experience in order to encourage all of us to think about emergency preparedness in our communities, especially to consider where the gaps might be during an emergency over an extended holiday period.

I also rise to honour the resiliency of these Wolseley community members and to thank all of those who stepped up to help when our neighbours were in crisis, including the caring staff at the Marlborough Hotel.

Thank you.

Marjorie Paradoski

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, International Women's Day, a day to challenge stereotypes, fight bias, broaden perceptions and celebrate women's achievements, was this past Sunday.

Today, I introduce and celebrate the achievements of Mrs. Marjorie Paradoski. Marj was the first female firefighter in St. Andrews and among one of the first in Manitoba. Marj's career in firefighting began alongside her husband Tony in 1970, where it was her duty to round up volunteers to fight fires in the community. It became apparent to Marj, with only six volunteer firefighters on the roster in St. Andrews, that additional help was needed.

Marj started fighting fires in 1973. One of her first experiences was firefighting—involved her jumping in a truck and assisting at the scene of a blaze where only two volunteers were battling. In Marj's words, she was shaking the entire time, but did what was necessary to assist her fellow volunteers and community.

Marj's commitment to community and keeping loved ones safe came from experiences in her childhood. She was only five when her family home burned down, and her grandfather would perish just a few years later in another house fire.

Marj was officially recognized as a firefighter in 1975. Through hard work and dedication, she would eventually rise to the rank of lieutenant. In 1983, Marj would continue her service to community by taking a job with the Selkirk ambulance service. In 1996, Marj was the first female firefighter in Manitoba to receive the Governor Generals Award.

Marj Paradoski is a trailblazer and an extremely remarkable individual. She has helped pave the way for all female firefighters that have followed in her footsteps. I kindly ask my colleagues to please rise and recognize Marj Paradoski, who is here with us today.

Flin Flon Aqua Centre

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, the Flin Flon Aqua Centre has been a community staple since it first opened its doors in 1970.

The Aqua Centre has offered swimming classes, recreational services and hosted events for people of all ages in Flin Flon and the surrounding communities. The centre has been the training facility for the Aqua Doves artistic swimming club, a thriving club dating back to 1975, which now supports 28 talented swimmers from age five to 17. The complex has been instrumental for families, seniors and youth in the community.

Sadly, after many decades, the Aqua Centre is now closed permanently due to infrastructure issues, the cost of which is reported to be as much as building a new facility. City of Flin Flon has to move ahead on building a replacement facility. However, with the estimated multi-million-dollar price tag, there is a desperate need for funding from all levels of government.

The provincial government needs to help fund the development of this new facility, as they must step up to help fund facilities and infrastructure in other northern communities that struggle with aging infrastructure and declining tax bases.

Given the history and vital role the Aqua Centre has contributed to the livelihood of Flin Flon, the construction of a new facility has to be a priority. Having spaces of this nature also play a key role in maintaining the sense of community we have in Flin Flon and across northern Manitoba.

Investing in a facility of this magnitude is not only an investment in Flin Flon, but also in the economic development of the North. This facility can be an

attraction for tourism, teaching and a central location for competition.

There are many lakes in the surrounding northern community, so learning how to swim is critical for children. The young, seniors and growing families in northern Manitoba deserve to have their needs and their safety prioritized. This government must step up and help when they need to. Thank you.

* (13:40)

COVID-19 Preparation for Seniors in PCHs

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, there's been an outbreak of the coronavirus COVID-19 in a nursing home, the Lynn Valley Care Centre, in BC. One resident has died.

The mortality rate for those over age 80 is high, and residents of personal-care homes who have chronic health conditions are particularly vulnerable.

We need to take great care of people in personal-care homes in our province, especially given the problematic circumstance in BC, where a shortage of staff has created a very difficult situation. I suggest it's time to screen workers going into personal-care homes and visitors to personal-care homes for symptoms of a COVID-19 infection to limit the chance of the virus getting into a personal-care home.

I believe it's also important to set up and begin using video links between residents in care homes and their family and friends. Such video links are vital to maintain contact even when individuals are quarantined.

While MLAs can easily use FaceTime on smartphones, many residents in personal-care homes don't have these devices. My experience is that getting video links between a resident and a family member outside the home can be difficult. We need to make sure this is easily possible. Keeping in touch with family and friends is very important at a time like this. I hope we will soon have an announcement from the minister of measures he is taking in these areas.

I'm also waiting for an announcement from the minister of steps that will be taken in consultation with First Nations and Metis leaders, to protect communities in northern Manitoba and in Winnipeg to protect vulnerable populations, as at Siloam Mission and the Main Street Project.

Overall, as this graph I table illustrates, we need to slow down the virus spread so it doesn't overwhelm our responses.

Thank you, merci, miigwech.

Cole Stainer

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Today it's my pleasure to stand up to acknowledge an exceptional young man from the constituency of Riding Mountain.

Cole Stainer, a high school student from Birtle, has been awarded the prestigious 2020 Loran Scholar award. This award provides \$100,000 worth of funding supports to recipients in order to help them complete an undergraduate degree at a Canadian university. In 2020, over 5,000 students applied and Cole is one of the 36 candidates which were eventually selected to receive the award.

Along with Sydney Strocen from Langruth, Cole represents the only other recipient from Manitoba in 2020. Both Sydney and Cole are from rural Manitoba communities, a fact which deserves special acknowledgement.

The principal of Birtle Collegiate institute, where Cole is currently a grade 12 student, said the following when interviewed about Cole's amazing accomplishment: Cole is now a great example for our other students that anything is possible. There are a lot of benefits to growing up in a rural community, and I am a strong believer that rural communities help to shape highly motivated, empathetic and respectful students. I feel that all three of these impressive qualities are embodied by Cole.

Students like Cole show that students from rural communities can achieve great things. Cole has no doubt made his family, friends, and the entire Birtle community very proud. He has also made all Manitobans, especially those of us who are from rural communities, proud that he is among Canada's elite scholars.

Please join me today in congratulating this exceptional young man on his amazing achievement.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, I have some introductions to make to you.

The first one: members may notice a new face at the table today, and I would like to take a moment to introduce to the House our new Clerk Assistant/Clerk of Committees, Ms. Katerina Tefft.

Kat began working for the Assembly on January 20th, 2020, and today is her first day serving as a Clerk-at-the-Table.

Kat earned a bachelor of arts, honours, in political science from the University of Winnipeg in 2014, as well as a master of arts in political science from the University of Toronto in 2017.

Her previous employment included work as a proofreader-transcriber with our Hansard Branch, as well as serving as a community clerk with the City of Selkirk for the department of Culture, Recreation and Green Transportation.

We are very pleased to have Kat on our team, and I'm sure members will make her feel at home.

On behalf of all members, Kat, we welcome you to the Clerk's table and to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as a table officer.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would also like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today students from St. Aidan's middle school under the direction of Romina Caniesco [*phonetic*], Rich Mittermuller and Dana Derken, which is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Virus Preparation Health System Readiness

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, the coronavirus is a serious threat to Manitoba and we must be prepared. That's why we will support the government's emergency appropriation bill to buy supplies to prepare for the COVID-19 illness. We, of course, recognize that this is not a partisan issue, and we are prepared to do whatever it takes to help the people of Manitoba to get ready for that eventuality.

In advance of this, we do have some legitimate questions that I do believe are important for the government to consider with respect to their preparations.

We know full well that the success of any campaign depends on the front lines being supplied effectively by their logistical channels. Is Shared Health ready in this respect, and are there enough masks, gloves, gowns and ventilators to be deployed amongst the front lines of our health-care system?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Thank my colleague for his offers of support at a time of concern in respect of the safety of Manitobans; that we welcome.

We are monitoring developments around the world, with COVID being ever-present in all our minds. We are also taking steps today to prepare ourselves with equipment purchases that should last a significant amount of time. We're projecting as much as six months at 20 times normal use rates. So that should prepare us, in terms of equipment, to protect our front-line workers.

And, of course, our hope would be that that equipment to remain in storage because people are all safe and don't need the protection. But better to err on the side of caution, and that is exactly what we're doing here.

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

Mr. Kinew: I would thank the Premier for some of the figures that he shared in his response there; that is, of course, exactly the sort of information we are attempting to acquire here.

Just in advance of this next question, I just want to table a document which lays out the protocol that the WRHA has put in place with respect to personal protective equipment. Now, this droplet protocol is in place, which means that it should be being delivered by all health-care professionals. One of the things that it calls for, as an example, is for a doctor or a nurse to have a new gown, glove and mask set-up each time they visit a patient, and then to discard it afterwards.

Now, we have heard from many folks in the health-care system that that's not currently happening, so we'd like to ask the Premier if he can update the House as to when the supplies will be in place so that protocol can actually be implemented everywhere that it's been called for.

Mr. Pallister: I am encouraged. The member and his positive tone and co-operation that he's evidenced in his comments today is appreciated, and I am sure by all Manitobans, as well.

