

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

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
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LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
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MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

*The House met at 10 a.m.*

**Madam Speaker:** O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy will, that we may seek it with wisdom and know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

### Speaker's Statement

**Madam Speaker:** I am advising the House that I have received a letter from the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for St. Boniface, indicating that he has identified Bill 200, The Scrap Metal Sales Accountability Act, as his selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 24 permits each independent member to select one private members' bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote and requires the Government House Leader and the independent member to provide written notice as to the date and time of the debate and the vote.

I have been advised then that Bill 200 will be debated today, Tuesday, November 24, 2020, at 10 a.m. with the question to be put at 10:55 a.m. this morning.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

##### Bill 200—The Scrap Metal Sales Accountability Act

**Madam Speaker:** Accordingly, I will now call second reading of Bill 200, The Scrap Metal Sales Accountability Act.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Sorry, I'll ask a question. I simply move it now?

I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that Bill 200, The Scrap Metal Sales Accountability Act; Loi sur l'obligation

redditionnelle en matière de vente de ferraille, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of the House.

### Motion presented.

**Mr. Lamont:** I do recognize that we're in the middle of a pandemic, that there are many other very serious issues to consider; however, this is also still a bill that, I think, absolutely has merit. This was something that was something of a crisis for a number of years prior to the pandemic arriving. And when I was initially elected, of the first five calls that I've ever received as an MLA, this was one of the issues.

There had been very significant increases in property crime in St. Boniface, up to 300 per cent, where people were seeing metal theft from their yards, which was then being sold at scrap metal dealers.

It's not just a problem—it's actually been a widespread problem across Canada. But there—and there are really two issues here that I want to be able to tease apart. One, of course, is that there are people who collect scrap metal and who—and—in order to earn money, essentially, that—it's entirely legitimate and we try to make sure that that is happening. But the other is the issue that there is a strong element of—or, not just of crime, but sometimes organized crime, who are—because metal is difficult to trace, so that sometimes large quantities of metal are being—were being stolen and being presented at scrap metal dealers. In one instance, an entire manhole cover was stolen in another part of Winnipeg.

And this is about ensuring the—that accountability is in place because what's happening is that the fact that people are able to sell metal in this way means that it basically drives criminal activity. And that's what we're trying to do, is to say look, we want to be able to cut this off and regulate it in such a way that the criminal aspect of it is limited, while the lawful aspect is still permitted. And that's been the issue here.

We have had a number of consultations in the community about this, but ultimately, one of the things that has been happening is that people have been seeing everything from copper fixtures or even their fire pits being stolen and being sold at scrap metal dealers.

And—the—we—so this is really just about increasing the level of accountability; making sure that the records are on—are in place at the scrap metal dealers; that the source of the metal is accounted for.

Just as one other example, Madam Speaker, that there was an individual—a constituent—who pulled into the Dominion Centre to shop and, when she left, found out that her—that part of her car had been cut off. That the—well, it's part of the—it's part of the exhaust system that—the catalytic converter—sorry, the catalytic converter—because it contains a particular number of metals which are, or—high value. The catalytic converter had been cut off her car in the time that she was shopping, and it was then used—it was then sold.

So part of this is just to also bring in a level of regulation that's similar to what exists under pawn shops. It is about making sure that we're tracking this in a responsible way. And ultimately the goal of this is to make the entire trade safer, more legal and try to—as much as possible—drive down the illegal activity that's being enabled by the current lack of regulation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Questions

**Madam Speaker:** A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Would the member for St. Boniface tell us what encouraged him to bring forward this particular bill at this particular moment in our history here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Thank you to the member for St. Johns.

I do think that this is—there's a further aspect to this bill which is important to recognize. And we—in structuring this bill, we attempted to structure it recognizing that there are people who are without homes who actually will rely on things like scrap metal collection.

I actually spoke to an individual who is living under the Osborne bridge; that's part of the way he makes—pays his way. We did want—try to structure this in a way to ensure that people are still protected.

So part of the issue here is that because of the lack of supports, especially income supports for people living in poverty, people who are homeless—

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

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** I would like to ask the member for St. Boniface if he can tell the House who he consulted with in the scrap metal industry before bringing this bill forward?

**Mr. Lamont:** Well, we had a number of consultations, and most of them were community consultations within St. Boniface.

\* (10:10)

So we had—the suggestion from this came directly from my constituents, who had been frustrated at a number of—there were a number of crime forums because there—like I said, an increase of 300 per cent in property crime.

We did consult with members of the Winnipeg police and the Police Association, who also reflected that this is a serious issue with large amounts of theft that have not been tracked. And, in fact, there's another instance of a truck—there was quite a serious incident where people were—got very sick because they were burning the plastic covering off wire in order to sell it—

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

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** I wanted to know whether the member had any consultation whatsoever with the police departments and agencies in Manitoba to ascertain how serious and how widespread a problem this is.

**Mr. Lamont:** Yes, as I just mentioned, we did speak. We had a meeting with members of the Winnipeg Police Association, as well as the chief of police, to discuss this, and they were actually—they actually told me about some of the incidents where you had entire—where you might have a spool of wire stolen from Hydro, it was completely stripped and the back—the entire back of a truck could be filled with untraceable wire. So it is a serious issue, and it is beyond just—it is often quite a criminal activity that is organized in nature.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Yes, my question to the MLA for St. Boniface is about the concern of pollution from scrap metal recyclers, that this is another reason why it makes sense to have better controls because then you understand what the

metals are, and there's been a lot of concern about lead pollution and other heavy metal pollution.

Can you put this in perspective in terms of St. Boniface?

**Mr. Lamont:** It has been an ongoing problem in terms of the rate of regulations. This has been an issue that residents have been very outspoken about simply because there has been—one of the things that's happened is that long-standing industries in the St. Boniface Industrial Park have been grandfathered, despite bringing in entirely new kinds of industry, which means they're essentially vaporizing various kinds of metals, which are then depositing themselves in surrounding neighbourhoods.

This is partly about also making sure we know exactly what kind of metals are at these sites. There are lead batteries, there's a number of other kind of toxic metals which should be traced and tracked.

**Madam Speaker:** I would ask members who are participating remotely if they have a question, to please let our moderators know so that the moderator can ensure that I am turning to the correct person for questions.

**Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River):** Under the—this legislation, I'd like to ask the member what methods of payments could a purchaser use to buy scrap metal from a seller?

**Mr. Lamont:** Sorry, what methods of payment? I could—if the member could just explain, is he talking about—does he mean credit cards, or is he—if—can he—if he could just explain exactly what he means by that.

**Mr. Wowchuk:** Exactly under the—what methods of payments: cheque, credit cards, cash, areas in which it could be traceable, et cetera.

**Mr. Lamont:** Well, the focus here is more on record-keeping rather than tracing in terms of types of payment. The main focus is on recording the source of the metal. The seller has to explain where it came from, they have to keep records of where—of the metal, who sold it and where it came from. So the sources or methods are less important than actually accounting for the origin.

**Mr. Maloway:** I'd like to ask the member a question regarding organized crime rings. My understanding is that there have been organized crime rings in Manitoba that have attacked Hydro installations and got metal from there, and other organized rings.

What information has he been able to ascertain from the police or other sources about how extensive these rings are? How many are there, and what is their scope of operation?

**Mr. Lamont:** I didn't—there's really—I mean, we need to understand that there's a triage in terms of this—of how this works. There are individuals, sometimes individuals at the local level and sometimes people living in poverty who are collecting metal, putting in scrap. Everything they're doing is completely legal and appropriate.

You also have, sometimes, individuals who are driven to theft by addiction, and that they're—this is a, relatively speaking, an easy way for them to get money, which is unfortunate. Part of this is actually an effort to try to suspend or mitigate that direct payment, so that people would be able to sell, but then get paid later.

But then there is—there are more organized groups. It's absolutely clear that there are—that was from speaking with the police, in particular that they were saying, you know, you'll have an entire truck full of—

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

Did the member for Elmwood have another question?

**Mr. Maloway:** Yes, I do.

I'm trying to get from the member the relative breakdown of how much of this is organized crime and how much of this is just one-off type of sales. For example, new to scrap metal dealers—you'll find occasionally a person pushing a shopping cart with a couple of pipes of in it, okay. That's not organized crime. Organized crime is attacks on constructions sites where metal is taken, Hydro sites, big operations involving many people, and it's organized.

I would assume that's what he's trying to get at and not chasing the person with the shopping cart with one pipe in it. Would I be right in that assessment?

**Mr. Lamont:** Yes, the member from Elmwood would be absolutely correct. That is something that we actually wanted to make sure that we were protecting people, sort of the person with one shopping cart.

