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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
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KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
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LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
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LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
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MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
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MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
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REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
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WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 7, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated. Good morning, everybody.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): Is there leave to consider Bill 228 this morning?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to proceed with Bill 228 this morning? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 228—The Animal Shelter
and Rescue Awareness Day Act**

Madam Speaker: So we will move, then, to Bill 228, second reading, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith), that Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm excited and so pleased to be getting up this morning to discuss Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act. As I have made it, this bill would proclaim April 10th of each year as animal shelter and rescue awareness day in the province of Manitoba.

As I have repeatedly made note since becoming an MLA in this House, I am absolutely an animal lover and have the great opportunity and privilege to work with a variety of different rescue agencies in Manitoba, in particular, in respect of dogs in

Manitoba. And so I'm really pleased to be able to bring forward this bill.

I do want to just share a little bit about the genesis for this bill. About two years ago, I had the opportunity to start working and supporting Save A Dog Network, and with—working very closely with the founder of Save A Dog Network. Her name is Katie Powell.

She is actually a paramedic full-time, and about four or five years ago, she came across a stray dog who, in her words, changed her life and gave her a very intimate understanding of the issues that we have in Manitoba—not only in Manitoba, certainly across Canada and certainly in the States—but, here in Manitoba, the issue that we have of unspayed and unneutered dogs and the overpopulation of dogs that we have, particularly in rural and northern communities.

And that chance encounter with what would become her first love—she ended up adopting this dog—changed the trajectory of her life and she did start the save the dog network. And what save the dog network does is they work with different veterinarians, but in particular, Dr. Jonas Watson.

Dr. Jonas Watson works out of the Tuxedo Animal Hospital, who—many of us have had the opportunity to listen to him and Katie, actually, in a standing committee meeting last year for the member of Fort Richmond's bill on service animals.

And they go into different communities and they offer mobile spay and neuter clinics at—for free, and it's entirely based on donations from the public, from community members, if they have any money that they can provide, they give whatever it is, \$5, \$10, whatever it is, to be able to get their dog spayed or neutered.

Save the dog network goes into these communities. They also gather up all of the loose and feral dogs and spay and neuter them.

And what I would suggest is not a lot of folks realize that every spayed and neutered dog—or every dog that does not get spayed or neutered actually has the potential for 65,000 offspring. And so it is very important to spay and neuter our pets.

The reality is, though, is that we know that northern communities don't have those resources. There are not veterinarian services in those communities, and oftentimes—let's just say, you know, there were resources for veterinarian services in each and every one of those communities, often folks don't have the dollars that they can apply to spay or neuter their pet.

We know that, in Manitoba, a lot of communities struggle financially and individuals struggle financially so if—unfortunately, if it comes down to a question of getting some groceries or spaying or neutering your pet, your groceries obviously take priority.

So—and why I share that and why I put that on the record is, oftentimes—and I've heard it many, many times while I've been at, you know, various dog parks with my Chilly Dog. And people will say, well, you know, if those northern communities would just spay and neuter their clinics. And so inevitably, while we're walking with our dogs, I have to explain, like, how can you spay and neuter your pets when you don't have those services? You simply can't do it yourself. Those services don't exist.

And so that's why this bill recognizes those individuals that do that work. And save the dog network is only one rescue organization here in Manitoba that does that work. The need to be able to spay and neuter dogs in northern and rural areas is so great that there are a variety of different rescue agencies that do that work.

And I have to say that, you know, it is actually really difficult work, and I think about another young woman up north who is actually a nurse full-time, but she also has, I believe it's called canine rescues Manitoba, and she also does that full-time on top of being a nurse in an isolated community. And when you—and, in fact, she's been profiled in CBC quite often for the work that she does. It's all done on donations or out of her own pocket.

*(10:10)

Recently, she was in CBC and they highlighted her, and they highlighted her parents as well because the whole parents' house is filled with puppies and dogs that she takes in and she tries to get them—she ships them down south and she tries to get them homes.

So it is really difficult work. It's emotionally draining work. I remember this young lady who is the nurse up north, a couple of years ago had a post

on Facebook, and she showed pictures about—after a very cold winter, and there were a whole bunch of dogs that had just frozen to death at the dump. Their—literally, their bodies were frozen to the ground.

And so I just feel that we have an opportunity to recognize in Manitoba, officially, every April 10th, those amazing human beings that give so much of themselves to our animal relatives who have no voice for themselves and who suffer greatly.

So, it is a very simple bill. It's a very non-partisan bill. I believe—I know that there's dog lovers and animal lovers among our colleagues here. It is an opportunity—no matter what's going on right now in the House, it is an opportunity for us in the Manitoba Legislature to say we really honour, you know, Manitobans that put themselves out there to do this really difficult and hard work, but rewarding work.

And also, you know, if members of the House support the bill, I think it is, again, a testament to—regardless as of the differences that, obviously, we have, certainly, that in respect of, you know, the most—those without a voice, that we can come together and entrench their intrinsic right to also be safe and to be healthy. And I would suggest to you that we can do better for dogs in Manitoba.

I do want to just quickly mention as well, you know, this type of work also goes to intrinsically creating safer space for communities. We know that we had a woman just last year—a young woman, I believe she was about 24—from one of our northern communities who was mauled to death by a pack of dogs. These rescue agencies also take those dogs and they take them from the community if the community says it's okay and they have the authority to do so, and they get them homes.

And so it intrinsically creates a space where we are hopefully creating an—a space where we don't see, you know, feral and packs of dogs mauling citizens who are just walking. And I know that when we look in the last 20 years, we know that there have been several children who have been mauled as well.

And so I do want to just, again, take this moment right now to say miigwech to all of those rescue organizations in Manitoba that are doing that work. Today, this bill is for them. It is meant to honour them, and it is meant to lift up the work that they're doing, and it's also meant to draw in public attention to the issue of overpopulation of dogs here in Manitoba and that we all have a responsibility.

And so, again, on behalf of Chilly Dog and myself, I just say miigwech to everybody that does this work.

Miigwech.

Questions

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

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I thank the member for introducing this bill.

My question to the member would be, right now, The Animal Care Act is current legislation in this province, and I was wondering how her proposed legislation would interact with this current law on the books, as it sits.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Well, miigwech to the member for the important question.

I actually have another bill in the queue that I've already introduced, and that is amendments to The Animal Care Act which would ban puppy mills and which would ban exotic animals throughout Manitoba.

This bill is entirely separate from The Animal Care Act. It is simply just a day of recognition, as we've had many days of recognition. We had one just recently on recognition of rail safety. It is simply just a day of recognition, Madam Speaker, and has nothing to do with The Animal Care Act.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Can the member tell us how this bill was inspired?

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech to the member for Point Douglas.

As I noted earlier in my introduction here, fundamentally this bill was inspired by the work that I have been so blessed and privileged to witness or in some small, small way be a part of. And, again, when you see Manitobans put their heart and soul into protecting those without a voice, you can't help but be compelled to try and bring legislation forward where we have a day that officially recognizes each and every one of them.

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): The NDP had 17 years to improve animal welfare in this province and did nothing.

Will the member now give—get on board and support our PC government's efforts to improve the animal welfare in this province?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, thank you for the question from the member of Dauphin. In fact, under the NDP we did have a licensing regime for breeders, and actually under the provincial veterinarian, we had animal protection officers that would go in and do checks and audits in respect of breeders, and actually what's happened is the last budget bill, or BITSA, that was tabled last year actually did away with the licensing regime here in Manitoba.

So I'm—I—and you know, one of the reasons why I became a legislature is to do more work on behalf of animals. I've been here two years. These are two bills that I've tried to introduce and I'm prepared and looking forward to doing a lot more in respect of animal welfare.

Mrs. Smith: Can the member tell us why it's important to recognize these amazing people who are doing this work on behalf of all Manitobans to keep our animals safe here in Manitoba, our dogs, our cats, whether that's reptiles or whatever it is. Why is it important?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, again, I think that it's important to recognize all of us in this Chamber, I know that each and every one of us, we have things that we know—we come into contact with Manitobans that we think are just quite extraordinary, and I'm sure that we all would love to have private members' bills that have appreciation days for whatever it is, and that is simply what this is. I think that it's an opportunity to recognize those individuals that are doing that really difficult work and who often actually, Madam Speaker, feel like they're not recognized for the work that they do.