We are continuing to rely, as we must and should, on the expert advice of our professionals in our system, but also to network with the experts in other provinces as well. There's a special advisory council that I am told is working well and our chief provincial health officer is participating in that. So that will assist in sharing information, and I am told that the federal co-ordination of the purchasing will proceed with

some vigour and we shouldn't be waiting that long for equipment to be available—additional equipment, I should emphasize, to be available to our front-line workers.

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

Mr. Kinew: Now, in addition to the logistical supply chain being in place, we also know that communication is going to be very important, particularly from the public health side to the front-line health-care workers themselves.

We were encouraged to hear the Minister of Health share that every respiratory case was actually going to be tested for COVID-19 within about two weeks. We are wondering, however, if that has been communicated clearly to those at the front lines of the health-care system.

So in the similar spirit of collaboration and co-operation here, I would ask the Premier if he could return to the House as soon as later today or tomorrow and just share with us the communiqué or letter that has been sent out to those front-line workers who may have to battle the COVID-19 illness.

* (13:50)

Mr. Pallister: Our minister has been assured, as we all have, that the chief provincial health officer is leading that communications effort and that all the necessary communications are happening, will continue to happen on an ongoing basis.

I would share with my colleagues, as well, that I've received a letter yesterday from the Prime Minister in respect of his desire to encourage and co-ordinate all provinces and territories in their communications around this issue effectively, and I would assure the Leader of the Opposition—through you, Madam Speaker—that our officials and ministers across the country as well have been in regular contact and are doing everything they can—I suppose to coin the adage, to prepare for the worst but to hope for the best.

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

Universal School Breakfast Program Inclusion in Budget 2020

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Well, Madam Speaker, when it comes to eating before you head to school, we know that the reality that many children in our province face is

different than the one envisioned by members in the government, and that's just too bad.

We know that this is not a question about parents' knowledge or their responsibility. We know that many parents are dealing with some serious challenges. In some cases kids have to—parents have to wake up early to get their kids to daycare or to school. In other cases, kids have sports practice and extracurriculars, and in still other cases there simply isn't any food in the home.

Now, this is why we have been working with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, educators and many other stakeholders to advance the idea of a universal nutrition program that would make available food to any child who needs it.

Can the Premier commit that such a universal nutrition program will be unveiled in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): At the heart of it, Madam Speaker, I don't think that the member's ideas and my own—or the members of opposition caucus' or government caucus' thoughts are different on the benefits of breakfasts. I think we share, strongly, a belief in the benefit of proper nutrition for our children in this province. I think where the difference lies is in the instant solution the member proposes, which is of a universal breakfast program offered through schools.

We have doubled the amount of food made available to children who are hungry over the NDP previous government's provisions. I should mention to the member we have done that while poverty rates have been dropping. The previous government did not grow the funding for food programs while poverty was rising.

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

Mr. Kinew: Yes, I would just like to correct the Premier. It's actually a charity that has provided those meals to kids. It's not actually the government. It's a charity, it's people in the private sector, it's community volunteers who are actually seeing that children in our schools eat, and what we see as a result is that it's a patchwork approach.

Kids in Dauphin may be able to get a hot meal a couple times a week. Kids in Louis Riel School Division may have access to some snacks on some days. But what's lacking is a universal approach that would ensure that every single child who is hungry

can get a meal at school so that they can fulfill their full potential in learning and also ensure that all the other kids in the classroom with that same child have a full day's opportunity to learn as well.

So that's why we're advancing that program, and we'd ask again if the Premier can commit that tomorrow's budget will include a universal nutrition program in Manitoba schools for every child who needs it.

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, the member's suggestion—while based, I'm sure, on good intentions—ignores the fact that it is a unique suggestion. That is not to suggest that it is all bad at its heart, Madam Speaker, but the reality is it's a suggestion that hasn't been taken up by any other province in the country.

We are, I am told, leading the country in providing food. This government has almost doubled the amount of food provided to help children. Close to 5 million snacks in the last school year, Madam Speaker, speaks to our intention—I would hope shared by members opposite—to make that the nutritional needs of our children are well addressed.

So we'll continue, Madam Speaker, to invest in the nutritional needs of our children and to also encourage parenting skills and development of solutions to the problems that children face in getting proper nutrition in their own home settings.

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

Mr. Kinew: Actually, Madam Speaker, when the member for Fort Whyte meets with the other premiers later this week, perhaps he can ask his colleagues from Alberta—his Conservative colleagues from Alberta and Prince Edward Island—how their universal school nutrition programs are doing.

Yes, it was an NDP government that brought it in in Alberta, but Premier Jason Kenney saw fit to support it, to continue it and to ensure that that is available to the one third of Alberta schoolchildren who need it. Similarly, a Progressive Conservative government in PEI has implemented and expanded a program that was handed to them by a previous government in that province.

So this is not a partisan issue. This is an issue about who sees fit to feed hungry kids in schools so that they can reach their full potential.

With that cross-partisan mindset in place, can the Premier therefore stand up and commit that tomorrow's budget will include a universal school

breakfast or nutrition program for every child in Manitoba who needs it?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I can say quite frankly, and I think with the support of all members of the Chamber, that we have not attempted to treat this issue in a partisan way. We continue to provide additional food available to our hungry children in schools to the tune of double the previous government.

We continue to address the needs of families to learn and to grow together in terms of their knowledge and ability to support one another. We invest significantly more than the NDP did in such programs, and we continue to do that because we are committed to it.

But yesterday the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) referred to this as a no-brainer. If it's such a no-brainer, Madam Speaker, why is it that the member has just misrepresented the nature of the programs in two provinces as being ultimately comprehensive when they are not, and why is it that NDP premiers have chosen not to implement such programs in their jurisdictions?

Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the member is wrong when he cites these as universal programs. They are not. We lead the country in providing food to hungry children—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: We expect to continue to, but we will also address the root causes of that hunger, Madam Speaker, so that we don't in a few years time have to lead the country in dealing with child poverty anymore.

COVID-19 Virus Preparation ER Capacity and Equipment

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): The Canadian Federation of Nurses are calling for every health-care worker who are providing care for those with COVID-19 to be provided with the necessary equipment they need to be safe. That includes N95 respirators for all situations, as well as other personal protective equipment.

Will the minister and the Pallister government ensure the appropriate protective equipment is in place?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, today our government was proud to become the very first

province in Canada to take the initiative to sign on to a joint procurement exercise to bring \$35 million of personal protective equipment into this jurisdiction to prepare well and adequately in advance of COVID-19's arrival in this province. We are undertaking those measures for the safety of patients and for all who work in our system.

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

MLA Asagwara: We have previously raised our concerns that consolidation has placed overwhelming demands on our intensive-care and critical-care units in our hospitals. In January the convergence of two flu strains overwhelmed intensive care, requiring diversion of patients to other cities. We're concerned about whether facilities are prepared to manage an influx of major respiratory illness.

What steps is the minister taking to immediately prepare critical-care services?

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, that is a different question than the first one that was posed by the member. The first question went something like this: she says that nurses want to have N95—[interjection]—she—they say that nurses—[interjection] The member knows that we are all endeavouring to accommodate them in this Chamber. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I would ask for everybody that—heckling across isn't going to resolve any of the issues and I would ask for everybody's co-operation as we move forward to modernize our Chamber, and I think honest efforts are being made in that direction by everybody. We may trip up once in a while, but it is not the intention that that would happen.

So the honourable Minister of Health, to conclude his comments.

Mr. Friesen: It's a different question than the first one that was posed. The first question was something like this: that nurses should be given N95 masks for every interaction with a patient in the health-care system.

* (14:00)

Madam Speaker, we are proceeding on the basis of evidence and science-based approaches. Science-based approaches say that surgical masks are adequate and sufficient for interactions other than those that are particular to respiratory illness where those particles could pass.

We are keeping the specific N95 masks, which we are also purchasing, for their intended purpose. What the member suggests—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

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

MLA Asagwara: Madam Speaker, nurses are asking to have the necessary resources to protect themselves and to ensure appropriate levels of staffing in critical care. They're also concerned about the capacity of our intensive-care units.

We have to ensure that our health-care workers are protected, and we need to ensure we have as much capacity as possible to manage serious illness.

Can the minister tell this House how he will protect our workers and ensure capacity is available in critical care when we need it?

Mr. Friesen: Today Manitobans saw the best demonstration of their province's and their government's commitment to keep workers and to keep patients safe in hospitals with a \$35-million purchase of personal protective equipment that is shown to be very, very effective in reducing the spread of this virus in hospitals and health centres. We are the first to sign on this.

In respect of the question about capacity, that is exactly the work that is being undertaken: heavy lifting on a daily basis at the incident command centre, collaborating with all of our partners to make sure that we have capacity in our system to meet the challenge that is coming toward us.

