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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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Speaker*

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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
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SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
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WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Morden-Winkler	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

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.

We acknowledge we are gathered on Treaty 1 territory and that Manitoba is located on the treaty territories and ancestral lands of the 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.

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Good morning, Madam Speaker. Could you please call this morning, from the 10 to 11 o'clock hour: Bill 240 from 10 a.m. 'til 10:30 a.m., and then Bill 242 from 10:30 a.m. 'til 11 a.m.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 204 from 10 to 10:30, and from 10:30 to 11, Bill 242.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 240—The Remembrance Day Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: I will therefore start by calling second reading of Bill 240, The Remembrance Day Amendment Act.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Good morning, Madam Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Lakeside, that Bill 240, The Remembrance Day

Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Isleifson: It's certainly a privilege to rise today and discuss the topic of poppies and the meaning of what a poppy is for those—in recognizing those who have served and those who have made the ultimate sacrifice so that we can all have the democracy to live in that we enjoy today, Madam Speaker.

My comments are going to be fairly brief. It's pretty straightforward. It's an opportunity for us. As we know, we have the ability and the right to wear a poppy to recognize those who made us the ultimate sacrifice from the last day in—pardon me—the last day in October until the September the 11th—pardon me, November the 11th.

One of the challenges that have been recognized in Canada and particularly in Ontario, and I'm—unfortunately I have not heard of this happening here in Manitoba. But it is an honour and a right to wear the poppy to recognize, as I've mentioned before, those who have sacrificed their lives so that we can live the life that we so much enjoy.

Unfortunately, as I've mentioned, in Ontario, there was a situation where an employer refused to let employees wear the poppy. And it's an unfortunate situation, but I can certainly understand that in some cases where it might, you know, interfere with the safety of work. Then yes, you know, I would agree that a poppy be set aside and then put on afterwards. However, to outright deny the ability of an employee to pay their respects by wearing the poppy is something we don't want to see here in Manitoba.

And I know it was after the fact when this happened that Ontario has introduced legislation. So, in my role, being involved with—so much with the legions who are given the right of the poppy by the federal government a number of years ago, working with them on a daily basis or on a weekly basis just to add that little bit more that allows us to honour their legacy, to honour what they do. And be proactive so that employers in Manitoba can follow some type of legislation ahead of time that says, yes, employees have the ability to wear the poppy during remembrance week, which is seven days leading up to November the 11th.

So basically, that's what the bill is for. Again, it does not apply if wearing a poppy poses a danger or a hazard to health, safety or welfare of any persons. But again, hopefully, those are minimized.

So, again, with those few words, Madam Speaker, it is just, again, an ability for us to unite in this House and give those like us the ability to stand up during remembrance week and even longer, if so be allowed, to wear the poppy and remember those who sacrificed so much for us.

Thank you.

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.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'd like to ask the member who he consulted when he was creating this bill.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Thank the member from St. Vital for the question. I know it's a question we always ask and it's an important question because as—legislation has us in here, reaching out and speaking with our communities.

Again, with this particular bill, I have spoken to a number of people from various—or, pardon me, from various legions throughout the province; again, with them having the rights of the poppy. Not the plant, the poppy. They don't have that right, but they have the right of the poppy, the symbol of the poppy. So I felt it was very important to reach out to them and to a number of veterans' groups as well.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I'd ask the minister to clarify a little bit, this exemption. I mean, I think we can understand that if you've got people working in a hog processing plant or a chicken processing plant, that you don't want the possibility of poppies coming off and getting involved in various things that you're trying to prepare.

But can the minister—can you just expand a little bit more, in terms of where the exemption will apply and where it won't apply, just for clarity's sake?

Mr. Isleifson: That's a very good question. When you look around the industry, and, again, I can look at the

places in Ontario where this was occurring. And when we look at retail outlets, when we look at gas stations, places like that, you know, where you'd think it would be fine to show your respect by wearing the poppy, and it just doesn't seem right that they would be denied that ability.

* (10:10)

Now, as the member mentioned though, I do understand if you're working in a grocery store, in a meat-cutting section, you know, you certainly would not want to wear the poppy there. But there are so many other public opportunities to wear the poppy, and I encourage everybody to do so.

Mr. Moses: I know that I attend Remembrance Day events at the Norwood St. Boniface Legion, Legion 43, and so I wanted to ask the member: How would this bill impact Manitobans' ability to commemorate Remembrance Day?

Mr. Isleifson: So, again, this bill would allow everyone to wear the poppy ahead of time. As the member said, he attends a number of ceremonies, as do I; and it's always been custom at the end of the ceremony to go up to the cenotaph on the wreath that was laid and take your poppy off and stick it into one of the wreaths that are up there. That is the final day of the poppy for the year.

So the bill would cover the one-week period before that, so remembrance week, and allow those who would otherwise not be able to, you know, stand up in their place of work and show their respect; so it would allow them to have that seven-day period as well.

Mr. Moses: I have, you know, friends and family members who are both current military members and former retired military members, and so I wondered if the member has been hearing from veterans and other folks in the world. Have they been advocating for this sort of change through Bill 240?

Mr. Isleifson: Good question by—from the member from St. Vital. And as I mentioned in my prelude, no one in Manitoba has come to me and said we need to change this, we need to add this. Again, in my role as the special envoy for military affairs, I visit every single military establishment here in Manitoba. We have a lot of discussions, and when I heard the challenges that they were going through in Ontario, that is why I brought this bill forward.

Again, I want to be proactive. I don't want us to always be fighting from the back trying to fix something that went wrong. I want this bill to be in place ahead of time so that we don't have to experience what they've experienced in Ontario.

Mr. Moses: I wish to ask the member, you know, if this bill does come to pass, and it becomes law in time for the next Remembrance Day, how does he, in particular, intend to commemorate Remembrance Day in light of the changes that will take effect once Bill 240 becomes law?

Mr. Isleifson: Every year since as long as I can remember, that first opportunity we've had to wear a poppy, I have placed one on my lapel. And I have worn it right up until September the 11th. *[interjection]* Pardon, November 11th. Thank you.

In my role, even on city council, I made a point of ensuring that everyone saw my poppy, and I encouraged those to wear a poppy. With this bill passing, again, I believe promotion is one of the best things to do, which I will certainly be promoting wearing the poppy, and I would encourage all of my colleagues to put on a poppy ahead of that day and wear it right through the process that you can and to dispose of it properly on November the 11th.

Mr. Moses: Just a final question for the member across the way, and in bringing this bill forward as a special military envoy, I'd like to just clarify again for us in the Chamber, and for Manitobans, why this bill is so necessary to inform and give employees the entitlement to wear poppies through their work. Maybe you can just outline it again for Manitobans.

Mr. Isleifson: Thank the member for that, and that's a very good point. And as I stand and rise in the House today, and folks are watching on whatever means they can, it is our responsibility. We have a responsibility to uphold the life that we live and make it as best as possible.

And I encourage all employers to have a look at their health and safety plans and ensure that those who want to wear a poppy during remembrance week, have that ability to do so. And I also understand that they may have, Madam Speaker, situations where they're unable to wear the poppy because of safety. But I do encourage all Manitobans to wear a poppy in remembrance of those who made such a great sacrifice.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions in debate?

Debate

Madam Speaker: If not, the floor is open for debate.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'm pleased to be speaking in respect with—to Bill 240—The Remembrance Day Act—Madam Speaker, this bill obviously amends The Remembrance Day Act to ensure that employees are entitled to wear a poppy in the workplace during the seven-day period leading up to and including Remembrance Day.

And I'm pleased to, you know, have this discussion. I mean, I know that during the Remembrance Day period, I have worn a poppy and continue to wear a poppy to show respect for the Canadians and the people, the military members, who have given a sacrifice in terms of their time, in terms of what they've done for their career and in many cases, sadly, given their lives in protection and in service of our country.

And to remember that, you know, I choose to wear a poppy. I am free to do so in this place, in my workplace, when I'm around and out in the community and I certainly wear that when I'm, you know, celebrating, when I'm commemorating Remembrance Day when I attend the Norwood St. Boniface Legion, Legion 43 every year.

