

## MLA's assistant claimed by COVID-19

### Springfield resident worked for Infrastructure Minister Ron Schuler, who has refused to reveal his vaccination status

By: [Carol Sanders](#) | Posted: 7:00 PM CST Monday, Nov. 29, 2021

The constituency assistant of a Manitoba cabinet minister who has refused to reveal his COVID-19 immunization status has died from the virus, sparking allegations the MLA's influence, in part, led her to reject the vaccine. Gladys Hayward Williams died Nov. 18 after battling COVID-19, a source close to the family told the *Free Press* Monday. She worked for Infrastructure Minister and Springfield-Ritchot MLA Ron Schuler, the only member of the legislature who has refused to divulge his vaccination status. "She died as a direct result of the misinformation that had been fed to her by Ron Schuler as well as others in the community," said the source. "I feel upset about what happened and I don't want this to happen to anybody else," the source said, without pointing to any specific misinformation Hayward Williams received. Schuler's office refused to comment on Hayward Williams' death.



Gladys Hayward Williams, right, with infrastructure minister Ron Schuler, when Williams received the Queen's Jubilee Medal in 2012. Williams died Nov. 18 after battling COVID-19, a source close to the family said. "Out of respect for the family we will not provide comment. In addition, providing false and misleading information to your readers doesn't help the family with their grieving," said the statement, which did not elaborate on what information was false and misleading. Hayward Williams, 70, was "perfectly healthy" until contracting the virus then dying in St. Boniface Hospital, the source said. She wasn't vaccinated in spite of being urged to do so by those closest to her, they said. She is survived by her husband, R.M. of Springfield councillor Peter Williams, three children and seven grandchildren. "This is preventable — this is tragic," said the source, who felt the cause of her death is being "covered up... The truth should be out there."

Hayward Williams' obituary makes no mention of her having COVID-19 and doesn't mention Schuler by name, only that she worked as a constituency assistant "to the MLA."

The source questioned Schuler's motive for not commenting on his assistant's death. "I feel that it's being done not out of respect for the family, but trying to not make Schuler look bad." Schuler has refused to comment on his vaccination status — even after Premier Heather Stefanson announced it will be mandatory for anyone entering the legislature as soon as Dec. 15. The infrastructure minister has declined to say what he plans to do when only those fully vaccinated can attend the building.

"It doesn't make sense. We're in the fourth wave, a new variant is on the rise and you have one single holdout in your caucus who has a ministerial position and a sacred responsibility to protect Manitobans and doesn't want to get vaccinated." — NDP house leader Nahanni Fontaine "Is he going to move his office permanently to his home?" asked NDP house leader Nahanni Fontaine, who said Schuler has for months refused to disclose his vaccination status.

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"It doesn't make sense. We're in the fourth wave, a new variant is on the rise and you have one single holdout in your caucus who has a ministerial position and a sacred responsibility to protect Manitobans and doesn't want to get vaccinated," said the member for St. Johns. She said Stefanson should have already ejected Schuler from caucus. "At this point kick him out already," said the NDP justice critic, who accused the Progressive Conservative government of "capitulating to its base."

The source close to Hayward Williams said Schuler is trying to "ride the fence" by not speaking up for or against COVID-19 vaccination. "He's got to pick a side of the fence (and say) 'Yes, I'm fully vaccinated and yes, I feel it's important and all my constituents should go out and get vaccinated. I'm going to support that and make efforts to try and make sure that happens' or 'No, I'm sorry. I'm anti-vax and don't think getting one is right' and put that out there," they said. "He's trying to ride the fence and get voters from both sides and I don't think that's right. I'm going to try and push him off the fence."

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After 20 years of reporting on the growing diversity of people calling Manitoba home, Carol moved to the legislature bureau in early 2020.