

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

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Myrna Driedger  
Speaker*

**Vol. LXXVII No. 39A - 10 a.m., Tuesday, April 11, 2023 - REPRINT**

ISSN 0542-5492

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

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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
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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
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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, April 11, 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. Derek Johnson (Acting Government House Leader):** I'd like to call Bill 235, please.

**Madam Speaker:** It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bill 235 this morning, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

## SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

## Bill 235—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act

**Madam Speaker:** So, I will therefore call second reading, Bill 235, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere):** I move, seconded by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) that Bill 235, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Micklefield:** I will never forget the shock of parents whose baby was born with multiple deformities, intact and beautiful, but not breathing: a sight not easily forgotten. I think these people deserve bereavement leave, and that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

I will never forget the teen mother whose surprise had turned to excitement, but then to grief as her pregnancy ended unexpectedly. Not many people knew, and it was just too awkward to explain, so she suffered and grieved alone. I think those young mothers deserve bereavement leave, and that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

I will never forget the woman who told me of her experience with a superior who she was obliged to inform following her miscarriage. Their interaction was clinical, impersonal and felt uncompassionate and insensitive. She felt handled, briskly, efficiently and coldly, with no acknowledgment that hers was a real loss, or understanding that hormonally, psychologically and emotionally, her life had suddenly and drastically changed. I think those women deserve bereavement leave, and that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

I will never forget the young father's blank face as he walked down the aisle of the church holding the shoebox-sized casket which contained his dead baby; his grieving wife at his side surrounded by a small group of friends and family. They'd always known the pregnancy would be complicated, but they'd hoped for the best. The very contractions that usually brought life literally squeezed their weak baby to death. It was horrific. And the couple mourned deeply. I think these people deserve bereavement leave, and that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

I will never forget, as a little boy, my parents hoping I would have a brother or sister. And I would later find out, against doctor's orders, were disappointed with repeated miscarriages and the fading hope that their miracle would never happen. Though, happily, it later did, and I would twice become an older brother. But for many, that is not their story. I think all these people deserve bereavement leave, and that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

I will never forget struggling to find the words to say, when I stood just a few weeks ago in the entrance

hallway of a friend's home who had experienced yet another miscarriage. Ruth and I gave them a plant just about to flower as we tried to acknowledge their loss. I think these people deserve bereavement leave, and that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

And I will never forget the day my own wife's pregnancy ended. I have her permission to share about that day we will never forget, when while at a friend's wedding, it became apparent that something was wrong. We excused ourselves without reason and went straight to the hospital, where despite assurances that with bedrest, all would be okay, a few days later, Ruth lost the baby. The ensuing medical procedures were unpleasant and intrusive, but the emotional fallout from the loss lasted much longer. Breaking sad news with those we'd earlier shared happy news with was one thing. But navigating the professional and personal relationships of those who knew nothing came with relational complications we did not want to get into, and tried with varying levels of success to avoid.

These experiences helped me understand something of what so many go through, often many times; sometimes for many years and frequently without a happy ending. One friend observed to me several years later that in his opinion, I was not yet over our own loss. I suspect he perceived something unresolved in me that I did not see in myself.

About 20 per cent of pregnancies end in miscarriage, though some stats put that number as high as 25. We really don't know. Probably that rate is actually higher, as many pregnancies go undetected.

But bereavement grief is real, and bereaved parents report a range of experiences from low-grade prolonged sadness to clinical depression, from anxiety to post-traumatic stress disorder. These are real things because this bereavement is real. Words like awful, devastating, horrendous and sad are never far from the lips of those describing their experiences. And I thank those who have come today, some who I know and others who I've never met, for showing their support in the gallery.

\*(10:10)

So, I say to those in the gallery and to all who have grieved this kind of grief, yours is a real loss. Your grief is a real grief. Your pain is a real pain. You are not alone; you are not unnoticed. And today, I hope to include you, your spouses and partners, in Manitoba's bereavement laws, which, if this passes,

will also include adoptive parents waiting for their child to arrive.

But this bill does not only expand the definition of bereavement to include miscarriage and stillbirth; it also extends it from three to five days. This will allow, at least for those whose work schedules follow a typical work week—and I recognize many do not—effectively a week off, with no risk to their employment status.

I will never forget the employee I had whose mother was healthy and happy on the weekend, but passed away on Wednesday following a sudden, 'undetective'—undetected and aggressive illness. The whole family was in shock, and I cannot imagine how one manages with three days to sort out the logistics of arrangements and a funeral and family visitors, to say nothing of their own mental and emotional state.

We made accommodations for the employee, who accessed time to grieve, and many employers do the same. But this bill ensures they cannot lose their jobs for taking five days to find their feet, sort out some essentials and make what plans they can for the coming weeks.

I think those employers—those employees deserve bereavement leave. And that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

I will never forget the phone call from a distraught husband that his wife, my secretary, had died suddenly, asking me, her boss in a school, to officiate the funeral. It was a very unexpected collision of roles and responsibilities, as the family grieved the loss of wife and mother while I stood by the casket of my own secretary.

But I think those people deserved five days' bereavement leave, and that is what I hope we can all agree on this morning.

Some may ask why I am not requiring employers to pay for this leave, and there are some reasons. First, some employers, when asked to pay, will require proof of the pregnancy that might be difficult to produce. Pregnancy tests are not always kept, and doctors' notes confirming proof of a lost pregnancy may not always be easy to obtain.

Second, and simply, I don't want this to be about the money. Having said that, many compassionate employers find ways to make this work, and in a rare moment of agreement, I cite the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), who rightly noted last week that small-business owners are under very real

pressures, with higher interest rates and inflation, and I don't want that to stall any of this out.

I want to focus on what we can agree on; I want to honour those parents and caregivers who would benefit from us passing this today.

I believe the real loss of the parents I mentioned earlier are worthy of honour and inclusion in law. I believe the silent grief of the teen mother I mentioned is worthy of our recognition and inclusion in law. I believe the cold, unhelpful reception reported to me by a female friend deserves to be remembered and honoured, and she honoured in our laws.

I believe the grief-stricken father holding the shoebox-sized casket of his child deserves an opportunity for bereavement more than has been the case, until today. I believe the mother, in whose hallway Ruth and I stood a few weeks ago, crying as she held a plant we had given her, deserves recognition in our laws for five days' leave.

And I believe this is what we would all want for ourselves, for our families and our loved ones. This law will not heal every pain or answer every question, but it is something we can do. It is a message we can send, and I believe it is in our hearts to do so this morning.

And I look forward to what I hope—

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

### Questions

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

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** My first question for this minister—or, for this member, I should say: How would paid leave help parents? Paid leave—keep that in note. How would paid leave help parents in their grieving process and improve their mental health?

Ekosi.

**Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere):** I want to thank my friend for that question, and I say my friend with all sincerity. When Ruth and I were in The Pas, we shared a meal together and I always remember that fondly.

So, as to the question, this bill, as I mentioned in my speech, does not require the employers to pay. And I think that what we need to do is start with a baseline that 'everybody' is clear on and can agree on and then we can move from there. Right now, people who miscarry or have stillbirth have no leave.

And so, I hope that we can agree today to give them something and to extend that leave for all bereavement cases from three to five days.

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

**Mrs. Cathy Cox (Kildonan-River East):** I'd like to thank the member from Rossmere for introducing this bill and this amendment.

Just want to ask him: He has talked, you know, about his experiences and about the experiences that he's felt with other individuals, but what inspired you, what was your inspiration for bringing this bill forward at this time?

**Mr. Micklefield:** I want to thank my colleague for that question. You know, this issue was brought to me—although it's one that resides in my own heart and mind—and it was reinforced to me just a few weeks ago with one of the stories that I shared. I've had phone calls to my office, I've had conversations with numerous friends, some of whom are in the gallery. And when this was brought to my attention, I thought this is something we can do; this is something that we can move forward.

Now, there may be aspects that others might choose to do in other ways, but we can get this far and we can move this forward for those people experiencing this, even today.

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

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Madam Speaker, as the MLA has pointed out that, very often following a miscarriage, the woman or partner may be hesitant to disclose this. They may be—but you're being forced to disclose a miscarriage in order to get the benefit.

