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of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Good morning, everyone. O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom comes, we are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Granted, 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 of our people. Amen.

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Acting Government House Leader): Good morning. I call on—debate on Bill 230, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 230—The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Debate on second reading of Bill 230, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I move, seconded by the member for Portage La Prairie (Mr. Wishart) that Bill 230, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Isleifson: It gives me great privilege to rise in the House today and start debate on second reading of Bill 230. As we're all aware, when we put our names forward to run for public office, when members of parliament put their names forward to run for public office, there's something that we must do, and that's to disclose any criminal history that we may have.

I take heart with this bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from having been in a position before, along with a number of my colleagues in the House, who have been either on—who have been school board trustees or on municipal councils throughout our province. And we take great pride in ensuring that the public that we come to represent in any of those cases know who we are, know what our past is, know our passion of why we're here and what we bring to the table. And it's vitally important and on us to ensure that we are as transparent as possible to all those who put us into these trusted positions.

This bill, again, it amends The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Act to simply require candidates who are interested in running for those positions to be open and transparent and disclose any criminal convictions or any convictions that they have plead guilty to in regards to the Criminal Code of Canada or the Canadian tax laws as well.

I do want to note, though, that, you know, there are times when we have young offenders that are out there that do silly things, do crazy things, or some people even say, do stupid things and get into trouble with the law. If that happens on a youth record, that is something that does not have to be disclosed under this proposed legislation.

So, again, it's really just—it's something that I believe is needed to ensure that we maintain the integrity of lawmakers throughout the country. And, again, when we look on school boards and municipal elections, all we have to do is look back at 2022, in the recent municipal and school board trustee elections,

and I'll tell you, there are a number—there were a number of candidates that put their name forward.

And I want to publicly acknowledge and thank all of them for putting their name forward for public service. We all know that it's very time-consuming. It's not an easy task. And even in some cases, in most cases in Manitoba, with the exception, I believe, of Winnipeg, is they're all part-time. They're all part-time councillors; they're part-time trustees. They work full-time jobs. They dedicate a lot to serve their communities, and I really want to acknowledge that on the floor today and say thank you to all those that put those—their—basically put their lives out in front and let people know who they are.

* (10:10)

Also, I've taken the opportunity to reach out to a number of trustees and councillors, both current and past, and just to get their viewpoints on, and their thoughts, on this bill, which we should be moving forward with. And I've received 100 per cent support from everyone that I have talked to in regards to this bill.

I even posted a video, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on, I think it was Facebook or YouTube or something like that, posted videos, anyway, explaining the bill. And the comments I received, and again I'll paraphrase because I don't have copies in front of me: was long overdue; it's about time; we truly support this; and everybody in a political role should be accountable and transparent.

So again, even on there, we all know how sometimes we'll put comments on twitters—on twitters—on Twitter and the comments we get back, some may be supportive, some maybe not. I see that from every post that everybody in this House makes, doesn't matter what side you're on, there's always those negative posts. But I'm happy to say, with this post, I have not seen any negativity on it, it's very supportive.

So again, I really believe it's a step in the right direction for our Legislature to put out there the requirements that bring it up to date to make everybody on a level playing field, to really bring transparency to the forefront and let people know that we run for these positions because we want to respect and honour the voice of those in our communities.

And I really believe that whether it's a school board trustee or a municipal council, they're in the same boat. Again, I look at the number of people who put their name forward on a ballot, realizing that they have an opportunity to serve and that their private life

is—basically becomes a public life. And so it's better to have that knowledge up front.

I would not want to, Mr. Deputy Speaker, vote for someone into a position, believing they're the very best person for that position, only to find out afterwards that there is some aspect of their past that may put my constituents, or our children, in jeopardy, in danger, because they did not disclose some criminal activity in their past. I'm not sure how I would feel if that happened. I would certainly not be happy with my choice if that was the case.

However, if I knew ahead of time that this person had a criminal history, and could understand what the history was, again, it's not preventing someone from putting their name on a ballot. It's not discouraging people from running for public office. What it's doing is creating transparency so that when they get up there and their name goes on that ballot, people truly know, and have a level playing field on who they can select, or who they want to select, to represent them on a municipal board council, or on a school board.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to end my comments there. I look forward to some questions and I look forward to unanimous support of this bill today.

Thank you.

Questions

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

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): Thank you to the member for Brandon East for bringing forward his private member's bill.

I want to, he referenced having chatted with some individual trustees, councillors, on this bill development, but could he outline in a little more detail, really, specifically who was formally consulted on the development of this bill?

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

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Thank you to the member from Wolseley for the question. We know

that question comes up on every bill, because it is important. It is very important on who we consult with. So, in Brandon, what I do is I meet on a regular basis with a number of people, on a monthly basis with the mayor, with the president of the Chamber of Commerce, with the board from the Chamber of Commerce.

But I also start, and I meet with every single city councillor on a regular basis as well. So, when I'm sitting around those tables talking to the councillors, that—that is where this topic came up. So again, I wanted their feedback before I proceeded to it, just so I knew, you know, if there was actually support out there on something that should have been done a long time ago, and finding out that there definitely was.

So, thank you for the question.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I thank the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) for bringing this bill forward. I'm wondering if you can explain what made you bring it forward at this time.

Mr. Isleifson: Thank you for—my friend from Portage la Prairie for that question. So, again, when you reach out, and being in a political life; again, I've been in political life since 2010 as a city council's 'deputy' mayor, in the City of Brandon.

And it was important that we'd look out and say, why are we not doing these things? But again, 2022 opened my eyes for me when we looked at who was running for city council, who was running for school board around the province.