Ride Sharing and Taxi Companies Fee and Insurance Requirements

Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples): Madam Speaker, ride-share cars in Manitoba must purchase basic insurance as well as special vehicle-for-hire insurance coverage through MPI.

Yesterday, however, Uber announced that they got a concession from the Pallister government allowing them to get their vehicle-for-hire insurance coverage through private companies.

Why is this minister creating an uneven playing field between ride-sharing and taxi companies?

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Crown Services): I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite, and our government was proud to bring in Bill 30, Madam Speaker, the ride-share bill that

essentially opened up ride share throughout all of Winnipeg and Manitoba.

Municipalities can write their own bylaws to ensure that residents throughout communities, not only in Winnipeg but throughout Manitoba, can get ride-share, taxi service—whatever they prefer. They have choice; that's important to Manitobans.

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

Mr. Sandhu: A taxi driver must pay a significant insurance premium and they have several other costs they must pay, including the installation of cameras, safety shields, as well as training costs.

Yesterday, the announcement makes it clear that there is not a level playing field between taxis and ride-sharing companies.

Why is the minister providing concessions to ride-sharing companies without recognizing the burden that it places on taxis?

Mr. Wharton: One thing that our government is concerned with, again, is safety, Madam Speaker, and when we went through this process with Bill 30, safety was our No. 1 factor. We consulted with over 350 folks that came down to talk and debate about Bill 30, and we were listening to the folks, not only in the taxi industry—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wharton: —but potential ride-share companies wanting to come to Manitoba to give Manitobans choice for ride-share companies within Manitoba.

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

Mr. Sandhu: Madam Speaker, we need fairness in rules between taxis and ride-sharing companies. Taxis must have a camera, which is—cost \$1,700; shield: \$700; 40 hours training for the drivers; a business licence renewal every year: \$600.

Ride-share companies require none of this. This is not a level playing field, which was promised by this Premier (Mr. Pallister).

Why this government want to hurt 600-plus small-business owners?

Mr. Wharton: Certainly, I appreciate a question on fairness coming from the member opposite, Madam Speaker.

The City of Winnipeg, along with other municipalities, have the ability, Madam Speaker, to write bylaws to ensure that fairness is across the board not only for taxicab owners, but for all ride-share members coming to Winnipeg to try to grow their businesses here in Winnipeg.

Where the NDP failed ride-share, we'll get it right.

École South Pointe School Travel Times and Child Care

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Students at École South Pointe are facing a long drive—a long bus drive—away from their current school next year. This is because students—some students have already moved once and they're facing further disruption. At the same time the parents are struggling to co-ordinate with child care for before and after for their kids, and, unfortunately, this minister is simply not listening to these concerns. But he should.

Will this minister meet with parents from École South Pointe, with the school board, and find a solution that will help them stay in their school next year?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): Madam Speaker, certainly this government more than any government in recent history has listened to parents who have said that there's a shortage of space in their schools. That is why in our first term we made the commitment to build seven new schools. Those are well on their way, if not already complete.

During the last election we made the commitment to build 13 new schools, including two in the area that the member is referencing, and every time that we put the allocations for those new schools in the budgets the members opposite had always voted against it.

On the one hand, they say they want more space; on the other hand, they don't support the resources that would create those new spaces.

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

Mr. Moses: Again, let's look at what the Minister of Education has said even just a few short years 'agwo'—ago. I quote: The best decisions are made at the local level because they know what is happening in their area. More than that, it's about respect. End quote.

Yet now, the minister has a parent advisory board and a school board telling him unequivocally to help

them find a temporary solution to keep their kids in their school next year.

Why won't the minister listen to local voices? Why won't he show respect to parents and kids and help the families get what they need?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, at the local level, parents in that area of Winnipeg were saying that they needed more space for their schools. They were saying that long before we came into government. They were saying that to NDP members who were in this Chamber at the time, and probably to the NDP who were at the doorstep, saying we need more space in that area.

This is a government that is going to be delivering that space. We've committed to it; we're moving forward with those spaces. Where the NDP simply ignored their pleas for many, many years, we're going to deliver those new schools and those new spaces.

So I appreciate the member opposite is raising these questions with all the best intentions. But intentions don't build new class spaces. This government does.

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

Mr. Moses: The minister references the past, but yet he offers the parents no solutions for the future.

Now, they are being disrespected in their local voices—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Moses: —being—not being heard. The parents couldn't be clearer; they're asking for the minister to help them find a temporary solution to keep their kids in their own school next year. They've been struggling to find daycare, before- and after-care for their kids, and this disruption will be another one on top of the fact that they've had to move schools already in the past.

Will this minister simply meet with leadership in the school and the school board, the parent advisory council, and ensure that they can find a solution to keep the kids at École South Point in their own school?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, Madam Speaker, I do reference the past, the past NDP government that refused to build the number of schools that were needed in many growing parts of Winnipeg and of Manitoba.

Now, I know the member opposite wants to forget the past, but you don't just sort of add water and stir when it comes to creating new schools. You have to have the funding, you have to have the plans and then you actually have to build them.

Now, had the NDP actually taken this to heart many years ago, maybe those schools would already exist. But they didn't in the past because the NDP didn't do it. Now that we're in the present, we're actually doing the work to ensure that those schools are going to open in the near future.

* (14:10)

We have to talk about the past, the present and the future. We're the future; they're the past, Madam Speaker.

School Construction in Brandon General Contractor Problems

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Madam Speaker, the Pallister government isn't shopping smart.

Unfortunately for the people of Brandon, the Pallister's government approach has seen the collapse of the general contractor for the Maryland Park School. The minister's words are cold comfort to those who may lose their jobs, contractors who are facing long and uncertain futures.

The families want to know: will their school open this fall?

Will the minister tell them, will the school open in September?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): I appreciate the fact that the—that member opposite raises the fact that Brandon has needed new school facilities for many, many years. I appreciate members opposite pointing out the fact that—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —for many, many years, the NDP, not just in Brandon but around Manitoba, didn't provide the facilities, the school facilities, that were needed in Manitoba, Madam Speaker.

But there's a new—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: —government, a newly re-elected government, who is providing those resources for Manitobans. We continue to commit to new schools. We continue to do them.

And Brandon will get a 'neel' school, Madam Speaker, which never happened under the NDP.

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

Ms. Adams: Madam Speaker, the Pallister government isn't shopping smarter. All evidence points to a flawed process that put this project at risk. Cheaper isn't always better and, unfortunately, families in Brandon are paying the price for the Pallister's government misguided approach.

Can the minister tell families in Brandon when his government were made aware of the financial problems with the general—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Adams: —contractor and what steps, if any, did they take to keep the project from collapsing?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I'm sure that all members of this Chamber appreciate the newfound interest of the NDP in building schools, but that is not an interest that they had for the 17 years that they were in government.

They routinely ignored the warnings and they routinely ignored the pleas of different communities who said we need more spaces. Of course, their answers to everything was adding portables, you know, more and more portables, continuing to have huts added to schools. We're actually building real spaces, Madam Speaker. We're getting results for Manitobans, for those students who don't want to simply be in a hut, in a portable—in a real school.

Brandon is going to get their new school because this government was elected and because they turned their backs on the NDP.

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

Ms. Adams: Cheaper isn't always better. That's why Manitobans have come to learn from the Pallister government's approach. The minister has not been straightforward with what his government knew about the problems with the general contractor.

So I ask again: When did the minister become aware of the financial problems with the general contractor, and what steps did he take to ensure—will ensure the school will open this September?

Mr. Goertzen: Well, I appreciate the member is relatively new to this Chamber, and I appreciate her question and her voice to any issue when it comes to education.

When it comes to tendering, Madam Speaker, she wouldn't have to go very far to speak and—to some of her colleagues and her caucus who still remain from the dark days of the NDP government about how tendering was done when the NDP were in government. I remember these certain orange bags that were bought and they were littered all over the province of—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Goertzen: They didn't work, actually, Madam Speaker, but they sure cost hundreds of millions of dollars to be littered all over the province and to be ineffective.

Now, they weren't tendered, Madam Speaker. In fact, there was a pretty big Auditor General's report written about it. I'm happy to provide it for her to give her some information.

Sale of Manitoba Housing Units Waiting List and Homelessness

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We've been hearing from constituents and, in fact, from speaking with homeless people, that it is getting harder and harder to get into Manitoba Housing. Last December, Manitoba Liberals found, through freedom of information, that this government had liquidated 92 Manitoba Housing buildings with hundreds and hundreds of units.

I table documents that now show that between January 2019 and January 2020 the waiting list has reached 9,239 people for Manitoba Housing, an increase of 2,388 in a single year.

Does the Premier recognize that liquidating Manitoba Housing stock is driving homelessness in this province?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): I thank the member for the question. It's an important one, and our government is proud to have signed on to the National Housing Strategy with the federal government and we are committed to investing more than \$225 million in Manitoba Housing over the course of the next 10 years in partnership.