Can you comment on that?

**Mr. Micklefield:** Yes, if I understand the member's question correctly, he's drawing attention to the fact that there are occasions where somebody requesting that leave might be forced to prove that they've miscarried.

And that's part of the reason why we're not, today, requesting employers pay, or requiring employers pay. We want this to be as straightforward as possible

and we don't want to give employers an opportunity to say no, when as it stands they could just say yes.

**Ms. Lathlin:** My next question is: What is being done to address other barriers women and their partners face when trying to take leave after a stillbirth or a miscarriage?

Ekosi.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Well, I want to thank the member for that question.

I think what is being done—we're talking about this here today and if that member has suggestions or ideas that would broaden the conversation, then I'd certainly welcome the opportunity to have that conversation. Obviously, there are ministers dedicated to that. That's not the purview of our conversation today.

But this is not the only bill before the Legislature addressing issues that affect women and children.

**Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips):** I'd like to thank my colleague, the MLA for Rossmere, for bringing this forward.

If I do understand the member's comments in his opening speech, he did indicate that this would—his bereavement leave would be extended to parents who were adopting. I'm wondering if the member can clarify that I heard that correctly, and whether or not this is something that's consistent across jurisdictions or something that is somewhat unique in his proposed legislation.

\* (10:20)

**Mr. Micklefield:** I want to thank my friend for that question.

And if one does a jurisdictional scan, you'll see that this proposed law does align with some provinces. I won't cite chapter and verse, though I have them here. There's a bit of a patchwork across the country on this particular angle, but this bill would include adoptive parents.

Sometimes, it is the case that parents choose and agree to adopt, even before the child is born. And so, this bill recognizes that and includes them in the bereavement provisions that I'm proposing.

**Ms. Lathlin:** My last question.

I was talking about barriers facing women and their partners. These should have been in these so-called conversations that he's—that he already had. So, I have to ask: Who did he really talk to in regards to

this bill, because there was—there could have been conversations about barriers?

A lot—important things that factor in when a stillborn or miscarriage happens within a family. So, tell me, the—what was shared with the importance of paid versus unpaid miscarriage stillbirth leave for them and their families?

Ekosi.

**Mr. Micklefield:** For the member for—from The Pas to ask, who did I really talk to—these are not imagined scenarios that I spoke about. These are real people, and some of them are here today.

And I would invite the member, at 11 o'clock, to join me on the staircase and meet those people and hear those stories for herself.

That is—that's an invitation to any member of this House. In fact, some of those people are here. Some of them contacted me about this issue some months ago, and it's been a conversation that has been ongoing and so these are real situations.

And also, Ruth and I have gone through this. So, it's not just other people, but it is, in fact, myself and my wife as well.

**Mrs. Cox:** I would just like to draw everyone's attention to the gallery, where we have a very tiny little toddler who is, you know, giggling and making noise. And it's so wonderful to hear those noises here in the Chamber. So, thank you for bringing your baby here this morning.

And I'd just like to ask the member from Rossmere: Do you think that coverage should be expanded further past what we've introduced here today?

**Mr. Micklefield:** You know, what we're—what I'm proposing today more or less falls in line with what's happening across Canada. If there are report stage amendments that would expand or improve, then certainly I would take a serious look at those and anything we can do that will make this journey a little better will—is a welcome thing.

No legislation can heal a human heart but, certainly, what we can do is ease things along as best we're able.

**Ms. Lathlin:** I would like to know what else is this government doing to address mental health needs of our grieving families.

Ekosi.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Well, I'm very happy to answer that question.

We have a minister dedicated to Mental Health and Community Wellness, and that minister is working tirelessly to do many initiatives that improve people's mental health in a variety of ways, from teenagers to the elderly.

So, there is lots to talk about there, including bills on the Order Paper. But, certainly, I know that if the member wanted to meet with the minister or have a briefing on some headlines about some of the good things that are happening, I'm sure that something like that could be made available.

**Ms. Lathlin:** Does this member opposite recognize that we, on this side of the House, introduced this bill three times already?

Ekosi.

**Mr. Micklefield:** Yes, I do, actually.

That bill has been introduced. It's different to this. This bill gives more time. This bill includes some other people as well. But the bill has not been called yet, I don't think, in this session. And if I counted more than 20 times, if I'm correct, 27 times, when it could have been called. And so, I am aware of that bill.

I think that this bill improves on what has been put forward by the member, though I do respect her work. And I think that by passing this this morning, we can get a good, solid foundation that we can all agree on to move forward together and honour these individuals.

Thank you.

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

### Debate

**Madam Speaker:** Debate is open.

**Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas-Kameesak):** It's always an honour to put words on record, and especially, particularly to this one here. I just want to put on record that we on this side of the House has introduced this bill three times and it was ignored by them. It didn't even reach second debate.

Now, they introduce this less-caring watered-down version, Bill 235, which is PC style. It's a—I would like to call it a so-called bad amendment to what we proposed in Bill 210, which was three days' paid leave, okay, which is quite different to what this side of the House is trying to put out there.

And when it comes to real people stories, I need to share with you that, as a woman, I truly know what miscarriage and stillborn is. In 2014, I was medevac'd to the—Winnipeg from The Pas for a ectopic pregnancy, which was truly painful. Not a comfortable ride, bumpy ride heading to Winnipeg. And then waiting for a very long time in a stretcher, waiting for a bed once I arrived here in Winnipeg.

Now, in 2015, Madam Speaker, between you and I, I want to tell you something what happened to me. Do you remember that day I was sworn in? The first day I was sworn in as the MLA and, also, so I can join in here in the Chamber. So, I did proceed. I came into the Chamber and I felt something in my area here, very familiar. I knew that I was having a miscarriage. I asked one of our staff that I needed to go to the hospital. She was the only one that I shared with her what was going on inside this building.

Thank goodness my daughter was with me, my oldest one. But she had no idea what was going on. So, we drove together to the Health Sciences Centre emergency room and I couldn't get out of the vehicle no longer. So, the emergency staff had to come and get me with a wheelchair. My daughter still has no idea what's going on. So, I went to the emergency room and proceeded to the washroom and basically, my body let go. All right? In the washroom, in the Health Sciences Centre ER.

So, I'm in the emergency room with no pants but my beautiful blazer and my beautiful minted MLA pin. Guess what, Madam Speaker? I was on the news. There was, like, two TV sets there with my face celebrating that I'm the first Indigenous woman to be sworn in into this Legislative building. I should have been celebrating with my family. But instead, I was in the ER with no pants on; my blazer and my body went through a lot of trauma.

So, I didn't get home until, like, before midnight. And because I had no pants on, I had to walk out with a pair of pants from the lost and found, which were hot pink and black spandex, okay? And guess what? It was—since it was so late, I'm like, I'm not going to meet up with anyone I know. Boom, I meet up with a cousin of mine. I had to quickly explain I went through a major medical trauma on my body, and—which explained the hot pants that I was wearing outside of that hospital.

\* (10:30)

Now, instead of being at home celebrating, I was in the ER hiding, okay? I went home to go recover for

one night. I didn't tell any of my colleagues, because it was something that I thought should be private. You know, again, just between you and me.

So, I went to work the next day, even though my body just went through a major, major trauma. My body let go. So, since that was my third one, I knew my body can no longer carry babies. So, what did I do? I go to work the very next day, even though I'm still—my body was sore. It felt like a hundred cramps. I should have stayed home.

But I felt pressured; call in sick the second day of being an MLA for The Pas? So, I chose to come in even though I was in pain, and that is why we need to have support like this. You know, nobody was pressuring me to come to work, you know. That was my decision to come in, yes, because I have pretty much paid leave. I was able to do that. I was very lucky to do that instead of being questioned, come in with a sick note or—you know what I mean?

And with this version, this watered-down version, like I said, is a much less caring version. Unpaid; you know, people with really, really good income can do that. People with a second partner with an income are able to do that. People in my circle, I see a lot of our folks that are going to be unable to do that. Unpaid? No.

