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DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): It is my duty to inform the House that the Speaker is unavoidably absent. Therefore, in accordance with the statutes, I would ask the Assistant Deputy Speaker to please take the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): 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 our people. Amen.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of Anishinaabeg, Anishinewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline and Nehethowuk nations. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit. We respect the spirit and intent of treaties and treaty making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation and collaboration.

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Speaker's Statement

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I have a statement for the House. I am advising the House that Madam Speaker received a letter from the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) and the member for River Heights, indicating that his—that the member for River Heights has identified Bill 238, The Personal Care Home Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended), as his selected bill for this session.

As a reminder to the House, rule 25 permits each independent member to select one private member's bill per session to proceed to a second reading vote, and requires the Government House Leader and the

member to provide written notice as to the date and time of the debate and the vote.

In accordance with this rule and the letter, Bill 238 will be called for debate this morning as follows: debate on second reading will begin at 10 a.m., questions put to the—put on the second reading motion at 10:55 a.m.

Accordingly, I will now recognize the honourable member for River Heights to move his second reading motion to begin this debate.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 238—The Personal Care Home Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the MLA for Tyndall Park that Bill 238, The Personal Care Home Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended); Le loi sur la responsabilisation des foyers des soins personnels (modification de diverses lois), be now read a second time, and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Bill 238 provides for the establishment and the operation of family councils in personal-care homes. While family councils have been attempted to be set up in some personal-care homes, there's not a legislated framework for them. This bill provides for the councils and sets up sufficient parameters to ensure that personal-care homes will set up councils, and that's—and that such councils can be an important bridge between residents and operators of personal-care homes in order to improve the quality of care in these homes.

We learned from the experience during COVID-19 that we need to make improvements in personal-care homes. Our seniors who have contributed in a major way to the quality of life that we experience today are precious people. They need to be able to spend the last years of their lives in a high quality of life, in dignity and in a loving environment. Our elders deserve no less.

During the many years that I have served as the MLA for River Heights, I've seen numerous issues that have arisen in personal-care homes. As an

example, there has been and still is a tendency to be too quick to use anti-psychotic drugs.

A number of years ago, when I was visiting in Portage la Prairie, there were many issues at Lions Prairie Manor. After I raised these concerns, which were brought to me by family members, there was an investigation conducted by the Protection for Persons in Care Office. The Protection for Persons in Care Office found 12 cases of mistreatment. It should be noted that this was a facility which was a public facility operated by Southern Health.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we all saw terrible tragedies in personal-care homes in Manitoba. A COVID-19 outbreak at the 'mers'-Maples Long Term Care Home in Winnipeg occurred in the fall of 2020: 74 staff and 157 residents tested positive for COVID-19 and there were 56 deaths linked to that outbreak. And there were many more deaths and problems in other personal-care homes, which were revealed also during the pandemic.

Conditions at the Maples Long Term Care Home were a disaster. In part because the provincial government failed to heed the warnings that Liberal MLAs had provided five months previously before the 'outbake' of COVID in the Maples Personal Care Home. Liberals had noted that at outbreaks in other jurisdictions, there was an almost immediate loss of many staff who were either infected or had to be quarantined because there were close contacts of those who were infected.

Liberals had called in May of that year for the province to have a rapid response team well-trained and ready for this. The government failed to put in place the rapid response team until after the disastrous outbreak was raging in full force. Fifty-six lives were lost because inadequate preparations were not made.

* (10:10)

Today, we are talking about important changes so that family members can form a family council and provide input to the operator and the staff at the personal-care home. There are several reasons why such a family council is really important.

One of these is that, for a number of reasons, resident councils are not sufficiently effective. Some or many residents in a personal-care home may have a degree of dementia. Some or many residents in the personal-care home may feel intimidated by staff and be reluctant to speak up. Some may have difficulty in speaking up because their native language is not

English or French or because of a stroke or other debilitating condition.

Family members and/or close friends of residents of a personal-care home often spend long hours in the home, spending time with and caring for their loved ones who are residents of the home. They are frequently very good and close observers of what is happening and, as such, can provide highly knowledgeable advice to the operators and staff of the personal-care home.

But—and this is the rub—in order to provide such advice, there needs to be a more formal process, and that is why this legislation to enable and facilitate the formation of family councils and their operation is so important.

This legislation provides for the establishment of family councils, which will facilitate communication between family members and the operator of the personal-care home. They will also provide a venue where family concerns can be discussed and brought forward.

I mentioned earlier that it's possible to try to set up a family council now, but the process is not adequate. I give you an example. A number of concerns arose at the Extencare Oakview Place. A group of family members got together informally, sort of like a family council. They did their best to communicate their concerns with the operator and the staff of the personal-care homes, but the process was not nearly as effective as it could have been with a formal process and an established family council.

If there had been a family council set up ahead of time, indeed, the problems might have been prevented or at least been caught before they rose to the extent that they did. If there had been a formal family council, they could achieve—have achieved much more to help the residents.

It is the experience at Extencare Oakview Place which led directly to bringing forward this bill. It is my experience personally that talking with family members of personal-care home residents over many years that tells me that family councils are badly needed. Family councils can be very effective, in particular in improving the quality of care for residents of personal-care homes.

And that is why we need this legislation, and that is why I hope that all MLAs will support this bill to be

passed in second reading today, and go to committee for the next stage.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Merci, miigwech.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held, and questions may be addressed in the following sequence: the first question may be asked by a member from another party; any subsequent questions must follow a rotation between parties; each independent member may ask one question. And no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): This proposed legislation would establish the role of family councils.

Can the member opposite speak how family is defined within this proposed legislation?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes.

It is the intent to have this defined broadly, and that is—that it is my experience that it is often not just a wife or a husband who is there; it is very often a daughter or a son or a granddaughter or a grandson. Sometimes it is a parent.

Occasionally, if you have somebody who is in a personal-care home because they have had stroke when they're very young, it could even be an aunt or an uncle—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'm just wondering, with that question in mind regarding how is family defined: Can the member provide clarity in regards to what the options there might be for someone living in a personal-care home who maybe doesn't have any blood-related family living the city or the province or a location that would allow them to participate?

So, the definition of family—is it broad enough to include those who aren't biologically linked to personal-care home residents?

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

The bill very specifically allows for the inclusion of one or more representatives of personal-care home residents. And so, that representative could be a friend, it could be whoever the personal—the resident chooses. And, indeed, it could be more than one person.

So the legislation is permissive. It is meant to be friendly to those who care for their loved ones in the personal-care home and not to be exclusive.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): I thank my colleague for introducing this legislation this morning.

When we're talking about family councils, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm wondering if the member can share any other jurisdictions Canada that this is modelled after and, more important, their impact, positively and negatively as to where we can go with this legislation in terms of supporting it?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, Ontario's Fixing Long-Term Care Act in 2021 sets out provisions to allow every long-term care home to establish a family council. So, that's Ontario.

Alberta's resident and 'famiry' councils act in 2018 supports the establishment of resident and family councils. And, to be noted, that this allows the participation of residents.