And I thought it was a great opportunity to ensure that our voters were being proactive and had the information in front of them, and who they were looking for.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker, just my question is this: You have—the member has said that it's—there are certainly examples of people who have been convicted who have then used that experience to, in political life, to reform—make reform to laws and procedures and have used that in a beneficial way.

Would there be an ability of individuals at the same time as this is listed to provide an explanation and what the individuals learned from the experience and what they're now doing to—as a result of that experience?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, thank you to the member for River Heights for the question. So again, the bill itself puts it out there so that those that are interested in

running must simply register or disclose, be transparent about their criminal past.

That history will be placed on a website through Elections Manitoba so that folks are aware of that. The bill is not intended for someone to write a 14-page document on what crime they committed and how they've been rehabilitated and things like that.

It would be great if they would stand up in a debate or something prior to the election and maybe talk about that because it would then be disclosed that everybody knows they have the criminal conviction, and that would give them the opportunity then to disclose even more details. But the—

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

Ms. Naylor: Why does Bill 230 not go further and require candidates to disclose breaches of Manitoba election law, conflict of interest law breaches or even misconduct breaches? If you were a lawyer, an accountant or a doctor and you've been charged with misconduct within your profession, why not include that?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, thank you to the member from Wolseley. You make some really good points there. And I think that's the beauty of the process we use here in the House when we can debate this at second reading, send it to committee, and maybe even some friendly amendments and we can certainly look at some opportunities.

I really believe—this is a non-partisan bill. I really believe we can work together to ensure that we have that integrity, that transparency throughout all of Manitoba. And I would certainly enjoy the opportunity to discuss it further with you.

Ms. Naylor: Through the Speaker, I'd like to ask the member: If this bill is a real concern for this government, why was it brought forward as a private member's bill instead of as a government bill?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, we as upper benchers have an opportunity to put our information on the floor. And to me, being involved in politics since 2010, and working in the security or law enforcement industry for 21 years prior to that, this is something that I felt was important.

As you're aware, government bills come on to the floor on a regular basis. That costs the government money. This is not a money bill; therefore, it's very fitting for an upper bencher or a backbencher,

however you want to call it, to bring this type of bill forward.

* (10:20)

Mr. Wishart: So what would the impact be on the current school trustees and municipal–elected municipal officials of this bill?

Mr. Isleifson: Thank you to the member from Portage for that question. So, again, this bill, if it's passed today and then through second reading—or through third reading and so on, would not affect the current members on city councils or school boards.

It would not come into effect, basically, until 2026 in the next round of regular elections, unless there's a by-election. If there's a by-election after this bill has passed, it would affect them, but it would not affect anybody right now until the next general election.

Ms. Naylor: I'm sure the member is aware that, across the country, and certainly in Manitoba during the last round of municipal and school board elections, we saw something we haven't really seen before, but a number of folks who have been very active in kind of hate groups and white supremacy organizations—even a leader of a white supremacy organization—running for some of these positions.

And so, does the member have any thoughts about how that type of—you know, could that type of disclosure—you know, what are your affiliations? What are the groups that you run with and work with? Should that be included?

Mr. Isleifson: That's a—kind of an interesting question. It's kind of like putting the cart before the horse. But, at the same time, I know I had this conversation with a member opposite out in the hallway this morning when they basically asked the same question.

And I would certainly like to know when I'm voting, you know, what that person—you know, what their background is. And, again, can you force that through a bill? This is—this has to do with criminal convictions. Being affiliated, where I certainly would not support them and I know members opposite would not support someone affiliated like that, would be a—

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

Mr. Wishart: I wonder if the member could explain to the House what cost might be associated with these checks?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, thank you to the member from Portage. So I know that there is a cost to both the criminal records check search, to get it done. I believe it varies depending on where you go to get it done. I think the average cost is probably around \$60.

But the cost to get this done is extremely small, relative to the responsibility that someone's going to have should they be elected. They need to be responsible to their voters. They need to be transparent to the electorate. And that's a very small fee to pay to ensure that the public is well informed, prior to an election.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Seeing no further questions, floor is now open for debate.

Ms. Lisa Naylor (Wolseley): So, as we know, this bill amends The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Act. Currently, offences for which a person received a record suspension under the criminals act Canada must be disclosed.

Youth offences and those offences for which a pardon was granted under the Criminal Code of Canada are excluded.

The bill requires candidates to disclose offences to which they have pleaded guilty or in respect of which they have been found guilty. So, as I indicated in the questions, I can certainly appreciate why there may be some benefit for this type of openness and transparency. I do think, perhaps, the bill doesn't go far enough, as I talked about some of the breaches under The Elections Act, but I'll go into that in a little bit.

And I'm going to say that, obviously, I've only been the critic on Municipal Relations for a short time but in that last four or five weeks, I have spoken with dozens of mayors, many councillors across the province, reeves, and certainly had served on the Winnipeg School Division board for five years, had the opportunity to serve for about a year on the Manitoba School Boards Association prior to being elected into these chambers. And obviously, then was connecting with school board trustees across the province.

And so, yes, these issues are close to my heart. I know how hard folks work at these levels of government, often for little pay, often simply out of a passion and caring for their community, where they live or where their kids go to school. So I think, you know, it's always in our best interest to look at ways to make

sure that the best interests are being served when people put their name forward.

But I also think that it's ironic that the PC government should put forward this bill when the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) herself has continually failed to follow conflict of interest laws, election laws and financial rules. Bill 230 conveniently doesn't require candidates to disclose conflict of interest breaches or election law breaches.

I appreciate the member was open to the idea of a friendly amendment when it comes to looking at this because I think that that is something that Manitobans are just as concerned about, especially if it's something that's happened in the recent past and—current period of someone serving versus, you know, something they did 20 or 30 years ago and how, you know, rehabilitated their life in the meantime.