And so this is just an opportunity to recognize them and let them know that here in the Manitoba Legislature, we honour the work that they're doing.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): And my question for the individual is: Who did this member consult with prior to proposing this bill?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, thank you to the member for Emerson. In fact, as I indicated, I've consulted with save the dog network, Dr. Jonas Watson, Leland Gordon. I've had the opportunity of visiting many

times at the Winnipeg animal shelter who also, all of their staff, do amazing work. I've met with individuals from the Manitoba human rights—or Humane Society. I've had the opportunity to speak with somebody—folks from D'Arcy's ARC. I've had the opportunity to speak with—and I, for the life of me, the name is—I'm forgetting it, but it's a cat rescue agency, and that's actually just a couple of the ones that I've talked to and met with in respect of this.

Mrs. Smith: Can the member from St. Johns explain how this bill inspires to educate and raise awareness around the need for spaying, neutering your pets here in Manitoba.

Ms. Fontaine: So, you know, every April 10th, every time we have an awareness day, it's an opportunity to raise public awareness, right? And so if the bill were to be able to go to third reading and would pass, it's an opportunity for those rescue organizations to, on April 10th, collectively spread the word and educate in respect of spay and neuter clinics and also the conditions in which we find these issues are predicated upon.

It's like every other awareness day that has the opportunities for that public education here in Manitoba.

* (10:20)

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I thank the member for the question.

If I understood correctly, I think I heard the member say that one unspayed or unneutered animal could potentially be responsible for 65,000 offspring, and that caught my attention. I was just wondering if the member could explain that or give some context for that rather alarming number.

Ms. Fontaine: And so to be clear, and I appreciate the question, because most people don't actually know those numbers. So, it's not like that individual dog is going to have 65,000; it is, you know, how many, like, grandparents and all of that. But that one dog who is unspayed or unneutered produces sometimes upwards of—you know, one litter has 12 dogs. Each of those dogs go on—if they all go unchecked and intact, that is the amount of dogs just for—offspring for one dog.

Mrs. Smith: Can the member speak about the overpopulation of animals that aren't spayed and neutered here in Manitoba, and if there is a problem?

Ms. Fontaine: So I appreciate the question from point—the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith).

Certainly we do have an issue in northern communities, as I said earlier, specifically because we don't have these services available. And, as I indicated, even if we did have the services, a lot of folks simply don't have the money.

But what's beautiful about the work that some of these folks are doing is that they go into communities, they contribute to that education. But, actually, what they end up doing is doing—they create networks in the community of individuals that will say, hey, we have this dog, it's been injured, it's loose, can you come and get it. So it's a beautiful kind of network to try and deal with the overpopulation of dogs in Manitoba.

Mr. Smith: I know that this is a bill on recognition—April 10th is a recognition day. I was just wondering why this is chosen to be a private member's bill rather than a private member's resolution.

Ms. Fontaine: Well, as I've indicated a couple of times, it's no different than any of the other private members' bills that have been brought forward and have actually passed. So, I would recognize the member for fort—excuse me—Fort Richmond's private member's bill on awareness—[interjection]—no, Fort Richmond—for service animals and the recent private member's bill on awareness day for rail safety. It is absolutely the exact same thing; it's an opportunity to have an official day that recognizes those folks doing animal rescue.

Mrs. Smith: Can the member speak about some of the conditions that northern and rural areas face in terms of spay-neuter clinics and veterinary services?

Ms. Fontaine: A little while ago, Madam Speaker, I had an opportunity—as everybody knows, I love to bake, and save the dog network was heading up to one of our communities. So I brought a bunch of baking for them and their team and for community members.

It—there is so much work that goes into a mobile spay and neuter clinic. When I walked into perimeter air, they had the whole area filled with crates and medical supplies. It's a lot of work to be able to do these, and it's a testament to the lack of resources and services that communities have. And, so, again, I just want to honour those folks that do that, a really, really important work, and all of the effort that goes into it.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I do thank the member for bringing this bill forward.

I, myself, grew up with dogs. I'm a avid dog lover myself. I know that—actually, my very first dog, growing up, was a lab mix. And it was interesting because it—kind of a neat story behind that.

In our neighbourhood, at the time, Dale Hawerchuk lived in our neighbourhood and, of course, he was—his wife was a dog breeder, and our very first dog came from Dale Hawerchuk just a few years before they decided to—before he—his last game with the Winnipeg Jets.

And so it was interesting to see how, you know, a dog just becomes part of the family.

And, of course, going on after that dog left us, we had a border collie, which is an incredibly intelligent animal, and I have to say that's—one of my favourite dogs remains a border collie. They have to be very well-trained and they're very high-energy, of course, for a young family with kids. That's a great fit for everyone, because, you know, it keeps both the kids and the dog active and it keeps both the kids and the dogs away from the parents. And I think that's always a bonus with respect to a young kid, especially getting to the teenage years.

You know, I—again I understand where this bill is coming from, and I do understand the need for animal welfare and safety in the province. I don't think anyone on either side of the House or any Manitoban, for that matter, wouldn't agree with that. I think that's very true.

But, you know, the reason we're here today is not necessarily just to debate this bill, it's a—we're here today because of the NDP's lack of integrity. And unfortunately the NDP did not negotiate in good faith and I have—and I could speak on the behalf of all my colleagues here. We're willing to sit here. We've asked for a number of occasions to sit on Fridays and that leave was denied. We asked to sit late; that leave was denied. Who knows? I mean, we could sit all summer for all we know, depending on the negotiation of over—on the other side of the aisle. We're here to work. We're willing to work; us PC MLAs work hard here in the Legislature and the in community, and we have no problem going toe to toe on this issue all summer.

So I do recognize that's why we're sent here at the Legislature, to work hard and represent our constituents and that's exactly what I plan on doing.

You know, after 17 years of NDP mismanagement of the province, we've seen what we called a decade of debt, decay and decline. It's no—I don't think anyone in Manitoba would disagree with that very premise. I know a lot of people have talked to me. I've had members of the NDP—rather, voters of the NDP in the past, who have said and have displayed their disappointment in the current status of the party. It's unfortunate that that's what it's come to.

But, you know, Madam Speaker, I think that here on this side of the House we display what teamwork is all about, and you see one the other side where you have multiple factions within their caucus. It doesn't serve the public good in any way, shape or form.

On this side of the House, we're a united front. We're here to work on behalf of Manitobans, and we have strong leadership in the party, and I respect that and I think that everyone in our caucus has a unique skill set that they bring to the table and quite a diverse group of people from different backgrounds, professional backgrounds. And it's interesting to see that coming together, and forming a government that actually provides for the people of this province.

And I know that members opposite like to point out things that they don't like in the legislations that we put forward. They like to point out measures that we've taken that they don't like. For instance, they don't like the fact that we're trying to reduce wait times in hospitals, and I'm not sure why that is, but perhaps they can speak to that a little bit better than I could.

Unfortunately, they don't seem to want to be supportive of our efforts here to make Manitoba the most-improved province, whether it's through education—I know we had the lowest literacy rates in the country and that's unfortunate, that we—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a point of order.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I rise on a point of order because the member has been speaking for four minutes. Not once has he spoken anything about the matter before us. He's carried on about everything

and anything, except the act that's here before us. So I would say that his comments so far have been completely irrelevant.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Clearly, it's not true or accurate that not once has the member referenced anything in this bill. He spoke warmly about his childhood dog, about a local breeder, about his own experiences and so, unfortunately, the member's point of order is misguided. If he claims that our member has not once referenced anything in the bill, it's simply not true.

Madam Speaker: I would concur with the member that he does have a point of order.

I would ask the member for Southdale (Mr. Smith) to bring himself around to the comments about the actual bill, which is The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act, and if he could address the bill that is before the House, that would be very helpful.

* * *

*(10:30)

Mr. Smith: Yes, I do pleased—I am pleased to rise here to speak to Bill 228. However, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the 17 years of debt, decay and decline from the NDP government previous has left us in a situation where this government has had to clean up a mess. And quite often, we hear things from that side of the House saying, you know, how dare you take important measures to make this province a better place? How dare you clean up the mess that we made?