And I think it's important, Madam Speaker, that other Manitobans feel free to wear the poppy if they choose to in the workplace, and as the member from Brandon East—excuse me—said that, of course, as long as it falls in line with health and safety protocols within their work, it's not putting themselves or their co-workers in danger.

And so, we're, you know, happy to support this bill. We know that, you know, the use of the poppy started in—with respect to World War I, which happened over 100 years ago—came to an end over 100 years ago. And, you know, I think that conflict and its continued to—use throughout world—the Second World War and other conflicts that Canada has been involved with, the poppy has become a symbol that we all recognize.

It is important for commemoration, for remembrance of those lives who've been lost in service of a free—and free future for so many Canadians that we all hope to enjoy. And I think that freedom also includes the freedom to wear a poppy, if we so choose to, in our workplace.

As I shared during the question period, Madam Speaker, I have, you know, family members and

friends who are current and—both current and retired service members in the military. One family member I know has a—currently a captain and he served a tour in Mali a few years ago.

And, you know, he shared his experience of what it's like to be away from family, to be away from home, to be doing work to protect communities around the world, protect nations around the world and to make that sacrifice in your chosen profession; have that chosen profession be one that is, you know, having the protection, the service and fighting for the freedom of our country at its core.

And so, I am beyond grateful for his efforts, for all of our Canadian service people's efforts 'oovar' the—over the many years and many decades that people have been sacrificing themselves for our freedom in our great country here in Canada. And so, I think a small token that many of us who were not in that profession—to do is—to recognize that service is to wear the poppy. And I know I choose to do that during that period leading up to and including Remembrance Day.

And we're happy to be, you know, supporting and moving this bill forward today. And, you know, we look forward to, you know, ensuring that people do have that freedom, that people aren't, you know, maybe looked at in a certain way if they want to wear a poppy.

This bill will certainly protect people who want to wear a poppy in their workplace and ensure that they have the ability to do so. And we want to ensure that that can take place. I think this is a reasonable measure for us to ensure that Canadians have both the opportunity to work, not feel that they're having any pressure to remove their poppy or anything like that, as long as, again, it's done in a—you know, given the safety of their—nature of their job; and that they have that ability to remember and commemorate the service people in our country. Whether that might be, you know, from what they know of the past conflicts or whether they have a personal connection to a family member who might've been, you know, involved in a conflict in the past or is currently a service person, or maybe they even gave the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of our country.

* (10:20)

And so, I want to just end my remarks, Madam Speaker, by just saying clearly that we thank all of our service people across the country and the ones who are currently doing the work to keep our country safe,

the ones who have done so in the past and the ones who have given the ultimate sacrifice. We thank them for their work and we know that our country would not be the same without their service and the effort that they have put in.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, a few words on this bill. Poppies are a very important symbol, not just of Remembrance Day but of, in fact, the past wars that we have been, as a country, involved with; and a symbol of hope, quite frankly—of hope that we're going to have a better future than some of the things that have happened in the past.

And it is timely that we're talking about this because there is a war—major war going on right now in Ukraine following the Russian invasion. And as we follow what's happening there, we see that the nature of war is changing, both in terms of technology and in both—and in terms of the approach that the Russian army has taken, which has been more and more directed against civilians, as opposed to against those who are soldiers and who are fighting in the war, and with incredibly malevolent consequences.

It has been a—for many years, we have thought that there would not be wars involving major powers in the world. And clearly, this is a situation where there is great danger and great uncertainties, that there are a large number of war crimes. There are, of course, new approaches to war, drones and so on, and ammunition which is much more destructive and even though some can be much better targeted than in the past, in this war in Ukraine, we've seen hospitals and schools being hit. And this clearly is so wrong and so out of what would be considered the international rules around wars, that it's been a—in a sense, a lesson to all of us of what can happen if we're not careful.

And so it really is vital that we are remembering on Remembrance Day and the week leading up to Remembrance Day, what has happened in the past. It's vital that we are thinking about how we prevent wars in the future. And it's vital that people, when they're working, if it's possible, if it's not a safety issue, have the opportunity to express themselves and to wear a poppy. I think the more people who are wearing poppies, the greater impression this will have and I think that's vital for the next generation of people.

If kids, as they're growing up, see everybody wearing a poppy in the week up to a Remembrance Day, it will have much more of an impact than if it's

just worn for Remembrance Day ceremonies and special occasions.

So, we are, in the Liberal Party, fully supportive of this bill. We feel it should be extended so that people can't be stopped from wearing poppies where it's reasonable at work. We do understand that there have to be some exemptions, that people who work in hog processing plants or in chicken processing plants and things like that, that there are reasons why you shouldn't be wearing a poppy while you're doing work like that. You don't want it to come off by accident and cause problems or contaminate what people are eating and so on.

There—it is important to have a perspective looking back. My father was involved in the Second World War. And he was in North Africa. He was in Italy at Anzio. And he came away from the experience feeling that wars in general were bad things, that we need to avoid them. But, nevertheless, he was there. It was not without danger. He was a medical officer and he was put in a place where—in North Africa where two other medical officers had recently been killed. And he knew from the start that it was high risk.

When the—they were in Anzio, it was a—supposed to be a fairly aggressive and circling maneuver, but in fact what ended up was that they were stuck in Anzio for a long time before they could actually break out. And they were constantly, day after day, night after night, being bombarded. You know, it wasn't a nice place to be, but they were there. And they were there trying to do what they and the other fighting soldiers could do to make sure we had a world where people would have freedoms, where people would be able to grow up in an environment where there were rights, where it was safe.

And so it's really important that we are remembering what people have sacrificed in the past, that we take account of what people are sacrificing right now in the name of freedom and against autocracy and despotism in Ukraine.

So we're behind this bill and fully supportive. It's important to remember that Canada was not involved just in the two world wars, that we had forces in Korea, that we've had forces in Afghanistan. I think too often those who fought for Canada in Afghanistan are forgotten. It's not easy when the changes that have occurred in Afghanistan, with the Taliban coming back, with women's rights being taken away, with the difficult—very difficult circumstance currently in Afghanistan. But it reinforces the need that we have

to make sure that we are going to have poppies and awareness.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 240, The Remembrance Day Amendment Act.

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

* (10:30)

**Bill 242—The Police and Peace Officers'
Memorial Day Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

Madam Speaker: The hour now being 10:30, we will be moving on to second reading of Bill 242, The Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I move, seconded by the member from Rossmere, that Bill 242, The Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day Act, be now read—oh, pardon me, (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for Brandon East, seconded by the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), that Bill 242, The Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Mr. Isleifson: I want to start by just acknowledging last Thursday, this past Thursday, May the 18th, I was honoured to put on a blue and black ribbon of remembrance. Glad I was able to participate. The police chief in Brandon provided me with this ribbon on the day, a very unfortunate day, where another police officer, this time in Ontario, had lost his life in a line of duty.

His funeral was on Thursday, so we wore the ribbon up until 6 p.m. Ontario time in recognition of this officer. It's unfortunate that, just recently in the last two to three months, over 10 police officers across

Canada has—have lost their lives defending our democracy. Defending our rights, defending our ability to have property, to share our lives with our families, to have them grow in an environment that is safe and enjoyable.

It is unfortunate that these situations arise, whether it's one off on a police officer who passes away in his vehicle responding to a call, to a few weeks ago or three weeks ago now, where two officers were responding to a call for domestic violence, and when they arrived on scene they were ambushed and both shot to death before they could even unholster their own weapons.

It's unfortunate this happens. We need to put an end to it, but, in the meantime, we also have to have the ability to honour and recognize those who give so much so that we can have communities that are safe to raise our children, are safe for us to live and grow.

There is a lot of work. If we just look around our communities, we look at the amount of crime that is happening in our communities, and we thank those who respond to that crime. With this bill, Madam Speaker, the Government of Canada has already officially proclaimed the last—pardon me, the last Sunday in September to recognize these officers.