It seems like there's one set of rules for all other Manitobans, but another for the Premier. And we know the Premier thinks she's above the rules. She broke Elections Manitoba laws, conflict of interest laws and financial rules on several different occasions. The Premier broke Manitoba's conflict of interest law multiple times. She failed to disclose \$31 million in real estate sales, calling it an oversight.

Just last week, a judge ruled that the Premier violated conflict of interest rules for failing to disclose \$31 million in property sales, saying inattention to the details of legislation is not something MLAs should strive for. The Premier also helped award \$23 million to a company her family has a financial interest in. Another clear violation of conflict of interest law.

The Premier has demonstrated repeatedly that she believes she's above the rules. In her run for leader of the PC Party she received a formal caution from Manitoba's commissioner of elections for spending \$1,800 on her campaign before the official competition started, which was against the law.

Perhaps the Premier learned to break the rules from her predecessor and mentor, Brian Pallister. We know the Premier looks up to Brian Pallister. She thinks he did a good job. She said that Brian did a number of great things for our province, and I think we can continue on with those great things. But Brian Pallister also broke the conflict of interest laws when he failed to disclose his Costa Rica properties until he got caught.

So overall, this bill shouldn't come as a surprise to Manitobans. We think that, you know, while there is some benefits to this law, it does also make it

harder for some folks to participate in the democratic process, and we know, you know, while some people may have room to hear, you know, someone committed a crime when they were 18 or 19 years old, they've since gone on to, you know, be rehabilitated in some way.

They have perhaps they're a really important leader in their community, whether that is, their, you know, their local community where they live, whether that's been in their school system, whether that's been in their community of their culture, their racial community and they're seen as a leader.

Perhaps they're, you know, really well respected and loved and that person now has to put their name down, showing that 30 years ago, they made a terrible mistake and have to face the idea of that kind of humiliation and shame in doing so.

So I have mixed feelings about that. I mean, as I've already indicated, I think that there is some value to transparency, but there is also, it's also really important that we make our democratic systems as democratic as possible so that there is space for all kinds of people in our communities to participate.

* (10:30)

This government, unfortunately, has changed a number of things to make our democracy less democratic. In 2016, the premier eliminated a per-vote subsidy that was paid to parties, and the Premier when Justice minister, dramatically increased the maximum political donations from \$3,000 to \$5,000. That just makes it easier for rich people to participate in the democratic process and harder for parties that represent people that aren't rich to participate.

This attack on democracy began on the first day they came into power. Public financing limits the unfair influence of big money in politics and is a pillar of our democracy. By eliminating the annual allowance, the PC government threatens the sustainability of Manitoba's political system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have such a long list of things that this government has done to kind of challenge democracy, but I want to share a few things that the NDP has done to support democracy, so I'm going to have to jump ahead in my notes.

The NDP supports an electoral landscape that features candidates of diverse backgrounds and socio-economic statuses, which is why our government took several steps when we were last in power to facilitate giving voters more power by banning corporate and

union donations which increase the accountability demands on political parties.

We also limited individual contributions; however, as I mentioned this Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) chose to raise the contribution limit. The NDP government introduced an independent commissioner to enforce The Election Financing Act in order to ensure that each party's compliance with the act and increase transparency.

We expanded representation on the electoral boundaries commission to include rural and northern Manitobans by adding the heads of Brandon University and University College of the North on the commission.

Our NDP government also expanded Elections Manitoba's role to include promotion of participation. It was our government who decided to set a fixed date for elections: the first Tuesday in October, every four years.

Adhering to set election dates allows for better planning around the enumeration process and allows for a stronger voters list. It encourages democracy and democratic participation in the voting process.

We know that in 2019, Brian Pallister chose to just violate that fixed date because he didn't care about democracy, but we do and we will continue to stand by that.

Finally, we took action to increase voter participation. We introduced amendments to allow polls to open an hour earlier at 7 a.m. on election day to allow voters more time to vote on the way to work. We added additional days for advanced voting. And we approved access to advanced polls in rural and northern areas so that residents in a community will not travel more than 30 kilometres to an advanced poll.

The election financing laws need to ensure that candidates from different walks of life are also able to access the resources needed to run campaigns so the diversity of Manitobans can be properly represented.

It's important we do everything we can to maintain the integrity of our elections and ensure that groups and individuals are equally able to run in campaigns.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those words I just—I would encourage the member who brought this bill forward to think about ways we can more broadly increase our democracy, increase participation and not

hold back good people from being able to participate in the process.

Thank you.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): I look forward to speaking to this bill that's brought forward by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson). It's a particularly important bill. I mean, we just had municipal and school board elections.

I think we can all think about our home communities and what occurred in some of them in terms of whether there was disclosure, whether there was an awful lot of detail in some people's background and we have started to see more participation, especially at the school board level.

For many years, there was actually very little going on in terms of school boards elections. Sometimes there would be unchallenged, in fact in many cases of almost—particularly in rural areas, it was almost no challengers.

And it is good to see interest in this again because it is a level of government that is important, not only in what they provide in terms of services, but also in terms of dollars and cents, and the impact on ratepayers and taxpayers both.

But I would like to take a moment and thank these people who put their names forward. It's challenging to do these jobs and be part of the local government, so to speak. And I think we all know that when it comes to levels of government, those that is closest to the people are the ones that hear most often from the people.

So, a municipal, in particular, do hear on a regular basis, and I know I touch bases regularly with all the councillors, both urban and rural, in my constituency; and frequently with the school board members, as well, to make sure that the issues are being addressed that they bring forward, or that they—that we have issues that they have to deal with.