BC's Community Care and Assisted Living Act, 2002, sets out the right for residents to be represented by a family council and the experience, to the extent that I'm aware of it, has been positive.

MLA Asagwara: Can the member provide any insight as to whether or not he thinks that the PC government's failure to meet their own commitment of establishing 1,200 additional personal-care-home beds has had any impact on the state of personal-care homes across Manitoba?

We know that, in fact, there's been a net loss of approximately 216 personal-care-home beds, despite this government's commitment in 2016 to make the— to add 1,200 additional personal-care-home beds.

So, can the member provide his thoughts on whether or not this failure to meet their own standards and actually have a net loss of these beds has had an impact on personal-care homes in Manitoba?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, the stresses on personal-care homes over a number of years clearly show that the family council is badly needed.

And it really doesn't depend on the size or the number of homes, it depends on the fact that each home should have an operating family council, and this can be very beneficial at times when there are stresses in a home, then families participate in a myriad of ways. And it can be very, very helpful.

And that's another reason why this family council is so important.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank my colleague for River Heights for bringing forward this really important piece of legislation, and just for all of the work he has done to help seniors in our province, here in Manitoba.

* (10:20)

My question for the member is: Could he speak a little bit to how a family council would not only help the residents who are living in long-term-care homes, but it's also a grounds and a means for friends and families who may have loved ones in long-term-care homes? Could he speak a little bit to that?

Mr. Gerrard: We've seen, over the last number of years, how important it is throughout the health system to have people who are advocates for those who are vulnerable; in this case, those who are residents. And in this case, having family or friends being able to advocate them is extraordinarily important. And it's a benefit, not just to the residents and the families, it's a benefit to the operator of the home, because they can bring forward issues which will make the operation of the home better and smoother.

And so, really, it's a no-brainer; whichever way you look at it, we need to do this.

MLA Asagwara: Can the member provide a bit of his thoughts on how the concerns that would be brought forward by this council would be actioned? So, what is the relationship between the council and the personal-care home and the—I guess the protocols or the mechanisms that would be in place in order for the concerns or ideas that would be brought forward by such council to actually be actioned upon?

So, I'm just curious to know, you know, what resources are needed in order to support that? Is it more resources from government or what exactly needs to be in place?

Mr. Gerrard: This family council includes the presence of one or more representatives of the operator of the personal-care home. It improves provisions that the personal-care-home operator must provide specific, helpful information to members of the family council.

But it provides, most of all, an opportunity for dialogue. And I think that that's where this really can be most useful; that the operator of the personal-care home can learn a tremendous amount, in my experience, from talking with family members, and that there are incredible opportunities for improvement.

And of course, if an operator is not fulfilling their promise—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Lagassé: Can the member explain by making these reports of abuse and neglect publicly available, how will this impact the personal safety and right to privacy for the residents and the family impacted by the neglect or abuse?

Mr. Gerrard: The information that is collected and provided is aggregate information. It's not releasing personal information about individual residents.

I want to finish up what I said earlier on. If an operator is not working substantially with the council, then the family members can come to their MLA, like the MLA for Notre Dame, and their MLA can bring forward the issues in a venue like this.

Thank you.

MLA Asagwara: So, I appreciate the member providing the responses he has so far. He's provided a good amount of detail in his answers, and I'm wondering about the reports that would be made public. You know, it can be very distressing for families to read reports of that nature online, and I'm wondering if he can provide some clarity around what the descriptions would be—what they look like online.

So, what would the criteria be in terms of what information is disseminated and made public? How would the PHIA rights of residents be protected, and also, how do we ensure that people reading that information have the supports—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Gerrard: The kind of information which is provided online is information which is helpful to families. In my experience, for example, even with the very distressing report of the Maples Personal Care Home, that family members were actually very pleased that the problems were brought out into the open so they could be discussed and then resolved.

And the expectation here is that providing what is really a fairly minimum amount of information can considerably improve the ability of families to advocate for residents and to improve conditions.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Time for questions has now expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The floor is open for debate.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): I'd like to thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing forward Bill 238, The Personal Care Home Accountability Act. I'm thankful to be in a riding that supports our seniors.

In Dawson Trail, we have two seniors service groups: Seine River senior services for seniors and Taché Senior Resources. Both these groups work to ensure our seniors have the resources and supports they need. And I am grateful for the wonderful work they do.

But I'd also be remiss to not mention the Villa Youville and the fantastic work that they do. They've got a very unique setting there in Ste. Anne, where they've got from the P-C-H-N all the way to assisted living, as well as independent living. And I find that this family model that the member for River Heights is talking about is really kind of magnified in that facility. Because if you have someone in the PCH and they're married and they can still live in the independent living, they're under the one roof so they can come back and forth.

As a son, a brother and a father, I understand the importance of having family that is involved in my life, and me in theirs. And family that is able to stand up and advocate for one another. We all have a duty to ensure our seniors are taken care of. We have a duty to support all Manitobans in their aging journeys. Not only do we need to support our seniors but also their families and their caregivers along the way.

Who better is there to advocate and determine the best care for our seniors than family that has been there from day one? Our parents, our grandparents, our aunts and uncles: they are the ones who have installed the values that we have in us today. We have an obligation to them to also make sure that their values, their needs are being met in every way possible.

Our government has always known that our aging population is of the utmost importance and we have 'tremendence'—tremendous amount of respect for them. After everything they have contributed to our way of life, raising their families and building our communities and what they continue to contribute to Manitoba, we know they deserve the best.

Our goal—the goal of our Manitoba government—is to support the health and well-being of our seniors and their loved ones. Manitoba seniors deserve to have the respect and dignity of the independent and

empowered lives. And for the first time ever, our government has put a minister in charge of our seniors. A minister that was put forward—that has put forward a seniors strategy to focus and invest in the well-being of seniors in our province. Our minister's consulting with seniors and those who work with and care for and love them to make sure they have the best interests at heart. If that doesn't show our Manitoba government's dedication to supporting our aging population the way they want, I don't know if anything will.

All of us need and want different things. And that is why bringing initiatives to ensure our seniors have what they want and need is important. New initiatives that ensure older adults can age in their communities and their homes as long as they choose will enhance their quality of life.

Our 'gouvermain' made historic investments in Budget 2023. The Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care increased the initiatives by over 72 per cent. What was \$54 million is now \$92 million. And that is incredible.

Together, we're making Manitoba a great place to age. Our government has committed over \$45 million in funding to support the implementation of the 17 recommendations of the Stevenson review. The recommendations will help strengthen the care provided in all of Manitoba personal-care homes and will make a difference for families, staff and residents.

The Stevenson review highlighted the need for improving staffing levels and our government—sorry, and our government isn't listening. There was an increase of \$13.8 million that is being provided in 2023, 2024 in response to the Stevenson review, to implement staff and emergency preparedness technology improvements in personal-care homes all across Manitoba.

* (10:30)

This \$13.8 million encompasses targeted funding for the following initiatives stemming from the Stevenson review. Establishing an infection prevention and control program to better prepare for any disease outbreaks. Increased allied 'heas'—allied health staffing within PCHs, including occupational therapists, physiotherapists, rehab aides, dieticians, social workers and recreational therapists.