We need more respect than that. We need three days' paid leave, and speaking of respect, there is none on that side of the House, especially from the member, especially when we introduced this three times, and they truly ignored it; didn't even come to second debate. I'm finally talking about what's—why the importance of paid leave is for miscarriage and stillbirth.

Because, basically, they took our idea and made it a less caring, PC style. So now, as an Indigenous woman here, especially when we have to be medevac'd out, you know, imagine how many days we've got to be gone and then ask for that paid leave.

You know, there's nothing in The Pas that can treat an ectopic pregnancy. There's nothing in The Pas to treat high-risk-pregnancy mothers. And they get flown out, and imagine women with jobs that count on shifts. You know, you—they're going to be losing pay. They're going to be scrambling to find care for their children while they go to Winnipeg and deal with this traumatic issue that is going on with their bodies.

And only, like, truly, a woman truly knows how that feels, and the trauma on your mental health as well. Not only your body, you know. It takes time to

recover from that. It really does, especially with your mental health, okay? So, I really liked the version of our bill on this side because it concerns paid leave. It would just lessen the stress for families that are already going through this.

Like having to explain, you know, to your family what happened. You know, mom was pregnant. There was a baby coming. You know, explaining to children what happened to mom in the hospital. You know, that adds pressure to our parents who are going through this.

So again, Bill 235, a less caring version of what we proposed on this side of the House. And when it comes to consultation, I just want to say to the other families and women who have went through this, my heart goes out to you. I know what the heck you went through. I truly know. Except mine was a little bit more public. I just shared with you, just between you and I.

So, my condolences to the families who have suffered this and went through this and are still going through this. My heart, my prayers go out to you. And there are supports out there for you. And—

**An Honourable Member:** Let's do the right thing.

**Ms. Lathlin:** Yes, let's do the right thing and work together on three days' paid leave, Bill 210, in—which we introduced three times already.

Kinanâskomitin. Ekosi.

**Mrs. Cathy Cox (Kildonan-River East):** I'd first like to welcome everyone who's joined us today in the gallery in support of Bill 235 that amends The Employment Standards Code to expand the length of unpaid leave upon the death of a family member to five days. And, in addition, this bill is precedent-setting here in Manitoba by providing up to five days' unpaid leave if the employee or the spouse or common-law partner experiences a loss of pregnancy.

Our government is committed to supporting families and individuals who experience a loss of pregnancy or the death of a loved one. We recognize that families need time; they need time to grieve and they need time to join together; they need time to console each other and heal without fear of losing their job.

Expanding unpaid leave from three to five days upon the death of a family member will give those families who are grieving the time to plan for funeral arrangements, connect with family and friends, make



those important phone calls and just be able to join together at such a sad and solemn time.

Madam Speaker, the word miscarriage is a word that no expectant mother or family ever wants to hear. However, it is a sad and traumatic reality for many families. Approximately 10 to 20 per cent of pregnancies end in miscarriage and, unfortunately, the number may be higher, with many women experiencing miscarriages even before they've confirmed their pregnancies.

Madam Speaker, the words you're pregnant—that moment, whether from a home pregnancy test or when your physician or medical professional confirms your pregnancy is a time most women will never forget. It's a time that brings hope, joy, immense love and emotions and future dreams for a family and extended family.

All of us remember hearing the news of an anticipated birth, whether your own pregnancy, your child's pregnancy, a friend's. Being told of a pregnancy immediately conjures up thoughts of soft baby blankets, cuddles and so many other firsts: first smiles, first giggles, first words, first time sleeping through the night, first steps and that first day of school.

When those dreams come suddenly crashing down because of a miscarriage, those dreams and aspirations, that hope, is immediately gone, Madam Speaker. And although nothing may have prevented that life-altering event, the impact it has on the expectant mom and the entire family is immense.

Madam Speaker, on October 3rd, 1999, I received a phone call from my lifelong friend of 47 years, a call that continues to rock my world to this very day. I could tell immediately from the urgency in her voice that something was very wrong. Sadly, she shared that doctors could detect no heartbeat when her daughter attended the hospital for what was expected to be a normal, healthy birth. Her little grandson was full term and the entire pregnancy had passed with no complications.

The entire health-care team at Brandon hospital were the most compassionate and caring individuals on this planet. But, unfortunately, they could not reverse the sad reality that this beautiful, loved and much anticipated baby boy was returning to heaven and not his parents' loving arms. That beautiful baby boy was named Joshua, Madam Speaker.

We still remember and love him today. And while those years have long passed, those sad days that I

shared with my friend shall never leave my heart. The grief, the pain and the immense loss cannot be mended in just a few days. To this day, I hold that sadness in my heart and will take it to my grave.

\* (10:40)

Madam Speaker, from bad comes good, and today this birth mom is a registered nurse. She recognized the invaluable services that were provided to her by her health-care providers and was motivated to obtain her BN so that she could work with other women who have experienced high-risk pregnancies and losses.

Madam Speaker, unfortunately I am a single—I don't have any siblings because my brother, as all of you in the Chamber know, died by suicide. But before that, when my dad returned from the Second World War, my mom and him were blessed with twins.

And my mom lived with my baba and gigi and my dad in my baba and gigi's home because they needed time to be re-established after my dad returned from the Second World War. I know that the family was excited and elated to be able to know that my mom was carrying identical twin boys, boys who could have been my brothers, who would still be here for me for support as our family suffered through the passing of my brother.

Unfortunately when my mother was seven months pregnant, she fell down the stairs at my baba and gigi's home and was told at that time just go to bed, everything will be fine, just take bed rest. Well, unfortunate she—unfortunately she lost those identical twin boys and it still has an impact on my life today, Madam Speaker.

I still think of what could have been and how things could have been so different for us and our little family. While five days of bereavement leave cannot address the pain and the suffering and the loss of a baby, it at least provides a chance to come to grips with the sad reality that the many hopes and dreams that we had come to count on, Madam Speaker, are no longer there.

I ask the members opposite to hear the compassion in my comments and vote with members on this side of the Chamber so we can move this bill forward.

These important amendments to the employment standards code are necessary. They're necessary for parents and moms so they may have the time to grieve, to console each other as they try to move forward on the next journey of their life.

I appreciate comments from the member from The Pas-Kameesak, but I do want to remind her that she had over 20 opportunities to bring her bill forward for second reading. As she said, let's work together and unanimously pass this bill together and do the right thing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MLA Malaya Marcelino (Notre Dame):** It's my honour and duty to be able to rise today to speak on this very, very important subject. I would just like to acknowledge and thank all my colleagues on this side of the House and on the other side of the House for sharing very difficult personal experiences with the whole public, very personal experiences with the public in an effort to show, really, how this issue resonates with so many people across our province.

On this side of the House, we are happy—rather, to see this bill go to the next stage because this bill, as presented by the member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield), has in its spirit a shared goal and a shared understanding for what miscarriage and stillbirth does to many Manitoban families.

I would have hoped to see and still hope to see more co-operation and some more respect, especially for the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin), who has brought this legislation forward, very similar legislation forward three times before.

And I do know in our discussions with our caucus that our House leader has also brought this legislation forward in more private discussions because this is a shared project among members in this House. This is a very important, shared project. Where we differ at this point, I hope we'll come to some resolution for the people of Manitoba.

The member for The Pas-Kameesak's Bill 210, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act, leave for miscarriage and stillbirth, raised a very important paid provision for this leave. And, on this side of the House, we hope to see those provisions carried forward at some point throughout the course of the discussions on this very important topic.

And I think I would just like to leave my comments at that point, to just really reiterate how important it is to have this shared respect, to have this recognition that this has been brought forward by the member for The Pas-Kameesak on three different occasions; also been brought forward by the House leader—Opposition House Leader—in her negotiations with the House leader on the other side. This is a shared project in this House. And I would like to see

a little bit more recognition and respect for that as we try to move this very, very important issue forward for women and for Manitoba families here in this province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I want to thank the member for Rossmere for bringing this bill forward. I also want to thank the member for The Pas for her efforts on a similar, and in some ways, better bill. I hope the MLA for The Pas, if this bill doesn't go through second reading, will bring forward her bill in this session. And if this bill does go through second reading, I hope the MLA for The Pas will bring in an amendment so that that can be considered and hopefully included.