In terms of organized crime, it's not—sometimes there are—look, there might be large organized crime organizations, but the other is even smaller organizations or smaller gangs. That there were—I knew that

there were problems with trap houses and meth houses in—which were running chop shops in St. Boniface.

So, these were also sites where people were travelling around St. Boniface and other areas, stealing anything, stealing bicycles, stealing all sorts of scrap metal, cutting it up and then sending it all—and taking it to local scrap yards.

But the other thing, is that this was—

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

**Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk):** In the proposed legislation, the seller of the material is to provide information to the dealer, or to the buyer, as to where he obtained the materials from.

Can the member tell me, will it then be the responsibility of the buyer to confirm that what he's received is not being stolen?

**Mr. Lamont:** I think that would place too much of an onus on the dealer; however, it is the obligation of the dealer to be able to record that. And that has been—that's part of what's been have been missing.

The other is this has been something that was suggested and discussed as—for the city of Winnipeg alone, but clearly this is something that needs to be done on a provincial scale. That it's—this is not something that's a—if we just—if we were only to do it in—if Winnipeg alone is to act, communities outside would not be protected in the same way.

So that onus should not be on the—it is not the dealer's job to be the police. The police need to step up and do that.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for this question period has expired.

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** Debate is open.

**Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Thanks for the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 200. I think this would be an opportunity for me to explain where our government's at on this particular area.

First of all, let me say I do appreciate the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) bringing forward this legislation. I certainly appreciate his interests in the scrap metal—scrap metal side of things.

Maybe just in terms of perspective, I'll go back to a federal-provincial-territorial meeting we had back in January. And the issue of rural crime and scrap metal

sales came up as part of our discussion. I recognize that scrap metal sales is not just a rural issue, but it also impacts urban areas as well.

\* (10:20)

And as a result of that discussion we had in our FPT, the federal government did agree to establish an ad hoc committee in terms of what we can do, in terms of accountability around rural crime and also in terms of what we can do in terms of scrap metal sales. So we're looking forward to the federal government taking a leadership role in that committee. We haven't had too much activity as a result of that. Clearly, they've got sidetracked, as many governments have, with the current pandemic. But certainly, I think, more can be done in terms of the scrap metal sales and rural crime.

So, in perspective of what our government is doing, we recognize this is an issue. Many individuals are feeling the repercussions of having theft of their personal property. We're also finding commercial locations subject to theft of various metals—different types of metals. We were seeing agriculture producers, again, some of their equipment being stolen and some of their property being vandalized and actually right into the farm yards, some people are coming and taking various forms of metal, and a lot of times it's primarily copper. Copper is quite easy to access.

We've also seen Manitoba Hydro being subject to the same problems. Obviously, a lot of different types of metals involved in Manitoba Hydro installations around the provinces—around the province and that certainly has been a concern for them.

So scrap metal theft, certainly, is a problem all across our province, and, quite frankly, not just Manitoba. We're seeing the same thing across the country. So I think, what I've asked our government to do, the Department of Justice, is to have a look at what other legislation is in existence, if there's something that we could look at as being adequate, at something that we could put in place here in Manitoba.

I do know that both Alberta and BC have put legislation in place and, obviously, we're having a look at that legislation and the effectiveness of that legislation as well. We also—I think, members will know that we are proposing legislation in terms of rural crime and we're out in the field through EngageMB, consulting with Manitobans on some of these initiatives that we're looking to undertake.

So we're looking for Manitoba's feedback on this, on the rural crime components, and also we asked them about the potential legislation around scrap metal sales.

So, we opened up that consultation back at the end of August. We had the EngageMB site open until the end of October, so a pretty robust period of consultation during that time. And we had close to 800 submissions by Manitobans in terms of their ideas coming forward on our rural crime approach and on the scrap metal side. So, certainly, that was very positive. We got good, robust comments from Manitobans, so the department is currently reviewing and analyzing that information that we received from Manitobans with the expectation that we will be moving forward on legislation around scrap metal in the very near future.

So I've asked the department, again, to analyze the feedback we've received from Manitobans and their ideas in terms of what the legislation should look like. We're clearly looking at Alberta and BC, in terms of their leadership and on the legislation, what is effective, what is not effective, and I think that will provide some very valuable direction for us in Manitoba.

Clearly, we want to stop as much of this illegal activity as possible, and I think by recognizing those that are selling these, what could be stolen, commodities, able to trace those individuals, and I think that will certainly hamper those individuals. And sometimes, as members alluded to this morning, actually organized crime being involved in this illegal activity.

So, we're certainly excited about the feedback that we have from Manitobans. We're certainly looking at what other jurisdictions have done, as well. And our intent, in terms of the consultation through EngageMB, is to put that information together, and we will report back to Manitobans through EngageMB. And then that document will be a what-we-heard document as part of the consultations.

So, I expect that will be done over the next month or two. We'll have that document back and available to Manitobans so that they know exactly the information that we've been hearing from Manitobans. I think that will lead us into a very comprehensive set of rules around scrap metal sales here in Manitoba. And I think that will certainly help to make a dent in what we know is criminal activity that has an impact on many Manitobans all around the province.

We do recognize the City of Winnipeg has implemented their own bylaw in respect of scrap metal sales. But we think there's an opportunity for us to have a province-wide piece of legislation that would apply to everyone across the province. And that's our goal. Our goal is to have a comprehensive piece of legislation that will protect Manitobans into the future.

So, obviously we're consulting with Manitobans. We intend to further engage the industry as well. Those that are involved in purchasing of metal and scrap metal, we'll certainly want to engage them in this discussion and make sure that any rules that we have in place would be effective in terms of their operations as well.

So, certainly a lot of work being done on this front. And looking forward to reporting back to Manitobans in terms of our work on this front. And I think this will be a nice package put together when we look at our other amendments in terms of dealing with The Petty Trespasses Act, the occupiers' liability. I think this piece of legislation will 'twy'-tie quite nicely into other pieces of legislation that we're looking at.

Madam Speaker, I'm just going to end my remarks this morning. I know I have other members and colleagues that want to speak to this important piece of legislation. So with that, I thank you for the opportunity to talk about where our government's at in terms of the scrap metal sales.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I understand there is some House business to be announced.

### House Business

**Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader):** On House business. Pursuant to rule 33(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be the one put forward by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Piwniuk). The title of the resolution is The Importance of Small Business in Manitoba.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Turtle Mountain. The title of the resolution is The Importance of Small Businesses in Manitoba.

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**Madam Speaker:** Retuning to debate then.

Honourable member for Elmwood, can you please unmute your mic? The honourable member for Elmwood, you're next up in debate. Can you unmute your mic?

\* (10:30)

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Just dealing with some serious technical difficulties here.

I was very pleased to see the bill being brought forward by the member, but I do see some problems with it. I was also pleased to hear from the minister that the government is actually looking into the problem, and I just hope that they actually deal with it quickly rather than dragging it out and delaying for several years here.

Minister has pointed out that this is indeed a national problem, and the fact that Alberta and BC have legislation is also encouraging because we all know legislation process takes a long, long time. And it's always good when dealing with legislation to look at best practices in other jurisdictions, and the fact that he's identified BC and Alberta as jurisdictions that have legislation, that is something that the government should be always looking at, and I know they do.

So, the key is to save a lot of time and effort here by getting copies of their legislation and start digging into what the issues were there and, you know, perhaps there'll be a little—slightly different issues here in Manitoba, but the whole idea of composing and getting all the stuff together and proceeding with some consultations I think is, you know, a really good sign.

Now, why did this issue become such a problem recently? You know, back 20, 30 years ago, you know, there was—scrap dealers were still there. They were operating and people were taking, you know, pipes and stuff to the scrap metal dealer. I'm assuming this was probably a problem in those days too, but it never, to my knowledge, became an overpowering issue.

But I think what happened here is the price of copper, for one, and other metals that got—when the price goes up, then there's a more incentive for collection of this material. Perhaps in the old days when you took an old piece of equipment out of your house, a refrigerator or appliances, if the price of scrap metal was low, probably you simply disposed of the item in the town dump.

And now that the prices are so high, there's now incentive to, you know, recycle these parts and take them off to the scrap metal dealers. So when you go to the scrap metal dealer, you're seeing contractors there, you're seeing homeowners delivering things there and you're seeing the odd person pushing a cart with a pipe in it as well.

So the question is how do we deal with the problem and deal with it effectively, and I think the issue has to be to try to deal with the volume of people here and those would be the organized crime rings. And there you would try to get information from the police. The police, you know, are dealing with these issues all the time. Presumably, the insurance companies would, as well, based on the claims they're paying.

As time goes by, you see more and more people, businesses putting up big fencing and cameras around their installations to protect their equipment. All of this is good. And the Manitoba Hydro sites, there have been—they've been hit, a lot of them, and, well, one wonders why somebody would be—you know, kind of dangerous to be going in and stripping metal out of a Hydro site, but presumably they're organized enough that they've got somebody with some electrical expertise, maybe electricians, who know what, you know, how to extract the metals from the Hydro site without getting themselves electrocuted.