And it's certainly good to know that these people have a history and experience, but sometimes that experience includes a few things that are questionable, whether it's driving records, or whether it's something related to child safety. Those are all very important issues for the electorate to know about, and I think it's particularly important that that be a matter of transparency.

Transparency is one of the fundamentals of democracy, so I think it's important that we bring these forward. I know in the most recent election, we did

have a city councillor running that did have a history going back some years, and he was—he made no secret of it. And though he did not—was not successful in the end, he was certainly in the running, and was very upfront about the situation. And it was a financial disagreement with the federal government, and I think that's something that many people have had experience with over the years, whether it ended up in charges or not.

And, we've—you know, he's certainly—was very upfront about it, and I respect him for doing that, and I respect him even more for having put his name forward and running.

But you've got to think about how far you—how deep you go here because, you know, we all have financial interests in one form or the other, whether it's a pension fund that has investments in one particular area, and some pension funds do concentrate in the energy sector, or in green tech or things like that.

And so, certainly you have an interest, if you're a beneficiary of that pension fund, you have an interest in what goes on in that particular sector. So, whether it's a pension fund or a mutual fund, because many mutuals are very specific about where they invest, and you do have input into that, so you can be part of a particular sector if that's what you consider to be a potentially very successful sector, and that'll benefit you in the long run.

But it is certainly important that we move forward on this. I think everyone in the House can agree that there is a need, in particular, when it comes to criminal charges, to make sure that that is out there, and I think we can honestly look to the Conflict of Interest Commissioner for advice as to where we set the line in terms of other types of impact.

I think, as legislators, we know that we all have, you know, some indirect connection to legislation that we pass. I recall many years ago when I sat on the crop insurance board, and of course I was a farmer at the time, and so any time we made changes, I benefitted or didn't benefit, depending on what the particular changes were.

And it was made very clear to us, in terms of conflict of interest, if we didn't benefit more than the average, in that case, farmer would, then we really weren't in a direct conflict of interest.

So, we had to think that through and be very much aware of what we were doing when it came to conflict of interest, but we're also there to make sure that the

right regulations, in that case, got put into place, or in this case, the right legislation gets put into place.

So, it's very important that we continue to do this movement forward. So I'm pleased to support this. I hope that everyone in the House takes time to speak to this and supports it.

I think that it's a step in the right direction, and I think that we can certainly look at the opportunities and draw on the expertise of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner as to—yes—as to what we move forward to further in the future, and I encourage the members of the opposition to support this private member's bill.

So, thank you very much, Mr. Assistant Deputy Speaker.

* (10:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just a few comments on this bill. I think that it is reasonable that people are aware of these matters, that there can be some notification where there have been individuals pleading guilty or found guilty of matters under the Criminal Code.

The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Income Tax Act. I would make several comments. First of all, I have long been of the view that we tend to take and put up for all to see the negative things that have happened, but we don't always put up some of the positive things that people have achieved and accomplished.

Now, in a sense that, in an election, candidates do have a chance to have a website, to provide an explanation, to tell voters what they learned from the experience, what they are doing to help others who may be affected by, you know, or may be involved in similar circumstances to prevent crimes.

I know that there have been a number of individuals in the past who have been convicted of offences and have learned from those offences, and have then, when they were elected to serve in, for example, the House of Commons, made a real effort to make substantive improvements in the area of preventing crime and improving the justice system.

So there are things that people can learn, and that those learnings can be important in improving how we deal with situations. People who have lived experience in terms of dealing with addictions, for example, have proved to be very helpful in helping others also deal with addictions and substance use issues.

And so the lived experience of people who have had problems can actually be turned to major advantages at times. Certainly, this is one of the reasons why some organizations which deal with people with addictions are very successful, because they involve people with lived experience in trying to help others.

So, I think it is important that voters are aware of these matters. I think it's also important that individuals have an opportunity to talk about what they have learned and what they are doing and plan to do in this respect.

Now, that being said, I think that there are some examples of circumstances where we clearly have to proceed with some care. There were large numbers of people who were convicted of possessing marijuana, and that is now history in the sense that marijuana is legalized.

But my understanding is that the—those convictions have turned out to be a little more difficult than some had hoped, in terms of being able to erase those convictions, get pardons or whatever. And so, I think it is important, you know, in this respect, that we are aware of these sorts of issues.

I know that there have been a fair number of people who were convicted of possessing marijuana who had their careers significantly affected as a result, and their ability to travel at times. So there are implications that we need to be aware of.

I'm also a little bit concerned about pardons because I suspect that pardons are easier to achieve from—for people who have money, right, and are able to use their money to hire lawyers and to get them through the pardon process.

So I think we have to be careful about putting in place measures which will discriminate, and probably the answer here would be to make sure that, you know, there's equity in terms of people being able to get pardons so it's not causing a major discrimination based on who has money and who doesn't.

I think the—those comments being said, that there is some good substantive basis for including this information. We now do it for MLAs. I think the process, as the MLA for Wolseley has said, could consider an amendment, and I hope the member for Wolseley (Ms. Naylor) will bring that amendment forward when the time comes, and we can debate it and discuss it and have a look at it.

So this is an important subject to be discussing and debating and to look at the positives and the negatives and to make sure that we are not causing problems which we have not anticipated.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): The question before the House is second reading of Bill 230, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment Act.

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

* * *

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Acting Government House Leader): I'll canvass the House to see if we can—or we can ask to see if we can recognize the clock as being 11 o'clock.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Dennis Smook): Is it the will of the House to call it 11 o'clock? *[Agreed]*

So we will end this at 11:48, just to give everybody a heads-up so that when they're speaking, they know what time it is. So it'll be 11:48.