I brought up the concern that I have had raised with me that women who have a miscarriage are often not wanting to disclose immediately that they've had a miscarriage. It's not a matter of having to prove it or not to prove it, but just a matter of having to disclose it. And I'm not sure that there's a way of getting leave without disclosing that. I agree with the need not to require proof, but I think that just some recognition that this is a sensitive issue as we've heard and that there will be some women who don't want to be put in a position where they have to disclose immediately.

The wording of this bill deals with unpaid leave for loss of pregnancy. I'm making the presumption that that will apply to miscarriages and stillbirths and abortions. Abortions are often accompanied by a significant turmoil and it is good that the member is including that.

\* (10:50)

The—I want to, also, to talk a little bit about the need for a little better approach to preventing miscarriages. And I say this as a result of meeting recently with a family who had numerous, either miscarriages or stillbirths, and they were advised after having these many miscarriages and stillbirths that there might be some dietary concerns, and that one of the potential problems causing miscarriages is a low selenium level. And it's my understanding that some soils in Manitoba are low on selenium, and that people who are eating Manitoba-grown food a lot may be therefore deficient in selenium.

And, interestingly enough, when this family, this woman, changed her diet and included more selenium—plus some other ingredients, so it's not conclusive that it was the selenium—she has since had

four children who have been perfectly healthy and, of course, the family is very delighted with that.

So I think that there are other causes as well of miscarriages: low thyroid hormone, hypothyroidism, can be to blame. And so I think that the word needs to get out and maybe there needs to be more research, as well, into approaches that can prevent miscarriages. And where we have issues, for example, in Manitoba, like low selenium soils, that women who are pregnant should be counselled to take adequate selenium.

I think that these are sensible measures that can be and should be taken, and if we can prevent even one miscarriage, that would make a big difference in the lives of people. If we can prevent more, that would be exceptional.

So I put this forward as something constructive that can be done as—in addition to what is being done in this bill. And, in fact, there may be opportunities for us to prevent miscarriages in a more vigorous way than we are doing at the moment. And let us hope that, if we can do that, as well as passing this bill and moving forward in terms of helping with the situation in this way, we can also help in this situation by preventing miscarriages through improvements, whether it be in diets or in other ways.

So, I thank both the MLA for Rossmere and the MLA for The Pas for their concern and actions on this subject.

Thank you. Merci. Miigwech.

**MLA Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns):** I want to put a couple of words on the record in respect of the debate this morning.

I want to be explicitly clear in this House that the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) brought forward this bill three previous times. And, you know, I think that it would have been nice—or, incumbent on the member introducing said bill that we're introducing—to acknowledge the member for The Pas-Kameesak and not take an opportunity to say that she had 27 times to bring forward this bill.

I don't know where he's getting that number from, but, you know, when we're talking about a bill that predominantly affects women and gender-diverse folks, including the member for The Pas-Kameesak, who shared her own personal journey, it would have been nice, and a little bit of class, for the member opposite to acknowledge that work.

More so, let me just put this on the record: you know, the member opposite is a part of a government;

they are the governing body here in Manitoba and had an opportunity to bring forward this bill as a specified bill, which was guaranteed passage by June 1st, but, more importantly, as a member of government, had an opportunity to go outside the box that is the PCs' *raison d'être*.

And if the member, you know, really did want to support Manitobans who require leave because of a miscarriage, he could have, first off, supported the member for The Pas-Kameesak's bill. But he also could have guaranteed paid leave.

It's not enough for the member to stand up in this House and say that, and I quote, I don't want to make this about money, end quote. That may be all fine and well and dandy for the member opposite, who—as the member for The Pas-Kameesak shared with the House, we as MLAs don't have to worry about, if we have a miscarriage, that we need to take three or four or five days off; we're still paid. But there are many, many Manitobans that don't have that privilege.

And so, the member could have—if he wanted to introduce his own bill and he wanted to circumvent the member for The Pas-Kameesak, he could have ensured that Manitobans who need this particular leave are paid. It's not enough to just offer unpaid leave.

And I would have thought and I would have hoped that after going two and a half, three years in COVID, where we saw the need for paid leave for employees, that he would have thought to himself, you know what, let's strengthen this.

If he wants to usurp the member for The Pas, he could have given paid leave. He didn't, though. And so, therefore, this bill is lacking. It is lacking in substance.

And, you know, I think it's interesting that the member, in his comments when the member for The Pas-Kameesak was talking about, you know, ensuring that this was paid leave, brought up small business. And his concern in this bill, as evidenced by what he put on the official record, was concern for money and concern for small business, and not necessarily concern for Manitobans that need it.

Again, we in this Chamber—those of us that are elected officials—have the privilege that, if we have a miscarriage, don't have to miss any of our dollars from our salary, but most Manitobans do not.

So, the member opposite has an opportunity at amendment stage to support Manitobans, to recognize

the work of the member for The Pas-Kameesak (Ms. Lathlin) and to actually just do what's right, to get on board with what many governments are moving towards, including New Zealand and India, that we know. So I would encourage the member to take seriously our amendments bringing forward.

Miigwech.

**Madam Speaker:** Are there any further members wishing to speak in debate?

If not, is the House ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**Madam Speaker:** The question before the House is second reading of Bill 235, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act.

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

I declare the motion carried.

\* \* \*

**Hon. Derek Johnson (Acting Government House Leader):** Is it will of the House to recognize the clock as 11?

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

## RESOLUTIONS

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

**Madam Speaker:** The hour being 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions.

The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries, brought forward by the honourable member for Dauphin.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** I move, seconded by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson),

*WHEREAS crime rates have been steadily rising in Canada as a result of "soft on crime" Liberal-NDP Coalition policies; and*

*WHEREAS municipalities are paying more for R.C.M.P. services due to the Federal Government negotiating a huge increase in the salary of the members of the RCMP without consulting with these communities; and*

*WHEREAS this wage increase is adding stress to the already limited budgets that municipalities must manage to provide services to Manitobans; and*

*WHEREAS the Association of Manitoba Municipalities have stated that this 23.7 percent wage increase is going to negatively impact all municipalities; and*

*WHEREAS the R.C.M.P. play a major role of creating safer streets and neighborhoods for Manitoba families; and*

*WHEREAS the provincial NDP, federal NDP and federal Liberals have made comments with "defund the police" attitudes; and*

*WHEREAS these attitudes are negatively impacting the relationship governments have with law enforcement officials; and*

*WHEREAS the Federal Government has the ability and the means to send these municipalities funding in order to fund their local police forces; and*

*WHEREAS all Members in this House should agree that there is a need to increase funding for police services, and not defund them, in order to adequately tackle rising crime due to NDP and Liberal soft on crime policies across Canada.*

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the federal government to adequately and fairly fund the RCMP and the increased wage that it negotiated rather than putting that burden on Manitoba municipalities. *[interjection]*

\* (11:00)

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Order.

Is there a problem here? Okay.

**Motion presented.**

**Mr. Michaleski:** Thank you, once again, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to raise in this House a very important matter and a resolution for this House to consider. This resolution does call on the federal government to adequately and fairly fund the RCMP and the increased wage settlement that they negotiated, rather than putting that burden on Manitoba municipalities.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to be very clear: We need, we respect and we appreciate our Canadian RCMP officers and thank them very much for their important service and role to our communities, for our provinces and our country. And in many parts of the

country and Manitoba, the RCMP are the ones we look to and call upon to maintain peace, law and order and our security.

This resolution is not about their fine and valued work. The RCMP has service contracts with many Manitoba municipalities and for reasons mostly out of their control, these municipalities and communities have traditionally struggled to grow and maintain community growth and in—and related regional police services and officers and RCMP detachments.

The federal government has the ability and the means to send municipalities funding in order to fund this 23.7 per cent increase and this is what should be considered and expressed to—by this House to the federal government.

The PC—on a related and relevant topic, the PC government is doing a lot to improve investment confidence across Manitoba and also is doing a lot to address and support the policing and law-enforcement needs across the province.

And, to be clear, we need the RCMP and national police forces and law enforcement to main peace and security in order for us to develop and participate in the many opportunities we have available to all of us in a free and democratic province and country.