And it's important to talk about partnership when it comes to Manitoba Housing, and we have developed partnerships, as well, with those not-for-profit sectors who also are looking at managing some of our properties as well. They're doing much better a job than—in—the previous government in managing those units, and this is freeing up more money to go

towards more Manitoba Housing to make it more affordable for those who really need it.

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

Mr. Lamont: I know the Premier is concerned about too many people being dependent on government for their living, but enough about the PC caucus and his patronage appointees.

The liquid and neglect—the liquidation and neglect of Manitoba Housing was already rampant under the NDP. These figures make it crystal clear that this government is making life and access to housing worse for thousands of Manitobans.

I'll ask the Premier: Will he actually act now to address his government's foul-up, or will he just blame the NDP and the victims of his own policies?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I did miss some of the preamble, Madam Speaker, but I did hear the part about patronage and the accusations around that, which are pretty rich coming from a political party that organizes its caucus so that they can appoint judges. I think the appointment of judges should be left out of political hands, and I hope that Liberal-west here would understand that and would communicate their disfavour to the federal partners that they have and make sure that in future all judges are appointed in a manner other than the Liberal government has been doing so far.

Co-operative Housing Accessibility for Manitobans

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Madam Speaker, I have the privilege of representing Willow Park, which happens to be the oldest housing co-op in Canada. Co-op housing is a viable alternative to being a tenant in a traditional non-profit housing complex like Gilbert Park.

What is the government doing to ensure Manitobans have access to housing co-ops?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): It's very important that Manitobans have the access to affordable housing when they need it, Madam Speaker, and that's why since 2016 over \$100 million in new social and affordable housing—[interjection]—rental units have been created.

I know members opposite think that's a funny matter, but we don't on this side of the House.

We want to ensure that that affordable housing is there for Manitobans when they need it, and that's

exactly what we're doing through partnerships like the co-ops that the member opposite mentioned.

Economic Growth Action Plan Employment Increase

Mr. Dennis Smook (La Vérendrye): Our PC government is committed to growing Manitoba's economy and making Manitoba an attractive place to do business. We saw last week that there are 3,200 more Manitobans working in February than in the previous month. This follows the highest month-over-month employment increase in over a decade in January, seeing a total of 9,700 more Manitobans hard at work in 2020.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Training please update the House on the success of the Economic Growth Action Plan to date?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Economic Development and Training): I thank the member for the question.

Madam Speaker, 6,500 new jobs in January, 3,200 new jobs in February. Our economic plan is working and is working well. We've been partnering with the private sector, post-secondary education. We are making a difference in Manitoba. We are on our way to the most improved province in all of Canada.

* (14:20)

Universal School Breakfast Program First Nations Children

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Our plan for a universal breakfast program includes funding for every child in Manitoba, including those in First Nation communities. We understand that all hungry children need to be fed, and we just can't wait to resolve jurisdictional issues.

Will the minister join us in supporting a universal breakfast program for First Nations children in this year's budget?

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Education): Well, Madam Speaker, I know that for 17 years, the NDP not only waited, they didn't do much when it comes to providing breakfast or other food in schools. Now they want us to believe this is a new-found interest of theirs, and, if it is, well, then I guess that's fine, but we haven't been waiting for the NDP to finally decide that this is some kind of an issue.

We've been taking action. We've increased the number of food supplies—whether that is snacks or meals—that have been going out in our education

system by 2 million since we've come into government. We know that that's an important thing to do. The NDP didn't take that particular issue seriously. We're taking it seriously, and we'll continue to make advancements when it comes to targeting need for those who need it.

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

Mr. Bushie: The minister will know that we need to improve education for First Nations children, but how can we hope for better if children are going to school hungry? Our plan includes funding to ensure all children in Manitoba will be fed, no matter where they live. It's common sense and it's the right thing to do.

Will the minister support this sensible proposal? Will the minister support a universal breakfast program for First Nations children in this year's budget?

Mr. Goertzen: I have no idea where that plan was in the 17 years that the NDP were in government. It may have been buried in scandal, but we have been continuing to take action when it comes to ensuring that those who need support in our schools, when it comes to food, are able to get that.

That means an additional 2 million times that snacks and meals are provided to students in the school system so that they're not hungry during the day, Madam Speaker. That is far more than the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) ever advocated for when he was in government. He sat quietly on the government benches and never said anything, never found his voice. If he's found his voice today, I'm glad that he has, but we're actually taking action on something that the member opposite never wanted to do anything about.

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

Mr. Bushie: The minister's approach to education is funding below the rate of inflation. That doesn't keep up with the growing population, and it certainly doesn't meet the needs of our children. A hungry child is at a deep disadvantage. We need to ensure they are fed so they can learn, no matter who they are or where they live.

Will the minister consider the value of our proposal? Will the minister support a universal breakfast program for all children in this year's budget?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, we again repeat and acknowledge that the best breakfast that a student can get is at home with a parent, with a loved one or with a guardian. And I know the NDP haven't seemed to confirm that, and so if they want to suggest that that's not true, they can certainly put that on the record.

But we also know that it is not true that every student has that opportunity, for a variety of different reasons, and I'm sure that many of us could explain and have our own experiences why that isn't true, why they can't get breakfast at home. And when that isn't the case, we continue to provide more support, working with partners, working with school divisions, working with others who are interested.

And that is why we've been able to provide more than 2 million snacks and meals more than the NDP ever did in their government, Madam Speaker. They talk about compassion, but that compassion actually never resulted in action. We're acting where they didn't.

Dauphin Correctional Centre Closure Request for Healing Lodge in Dauphin

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): We know that this Pallister government has a plan to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre and we know that it's devastating for the town. That's according to the mayor. We know that the Pallister government came into town with no notice and announced the loss of 80 jobs.

They didn't talk to the workers ahead of time. They didn't talk to the union ahead of time. They didn't talk to the community ahead of time. Now, just on four months notice, those workers have to make very difficult choices and some of them are just going to be out of work.

Will the minister reconsider his plan to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, and build something new in its place?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, Madam Speaker, the member opposite is completely wrong. No employees will lose their employment. We have lots of vacancies across corrections in Manitoba. And we're working closely with the community, we're working closely with the individuals impacted and no members will lose their jobs.

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

Mr. Lindsey: Time and again, this Pallister government has shown that their decisions are just

about cutting costs, just about the money, not about people. This minister's giving marching orders to cut millions of dollars from Justice, so he's closing the facility with no notice.

The decision isn't considering what's best for the community. It's not considering what's best for the workers. And it's not considering what's best for the prisoners.

So, I ask again: Will this minister and this Premier reconsider their plan to close the Dauphin jail and look at building a proper facility for a healing centre?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Well, I think it was about the money when the NDP were in power. They had \$200 billion go through their orange little fingers but none of it went to fixing a jail and none of it went to building a new one—just empty promises.

Now, earlier in question period, the Opposition Leader attempted to create the false impression that there was a universal breakfast program in Alberta. There is not. In fact, Alberta invests less than a third as much per capita in its meal program as this government does and, more importantly, feeds less than a third as many children as this government does.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

Petitions?

The honourable member—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

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

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, on a happier note, I understand that our esteemed Clerk may be experiencing a milestone, a birthday today and I think it would be in good order if we end question period by celebrating our Clerk with a hearty and a harmonious round of Happy Birthday.

Happy Birthday was sung.

Madam Speaker: Where was all that beautiful harmony during oral questions? *[interjection]*

I regretfully have to say that was not a point of order, but job well done.

PETITIONS

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background on this petition is as follows:

- (1) The provincial government's plan to close the Dauphin correctional 'cension,' the DCC, in May 2020.
- (2) The Dauphin–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 impact the local economy.
- (4) As of January 27, 2020, Manitoba justice system was already more than 250 inmates overcapacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

Signed by Carla Wolfenden, Sandra Redluk *[phonetic]* and Chris Wolfenden and many, many others.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

* (14:30)

- (1) The provincial government plans to close the Dauphin Correctional Centre, DCC, in May 2020.
- (2) The Dauphin Correctional—sorry—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 over capacity.

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.

Crown Lands

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

Many farmers, specifically cattle ranchers, will be negatively impacted by the changes to leased Crown land announced by the provincial government on September 27, 2019.

Farmers previously had the ability to strategically plan out the way in which they utilized their leased Crown land.

The announcement reduced leaseholds by 35 years to 15 years, and these changes will create great uncertainty, having the potential to impact an entire farm's operation and even existence.

This uncertainty will take away the incentive for farmers to safely invest in their Crown land leases.

The potential of losing these leases without the afforded time to plan ahead will create additional stress for the current farming generation and the ones to follow.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Agriculture to reconsider the changes to Crown land leases and instead create an agreeable strategy that satisfies all parties, specifically ranchers;

To urge the Minister of Agriculture to recognize the value of agriculture in the province of Manitoba and the value Crown land holds to farmers in sustaining their livelihood;

To urge the Minister of Agriculture and all honourable members to understand the important role farmers play in the Manitoba economy, and to allow

them to take part in discussions that directly impact their livelihood.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Dauphin Correctional Centre

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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 plans to build a new correctional and healing centre with an expanding courthouse in Dauphin.