And again, it's just not police officers, it's also peace officers. Here in Manitoba, we've done it a little different, up until my bill here today, Madam Speaker, where we have recognized the last Sunday as well. However, working with the police officers' association, who already has things in place where they do their recognition, they have asked us that in each year, we mark November 30th as a day of recognition here in the Province of Manitoba, to coincide with what our local police do here in our province.

So, again, Madam Speaker, I'm asking our House to come together. Let's show our respect to the police officers and peace officers in Manitoba, and spread that out right across our nation, in feeling for what these folks do every day. They put their lives on the line every day when they go to work.

I've always said, I want to go home at the end of the day the same or even better than it was when I went to work in the morning. In the case of police officers and peace officers, or those working in corrections, they're the same. They want to go home at the end of their shift, whether it's a day shift or a night shift, and, you know, we need to do what we can to ensure that happens.

Unfortunately, there are those, as I've just mentioned, including 49 right here in Manitoba, who have lost their lives in the course of duty. And if I may, Madam Speaker, in the history of Manitoba, those 49 individuals: 22 Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers; five federal prison guards; four Manitoba provincial police officers; two Manitoba prison guards; six Manitoba Conservation officers; six Winnipeg police force officers; two St. Boniface police force officers; one Benito town constable; and one Winnipeg park police constable. That's 49 too many, Madam Speaker, 49 too many.

We can't do anything to bring them back, but what we can do, with the support of this House, is we can set aside November 30th of each year to help recognize the efforts, the sacrifices, that all those officers made while we continue to work to ensure these senseless deaths cease to happen.

So with that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity and I ask for support of the House to pass this bill.

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.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Could the—*[interjection]* It's okay. Could the member please advise the House who was consulted when writing and drafting that Bill 242?

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I thank the member for St. Johns for the question. As I previously mentioned in my prelude, that the police officers' association have been consulted. They're the ones who came up with the request for the date to coincide with theirs.

Also a number—I have a number of acquaintances who work in police services, as you're aware, Madam Speaker, and my job in health care for 21 years, I was a regional manager of safety and security, and worked closely with not only the Brandon city police but the RCMP detachments wherever our facilities were in Prairie Mountain Health.

So, I've talked to a number of them, again, the ones that I could connect with in the area here. So,

again, great consultation, great feedback and the police officers' association, again, was the important one that wanted this date.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I'm aware that if we're going to have problems in reducing crime, that it needs much more than just police officers. And I think that in this memorial day, that the—I'm presuming that the member is looking at this in a broader sense in terms of how we can reduce crime and have greater peace and stability in our society. And I want to give the member a chance to talk a little bit about this aspect of this memorial day.

Mr. Isleifson: Again, if we look at the title of the bill, it's The Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day Act, so absolutely, it branches out well beyond just the police force.

When I look at the numbers that I read earlier, you know, when we look at corrections services Canada, from Manitoba penitentiaries, you know, where we've had two guards that were killed in the line of duty. We had one, two, three from the Stony Mountain institute. The Vaughan Street detention centre; we had one in The Pas Correctional Centre, we had one—so it branches it out way beyond just police officers. It's those working in the industry as peace officers. And again, I have more names that I would—I'd be happy to share with the member so he can see exactly where they come from.

Madam Speaker: Any further questions?

If not, is the House—oh, the debate—or the question period then is over.

Debate

Madam Speaker: And the floor is open for debate.

MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to put a couple of words, very brief, on the record in respect of the police and police officers' memorial day act, commemoration of days, week and months acts amended.

Madam Speaker, this bill amends The Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act. November 30th of each month is proclaimed as the police and peace officers' memorial day. The Government of Canada observes Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day on the last Sunday of September of every year.

* (10:40)

On September 24th, 1998, the Government of Canada official proclaimed the last Sunday of September of every year as the Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day.

In announcing the commemorative day, the Solicitor General of Canada stated that a formal national memorial day gives Canadians an opportunity each year to formally express appreciation for the dedication of police and peace officers who make the ultimate tragic sacrifice to keep our communities safe.

On January 17th, 2003, a nationwide half-masting was included in the half-masting rules. The flags will be at half mast on all federal buildings and establishments in Canada, including the Peace Tower from sunrise to sunset on Police and Peace Officers' National Memorial Day.

Canada also officially recognizes National Police Week, which pays tribute to police officers and peace officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty. During National Police Week, various events and activities take place across the country to honour and remember fallen officers and to show support for law enforcement agencies.

These events often include memorial services, candlelight vigils, parades, memorial runs and a community outreach program. National Police Week began—began in 1970 as a way for the police to connect with their communities and to increase awareness about the services they provide. Taking place from May 14th to the 20th this year, the 2023 theme is committed to service.

This year, and I quote, Madam Speaker: this year, we recognize the oath officers proudly take to be committed to serve communities who want and expect the police to keep them safe, end quote. Police services across the country are joined in achieving this goal, committed to serve in communities across the country.

Public safety involves a collaborative effort within policing agencies between police services and between the police and other first responders, social and community services, as well as residents. Collectively with other first responders, social and community organizations, we achieved this 24-7, 365.

The largest sporting event ever hosted in the province of Manitoba, the 2023 World Police and Fire Games is an exciting and rewarding community-wide sports event. This takes place this year from July 28th to August 6, 2023. The World Police and Fire Games is an Olympic-style competition with more than

8,500 athletes representing law enforcement, firefighters, police officers from more than 50 countries around the world.

As a celebration of firefighters and law enforcement worldwide, the size and scope of the World Police and Fire Games continues to grow each year. Beginning in 2022, the WPF 2023 will introduce sporting events and activities to build momentum and awareness of the World Police and Fire Games that, again, are coming to Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, finally let me just say, as my colleague for Brandon West-East mentioned, I'm certain that everyone in the Chamber would offer our recognition and our condolences to Manitoba citizens, and including, obviously, Canadian citizens who have lost their lives in the line of duty.

And on our side of the House, we offer our sincere condolences to their families and their friends and their communities.

Miigwech.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I want to say a few words on the peace and police officers' memorial day proposed for November 30th of each year. It is important that we give honour and respect to police officers. Indeed, police officers deserve this respect. In the large majority, there are a few outliers. There are a few who have been involved in things which are not up to the standards of what we expect of police officers. But the large, large majority of police officers not only deserve our respect, but they have earned it. And, in fact, it is important for the police officers' ability to carry out their duty that they have that respect.

And I think this is an important day to not only talk about this but to move it forward. There have been, as we all know, concerns about sexual harassment in police forces in Canada. There have been concerns about discrimination in police forces in Canada, about inordinate arrests of people who are Black, Indigenous or people of colour. And these issues clearly need to be addressed, and to be addressed well, in order to restore the full honour and respect which police officers should have and deserve to have.

So it is really important that these issues, which are troubling issues, are addressed and that we can talk about them. But at the same time, it is important to correct these problems, but it is also important that we have this particular day, which talks not just about

police officers but about peace. And peace and order in society depend on much more than police.

Peace, as we are finding in many jurisdictions, can be helped considerably by having, on occasions, social workers working closely with police officers and addressing mental health concerns, concerns of people who have neurodiversity. And so it is really important that we start to think about peace in a broader context.

We have involvement of citizens, which can help. And we have seen patrols—the Bear Can [*phonetic*] Patrol, which have had a significant impact. Indeed, communities on patrol can be very important, as I'm aware from representing River Heights, where we have had many—much of the time Citizens on Patrol organization.

Sadly, the current government has not adequately funded the citizens on the patrol program provincially, and so the result has been that there's been a fall-off of interest and some people leaving this. And the activity is less because there hasn't been the sort of provincial support that there should be. And there should be because Citizens on Patrol can be a big help to police officers. I have talked with individuals in River Heights who tell me that, as they are working to prevent property crimes in River Heights, that the police officers have been ready to listen, ready to work with people involved in Citizens on Patrol, ready to make a difference.

And so it is important that we are not just supporting police officers, but we are supporting our communities. We are supporting other parallel efforts to ensure we have a more peaceful and safer and more stable society.

There are concerns, and they have been raised about violence, violence toward police in which police are killed. And certainly, in the Liberal Party, we offer our condolences to family and friends who are affected by these tragic events.