Increased housing—housekeeping staff, which will include health-care aides, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses; enhanced information and communication capabilities, to better manage human resources, staffing issues before they become critical;

enhancing Internet access for personal-care homes in rural and northern locations; and increased emergency management staffing.

I must say that some of the stories that I come forward regarding the lack of care for seniors across our nation is an absolute tragedy. That is why I'm so honoured to be part of a government and to work alongside my colleagues who wholeheartedly care for the elderly in Manitoba, and work tirelessly to ensure that everyone has what they need when they need it.

The health and well-being of Manitobans is our top priority as we move forward and heal Manitoba after going through a pandemic. Again, we'd like to thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for bringing forward Bill 238, The Personal Care Home Accountability Act.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I'm always grateful to put a few words on the record in regards to health care in Manitoba, and this is a particularly important issue, as it is speaking, you know, directly to the needs of seniors in our province. Disproportionately, seniors are not the only people who live in personal-care homes, but they are the majority of folks who reside in long-term care and personal-care homes, and so I'll be speaking to this bill through that lens, Acting Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to thank our colleague, the MLA for River Heights, for bringing this bill forward. You know, he's already put words on the record that outline sort of where his perspective is coming from, and amplifying the voices of families that he's been in communication with, and I really respect that. I think that it's really important that when we bring any legislation forward, that we ensure that we're centering the voices and the lived experiences of those who are most impacted by a legislation, and so I want to thank him for making the effort to bring this bill forward.

You know, here in Manitoba, since 2016, we have seen the current government not take the necessary steps to ensure that long-term care, personal-care homes across our province are adequately resourced. We saw, you know, funding to personal-care homes cut pre-pandemic. We saw aspects of health-care, that we know seniors really depend on being there for them and having strong infrastructure, be cut and undermined by this government.

One basic example would be cuts that were made to in-patient physiotherapy and occupational therapy in hospitals. A cut that would see many seniors—to date, we know, you know, well over 1,000 folks, but

many seniors not be able to get the physiotherapy and occupational therapy they needed in hospital, post-hip and knee surgeries. Which, I think, the general public understands the implications of that, but certainly if you'd taken any time to do a little bit of reading in this area, you understand that, when seniors undergo surgeries of that magnitude, of that significance, you know, the recovery process within the first 24 to 72 hours post-op is incredibly important. And not having in that first 24 to 72, extending to about a week or two, not having occupational and physiotherapy available really impacted negatively the outcomes for these seniors.

And so, we see that folks, you know, in personal-care homes and in long-term care who depend on those homes being adequately resourced, we see the folks who depend on our health-care system in areas like orthopedic surgery being adequately resourced, we see that unfortunately, due to this government's cuts and mismanagement of our health-care system, how it's negatively impacted seniors in Manitoba, and, ultimately, negatively impacted the health outcomes of seniors in Manitoba.

And I mentioned pre-pandemic decision making because we saw, during the COVID-19 pandemic, what happens when a government cuts health care to the bone: you create a health-care system that cannot respond to the acute needs of its citizens. And we saw that personal-care homes in Manitoba, which had been underfunded and cut by this government—we saw that personal-care homes who relied on staff who, under this government, had had their wages frozen for quite some time; we saw personal-care homes where allied health-care professionals were denied a contract by this government; we saw them unable to react or even act proactively and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

And as a result, there were catastrophic outcomes. This is a government that has been resistant to providing information to Manitobans—basic information that Manitobans depend on to know how to better support their loved ones in personal-care homes.

It should be stated on the record as a reminder to this House—especially considering this bill is talking about publishing reports online and being transparent, that's really what it's talking about—that the only reason why Manitobans were made aware of what was going on at Maples Personal Care Home where 56 residents died during the pandemic, was because a paramedic posted what they witnessed when they

were called to respond to Maples Personal Care Home on Reddit.

A local paramedic responded to a call from Maples Personal Care Home and described nightmarish circumstances and posted it on Reddit because they knew that that might be the only way the government would pay attention. That is an incredibly shameful moment in Manitoba's history, where the only way a government would respond to dozens of residents dying in a personal-care home was due to a social media post from a first responder.

It's incredibly shameful because this government had actually been asked for help before that point and had not responded. And time and time again, that is what we see from this government: people reaching out for help, pleading for help, asking their government to do what a government is supposed to do and this government closing the door on those folks who are pleading for their assistance.

And in the case of Maples Personal Care Home, the outcomes were devastating. And rightly so, many Manitoba families have mobilized for the sake of other families not having to go through what they endured, to see changes happen in our health-care system in regards to long-term care and personal-care homes.

I know that the government will say things like, well, you know what? We've got the Stevenson report and we're acting on that and that's good enough. But we also know that the Stevenson report is inherently flawed, that probably one of the most important, if not the most important question posed to this government, posed in regards to that report was, who is responsible?

Who is responsible for the devastation we saw at Maples, at Parkview Place, in long-term-care homes across Manitoba? And that is the one question that report not only failed to answer but avoided answering entirely, intentionally. And so that report is inherently flawed because there's actually no accountability at the heart of it.

* (10:40)

And I've said this before in the House, that in order for anyone, particularly a government, to move forward in a better way, in a way that improves our health-care system, you've got to be dealing with a government that's accountable.

And this is a government, this PC government, first under Brian Pallister, now under the Stefanson

government, that has done everything they possibly can to avoid accountability. They'll blame anybody and everybody else before looking in their political mirrors and saying, you know what? We have to be the ones to fix the mistakes and the chaos we've created.

And so, I certainly understand the desire to create new mechanisms for accountability, for transparency, because those are the areas this government continues to fail and refuses to invest in. We still have inadequate staffing across personal care homes in Manitoba.

Allied health-care professionals still don't have a deal in Manitoba, which is mitigating our ability to retain and recruit allied health-care professionals to personal care homes. We still are losing nurses from our health-care system in droves, right now, because of the mistreatment by this government.

Long-term-care homes still do not have the support that they deserve from this government. And seniors across Manitoba are well aware of that. And they will remember that in the coming months as we head to the polls.

So, I thank the member for bringing this forward, and I want to make it very clear that this government has failed seniors. They've failed personal-care home staff who love their jobs and want personal-care homes to be stronger in Manitoba. And the fact that we have a net loss of personal-care home beds in Manitoba, despite their promise, is a disgrace.

Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Always a pleasure to get up and speak to important legislation. I'd like to thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for the work that he has put into this. I have served for many years with the member from River Heights and—great respect for him and the work that he does.

In case the Chamber doesn't know, he was one of the most pre-eminent pediatric oncologists this province ever had and did amazing work. And so I'd like to focus my attention to this legislation in dealing with family councils at personal-care homes.

I look around the Chamber and I say to each and every member here, there's only a matter of time which separates us from perhaps needing these services. So, we want to be very mindful of what happens. We probably have loved ones in them, whether

it's grandparents or parents or aging aunts and uncles, or relatives of some kind, friends.