Signed by Patricia Start, Brittany Wellborton [*phonetic*], Laurie Austin [*phonetic*].

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I wish to present the following petition for 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 over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this petition, Madam Speaker, has been signed by Norma Sutherland, Chantel Plett, Jim Fleming and many other Manitobans.

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

And 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 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.

Personal-Care Homes

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Manitoba elders and seniors have built this province and should receive a high level of support, having earned the right to be treated with due respect,

dignity, understanding and compassion as a fundamental human right.

(2) Seniors who reside in personal-care homes have more diverse and complex physical and brain health issues today than those who were in similar homes even just five years ago, yet the staffing formula, or minimal personnel requirement, is over 20 years old.

The issue of the changes to, and more complex nature of, care is being exacerbated by the provincial government policy of discharging people out of hospitals more quickly, leaving many residents still in need of a high level of care.

(4) Manitoba does not have enough health-care aides and nurses specifically trained to care for seniors with high and complex levels of physical and mental issues such as those with dementia, coupled with multiple chronic conditions.

(5) The added complexity of care with such residents is putting additional stress on doctors and family members, as it may take six to eight weeks for a doctor to see a resident in a personal-care home.

(6) Unfortunately, the lack of quality care received by many residents is not unique, causing one person to say that: It was easier to watch my dad die in the personal-care home than to watch him live in the personal-care home.

(7) Staff are so overworked that they are forced to tell senior elders and residents in need: Go in your diaper; I can't help you. You will get food eventually.

(8) Relatives are also being told that residents in care homes should not ever expect to walk again after hip or knee replacement surgery because care homes are not set up for rehabilitation.

(9) The provincial government has allowed personal-care homes to serve food that is warmed from frozen instead of being freshly cooked, depriving seniors the taste of good food, which is one of the few real pleasures that would be—they would be able to enjoy at this time of life.

(10) Although residents enter personal-care homes to have the best possible quality of life in their last few days, weeks, months or years, relatives repeatedly hear the words: He came here to die; and: She came here to die.

Relatives are regularly angry, frustrated, disappointed and shocked at the care their loved ones now received in Manitoba's personal-care homes.

(12) Administrators in personal-care homes respond to complaints by stating they need more, better-trained staff.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to increase training and staffing requirements for personal-care homes in Manitoba to ensure residents receive high-quality, nutritious food as well as compassionate care.

Signed by Wendy Bloomfield, Art Bloomfield, Sarah MacAulay [*phonetic*] and many others.

* (14:40)

Dauphin Correctional Centre

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the Minister of Justice to meet—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 Tammy Kowalski, Carla Good, Deanne Turnbull.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background of this petition is as follows:

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

(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 over capacity.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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 Shelley Bates, Lisa McKay, Joanne Richard and many other Manitobans.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): 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 in May 2020.

(2) The Dauphin Correctional Centre 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 over capacity.

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, Susan Zurba, Wendy Wellborn, and Alison Bourgouin.

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

To the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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 expanded capacity—expanded courthouse 'stob' in Dauphin.

This has been signed by many Manitobans.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

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

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

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

And we petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

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

And this has been signed by many Manitobans.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): 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 over capacity.

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 Kaylee Desjarlais, Makenna Desjarlais and Amanda M. Holt and many more Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, as discussed with leaders of the opposition parties, today we would like to have Supplementary Appropriation, brought forward and debated and passed.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider Supplementary Appropriation this afternoon.

The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding)—oh, sorry. The honourable Minister of Health.

Messages

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I have a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as well as the Supplementary Appropriation document, which I would like to table.

Madam Speaker: Please stand for the reading of the message.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Estimates of additional sums required for the services of the Province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2020, and recommends the supplementary Estimates to the Legislative Assembly.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

The House will now resolve into Committee of Supply to consider a resolution respecting the supplementary appropriation bill.

* (14:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Supplementary Supply

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. We have

now before us our consideration for the resolution respecting the supplementary appropriation bill.

The supplementary appropriation resolution reads as follows:

RESOLVED that a sum not exceeding \$35,200,000 may be incurred for the public service according to the appropriations set out in part A of the Supplementary Estimates, and be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2020.

Does the minister have any opening comments?

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): It is a day today when we're coming with a significant and unusual request. I understand it has been a number of years in this Legislature since there has been the introduction of a supplementary appropriation. Were the House not in session, then we would be able to accommodate this in a different manner, but as the House is sitting, we are bringing this for debate.

We have already appreciated from the opposition party, the NDP party, signals that they will support the work that is being undertaken today. I would suggest in the very outset that this is not a partisan issue; that while there will be in this House many debates where we will not agree, I believe this is a debate that invites broad co-operation because we have before us a request that would authorize expenditures to help this government bring into this jurisdiction \$35,200,000 worth of personal protective equipment to help us prepare in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak.

As you know, and as all members of this House know, since the first report, that first detection on December 31st of 2019, the world has been having to adjust rapidly to the advancement of COVID-19. We know that this continues to be the case in Canada and outside of our own borders. We are testing approximately 40 tests per day in Manitoba. Those tests have all come back negative, but we know that while we continue to say that in Manitoba the risk remains low, we know that that will not continue to be the case.

And so I would say that our government has, at this point in time, adequate personal protective equipment for the time being and for the reasonable, foreseeable future. However, we don't believe it's good enough, and this bill and this appropriation would allow us to purchase the equivalent of six months additional supply at 20 times the normal rate of utilization for this type of equipment.

We know from experts that this type of personal protective equipment is important for front-line health-care workers, for patients who enter our system, and we continue to receive the guidance from experts at the World Health Organization, Public Health Agency of Canada, and experts in our own jurisdiction that say that these kinds of pieces of equipment, when put in place, can very effectively and significantly reduce the spread of the virus in the jurisdiction. And that is what we all want.

Therefore, we have brought this bill that would see the purchase of supplies that would include, but not be limited to: gloves, hand sanitizer, facial masks—both surgical masks and HN94 masks—respirators, face shields, disinfecting wipes, oral thermometer tops. As I mentioned, the projected cost of this purchase would be an estimated \$35.2 million.

I would indicate that we are partnering with the federal government and other provinces in a joint procurement purchase agreement. We believe that this will allow us to receive the supplies faster and get best value for the purchase. The federal government is indicating that they will partner to help us purchase these supplies at the best possible rate on the competitive market.

I would also add, for all members, that while these supplies are important, we are erring on the side of caution. We are doing these things out of an abundance of caution. Should it be the case that we do not deplete the supplies—and we would not want to deplete supply, we can fold these resources back into general inventory because the spoilage rate on this type of purchase is not great.

So, with all of the anxiety over the situation, I would continue to say that we want Manitobans to have good information and we would want them to know that this jurisdiction is preparing, planning, working collaboratively with all of our service delivery organizations and groups in Manitoba and working and collaborating and giving leadership outside of Manitoba at the national and international level.

As I mentioned, I thank already the opposition parties for certain signals of support for these measures, and I welcome the debate this afternoon during the Supplementary Appropriation debate.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the official opposition critic have any opening comments? No?

Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to make comments? [*Agreed*]

The honourable member for River Heights has asked for leave. Yes, there's leave.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I just want to signal that, in the Liberal caucus, that we are also supportive of this motion and want to make sure that the supplies which are needed are on hand as soon as possible.

The—we have a number of concerns, which I will detail in more depth later on in—this afternoon about the slowness of the pace in certain areas, but we are certainly fully supportive of this effort and want to make sure that, to the extent possible, that Manitobans are protected from the ravages of the coronavirus, COVID-19.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for those comments.

The floor is open for questions. Any questions?

Shall the resolution—oh, the honourable member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: I just want to start by asking whether the minister can provide a full list of the goods which will be purchased.

Mr. Friesen: I believe that such a list can be furnished for the purposes of discussion this afternoon.

* (15:00)

Let me also pre-empt that request by referring to a document that I have with me that lists, among these supplies, gloves in multiple sizes; we have also infection control materials like sanitary disinfectant wipes, 'disinfective' hand sanitizer, thermometer covers that are disposable.

As I mentioned, the N95 respirators, as well as surgical—sorry, surgeon masks—as well as surgical masks and other certain supplies, and I will look to furnish the member with a full list as the afternoon continues.

Mr. Chairperson: Any other further questions?

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Mr. Chairperson: The resolution is accordingly passed.

All those—okay—[*interjection*] That concludes the business of interim Supply—[*interjection*]

That concludes the business of the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Chairperson): The Committee of Supply has considered and adopted a resolution representing Supplementary Appropriation.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Wishart), that this report be received by the committee—*[interjection]*—that the report be—of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living, that this House concur in the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence in the resolution relating to the Supplementary Appropriation bill for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2020.