So there's more to this story too. I've heard stories about air conditioners being stolen—like, literally an air conditioner that is not on a roof but is high enough up from the sidewalk that you would have to, you know, pull up with a truck and then put a ladder in the truck and scale the side of the building. And literally, this is what they did last—I think it was a year or two ago, took this air conditioner off the side of the building.

So, you know, I know people, when they're putting in commercial air conditioners—maybe residential too, but certainly commercial—they put, you know, fencing. There's fencing and metal fences and stuff that you can put around these things. And believe it or not, the air conditioning people will tell you they can construct a metal box around the air conditioner, and it still gets attacked, you know.

So then what you do is you try to put it higher up the wall and, in this particular case, putting it near the top of the wall didn't help the person either. So, at the end of the day, they had to put it on the top of the roof. And—but even then, I guess, if people are determined



enough, they can simply scale the roof, bring a big enough ladder and start tearing the things off the roof.

So there's obviously high value and it's worthwhile doing this for some people. But this is not your guy with the shopping cart doing this kind of stuff. You need trucks, you need tools, you need extra people; one person cannot do this stuff, so these are rings. You have the chop shops dealing with motorcycles and motorcycle parts. You have all sorts of these organized rings going—and these've been operating for years and years and years. And these are not—like, these are known entities. They're known to the police. If they're not in the beginning, it doesn't take long.

There was a case recently where a chop shop was cutting up motorcycles, stealing them right here in Winnipeg, and they eventually busted the group, and they were out in the Lorette area, around in there, Ste. Anne–Lorette area. And so they eventually caught the people.

So a certain amount of vigilance, work by the police and all the authorities, I think is probably leading to solving some of these problems. So I think there's many ways to deal with this issue and legislation is not the only way. But legislation is probably—or some kind of bylaw. Evidently Winnipeg has a bylaw, but some sort of legislation is probably worthwhile doing.

But the member should know, you can have all the legislation you want and all the rules, but you know, it's really a big issue here of enforcement and being able to catch the people in the first place that is the, you know, the real issue here.

So, you know, I do applaud him for bringing forward the bill. I just thought that it doesn't seem like it was going to be able to connect a hundred per cent and square with the problem. It might sound good, you know, to his constituents, that he could point out that he's listening to them and he's introducing a piece of legislation here, but you know, the thing is, the legislation's got to be workable.

So I think if they, you know, this might be an example where the government could actually do something really smart for a change and get back to the way we used to solve a lot of our sticky problems back in the Gary Doer–Gary Filmon days where we had an all-party committee on almost everything in those days. We had an all-party committee on Meech Lake; we had an all-party committee on smoking in public places. Denis Rocan, the Speaker of the day,

was involved in, I think, the smoking issue. You know, these things worked very well to get all the parties together, and you know, I'd be happy to work with the minister on this and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) and see if we could come up with some sort of set of legislation or legislative rules and so on that might be applicable and might work properly in here.

But I think the first thing we have to do is get the legislation from BC and Alberta, and also, the whole idea of looking on a more national basis is good as well, but not to the point where we're going to tie it all up for the next few years in consultations among different provinces to come up with, like, the perfect solution here for the problem.

So I think that, yes, that's fine for the minister to do it, because, certainly, we can't be involved on a national basis here, but we can certainly help them out when it comes to the provincial element of the legislation here. And up to this point, I've heard no, you know, I've had heard nothing from the government in terms of their interest in having any input from the opposition on a set of rules that might work, Madam Speaker.

So once again, you know, we should get at the problem before it gets even bigger than it is. And given the situation—

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

\* (10:40)

**Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain):** I am delighted to be able to speak this morning to Bill 200, the scrap metal accountability act, put forward by my honourable friend, the MLA for St. Boniface.

Scrap metal theft is indeed a global issue driven by world metal prices. For example, one of the common targets of thieves is copper, which is now worth over \$3 a pound. These thefts are extremely costly to the electrical, construction, telecommunication and other industrial sectors, and the loss of metal on worksites can 'seriously' delay projects, often creating costs that far outweigh the value of the metal.

Attempts to steal metal have also lead to power outages, serious injury and even death when the thefts have been attempted from live electrical infrastructure. While there are Criminal Code offences to address metal theft, such as theft over or under \$5,000 and possession of stolen goods, a key problem in trying to combat metal theft is that thieves can often

settle the metal for cash. So it is hard to trace sales of the stolen metal and difficult for law enforcement agencies to investigate and lay charges.

In Manitoba, pawn shops are required to record identifying information about persons who sell property to them and also record details about the transactions. The City of Winnipeg, as has been mentioned, has passed a bylaw which compels legitimate scrap metal dealers to collect and store metal transaction information.

However, at this time, Manitoba does not have provincial legislation to require scrap metal dealers or recyclers to record information about sellers and transactions. That is why, earlier this year, as the minister stated, our government started to analyze existing metal seller accountability legislation in Canada and identify possible approaches that could be considered for metal seller and transaction recording in Manitoba.

Our government identified legislation in Alberta, the Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act, and legislation in British Columbia, The Metal Dealers and Recyclers Act, as possible options for Manitoba to look at.

Madam Speaker, I'm going to share with the House some details about what our friends in Alberta have put into law. The Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Identification Act was proclaimed in November 2019 with the intent to protect against metal theft. In July 2020, the government made amendments to strengthen the legislation and established a Scrap Metal Dealers and Recyclers Regulation.

The act and regulation implement duties for scrap metal dealers and recyclers when they purchase or receive scrap metal. The act also enables law enforcement to conduct investigations to determine compliance and penalties for contraventions of the act.

Scrap metal is defined as all new or used items substantially made of non-ferrous metals. Regulations specify commonly stolen items including, but not limited to, copper cable and wires, including power lines, telecommunication cables and cable reels; metal traffic control lights, signals and signs; street lighting poles, wiring and fixtures; sewer grates and manhole covers; metal guardrails and handrails; metal grave markers, funeral vases, memorial plaques and monuments; catalytic converters and lead-acid batteries.

Transactions in Alberta are limited to individuals 18 years or older with valid government-issued photo identification. During a transaction, scrap metal dealers and recyclers are required to record information about the seller and the transaction itself. Personal information to be recorded is legal name, address, name of the business, unique ID number on the personal ID provided. Transaction information to be recorded includes the date and time the property was acquired, description and weight of the metal; the specific make, model, colour and licence plate number in which property is delivered.

Scrap metal dealers and recyclers are required to retain the prescribed information for a period of at least two years from the time of sale. The act and regulations require scrap metal dealers and recyclers to report transactions directly to law enforcement via a centralized database.

Cash payments are prohibited and scrap metal dealers and recyclers are required to use traceable currency to purchase scrap metals. This means that payments to sellers must be processed through a financial institution using a cheque or electronic payment.

Further west, British Columbia's had a law in place since 2011 that requires details of the motor vehicle used to deliver the metal, reporting of new inventory filed daily with police, registration of metal dealers and recyclers and inspections by government inspectors.

On August 31st of this year, our government launched a public engagement survey on the engage Manitoba website entitled Development of Rural Crime, Bio-Security and Metal Theft Legislation, in order to obtain the views of key stakeholders and all Manitobans on how our province should approach this important issue. As the minister stated, that public engagement just concluded on October 31st, and the survey responses are now being examined to help assist in the development of a well considered and effective approach to metal seller accountability for this province.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, Bill 200 was introduced in the Manitoba Legislature before the engage Manitoba public engagement had been completed, and was not developed with any input by the industry. Our government is not opposed to legislation that is intended to deter the theft of scrap metal and increase the safety of all Manitobans. We have taken the time to consult in an attempt to ensure

the legislation we put forward is the most comprehensive in Canada.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James):** Appreciate the opportunity to put some thoughts on the record about this bill.

I am also happy to hear that the government is considering some solutions to responding to this issue, as well. I know it's a complex issue that has been ongoing for some time, and it is something that is an issue in my own constituency, especially in the West End portion of my constituency. There is a lot of metal theft and bike theft that I think does contribute to the issue.

And I think, of course, this is an important issue because not only is it a nuisance for some home owners and business owners; not only is—it create headaches of that nature, but it's also creating major safety risks. We know that a lot of the items that are stolen are either contaminated with insulations or things along those lines that are required to be removed, and individuals who are handling them are also placing themselves at safety risk.

So we know that there are a variety of issues that can be responded to with this bill. So I do think there are some positives here and do applaud the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) for bringing it forward.