* (10:50)

But at the same time, we need to be addressing, in a far better way and a far broader way, those things which can be risk factors to lead to people to be engaged in violent acts. The presence of poverty, for example, is something that we can address, and that can make a difference.

Education is important, and it is important that our schools are helping children to understand, and will be important. I suggest to the member who has

brought forward this bill that it will be important to have a program in schools around the province to have more of a dialogue now, in terms of what's happening, not just with police but with other aspects, and how communities and individuals can be involved in decreasing violence.

We know that individuals who are neurodiverse, those with learning disorders, with autism, with ADHD, are often individuals who are misunderstood, and who are disproportionately put in the—incarcerated, and we need to make sure that our society is much more understanding and helpful to those who have autism, those who have ADHD and those who have learning disabilities.

Learning disabilities—right now we are not properly screening for learning disabilities in Manitoba early on, when we should be, so that when they're detected, they're detected too late, and too often they're missed. And when somebody with a learning disability is not diagnosed, and is not helped, then we have a problem, because they become, you know—having difficulty in school, difficulty learning. They can develop secondary mental health issues. They can drop out of school. They can become involved in juvenile delinquency. And they—

Madam Speaker: Order please.

The member is straying somewhat from the title of the bill that is before us, so I'm going to ask him to bring his comments more closely related to the bill that's on the floor.

Mr. Gerrard: Madam Speaker, with respect, we are talking in this bill about peace, about decreasing violence. And one of the reasons why we have violence is that we are not addressing learning disabilities. So these individuals come up and struggle in society and get frustrated, and too often become violent.

And until we understand that, until we act to make a difference, we are still going to have much more violence in our society that we should have. And we know, for example, that exposure to lead is exposed—associated with increased violence, increased crime. And we have got governments which have not paid enough attention to this. And so we have too much lead, as many reports have shown, in areas of Winnipeg; and those happen to be areas where there are high crime areas.

So, there are things that we have to be talking about and doing if we're going to achieve a more peaceful society. If we're going to decrease the

violence that is present now, and which is so disturbing, then we need to be acting much better. We need to be reforming the child and family services system because too many children who've gone through that system end up getting in trouble and having difficulties later on.

So, there is a lot to do. We need to remember that. We need to salute the police, honour the police, but we need to think also of how we achieve better peace and less violence.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 242, The Police and Peace Officers' Memorial Day Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

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

* * *

Hon. Jon Reyes (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, is it the will for the House to call it 11 o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 11 o'clock? [*Agreed*]

DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

Res. 15—Committing to Balancing Future Budgets while Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on—resumption of debate on Resolution 15, Committing to Balancing Future Budgets while Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families, which is standing under the name of the honourable member for Union Station, who has three minutes remaining.

MLA Uzoma Asagwara (Union Station): I am energized this morning by the enthusiasm from my colleagues on this side of the House.

You know, keeping in mind I only have a few minutes left to speak on this resolution, I think what I'd like to share actually are some experiences I had over the weekend. So, it was the long weekend and like many of my colleagues on this side of the House,

I worked most of the weekend. Had a fundraiser on Friday, was out in community very—you know, early Saturday morning and then throughout the day and, you know, was speaking with folks over the phone, via email on Sunday and even yesterday night.

Mr. Andrew Mickelfield, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

And you know, I think what is really important to note and what I took from all of those conversations is that it doesn't matter where I am, doesn't matter if I'm at a fundraiser in the community on Friday; it doesn't matter if I'm at an awareness run on Saturday morning; it doesn't matter if I'm sitting with health-care professionals late Saturday afternoon and chatting with folks on Saturday—Sunday and Monday, rather, in terms of how they're trying to navigate this health-care system, but are having extreme levels of difficulty, due to this government. It doesn't matter where I am or who I'm talking to, Manitobans across the board, coming from very different lived experiences are all on the same page: This PC government is failing them.

This is a Conservative government that has prioritized privatization of health care. Now we're seeing the privatization happening more in education. This is a government that has prioritized their own political agenda, their own political careers above and beyond Manitobans, beyond people. And when I sit and I talk with people from all walks of life, in Manitoba, they make it explicitly clear to me that they don't accept it. That they don't accept that this government in any way, shape or form has the capacity nor the interest in fixing the chaos they've created across the systems that people depend on to have good outcomes in their lives.

And so, this resolution that was brought forward is completely disingenuous. It lacks any accountability whatsoever and it, yet again, is just a symbol. It is just a document that further reiterates that this government cares first and foremost about itself and that somewhere on a list, down on a list, are the people of Manitoba. That is unacceptable and this is the year that Manitobans get to change that.

Thank you.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): As I always say, it's always a privilege to be up here representing the people of Transcona debating important topics such as this brought forward today in the House. I will say, Deputy Speaker, that when we're debating something like this, it's really quite disingenuous coming from the other side of the House—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Altomare: Well, thank you, Deputy Speaker for that. I appreciate you intervening. May I continue? Thank you very much.

You know, what we see here is an example, Deputy Speaker, of Hail Mary politics. This is what happens after seven years of consistently underfunding core government services. Then, all of a sudden, now, without any real planning, we get this resolution brought forward to this House.

But nobody can take this seriously. Why? Because we know the record. And this government can't run on their record. They absolutely cannot because—just a few examples, Deputy Speaker: AMM, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, have had to deal with years of zero per cent—seven years of operating grant freezes.

* (11:00)

So, what does that seven years of operating grant freezes do, Deputy Speaker? What it does is that it takes the impact, the very deleterious impact of inflation and it hammers local ratepayers. So, while this government wants to balance budgets, it's always done on the backs of Manitoba taxpayers.

So, the AMM then, is then forced to deal with the reality of increased fuel costs, increased cost to maintain their fleets—they keep the roads clear; increased costs to maintain their water treatment facilities. All of those things are passed on to who, Deputy Speaker? The local taxpayer. So, while this government freezes their grants, this is what ends up happening. The Manitobans still end up paying, and they end up paying for these deleterious decisions.

And here's the other piece though, Deputy Speaker. The government of Manitoba can borrow money at the best rates, better rates than the local municipalities can. So, while the government shirks its duty in providing the necessary grants to AMM members, AMM members are then forced to borrow money at higher rates to maintain core services that their ratepayers expect.

The City of Winnipeg itself has seen cuts to transit, cuts to snow clearing, cuts to other important services, such as library, the creation of an active transportation network, all of those pieces that are important to rate-payers here in the city of Winnipeg.

What ends up happening? They have to borrow money—the City of Winnipeg—at this point, at a higher rate than this Province can. Meanwhile, they wipe

their hands, shirk their responsibility and the City of Winnipeg is left to deal with the impact of this lack of accountability.

The other piece, Deputy Speaker, regarding this is some of the important lessons that are taught in our schools, a lot of which has to do with the acceptance of responsibility and the seriousness that we take—our words mean something.

And so, when we see six and a half years of 0.5 per cent, school divisions are left to make very difficult decisions; difficult decisions around staffing, difficult decisions around programming and difficult decisions around recruitment to the point, now, where many school divisions don't have the capacity to bring on the people that they need to have, to have their system work properly.

So, what's the impact, Deputy Speaker? The impact is there are families that are on wait-lists, 10 to 20 deep, to get necessary clinical services for their children because they've been identified as requiring extra supports in schools. We all know this. We can't just, all of a sudden, snap your fingers and have this support come through, just like if you've increased your funding. It doesn't work that way. You have to build capacity. And it's the building that capacity that's been missing.

You know, we can also talk about, Deputy Speaker, is how workers have been treated by this government. We saw last week here on the steps of the Manitoba Legislature, we saw M-H-A-C-P that has been without a contract for how many years, member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe)? How many?

An Honourable Member: Five years.

Mr. Altomare: Five years. Five years, they've been waiting, and then this government says, oh, we're going to let the process work itself out. Five years? How does anyone even—does it—is there anyone left in the health-care system that wants to work for this government?