Motion agreed to.

Supplementary Supply Motion

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that there be granted to Her Majesty on account of Certain Expenditures of the Public Service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, out of the Consolidated Fund, sums not exceeding \$35,200,000 as set out in part A of the Supplementary Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 33—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Steinbach, the Minister of Education, that Bill 33, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020; Loi portant affectation supplémentaire de crédits pour l'exercice 2019-2020, be now read a first time and be ordered for a second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 33—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 33, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020, be now read a second time and be referred to Committee of the Whole.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to rise today and to put some words on the record in respect of a supplementary appropriation of 32–\$35.2 million that would ensure that Manitoba is well prepared in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak as a result of the coronavirus spread that has continued in the year 2020.

As all members know, COVID-19 is taking a toll on people throughout the world and here in Manitoba. First, in Hubei in China and then spreading to other countries and, indeed, in the last number of weeks, coming to Canada. I can report today that this virus has not yet been detected in Manitoba. We continue to say that the risk in Manitoba is low for the time being. We expect that to change as the virus continues to advance.

* (15:10)

Nevertheless, whether it be financially, whether it be a loved one, whether it be someone you know in another jurisdiction, whether it is someone who has travel plans upcoming or someone who's just returning from travel, we are all feeling the toll of this virus.

So, Madam Speaker, we need to expect that the risk is going to increase here. We need to expect and prepare for the arrival of COVID-19 in this jurisdiction, and I want to assure Manitobans today that this government, through its chief agents, including the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, the office of public health, all of our service delivery organizations, the regional health organizations, and the other health organizations, including Shared Health and CancerCare Manitoba, all of our partners, including Cadham lab, now located through Bill 10 within Shared Health, are working together, are collaborating, are taking the necessary steps to formulate our response when the virus—should the virus come to Manitoba.

And I would reinforce the idea of partnerships, Madam Speaker, that I said earlier today to Manitobans at a media availability that we are all in this together, and, really, when we come to understand how a virus like this spreads, it is important for all of us to be vigilant, for all of us to be taking precautions, and even if it is a small thing we must learn, at a time like this, to do some things differently.

I have—you know, humour is not what you want to begin with, but there are some small statements I've made where it becomes difficult to reteach a politician to not shake a hand at a public event, especially when that member is the Minister of Health, but I'm endeavouring to learn.

I went to a local trade show on the weekend in my constituency, and I didn't shake a single hand, and I gave the disclaimer to everyone that we were learning to do this together. Some people chuckled; some people didn't know what I was trying to do; some people thought it was awkward. I talked to one new Canadian who didn't speak much English who had no idea what I was trying to do.

But this idea of perhaps not extending the hand is different for us as Manitobans but necessary now. Now, of course, we know the main counsel we're giving to people in the way they conduct themselves would be the simple things that they can do in terms of coughing hygiene and sneezing hygiene, not into the hand but into the sleeve, to wash hands often, to stay home from work if you are feeling ill so as not to spread the virus if you could be contagious.

And there are other things we can do as well. I am learning about the importance of disinfecting my personal devices, like the iPad and the iPhone that I have in the Chamber, and on the weekend I prepared by finding a solution of alcohol-and-water-based substance you can use to spray your personal equipment. Then it becomes important, as well, to throw away the materials or to clean them that you've used to clean those devices. All of these precautions can help, and there are many more that Manitobans can take.

Now I can tell all members of the House that our system in Manitoba is doing a very good job of making these resources available online at Health Links. There are phone numbers that people can use. There are websites with very, very comprehensive information.

However, our duty to consult does not stop there, and we are dialoguing broadly with Manitobans. I can

report to the House this morning that we have been briefing Association of Manitoba Municipalities leaders across this province by conference call. I can tell members that indigenous and Metis leadership are being briefed in a series of calls, not just with FNIHB, the federal government's indigenous health branch, but also directly through Manitoba officials, through public health officials, through our chief.

I can tell members of this House that plans are under way. The Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen) and I have spoken about the need to convey coherent messages to superintendents in the public school and independent school system so they know how to prepare.

And that is not, of course, where our collaborations stop. I want to inform members of this House that we have certain bodies that we are participating in, like the special advisory committee on COVID-19. Dr. Brent Roussin, who is the province's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer is part of that team that is networking, sharing, planning, at a national level along with the Public Health Agency of Canada, with the World Health Organization, with the centres for disease control, and of course, as I said, in our jurisdiction as well because that leadership and co-operation is required.

Madam Speaker, I know this situation causes a lot of anxiety and that is a natural reaction when we are facing something that is unknown, and indeed, when it comes to COVID-19 there is so much that we are learning on a week-to-week basis.

I stand here and speak today, and we'll welcome the debate this afternoon, and just yesterday we learned of the very first fatality in Canada, in BC: an elderly person who was in a long-term care facility. And that comes as a shock to Canadians, even though we've all been preparing: our first fatality attributable to COVID-19.

With that fatality we cross another threshold, and, indeed, there may be other thresholds to cross, but I say that we need to not panic but to have good information, and I am committing as the Health Minister, along with the provincial chief public health officer, to provide ongoing information to Manitobans because they need it, they deserve it. We will make that information available on websites and by phone. We will work with our health-care providers.

I'm very pleased to update the House today and indicate to everyone that even before this debate I had the opportunity today to speak to all labour

organizations who represent the workers in our health-care facilities in Manitoba, and to update them on these steps that we are taking to bring this protective equipment into our jurisdiction. I felt that that was a positive conversation. There were intelligent questions asked. I felt like those questions contributed to our collective learning as we continue to walk this together.

On that call were Doctors Manitoba, MGEU, MAHCP, Manitoba Nurses Union, CUPE, PCAM and PARIM as well. Madam Speaker, I want to also say today that the reason we're here is because the offer was made not long ago by the federal government to organize a joint procurement–purchase agreement—a joint procurement purchase agreement—and we were invited as provinces and territories to sign onto this.

I am proud to say that with the work today of all legislators in this House, if we pass this bill we will become the first province or territory in this nation to sign on there. That is a good step for us. As I indicated in my opening comments, we do have supply now for the personal protective equipment that we would seek to also purchase with this order. However, we don't have, in our minds, enough when we start to plan out. And by enough—I want to be clear—what we are looking to acquire for Manitoba is six months' additional supply at 20 times the rate of normal utilization.

That is a significant amount of supply. And we recognize that this is a significant expenditure. And that is why it comes to this House as a supplementary request for additional authority.

Madam Speaker, these materials would include the masks we spoke of earlier in debate, it would include gloves, it would include sterilization substances, it would include disposable thermometer covers, it would include these N95 masks which are specialized masks that we'll talk about in just a minute.

But we believe that this is done out of prudence, out of caution, because of a scientific-based approach, because of an evidence-based approach that says we must have a very comprehensive view of how we will respond to COVID-19.

I want to also add for debate this afternoon the knowledge that these materials do not spoil easily, as you will know, Madam Speaker, because you spent many years in the health-care system. I know some of the positions you occupied. So you know this field very well, and you know, when it comes to inventory,

this is not like acquiring vaccine. That's been necessary too in the past, to acquire additional vaccine. I'm thinking about the time when you were the Health critic when this province faced the H1N1 press, and you asked question after question, day after day, about the preparedness level of this province when it came to vaccine. And, Madam Speaker, I recall at that time the vaccine did not arrive all at once. And even promised supply, as the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) hinted at earlier today, was not arriving in time.

* (15:20)

You asked those questions. In this case, with this equipment, because there is not a vaccine in place for this, we are able to fold this back into inventory should it be the case that we are not using all of this. So there will be utilization over time that we can take up.

But on the question that the member for River Heights asked, which is an excellent question, we must ensure that these—this order arrives in jurisdictions sooner rather than later. And I want all members to know I have posed this question to the federal minister, Minister Hajdu, and I have said to her that not only will Manitoba sign, Manitoba will continue to insist that every effort is made to 'concrete'—to conclude order taking so that we are not waiting for provinces who are waiting too long to sign on. We must make the order to get the pricing and to get the equipment coming to our jurisdiction. I have been given assurances that, at this point in time, there is no cause to understand that there would be a delay of any kind for this.

I know, and I want to share, that when it comes to suspected cases in our jurisdiction, I want to be clear that suspected cases of COVID-19 are required to be reported to Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer. That allows us to undertake appropriate follow-up actions. If and when a case is found, we will be reporting it to the public as quickly as possible.

As of this week, almost 100 tests have been undertaken in jurisdiction. Our provincial lab has increased its capacity and is undertaking roughly 40 tests per day even as of this last weekend. We, as I said, are dealing with municipalities, with indigenous and Metis leadership, with school administration, with other groups, business and industry as well. We have formed a deputy ministers' committee that is talking about business continuity. That is very important.

I would be remiss if I did not point out that we have an incident command structure in this

jurisdiction on which both Shared Health and the office of the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer have activities. They are co-ordinating with the service delivery organizations.