What we don't need are politically motivated, irresponsible, sensationalized and dangerous calls to defund police. These games that we—concerned that the federal Liberal coalition and provincial NDP have expressed and have been known to do.

*Mr. Dennis Smook, Acting Speaker, in the Chair*

This is extremely dangerous a position to take and completely disrespectful of the need for police services. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, coupled with the Liberal and NDP soft-on-crime approach, many municipalities are needing and asking for more effective, more co-ordinated police services and presence to cover a broader range of policing and security needs in an ever-changing Manitoba.

Madam Speaker—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm sorry—the Stefanson government is doing a lot to help Manitobans avoid lives of crime and, in fact, helping the federal government in this regard, too, with changes to legislation through consultation and collaborative approaches that are leading to significant progress being made for municipalities.

The main point is the federal government's decision to off-load this settlement without consulting Manitoba municipalities is simply out of sync. It is out

of sync with the shifting and expanding needs, wants, demands and pressures across Manitoba.

Guided by our goals to reduce crime, improve community safety and reducing the number of people coming into conflict with the law, our PC government is doing a lot, taking a lot of actions to assist in justice and police needs.

Number 1, in an action plan that we have, we've adopted a stronger position and adoption of restorative justice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This includes a more collaborative community approach towards justice and implementing risk assessments so that offenders are better able to be served rather than going through the justice system. Restorative measures are incorporated into the offenders and into the justice system, diverting them and helping them, rather than putting them through the corrections system.

Also, we have a strong support—shown strong support for victim support services. And that deals predominately with the victims of serious crime, making sure that we have those support services, those people.

Reduced reliance on incarceration. And this, again, is in line with the restorative justice approach. And I know it's not in line with NDP's desire for jails as a solution, but what we have is a different path, different alternatives towards helping offenders.

And I know our government has taken a stronger position on bail recently, and the release and keeping a strong position regarding the release and scrutiny and condition of those accused in terms of granting bail.

I just want to share a bit of—about a brief experience that I've seen in my region. We have smaller communities, and they've been declining. We've been losing detachments, losing officers over many decades over time. And, in fact, there's a transfer of need and policing and enforcement that's occurring, with more natural resource officers.

And that is almost a need for greater collaboration, again, between RCMP and local communities, local First Nations in law enforcement and in resource enforcement. Conservation officers—what we have now, is the many areas that are in a sparsely populated area that don't have any effective means of law enforcement. And this is not uncommon across Manitoba and in particular in our area. And what's needed is some police services. And traditionally, the RCMP have filled that role.

But, in a lot of cases, it's been hard on these municipalities. And they've—again, through declining tax-base population, they're facing real challenges of being able to maintain services. So, this offload of this incredible cost increase related to the settlement for the Canadian federal government police is—again, it's out of line and it's hard. It's not that the municipalities can't do more if they were given the ways and means to do so, but, right now, this is difficult for municipalities to absorb and the federal government does have the means to send the money towards the municipalities to cover this cost.

And just finally, on a local level, these communities, what they're needing and what they're asking for is local police, local enforcement, presence and services and—to keep the peace. And this is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, absolutely critical to the growth and development of the region. It is there to assure, you know, confidence in the region and security. And, again, I can't say that loud enough, that this is an important part of development.

So, in closing, there needs to be better communication, co-operation, collaboration between various levels of government. And we need to ensure funds are properly, effectively and efficiently used to protect society and, in fact, to protect our police officers and their families, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

\* (11:10)

This is very important that that is a consideration. Manitoba municipalities can do more if—again, if the 'circumstances' change and ways and means increase. Yes, they can absolutely do more and they can absorb probably more of these costs. But they can't afford this sudden cost.

So I ask this legislator to support the AMM and this call on the federal government to 'adequately,' fairly fund the RCMP and to cover the increased wage—

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

### Questions

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

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** Why did the provincial government freeze funding to municipalities for seven years, thereby cutting supports for law enforcement, including the RCMP?

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The honourable member for Brandon—sorry, Dauphin.

**Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin):** I can—I do get that all the time.

So, let me just say, you know, this is a significant wage settlement that the federal government has negotiated with the RCMP and they have simply offloaded that cost onto municipalities.

Municipalities have—share tremendously in the provision of services, including police services, local development services. So, again, they're doing their job, but this offload is—municipalities just simply—

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

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** Good morning to everyone in the Chamber.

I would like to ask my colleague: Has he heard from any rural municipalities that were appropriately consulted by the Liberal-NDP coalition? Were any of them included in the discussions? Were they consulted? Were they at all part of the process? Could he let us know?

**Mr. Michaleski:** The short answer and the real answer is no. We've—in my region, I have not heard of the Liberal-NDP coalition approaching municipalities, talking to them, explaining what's going on with this negotiation and if they were okay with it. But this is not something that's new.

What's in fact happened, though, is the federal government—Liberal-NDP coalition have settled on an incredibly large—

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

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Can the member explain whether the source of this increase in RCMP salaries were due to an increased need for policing costs in municipalities?

**Mr. Michaleski:** I want to thank the member for that question because it—I believe the need for police services is growing, it's expanding. And the scope of where we need greater police service is expanding. So, the answer I think prompting that is yes, we—there's a greater need for police services.

This particular issue, though, deals with federal policing, and there's also many other sources of policing that municipalities are also considering and needing.

So, again, this is—the answer is, there is an increased need.

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

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** I want to offer the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) best wishes. I know he has indicated he's not running again, and so the best wishes in his future life.

But it does beg the question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what his role has been in this Legislature to further these issues. I'm wondering, did he actually object when the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) cut millions from law enforcement programs when she was Justice minister? Did he voice that opinion around the caucus table? Because he certainly didn't do it in this Chamber.

**Mr. Michaleski:** I want to thank the member from Concordia for his well wishes and for his question and questioning, you know—in fact, he's been questioning my integrity and what I've done in this House to advocate for our region.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I can tell you is I have tirelessly advocated for growth and development—positive growth and development in our region. This is a major, major component of averting people from lives of crime and criminal activity. And what we are needing is a broad range of police services in—

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

**Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East):** We all know that this cost of this back pay on Manitoba alone is \$5.1 million, and I'm just wondering if the member—if he could explain how the Liberal-NDP coalition who are responsible for this increase have helped the municipalities bear this cost.

**Mr. Michaleski:** I want to thank the member for that really good question. And, really, it relates to the Liberal-NDP coalition's soft-on-crime approach. This is how it's affected municipalities. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, make no mistake: soft-on-crime has a cost. You know, we have to be careful. But what is absolutely factual is the NDP-Liberal coalition created incredible costs on our criminal justice system by their soft-on-crime approach.

**Ms. Naylor:** I would like to ask the member if at any point in the last six, seven years, if he or any rural member of this caucus ever pushed back against Brian Pallister or the current Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) cuts to municipalities.

Did they ever speak up on behalf of their own communities to end that funding freeze before very recently?

**Mr. Michaleski:** You know, I am incredibly proud of the PC government's efforts over the last seven years to really approach the challenges, the mess left by the NDP in our justice system. We've done a lot to improve on this.

And what I can say is we have consistently advocated against the NDP and their soft-on-crime approach and their attitudes towards defunding the police.

**Mr. Wiebe:** You know, I—it's curious. You know, this has been brought up by the opposition party in this House month after month, day after day. It's been asked of the just 'minspers'—minister, it's been asked about municipal funding with regards to the Municipal Relations critic.

You know, meanwhile, this member has been silent, completely quiet on this issue and, in fact, allowed the Dauphin jail to be closed under his watch and said nothing. So, it's been funding cut after funding cut.

Did the member at least privately advocate for his own community, or did he just walk away from them and say—what was his quote? This is fine, is what the member said.

\* (11:20)

**Mr. Michaleski:** The member from Concordia, you know, this is—I recall, you know, him chirping about how important the jail was. And, of course, that is their strategy; that is their plan. They're not very much for positive growth and development in particular in—outside of Winnipeg and in my region.