Madam Speaker, I'd like to speak to Bill 228, and I think there's some merit to Bill 228, no doubt. However, we can't forget the fact that the NDP have left a mess for this province and for—not only for us, but for future generations. They basically mortgaged the future generations' prosperity for political gain, and that's the problem. And that's the reason why, in 2016, members opposite lost government and—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a point of order.

Mr. Lindsey: You just ruled that the member was talking about things other than the act before us. You requested that he please get on track and talk about

the act before us, and he still has not followed your ruling. He's carrying on about things still that have nothing whatsoever to do with this act, so, once again, I would suggest that he be called to order and keep his comments relevant to that which we're supposed to be talking about here this morning.

Mr. Micklefield: There's an old saying: judge not lest you be judged. If the scrutiny of the member opposite was only applied to himself and his colleagues, we would be in a very different parliament this morning.

Madam Speaker, the member has referenced this bill already in the—less than one minute. I believe he's referenced it twice, and I think that there is latitude so long as the member brings the content back to the subject at hand.

Now, I think that's precisely what has been happening, Madam Speaker, and I think that the member opposite may do well to listen and to perhaps ease off on the points of order on relevance because, you know, he could be reminded at a future time of this same new standard which he seeks to impose on others. Certainly a double standard is not something which serves us well.

So I would say that the point of order should not go forward, because I don't think it's an accurate one, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate to members that there is latitude when we are addressing legislation and in debate. Everybody uses the latitude. And I would encourage the member, however, to bring his comments back to the bill, more than just a few words about the bill. This is debate about legislation that is before us, so I would ask the member to address his comments specifically to this bill on animal shelter and rescue awareness day.

* * *

Mr. Smith: I do appreciate your ruling on this, and I do respect you as a Chair, and I will continue to speak about Bill 228.

You know, I—again, like I said, I do thank the member from St. Johns for bringing this forward, and I don't think there's anybody in Manitoba or anyone in this Legislative Assembly that wouldn't agree that there is animal shelter—animal welfare, rather, is an important issue. And I don't think there's anyone in this House who hasn't either had pets or had family members who've had pets. And, you know, you can really grow—they grow in part of the

family. And, you know, currently we—my wife and I have a cat, and, you know, I'm—I do—more of a dog guy. I'm more of a dog person, myself, but unfortunately that hasn't come to fruition just yet. And we—maybe with a little bit more negotiating, that might happen.

But nonetheless, I think that it's incumbent on this House to address issues like animal welfare, but there are issues that are going on right now as we speak. And if anyone's in their community door-knocking or going to community events, they are hearing issues that are coming up time and time and again, and you know what, it would be unfortunate not to mention things like health care, where our government has taken very important steps in improving the health-care system.

We've done things like—you know, we've done more consolidation and brought health care to a much more efficient place than it was just several years ago. And I do appreciate the time to speak to this bill, on Bill 228, but, like I said, the members opposite have indicated that they want to sit throughout the summer or at least throughout the next three weeks, and I do look forward to more debate on similar bills like Bill 228. Whether it's animal shelter, animal welfare or other related legislation, I think that's—it's incumbent upon us as legislators to be willing to work the entire summer to do that. That's what we're paid to do. That's why we're here. And we're here to represent the people that put us in these seats in the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

I would say that, you know, the member had mentioned during her preamble a number of things about her preparatory work for this proposed bill, and, you know, I would just be curious—and I know she mentioned a few groups that she had consulted with, but I'm just curious as to how much consultation happened throughout her preparation to draft this legislation.

And see—again, I know I asked the question about the animal welfare act itself and how this interplays with it and she said that she's got another piece of legislation that's coming through with exotic animals, and, you know, I only saw a little bit of that legislation come to the order table I think a week or two ago, but it was—I do look forward to debating that bill very much. It'll be interesting to see how that plays out.

But again, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that there are a number of things in this bill that do sound

good, and I don't see that anyone would have any issue with it. However, it can't distract from the fact that the NDP, over 17 years of mismanaging this province, have basically left us in a situation where we're cleaning up the mess.

We are cleaning up a mess that has gone on for far too long, and I think that 2020 we're going to see another example of Manitobans showing their frustration with poor leadership and poor policies being put in place. You know, the NDP were very good at takeoffs, not so good at the landing. They had all kinds of great announcements, all kinds of great ribbon cuttings, and everyone comes up, takes pictures, claps and goes, yay, but at the end of day, unfortunately, there was never any follow through on the policy development, right. It was more about picture and photo ops than it was actually delivering for the people of this province.

And that's, I think, where the problem lies here, and with respect to the NDP's mandate in general, you know: we want to look good. It doesn't matter if we actually have results.

If you have the education standards with the lowest outcomes in the province, or rather in the country, that's a problem, Madam Speaker, regardless of what kind of announcements are made to try and make it look otherwise.

So I do want to, again, thank the member from St. Johns for bringing this legislation, Bill 228, to the Chamber here this morning, and I know there's a few other speakers that do want to speak to this bill on both sides of the House, so I think that it'd be incumbent upon me to allow them to do so.

And I thank you again for your time, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Just to finish off on my comments from the last point of order that was raised, it—I needed to finish the sentence and indicate that it had been a point of order.

Further speakers on this debate?

Mr. Brad Michaleski (Dauphin): It's great to stand up, to have an opportunity to spill—to speak to Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act.

Now, I do have a love for pets and dogs as well as the member, and I know it's really important to look after our pets responsibly and care for them because they are companions, they're work animals.

There's a broad range of reasons why people have pets, but it's important that we do look after them.

Now, I do have a—not a very good success with having cats, because in our yard we have, what's it called, a distemper and it doesn't allow cats to really to survive there. So we have had farm dogs for as long as I can remember and they've been a quite important part of our family. And—but we've had a number of them over the years, and a lot of them have gone through long healthy lives and other ones haven't, but that's farm animals.

* (10:40)

Again, many people also have pets. And I noticed that when I was—three years ago, and didn't really realize how many people have pets. I just think that, you know, on my farm, everybody just has a farm dog and that's it and they love their farm dog, but when—during the three years ago when I did a lot of door knocking, I couldn't believe—there probably was half the homes that I went to in the communities that I walked to either had a cat or a dog, and you sure knew you—you sure you knew they were coming if you knocked on the door and the dog started barking inside there, and, of course, that's what dogs are good for, to alert people and—when people are around—*[interjection]* No, there wasn't anything other—out of the ordinary, just more than less, just cats and dogs, yes, yes.

So, again, we have a many—but this Bill 228 is talking about animal shelters and rescue awareness day, and, again, I've spoke about a number of dogs we had, and I'll tell you about our latest, our dog. We needed to get one about four years ago, and, for the first time in a while we went to the shelter. We've always kind of looked for a particular breed of dog on the farm, and just for security reasons. Again, we were looking for a particular kind.

So, anyway, I went to the local shelter, and there was five dogs there, and I, of course, picked my one or top—top one or two, but I did tell my wife that she can go and choose the dog.

You know, this was only being fair. I chose the last one; it didn't work out so well, so she could choose this one.

And as it turned out, the No. 5 on my list turned out to be No. 1 on her list, and so right now we have a dog named Marcie, and she's a border collie cross and a very, very nice companion dog, not necessarily the security dog that I would like to have, but she's a

very, very friendly dog with people and, again, of course, my wife and her get along very, very well. So—and I do appreciate Marcie as well.

So—but anyway, we need to have care for the pets and, again, think everybody that has a pet has a good story about this, and, of course, animal shelters do play an important role in, again, in providing me with the opportunity to meet Marcie, and Marcie turned out to be a welcome member to our family.

So—but I'm proud of the—in Manitoba, The Animal Care Act, which was introduced by the previous PC government, sets out that all animal owners have an obligation to ensure that animals have an adequate source of food and water, they provide the animal with adequate medical attention when the animal is wounded or ill, they provide the animal with reasonable protection from injurious health or heat and cold, and not to confine the animal to an enclosure in an area without—or 'misht'—must ensure has—I'm sorry—not confine the animal to an enclosure or area with inadequate space, with unsanitary conditions, with inadequate ventilation or lighting or without providing an opportunity for exercise.

So, going back to Bill 228, we have these animals that are available at the animal shelters, and I would encourage people to, if they are looking for a pet, to go to these shelters and have a look because it does turn out very, very well.