And so, they're very important. They're important to what we do here as society; taking care of our aged. It's important. These are men and women who have done amazing amount of work for us, for our city and for our province and our country. We want to make sure that they're well taken care of.

One of the things, for those who go and visit personal-care homes, is often they are faced with an amazing amount of loneliness. The days tend to be long. They don't really get visitors; their families are busy. They—sometimes families choose not to visit them.

So, it's important that we have a family council. We have individuals who will give input into what it's like to be a family member of a resident. And I'm sure the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) did some consultation at the personal-care homes to see how they were going to be viewing these additions to their—to the personal-care home. And, in fact, when this someday gets to a committee, we will then be able to hear what personal-care homes have to say about it.

But again, it's a very sensitive and very serious issue, because I, myself, personally have been and visited a lot of loved ones and individuals that I care for greatly, in personal-care homes. And you can't leave without being touched by how beautiful these people are and how much they absolutely love—love—to have someone visit.

In fact, my children's great aunt, who came here from Russia, was in a personal-care home, the personal-care home right by Concordia Hospital. And I remember taking the kids to visit her, if not once a week, certainly once every 10 days, and she just loved it. She loved when family came and visited, and we would speak with the care providers.

Anyway, the kids were out visiting family at the lake, so I went and I visited Tante Lydia, and the personal-care-home attendants came to myself as one of the family and suggested that maybe end-of-life protocols should be engaged, that she was slipping very quickly. And she was basically coming in and out of consciousness.

But I went and I visited with her in her room, and very softly she said to me, where are the kids? I said, well, I'm here. And she said, where are the kids? I said, well, you know what, they're not going to be back until Monday or Tuesday, but I'll bring them in as soon as they come back from the lake. And I explained

it to her and talked to her, and she said, okay. And she said, you know, do you think you could get me some coffee?

And I got her some warm coffee, and we sat and I served her coffee, and it was a very special moment. Until the kids came back from the lake, she perked up and started eating, and was waiting for the kids to come. So, kids came back from the lake, and I took them to see Tante Lydia, and we went in, and we visited and she just beamed. Just glowed. And had a wonderful time, and the kids still sang her a couple of songs which she really loved.

And, oh, she was just delighted, delightful. Just beaming. And just loved the fact the kids came, and hugged and kissed them before they left, and she was so happy. And, two days later, she passed away. She just lived to see them one more time.

Families are important. Important to have them engaged and involved, and this is important that we always stand there for those who walk the path to make our cities and our province and our country better than when they got here, and we hope some day we have the same care.

And we certainly support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are there any further speakers to this bill?

Seeing no further question—or speakers, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is second reading of Bill 238, The Personal Care Home Accountability Act (Various Acts Amended).

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

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye. They said—okay. I haven't heard any noes. The motion is accordingly passed.

The hour being—oh.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you please canvass the House and see if it's the will of members to call it 11 a.m.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Is it the will of the members to call it 11 a.m.? *[Agreed]*

DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

Res. 9—Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): We will now move on to private members' resolutions. The hour being 10:49, this—we will end at 11:49, just to let every—give everybody notice that we will be done at 11:49.

The private member's resolution before us today is resumption of debate on resolution No. 9, Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries, standing in the name of the member from Burrows, who has 10 minutes remaining.

* (10:50)

Mr. Diljeet Brar (Burrows): It's an honour to rise in the House today and speak to this private member's resolution.

The burden of this expense is huge, and our municipalities, they need help, no doubt about it. And we all know that our municipalities are not in a good financial state for years. This resolution brought forward by the member from Dauphin, if we take a look on the wording, it clearly tells us—I would actually request the municipal leaders to take a look on the detailed wording of this PMR.

It clearly tells that this government is not actually in favour of getting funding from the feds. Neither they have funded municipalities well for the last seven years.

So, we all know that when we ask for help, we should ask in a way that makes somebody help us. What if I come to you and say, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, that I don't like you; would you buy me a coffee? How does that sound? I will not get a coffee from you.

What if I go to somebody for help and I say, I hate your policies; please give me some money. No, we're not getting any help.

This resolution, the way it's worded, it's more about condemning the federal government and official opposition than asking for money or asking for help for our municipalities. It's very clear. And if this government really intends to help our municipalities, why didn't they help municipalities for the last seven years?

The resolution sounds to me like the PC government saying to the feds, hey, can you do something

that we didn't do? Can you please fund our municipalities because we didn't do so? So, if funding municipalities is the right thing to do, this PC government should have done this earlier. This government is simply following Brian Pallister's cuts-and-closure policy. And it's visible from their decisions. The new Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) also followed the same policy; nothing changed.

And when we talk about this RCMP retroactive salary, these costs are owed back to 2017. That's why it's \$45 million that municipalities are supposed to take care of if they don't get any support from anywhere. What would the municipalities do? They would either cut some services to save money or they would increase tax or they would do the both. And that, too, at a time when Manitobans are undergoing so much stress due to the grocery prices hike, fuel prices hike and fertilizer prices hike.

If this government is really, really serious about getting some money, or they want to speak in support of the municipalities, why didn't they stand up and speak in favour of the municipalities? This PMR is on the floor, I think, for the third time. I didn't see them stand up and speak in support of municipalities.

So, municipal leaders should know their intentions. And I don't know if the Premier already reached out to the Prime Minister to ask for help. I don't know.

So, nobody is stopping the Premier or the Cabinet ministers to reach out to the federal government, write to them and ask for support. So, I understand this—that this resolution is purposely drafted in a partisan style so that they—that this resolution does not go anywhere, because attacking opposition seems more important to the PCs than helping municipalities.

And we all know that they cut so many services. They cut—in 2017, they cut 50-50 transit funding that impacted Winnipeg worth millions of dollars, and Brandon hundreds of thousands of dollars. They also cut infrastructure funds by millions of dollars. And they don't like to spend money. They underspent budgeted infrastructure in four years to the tune of \$1 billion.

So, if a—if money is budgeted for a purpose, what's the reason for not spending it?

And then they downloaded this responsibility of snow clearing to the municipalities. Was that a way of helping municipalities or punishing them for the great work they're doing?

And during the COVID times, the former minister responsible for municipalities wrote a letter to municipalities pushing for layoffs and cut wages. So, this is the record of this government.

And they refused additional funding for slow-snow clearing to Winnipeg when it was harsh winter. And the city had to pay \$33.1 million accumulated from snow clearing.

So, their policy is not to help municipalities, to starve the departments, to cut services. I want to remind Manitobans about Bill 37, which is an effort to centralize decision making. So, land-use decisions transfer to the minister and Municipal Board. So, whatever the municipalities decide, the government would have power to change that decision forever. So, that's like silencing the local voices. And affected municipalities have opposed this legislation.

When this PC government talks about crime, let's see their record on crime. Under their watch, in 2019, Winnipeg had 44 homicides. And that is double than 2018 numbers. That was under their watch: 2020 numbers, 43; 2021 numbers, 43 again. So, this is their record.