They have consistently defunded and pay—and ignored the potential of the Dauphin region, and I have done a lot, hearing from the people in our region that know there's extraordinary opportunity to grow and the member can—

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

**Mr. Schuler:** Well, I'd like to ask my colleague if he could reflect on how crime rates in Canada have been

impacted since a soft-on-crime federal government was elected and has made it easier for repeat offenders to be released on bail where implemented and, interestingly enough, supported by the NDP opposition here in this Chamber.

**Mr. Michaleski:** I want to thank the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) for that question. I know our government, and I know our Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) is—has, approaching the bail issue—this is something that's important. We recognize that bail is an important part, but we have to be sure that there's high scrutiny on granting bail.

And I appreciate this tougher-on-crime approach versus the damaging soft-on-crime approach of the Liberal-NDP coalition.

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

### Debate

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

**Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley):** This government has done nothing to support municipalities for seven years and their cuts have made things worse. They froze supports, and this comes when municipalities have been struggling for years, but when they've asked for help, the provincial government repeatedly refused.

Because of the first collective bargaining agreement with the RCMP, retroactive salary costs for the RCMP's services are owed back to 2017. This means a 23 per cent increase of \$45 million to policing costs that Manitoba municipalities are on the hook for.

Without additional funding, this will force municipalities to make cuts, raise taxes or both. The PCs should support municipalities and cover the true cost of law enforcement. Stop the pointless jurisdictional fights and make sure we don't force municipalities to raise taxes during the cost-of-living crisis.

On March 31st, 2023, municipality associations across the country, including AMM here in Manitoba, released the following statement:

Our collective associations are extremely disappointed that Budget 2023 does not include a commitment by the federal government to absorb retroactive salary costs resulting from the first RCMP collective bargaining agreement. Municipalities were not meaningfully consulted during these negotiations, despite being paying contract partners. The federal government's unwillingness to absorb these costs will

directly result in significant property tax increases, delayed infrastructure projects and other cost-cutting measures to the detriment of local communities at a time when municipalities are dealing with inflationary pressures and affordability outcomes from ratepayers.

We call on the federal government to immediately reconsider its approach to this issue and commit to absorbing all retroactive salary costs, given the lack of consultation and adequate communications on this file.

And this was endorsed by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities, Alberta Municipalities, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities.

I believe that Manitoba municipalities deserve strong provincial support to excel and provide great services to their citizens. Municipalities should have long term, predictable funding that grows with the economy.

The PCs kept operating grants for municipalities frozen for seven years, leaving municipalities with no support. At the same time, the Province continues to increase demands on Manitoba municipalities.

The PC government forced municipalities to pay for the radios needed for their emergency communication system. This could cost some municipalities hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In 2017, the PC government cut the longstanding 50-50 transit funding for municipalities, costing Winnipeg millions of dollars and Brandon hundreds of thousands.

The PC government cut infrastructure funds by hundreds of millions of dollars and, over four years, their government left a billion dollars of budgeted infrastructure unspent. The PC government contracted out its Amphibexes that cut ice jams.

Chief John Lane is begging the Province for funds for more ambulances, as there has not been a new ambulance in many years. And instead, they cut funding by \$1.5 million.

The PCs have downloaded responsibility for snow clearing to municipalities and they've left hundreds of highway maintenance staff positions unfilled, leaving the—letting the vacancy rate climb from 20 to 36 per cent in only three years. The situation is even worse in northern Manitoba with the



vacancy rate climbing from 30 to 47 per cent in just four years.

And, during a winter with one of the highest snowfalls on record, the PCs refused to provide additional funding to the City of Winnipeg, leaving them to pay off a \$33-million deficit accumulated from snow clearing.

The PC government stripped control over land-use decisions from municipalities and transferred it to the minister and Municipal Board through Bill 37.

The Manitoba NDP stand firmly against the PCs' bullying of municipalities. Unlike the PCs, we are committed to working with municipalities to ensure that services get delivered to Manitoba families.

You know, we're hearing a lot, because this is about underfunding of RCMP, the government is using this as an excuse to kind of play in the sandbox with their narrative about being so-called tough on crime. But I think it's important that we actually take a little look at the PCs' record on what they've actually done to support and—Manitobans in general on this issue.

We know it's an election year, so they are trying to change the channel and they're trying to make Manitobans more afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they're trying to convince Manitobans that somehow, in an election year, they can fix what they broke over the last seven years.

The PC government says they care about crime in our province, but their cuts to Justice tell a different story. In 2017, the PC government cut Justice programming for organizations like Elizabeth Fry and John Howard by 20 per cent.

When the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) was Justice minister, she eliminated the Restorative Resolutions program that provided alternatives to the incarceration for offenders. She also prioritized the prison phone—sorry, she also privatized the prison phone system to a US company, hiking the rates for inmates to make phone calls to keep them connected with their families.

She cut fresh milk and substituted powdered milk for Manitoba prison inmates. She cut employment training programs for inmates that helped reintegrate those in jail, that helped—*[interjection]*

Wow, the Justice Minister sure has a lot to say on this issue right now, after seven years of cuts, cuts and cuts. But he also might just take a listen to the long,

long list of cuts that he and his party has been responsible for.

They cut the Indigenous Court Workers Program, a court program designed to help Indigenous people navigate the justice system. They cut training programs for inmates that help reintegrate those in jail. They cut funding in 2017 and 2018 and left federal funds on the table, forcing them to reduce the budget by 25 per cent and re-divert the funds out of Manitoba. They closed 56 beds at Milner Ridge Correctional Centre.

\* (11:30)

The PC government's cuts to public safety are all about dollars and cents. And since 2016, at least 316 positions have been cut from the Department of Justice, which includes at least 47 positions from Community Safety.

The PC government has cut funding to municipalities which provide critically needed community services and support. And policing forced them to cut programs and redirect resources. They cut \$75,000 annual funding from the Gang Action Interagency Network, which helped youth access supports to exit gangs; the Spotlight unit, an intensive anti-gang project that supports youth at risk of gang involvement. And officers were redirected from Project Devote and the Community Relations Unit, which focuses on initiatives like the Block Parents Program, Citizens on Patrol, crime prevention, diversity relations and Neighborhood Watch programs, because of the lack of resources and increased numbers of homicides in 2019.

This government used the pandemic to make more cuts. Manitoba Justice asked Legal Aid Manitoba staff lawyers and Crown prosecutors to take 35 unpaid days off in 2020. Earlier in 2020, private lawyers threatened to boycott Legal Aid cases if the provincial government didn't increase their hourly rates. And these rates have not been increased since 2008.

Inadequate legal representation has created a system that puts expediency ahead of just and fair verdicts. And this disproportionately impacts the poor, who have no choice other than to rely on public resources.

Budget 2021-22 cut funding to community safety by \$2.6 million. These are cuts to crime prevention, community correction, family resolution service and others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue to advocate for investments and services that address the root causes of crime such as health care, education, mental health and addiction. We will call on the provincial government to immediately increase funding to municipalities so community organizations and police forces have the resources they need, and call on the Province to create a new healing lodge—

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

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot):** I would like to thank the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) for putting forward this resolution, which shows an individual who has grave concerns with the way the federal government has been dealing with this particular issue of underfunding of the RCMP. Comes as no surprise. I don't think we have a Prime Minister and a Liberal government that's particularly friendly to law enforcement and the reduction of crime.

But I would like to put on the record, at the beginning of my speech, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities put out a statement in which they say, we call on the federal government to immediately consider—reconsider its approach to the issue and commit to absorbing all retroactive salary costs given the lack of consultation and inadequate communication. *[interjection]*

Now, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) should maybe wait for his opportunity to speak. He seems to be chirping over my desire to put a few words on the record. But that's a typical NDP; they just want to shut down anybody that they disagree with. Where we are a party that believes in law and order, the NDP and the member for Concordia believe in defunding the police, so he's going to shout me down. And that's unfortunate.

What's interesting is there was also a joint statement put out by the British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and yes, now they've also got—New Brunswick has signed on to the resolution. And it states: Our collective associations are extremely disappointed that Budget 2023 does not include a commitment by the federal government to absorb retroactive salary costs results from the first RCMP collective bargaining agreement. *[interjection]*

And the member for Concordia is trying to shout me down. I know he's a defund-the-police member of the Legislature, and I don't know why he feels—and he just keeps trying to shout me down. It's an NDP

approach of doing things in this Chamber. How unfortunate.