The hour being 11 a.m., we will move to private members' resolutions.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 4—Calling on the Federal Government to Reform Bail

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I move, seconded by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Lagimodiere), that,

WHEREAS the Courts in Canada adhere to the Criminal Code of Canada which is the legislation that is responsible for how Judicial Interim Release, often called bail, is determined; and

WHEREAS the Criminal Code of Canada is within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Federal Government; and

WHEREAS the administration of these laws that are made unilaterally in Ottawa are forced upon provincial justice systems to enforce; and

WHEREAS the coalition of the federal NDP and governing Liberals in Ottawa have made it easier for violent offenders to be released into the public; and

WHEREAS there are concrete examples of repeat violent offenders committing heinous crimes against innocent citizens and police officers after these offenders are released on bail; and

WHEREAS just recently the NDP-Liberal Coalition in Ottawa voted against implementing bail reform refusing to take action on the rising crime rates that are being seen across this country; and

WHEREAS instead the NDP-Liberal coalition in Ottawa is more preoccupied with criminalizing law-abiding farmers and hunters with Bill C-21 rather than addressing the real problem of violent crimes committed by repeat offenders; and

WHEREAS the Federal Government should prioritize the needs of those on the ground such as court staff, crown counsel, and victims who are handcuffed by these federal rules and engage in real dialogue with the provinces that administer those rules; and

WHEREAS Manitobans and Canadians are concerned about increasing violent crime and this Provincial Government has been a leader in Canada on calling for a reverse onus when bail applications are made on serious offenses.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to unite in calling on the federal government of Canada to listen to their provincial partners and make substantive bail reform that protects the public from violent repeat offenders.

Motion presented.

* (10:50)

Mr. Schuler: I will take not much time to put a few words on the record. I think we all recognize that we have a serious crime issue across this country. We have seen through various media outlets what has been happening. And a lot of that seems to be traced back to our federal government that is in control of much of the Criminal Code.

I'd like to just point out to the Manitoba Legislature that violent crime has increased 32 per cent in the last eight years since Justin Trudeau has taken office. And a lot of that is traced back to bail reform. And I know that there are individuals in this Legislature who are a little confused about whose jurisdiction that is, but the bail reform is actually something that has—decided,

constitutionally, by the federal government. They decided that it was better to not have bail and release violent criminals out on the streets as they wait for their court case.

Mr. Brad Michaleski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

We have seen individuals commit heinous crimes while out when they shouldn't have been out. They should not have been allowed out onto our streets until they face the penalty of their crime. And for those of you who may not know, maybe they haven't been following the media, our Justice Minister, Attorney General (Mr. Goertzen) was in Ottawa. He was there with his fellow provincial counterparts and his federal counterpart. And there is an agreement from the federal government that they will do bail reform.

What this bill in front of this Legislature does today is it encourage the federal government to move on that, to act. It's not good enough for platitudes. It's not good enough to speak about the need for—what is necessary is that we need action. It was the federal Liberal government that removed a lot of the need for bail, and now we have to put much more string—stringent bail standards on violent criminals.

So this is by and large encouraging of the Parliament, our Government of Canada, the Justin Trudeau government that they would proceed with bail reform and do so quickly. The numbers are shocking. And I would point out to members, I remember a time when Justice minister Dave Chomiak and then there was Justice minister Gord Mackintosh would go with the support of the Legislature, and they would go to Ottawa and ask for more stringent criminal reform. And I would suggest to the opposition that if Dave Chomiak or Gord Mackintosh would be here, they would agree with this, that it is time for bail reform.

In fact, these are some of the things that they spoke to. And Dave Chomiak was a law-and-order Justice minister. And he took a grim view on crime and criminals. So, I would suggest to members opposite, this is a piece of legislation that should be passed. It would be sending a strong message to the federal House, to the House of Commons that they move on legislation and get this done.

And frankly, I think Manitobans are sick and tired of individuals on our streets that are committing heinous and violent crimes, again, not just in Manitoba, but across this country. This needs to be done and Parliament should act on it and get going on it, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Before we get started in questions, I would like to acknowledge there's a group that's up in the gallery that will be leaving shortly.

I want to see—say that this group from Linden Christian School, 36 grade 4 students under the direction of Kathleen Hofer. This group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Khan). We—great to see you here and welcome.

Questions

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Okay, so we'll get back to business.

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Just wanted to know if the member for Springfield-Ritchot raised concerns at the caucus table when it was revealed that his government, in this year's budget, is cutting funding for legal aid by \$650,000, as found on page 104 of the Estimates of Expenditure.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): I'd point out to the member for Concordia that he should stay on topic. Violent crime has increased 32 per cent in the last eight years since we've had our federal government, and a lot of that has to do with bail reform.

I would suggest to him that this is something we should be sending to the House of Commons as a united front and indicating to them it's time for bail reform.

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): The honourable member for Concordia. I'm sorry, the honourable member for Midland.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): So as—glad this member from Springfield-Ritchot brought forward this issue, and I'd just ask, why is bail reform so necessary when we're dealing with violent offenders, and why does the federal government need to amend Bill C-75?

Mr. Schuler: I'd like to thank the member for that question, because we have seen some of the most horrific offences in Manitoba are committed by

offenders who are out on bail. And this is something that the federal Liberal government changed; they reduced and in some cases, basically eliminated the need for bail. And high-risk-to-repeat offenders are out on our streets, committing again and again in horrific ways, and it is time to put bail reform back on the agenda for all Canadians.