And, in addition, animal owners, under the act—animal owners are prohibited from inflicting acute suffering, serious injury or harm or extreme anxiety or distress.

Now, this is, again, if you're a pet owner, generally, again, you hear stories where this neglect and stuff happens and then shelters play a role in rescue, and it's a sad fact, but I think by and large there's a lot of responsible pet owners that are out there and they do look after their animals with care and respect that they deserve.

In the end, this legislation, though, is the toughest in Canada, and we are proud that—again, that the previous PC government introduced it.

So, listening to the member, she referenced—when I asked the question about what the previous government had done, and she referenced, you know, kennel licensing. And it's—you know, that didn't work out so well for—in terms of rolling it out and getting it done. But we are—have some actions that we're going

to be taking in terms of animal health care and—which probably addresses a lot of Bill 228.

So, our government is currently tendering a consultant to develop a kennel companion animal retail and companion animal breeding operation and training program to ensure operators are aware of requirements under The Animal Care Act and to ensure sound animal welfare practices at these operations and build public trust for potential implementation beyond 2018-19.

Now, this is solid actions built on solid legislation. So I would encourage the member to really support the actions of what our government is doing. And I recognize the value in wanting to put an awareness day on this matter. But, really, she—or the member should really get on board with, again, very positive actions of our government in terms of animal health and welfare.

And really for—it's really hard to take—to work with and support this when, of course, not a day or so ago, you know, there was an agreement to move forward, and that was actually reneged on by the members opposite. So we just not sure what the motives here.

What we do know is we do have sound legislation. We're building off of that sound legislation, so I would really encourage the member to support what our government is doing in terms of animal welfare and the actions that we're taking indirectly to support her bill—or the member's 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act. I think it's really important, again, for all of us as pet owners, pet lovers, that we do look after our animals on a daily basis, and we really appreciate the companionship and really respect having those animals in—as part of our family on a daily basis.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 228, The Animal Shelter and Rescue Awareness Day Act.

I speak in support of this legislation because I think it would be valuable to have this day on April the 10th and—as a way of creating 'greeting'—greater awareness of pets, of the importance of looking after pets well.

I think, fundamentally, pets have been tremendously important for individual people, for us as a society and for humans throughout our development and evolution.

What is particularly significant, I think, is that when kids are growing up, when they have pets and can learn from the pets the care and the compassion that you need to properly look after a pet, and that that care and compassion can be something that then lasts a lifetime, because pets can sometimes teach you important lessons. And the more kids can learn well how to look after pets well and relate to pets, I think the better society we will have.

* (10:50)

Pets are also important at any age. There have been numerous studies showing the positive impact of pets on the health of people. People with pets get out regularly, get more exercise. But the relationship between a person and a pet can be a very important relationship and important in addressing things like loneliness, which has been identified as a particular problem in recent years for seniors, and so the better we can do in recognizing the importance of pets.

Indeed, a number of years ago I brought in a bill, Fluffy's law, which would have made it easier for people to have pets in apartments. I didn't have the support of the other political parties at that time and it didn't pass. There have been some modest steps making it a little easier for people to have pets in apartments, but we still need to move in that direction because it's tragic when a senior has to move from their home into an apartment and can't take their pet with them. And that's, of course, one of the reasons why I was working very closely with Bill McDonald and the Winnipeg Humane Society at that point, who were also very, very positive about this effort and very, very supportive.

I want to salute the people who work in the pet rescue area for the efforts that they make and for what they do. There are some incredible animal rescue organizations here in Manitoba that do great work, driven by dedicated volunteers. And the volunteers have big hearts, sometimes tough skin, as they, unfortunately, have to rescue animals from some fairly sad and occasionally horrific conditions that can have a long-lasting impact on the animals and sometimes on people.

The—let me mention a couple of people: Chris Bishop in our caucus staff has spent a lot of time helping with the Spirit of Hope Rescue centre, and they deal with some of the issues which are being highlighted here, which is pets in the North as well as pets more locally. Roger Tam, who is in River Heights, and others have been working hard in supporting the Winnipeg Pet Rescue Shelter. And I

could go on and on naming people who have been—contributed. The circle of people who are involved in pet rescue is large, and it is a major effort and it talks, really, to the care and compassion that Manitobans have for pets and the understanding that we need to be looking after pets well as part of building a healthy society.

On April the 10th, we hope that the government will encourage adoption, spaying and neutering and creating a humane environment. Indeed, it is not just the government, it really needs to be all of us celebrating and working on this day, creating the right environment for companion animals. Treating animals with dignity and respect is the least we can do and sets an important standard and base mark for how we treat others as well.

I would urge all members of the Legislature to be involved in some way or another in supporting the effort to look after pets well, look after animals well.

You know, Manitobans love their four-legged family members, and we would have one suggestion for the MLA for St. Johns as she works on bringing this day into account, and that is that people who work here be allowed, on April the 10th, to bring their dogs to work with them. And we could have a celebration in real time celebrating the animals that we share our lives with and that we love.

I know I had a—one of our caucus members, a number of years ago, loved on occasion to sneak her small dog into the building. I don't think it was really allowed but she managed to and the dog behaved beautifully and was just fine in the office and very quiet and we liked having her pet around and it just spoke to who she is and spoke to what the opportunities are to do something like this.

So with that suggestion, Madam Speaker, I will pass this on to others to speak on this bill, which hopefully will pass forward and we can make April the 10th a day to remember.

Thank you.

Mr. Cliff Graydon (Emerson): I appreciate the opportunity to get up to speak to this Bill 228—and I will uncover the microphone, sir, thank you. Sorry for the inconvenience. At the same time, Madam Speaker, it's clear that on the NDP side of the House, that there isn't an interest in this bill at all. Only one person brings it forward. The rest don't sit there, get up, they wander around. They don't trust themselves.

Unfortunately, with animals you have to trust. With pets you have to have trust. You have to have integrity. The animals understand that but you can see that there is a huge division on that side of the House, Madam Speaker. They don't communicate. I would say there's probably three or four different parties over there right now. They're all independents.

Quite frankly, Madam Speaker, what we've seen under the NDP, we saw 17 years of complete mismanagement with our finances as well as with our animals in the province, whether they be pets or animals. And I have grown up with animals. I have got pets on a farm and quite frankly, you have to develop trust with them in order to have them work with you.

But the NDP—under the NDP, we saw animal welfare complaints triple. They tripled with nothing done by the sitting members that are here today that were there for 17 years. They had control of this Province but they did nothing with looking after the animals. What they did is they put animals down. They put down agriculture. They worked against agriculture in this province. They worked against our animals.

So as a result, the NDP did what they always do. They threw money at all—in all—ill-informed programs like kennel licensing, which failed to address the situation. My colleague brought that up, and some sat there wondering what's he talking about? And the ones that knew just kind of hung his head. He knew that they had not addressed this properly, Madam Deputy—or Madam Speaker.

So trust and integrity is terribly important with animals. It's terribly important with people, and in this Chamber, in the last couple of days—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Graydon: —we have seen there is no trust and no integrity and truth is a strange word to a number in the NDP party. That's unfortunate.

I have worked with animals all my life, and I enjoy it, and in my family, I have a—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Graydon: —daughter-in-law that's a veterinarian who has done more volunteer work with animals than any of the NDP have done with people. She has done more work with animals and working with

them, even in the North. She has a heart bigger than gold.

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have seven minutes remaining.

The hour is now 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions.

DEBATE ON RESOLUTIONS

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): I move to resume debate on private member's resolution No. 3—oh, I apologize. I apologize, Madam Speaker. Let's try that again.

Is there leave to resume debate on private member's resolution No. 3, Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities?

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to move to do debate on resolution on Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

The honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, on House business.

House Business

Madam Speaker: On House business.

Ms. Fontaine: Pursuant to rule 33(8), I am announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for St. Johns. The title of the resolution is Protecting and Promoting French Language Services.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Thursday of private members' business will be one previously put forward by the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine). The title of the resolution is Protecting and Promoting French Language Services.