And, as I mentioned already, we are supporting in this jurisdiction the approach and—infection prevention and control guidance—what we call the IPC—infection prevention and control guidance that has been developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada, that has been developed in part with a national advisory committee on infection prevention and control. It aligns with the guidance of the World Health Organization. It is endorsed by the Canadian federal-provincial-territorial special advisory committee on COVID-19. It is based on science and evidence. It proceeds from the learnings we have in the system from SARS and H1N1, and it calls for a full spectrum of IPC measures—of infection prevention and control measures.

These include engineering and administrative control measures in hospitals and clinical settings. It includes the PPE—personal protective equipment we have spoken about. It includes handwashing, and it includes interventions in the system, and interventions, Madam Speaker, in the system will have a significant effect on reducing the spread of COVID-19.

We must use the masks. We must make sure that protocols are in place and observed like isolating patients, like giving them a two-metre buffer zone, like cohorting sick people into a single area, like cleaning and disinfecting of services.

But what we will not do is use unscientific methods that are not suggested to us by these key agencies in the manner that the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) said earlier today. They said that they side with the nurses who say that they wanted these H-ninety-five masks used in all circumstances.

I would suggest to the members of this House that that would be analogous to going to Costco and running through the shelves and pulling off the supplies and buying them for yourself. There are medical reasons we use the H-ninety-five masks, and that has to do with AGMPS protocol, which is aerosol-generating medical procedures.

Even this morning, when the Leader of the Opposition tabled back into the House a WRHA document that talked about how to use supplies, I would have the member for Union Station know that their leader tabled a document that did not call for

those masks to be used in the manner that they prescribed them.

We will take a science-based approach because it allows us to keep those masks for their intended purposes. It would be a tragedy to end up in a situation where we had allowed an undisciplined use of the equipment that we procured only to find that when most needed, because there was an aerosol-generating medical procedure for which the equipment wasn't available, that we had an unfortunate outcome.

Madam Speaker, we do thank all the members of this House today for this important debate. We know that the situation is difficult. We know that processes and procedures are in place, and many more being developed, as we continue to understand how to respond.

I will end on this thought. I do not believe that this is a partisan issue. I believe that there will be enough partisan issues to divide us. And so I'm referring to a document that was developed under an NDP government from 2010. It's a document that I would ask all members to review over the coming days. It's called H1N1 Flu in Manitoba: Manitoba's Response, Lessons Learned, from 2010.

It's an interesting document. I believe, Madam Speaker, you probably have some familiarity with this document. I imagine that if I checked Hansard, probably you've asked questions about it.

But what it said is that the learnings of the system after H1N1 were that maintaining a stockpile of personal protective equipment for health professionals was essential—page 1 of the document I'm holding in my hand. Expect the unexpected is one piece of advice; partnerships pay off, Manitoba's First Nations and Metis communities collaborations, sharing information—all of these are good pieces of advice for us as legislators.

And I would say to all the members of this House, I think that this challenge that faces us provides us with a rare opportunity to do more in the way of non-partisan co-operation. I think that this debate this afternoon is an excellent first step along the way of inculcating trust among members, sharing of information, because I will end where I started, and that is to say that, Madam Speaker, when it comes to COVID-19, we are all in this together.

Madam Speaker: Do members have any questions on the bill?

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members. No question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): Certainly, on this side of the House, we're in agreement that, you know, any measure that can be taken to ensure that the health of Manitobans is put first and that front-line service providers have everything to their avail in order to provide the best care possible during this period of time when we're seeing COVID-19 become more and more of a reality for Manitoba—but certainly throughout any time, we put the health care of Manitobans first and foremost. And it's certainly not a partisan issue. We're definitely on this side of the House on board with making decisions to support good health care.

What is the minister doing to ensure that indigenous communities, First Nations communities, are 'adequally'—adequately, rather, prepared for—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I would remind the member that that preparedness for indigenous and Metis communities is not a sole responsibility of the Province, but rather a shared responsibility through the federal agency responsible also for indigenous affairs and indigenous health. So with FNIHB, the Province of Manitoba is partnering.

I indicated earlier today that we have under way conference calls with indigenous and Metis leadership to make sure that, even from the provincial perspective, that good planning is in place. I understand anecdotally—I received a report earlier today that says that leadership has been very, very appreciative of the efforts of provincial planners to include them.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I note that the minister has ordered supplies, but I'm very concerned about funding for additional personnel in critical areas to train staff and personnel. And not just health professionals in areas like

personal-care homes which are so critical, extra expenses for staffing properly in personal-care homes.

* (15:30)

This has come to the forefront in Vancouver, where this is very critical and has caused major problems in the personal-care home where COVID-19 has appeared. So, is there extra funds for these as well?

Mr. Friesen: I thank the member for the question.

I want to indicate to the House that we are working through labour relations on a memorandum of understanding and an agreement that would establish arrangements for the movement of staff, voluntary and involuntary, to deal with emerging needs related to COVID-19. This is done without having to declare an emergency. It would allow us to be flexible and prudent in the management of human resources in such a time, and I'm understanding that we're very, very positive about the meetings we've had with CUPE, with MNU, with MGEU, meetings that are going on and coming up. MAHCP as well. We are optimistic that everyone will see the value of this, in this way, and if the member wants to ask additional questions—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

MLA Asagwara: How frequently will the minister be updating the House in regards to coronavirus COVID-19?

Mr. Friesen: I want to also say to the member of River Heights, and I just wanted to add this, that he asks about where expenses will be incurred. I want to remind all members that this government has done more to return amounts to the rainy day fund after the NDP raided it for 17 years and we have hundreds of millions of dollars right now because it would seem that the prospect of rain is imminent, with the financial meltdown that is continuing, with COVID-19 that is attributable to some of that cause, and we have some flexibility that was not there in the past to respond.

I'm happy to take the member's question from Union Station in my next response.

MLA Asagwara: I would just reiterate the same, I guess, question. Thank you.

Mr. Friesen: We have no schedule on which we will be updating members of the House or the public, but we have said we will do it often and as required, because we do believe that information is essential,

good communication is essential. We've said if there was a case of COVID-19 in Manitoba, we will inform Manitobans very, very soon. This is a moving target. We will continue to maneuver well and in co-operation with other agencies as we inform Manitobans.

MLA Asagwara: Would the government—can the minister comment on whether or not the government would ban requirements around doctors' sick notes by workers? You know, requiring these sick notes will put increased pressure on the medical system and also engage administrative work instead of directly being able to deal with COVID-19.

Mr. Friesen: We have seen in the last few days some evidence of federal officials responding and trying to, I guess, create the conditions for more flexibility around workforce being sick. As I say, preparation is being made behind the scenes, I would strongly suspect would include things the member is saying now. It's too early to say if that particular measure will be undertaken.

To the member's last question, let me also add involvement by AMC officials' level group called the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba—FNHSSM—is included in the incident command structure of the province.

MLA Asagwara: Can the minister provide any insight as to what steps are being taken to protect workers during what could be a coming crisis?

Mr. Friesen: Well, I would say, when it comes to workplace safety and protections, one of the main things we can do is what we're undertaking today. I have information that I've—that came with me today into the Chamber that shows the difference between using protective measures and not using protective measures when it comes to maintaining health-care system capacity and the health of health-care workers. And I would say, because I can't table this document—I don't have enough copies—I would say that it is a very significant factor, what the use of PPE, personal protective equipment, allows us to also then do to limit the spread of the virus. It's the best way to start in terms of taking precautions, keeping people safe.

Madam Speaker: Are there any further questions? Are there any members wishing to debate the bill?

Oh, I see that there is somebody that is prepared to ask a question, so I will revert back to that.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): My question for the minister is: At the nursing home in the

North Vancouver where COVID-19 has appeared, many staff refused to come to work because they were scared of COVID-19. It's caused some chaos.

What is the plan—the minister doing to avoid this problem in Manitoba?

Mr. Friesen: I thank both members for that question. It shows the extent of collaboration and co-operation in the House today.

It is a good question. The member must remember that these are service delivery organizations. I can tell you that the question has been broached here in Manitoba with our service delivery organization. It's an important question because, especially at the advent of seeing the virus in facilities, people are responding, and it may look different—that response may look different with a more—a fuller impact of the virus in our jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, I would say this: that we are continuing to work with all our partners. We need—we thank our health-care workers for their excellent care for their—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Are there any further question?

Debate

Madam Speaker: Are there any members wishing to debate the bill?

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): As I mentioned earlier, certainly on this side of the House, and it seems everybody in the House would be in agreement that we should be working collaboratively to ensure that, as we face the looming reality of addressing COVID-19 in Manitoba, that Manitobans can receive the absolute best health care in a timely manner.