At this point, we're having people leaving in record numbers. So, while they say they've hired extra people to work, they can't tell us how many people have actually left so that we can do a real comparison, Deputy Speaker. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Altomare: That's the piece that's important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I'm just going to ask if conversations could be at a suitable volume. The

level of chatter is inching up, up, up. And if we could just be respectful for the member speaking.

I also do want to just remind all members of the topic this morning, and to make sure their remarks are relevant and staying on track, tying it back in to what they're saying.

Mr. Altomare: I want to thank my colleagues, as always. I also do want to mention, Deputy Speaker, that I was paying really close attention to what the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara) was saying, especially around the seriousness of the decisions that we're facing right now, because of the years of underfunding, the years of underfunding that have left core government services in tatters.

Now, while we say in this PMR that we're going to have balanced budgets, at what cost, Deputy Speaker? Any serious government knows that we have to keep the core services intact so that people can rely on the services that they expect from their government. The top two are health care and education. And what have we seen? We have seen a record here that really defies—it really does defy logic. Because how can you have more with less? And that's what they're asking us to believe right now. And so when we have this particular piece—this particular resolution in front of us, we see what the evidence has provided us.

As I began my debate, Deputy Speaker, I talked about the importance of accepting responsibility for your decisions. That's something that we talk about all the time in the school system, right? That's a really important life lesson because when you do that, you can then see your errors and make the necessary adjustments. This is an important piece that needs to be imparted. This government hasn't done that. They're actually doubling down on their errors and hoping people aren't paying attention.

But I can tell you, just like my colleague, the member from Union Station, said, when we have conversations with people and when we're out on the doors and we're meeting people in the community, they're talking to us about the difficulty in accessing services that weren't difficult before 2016.

So, here's what we're left with then. We're left with this conundrum where any serious government would realize that having a plan in place over time for these core government services to be maintained is something that is important, because people expect their health-care system and education system to be

functioning so that when they need that service, they can access it in a timely fashion.

Some of the longest wait-lists now are for MRIs. I had a constituent speak to me about that and about the decision that the doctor had given him: you can wait here or, you know what, if you have the means, you can drive down 90 minutes to the border and go into a truck and get your MRI done in Grafton. Imagine that, Deputy Speaker. The home of public health care being—getting to the point now where we have to drive down to a trailer in North Dakota. How insulting is that to the people of Manitoba, the hard-working people of Manitoba that expect to see their tax dollars properly invested in these core government services.

So, now we're left to debate this particular resolution, Deputy Speaker, where it has absolutely no teeth. No one's going to believe them. They certainly don't believe them at the door. These are important pieces. A serious government has to take seriously the responsibility it has on core government services. I'll repeat it again: health care and education are seen as that. These are not dollars that are spent; these are dollars that are invested in our community to keep our citizens healthy, to keep our citizens informed and to, also, invest in our citizens. This is what it's all about.

So, when we bring forth a resolution such as this, it rings hollow, Deputy Speaker. Especially when we have so many people impacted by these deleterious decisions these past number of years since 2016.

And with those few words, Deputy Speaker, I will cede the floor—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): I'm—I think it's important to talk about this resolution and talk about—you know, in the previous comments that have been made in previous days of debate, there is a fair amount of statements that have been made that I would say are divorced from reality. I would say that some of the other members, the government members, were saying things about the NDP's record, which, quite frankly, are inaccurate.

* (11:10)

I will just say, as we all know, that there's no coalition here in Manitoba. That was said. It's a talking point to mislead Manitobans, but it gets said anyway. The argument about hiking the PST to 10 per cent is invented out of whole cloth. You know, and if we're

going to have to—if we're going to have debates in here, let's have it based in evidence, let's have it based in fact.

Because just putting words in other people's mouths is not a way to go at this because realistically, if we're going to talk about the importance of balanced budgets and how important it is to make sure that people have to—can afford things, we have to recognize when the government cuts its spending—well, this is a basic fact of economics—is that all spending is somebody's income; public spending is somebody's income; private spending is somebody's income.

So when public spending is cut at a time when private spending is also cut, what you end up is—with is a recession. It doesn't make things better. It makes people unemployed, and it means people can't actually afford to pay their bills. This is a basic thing that was learned in the 1930s, and established pretty well by economists in the 1930s, that the whole idea that you should always balance your budget absolutely no matter what, is not going to work.

There is enormous historical evidence that austerity is crushing, that it does not work and that it leads to very, very nasty politics because it—people get desperate. People get desperate, and they split off, they—it divides people. Because people will either go to the far left or go to the far right because they're losing all control of their lives.

So, we also have to recognize—look, this is a government that has had multiple credit downgrades and has racked up billions of dollars in debt that wasn't borrowed to build infrastructure or bridges or roads that will help the economy or contribute to future growth. It wasn't borrowed to invest in health care. And had they wanted to, there were multiple occasions for this government to balance the budget.

There was a point when somebody from the Finance Department and the Auditor General got in a fight at committee over the fact that the government, as far as the Auditor General was concerned, was running a surplus. And the Finance Department challenged the Auditor General on that and said it was—and disagreed.

The amount of money that was released to this government over the years in terms of transfer payments, the massive increases in transfer payments we've seen: \$1 billion just this year, an increase of 16 per cent. An increase of 100 per cent in federal transfers over the last seven years, and this government has still been unable to balance a budget because

what they've been doing instead of spending that money, investing; instead of putting that money into things that will pay back, like education or making people healthier or infrastructure that will help people get their—get to school or work, or get their goods to market more easily or cheaper, that didn't happen.

It's all happening right now. The PCs are taking one year that they're going to pretend that they're going to—they want to pretend this is—it's kind of like Mardi Gras, I think. This is sort of a Mardi Gras budget, where all the rest of the year, all the rest of the time, they were cutting, cutting, cutting. This is the one year they're going to have the big celebration, and then, you know, frankly, if, given the opportunity, they'll go right back to where they were before: cutting and freezing.

This is not what we need to do at a time when our education system is in tatters, our economy is fragile, our health system is breaking down and there are all sorts of areas where we need fundamental investments in government in order to provide services so that the private sector can do its job.

There are lots of places where people can't drive trucks because the roads are too bad. They can't—we can't access—we can't open up the province to minerals because we don't have roads because this government hasn't put the money into it. Because they think that you can just keep kicking this line—this money down the line. Quite frankly, this is junk economics. It's junk economics.

The basic tax exemption, even if that means that people will save less than a dollar a day at the bottom end of the scale. Is it good that they're saving a—less than a dollar a day? It's better than nothing, but better than nothing is not the same thing as good because the reality is that when you actually change that, the vast amount of money that's going to be saved, thousands of dollars, are going to be people at the top of the income scale, who don't really need it. They really don't.

Because one of the things that's happened over the last six years, and actually just certainly over the pandemic, is that we've seen people who own property have—and people who own for a living, I'll put it that way—have massively increased their wealth. And they've massively increased their wealth because everyone else is paying them. They're paying them rent. They're paying them interest.

And it's—it is really—it is destabilizing our society because if you look at the extremism that we're seeing, it's due to economic—it's due, in part, due to economic

desperation. It's the people feel they have no say or no control over their lives, and they don't know where they're going to go, because they don't know whether they're going to be able to keep their job, keep up—pay their bills or keep a roof over their house.

And this government, frankly, is not helping to do that. But it also has to be said that one of the myths in Manitoba is that the PCs are remotely centrist. Because they actually are—these are actually pretty far-right ideas. And the NDP can pretend to be left, but it's only left in comparison to a far-right party.

The NDP also did many of these same policies in 2000. They boasted they'd cut taxes by a billion dollars—by a billion dollars—and they did. They really did. But those taxes—again, well, why didn't people feel it? Why didn't we feel—why wasn't there a big impact on the economy, aside from the fact that there was—in 2008, there was a global financial crisis, because everybody had been cutting taxes for years and years and years and expecting—while piling debt onto citizens.

The reality is, and lots of people—if you actually look at the way debt works, the more governments—if—the harder the governments try to get rid of their debt as quickly as possible, it forces that debt on to citizens. And they end up not being able to pay it, and they all end up being driven out. So, this is a—it is a highly complex thing, and it's a lot more complicated than this government wants to make it sound.