Res. 3—Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities

Madam Speaker: We will now move to the resolution, Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities, standing in the name of the honourable member for Southdale, who has 10 minutes remaining.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I do want to rise today to put some facts on the record regarding this resolution. And again, I do want to point out to the member who put this resolution forward that, in fact, the budget in 2018, the operational funding for Winnipeg in Budget 2018, has been maintained at the same levels it was in 2017: 115 and a half million dollars for operations. So I'm not sure where the NDP believe that this is a cut. The numbers have not increased, but that's not a cut. That's just creative storytelling, in my opinion, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

You know, we've seen, again—and the reason this—these tough choices are made in this budget is because, Madam Speaker, 17 years of deficit, decade of decay, decline. These—the former government had left a mess for this government to clean up, and I think it's been reiterated in this Chamber a number of times, and I think it's got to be done again, because what happened in the 17 years that NDP caucus ran this province, not only did they mortgage our children and grandchildren's future, they left an incredible mess of the social services, social programming and our finances in this province.

That's why we're here to fix the—rebuild the economy, repair our services and get Manitoba back on track to become the most improved province in this country.

Right now, funding for this—for the City of Winnipeg is the most—among the most generous in the country. The transit level provided in 2017, which is the same amount as provided in 2018, through an unconditional grant, is nearly \$3 million more than the NDP provided in 2015, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This funding now flows through a single, unconditional operating grant that provides Winnipeg with a fair say on local decisions that totals \$150 million. We're allowing municipalities to make decisions—the right decisions with the money that we give them, as opposed to the NDP who basically prioritized four municipalities, and that is shameful. Our government remains committed to this fair say. We're reducing red tape and allowing municipalities to best determine their priorities. Winnipeg has never had a greater flexibility and fairer say with their funding as they do today.

We have taken a different approach from the old NDP way, which was top-down, itemized granting. Our government—a massive supporter of public transit in Winnipeg, illustrated through our

operating funding and also by our significant capital investments.

We're 'investing'—vesting well over \$200 million in major transit projects across Winnipeg, including bus rapid transit phase 1 and phase 2, \$27.4 million to Public Transit Infrastructure Fund, transit projects including the purchase of 60 new buses, and over \$7 million in additional direct funding for buses purchased since taking office, Madam Speaker.

It's—I'm not too sure why members opposite have failed to support us on our fair say initiative with municipalities. The AMM has been clear: they support our initiative. In fact, that's something they've been asking for—for a while, and this government has gone in that direction. I do call on members opposite and the member who introduced this resolution, the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, to get on board with our government's decisions to make our province a more-improved place to live.

The thing is, Madam Speaker—or, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my apologies—that good governments make tough decisions. Poor governments make decisions based on political priorities and that's the difference between what goes on this side of the House and that side of the House.

During the 17 years that the NDP were in government, they made political decisions. I've alluded this before today, but all the decisions that were made—or, many decisions that were made were indeed political. They wanted to make decisions based on what makes the most flashy and sexy announcement, what's a nice ribbon cutting. But at the end of the day, Madam Speaker—Mr. Deputy Speaker, those announcements, those initiatives did not get the results that we needed as Manitobans, and that is why this government in 2016 and continuing on for the next, in my opinion, 16 years at least, but we are focussed on getting results for Manitobans.

If we look at the education system, again coming in dead last, Madam—Mr. Deputy Speaker. Dead last in our results, and that's just abhorrent. How can a government that claims to care about education, that claims to care about our future does not invest money properly? You know, if spending money was any indication of success, then this province would already have been the best province in Canada. Unfortunately, under the 17 years of that administration that was not the case.

We do know that the members opposite like to talk about this myth of cuts and, unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I already alluded to, if we were to spend money like the NDP did, we would basically—not even spend money like the NDP—if we had just kept the spending level at 2016 moving forward, we would be reaching a \$1.7-billion deficit fairly shortly—\$1.7-billion deficit. That is ridiculous. On top of that, the debt servicing cost reaching a billion dollars. That's a billion dollars of Manitoba's money going over to money lenders. That is shameful. How many schools, how many hospitals, how many doctors and nurses, how much money could be invested in this province as opposed to spending on basically servicing a credit card debt, a glorified credit card debt—that's all that was.

Here on this side of the House we know that we're standing up for Manitobans. But not just for today, for tomorrow as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

When Manitobans elected us in 2016, they voted for us to bring about results—a result-oriented government. They knew that their future, their children's future and their grandchildren's future relied very heavily on the decisions that are made today, and, unfortunately, that was not the strategy of the members opposite when they were in government for 17 years.

What makes the best ribbon-cutting ceremony, what makes the best announcement, what looks sexy, what looks good on TV, and what looks good on social media, that was their priority. Our priority is results, getting results for Manitobans for the taxpayers of this province. *[interjection]*

Well, the member from Fort Garry-Riverview would like to know: such as. Well, actually, Mr. Deputy Speaker, right now we have worked very diligently to bring about very important health-care changes to this province. Consolidating the health-care changes, making sure that wait times go down. Under the NDP, wait times were at an historic high, and that is shameful. If spending money was the only solution, we'd have the best health-care system in Canada, and that was not the case under that previous administration. So it's shame on them for standing up and spending money on priorities that are nothing more than political priorities. If it looks good on Facebook, they did it. If it looks good on TV, they did it. But if it looked good on paper, if it looked good in actuality, if it actually meant delivering results, they failed—and miserably I might add.

* (11:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 2016 Manitobans had enough and kicked the NDP out of office. And that is why I have a lot of faith in Manitobans and knowing that they're onside with our important decisions being made here in this province.

We care about the children. We care about patients. We care about the future of this province. Mr. Deputy Speaker, members opposite are more interested in health care than they are in actual patient care, and that's the problem. Patient care is important; that's what health care is all about. And if they want to take orders from their union bosses, that is up to them, but we, in this side of the House, take orders from the people of Manitoba, the people who voted for us and the people who put us in this Chamber themselves.

No matter what riding you live in, no matter what community you're in, people pay taxes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those—that tax dollar needs to be respected, and when you have the NDP in power, they did nothing to respect the taxpayer, and that is unfortunate. And that is why I'm very proud to be part of this PC government, this Progressive Conservative caucus, because I know we've got the best interests of Manitobans, not just for today but for the future, in mind. And when we make decisions we know that the decisions we make today will be impacting people 20 years from now in a positive way, not like the NDP of opposite, who spent and spent and spent and got worse and worse results. I'd like to see a graph of that; it would look terrible: Spend more, get less. Spend more, get less. Spend more, get less. That is shameful.

This government believes that we spend money correctly, we invest wisely and we make sure that our health-care system, our municipalities and the finances of this province are sustainable not only for today but for tomorrow, for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren because that is what good governments do, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They don't go out there and look good on Facebook, look good on social media, look good in traditional media, make a big splash and everyone looks great, and then at the end of the day, not deliver on results.

Now, that is the NDP record. The PC record is getting results for Manitobans because they're the ones who not only vote, they pay taxes; it is their province, not ours; it does not belong to the government. The government represents the people,

and that's not what happened with members opposite for 17 long years. That is a shame.

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

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I just want to say that we're happy to be here. We're happy to be holding this government to account. We're happy to be here to ask questions all summer long because Manitobans want to know what this government is hiding in their BITSA bill. And that's exactly why we're here, and this is exactly the reason that, you know—you were hiding this in the last BITSA bill; we're wondering what you hiding in this BITSA bill. So we are not going to give up our right to be able to ask questions—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: And I'm sorry I have to yell because they're so loud, and, you know, they had a chance to speak. I don't know why—you know, they'll have a chance later. Member opposite put some words on the record already, but he continues to shout over there, so I apologize for my shouting because I have to shout over the opposite—members opposite.

So the reason we're here is because they hid this in the last BITSA bill, this 50-50 transit cut that they made to Manitobans. They had no idea that this was coming. So when they talking about—when they say there is an agreement, there is no agreement. They—why would we give up our right to ask questions about BITSA? Doesn't make sense. So when they're trying to say that there is agreement, that we're holding them here, we're not. You know, we're glad to be here, we're glad to be asking questions on behalf of Manitobans, and we want to know what's in this BITSA bill. We don't want to see another 50-50 transit cut that's going to affect Manitobans in a negative way.