So, I would like to say that municipalities, they do need help. But we need a government that really understands and that really wishes and takes action to support municipalities. We would continue to advocate for investments in services that address the root causes of crime, such as health care, education, mental health and addiction services and recreation opportunities, so that communities can be safer long-term.

* (11:00)

And we would call on the Province to construct a new healing lodge in Dauphin that—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Thank you, Mr.—*[interjection]* I'll take it. Thank you, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker.

You know, when I was looking through the Stefanson government motion that we're debating this morning, I thought back to my childhood: 1970s, watching TV, and there was a show on TV which was the No. 1 show, probably, in North America. It was called Happy Days.

And this thing had been going on for years at the No. 1 spot, and overnight, it just fell off. And what had happened in the episode that they traced back to its

demise was the main character was wearing a leather jacket on water skis, literally jumping over a shark.

It was so ridiculous, so implausible that this much-beloved TV show absolutely collapsed in the ratings. And, of course, it became a cultural phenomenon, and today we actually refer to shows that are past their best-before date as jumping the shark.

And when I look at this resolution, this is very much the political equivalent of jumping the shark. This is not a serious resolution; this is not a serious government. We do not have a serious Justice Minister. You know, when you look at this, it's so—it even is internally ridiculous and contradictory.

So, in the first part of the purpose or the preamble of this, the Stefanson government is critical of the federal Liberal government for, I quote, huge increases in salary for members of the RCMP. And then, in the exact same motion, says that the federal Liberals are defunding the police.

Well, how is it? Are they massively putting, you know, more resources into policing or are they defunding? Well, this government doesn't know and quite frankly, they don't care. Because if anybody is defunding the police around here, it's this Stefanson government, right?

Because we know that they have the power to fix this situation. They have, with the stroke of a pen—this minister—if he was serious, and I'm not saying he is—he could go back to his office and fix this right now. And the question for this body is, why is this unserious Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) refusing to do the job the taxpayers pay him?

He certainly isn't asking himself to be defunded. And why isn't he going back to his office right now and solving this problem and fixing it? Well, because they're not interested in public safety, and we've seen that for seven years.

In seven years, we've gone from a relatively safe province to one where people live in our bus shelters. We have gone from having a mental health system that was no model by any means, but it certainly wasn't on the verge of collapse and, of course, is collapsing now.

And there is a direct line between the policies of this government and Manitobans being less safe. We have seen not only the cuts to health care, not only the cuts to education, but we've seen the cuts to affordable housing. We've seen cuts to mental health supports and we've seen cuts to social services, rent assist, EIA,

the list goes on and on and on. And this government, which is extreme—I think they only rivalled by their friends in Alberta in their ideological extremity—they don't believe that Manitobans have an obligation to take care of one another.

They believe that everybody is on their own and, to them, investing in Manitobans is an expense; it's a waste.

And they don't want to do it, because they need money to send the Galen Westons of the world hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money. And, you know, and if you're a party that's built on a foundation of greed, then that's your focus; that's what you're all about, right?

But what happens to Manitobans when you don't support them, when you don't help them and—when they're vulnerable in their need? Well, they become desperate. And what do desperate people do? Well, they try to survive and they survive the best they can, and often in ways that make us all less safe.

So, this minister could prove that he's actually serious and could get on—back to his office, sign the papers and clear up this funding problem right now, today. And so, ask yourself why he's not in a rush to do that, and why he would rather chase after these political ghosts of these defunders that only exists in his fever dreams, and wants to blame the federal government for a problem that they can solve. And has, you know—that's the other part about this: your grandfather's PC Party believed in personal responsibility; the new Stefanson government believes in anything but.

It's all about avoiding responsibility, it's always about deflecting and blaming others for the problems you created. So, apparently, this government could fix the funding issue with the RCMP, but won't. But they're going to blame the federal government.

But what is this government even doing to advocate on behalf of Manitobans? We've seen time and time again that the federal government has been dumping bags of money on their desk, and offering to dump more, but there's always a catch. There's a catch that they—that this Stefanson government would have to participate in programs that would actually assist people. And because they don't believe in that, they won't actually take that federal funding and they won't put it to work in Manitoba.

You know, hopefully in a few months, with a change of government, Manitobans will see what it's like to have a government in place that puts

Manitobans first, that wants to take whatever resources are available, whether they're from the federal government or not, and invest them back into Manitoba, because we believe that we're only as strong as a community as our most vulnerable people.

And to judge a province and the success of a government, you have to look at the vulnerable people in that community and how they are treated. And when we look at Manitobans and look at what happened in the last seven years, we can see the absolute sheer contempt this government has for them and how little they think of Manitobans—especially those that can't write \$5,000 cheques to the PC Party of Manitoba—that they will not invest in them, they will not stand with them and, in fact, they will blame them for their own problems, and they will blame others for their own problems, and they will sit on their hands and do nothing.

And again, why? Because the Galen Westons of the world are calling. Apparently, they need another yacht, and this government wants to serve that up for them.

So, let's also look at some of the other—you know, if we had a serious Justice Minister—right now, we have a crisis in our Crown prosecutions where we have a huge vacancy rate. Crown attorneys can cross the border into Saskatchewan, Alberta and get a \$50,000 pay raise instantly.

And they're leaving in droves. The ones remaining are just buried in workload. I'm hearing stories from Crown attorneys that come back to court and they're sitting in their office, they're breaking down and just crying. They're so frustrating, they're so overwhelmed, there's no supports. And after they collect themselves, they go on the Internet and look for—they look for new jobs.

And they're getting them, because this government hasn't bargained fairly with Crown attorneys, and they still don't have a contract after a year. And this government doesn't want to pay RCMP officers, because they have no respect for them, and they don't want to pay Crown attorneys, because they have no respect for them.

So, who's the defunders in this scenarios? It's the Stefanson government. Because if this Stefanson government was serious about protecting Manitobans, they would take care of front-line workers. They wouldn't make them argue and fight with this government for cost-of-living increases for over a year. They would be able to keep a court open in northern Manitoba.

* (11:10)

And let's talk about that: this government privatized government air services that used to fly into these—had reliable transportation into these courts. What did they do? They gave it to PC donors and friends, the Exchange Income Corporation, who Gary Filmon, former PC premier, is making two, three hundred thousand dollars a year as a board member for this corporation.

And now we have unstable court services and we can't hold court up in the North because this government's only rationale for existing is to pay off their donors and their party favourites.

So, I have lots more to say, but very little time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): I just want to—sorry; clear my throat. There is a lot to say on this PMR. I find it incredibly important to talk about this issue because of the very important words put on the record by my colleague, the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), and my colleague, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv).

We began this debate a number of weeks ago, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, and it's an important one. The people of Transcona have entrusted me to represent them in this Chamber. It's an incredible community, one that is incredibly supportive, not only of the people that work in government, but also of the people that keep us safe.

I was reminded of that this weekend as we, on the Transcona Trail on Saturday, unveiled a memorial to a former student of mine, Jordyn Reimer, who was tragically taken from us by a drunk driver earlier this year, on the corner of Kildare and Bond. Incredibly, we saw a hundred people—hundreds of people out, Assistant Deputy Speaker, supporting this family.