Municipalities were not meaningfully consulted during these negotiations despite being paying contract partners. The federal government's unwillingness to absorb these costs will directly result in significant local communities at a time when municipalities are dealing with inflationary pressures, no thanks to the NDP and Liberal coalition and affordability concerns from ratepayers.

We call on the federal government to immediately reconsider its approach to this issue, and to commit to absorbing all retroactive salary costs, given the lack of consultation and inadequate communication on this file.

That is all the municipalities across western Canada and from the East Coast.

So, why this disrespect from our federal Liberal Party with their supporters, their coalition with the federal NDP? Well, I would suggest that Justin Trudeau, when he was just starting out, he learned from the—some of the champions of disrespect when it came to municipalities, and that was the provincial NDP and—including the member for Concordia, who still seems to want to shout me down with his defund-the-police chatter.

The NDP, under the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Concordia and other NDP members, went out to a meeting and indicated that they felt that rural municipalities were howling coyotes. And the member for Concordia, he—now, all of a sudden, he doesn't have quite as much to chirp about. Even worse, they went out and they referred to rural municipalities as petulant children.

So, while the municipalities are out advocating for their communities, advocating that the federal government should be covering the cost of the increases of RCMP—when they weren't part of the negotiation table, when they weren't part of the conversations, they were not consulted and the federal government, the Liberal-NDP coalition showed great disrespect to those communities, they learned it all from the provincial NDP, from the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Concordia, who went out and showed the ultimate disrespect by going so far as calling down the municipalities of Manitoba and calling them names.

Now, the member for Concordia does that on a regular basis against members in this House. And, you know, we've gotten to the point where we just don't

even listen to that nonsense chatter anymore. But the municipalities—[*interjection*]

You know, I would suggest to members of this House that, you know, maybe the member for Concordia should just wait for his opportunity, then he can put on the record how defunding the police is how we're going to fight crime in this province. So, maybe the member for Concordia could allow others to speak.

I would suggest that, while municipalities are out there advocating for their communities and the NDP is out there disrespecting them by calling them childish names and calling them down, I would suggest that if you really want to know where the real politics, where the rubber hits the road—it is at the municipalities, and when you listen to what the municipalities are saying, they are speaking from hundreds of years of experience across this province on those boards who have been out in the communities.

There's probably no more grassroots governance than at a municipal level, because that's where the issues come forward to elected officials, whether it's a problem with a 'detch'—a ditch overflowing or an issue—just the very most basic of services are the most important services that are delivered by these municipalities.

And for the NDP, the member for Concordia to go out and refer to them as howling coyotes because they were raising issues with the NDP and referred to them as petulant children—member for Concordia, Leader of the Opposition and all members of the NDP who seem to have agreed with those kinds of statements.

And just a point there, and I thank the Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) for mentioning it, they never, ever, ever apologized to the municipalities across this province for those poorly chosen words. They never apologized for that offensive, that bullying and demeaning language that was used by, amongst others, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Concordia.

Because if you look at the resolution that came not just from the AMM—the Manitoba municipality organization—but across this country, who are calling out the federal government that the federal government should be helping them. And in the grand scheme, on a federal budget, what they're asking for isn't that significant of a funding.

This is—considering that the Prime Minister and his supporters, the NDP, love to sit in hotel rooms for \$6,000 a night, and—\$6,000 a night. That's the caviar-and-champagne, socialist NDP approach of using taxpayers' dollars.

\* (11:40)

Also, what the rural municipalities are asking for is for the federal government to cover the retroactive costs and some of the increases. That's what they're asking for. It's not outrageous, it's not egregious what they're asking for. And the member for Concordia, who, along with his leader, the Leader of the Opposition, wishes to defund the police. Somehow, we're going to have a better crime-fighting system if we have less police officers. That's what the NDP wants. That's what the NDP advocates for. Well, that's not our approach.

And we are here today—and I'd like to thank the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski), who has been unbelievable in this Chamber—and we've heard some chattering, and, of course, the member for Concordia trying to shout everybody down in this place because that's now his new approach to trying to get heard.

The member for Dauphin has been in this Chamber and has been in this place asking for and calling on the federal government to properly fund the RCMP, because he knows, like many of us know, how important rural policing is to our communities. How important it is to have those RCMP there. How important it is to have them well paid.

And we agree that the RCMP need to be well paid. We also agree that the federal government should have been paying for the retroactive and the added costs. And I agree with the member for Dauphin, and he's been an amazing colleague and I would say that I consider myself honoured to be able to have served with him in the Progressive Conservative caucus.

I was up in Dauphin for one of the Ukrainian festivals, and he was just the most generous host, and I want to thank him again for the wonderful times we had. And I wish him well in his future endeavours. And I thank him for having brought this important resolution forward, something we should all get behind, even those who want to defund the police.

This is important to rural communities. The rural communities are asking for it, not just in Manitoba but in western Canada. Not just in Manitoba and western Canada, but eastern Canada. The rural municipalities

are asking for this. I would suggest to this House, let's pass this resolution.

**Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to start by offering my condolences to the families of Constables Travis Jordan and Brett Ryan with the Edmonton police. I did have an opportunity to express those condolences publicly previous to this, but this is my first opportunity I believe to bring it forward in the House.

As a member with family members, immediate family members, in the police service, you know, I hear on a regular basis stories about difficult calls that they need to attend to. About—stories about trauma that they see and they experience. And only—to only have to imagine what their families, the families of these two constables have gone through is unfathomable, I think, to most people, and especially to those who—for their own immediate family members. This is a real possibility every day that they leave to go to work.

So, we owe those two service members, and all of our police and first responders across the country—we owe them to take their issues very seriously. And we owe it to them to bring forward legislation, as legislators that support them, that acknowledge the work that they do, and to commit to them every single day that we will do everything that we can to ensure that they can come home safely at the end of their shift, like all of us expect to be able to do.

That's why it's very concerning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to see what's clearly a politicized and—a private member's resolution that's been brought forward here that's—really doesn't address the issues, that doesn't acknowledge the realities that service members experience. And, as I said, just tries to score cheap political points with rhetoric. You know, I've heard it said, fake news in this House.

You know, it's the kind of thing I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that doesn't do this issue justice. And I'm quite surprised, quite frankly, that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Michaleski) would bring forward a piece of legislation or a resolution like this. I know him to be a good man, an honourable man and I do know that he isn't—as I mentioned in my questions—isn't seeking re-election, has an opportunity to leave a legacy in this place, as I think we all would hope that we can do.

And you know, as I mentioned in my questions, I think, you know, he had the opportunity certainly to stand up for his community of Dauphin. He had the

opportunity at the time to stand up for the Dauphin jail, not just an important employer in his community, but also a big part of our justice system. In fact, he could have come out and he could have supported the NDP's call for a more holistic and a more comprehensive justice facility in his community, and yet he continues to not do that.

And when given the opportunity to bring forward I would imagine his last private member's resolution, to bring some kind of legacy to this place, he instead brings forward, you know, a PMR that I guess was written by the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler). You know, it has that kind of tone, that kind of politicized tone, that cheap shot kind of tone.

Or maybe it came directly from the Premier's (Mrs. Stefanson) office, because we know the Premier, as Justice minister, refused to fully fund our justice system and, in fact, made cuts that we're still seeing the effects of.

So, it's unfortunate that he's done that. But I do think we have an opportunity to talk about what's real here. You know, we're not talking about a federal Liberal government in this place. We're talking about the opportunity that this provincial government had in their latest budget, in Budget 2023, to support municipalities when they're asking for that support directly.

And we've had the opportunity as an opposition to bring this forward, as I said, day after day, month after month in this Legislature, to ask questions in this Legislature. Why won't this PC government support our municipalities and support this looming decision that was made by the federal government, to give them some assurance that they would be supported and be able play—pay their law enforcement?