They want to—you know, there was a long-standing commitment with the mayor of Winnipeg that 50-50 transit would continue, but this government felt that, you know, that wasn't important; there was no value for money there. Well, let me tell you, Manitobans think there's value for money: getting on a bus, getting to work, getting their children to daycare, getting themselves to school and also not being an emitter and a polluter and driving their car to work every day; this gives them an alternative. But this government continues to take that away from Manitobans by their austerity. Shame on them, shame that they would give

Manitobans less choice in this province. Instead of investing in 'monerd'—modern transit systems to meet growing needs of our province, this Premier (Mr. Pallister), well, he's decided upon a regressive action that'll make public transit less effective in a time where it's even more important.

I represent a riding that has probably, you know, one of the most vulnerable constituents in all of Manitoba, constituents that rely on low bus fare to get to school. Well, now this government's raised tuition so some of these of my constituents can't even go to school now because they've decided that they're now going to cut tuition. So it went from transit to tuition, so they're making it even harder for Manitobans to get themselves out of poverty, which I must say that we still have no poverty reduction strategy here in Manitoba.

This government has been in government for just over two years. They talk about our 17 years. Well, I can tell you we've had 17 years of success in this province of supporting Manitobans and of putting people before profit, something that this government doesn't see fit.

We've asked for, you know, BITSA to be brought so that we could debate it. Has it been brought? No—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: They are still sitting over there on their hands. We don't know what—maybe it's not even done yet, you know. Incompetent—we don't know—*[interjection]*—yes. Do they have it done, do they don't, they do, they don't.

So, you know, this government continues to teeter and totter and the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding), maybe he'll get up next and talk because he's got lots to say over there, shouting across the floor, so he can maybe bring the poverty reduction strategy and tell us.

Actually I just read an article in the paper that says it's going to make it even easier to put kids in care. I think we should be supporting families in their houses and keeping kids in their homes, not making it easier to take them out of their homes. So shame on him for even bringing that forward. That's horrible—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: —and, you know, this member from Southdale talked about the mayor. You know, he said, oh, this is untrue. We're giving the same dollars we gave last year.

Well, the mayor says that that's untrue, that he's not getting the same dollars, so who's not telling the truth here? I think I agree with the mayor because bus fares have gone up. Why would that have to happen? Because this government cut the funding.

So what else are they hiding in this BITSA that they don't want to bring forward, that they don't want Manitobans to know about, that they don't want us to be able to ask questions about? We will not give up our right to ask questions about BITSA.

The member from Southdale also talked about tough choices. Well, I guess it was a tough choice to cut the 50-50 funding because that was right after you said that it wasn't cut, so, ho, which is it? Teetering again, eh? Tough choices.

You said that you'll continue to make sure Manitobans have fair share and fair say. Well, I can tell you 50-50 transit doesn't agree with that. The mayor doesn't agree with that. Manitobans don't agree with that. You're listening with earplugs in your ears. It's time to take those out and actually start listening and have some compassion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I just want to remind the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) if she can speak through the Chair—just a warning—and not to individual members in the Chamber. *[interjection]*

The member for Point Douglas, sorry.

Mrs. Smith: The member from Southdale talked about fees when rapid transit—and how their government supported it and blah, blah, blah. Well, that was actually our government. You continue to take credit for work that we've done. How about starting to do your own work on that side of the House and quit taking credit for the work that we've done in building this province up into where we are now.

And I can tell you knocking on doors in every event, and the member from Southdale talked about going to events and talking to people, and I can tell you the events I go to and the people I talk to and the doors I'm knocking on, they're actually regretting what choices they made in 2016 and they're looking forward to 2020 and making sure that 50-50 transit is restored because this government has no, you know,

no idea how to run a province. They're running it into the ground. They continue to make cuts that are affecting Manitobans.

If you look at our health-care system, well, I can tell you I visited the emergency room a couple times this year, once with my daughter because we were in a car accident four months ago where we were T-boned, and we waited four hours. We got into a room; a doctor came to see us. As soon as we went for X-rays, we were off that list, so we were no longer on that waiting list up there, so they're just changing the rules around that.

* (11:20)

My husband—

Point of Order

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Rossmere, for—on a point of order.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): The member for point of order—excuse me, Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) is—I'm struggling to find how this is relevant. Now, the members opposite have asked to debate the resolution in front of the House this morning and it baffles my mind how getting T-boned—and sincerely, I, you know, I have compassion for the member on that point, but it has nothing to do with what we're supposed to be discussing this morning.

So I'm—I would be grateful if the member could pull herself in and rein herself in and perhaps find her way back to the notes, back to the resolution and back to relevance. I think that would be a benefit not just to this House, certainly to herself and by extension to all Manitobans, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Point—St. Johns.

The honourable member—Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): So I do just want to put on the record that the member for Point Douglas is discussing and referring to things that are obtained in respect of our resolution when we talk about public transit and municipalities.

And what the member was simply trying to do was draw the point about the fact that this government, the Pallister government, is in—always looking at just cuts, and not understanding—as she

said, they're not hearing the public talk about how that actually impacts on their lives day in and day out.

And while, you know, I appreciate the member for Rossmere getting up and trying to formulate an argument, she is discussing the resolution at hand and we shouldn't—and we should be very wary of looking at transit cuts and all of these other pieces that were hidden in the BITSA and seeing them kind of in silos. All of them are interconnected and that is simply what my sister-colleague is doing.

And it is, you know, incumbent on us as the opposition to bring forward and put on the record in an official way the impacts that the cuts have.

Miigwech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for River Heights, on the same point of order.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Oh, no, I thought we were back on the debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Okay.

On the point of order from the member from Rossmere, he does have a point of order. We should stay with relevance to what the—what we're debating on the bill. So just a friendly reminder that—if we could just stay relevant to the actual resolution.

* * *

Mrs. Smith: So, back to my point about visiting the hospital. So, I actually had to go and pick my daughter up that day because she didn't have a bus token because, you know, sometimes being a politician and helping people in the community and supporting them, many people come into our office and ask for a bus token and I can tell you we have bus tokens in our office.

I personally purchase those because I know how much our constituents need it in my community, whether that's to get to appointment, to go to a job interview, to go visit EIA, to go to the medical, to go visit the emergency room. And you know, a—or \$100, that's over \$100 now people are paying for bus passes because of this government.

Now, you park downtown, it's \$3.50 an hour because of what this government's austerity has caused in 50-50 transit—their 50-50 transit.

So me driving my daughter to the hospital that day—*[interjection]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: –was because she didn't have a bus ticket. I had to actually go pick her up and take her there. And you know, sometimes my daughter chooses to buy lunch over a bus ticket, and that's the choices that many Manitobans are having to make. Do I pay for my electricity? Do I put food on my table? Do I, you know, pay for my medication? Or do I buy a bus pass? Well, I can tell you the bus pass is going to be the last thing that they pay for because, you know, they have to keep their lights on, they have to feed their families, they have to feed their children and they need their medication.

So this government has made it harder, through their 50-50 transit cut, for Manitobans in all of this province—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Smith: –to be able to, you know, make a living. We know that bus drivers are being laid off, some people in—that are fixing the buses, and it's all because of this government's, you know, value for money. They don't see the value of putting a person on a bus to get to work or taking their children—

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

I just want to remind everybody on both sides of the House, and the independents, that we should just have relevance to what we're discussing for resolutions this hour.

Okay, the next speaker, the honourable member for St. James.

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): Let me tell you how much of a pleasure it is to stand up in the House today and speak to this resolution and indicate to all of the members of the House how much I'm looking forward to sitting longer in the Legislature and deliberating over the business of the province and rolling up our sleeves and addressing, certainly, the issues on behalf of all of our constituents.

I know that the people of St. James, who I've seen on a regular basis knocking on doors, are certainly always very encouraging of the initiatives that our government is taking and looks certainly forward to our government continuing to eliminate some of the problems and address the needs and come up with real solutions to some of the problems that we had faced—we are facing based on what we had taken over from the previous government.

Now, the previous speaker references running the province into the ground, and, quite frankly, I was somewhat astonished by that comment. I think that this government was given a very significant mandate to address all issues, including dealing with funding for municipalities for a number of different initiatives that they're pursuing, and our government does continue to fund municipalities to be able to address issues such as transit.

But, again, when I've been talking to my constituents, a lot of the areas that they're expecting this government to address and try to come to terms with, the No. 1 issue, of course, was health. And our government is continuing to come to terms with finding solutions to our health challenges. And I think that everyone in the House does realize that there are challenges that all governments in Canada, and certainly Manitoba, face in regards to the expenditures to be able to offer the services that we offer.