One thing I think that is really important when we think about the value of this bill and ultimately what it's seeking to achieve here, is what it's actually responding to. And I think what's clear is that this bill isn't simply responding to an issue with scrap metal sales and the theft of scrap metal, it's actually responding to, in large part, an issue of poverty in this province. People aren't deciding to steal metal because the penalties for doing so aren't big enough; people aren't deciding to steal metal because we have a lack of legislation that prevents them from being able to sell it; they're stealing it because many folks who are engaging in this are suffering from the effects of poverty—and, in fact, sometimes deep, deep poverty.

And that poverty is our responsibility. It's our responsibility as legislators to respond to that, it's the responsibility of the government to respond to the type of poverty that's leading to individuals making the types of decisions that are being made when they decided to take metals and to try to sell them off in whatever way they can. We have to recognize that when people are engaging in these behaviours and they're in these types of situations, these are folks who

are often without identification. These are folks that are often without access to a bank account. They often lack access to housing. And when you're in that type of a situation and you're forced to make decisions that will allow you to survive, sometimes you end up making these types of decisions.

And, of course, again, most of those issues are issues that—tied to our government's failure to respond to the root causes here of this issue, and that's poverty.

You know, we had, previously, a government that understood that many of the challenges that we face in terms of crime and addictions are rooted in poverty, and worked a lot to develop a social enterprise sector in this province that focused on providing employment opportunities to folks, especially in the core area, through really innovative programs like BUILD and the Manitoba Green Retrofit program.

\* (10:50)

And those are really incredible programs that intended to serve individuals who are hard to employ, individuals with criminal records, individuals who couldn't get a licence, the kind of folks that might otherwise engage in the theft of scrap metal. And those organizations did some incredible work in providing employment opportunities and helping people to stay out of the kinds of situations that might lead them to considering stealing scrap metal and selling it off to meet their basic needs.

That social enterprise strategy and the work that had been done to advance those organizations has all been put to rest by this government. The Manitoba Social Enterprise Strategy that had been developed with the assistance of a variety of really fantastic community organizations that understand issues relating to poverty, that understand issues relating to addiction, that strategy was shut down, and this government closed it off. And unfortunately, folks now that are living in those—in—especially in our urban core, that might have otherwise had access to employment opportunities that could've prevented them from engaging in this kind of behaviour, have been cut off.

And I think about a story I heard from someone I know who was in a management capacity with Manitoba Green Retrofit, which was one of these social enterprises that served these hard-to-employ populations in our urban core. And I remember him telling me stories about when they would put a call out for folks in the community to invite people who wanted to work to come down, they would have

lineups around the block at the social enterprise centre. They would have lineups longer than you can imagine, and that speaks to the hunger, the desire for so many folks in these impacted communities to work, that they want opportunities to be employed. They want to be able to go, make an honest living, and unfortunately, those opportunities are not provided to them, and that is not their fault. That is the fault of government to fail to provide for those needs.

And I saw the same thing when I worked at Resource Assistance for Youth. I was actually a manager of a youth employment program there. We engaged homeless youth in offering them employment opportunities. And I saw the same thing there. I saw a lot of youth who were really just hungry to get to work, and they faced incredible barriers in doing so: they didn't have IDs; they didn't have a place to live; they didn't have bank accounts. And as a result, sometimes when they needed to do what was required in order to survive, they would engage in decisions that were less than optimal. And they would engage in the kind of decisions that ultimately could lead them to have engagements with the justice system, and all of that ties back ultimately to poverty.

So my concern about this bill is that, while I do agree that a response to an issue that does exist in this province that I know is a real concern for business owners and homeowners, and I do know that there are a variety of complex factors that feed into this, and this is an issue that we certainly should be trying to resolve, my concern is that this bill further criminalizes poverty in Manitoba and it creates real risks for folks who are facing crushing poverty, who are just struggling to get by who now are facing a prospect of, in addition to dealing with what they're dealing with on a day-to-day basis, are risking further criminalization as a result of the situation they're in.

That's on us. That's on us as legislators. That's on us as folks who are coming here to the Legislature to figure out that problem and to understand how we can respond to those needs so we can give those folks opportunities so they don't need to be looking at perhaps stealing metal.

You know, further to what might drive someone to think about engaging in this kind of behaviour, you think about the housing crisis that we're facing in this province right now. We've got a huge crisis in affordability of housing. There's a massive lack of available social and affordable housing in this province, and yet this government has failed to build any new social housing units in this province.

We've got Manitoba Housing units that should be there to serve the types of populations that might be struggling with extreme poverty. We've got social housing units to serve those housing needs, but this government is selling it off. They've sold off 380 housing units at 185 Smith. Imagine what we could do to respond to our housing crisis and to help to respond to some of the economic drivers of the crimes that are being ostensibly dealt with through this bill if we could offer 380 additional units of social housing to folks in this province.

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

Oh, continue, sorry—oh, no, actually, as previously announced, the hour being 10:55 a.m., I am interrupting the proceedings to put the question on Bill 200.

The question before the House then is second reading of Bill 200, The Scrap Metal Sales Accountability Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some Honourable Members:** Yes.

**Some Honourable Members:** No.

**Madam Speaker:** I hear a no.

#### Voice Vote

**Madam Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

**Some Honourable Members:** Aye.

**Madam Speaker:** All those opposed, please say nay.

**Some Honourable Members:** Nay.

**Madam Speaker:** In my opinion, the Nays have it. I declare the motion defeated.

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**Madam Speaker:** Is it the will of the House to call it 11?

**An Honourable Member:** Sure.

#### RESOLUTIONS

**Res. 6-Call for an Inquiry into the Provincial Government's COVID-19 Second Wave Response**

**Madam Speaker:** It is—the hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on call an inquiry into the provincial government's COVID-19

second wave response, brought forward by the honourable member for St. Boniface.

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), that

*WHEREAS there has been a dramatic increase in COVID-19 infections in Manitoba during the second wave of the pandemic to the extent that Manitoba quickly rose from one of the lowest to having the highest number of active cases per capita of all provinces; and*

*WHEREAS the resurgence in cases is worse because the Provincial Government's wishful thinking left it unprepared for the pandemic, resulting in very long wait times for COVID-19 tests, people waiting for up to seven days to get results and up to several days to have contact tracing which together led to greater uncontrolled and undetected community spread of COVID-19; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government's failure to properly act led to an increase in personal care homes COVID-19 infections by not immediately implementing a rapid response team and instituting full testing of all staff and residents when the first COVID-19 case was detected in a home; and*

*WHEREAS in August, the Provincial Government ignored the calls for investment in infection control and better staffing to prepare seniors' homes for a second wave, and failed to heed reports and recommendations from outbreaks in Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia and as a result put the health and safety of residents and staff at risk; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government failed to act to address reports of poor care at the Parkview Place personal care home going back years including a March 2020 report detailing concerns with the state of repair of the facility. Its cleanliness and sanitation practices included issues with cockroaches, dirty toilets and grease laden dirt in the kitchen. In October, the Provincial Government ignored evidence that The Maples personal care home was understaffed and continued to insist there were adequate staff present even as residents were dying; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government's own accounts show that its support for business is among the worst in Canada as its failure to take basic steps to control outbreaks has led to further shutdowns and businesses have had to close or reduce their capacity*

*without receiving any financial government assistance causing businesses and workers to choose between getting sick or going broke; and*

*WHEREAS the Provincial Government has been saying one thing and doing another by calling for fundamentals, while encouraging activity that spreads the virus by urging people to go back to work and shop and it has also failed to address the inequities in the services provided to Indigenous peoples which resulted in them experiencing COVID-19 at disproportionate rates; and*

BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to call a public inquiry into its failure to adequately prepare the province for the second wave of the pandemic, specifically into the outbreaks at personal-care homes, jails and in First Nations communities.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Boniface, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to call a public inquiry into its failure to adequately prepare the province for the second wave of the pandemic, specifically into the outbreaks at personal-care homes, jails and in First Nation communities.

**Mr. Lamont:** The reason for calling for an inquiry—there are a number of reasons to call for an inquiry specifically; I know that the opposition has very rightly called for inquests. This does not displace or change the fact that inquests should take place, simply that an inquiry plays a very specific role and can deliver answers in ways that—or deliver different answers to issues than inquests can.

There's no doubt that we have an extremely serious problem—a crisis, really—when it comes to the pandemic response here in Manitoba. In July, we had—we were down to one case briefly, and we had the opportunity, I suppose, to reopen cautiously, but there have been a number of issues.

It's clear that we have absolute disasters at the Maples care home, disasters at Parkview Place. We have other personal-care homes where people are asking—pleading—for help, for volunteers, just in order to get the very basic—the most—the basic needs of residents followed.

We have problems with testing, contact tracing. It took months to create a rapid response team. We still have yet to see really serious responses to some of the crises in personal-care homes and there are lots of answers—lots of questions that need to be answered.