Mr. Wiebe: Did the member, when he was a minister at the Cabinet table, did he support the Premier (Mrs. Stefanson) when she cut the integrated Warrant Task Force program in 2017? Did he raise his voice at that time, and did he express his concerns about the impact that would have with folks who are on bail?

Mr. Schuler: Our government did more than that; we raised concerns with the federal government about the bail reform that was putting individuals who were at high risk to re-offend, and we've seen heinous crimes that were committed not just in Manitoba, but across this country to the point that even the federal Liberals are now in agreement with this resolution. What this resolution does is encourages them to do it and do it now.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this legislation. I do think it's important legislation that we are debating, but it does come across as a little 'blamey'. It really puts onus on different levels of government and I'm wondering if the member could share with the House today what role he feels the provincial government has to play with bail reform.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and the member will know there are constitutional jurisdictions that are laid out, and bail reform is a federal jurisdiction. And I believe our government, our province and all the provinces across this country met with the federal government. And they have an agreement with the federal government that something needs to be done.

What this resolution does is encourages the federal government and the House of Commons—it's not just the federal government, but the House of Commons—pass bail reform and do it now. We believe that this is on the agenda of most Canadians that this be done.

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): To my colleague, the MLA for Springfield-Ritchot, a key component in the justice system, obviously is confidence of the public in the justice system. Can the member share with us his perspective on how changing and reforming bail will improve the confidence of Canadians in our justice system?

Mr. Schuler: Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the confidence in the justice system has been declining. If you were looking at polls, and polls are just a snapshot, but we've seen a trend that Canadians, and Manitobans in particular, are losing confidence in the justice system when they see offenders that have committed heinous crimes are then seemingly released almost automatically until they face some kind of punishment for their actions and are left to commit again and again, and that is what erodes confidence in the justice system.

* (11:00)

Mr. Wiebe: Does the member think that members of the public would lose confidence in a government who cut court services, who cut funding to community safety division by millions of dollars in 2021, cut municipal funding, impacting local police, and cut rehabilitation programs almost as one of the first acts of this new government while the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) was at the Cabinet table? Does he think that those would erode members of the public's confidence in the justice system?

Mr. Schuler: Under the leadership of our Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), we see in this budget an historic amount of money going into justice initiatives. We have seen amazing justice reform that was necessary. And what is interesting is the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) is voting against that historic investment in justice.

He and all of his colleagues are voting against this historic investment of monies in this year's budget going into justice initiatives.

Mr. Pedersen: Assistant Deputy Speaker, our Minister of Justice has been very active working with other provinces and with the federal government. I'd like the member for Springfield-Ritchot just to emphasize how our Minister of Justice has led this initiative for bail reform.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I can't imagine that our Minister of Justice, the member for Steinbach, could do more, other than running for parliament himself. He has been on the spearhead of justice reform issues, he went to Ottawa and he was one of the lead voices to get this through. Yes, the government has agreed to this. However, we would like to see this proceed now and not wait for a long period of time before the federal government gets this done.

If there is unanimity here, perhaps we could have unanimity in Ottawa.

MLA Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): So, the Justice minister and now this member talks a lot about justice and reforming the justice system. We also talk about lack of faith in the justice system. So can the member explain to us how any of this that he's talking about today will help restore faith in the justice system in the North, where justice is continually denied because of this government's refusal to have enough justices, to have enough judges, to have enough flights to get people there.

Mr. Schuler: Well, I would like to point out to the member that the NDP, his party in Ottawa had the chance to vote in favour of improving bail. Every single NDP Member of Parliament voted against the measure. That impacted public safety. That impacted Churchill. It impacted Thompson. It impacted Dauphin. It impacted Winnipeg. It impacted Concordia. It impacted all the way across this province, all of it, and it was the shameful behaviour of the NDP in Ottawa who could have seen that bail reform would have taken place.

MLA Lindsey: The member talked a lot about what the federal government could have done or should have done or might have done. I want to talk for a minute about what this provincial government has done to justice in this province, particularly in northern Manitoba.

They privatized the government air services, which now prevents judges and court people from getting to communities in the North. People are spending more time in jail than they should be because they are waiting for court dates that just aren't happening because of the shortage of judges and Crown attorneys.

So maybe the minister would like, or the member would like to focus on something that he could actually fix here in this province, and get his government to actually fund justice in the North properly.

Mr. Schuler: We have been focussed on funding justice in Manitoba. We have historic expenditures taking place on programs and on the justice system here in Manitoba. And what's interesting is the member for Flin Flon gets up and shouts and rants and raves his questions, and then he gets up and he votes against the budget that does exactly what he's asking for.

You know, maybe he should read the budget that's going to come again in front of this House, and he should look at it and he should vote for it because it does exactly what he's asking for.

Mr. Martin: To my colleague, I'd like him to—if he could explain to this House and help this—members across the way understand perhaps the constitutional differences between the levels of government when it comes to this pertinent issue because I believe members opposite seem to be confused about how the constitution works in terms of the application of what the member is trying to seek this morning.

Mr. Schuler: The supreme document that governs this country is called the constitution. It lays out the division of powers, and bail reform comes in under the federal government. It is the House of Commons that sets that. I would point out to members opposite we need their support to send a message to Ottawa. Ottawa now agrees. Our Minister of Justice (Mr. Goertzen), along with other ministers, went and he got the federal government to agree to do bail reform.

What we need is the reform to be done now because we are taking individuals who have committed heinous crimes, putting them back out on the street and surprise, they're committing the same crimes again. Heinous crimes are being committed by people who should be incarcerated until they face the penalty of their crimes.

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): The time for questions has expired.