But for either of the parties to talk about the things they've done for people living in poverty or the working poor in this province, it's—I'm sorry, it's an insult to reality. We live in a province that for decades has had some of the worst poverty in Canada where nothing—virtually nothing—has been done in terms of social assistance, and where vast amounts of money have been pushed into systems to punish people for being poor.

So, we will double the Justice budget, as the NDP did, and put more people in jail, but not even raise the amount of money that people get to feed themselves by a dollar for decades. That's the reality in this province. And I do have to say, you know, like, not only are there people in this province who haven't seen a raise in decades, when I talked to organizations, there are lots of organizations, including Crown corporations in Manitoba, all sorts of organizations and institutions, universities, arts organizations, sports organizations, who have not seen an increase in funding in decades. Not 10 years, not 20 years, not 30 years, but 40 years in some cases.

The centre communauté franco-manitobain, it has—getting the same amount of money that it got—or no, I think it's increased by \$1,740 since 1974. That's how long it's been since there's been any meaningful increase. And the idea that people can keep doing more and more with less is not—you can do that if you actually give people the tools to switch over and become more efficient and actually put money into it, and they can't.

And I did just want to mention, because somebody mentioned the fact that they were boasting about the NDP's record on balancing budgets, the reality is that that's not a progressive thing to say. That's not a socially democratic thing to say. It's not. I'm sorry, it's not.

Tommy Douglas was a fiscal conservative and he ran—this is based on the comment of the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliv)—he ran against the Saskatchewan Liberals in 1944, screaming about the fact that they'd run up so much debt.

Well, what did they run up that debt doing? It was during the Depression and the Second World War and they were spending that debt. They were running deficits in order to make sure that people could stay alive, but Tommy Douglas didn't get rid of that debt; the federal Liberal government forgave it.

The Government of Canada actually wrote off the Depression-era debts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. It wasn't great management; it's—you know, it's great management when the federal government comes along and says, you know what? You can have a balanced budget now because we're going to take all this debt off your hands.

And that's what happened. And I mean that, you know, if—the reality is that the NDP has not been progressive. It has not, because their economics are basically exactly the same as the PCs, and if you look at their record, as the NDP urges to do, you see a party for the last 30 years, economically, they're all stuck in the 1920s. And I mean that literally; they have not actually gotten to the point of the New Deal.

The NDP and the PCs are trying to solve problems by using economic models that are divorced completely from reality. They don't predict anything; they just mean that the rich get richer while the poor get the picture. And that's what's been eroding that middle—and crushing middle class and working class and crushing people who are living in poverty in this province for decades.

And that's the reason we don't see any changes in this province and why we get exactly the same policies under both parties, which, as I will also point out, both parties have amended the balanced budget law a total of 11 times to avoid having to pay the penalty for what it's supposed to be.

It's—that particular bill—that law is an embarrassment—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired.

* (11:20)

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): So, you know, this PC government introduces a piece of meaningless nonsense and expects us to spend the day debating it, when in reality, what this resolution should have said was: whereas this provincial government borrowed money to pay for cheques to give out-of-province millionaires; whereas the COVID pandemic caused unprecedented pressure on Manitoba's finances because of mismanagement by this PC government; whereas in contrast, the NDP ran successive surpluses until a Progressive Conservative prime minister cut transfer payments; whereas this provincial government has provided help to especially rich Manitobans and not to poor Manitobans; whereas the Manitobans expect a government who is fiscally responsible but they did not get that with this PC government, who had to borrow money to pay for their out-of-province billionaire friends' tax cuts; whereas the NDP have no hidden agenda to raise taxes in the provincial sales tax on Manitobans and cancel school tax—just more make-believe from this government; whereas Manitobans save \$5,500 in taxes compared to the dark days of the NDP, but they can't find a doctor, they can't find an ambulance, they can't find somebody working in a lab, they can't afford to pay for groceries, they can't afford to come from the North to get health care; whereas—oh, sorry.

Therefore, be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn this provincial government for their complete mismanagement cutting and privatizing services that Manitobans depend on.

Let's talk a little bit about this government's record. We have seniors living in Flin Flon who need dental care but because this government shut down the operating room in Flin Flon, those seniors cannot get dental surgery. I've talked to the Minister of Seniors any number of times. He was going to do something. You know what he's done, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing.

He's fine with leaving Flin Flon seniors in pain with no dental care because they don't have private insurance. He's okay with that. He hasn't fixed it. He hasn't advocated, he's done nothing. *[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

MLA Lindsey: Let's talk about the people of Leaf Rapids. They used to have a hospital. They used to have an emergency department. They have none of that now, thanks to this PC government.

Let's talk about Leaf Rapids. They used to have a hospital. They do not anymore, even though they're fully staffed. This government refuses to send seniors back to Lynn Lake to be with their families because that's their mindset, is shut it down. They don't care about people in the North.

So, while they want us to talk about balancing budgets, let's talk about what provincial government should actually be doing with money that they bring in, which is providing services that Manitobans depend on, services like health care.

Let's talk about the northern patient transportation system that's basically been gutted by this government. I was at the airport coming to fly back on Sunday night, Monday night—whatever night it was. And there was people in there that were coming to Winnipeg for medical because we don't have any medical available for them in Flin Flon.

One fellow told me he'd been flying eight times in the course of a year. He has to spend two days here. You know what the government pays him for his trouble of hotels, taxis, meals? Nothing. They pay him nothing. He's on his own dime for that. There's a lot of people that can't afford to pay for two days' hotels and meals plus the airfare cost that the government doesn't cover.

I talked to another lady that comes for an injection every couple of months. She tries to find the cheapest hotel that she can possibly find because, once again, this government doesn't cover hotel stays and we know that the flights in the North have been unpredictable, have been less than adequate. We used to have two flights a day to Flin Flon. Now we have one flight a day, most days. Some days, two flights a day, when Calm Air decides to fly on time.

So while this government likes to pat themselves on the back and say how wonderful of managers of money they are, they're not. Because they continue to borrow money to pay for tax cuts, the tax cuts that predominantly went to help their rich friends. We

know that the majority of people didn't enjoy the same level of benefit from these tax cuts that they like to pat themselves on the back about.

So, we know that they made the largest ever cuts to post-secondary funding while at the same time increasing tuition fees. Because they think they're so good at managing money, but their idea's that, well, unless you're rich, you shouldn't go to school. Because they don't want average Manitobans getting ahead because it's all about money for this government. It's not about people. They don't care about average Manitobans.

So, we know that recent studies have shown that half, 53 per cent, of Canadians say they can't keep up with the cost of living. Seven in 10 Canadians report being stressed about money as inflation continues to grow. And we see this in every aspect of life. Cost of groceries has gone up through the roof.

This government, what is they do? Well, nothing. They lag so far behind on raising the minimum wage that people were suffering and losing their houses and losing their cars, not being able to afford to put groceries on the table anymore, because this government wouldn't step in and help out because all they were concerned about was giving money to millionaires.

So, we know that over the years, NDP governments managed to have balanced budgets while at the same time providing services that people needed. We used to have doctors in northern Manitoba. We used to have nurses in northern Manitoba. We used to have fully functioning hospitals in northern Manitoba. So we know that this government cut all that stuff. We don't have those services anymore. Manitobans in the North particularly have felt the brunt of the cuts.

When this government decided to shut down so many ERs in Winnipeg, it had a knock-on effect on people in the North because as those waiting lists grew, people from the North didn't get on the list. They just didn't get recommended for surgery. They never got there. They just sat at home and waited in pain and suffering.

So, we know that this particular resolution that they've put forward is completely meaningless. It's not worth the paper that it's written on. Because it's—in this government's mind, it's going to create a wedge that somehow we're against balanced budgets. What we're really against is ignoring Manitobans. A government of Manitoba should be in place to benefit Manitobans, not just rich Manitobans but all Manitobans.