On the path is a beautiful bench was unveiled in her honour. A lot of tears were shed, and a lot of community bonding took place. Later that same afternoon, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, we saw some more of that community spirit in the L'Arche walk that took place in support of community living.

Like I said earlier, it's an honour to stand in this House and represent the constituents of Transcona, because they send me here to talk about important issues and to support what we believe as a community is important in Manitoba.

You'll find, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, too, that recently we had—I had a former teacher of mine just recently pass away. I believe his service is tonight. I just want to put on the record that Karl Gradt was a teacher at John Gunn Junior High in the '70s when I was there as a student and was incredibly influential.

But on to the matters at hand.

The PMR, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries. You know, I find it incredibly interesting that during a time of record federal transfer payments to this government, record Hydro revenue to this government, record income tax revenue to this government, we are actually having to debate this PMR.

I would wish that this government would spend the energy on actually partnering with the federal government and having a true dialogue on how to cover these increased costs, instead of transferring them down to municipalities.

This is at a time—also, what I find incredibly interesting, Deputy Speaker, and somewhat troubling, is this government is borrowing hundreds of millions of dollars to send out rebate cheques to people that don't need them. We had that outlined yesterday in question period. We've talked about this for weeks. Where are the priorities? Are their priorities with their municipal partners, or are their priorities so misguided that they have to borrow hundreds of millions of dollars to send out rebate cheques?

I find it incredibly troubling, as the member for Transcona, representing my constituents, that I have to explain why a government is borrowing hundreds of millions of dollars in a time of record revenues from the outlying three pieces that I talked about earlier—record federal transfer payments, record income tax revenue and record revenue from Manitoba Hydro—that we're doing and having these priorities that don't reflect, really with the priorities of Manitobans. What they want is, they want—just like the member from Fort Garry pointed out earlier, so eloquently, is a real partner in the provincial government with the municipalities to provide important services such as policing. I can't believe that this isn't a priority where they would seriously partner with the federal government to solve this issue.

Instead, we continually see a government that kicks the can down the road to the point now where we're at 23 per cent increased costs for policing

downloaded to municipalities, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker.

How can that happen when we have all of this revenue coming into this province of ours? Talks about setting priorities—sorry, my voice is a little scratchy this morning. I thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker.

Again, this is incredibly troubling, because supports to municipalities were frozen. It's well documented that they closed the Dauphin jail. It's also well documented that they cut funding to the Justice Department for years. And then they bring forward this PMR, calling on the federal government instead of taking responsibility.

This is one thing, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, that we always talk about in schools: it's taking responsibility for your actions. But they can't do that. If they were to take responsibility for their actions, they would have to own all of their decisions. That's the piece that they are reluctant to do. Decisions that municipalities have had to absorb the costs for.

This is a government that doesn't want to truly partner with municipalities. The AMM is on record saying that their lack of support has led them to make these many impossible decisions of what to cut next, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker.

You know, I mean, that's—this sounds familiar, because it's also the same thing that school divisions have to deal with, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker. Years of underfunding, years of unpredictable funding that have led school divisions and municipalities to make impossible decisions of what to cut next, what service do they curtail on next.

Is it snow clearing? Do we not go down that service road that needs to have the snow cleared on a regular basis to ensure that emergency services can actually reach the homes when they need them? Like policing, RCMP, fire, all of those important pieces that municipalities are responsible for and demand a true partner in the provincial government. This is what's missing.

So then, all of a sudden, when it comes to crunch time, they wash their hands, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, and leave municipalities on their own. And then we have to debate this PMR, a PMR that didn't need to come if they had a true partner in the provincial government that has seen record revenue.

That truly outlines what I believe is their—is the way that they do not itemize real priorities of

Manitobans. I began—when I began speaking a few minutes ago, about how much of a privilege this is to be in here. Just imagine, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, if you're given a privilege of government, of the responsibilities that you have to every citizen in this province. It is an awesome responsibility, one that cannot be taken lightly.

They want a government that brings forth PMRs such as this that are serious, that really reflect the values and the priorities of the citizens of this province. Instead, we're debating this piece here that wants—that has a government completely abdicating their responsibility to municipalities and, by extension, to its citizens.

* (11:20)

I find that incredible, but here we are. Here we are debating this particular piece. And what we have are many, many needs in our municipalities. I mean, we can outline them. They were—they've been outlined this past week.

We have, of course, the need, because of climate change, around proper transit systems. We have nothing. We have cuts to municipalities that resulted in cuts to transit. We have the third largest metropolitan area in this province, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, that doesn't have a transit system. It's called Steinbach, Manitoba. They don't even have that. Municipality can't provide it because they don't have enough funding.

So, as I began nine minutes and 40 seconds ago representing here—standing, representing the people of Transcona, we remain disappointed in the priorities set by this government and we'll hold them to account at election time.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'd like to, you know, commend some of the words I've heard today with respect to this resolution. It's important that we're taking the time to debate this today because it's part of our jobs as MLAs, here, to debate the issues that are really critically important to Manitobans.

And certainly, community safety is important to Manitobans. You know, obviously, I think health care is probably No. 1 priority for a lot of Manitobans, top of mind. But it's undoubtedly, community safety is an issue.

But the problem with this resolution as has been pointed out by my colleagues, the member from Transcona, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw),

the member for Burrows (Mr. Brar), who have said it so eloquently today, this bill really isn't about community safety. It's not a serious resolution that we're debating today.

It wasn't written in a serious tone. It wasn't crafted to be actually effective in delivering its message about community safety. In fact, it has a bit of community safety, but is such a thick, heavy layer of partisanship and political nature that it's hard to really discern what steps in here would actually deliver safer communities to Manitobans.

And so, you know, I have the utmost respect for law enforcement, especially those in Manitoba: RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service. It's a tough job. And I think we're grateful for the work that they do. I've myself had the opportunity to go on a ride-along with Winnipeg Police Service and see what it's like for them and get a small snippet of the everyday work that they put in to—in our communities. And I value that.

And it's from those experiences that I can say that conversations with law enforcement, they've told me that as much as they value the work that they do in our community, and it's valued, they know they can't do everything. They know that they can't do everything to help protect and keep communities safe. That they need additional supports. They need supports from people to help with social services in our community.

And unfortunately, those very services have been cut by this PC government—those services to deliver mental health supports to those who need it the most. When people are in crisis, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, when they're going through a life crisis, a mental health crisis, and they need to get supports, they want to get it from someone who is particularly trained and specialized to deliver that type of crisis support.

It's not always going to be the best fit for a police officer to deliver that right type of support for that individual in that particular case. And so, if we don't fund one, we're putting an unburdened stress on that officer who should be doing other, really important work in our communities.

And that's not just a disservice to the individual who's going through a crisis, who needs a government to support them in the right way, it's a disservice to the police officer who's now being asked and tasked with the—doing a job that is not necessarily their expertise.