Debate

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): And the floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I just want to start by saying I think it's rich that this member would come out and talk about trust—trust in the justice system here in this province. Because we know that nobody trusts this government when it comes to fulfilling any of their obligations, whether it be on health care, education, affordability or, in this case, on justice.

We know that the PCs have made cut after cut after cut in our communities that have ultimately left them less safe. And they let crime continue to increase under their watch. And they cut those services that people rely on to keep their communities safe.

You know, the member wants to talk about the impact that this budget will have. Well, a cut by—of \$650,000 to legal aid that's in this year's budget will have an impact on the justice system, will make people have less trust in this justice system in this province. And yet he stands up and he proudly says, yes, I will vote for that budget, I will vote for a cut to the legal aid system.

Likewise, the member from Flin Flon mentions the real impacts that people in the North are having and seeing in the justice system, the impacts that it's having on their lives, and yet the minister glosses that over and says, well, oh, there's—I heard a heckle from the Justice Minister saying, oh, the flights get cancelled all the time, it's no big deal. Well, it is a big deal to the people in the North. And yet this member stands up and he wants to vote for a budget that supports these cuts.

He knows that the cuts—that when he was around the Cabinet table—to the integrated Warrant Task Force program brought forward by the then-minister for Justice, our current Premier (Mrs. Stefanson), the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) proudly stood up and said, I stand behind that cut. And he continues to stand behind this Premier who doesn't take justice services seriously. He stood behind the cuts and freezes to municipal funding that impacted police forces across our province. He stood by while the Community Safety Division was cut in Manitoba Justice. Every step of the way, this minister has stood by, he's allowed these cuts to happen.

He stood with his Premier who, you know, Manitobans just don't trust on this issue, and yet, now he's coming forward and he says, I need something to distract people from our record. We need something that will distract people from what we have brought to the Manitoba justice system. And so they're scrambling—they're scrambling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And this resolution clearly speaks to that.

We know that the issues surrounding public safety go very deep. And we want to make sure that this government understands clearly from the people that we're hearing from on the doorsteps, in the community, at every step along the way. People understand that there—this is a bigger issue than just the justice system. They know that public safety comes down to our—is poverty out of control in this province? They know that housing issues that have gone—been ignored or been made worse by this government are impacting safety in our communities. We know that affordability right now with rising interest rates and a stagnant minimum wage, that this government did nothing about, allowing people's hydro bills, mandating at the Cabinet table that their hydro bills should go up by a set amount every year, impacts what people can afford.

* (11:10)

These are all issues that this government continues to ignore. They continue to take an ideological stance when it comes to the addictions crisis, the housing crisis and poverty in this province. And they're not looking for solutions, you know?

And the problem goes even deeper than that, you know. We spent some time yesterday sitting down with a local school board who said, you know, you want to tackle the issues of crime and safety in the community, it starts right at the very beginning.

It starts in the classroom. It starts at kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, grade 3 through grade 12. They know—they understand that our communities are less safe when people don't get a good education and yet, this government has taken it upon themselves to cut and freeze education throughout their entire term.

So, now they want somebody to blame. Now they want to say there's a—there's one magic bullet that would solve all the issues that have grown under their term. The minister—the member for Springfield-Ritchot (Mr. Schuler) even himself said, it's been seven years that crime and safety have gotten worse in our communities. Seven years, he said—well, maybe he said eight. But seven years, I think we can clearly say, has been completely under their watch.

And yet, they have no answer for why it's getting worse. Manitobans know why it's getting worse. Cuts have consequences, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And they want to shift blame to anyone else but we know that ultimately this lies directly with them and their—either inaction or their actual harm that they're causing.

Another issue I mentioned in—and again, you know, the questions are only 45 seconds; we could've gone on. There's a whole list of cuts that they've taken—but rehabilitation programs in our prisons, giving people the opportunity to come out with some skills or some experience, some work experience, a path forward, a way that they can right their own personal lives when they come out. That is a good example of how you can have a real impact. You can have an impact on people's lives who are facing these challenges.

We know that people who are, you know, looking for legal aid, a cut of \$650,000 in this year's budget—you know, and I hope the—you know, he's not a minister anymore so maybe he didn't have all the information in front of him. You know, sometimes, you know, a member of caucus, a lowly member of caucus may not have all the details of what's in the budget. I see the Speaker's grinning over there. So, you may not know every detail.

But now that he's seen the budget, does he go to his best buddy from Steinbach and say, you know, this is going to really impact the justice system? Does he bring it up to him? Does he actually bring this issue forward and say this is something that's going to impact the justice system and give people less confidence in the justice system and have a real impact on those who are now have to seek bail?

Does he actually listen to members from the North? Because of course, he doesn't go north. But we have members in our caucus every day who say, what about the North? What about the North? And they say this is having a real impact on those people who are looking for justice and seeking justice in the North.

We heard the other day from lawyers who see, every single day, the impact of having to travel—you know, it's long distances in the North, Mr. Deputy Speaker—travelling to a court date and not having a judge or not having a prosecutor or a defending lawyer. There is—has impacts. You know, they have to drive back and now they have to come back another day. This has impacts on our justice system, makes our communities less safe.

So, you know, it's rich that the member wants to now talk about trust. I want to talk about trust, too, because the people of Manitoba, well, they see through this. And they see through what this government has done.

They see clearly that these cuts have consequences. They see the differences in their communities. And ultimately, it will come down to a question of trust at the ballot box. And do they trust a government who has cut, year after year and, in fact, in this very budget has cut the justice system once again? Do they trust a government that has cut every single year and that now says, just trust us?

Or will they trust a government—an opposition that comes forward with good ideas about how to make our communities more safe, comes forward with ways to strengthen our justice system in a real, fundamental way and ultimately tackles the root causes of crime to make our communities safe for the long term.