We know that this government doesn't do that. We know that they have ignored the basic needs of renters. We know that they've ignored the basic needs of the less well-off Manitobans. We won't even get started on how they've ignored Indigenous people, particularly in northern Manitoba. Trying to build hospitals with absolutely no funding from this government. Because they don't care about people in the North.

We know that things can be different. And we know that October, when the election comes, things will be different. It'll be a brighter day for Manitobans once—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

* (11:30)

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): Thank you Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a chance to share a few words on the private member's resolution, Committing to Balancing Future Budgets while Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families.

At the end of the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans just do not believe this government. They do not believe the spin that they try and put on the so-called good work that they're doing. They do not believe that they're going to positively move us forward, they are going to balance the budget, they are going to commit to balancing the budget.

At the end of the day, it just comes down to the fact that everything this government says is just a political spin. This is just now election year topics, discussions that they're going to put forward, promises, announcements. And at the end of the day, it's just something that's not in reality, not based in reality.

And even going through the whereas in the resolution that's brought forward today, it contradicts themselves. It contradicts their own budget. So again, this government is now speaking past their own timeline and trying to commit past their own timeline. And let's be clear, their timeline ends in October.

So for them to say we are going to commit to doing things past that, the reality is that's something that Manitobans just do not believe they are capable of doing.

So, in reading some of the whereas clauses and—in the resolution, whereas the COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented pressure on Manitoba finances. That is something that we absolutely agree on. But what this government fails to mention time and time

again is they're also received record transfers during this time, as well, to help with all the issues that arose during the pandemic, and continue to arise during the pandemic.

But again, I get back to in—since the pandemic and during the pandemic and to this day, sometimes I ask the basic question that I know the federal government has asked this government, as well: money that is coming forward to the province from the federal government, are you spending it where it is intended to? If you ask for increased health dollars, are you in fact spending it at the bedside? You ask for increased education dollars; are you spending that in the classroom?

And at the end of the day, it's just not happening. But this government conveniently will try and use the pandemic as a shield for all of their mismanagement, and all of their cuts that continuously are now coming to a head. Before the pandemic, this government was still on a path to be able to devastate the education system, to devastate the health-care system. And now they just got exasperated with the pandemic, even though during that time, they had a number of increased transfers coming from the federal government, they were still on that path to not being able to do that, not being able to make their own ends meet. Because they simply just were not going to be able to do that.

So when we talk about the unprecedented pressure on Manitoba's finances, that's because of the cuts of this government. That's because of the accumulation of cuts prior to 2019 that began in 2016 and are coming forward; now we're sitting here in 2023, two terms, seven years later, and now it's coming to a head for this government.

And I know, going forward, they're trying to now say, well, we're going to commit to something else that they're not going to be a part of. And a number of members opposite are not personally going to be a part of that as well.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you've talked about the finances, we talk about the finances, and a number of different Finance ministers have come and gone under this department because they just simply know that the plans and the comments and the budget that this government has put forward is just not realistic. It's just not something they themselves can live up to.

So those Finance ministers have come and gone, and now we're sitting here on the eve of an election with all kinds of promises and all kinds of resolutions

coming out to try and pat themselves on the back. And we know how that's worked for this government. They've tried during the pandemic to pat themselves on the back. In fact, the former Health minister, then Finance minister, told people we got this. But clearly you did not have this.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the—my colleague, the member from Transcona, talked about accepting responsibility. So that's something that this government is being asked to do time and time again: accept responsibility for your action. Accept responsibility for your cuts. Stop trying to put a spin on it to say you're investing more, you're doing more here. At the end of the day, Manitobans know that in health care, in education and all across every department in this province, it's a net loss. The so-called investments, and the new investments, and the record investments that this government claims to be making is, at the end of the day, a net loss, because of that accumulation from 2016 up until today.

So when they bring forth a resolution now, committing to what they're going to do in the future, their track record just shows that they're not capable of doing that. And they're not able to do that going forward. So why should Manitobans trust them? Because this government has done that on the backs of Manitobans. They have done the cuts on the backs of Manitobans. On the cuts of health care and the cuts of educations.

So now they've—they're claiming to be the champions of balanced budget going forward. And, again, using the pandemic as a shield as to why they—the systems are the way they are. The systems are the way they are because of this government, because of the incompetence of this government to actually manage the health-care system, manage the education system. And it's now coming to a head.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the resolution was first brought forward—now, this is now a couple different times, now, that this government has brought forward this resolution to have discussion on this. Again, to try and—for a second opportunity to pat themselves on the back. And during the questions, there was—there's some simple questions. You would think they would be simple questions, basic questions to ask—to answer.

So, like why is this government claiming that they're on the path to a balanced budget in 2027 when their own budget documents suggest that they'll be a \$53-million deficit that year? That just shows how out of touch this resolution is with the reality of the budget

process that they're putting forward. Their budget is going to contradict this resolution and vice versa.

So why bring this forward? Again, to try and pat themselves on the back, thinking Manitobans won't realize it. Thinking Manitobans won't question it. Manitobans just simply won't understand that. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans are very, very smart. And they know and they see through kind of the rhetoric that this government is trying to put a spin on.

Another question that came up during the questions and answers is, why has the government failed to support Manitobans during the affordability crisis? And, again, try and put a spin on that and say, oh, yes, we're doing this. Oh, yes, don't you recall, Brian Pallister signed some cheques and said, here you go. And now this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) follows suit, try to give cheques to Manitobans. At the same time at the expense of what? Manitobans know that that was not going to help them during an affordability crisis. They know that the overall, in the big picture; that was all going to catch up.

So if this government comes out and says, well, here's a cheque for \$100 or \$200 or \$300, at the end of the day, in the affordability crisis that Manitobans are going through, they have to just turn that over now and pay their hydro bill. They have to just turn that over now and go and pay those increased costs at the grocery store. Because that's the reality and that's the affordability crisis that this government is just ignoring. The affordability crisis that affects everyday Manitobans because this government is out of touch with everyday Manitobans.

So they think they can come out and buy the province and buy Manitobans by saying, oh, this is what we're going to do. We're going to do this record investment. By the way, the cheques are going to be in the mail. We're going to pay hundreds of thousand dollars to advertise the fact that those cheques are in the mail.

How is that helping Manitobans during an affordability crisis? Why not turn around with those advertising dollars that you're using to pat yourselves on the back and actually do something to work the affordability crisis, to lower rates for Manitobans, to help Manitobans each and every day. Manitobans that have to go at the end of the month and realize whatever cheque they may get, whether it be through social or paycheque or what have you, or pension or what have you, and realizing that I have to make a choice here: I have to either pay my bill or put food on my table.

No Manitobans should have that—have to be forced to make that choice with a government that's claiming that they're working for them and helping them through an affordability crisis. Because they're just simply not doing that.

So for this government to come out here and say now we're going to commit to future budgets in 2027 and doing that going forward, that's just not the reality because they're not addressing issues that arise each and every day.

Another question that came up during the question and answers is, why has the government made life more expensive for Manitobans by raising hydro rates and approving above-guideline rent increases? Again, out of touch with everyday Manitobans and the need and what Manitobans are going through, day in, day out.

So when they talk about the afford—first off, this government will never use the word crisis when it comes to health care, when it comes to education, let alone when it comes to affordability. They will not use that word. Yet that's clearly what we are in. We are clearly in a health-care crisis. We are clearly in an affordability crisis. And this Manitoba government just fails to acknowledge it and do anything to put some real, tangible solutions on the table so that Manitobans can actually see a light at the end of the tunnel.

Another question that came up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the question and answer period is why is this government giving cheques to billionaires? Taking money away from the education system they cut funding in, for years. Again, that was simply asked. When this—when the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was asked, why are you giving cheques to billionaires who made over \$400 million in the first quarter, and are they really going to not need \$300,000, she claimed they were going to close. She claimed that these businesses were going to go out of business if they did not receive this benefit on the backs of Manitobans. And that's absolutely unacceptable—

* (11:40)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member's time has expired.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak): As the MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, it's always an honour and a privilege to be standing here to be speaking on behalf of my constituents and in front of my colleagues as well. And most importantly, to put my debate on record.