And so we want to get, in my view, get policing to a role where they're doing a job that is best suited

to them and put resources into specialists, like mental health specialists, like addictions specialists in our communities who can help people and help them where they're at, help community members where they're at. And that's a difficult thing to do.

But, you know, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, if the government was really serious about this bill, they would have at least mentioned that in this resolution. They would have put it in some of the words here. And, you know, I'd like to read the words here, but it's not even worth reading. It's such an unserious written resolution that it's not worth repeating here.

It's sufficient to say that the government doesn't take this issue seriously, given the text that's written in this resolution. By the fact that they have ignored some of the critical issues of addressing community safety. They haven't even mentioned how they're going to tackle mental health and addiction issues, or the homelessness challenges, or issues—tackle issues like poverty in our community.

And we know all of these issues and root-cause trauma are some of the issues that people deal with when they're interacting with law enforcement and leads to crime in our communities.

And it's sad to say that, you know, the government is putting forward this sort of resolution that's calling on the federal government when, quite frankly, the minister could call. The minister here could call his federal counterpart and make this ask, if he really wanted to. He doesn't need this resolution to do that.

The Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) could call the federal counterpart and make this call that they're asking. They don't need this resolution here. This resolution is shrouded in political—in a political nature and in a partisan language and it has no bearing in the fact that the minister could make the call.

And I know the opposite side has—had such fractured relationships with folks over the past number of years. We know the former premier, Brian Pallister, had such a fractured relationship with the former mayor. We know, right now today, there's a fractured relationship between this Premier, the Health Minister and health-care workers. We know that this government has fractured—frankly, fractured relationships and the PC government go hand in hand. It's like peanut butter and jelly; they just stick together—fractured relationships. So, I'm not surprised. I'm not surprised, Mr. Assistant Deputy Minister, that if the minister called his federal counterpoint, he may not

even pick up the phone because of that fractured relationship.

Maybe that's why he's brought this here today: because that relationship is so fractured that he wouldn't even pick up the phone for the provincial minister. Perhaps that's why he's brought this forward. Because he hasn't had the relationship.

But you know, he could also send an email, if he can't pick up the phone. He could send an email to make a call for funding for RCMP. But he apparently hasn't or can't and he's brought this forward today, this resolution that's wrapped and shrouded in partisan, political language.

And I think that, you know, that says quite a lot about the nature of this PC government, that they would rather play partisan and political games than do the work that would actually help communities in Manitoba.

And communities in Manitoba are going to know this. They're going to remember this. They're going to remember this time when this government had a choice between doing two things: (1) helping communities and standing up for them, investing in community safety, investing in the lives of Manitobans; or play political and partisan games and have us debate a ridiculous resolution in the House here for no other benefit than of Manitobans, I might add.

Which one did they choose? They chose to play political and partisan games instead of helping the lives of regular Manitobans.

So, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, I think it's important that I talk about—before I get a chance to—before I conclude my remarks, I want to talk about something very important. I want to talk about something very important when it comes to dealing with the notion of this resolution. The fact that we haven't—this government for years has repeatedly made life more difficult for municipalities to address community safety.

So, not only is this bill wrapped in political and partisan language, not only does it fail to address key issues to keeping community safety, like addressing mental health and addiction issues and poverty and dealing with trauma, it actually is a slap in the face because this government has frozen municipal funding for years. They have frozen municipal funding, which has made it more difficult for municipalities to fund RCMP each and every year of this government's tenure.

* (11:30)

And so, in fact, with the rising inflation that we've seen over the past many years, at this government's choice, their decision, their conscious effort to freeze municipal funding, who in fact has defunded the police? I think it's clearly this PC government.

And so for them to now, at this point, just months away from an election, to bring this forward, when in fact they have (a) underfunded municipalities and thus underfunded RCMP; when they have (b) simply ignored the core issues of keeping communities safe; and when—(c) when given the choice between doing the right thing and helping Manitobans who are in need and actually instead bring forward a resolution that is wrapped in political and partisan language, this government has failed on all three levels.

And Manitobans are going to remember this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're going to remember this not only today, not only tomorrow, not on Thursday, but—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Before I recognize the next speaker, I'd—it was getting a little loud in here from both sides. I'd ask everybody to please, please keep the noise level down. Members, please keep the noise level down. And for the speakers to please try to remain relevant to the resolution here that we're discussing today.

Thank you very much and I would expect that things should change in here for the next 20 minutes.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I just want to continue on from the rest of the speakers this morning, and really, you know, hammer down that this government is not doing their part in terms of supporting RCMP and the municipalities that are actually, you know, underfunded year after year from this government.

They've given them basket funding and said, oh, here, you go do what you want with it, and if you mismanage your money because you can't do everything that needs to be done, that's your fault. But it's actually on this government, because they are underfunding 23 per cent—23 per cent—and they don't want to take responsibility for that.

Now they're bringing a resolution forward. And like—the my colleague said, the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) can just pick up the phone. She can call the Prime Minister, she can call the Justice Minister, she can have a conversation and they can discuss how they can

both, you know, come to the table and make sure the municipalities aren't having to raise taxes.

We're in an inflation crisis in this province. People are struggling. People who, you know, were able to put money away in the bank are no longer able to do that, and this government is going to force municipalities because they have no relationship, or very little relationship with any of their partners, because they've continued to not come to the table in a good way.

You know, we saw that with Pallister: picking fights with the mayor, picking fights with the Prime Minister. We see that carry on with the Stefanson government. You know, we can have a good relationship with our municipalities and with our Winnipeg Police, our RCMP. I've worked extensively with the RCMP, actually, have a good relationship with them.

They talk about the resources that they need to support those that are struggling. And my colleagues outline that: mental health, addictions, you know, domestic violence. They need social workers. They're not able to hire those. They need a liaison worker when someone goes missing or is murdered to come in and help support that family.

The Winnipeg Police, thankfully, have been able to do that, through Victim Services, but the RCMP aren't able to do that because of the underfunding from this government. They're trying to shirk their responsibility onto the federal government and not come to the table with their fair share.

We look at all of the cuts that this government has created. This, you know, level of crime that we see in Manitoba, it's due to their cuts; it's due to the social services cuts that they have created. You look at the housing. You only have to drive past one social housing to see that they're boarded up. We're in a housing crisis. And does this government bother to fix up the existing housing that we have?

You know, Acting Deputy Speaker, what they're trying to do is they're trying to shirk the responsibility, just like they're trying to do with the federal government, to agencies, to say to agencies, here, you take over the social housing, we'll give it to you. Because they don't want to be landlords. They don't want to have the responsibility of fixing up social housing and ensuring those folks that are outside—you walk out this Manitoba Legislature, there's people sleeping in bus shacks. People sleeping in bus shacks. That's not dignity for folks.

And it's a responsibility of this government, and it's these cuts that they've made, and they don't want to come to the table to help with policing. And policing are saying we need funding from this government. RCMP need funding from provincial government and they're trying to say, well, it's all on the federal government.