One of the things I do want to say is just to emphasize the importance of what an inquiry can do. An inquiry would be public and open. We've clearly, in the last few days, we've seen this divergence and questions about—of trust and confidence in the government's ability to react and issues around its performance, especially on communications.

\* (11:00)

In order to be able to restore trust and restore confidence and also to figure out what exactly has gone wrong, we need an inquiry. An inquiry can look at underlying reasons. It can find fault. It can be fully open and public. It can give families a voice in order to be able to discuss—to talk about what they've experienced and the challenges they've felt. We can address much of the missing information that's—that has been explained but why things weren't ready, how things didn't go right. And the other thing about it is that an inquiry can act relatively quickly in comparison with an inquest. An inquest might take two years, whereas an inquiry can deliver answers in months, and it can spearhead changes.

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

These are absolutely critical actions to take because while we are sort of in the face of the worst of the second wave, I recently spoke to somebody in Minnesota who is undergoing a third wave. And I know we're all optimistic about a vaccine, we're all optimistic about things getting better and hoping that things will be able to change, but we—the fact is is that if we can find out what went wrong, have it be independent, separate from politics, have independent inquiries into it, that it will make a colossal difference in being able to provide specific recommendations and advice, not just for how we can improve the situation for the rest of the pandemic, but to address underlying and fundamental issues that created these problems.

Because—I'll say the one thing is that, as somebody said, that the pandemic hasn't just sort of revealed all the broken systems and all the broken—and the weaknesses that were pre-existing that were there before the pandemic. Whether it was—and we've known that with personal-care homes, there were issues with understaffing and underfunding for years.

We've known that there were structural issues. And the fact that these places—there were too many people living together in multiple rooms—or multiple residents in a room where they weren't be able—weren't able to separate. We know that there was—there wasn't enough PPE, there weren't enough stockpiles, but we also know that there wasn't adequate preparation in the lead up to the second wave.

We know that in the middle of August, there had not been a single new dollar committed to either addressing infection control and pandemic preparation and the cost of the public health orders that were imposed on personal-care homes. The same is true of education, and the same is also true of jails, which we've known have been overcrowded not just for years, but for—but more than a decade.

So these were all known hot spots. They were all—the warnings were given. So part of this is about understanding what went wrong, whether people knew—were provided with the suggestions and ignored them. But, ultimately, this is about more than finding fault, though that—it is important that people face the consequences of their actions and their failures. This is about being able to find out what went wrong in order that we can improve our system, that we can actually address the fundamental challenges and make sure that we're making the investments to make these systems stronger and better and different. Because it's clear that we—that when the pandemic struck, we had a system that was very fragile in too many ways, that too many people are living in vulnerable situations and were exposed and were unable to—and had no place to go for shelter. And sometimes, literally, that's the case.

But the fact that we have a situation where we had the greatest number of cases ever yesterday, we have—we're still behind on contact tracing. And as people have—I have had people who used to work in emergency management warn that we are forever going to be behind this.

So part of this is to say, if we have an inquiry, to set it up and have people who are dedicated to this, who are able to be impartial, to take—again, to take the partisan politics out of it; to look at what happened with a clinical eye that looks at where the fails are—the failures of organization happened; the failures to commit; the failures to listen but also to do the opposite, which is to make recommendations; to listen; to organize and to commit the resources that are actually required.

We know that there have been outstanding recommendations for senior personal-care homes for many years. We know that there have been complaints about the way that jails have been run for many years. We know that First Nations are vulnerable and that there's absolutely no secret that they've—that many of those communities have been living, essentially, in a forced crisis for many years due to underfunding and due to lack of adequate housing, lack of adequate water, all these things. They're not new.

What has happened is that we've—is that the pandemic has stripped back and exposed so many of the systems that have—that are truly broken. So—and for that reason it is absolutely critical. This is something that is doable. That incredibly valuable information emerged from the inquiry that the army did, that the military did in Ontario after the catastrophic failure of personal-care homes.

And I just want to make two quick statements. One—this, again, relates to vulnerable populations. One is the fact that we have to be critical in—this should be considered as something that needs to be discussed. There are so many people living in vulnerable situations right now who don't have the income to pay for their—they can't pay for rent. They're still being evicted. They have—that there are tens of thousands of children every month in Winnipeg and across Manitoba whose parents, even working full time, cannot afford to buy them all the food they need to keep them healthy. These are all pre-existing crises.

And so we need to understand those system issues that have made people so vulnerable because—and there are—there's a difference, I think, between blame and accountability. There's—and there's a difference between blame and responsibility. I know that people are very often afraid of being blamed. They're afraid of being blamed for something, but, ultimately, accountability is something that we have to have for democracy to exist. And the responsibility is about more than accepting blame or just it—ultimately, we have to do what we can to recognize a broken system and make amends and do what we can to fix it.

And that is what we're—that is the goal of what we—that is what we're trying to accomplish. That is what—the end goal of what we're trying to achieve by calling a public inquiry into this—the second wave response, because there could be a third wave as well.

So, the sooner we act on this, the better. And I do believe that this is an absolutely critical move that this Legislature could make. I certainly hope that we will

see the response that we—and support from everybody across all parties.

Thank you.

### Questions

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** A question period up to 10 minutes will be held. Any questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member of another party, any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties, each independent member may ask one question. And no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** I just realized, back in October, the government or the Province had introduced an—amendments to The Employment Standards Code to make it easier for more workers to take sick days during COVID and access the benefits that are available to them federally. However, in our House, this legislation was for some reason blocked by the member from St. Boniface in his so-called party.

I'm wondering if the member from St. Boniface can explain why he and his party didn't want more workers in Manitoba to be eligible for protected leave due to COVID?

**Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface):** Well, sure, I mean, the idea—it—the entire premise of the question is incorrect, of course.

One of the things that we were—we had a bill dropped on us and it was expected to be passed by 3—or passed by the end of the day without any consult, without any—without even a chance to see it. So let's be clear about that.

It was a pre-existing federal program that people could already access, and one of the problems with the bill, and we asked for the amendment, was to say—was that it required a sick note, which is a waste of time and money. We asked for the amendment, but, while the government didn't make the amendment, we did get—secure a promise from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) that sick notes would not be required.

The fact is that we need to respect democracy in this House and respect due process. And the fact is that corner-cutting has been a—is one of the reasons why we need an inquiry to this government's response.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** Does the member for St. Boniface believe that the military

should be called in to provide extra support at our PCHs?

**Mr. Lamont:** I absolutely believe that it needs to be considered.

I've had a number of people calling in desperation from personal-care homes pleading for help because they—there are—often, the people who are in personal-care homes are in their 80s or 90s. Their children are in their 60s and are vulnerable. I've heard people who were broken-hearted, who want to be able to go help their parents and can't.

They need help, and absolutely the military should be considered. This is something I've had a number of people reaching out to me about. We agree with the official opposition that this needs to be done.

**Mr. Isleifson:** I guess I—the last comment I received from the member is really concerning, and when I speak to this resolution I will certainly table some more evidence to what we're doing.

\* (11:10)

One of the things that he was chatting about, though, was really concerning, is the end goal should really be to work together.

My question is, does the member not believe that working together and coming onto team Manitoba is the best option for everybody?

**Mr. Lamont:** Well, let's be clear. You know, in March, we—I sent a letter to the Minister of Health on March 13th, offering—requesting all-party co-operation. The fact is we also—we still live in a democracy, and the core of democracy is dissent. The fact is we need to be able to have people who are going to stand up and point out what the government isn't doing.

So, frankly, I don't—I'm a little frustrated with the sports metaphors. The fact is is that we have to bring different people together. I'm more than happy and we've been—actually provided over 30 suggestions to this government. But if team Manitoba means equating a pandemic response with a weekend softball tournament and expecting everybody to shut up, that's not how we work.

**Ms. Fontaine:** While the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) and I don't necessarily agree on many things, I would like to take up his line of questioning in respect of the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) and the leader of the Manitoba Liberals.

Why would his party block the passage of a bill to help Manitobans access federal paid leave sick time?

**Mr. Lamont:** Again, to be clear, we did not block it. We denied leave for passage that day so that we'd have an opportunity to actually read it. We—and we—because—so that we could actually request an amendment.

And we were told the only way we could—we would be able to request an amendment would be if we—because there is—there still has yet to be any meaningful financial sick leave on the part of the provincial government, that simply asking the—simply connecting the federal—connecting Manitobans to the federal programs is part of what this government has been promising to do while continually failing and refusing to actually step up on their own.

And it has caused a real crisis, not just for people living in poverty but for small businesses and other workers—

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

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** I appreciate the opportunity, and I appreciate the member for St. Boniface bringing this forward. He did make some inaccurate comments about provincial government spending on pandemic-related items.