And I know that my constituents were—and all Manitobans were very pleased with the recent announcement and the opening of the Grace Hospital emergency, which is going to accommodate and address service to all Manitobans and certainly all Winnipeggers. And it was a state-of-the-art facility, and I encourage all members, because this facility does help all Manitobans—and I encourage all members to take the opportunity to tour that facility because it really is something that not only our government but all Manitobans can be very proud of as we continue to proceed into the future.

And, again, my honourable friend from Point Douglas indicates breaking—running the province into the ground, and having the experience that I have in education, I'm very pleased that the Minister of Education is continuing to find solutions and enhance our educational programming. Certainly, the review and the study that he is doing right now, incorporating feedback from a number of different entities—parents and parent councils and teachers, as well as principals and school administrators, the administrations within school boards, as well as trustees—and, certainly, I know that all of the House is going to look forward to hearing and seeing what recommendations come out of those studies.

* (11:30)

So I'm very encouraged. When I attended the event that took place at the convention centre and have—bringing all parties together to explore areas of interest in education. So I know that there are many

members of the House that are certainly very interested in this, and I look forward to seeing it.

And one of the other frustrations, I guess, in regards to running the province into the ground, you know, when we talk about Hydro. Hydro was such a valuable entity to this province. It certainly is something that—an entity that we all value, and based on the fact that now Hydro is actually having to borrow money to accommodate services is really, really something that this province has never seen before. And that alone is something that I really believe that the previous government is—created the most challenging situation that this government has to face because Hydro is so important. You basically drove that entity into a very, very serious financial situation, and now Manitobans are paying it.

But there is light at the end of the 'tunnel'. This government is not prepared to just sweep these problems under the carpet. This government is prepared to address the problems and will continue to bring Hydro into financial credibility and financial structures. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I—just a couple of points based on the previous speaker's commentary in regard to running the province into the ground; I certainly would challenge that commentary.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, good governments make difficult decisions that are necessary to ensure the protection and sustainability of the quality service to their citizens. During a decade of debt, decay and decline, the NDP had very difficult times making difficult decisions. Our government has begun to work hard to do the hard work that's required to repair the damage, as I just indicated in a number of the examples that I had given.

During the last election, our PC team promised municipalities all across Manitoba that we would implement a basket-funding model in order to provide municipalities with fair say to have the power and flexibility to fulfill the demands and priorities of their residents, including transit demands, improve efficiencies and reducing red tape by establishing a single point of contact in order to lessen the frustrating application-based funding approach that existed previously.

We recently attended the MAA's convention where there were 111 meetings held by ministers and departments with those in attendance, all bringing forward very valuable suggestions and discussions. The PC government has delivered four AMM resolutions, which shows our approach to

municipalities and completely changed the direction that our government's taking with municipalities. The NDP talk about the city's budget, but they forget when they were in power they couldn't keep their own budget balanced, and now they want to comment on how municipalities should proceed.

Operational funding for Winnipeg in the budget 2018 has been maintained at the same level as 2017: \$115 million operational. This funding is amongst the most generous level of unconditional operating funding found anywhere in Canada. And that's a very bold statement to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This government has gone to great lengths to ensure that our municipalities have the funding that they need to be able to achieve the service that municipalities desire, including transit. This funding now flows through a single unconditional operating grant that provides the City of Winnipeg a fair share on local decisions. Our government remains committed to fair say—

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

The honourable member for river—the honourable member for Rossmere.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was just wondering if we could canvass the House and see if there's leave for the member to continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave for have the member continue?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important resolution.

We've seen, in the last few days and now, today, NDP and Tories arguing in one way or another. Today, it's about, you know, who's done worse when it comes to public transit in Winnipeg and in Manitoba. But what is lacking is the broader perspective of why public transit is so critical and what division in the planning is for public transit for Winnipeg and for Manitoba.

Public transit and its support are really vital and central to our future as Winnipeggers and as Manitobans. Rapid transit is especially important. And public transit is important particularly to

students, to low-income families, to seniors, to people with disabilities, to those who are unable to drive. For example, I was talking recently with people who are concerned about those with epilepsy and seizures and who are unable to drive a car and people with—who can't drive a car need to have access to really good public transit.

Tourism—to have a top-notch tourist location in Winnipeg. We have many wonderful attractions, but you compare us to other major cities, we don't have the kind of rapid transit that's available to people coming to most major cities in the world that gets tourists to where they need to go to, or want to go to, very quickly.

Certainly, they're opportunities that we need to embrace and to work toward. Getting access to health care, to jobs, to services—the current government is closing emergency rooms, but they forgot that the cities that they compared Winnipeg to, like Vancouver, who have fewer emergency rooms, have a rapid transit system that people can get access to places like emergency rooms very quickly, whereas here, there is not that same rapid transit where you can get to where you need to go for health care very quickly if you're sick.

And so we have a different circumstance. The government should have been putting in place the rapid transit system before doing this sort of fast closure of emergency rooms. It certainly created a lot of chaos and a lot of problems, and this aspect wasn't adequately considered.

We need a city where it's much easier to live without a car and, you know, more possible, and more people do it. I remember going to school—medical school at McGill University. I was there for four years in Montreal, and it was very easy to get around because they had a rapid transit system built and developed. Quite frankly, didn't need a car. And it's hard to say the same thing in the same way about Winnipeg because there's not the adequate, city-wide rapid transit system that other large cities have.

* (11:40)

We need to recognize that rapid transit, fully developed and fully city-wide, is, in fact, the backbone for people travelling in large cities in today's world.

And it is not only the backbone for how people travel; it's also the backbone for how the city develops, how planning happens for a city. You would put in place, normally, the backbone and then

have a development plan. This—successive NDP and Conservative governments have failed to make sure that that city-wide rapid transit system was in place, and so we don't have the backbone and it makes it more difficult to have a Winnipeg plan—a plan Winnipeg, which is based on a strong backbone to start with.

The backbone provides, as I've already talked, much easier access and much easier visiting for people who are from outside of Winnipeg, and that would apply to people who come from rural areas. Somebody who comes from rural areas will now, if they have a car, automatically take a car and drive it all over Winnipeg. If there was rapid transit what happens in other jurisdictions is that people park on the outskirts of the city, get into rapid transit and they don't need to be tied up in traffic jams and things like that. They have easy access all over the city.

This is what's happening elsewhere, but it's not happening here because we don't have that fully completed and functional rapid transit system for Winnipeg. It is important for people who are flying in from the North. As an option, it makes it a lot easier to get all over the city very quickly to where you need to go. It would be a big difference. It makes a big difference for people coming in from outside of Winnipeg. It makes a big difference because all of a sudden it's very easy for people to get to the Museum for Human Rights or other attractions—the Convention Centre, wherever people want to go and particularly for meetings, and experience the wonderful things that we have in Winnipeg and in Manitoba.

Winnipeg can be even more of a hub with this sort of development than it is now, and I should add that having adequate public transit in communities around Manitoba is also important. Being connected and having the public transit so that you can get where you need to go in communities like Brandon and many other communities in Manitoba would be—is—and is very, very important.

In the development of the plan, we need to consider many things and make sure that we are consulting and talking with people who will be involved from all perspectives in the changes that will occur. But I don't see that happening with this government or the previous government. We need to take hold of this concept and make sure that the vision and the plan for rapid transit are there for people in Winnipeg and for the people in Manitoba

so that whether you're a senior, whether you're a student, whether you're a tourist, whether you're a developer, you have an understanding of what's going to be happening in Winnipeg and Manitoba in the future.

We've debated rapid transit for 30 or 40 years in Winnipeg and we still haven't got it. We need action; we need a plan. We think that the current government in their activities in cutting transit is taking us backward instead of taking us forward. We think we need to go forward, Mr. Speaker, and make sure that we are thinking about what the future will be, what we can do in our wonderful city and our wonderful province. We need to be acting and planning and talking with people about what the vision for the future is and what the plan for the future is.

And so debating about who is the worst in rapid transit is—shouldn't be on the agenda. What should be on the agenda today is talking about what we really need in terms of a better world for Winnipeg and for Manitoba in terms of better public support and provincial support for rapid transit, a vision that will help all of us and create a better, more equitable and healthier society.

Thank you.