In regards to this private member's resolution, Committing to Balancing Future Budgets while Keeping Life Affordable for Manitoba Families, is quite—it's quite peculiar coming from the other side of the House. As long as I've been standing here on the opposition, from where I come from, as an Indigenous woman from northern Manitoba, I just find that there's times where communicating with the government is like trying to communicate with a brick wall.

How—why I'm saying that is because I come from a community that has many, many problems in accessing services and some of those services that are affecting, that I'm hearing right now, is within our education system. And that's why when it comes to education property tax, it really bothers me that when we learned about these huge corporations that are going to be 'benifating'—benefiting from these education property taxes that should be going to public schools, it angered me.

And even more so, it just even made the government look even more to me as out of touch. Because I just don't understand, you know, contributing to already millionaires, or contributing to public schools? And here we are, again, fighting on behalf of children and as a mother, too, my children attend school in the Kelsey School Division.

In The Pas, I have many, many conversations in regards to cuts, lack of services such as clinicians, which is so badly needed in northern Manitoba, attraction of teachers, retention of our teachers and our EAs as well. I just find that these services are needed even more, especially after the pandemic. It seems like our classrooms are becoming smaller and our staff, too, as well, is becoming smaller. So, with that, our public health—our public school system is already suffering.

So, it just angers me that these property tax rebate benefits for the wealthy and large corporations, you know, is starving our education system and also leaving our renters and us regular folks behind. I can say that on behalf of my constituents and many, many, many people that I know as well.

So, in regards to this, times are tough already for our families. And the cost of living is riding—is rising at an 'unprecedented' rate. In regards to, you know, watching the news every day, you know, the need for food banks is at its highest right now. In fact, we don't even have a food bank anymore in The Pas. Our office has been trying to work with partners within our communities, slowly, to get a food bank going again,

especially for our seniors and those single parent families. A service that is much needed.

There is no shame in using those services in—such as food banks, where I remember being—growing up in the Saskatoon—the Indian and friendship centre in Saskatoon, and many of our families had to go there. And in fact, we considered it a nice family outing, if you will. And that's why I think it's important that we start stirring up our partners again to get this food bank once again going for our seniors in The Pas.

So, that is why it's disappointing to see that, instead of helping Manitobans through these difficult times, the PC government has yet again chosen to help their wealthy friends and a large part of our province's corporations instead. The Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) comments about saying that perhaps these—this company would go out of business, you know, if these rebates weren't received.

You know, to me that was even more so concrete to show that—how out of touch the other side is. And it was quite laughable, if you will. And to me, it just seemed it was, you know, out of disrespect, too, in regards to our staff and students within our public school systems as well.

And I just really wish that this message would be carried out more and more. And I believe that as an NDP MLA for The Pas-Kameesak, these conversations are already being held and we already know in northern Manitoba how out of touch this PC government is, because we still have been waiting to be treated as respectful partners in regards to improving our health-care systems, especially as Indigenous people.

I think there's a few major health-care projects going on on First Nations land. And we have yet to see the Province step up to provide their share and their concern and their respect for Manitobans living in northern Manitoba.

And in regards to accessing those services, we had just heard, too, from the member from Flin Flon about how we have to cancel appointments, especially when it's known that it's—a family member can't afford to leave their family for a couple of days to access—to fly or take a bus or drive to Winnipeg for an appointment. They've got to worry about their leave from work, they've got to make sure that the family has groceries at home before they leave, they've got to worry about child care.

And on top of that, you know, we have this inflation. You know, more and more that we shop for

groceries, the more and more the bigger the bill is. And, you know, it's quite concerning when you pick up an item that we used to enjoy a few years ago is now like three times the price.

And, you know, how would that—of course that's going to affect our families—our lower-income families. You know, the higher the prices, the less they can buy. And this is why it angers me that these rebates and these wealthy corporations are going to be benefitting, and I just see once again how I see the PC government.

You know they—right here—it's like they don't—not want to provide what is needed for all Manitobans to survive what we're going through right now with this inflation. And once again, despite the Province claiming that these property owners' rebate savings will trickle down to the tenants, many of the tenants are not even seeing their fair share.

So, after six years of cutting our children's education, you know, as a mother, the PC government has not provided any plan in how they make—in how they're going to make up the funding of a difference of nearly \$900 million as a result of the tax rebate.

* (11:50)

So, with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm just really concerned about my children's education and the rest of Manitobans' education with these tax rebates. To me, it's just a selfish idea and an idea that I cannot fathom, especially where I'm coming from. While living with my mother in Saskatoon, we were on social assistance, and I truly know how this can affect lower income families.

Ekosi.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record, and build off of some of the comments by my colleagues, starting with the member for Union Station (MLA Asagwara), who I think right off the top called out this resolution for being nonsense; for being, you know, I mean, first of all, poorly written and poorly conceived of, but even the details within it being so factually incorrect that it's almost impossible to just debate the resolution on its merits, right?

It's—I mean just as a sort of starting point, and I know that the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie) also mentioned this, the PC government's own budget this year, 2023 budget, you know, laid out their plan, their projected deficits going forward, and they said, well, in 2027, we'll have a \$53-million deficit.

And here comes the member for Brandon West (Mr. Helwer) and says, well, no, no, no, we're going to do something completely different. Like, did he miss the meeting? Did he not read the budget?

You know, I can't really figure out what's going on over there. It seems like there's many divisions and factions in that side of the House, and, you know, I can understand why. The dying days of an unpopular government with an unpopular Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) who has, you know, presided over so many cuts and, you know, the slashing of our public services. No wonder, you know, the member for Brandon West is going out on his own.

You know, but that being said, I mean this was his opportunity, given that this would be his last PMR in this House. He's announced he's stepping away from public life, and, you know, I wish him the best and that, but if you're going to leave a legacy, you know, why would this be the legacy that you would bring to the House? Something that's so, on its face, ridiculous and so poorly written that, again, it's difficult to even take seriously. It's even difficult to debate in a serious way.

But that being said, I think it is important that we call out, you know, some of the cuts that this government has made, which I think the member for Transcona (Mr. Altomare) did very well, that we call out the fact that this doesn't actually address the affordability crisis, which the member for Keewatinook (Mr. Bushie)—or, sorry, the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) just put on the record.

You know, there's a whole bunch of ways that we could talk about how this government has failed Manitobans, but just—even if we were just to talk about the finances and how this government has managed the finances, it's been an absolute unmitigated disaster from the jump.

And it started with Brian Pallister as premier. You know, he came in, tough talk; well, we're the fiscal managers, we're going to be, you know, we're going to be tough with Manitobans, but we're going to balance the budget. You know, I think he said, you know, 10 years down the line or some kind of future whatever—you know, future target that, of course, he

never met. He never even came close to—you know, they say that 2020, oh, we're going to balance, this is the balanced budget.

You know, the worldwide pandemic is taking out the world economy, you know, putting immense pressure on health-care services, on a whole number of things, and yet they get their drafters to go out and write a budget that was written as if there is no pandemic. So, oh, there's no pandemic; we're going to balance the budget. That's baloney, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It doesn't make sense for you to bring in a budget that's balanced when you know that your whole, you know, if I can use an analogy, it's—I paid off the mortgage at the same time your whole roof is caving in. It doesn't make any sense. Your foundation is crumbling, as the member for Transcona rightly points out.

So, anyway, just to sort of, you know, dispel any kind of myth that they once, one time, balanced the budget—of course they didn't, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It was complete hogwash. But just, even just to imagine that Brian Pallister came and said, we're going to be tough with, you know, the budget, and we're going to do—well, no, he didn't. He ended up bringing in a balance budget legislation that then the next year he amended, and the next year he amended again, and the next year he amended again. I think it's been four times now the balanced budget legislation has been amended. And what changes did they make?

They made sure that Cabinet ministers still got their pay. That was the one sort of, you know, stick that they had, that we had in Manitoba, that was saying, well, you've got to be at least accountable; if you're not going to balance, then Cabinet ministers don't get paid.

Well, all of a sudden they're still getting paid, even—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) will have six minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, this House is recessed and stands recessed until 1:30 this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

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