I'm wondering if the member is aware that Manitoba's per capita and percentage here of GDP on pandemic-related spending in 2020 is the third highest in Canada at 3 and a half per cent. Is the member even aware of that fact?

**Mr. Lamont:** I'm aware of that talking point. It's not a fact. I made it absolutely clear to the Premier (Mr. Pallister)—sorry, to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding). In the government's own financial update in June they said that the PBO—the Parliamentary Budget Office's estimate of \$2.5 billion was \$400 million more than it actually was.

When you actually break down the Province's response, it isn't provincial government response at all. And a lot of what's happened is that this government has taken a COVID label and stuck it on a bunch of operational spending that was—that had nothing to do, that is not new money—that has nothing to do with COVID preparations and will not go to COVID preparations.



They had \$280 million that was set aside for sprinkler systems in personal-care homes. Do sprinkler systems matter? Absolutely—

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

**Ms. Fontaine:** I just want to be clear for the House and for the official record. Like, certainly we know in the House and everybody on—in the House should recognize that, you know, Manitobans having access to paid sick leave and the delay for that fundamentally rests on the shoulder of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the Pallister government.

However, I think it is important for Manitobans to understand that the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) and the rest of his caucus also stood in the way of paid sick leave for Manitobans.

Why did he do that, and why is he denying the role he played in further delaying sick leave benefits?

**Mr. Lamont:** Just to be clear that this is a federal program that already existed that everybody could actually apply to. It was not—we were not—all that was happening was a housekeeping measure.

We asked that—we actually wanted it to be improved for two reasons: (1) we actually—because it's only limited to 10 days, and I just got an email today from somebody who is sitting at home unpaid because they can't get a confirmation on their test from—for—because they are not going to be protected. They are currently sitting at home past the 10-day mark, and they're going to get no protection, which is something we asked for and which was ignored.

And the second was that we asked for changes to the doctor's note that—which we actually did receive. The fact is that we wanted changes to it and which is a completely legitimate democratic—

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

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm a little—question the member on this resolution. I know pandemic is a big word. There's lots of moving parts here, and, you know, we've been at this for a number of months. And Manitoba team been led by the government and Dr. Roussin has done an outstanding job. And I think the suggestion of the member that we need some sort of inquiry, again, I think it taints the good work that's being done.

So I want to just ask the member: Is he aware that there's virtual care options, additional measures that

were taken? Is he aware of the micro-credential partnerships at Red River—

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

**Mr. Lamont:** Considering there is already an investigation being called into what happened at Maples, the idea that this government has done a good job is absolutely scandalous—scandalous. I had friends whose parents died in there, and they were told—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Lamont:** —that their parents weren't being fed. This is—this—the reason we need this is because people need to be held to account. There's a long history in this country of absolute seniors abuse being ignored in personal-care homes, level—at the level of criminal negligence.

If it happened in anyone's home, they would go to jail for it. If anyone at a child-care centre treated a child like that, they'd go to jail. The idea that this government wants to—that they want to pat themselves on the back for the single-most disastrous response—

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

The honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine).

**Ms. Fontaine:** Oh, miigwech, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for River Heights. I just noticed that now.

The honourable member for River Heights, on a question.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My question has to do with a problem during a crisis like that. One of the first casualties is often truth, and we're saying that here.

We had the Premier on Sunday saying that the contact tracing was up to date. We have headlines in the newspaper today saying it's not. We had—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Gerrard:** —word that the—from on high that there's no spreading in schools, but there's many examples of spread happening but contact tracing in schools not being done adequately. Why this public inquiry is clearly needed to get to the truth of—

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

**Mr. Lamont:** Again, this is—I thank the member. This is something we've been hearing over the weekend, that this was—that we're hearing from teachers that they are not hearing from their own—they're not hearing from public health, they're—that they're hearing from parents of students who are sick, over and over again. And—but those numbers are never showing up publicly.

So the fact is that we have a breakdown. We—that the complete breakdown in control of what's happened in this pandemic, where the public health doesn't actually know where infections are taking place. And we've seen some of the worst outbreaks. And we have a tragic situation in Steinbach where hospitals are being overwhelmed, where we've had—

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

Question period has expired.

### Debate

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The debate is open.

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** Good morning, everyone.

I kind of start today—it's always a privilege to rise, and even virtually, to discuss issues of important matters of all Manitobans. And I thank the member for bringing this resolution forward. It does allow us an opportunity to sit back and not only look at what we need to do going forward, but what we have done and what other provinces have done.

And I am shocked a bit to hear some of the answers to some of the questions, especially to mine and to the member from St. Johns. And the member is correct. We don't often, you know, sit along the same lines. I like to cook. She likes to bake. But other than that, the line of questioning still did not receive an answer.

And I do want to table a report from CBC News. And I'm just going to quote right from the report where it says: The Province has introduced legislation to make it easier for more workers to take sick days during COVID-19 and access federal benefits. However, the legislation, which expands the criteria for when a person is eligible for a job-protected leave, was blocked by the Manitoba Liberals.

\* (11:20)

So it is clear—and I have issued that forward, so I hope the table officer has a copy of that already—and it is important to realize when the member from St. Boniface says that, you know, they are working as a team and they want to move things forward, and I certainly have not seen evidence of that. I know during a surge in positive COVID cases here in the province, it's concerning for all of us and we are doing everything we can to help halt the spread of this virus and protect our most vulnerable people.

I know even in my own constituency of Brandon East, we have an outbreak right now at a long-term-care facility and the response team from Prairie Mountain Health was right on top of it. And, you know, we have partnered with the City of Brandon and their paramedics and emergency services who are now assisting in the Fairview Personal Care Home and everybody is coming together. That's what partnership is. Sure, it would be great to say, hey, this is over and we don't have to worry about anything, but it is—this virus is going to be here for a while.

I know, again, the goal of our government, besides working together with everybody to bring an end to the virus, but right now it's also about how do we live with the virus until that vaccine comes out. I know our goal is to support the health and well-being of all Manitobans and their loved ones, and our message is clear and it always has been clear: stay home. If you're not feeling well, stay home. And that's one of these things that this paid sick leave would've helped, but, unfortunately, you know, that got blocked in the House.

I do know—and we could go on about our differences. I mean, there's certainly different aspects. I sit back everyday and I listen to questions in question period and I listen to the basis of information that's used on these questions, and honestly, a lot of it, I don't know where it comes from.

You know, we talk about some investments that we've made in health care, and we've made some huge investments in health care. Since September, we have opened up new testing sites in Winnipeg—I believe five new ones—and even sites in Brandon and Winkler and Portage la Prairie.

We're doing what we can. There's always calls for staffing. And, you know, the regional health authorities are working hard, Shared Health is working hard in recruitment, but those are efforts, again, that come together. Just an example of what partnership is like, you know, working with Red River

College and Dakota Medical Centre, you know, where we have their doctors also providing testing.

So, again, we can look at how do we eliminate lineups, how do we—he talked about backlogs in COVID testing. My understanding is, right now, there are no backlogs. The results are going out; the tests are going in. We've added over 200 contact tracers from Statistics Canada. We've added public health nurses. The Red Cross has come on board. And this is eliminating the backlog. And, again, we've partnered with Red River College to do some rapid training, in addition to health-care aides, for personal-care homes that are now well-equipped to deal with their situations.

It's a tough subject, and, sure, we would all love to be—we'd all love to be out visiting with families and friends and it's just not that time. And to look at what we've done so far—and that's just health care and there's many other aspects. We could talk about businesses and the business communities and what we've done for them. You know, we talk about the Manitoba Bridge Grant, you know, \$5,000 for all these businesses that were forced to close. So we are truly all in this together, and that's with our communities.

I'm not sure if anybody—because some of you would've been busy this morning debating a bill in the House, but information released this morning is over 5,564 applications were received in one week for the Manitoba Bridge Grant.

These are things that we as a government are doing for Manitobans. Yes, we have a shop-local campaign, and I do know that a lot of the small businesses are working together to salvage their Christmas season. Just this morning, the Brandon Chamber of Commerce has put out a survey to all of its members and even small businesses who are not their members to create an online portal for shopping.

And I think that's one of the biggest misunderstandings that I'm seeing, is when shops and stores were closed to only items of essential services, a lot of people figured that was it, they couldn't buy other items. However, it's—in-person shopping for non-essential items has been—we're asking people to hold back, but you can still definitely buy those products. You go online, phone the business—go online if they do have online shopping, pay for your products online or over the phone and do curb-side pickup. It's a challenge that we're all facing, and it's something that we all have to work together to, you know, to make sure that happens.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we talk about—and we heard yesterday from the Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) and—continuing to put forth proper information on what is happening and what they are doing to keep staff and inmates safe. I do know that the Manitoba Legislature has been really reaching out and—through the ministers' offices themselves and government, reaching out to organizations.