Well, come to the table and talk to the federal government. They don't need to bring a resolution like this forward. If they had a relationship and they had a partnership, they would come to the table and figure it out. Because Manitobans are going to know, if their taxes go up, who is actually responsible for that. And that's going to be this PC government because they are forcing municipalities to raise taxes which is going to force, you know, Manitobans to make tough decisions.

Now, whether that's taking out of their rainy day fund because they have to pay higher taxes because RCMP, you know, have increased 23 per cent and the money has to come from somewhere. And municipalities are going to be forced to put that onto Manitobans. And that's not fair to Manitobans.

Families are struggling to put money away for education. And we have a government here that underfunds education. I look at Selkirk Avenue. That was supposed to be a bustling hub for education. Very little folks from the North End inner city are actually attending school there. It's actually folks from other areas that are coming to attend classes there. That was created to help lift people out of poverty.

This government, through their austerity, through their cuts to social programming, through their cuts to social work, has created, you know, this increase in crime that we see here in the city. And I want to talk a little bit about the North End because you know, the North End is a lot like the North—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I would ask the member to please be a little bit more relevant to the resolution here, if she could bring it back, please.

Mrs. Smith: When I'm talking about policing, I'm referencing the Winnipeg Police to the RCMP and the—what's happening here in the city and actually what's happening in, like, Thompson or The Pas, you know, some of these areas that have the same issues as the Winnipeg Police.

I'm talking to RCMP, and RCMP are saying that they don't have the resources to support. They're seeing an increase in addictions, which we're seeing here in the city. They don't have addiction support

workers. They don't have access to be able to hire them.

They have—you know, they can barely pay their staff that they have. And this government continues to underfund municipalities and the RCMP. And it's helping, you know, to create this increase in crime that we see.

So, I want to go back to some of the root causes of why we need more policing in, you know, the rural areas and why they're asking for more funding. Their salaries have—increased, 2017, under this government. They've not had a raise. Now a 23 per cent increase. Where is that going to come from?

They're trying to say to the federal government that it's all of their responsibility, but Acting Deputy Speaker, it's a responsibility of both governments. And this government should come to the table in good faith. They should ensure that it isn't shirked onto the taxpayers, that they're not having to pay increased taxes while this government continues to increase hydro rates for Manitobans, they continue to increase rent rates here in Manitoba.

* (11:40)

And Manitobans are struggling already, so if you put that on top of, you know, what they're having to pay for their taxes, because they have to pay for the increase in RCMP salaries, Manitobans are not—they're not going to have the wool pulled over their eyes by this government. They're going to know exactly why their taxes are increasing: because the RCMP salaries are increasing, because they failed to come to the table to pay their fair share and want to blame it on the federal government when they also have a responsibility.

So, we're, you know, we're coming to an election, and, you know, this government is making a lot of announcements, empty announcements, that, you know, are far and few too late. We have people who are struggling with poverty, we have people who are struggling with mental health, we have people that are dying of addictions in this province.

This government is not addressing any of that. They're putting it onto policing. RCMP are struggling. They've had meetings. This government knows what the struggles are. And they've asked for this government to help support them in making sure that, you know, they're not responding to mental health calls, that there's a social worker that's coming there to do that.

If someone's in addiction crisis, that they're not being, you know, held up at that—well, maybe someone is being domestically abused. You know, there's a violent act happening, but they're, you know, here helping someone that is struggling with addictions, that an addiction support worker can actually come there and do that work.

When we look at the housing crisis, you know, often you see the RCMP responding to someone who is sleeping in a bus shelter. Should it be the RCMP? RCMP are saying, no, it shouldn't be—that they would assist if needed, if someone is violent. But they want to see more supports within the RCMP to be able to have social workers respond to those types of things.

So I want to say to this government that, you know, an election is coming. Manitobans know who they can count on—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I'm very pleased to speak to this PMR today, Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries.

You—reading this resolution, you wouldn't really think that there was increased revenue coming to Manitoba. I mean, we have record revenues. It's unlikely that it's going to continue into the future given the prospect of possibly a recession—recession coming up. And I could understand that if this government was running huge deficits, was short of revenue, federal transfers were down, that they could make this argument, that the municipalities should pay the bills and the federal government should pay the bills.

But that's not what is going on here. This is all part of an election strategy to build wedges—you know, and I understand why they're doing it. They're not only doing it here, they've got this friendly Saskatchewan group that's running attack ads. Which, by the way, they'd better check those ads, because they could end up paying out a fair amount of money in a lawsuit very soon on that.

And I mean, and the answer is pretty—it's a pretty straightforward case, too, I will tell you. But they obviously are not paying much attention. Yes, they're just accepting that facts are facts, but they're not facts. They're not real. They were not real in 2008, 15 years ago, and they're not real now.

But there was an audit in the meantime that said of all 57 MLAs in the Legislature, over a two-year

period, they audited every expense. And there was not a problem with any one of them. So this is a case that wouldn't even end up going to trial. It'll be settled out of court, right?

And so, I would caution them to be careful—

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Order.

If the member could please bring it back into the scope of the resolution before us. It needs to be relevant to what we're discussing here.

Mr. Maloway: I consider that very relevant to what is going on with this resolution. I mean, it's all part of the same picture to try to draw wedges just before an election. You know, once again, we have record revenues. And what are they doing with the record revenues? They could be taking care of this issue or helping to take care of this issue with the federal government. But no, they don't want to do that. They want to try to buy as many votes as they can by sending rebate cheques out. Okay, there's rebate cheques.

There's all sorts of different programs they have right now that they didn't have before. You know, they waited for all these years, didn't come out with any of these programs until just before the election. Well, I think the average voter—and I, you know, I talk to a lot of average voters, quite—and I can tell you that they see through this. They say, yes, they're happy to get their cheques, but they're certainly not voting for the PCs. Because they remember how they balanced the budget in the first place.

You know, it's not that hard to do, just on infrastructure alone. All you have to do is put all the projects on hold, or most of them on hold. And when you do that, you don't spend the money. That's as simple as that. You just simply underspend your budget. And that's basically what they've done. And that's just one area, in infrastructure.

When you take a look at health care, you see the same issues of cuts throughout the system. And that is how they end up with a balanced budget. Well, the public know that. The public understand first-hand what is going on with their services, when the health care's not there anymore, when the infrastructure isn't being replaced and all of a sudden, they're getting cheques in the mail. And they're wondering what is all this about?

And so, the—you know, they think that somehow this is going to benefit in the long run, but I can assure

you that this—there's lots of evidence that show that this particular strategy of theirs is not going to work. And the fact of the matter is that, you know, I think we should just get into the election.

I mean, you want to have an election? Let's have an election, you know? Why do we have to keep torturing ourselves, you know, day after day, dealing with these issues when all what—we know what this is all about. There's no secrets here. We know this is all about an election coming up.

And, you know, it depends on what level you're prepared to go to get the results you want. But if you have to go and throw things off to Saskatchewan and the federal PCs—anyway, I will continue this conversation later.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Are there any further speakers?

Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is calling—resolution No. 9, Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries.

Is it the pleasure of the House to accept—to adopt this resolution?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

I declare this motion carried.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): And the hour being 12 o'clock, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 p.m. today.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

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