Now, this speaks nothing to what my—the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) and our critic for Municipal Relations already brought up, and that is the seven-year funding freeze which directly impacted municipal ability to pay for RCMP services and other police services in their community. I mean, this is facts. We want to talk about fact versus fiction; this is about as clear as it gets.

This has been the PC government that has presided over the biggest cuts to municipalities that we have ever seen. And that directly affects their ability to provide community safety in their communities. It's as clear as can be; it's A-to-B stuff. So, anybody can look at their record as it's stood so far.

But when we brought this forward, when we saw this situation coming forward on this settlement, we

brought it forward in the House. We asked this provincial government to step up. We asked them to be partners with municipalities at the table. And they refused.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen) says, well, no, this is a federal government problem. Well, what we need is we need a provincial government that's going to provide some assurances and some funding to provide that continuity to communities so that they can offer proper community safety across Manitoba. But he refused to do that.

So, we'll—we continued to ask about it. We continued to bring it up in question period. We continued to bring it up every chance we got when we spoke to municipal leaders. And this government was silent and this government said nothing. They said nothing. And now, when they want to score a cheap political point and they want to make some broader point about the federal parties and, you know, the differences between the federal party and, of course, the Manitoba NDP—doing what's right for Manitobans at every step of the way—they want to make some kind of larger point that scores political points. They forget about the actual impact this is having on our communities.

We've seen that violent crime has gone up across our province. And, you know, I've talked about the impact it's had on downtown Winnipeg and in our suburban areas. But we know this isn't just in those areas. I've talked to municipalities across the province who've said this is happening here. It's happening; we're seeing the addictions crisis come to our community. We're seeing the impacts that it has on violent crime. We're seeing the homelessness and the housing situations that this government has only made worse. We're seeing that impact our communities.

They're telling us that this government's decision about defunding our prison system, and, you know, cutting programs that actually give people some kind of hope and some kind of path out of a life of crime. That's now impacting those communities.

\* (11:50)

So it's not like, you know—I mean, this government has gone around for seven years saying, don't worry, just trust us, this is all going to work out, this is all part of some kind of cut-to-prosperity plan. Well, here we see the results, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's black and white; it's A-to-B stuff. This government needs to be held accountable for their actions.

And it was this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) who was Justice minister who gladly sat by while programs were cut, while people were left on their own, while addictions services were cut, while people were left to fend for themselves. And now we see exactly the impact that it's having in our community.

So, when we're given an opportunity as legislators, when we're given an opportunity especially as, you know, a career winds down or an opportunity to be an MLA in this place winds down, I would hope that we would bring forward something that's more impactful, that actually speaks to what's going on—going on with people in our first responder and our police services across this country. Because this is important stuff. This is important stuff.

This PMR talks about attitudes. It mentions—it has the word attitudes a few times, which is, I mean, again, just poorly written and just slapped together. But I'm not worried about attitudes. I'm worried about actions, when you have a government that has shown itself month after month, year after year where they stand when it comes to supporting communities and supporting police services across our province.

I think it's very clear what their record has been and I hope that, you know, they go out on every single doorstep in this province and they talk about their record on community safety. We're certainly going to do that. We're going to talk about how we can partner with municipalities, how we can ensure that community safety is a No. 1 priority.

How we can talk about how—you know, I think I heard members say well, it's only \$5 million or something. Well, why? Why, in all the discussions and the hundreds of millions of dollars that this government was handing out for election—like election candy. Why, why couldn't someone—one person—stand up at that caucus table and say, let's support our municipalities, let's support the community safety and communities across our province.

It may not be one of these, you know, election goodies that they want to hand out, but it is the right thing to do and this government has failed to do the right thing one last time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park):** Here in Canada, specifically here in Manitoba, we have three levels of government.

We've got our national, federal level of government in Ottawa, Parliament Hill, Justin Trudeau, all

that jazz. We've got our provincial government here in the province of Manitoba, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly, Mr. Deputy–Acting Deputy Speaker. We then have a municipal government. So, the three levels: federal, provincial, municipal.

Every level of government has responsibilities for different roles and different positions within the province of Manitoba.

An example: infrastructure. I think that there would be a consensus here in the House that, when it comes to infrastructure and, for example, potholes and lights and stop signs; it is the city–the municipal responsibility in large.

So, like that, similar to infrastructure and it being a city responsibility, justice is a provincial responsibility here in the province of Manitoba.

And because of this, it isn't–this provincial government, they have no reason to be asking for more money from the federal government right now, especially because the federal government just gave over half a billion dollars–that's billion with a B, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. The federal government just gave over half a billion dollars to this Province to use at their discretion. This would be a perfect example.

So maybe the better question to be asking right now is how are funds being spent in our justice system here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, I don't have a lot of time but there are a few things I want to make sure I get to put on record. With the time I have, I want to talk about AMM, the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, because they shared a position paper back in 2021 and their priority No. 3, which I table now, is a review of policing structure and provincial funding support.

And on it, it reads: to continue to consult with the AMM and municipalities to promote a more transparent, fair, and sustainable police funding model and reduce the financial and administrative burdens in relation to police services due to amalgamation.

Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, the AMM has long called on the Province of Manitoba to review the 'distributing'–distribution of policing costs and grant funding in Manitoba as the current model is unsustainable.

I just tabled this, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker. AMM literally warned the Province two years ago that this was going to happen, and now the Province is

going and crying to the feds, saying give us more money. I know you just gave us over half a billion dollars, but give us more money.

There's something wrong with this, and on this same position paper, the AMM cites that the provincial policing grant does not reflect what different municipalities pay for policing. And how AMM called for funding arrangements among amalgamated communities to be reviewed to address and resolve outstanding equities.

Again, this problem is not a surprise. We had the forethought going into it and nothing was done, and now look at the position that we're in.

So, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I'm looking forward to more debate on the resolution.

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** The honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Brar). No, sorry–Maples.

**Mr. Mintu Sandhu (The Maples):** You know, it is an honour to rise in the House today to put a few comments on the PMR brought forward by the MLA from Dauphin.

The provincial–Province has done nothing to support municipalities, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and this is not the first time we are hearing this issue. We have raised this issue so many times. Funding cuts to the municipalities: seven years in a row, they have frozen the funding.

Each and–now, because this is election year, now they are saying, okay, we can unfreeze the funding. This was one of the commitments made by Manitoba NDP, to unfreeze the funding. We will properly fund the municipalities so that they can provide the services to their citizens.

So on the one hand we say, like, provincial government is saying, like, we are supporting regular Manitobans. On the other hand, we are cutting funding to the municipalities. Municipalities have to raise their taxes. So, who is paying those taxes, Mr. Acting Deputy Speaker? These are the same people that will be giving the–some kind of help–what the PCs saying they help, but it's not really help.

And recently haven't seen, I think it was on March 31st, 2023, municipality associations across the country, including AMM here in Manitoba, released the following statements.

I'll quote: Our collective associations are extremely disappointed that Budget 2023 does not include a commitment where the federal government to the absorb retroactive salary costs resolutions—resulting from the first RCMP collective bargaining agreement.

Municipalities were not meaningfully consulted during these negotiations, despite being paying contract partners. The federal government's unwilling to absorb the cost will directly result in a significant

property tax increase, delayed infrastructure projects and other cost-cutting measures to the detrimental of local communities at a time when municipalities are—

**The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook):** When this matter is once again before the House, the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Sandhu) will have seven minutes remaining.

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

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Tuesday, April 11, 2023**

**CONTENTS**

<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>		<b>Resolutions</b>	
<b>PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS</b>		Res. 9—Calling on the Federal Government to Absorb the Cost of Increased RCMP Salaries	
<b>Second Readings—Public Bills</b>		Michaleski	1368
Bill 235—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act		Questions	
Micklefield	1359	Naylor	1370
Questions		Michaleski	1370
Lathlin	1361	Schuler	1370
Micklefield	1361	Lamoureux	1370
Cox	1361	Wiebe	1371
Gerrard	1361	Isleifson	1371
Martin	1362	Debate	
Debate		Naylor	1372
Lathlin	1363	Schuler	1374
Cox	1364	Wiebe	1376
Marcelino	1366	Lamoureux	1377
Gerrard	1366	Sandhu	1378
Fontaine	1367		



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