And, again, we hear lots of information on whether it's just the normal flu shot, maybe it's the advanced flu shot and even a lot of talk on an upcoming vaccine. But, again, those are future things that we hold that we can gain access to, but we continue to move forward in what we're doing right now.

You know, for an example, when I talk about the flu shot, there is—the government has launched a Flu Shot Finder. And, again, I'm not sure how many of my colleagues here have received the flu shot or gone out and got it yet, but it is something that I do every year and I have done for the last, you know, 40 years, just because it's the right thing to do in my mind.

Again, we talk about enforcement and how do we enforce—it's—it is saddening to see some of the protests going on on the anti-mask movement and things like that. And it is disappointing, in my view, that these things are happening. Sure, people have a right to protest, and I think that's a basic right that we all have. But we need to understand, when we don't follow public health orders it puts everybody else at risk.

So we have a—over a million people in this province and, you know, our goal—all 57 of us in this Legislature, our goal is to bring forth our constituents' concerns and work on solutions on how we can help them. I mean, for example, investing 2.5 additional dollars to support provincial and municipal partners for additional training and resources to help enforce public health and emergency orders. GC—pardon me, G4S I believe is the company's name, has been hired as well.

But I don't think it's—we should rely on almost the 3,300 additional personnel that have been hired to enforce these things. Manitobans are smart people. Manitobans are caring people. They're loving people. And we want to see this virus go away as soon as possible, and we do that by working together. And that is something we should be doing here in the Legislature instead of bringing forward resolutions from a party that blocks bills that help Manitobans. And here we are discussing a bill that they want to come forth today that is unnecessary.

Let's all work together on team Manitoba, and let's work on beating this virus together.

Thank you very much.

**Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I'm glad that the Minister of Health was clapping for me as I got up. I'm sure he's going to appreciate the comments that I'm going to put on the record. *[interjection]* All in together, right. Okay.

Well, Deputy Speaker, I want to put a couple of words on the record in respect of the member for St. Boniface's (Mr. Lamont) resolution today, which is calling on the Manitoba government to call a public inquiry. While I would say that that is important, I would tell the minister—or, the member for St. Boniface that, unfortunately, the call for a public inquiry in Manitoba is at the prerogative of the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his government.

\* (11:30)

And so I would suggest to the House this morning that it doesn't seem very likely that the Premier is going to call a provincial inquiry into his utter failure at handling COVID-19—not only the Premier's utter failure at showing leadership in respect of mitigating the transmission of COVID-19 but the other failure of his Health Minister, as well—*[interjection]*—who we hear just chirping here as well.

It seems very unlikely that the same man that stood and doubled down his support and protection of his Health Minister when the Health Minister got up in this very Chamber—virtually, at any rate—and questioned the motivation of Manitoba doctors when they were offering expertise and advice that the government should've taken at that time or even previously.

So it seems very unlikely that the Premier or whoever the Premier's successor is, because we know, Deputy Speaker, that right now the Premier is counting the days to when he can retire and get to the beaches of Costa Rica and not have to deal with the mess of being a leader for Manitobans and dealing with all of the different things that he's supposed to be dealing with in the midst of a global pandemic but can't seem to get himself together to deal with.

And so we know that he's getting ready to retire, and we know that members opposite are starting to calculate—*[interjection]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Ms. Fontaine:** —who's going to run for leadership. Is it going to be the Minister for Health? Did he blow his chances at becoming the leader of the PC caucus? I would suggest to the House, yes, he did.

So, Deputy Speaker, I would—again, I know that the member for St. Boniface is trying to bring something forward, but certainly that's going to fall on ears that are not willing to even contemplate what the member for St. Boniface is putting forward.

What I will suggest again in this House, Deputy Speaker—three weeks ago I stood up in this House and I called on the government to support the Chief Medical Examiner calling a public inquest. And to disabuse the member for St. Boniface, who said that the—a public inquest wouldn't get to the information that he's seeking and that Manitobans are seeking: he's wrong on that.

In fact, the Chief Medical Examiner, which is independent of the Premier and the Health Minister and the Pallister government and has the ability to call for a public inquest—not only does the Chief Medical Examiner have the ability to call a public inquest, separate from—juxtaposed to what the member for St. Boniface is bringing forward today, this is actually law.

It is law, Manitoba law, under The Fatalities Inquiries Act, that the Chief Medical Examiner must call an inquest when there are deaths of Manitobans. And to be particularly clear this morning, Deputy Speaker, I'm going to read out the sections in which that is law in Manitoba.

In section 7(1) of the act, it requires that inquiries be conducted when deaths occur under specific circumstances, including but not limited to deaths due to a contagious disease that is a threat to public health, such as COVID-19, Deputy Speaker. And then, deaths brought about, and I quote, in a prescribed type or class of facility or institution.

And in the regulations of The Fatalities Inquiries Act, it actually lays out what those specific facilities are. And they are as such, Deputy Speaker: Revera Parkview Place Long Term Care Home—it's specifically noted in those regulations; the Revera Maples Long Term Care Home.

And I'm going to remind Manitobans, when I sent that letter to the Chief Medical Examiner at the time, the deaths at that time for Parkview were 23, and for Maples they were eight. And I want to share with the House today, on this particular date, Maples has

had 47 deaths of Manitobans; Parkview Place has had 27 deaths of Manitobans.

The Chief Medical Examiner is, by law, required to call a public inquest into those deaths to understand the manner in which those deaths occurred, the circumstances in which those deaths were predicated upon and the response of those officials, including government.

The other thing that a public inquest called by the Chief Medical Examiner does is that it can compel witnesses to testify before a Provincial Court judge in respect of the conditions in which these deaths occurred. It can also subpoena records. It can subpoena records from the Department of Health. It can subpoena records from the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) office directly.

It can look at all the mitigating circumstances that has contributed to the heartbreaking number of deaths that have occurred in PCHs like Parkview and Maples. That is why a public inquest under the fatalities act is so important and why the Chief Medical Examiner is required to do so under law.

I will also share with Manitobans this morning that there's not a time limit on when the Chief Medical Examiner can call a public inquest. If the Chief Medical Examiner wanted, the Chief Medical Examiner could call a public inquest this morning, today, or tomorrow, but immediately if the Chief Medical Examiner would do so.

And why, three weeks ago, we made this call and why I sent my letter to the Chief Medical Examiner is because Manitobans are entitled and are due the information on how their loved ones passed, what were the conditions in which their loved ones passed, what were the mitigating factors that contributed to their loved ones passing from COVID-19.

I know that folks on this side of the House—almost every single day one of us is taking a call from Manitobans who have lost a loved one in a PCH, and it is difficult to hear. It is difficult to try and offer comfort and some type of reasoning to folks who lost their loved ones and, as I shared several weeks back, we know that often loved ones died alone. We know that loved ones, when they died, died in circumstances that none of us would want our loved ones to undergo. And that is the reality of where we are currently situated under the leadership, or lack thereof, of the Premier and the Health Minister.

And so the very least that these two men can do and the very least that these two men can offer

families of loved ones who have lost their lives is to encourage the Chief Medical Examiner, to send their own letter to the Chief Medical Examiner encouraging that he call immediately a public inquest. It is the bare minimum that they can do to ensure that Manitobans get the information that they are entitled to on how their loved ones passed.

All Manitobans deserve to die in dignity and we have to do everything that we can to ensure that—

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

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** Good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege to be here with the Legislative Assembly this morning and share some comments.

One of the advantages and one of the very fortunate things that we have as legislators is that we do have this ability to work remotely while a significant number of Canadians and, indeed, people around the world, don't quite have the privilege that we have as legislators to have access to the technology necessary but, more importantly, the forum to have these very frank and these very open discussions.

\* (11:40)

And so I want to thank the independent member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) for bringing forward his private member's resolution this morning for us to discuss and have consideration on and put some remarks on the record. Because that is the wonderful thing about parliamentary process is that what we say, does become part of the permanent record and it allows us to put in Hansard our perspectives and our views on any number of subjects.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened very intently because I think it's important we may have different opposing views, whether it's with the members of the NDP party or members of the Liberal Party, but that being said, we do also have a significant amount in common. I don't doubt that there isn't a single MLA in this Legislature who doesn't want the very best health care and protection for all of Manitobans, in particular those vulnerable Manitobans who are most at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of the things, when I was listening to the independent member for St. Boniface, one of the words that really struck me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in his comments, was that word accountability, and I think that is an important word that should be at the back of all our minds day in and day out as elected

officials. As elected officials, we are role models within our communities, and I think a lot of individuals look to us for actions and advice, and it is important that we, as elected officials, remain accountable to our constituents.