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): If I may ask the indulgence of the Chamber, before I start my comments on this particular resolution, I would just like to give a shout-out to the grade 7 class from Miami School that were in the building earlier this morning. I met with them in my office, a great group of young students, and their teacher, Nathan Strange, he comes every—brings his class every year to come through and see the Legislature. I know they were up in the gallery here just at the beginning when session was beginning this morning.

And so, of course, I happen to have particular connections to Miami—and I'll make sure everybody knows, that's Miami, Manitoba, not Miami, Florida—that my wife comes from Miami. And we were just at the school last week on the school grounds watching our grandson play soccer, and my wife was talking about, yes, she used to play field hockey out there, and so it was a bit of a reminiscence. So I'd just welcome them.

And also, yesterday, the Dufferin Christian School was here yesterday. They were up in the gallery. So it's great that our students take the time to

come and see democracy in action here and as we debate particular bills and resolutions.

And this resolution, brought forward by the member from Fort Garry-Riverview, it's Restore Public Transit Funding for Municipalities, but it's a bit of a misnomer, really. It should have read: restore control over municipalities. That's what the real intention of the NDP was because, going back—and the member from Fort Garry-Riverview was a member in the previous government—they loved to have control over municipalities.

It wasn't—and one of the first initiatives that our government took, and it was the Minister of Indigenous Northern Relations who began that discussion with municipalities, and our current Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Wharton) has continued that, but we work together with the municipalities. We had talked to them before the election about basket funding, about letting them have control over the funds that they receive from government.

This is totally different from what the previous government's view was, because they wanted control. And one only needs to go back to when they forced amalgamation on the municipalities. They did it on the eve of the AMM's convention, no previous discussion with them.

And the member from Fort Garry-Riverview will remember as being a member of that government at the time. I know that I went to different regional meetings that were happening for the—I believe he was the member for Dawson Trail who was the municipal minister at the time, and he just about got run out of town in a couple of those meetings because there was a lot of bitterness displayed. There was emotions that came out from when people discussed—described how this—the previous government was tearing apart communities by forced amalgamation. There was no reason for it other than for control. And that's what this bill—this resolution is all about. It's regaining control over municipalities.

And it's also interesting too, on this resolution, that when I'm talking about rapid transit and the south—phase 2 of rapid transit, I believe it goes through what's called the Parker Lands. And somehow I think the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) was involved in a bit of the controversy on the Parker Lands, a lot of division over—from the community members about it

going through this, what was described as pristine wilderness area, within the city of Winnipeg.

Of course, we also know how Manitoba Hydro took the City to great lengths to sell them some land, a right of way along there, and I see the construction going on now on phase 2 of rapid transit, the bridge-overpass overtop of McGillivray Boulevard, and I believe, farther south of that, they're actually moving to move the railway track. So there's a lot of expense in here.

* (11:50)

And with that particular dogleg of rapid transit going through the Parker Lands and around, it did remind me of Bipole III, how government interfered with that and made that one 500 kilometres longer. I don't know how many extra kilometres this will be, but that was just more signs of the mismanagement of the previous government, how they interfered with municipalities so we have—our government has developed a great working relationship with the municipalities.

We continue to have that open dialogue with them. I know our Minister of Municipal Relations (Mr. Wharton) is constantly dialoguing with both the mayor of Winnipeg and all municipal leaders across the province, all of us from Cabinet have regular meetings with the AMM executive and we also deal with our local municipalities all the time.

One of the things that basket funding allowed—one of the many great things that basket funding allowed was to reduce the red tape and the funding applications and the narrow windows that the previous government had set up for funding. If you wanted to get funding for a particular program, municipalities, whether they be the city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon or any rural municipality, had to spend a considerable amount of time doing paperwork just to fit into a particular grant application. And now with basket funding you give a pot of money to the municipalities and we know we are confident, as a government, we are confident that the municipalities have that ability to spend their money wisely and to spend their money where they see it best fits rather than having government—provincial government manage—trying to manage their money, because we know from the previous government that they couldn't manage a lemonade stand never mind trying to run a municipality.

So this funding model works very well. Municipalities are very happy with this, and we

continue to work with municipalities. We—even though the Province has our provincial budget, we know that when we maintain—when we manage our budget wisely, it also helps the municipality. Because just as we are going to fix the finance and repair our services and rebuild the economy provincially, that's what municipalities do. And the spinoff effect from us managing our money—managing the taxpayers' money properly also helps the municipalities in order to be able to spend their money where they see it fit best.

Unlike the previous government, we do have a lot of confidence in municipalities that they really do know how to manage their money and being close—being more closer aligned to where they see the funding is best spent.

That's why we developed the basket funding model, and that's why it's working so good and that's why the Association of Manitoba Municipalities continues to support the basket funding fair say fair share because they have the ability to spend money where they see fit much better. And we only have to look at the previous government's sad record of money management or money mismanagement, I guess I should call it. So we'll continue to work with municipalities.

We know that this is the right path that we're doing, and as we continue to fix the finances of Manitoba, it will inevitably help municipalities all across—not only just for the city of Winnipeg and the city of Brandon, but for all municipalities across the province.

So while this resolution talks about restoring funding, really—I'll just reiterate again that really it's about restoring control where the NDP thought they had control. And I remember very well just going back to the amalgamation—the forced amalgamation, I always call it forced amalgamation. The previous minister, the NDP minister, described municipal officials as howling coyotes, and that was very degrading to them. And the member from Elmwood has talked about his—is quoted as saying that city council doesn't even speak about the city of Winnipeg, that they don't even know how to manage their own money.

It's unfortunate that the members of the NDP take such a shallow view of municipalities. They know how to operate; they know best how to spend their money, and that's why we've developed a basket funding model, and we'll continue to do that because we have the support of municipalities in the

funding model, and we will continue to support municipalities in making sure that they do what's best for each individual municipality.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): It's a privilege, always, to stand in this House and—this morning to put just a few comments on the record about the private member's resolution put forward by the member for—someone help me out here—*[interjection]*—Fort Garry—Rouge. Thank you.

And I do want to put on the record that, unfortunately, that member is—no, I would be breaking a rule if I was to say what I was going to say, so I will get straight to my content.

The predication for this resolution is misguided, Mr. Deputy Speaker: restoring public transit funding. That would lead one to believe that the funding has somehow been reduced, and otherwise, how could it need to be restored, when in actual fact, operational funding for Winnipeg in this budget is exactly the same.

Now, the narrative goes something like, that because of the PC government's draconian cuts, that Transit is scrambling to make ends meet, has had to cruelly raise transit fares, and the—anyone who rides a bus is a victim of, allegedly, the PC government's cruel cuts.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, allow me to say, nothing could be further from the truth. Fares are set at the municipal level, and our funding allows the municipality to be in control of how it wishes to spend its money, and not us folks here on Broadway charged with provincial oversight. We think that's a much fairer way; we think that's a much more responsible way.

And, you know, it reminds me of how I like to treat my own children at a birthday. I don't tell them, well, you can get birthday money, but we're going to tell you got to spend so and so much on candy, and then you can only spend this much on toys because you got to spend this other much on holiday and then this other amount—that's not how we do it, you

know? And especially as our children get older, we allow them to choose.

And I'm not inferring for one second that it would be appropriate to think of any municipality, who is a true partner with this government, as a child. But, you know, that is what it can feel like when you're told how you must spend your money and how much you must spend on each particular thing.

So, not only has the funding remained the same, not only is the funding among the most generous in our entire country, the funding flows through a single operating grant. It gives Winnipeg—the City of Winnipeg a fair say on local decisions. And we're not talking about small amounts of money; we're talking about tens of millions—in fact, over \$115 million dollars.

So we believe this is a much fairer system. We believe this a much simpler system, and it does allow municipalities to best determine their priorities.

Now, the City of Winnipeg has been in a fortunate situation and is free to manage its affairs as it should choose. That's what we are maintaining. We're investing subsequent millions—some 200 to be precise—in major transit projects. So, contrary to the misguided narrative for the member opposite that somehow, something needs to be restored, in actuality, we are seeing \$200 million invested into major transit projects all across the city, which include bus rapid transit phases 1 and 2.

I could speak further of \$27.4 million to support public transit infrastructure funds, transit projects, including the purchase—

* (12:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

When this matter's before the House, the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Micklefield) will have six minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 7, 2018

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