And we can do our due diligence collectively to alleviate the anxieties and, you know, stress that folks are experiencing worrying about the realities of COVID-19. And, certainly, that means that our participation in ensuring that front-line service providers have all of the protective equipment that they need in order to be able to provide best care; you know, we're on board with that.

It's also really important, and that's why we ask the questions that we do around training and preparedness, communication, protocol communication and, as well, around capacity. We ask those questions, certainly, not to be antagonistic but to shine a light on the areas that we should all be thinking

about in terms of how we can address COVID-19 in Manitoba and how we can ensure that everyone has the best opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

You know, as of today, there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our province, and we are still seeing, however, global consequences as the virus does spread. And, when I think about the communities that, you know, tend to be, and will likely be, disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, you know, I'm certainly someone who is grateful to be in a position—as I'm sure, you know, many members in the House are—where I can go out and, you know, as somebody who does have respiratory issues, I have asthma—I can go out and I can buy several months' worth of supply of my medication and know that should I need it, I've got it at home.

We can go out and buy, you know, plenty of additional supplies for the home, if needed, but there are many Manitobans, Madam Speaker, who are without the resources to be able to make those kinds of decisions for themselves and their families.

And so, you know, I have additional questions around what the government may be able to do to ensure that low-income individuals and families, you know, given lower access to health-care in low-income areas, what are the plans to support folks who may be in need of additional resources and may lack the capacity, unfortunately, to get those resources.

You know, what is in place to help support families and individuals who are maybe under self-quarantine doing the responsible thing—doing the responsible thing—and ensuring that they're not potentially exposing other Manitobans to COVID-19 is what we're asking of folks? And I think that, you know, most people are right on board with that. They understand the importance of making that decision for the safety of not only the—their loved ones but also their neighbours and community members alike.

* (15:40)

And, in encouraging folks to make that decision as a first step to making sure that we can all be healthy and safe.

We must also take into consideration not everyone has the benefit of the supports through their employment, for example, where they can take that time, self-quarantine for, you know, sometimes above the two week period. And then you're looking at additional periods of time to have, you know, consecutive negative tests before you can reintegrate

back into community successfully without risk of exposing others to the virus.

You know, what supports are we advocating for or are we putting in place to make sure that folks who do the responsible thing have what they need in order to ensure that their family's needs are met, their household's needs are met, their own needs are, in fact, met? What are we doing to ensure that, you know, folks in our communities, Madam Speaker, who are dealing with severe and persistent mental health issues, acute mental health issues; folks that are struggling with maybe problematic substance use and addictions have the resources that they need in order to make healthy decisions in terms of self-quarantining or seeking the help that they need should they, you know, present with any of the symptoms or severe in severity, or whatever or whichever it may be in terms of COVID-19, and ensuring that they can get the health care that they also deserve?

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And so there are many concerns that we have. You know, we've got concerns around the shortage of ICU beds in Winnipeg. You know, this has led to patients being transferred to rural facilities. Again, I certainly don't bring this up for any other reason other than to make sure that we're asking really important questions so that Manitobans can rest easy knowing that there is a plan in place, and that the answers to those questions shine a light on, you know, how collaborative efforts are seeing a successful plan be implemented to ensure that, you know, folks who unfortunately, due to a shortage of ICU beds, can't access them in Winnipeg. You know, that we have a plan in place to address that so that we're not increasing the risk of, you know, transferring the infection to other folks because we are transferring patients around the province who are infected with COVID-19.

That's a very serious risk. And that's why we pose, you know, these kinds of questions. We saw the surge in presentation with flu season this year. So the convergence of two strains of the flu absolutely overwhelmed our emergency rooms, it overwhelmed resources for front-line workers. Again, going back to capacity issues—ongoing capacity issues. And so we have to be realistic and honest about how critically important it is that we're ensuring our front-line services have adequate capacity to address what could be a serious influx in respiratory illness.

And it is something that front-line service providers, health-care workers—health-care aides,

rather—nurses, doctors, are all talking about, because it is critically important in times of heightened stress in our emergency rooms, in our hospitals and our help 'celp'—health-care facilities, we want to ensure folks can utilize their training, follow protocol, not under the conditions of having to work extreme amounts of overtime under, you know, levels of stress and acuity in terms of illnesses that they haven't maybe in their careers had to deal with before.

So these are all things that I would like us to take into consideration collectively and strategize collectively around making sure that what needs to be in place for the betterment of Manitobans' health and for the safety of all Manitobans is what happens. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to debate the bill?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I have a few comments as, of course, this is a very important issue right at the moment, as the COVID-19 coronavirus has been spreading around the world.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

It is currently infecting people in I think 100 or more countries. The last I saw, there were about 60 countries where it had spread within the community; that is, locally within the country, and not just from somebody arriving from somewhere else. So it is spreading in communities globally.

It is moving very quickly, as we have seen in Italy. It is vital that we do everything that we can to prevent a major problem here. But it is, as the Minister of Health says, it is highly likely that the risk in Manitoba will not remain low. We need to be prepared. We need to be ready. We need to be acting very vigorously, ensuring we have the preventive measures and the funding in place. We fully support this funding for equipment because we think this is vital, but we also feel that there needs to be a real, urgent plan to hire more staff in order to make sure that we are training people. We need to train people in personal-care homes as an example. And it's not just the health professionals, it is the cleaning staff, it is the administrators, it is clerical 'straff'—anyone who comes in.

Indeed, as has happened in North Vancouver, as the members may know, the virus got into a personal-care home, almost immediately when this became public. A lot of the staff didn't come in to work because they were so scared of the COVID-19,

and you had a very chaotic situation where family members were doing everything that they could to help their—the residents of the personal-care home. But they weren't trained and, you know, in spite of everything that they were doing, they were not fully able to follow all the appropriate protocols. And it's a situation where the COVID-19 virus could easily spread much more than one would hope.

So as we have found in the United States, as well, that the personal-care homes are a very high-risk situation, a significant number of the deaths in the United States are from—are in residents of personal-care homes. And it is one area where we need to be very vigorous. We know, broadly, that people who are over 80 years age—of age have a high mortality rate of 15 per cent. We don't know at this point yet what the mortality rate of residents in personal-care homes is, but it is likely to be higher than that, because many of them have chronic illnesses. And so it is very urgent that we have training of people in personal-care homes and that training, given what happened in North Vancouver, might need to extend to family and friends who are coming in to visit their relatives.

We need additional staff in personal-care homes. We're already short, as the Marsh Report has indicated, in personal-care homes. There is much that needs to be done and there are many people, including myself, who feel that the government has been a little bit slow in many areas.

There needs to be much more attention to the testing—testing outside of people who are from China and Iran. The government is moving in that direction, but it apparently won't have things fully up and running for another approximately two weeks. So there are things that need to be done urgently.

We want to work co-operatively, providing suggestions to the Minister of Health. I will make one more, and that is, in British Columbia and Toronto—the University of Toronto and the University of British Columbia are now prepared to deliver courses online, which is likely to be required as the universities—as we've seen elsewhere—have been shut down by this virus. There is much to do here, and one of those things is to make sure that we are able to continue debates in this Legislature, including if people have to participate online. And we're waiting for those plans from the minister.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is that Bill 33, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020, be now read a second time and be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

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

The House will now resolve into Committee of the Whole to consider and report on Bill 33, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020, for concurrence and third reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, please take the Chair.

* (15:50)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill 33—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020

Mr. Chairperson (Doyle Pivniuk): Will the Committee of the Whole please come to order. We are now considering Bill 33, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020.

Does the honourable minister have an opening statement? No.

Does the official opposition critic have an opening statement? No.

Does any—does the honourable member—we have—we shall now proceed with the consider—the bill clause by clause. The title and enacting clause are postponed until all other clauses have been considered.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; the enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

That concludes business before the committee.

Committee rise.

Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered bill twenty—Bill 33, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020, and reports the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Swan River (Mr. Wowchuk), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 33—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Madam Speaker, I would just like to take this opportunity to—*[interjection]*—oh—to read the motion.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), that Bill 33, The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020, as reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: Was there a member wishing to speak on debate?

Mr. Friesen: I'd simply take this time to offer a list of the supplies that are being procured for Manitoba as was previously requested by the member of River Heights, and I will have those distributed to the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) and the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), who are the critics for health care at this time.

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

As previously agreed, we shall now proceed to royal assent.

* (16:00)

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Ray Gislason): Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Her Honour Janice C. Filmon, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba asks your Honour to accept the following bill:

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier):

Bill 33—The Supplementary Appropriation Act, 2019-2020; Loi portant affectation supplémentaire de crédits pour l'exercice 2019-2020

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): In Her Majesty's name, the Lieutenant Governor thanks the Legislative Assembly and assents to this bill.

Her Honour was then pleased to retire.

God Save the Queen was sung.

O Canada was sung.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, could you please canvass the House to see if it is the will of members to call it 5 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Is the will of the House to call it 5 p.m.? [*Agreed*]

So—oh, agreed.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned to—'til 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

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<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>