Sometimes that accountability can be done in very simple ways, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in particular when we're talking about COVID-19. I mean, the very simplest things that all of us can do, and Dr. Brent Roussin and other health officials have consistently and constantly reminded us as Manitobans, to focus on the fundamentals—washing our hands, wearing a mask, maintaining at least a six-foot distance and, as noted by my colleague and friend, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), get your flu shot.

And, again, like the member for Brandon East, this is something that I and my family do on an annual basis. In fact, it was just a few weeks ago that in the community of La Salle they brought in their—they brought in—the public health brought in a number of nurses to do a community vaccination. And it was terrific to see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lineup of individuals out in a community centre—all properly spaced, but a lineup nonetheless—that stretched a considerable distance.

And all those individuals, both young and old, and a number of children holding the hands of their parents, were in line to get the flu. And in so many of those instances, that flu shot, that accountability for that flu shot, wasn't so much about protecting themselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during these COVID times. It is about protecting others.

And I think that's the view that we need to look at at all our actions as legislators in Manitoba. We need to look at how can we protect other individuals because, in protecting others, we protect ourselves. And it is—goes beyond the simple protection in terms of people protected from crime that our police forces and judicial system takes care of, to the protection of health, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There are and there have been challenges within the system, within the system coast to coast. Yesterday, I believe, I read in Calgary—or in Alberta, I apologize, I think they hit over 1,500 cases. I think they've also seen record cases in Saskatchewan and as well as in Quebec and Ontario.

So this is a situation that is occurring throughout the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am very proud to be a part of the government and in all—and indeed, all legislators who have taken COVID-19 seriously,

who have addressed it in a—I believe in a responsible and scientific and a medically focused manner.

You only need to look at other jurisdictions and, literally, just a few hours south of us, the Dakotas—whether it's North or South—you can see the difference when a non-medical, a non-scientific approach goes to be in vocation of legislation or any kind of government rules and that. When we have government officials—and again, unfortunately, not just south of the border, I mean, we have those in our own communities here in Canada but we don't have them in the sense of having those sort of direct consequences. The numbers south, in Dakotas, are indicative of the enormity of COVID-19 in those communities, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But—so, while the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont)—the independent member for St. Boniface has brought forward, I think, an interesting resolution—a private member's resolution this morning for all of us to have a look at, I think it should give us pause and give us all an opportunity to reflect not only what we, as individuals, have done to ensure that our constituents have the necessary information.

And really, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my—all my colleagues, I think that, if there's one thing that this pandemic has shown me as an individual and as a legislator, is the importance of information—importance of accurate information.

I think all of us are inundated with emails, not just from constituents but from people around the world that want to target legislators. But you have emails that are simple, straight and forward, related to COVID and perspectives and—about, you know, obviously the mental health aspects and loneliness aspects that can occur due to isolation and that.

But then you get the extremes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have extremes of individuals, you know, with some whispering conspiracy theories and some out and out just shouting conspiracy theories. And it truly is unfortunate that those voices are being heard in too many communities, that those voices encourage others to ignore the truth that exists.

And I'm not talking about my truth, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm not talking about the member for St. Boniface or the member for St. John's' (Ms. Fontaine) truth. I'm talking about the truth from our medical professionals.

If we cannot, as a society, look to our health-care professionals and ask their advice and seek their

information and use that information to bring in programs, policies and that that will hold us as government and, as indeed, all legislative officials accountable for our actions, but that will protect all vulnerable Manitobans.

So, with those comments, again, I want to thank the member for—the independent member for St. Boniface (Mr. Lamont) for bringing this resolution forward, for having this conversation. Again, it reminds me of how very, very blessed we are as Manitobans, as Canadians, that we can have these conversations even against a backdrop of a pandemic and we can have these conversations in a very civil manner, in a very reasonable manner of logical and open debate.

And so I look forward to hearing the comments of other legislative colleagues here in the Chamber, the virtual Chamber this morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we continue to take a look at the independent member's—

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

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** There's no question that this government's COVID response has been disastrous, and Manitobans are paying the price.

This government's failure goes back so much further than the pandemic. During this government's first time—term, I was still employed at a community health clinic. It was painfully aware to me as a front-line mental health-care provider that this was a government that didn't take the responsibility seriously.

Two Health ministers under this government were simply uninterested in meeting with the executive director of that clinic. Those Health ministers under this government were completely incurious about the important work of a health clinic that were the leaders on women's health care for more than 35 years in this province. Both ministers refused to learn about the important work of birthing and of abortion provision in this province and, in fact, would not even speak the word abortion or engage on the issues of reproductive health.

\* (11:50)

Knowing this, though, I'm unsurprised but terribly disappointed that this government did not respond to the official opposition's early and ongoing request to provide a gendered response to the pandemic. Their policies have long shown that the

well-being of women, including trans women, non-binary people and children, are just not a priority.

Throughout the pandemic, we have also seen that seniors are just as easy for them to write off. This government's ability to prioritize the bottom line over people's health and well-being has been clearly demonstrated in the health-care system before and since the pandemic began.

They stripped the capacity from our health-care system over the past five years, leaving us woefully unprepared to face COVID-19. They slashed ICU capacities, closed emergency rooms and diagnostic services, forcing people to travel further from home for care. We're still hearing from front-line workers of all sorts, who don't have sufficient PPE or have expired PPE.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) refused to have some foresight and expand our COVID testing capacity during the summer. This meant that when the second wave hit, as we all knew it would, people had to wait days in tests lines, at first with no washroom access, only to be turned away and told to come back tomorrow, and then they had to wait weeks to get the results.

Another way that the government has shown us what does and does not matter to them is by slashing funding from personal-care homes and not heeding the warnings of other provinces or even seem to pay attention to the devastation in personal-care homes in other parts of the country last spring.

They failed to act on reports of poor care at personal-care homes, including Parkview Place and the Maples, dating back years. If those concerns had been addressed, fewer families would be losing loved ones right now. Under the Pallister government, seniors have seen cuts to the services they need and deserve.

And today, we woke to the news that as COVID-19 deaths soar, nurse investigators at Manitoba's medical examiner's office are warning that they're desperate for resources. This is another department that was underfunded and understaffed before the pandemic and then during the pandemic, staff were required to take off five unpaid days. The result of these terrible decisions is a small, stressed staff team that's on the verge of burnout. This is a role that requires at least one team member to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Due to the demands of the position, investigators are required to be nurses with experience in

emergency or acute care, who have extensive medical knowledge. Yet in the middle of the pandemic, the office is underfunded, understaffed and has been provided no additional resources, nor have vacancies been filled. Staff have identified that they're concerned about compromising the quality of their work and the serious impact on families who are in need of timely information and ongoing support while they are grieving.

I'm going to jump to the end of my notes, as I'm aware that we're running out of time this morning. And so what I wanted to say is that I think that there are members on the other side of the House who are feeling what I'm feeling right now.

I'm certain that some ministers and others in the backbenches are as devastated as I am by what their government has done, and I wonder why they don't speak—stand up and speak out, why they aren't putting constituents first instead of loyalty to a failing government. I'm certain some of my colleagues on that side of the House cry at the losses piling up for the people they represent. So why will they not act?

This morning, I read a series of tweets from Winnipeg journalist Melissa Martin. They summed up my own feelings so well, and I believe her words deserve to be heard and put on the record here in this House.

I quote: I think, months from now and looking back, what will stay with me is how fast it all started to fall apart, and how desperate the efforts needed to be to keep it together. Every system now affected, so fragile in ways we've never wanted to fully see before.

This is still what's the most jarring, is how it's felt like one day everything was okay and then you went to sleep and when you woke up every single public system was overwhelmed. It wasn't just one night, of course, but it wasn't all that many nights either.

How much of any sense of security we had in these systems, these key supports in our lives, was

bought and paid for by enough people doing more than they should, and every bit as much as they could, to keep it functioning just well enough to get by?

Every day now it's either something in my inbox or some story I'm reading about some segment of the front lines that's just about at a breaking point; and every time, there's also a note, something about how it was all they could handle even when things were normal.

Some of the emails I get now won't become news because there's nothing that hasn't already been explored, just cries of help from workers who have nothing more to give. Half the time, they don't even want it to be reported, I've noticed. They just want someone to know. End quote.

Sadly, Manitobans know that in this crisis they can only turn to the opposition or to the journalists to be heard and tell their stories, but they deserve to have a government who will listen and respond.

Overall, this government has displayed disastrous reactive responses instead of careful advanced planning when it comes to COVID-19 and must be held to account.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The next speaker, if you indicated from the independents, is there anyone to speak?

If not, I will go on to the honourable member for Dauphin.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** It's great to be able to stand up here and to talk to this resolution. Again, I thank—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. When this matter's before the House, the honourable member for Dauphin will have 10 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 p.m., the House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m.



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, November 24, 2020**

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