I'm excited to get to the ballot box and test who do Manitobans trust.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to start by thanking my friend from—for Springfield-Ritchot who has been a—well, I—he is actually one of my good friends, and somebody who I've learned a lot from. I have no

problem saying that. And he brings these issues forward because he has a lot of passion and because he represents his community and the province well, because he knows what the issues are, and he knows how to describe them and he knows how to advocate for them. So I thank him for bringing forward this issue this morning.

I also want to, while I have the opportunity, again officially acknowledge the loss of two officers in Edmonton earlier this week. Constable Brett Ryan and Constable Travis Jordan, who lost their lives protecting others in the city of Edmonton. And far too often, we hear about officers who lose their lives in the line of duty or are put into harm's way.

Particularly this year, we have heard more of that. It was actually in October of last year, we were meeting with ministers of Justice in Halifax, together with the federal Public Safety Minister, Mendicino, and the federal Minister of Justice, Mr. Lametti, and at that time we heard of an officer-involved shooting, killing of an officer in Ontario on that very day that we were meeting.

But before that, we had already been talking about bill reform here in Manitoba, and the challenges with bear spray is one example, and edged weapons. And the call for having a tougher bail system so that individuals who are repeat offenders, who have proven through convictions before to be dangerous to the community, if they were accused and charged with another similar or violent offence, that it would be more difficult. Not that they could apply for bail, not that they couldn't get bail, but to reverse the onus and say, you have to demonstrate why it is that you will not be a danger to the community.

Manitoba, and actually British Columbia at that time last summer, were a couple of the leading advocates for bail reform. We weren't hearing it much from other provinces at the time, but then when we got to the meetings in October and we raised this issue, British Columbia and Manitoba, it was unanimous around the table. Every province indicated, regardless of political stripe, that they were concerned about this issue.

I think that the federal minister and the Public Safety Minister were maybe surprised by how unanimous that call was because for my friend from Springfield, who has been to many federal and provincial territorial meetings, he will know that you rarely get unanimity around that table. There are different interests around the province for a lot of different reasons.

But on this particular issue, every province agreed that there needed to be a reform, partially because of the changes that were made in 2019 by the federal Liberal government to bail. Yes, they codified some things that were already expressed by the Supreme Court, but there's a concern that there were unintended consequences, and it's gone further than that. And we've seen more and more individuals who were released on bail.

Of course, Manitoba took action. Manitoba brought in this integrated, high-risk warrants unit, doing far more than what was done under the former unit that existed. We brought in more integration when it comes to supervising on bail, and to be more strict on the supervising of bail.

But as my friend has already indicated, from Springfield, that this is a Criminal Code issue. The Criminal Code itself, which defines bail and the provisions around bail, is a federal piece of legislation. That is why or how the federal Liberal government in 2019 were able to make changes, because it's within their purview. But then in those meetings in October, every province expressed a desire to see it change, so the federal government at that time said, well, we're going to call another meeting to specifically look at the issue of bail reform.

Not long after that, provincial premiers across the country, all premiers and territories, re-emphasized that call and asked for that meeting to happen, to look at bail reform when it comes to issues of weapons in particular. They raised that concern. We reiterated that concern about the need to have a meeting with the Attorney General for Saskatchewan, and then the meeting was finally called. The meeting was held earlier this month, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Now before that, though, before the meeting was actually held, we did hear from different political parties across Canada. We heard from opposition parties. And what was interesting was that uniformly, opposition parties, governing parties, they all said the same thing: there needs to be changes. It's gone too far. We're hearing about too many crimes where an individual is charged with a crime, and they'd already out on bail for a similar violent offence. Victims were coming forward and saying, how could this happen? How could it be that an individual who was already on-accused of a violent crime could be released and commit another violent crime, and now my son, my daughter, my mother, my wife, my husband is now a victim because of that.

* (11:20)

We've heard that across Manitoba; we've heard that across the country. And it's why governing parties united and said there needed to be change. It's why opposition parties united and said there needed to be change. It's actually why the federal Liberal government said there needed to be change.

But there was one entity in Canada who said there didn't need to be any change. In fact, one entity said that the bail laws were already too far, they're too strict. And that was the current provincial NDP. It's voiced by the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw), who went on Twitter as he often does, and goes right from his mind right on to Twitter.

And I actually appreciate that in some ways, because the member for Fort Garry has the strength to say in public and out loud what the NDP only normally say in private. He speaks and says what the NDP actually believe but are scared to say in the public, because they know it wouldn't be well received.

So, the member for Fort Garry went on to Twitter and said, we don't need bail reform. The bail reform—the bail laws are already too strict, they already go too far. He advocated, he advocated for having bail reform that would actually let more violent criminals back on the street.

Now, as I understand it, and you hear these sort of things from people, he immediately got a call from his coms people and was told to delete the tweet. I think the call went something like, you know, we understand what you're saying, Mark, we actually agree with you, but this isn't going to be accepted by the public, and you need to delete that tweet.

So, within a few minutes, he deleted the tweet and tried to pretend that it never happened. And so, his—

An Honourable Member: Who did that?

Mr. Goertzen: That was the member for Fort Garry who was told to delete the tweet by his coms officials. But, just because he deleted the tweet and was told to delete the tweet, doesn't mean, of course, that he doesn't believe it.

He's never stood up and said that he doesn't—that he repudiates what it was that he was told to take down. Which means, of course, that he believes it. In fact, there isn't a party of his member—a member of his party, and I asked the member, the current Justice critic, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) whether he would repudiate the comments for the member for Fort Garry, and he didn't.

And that's because the member for Fort Garry spoke publicly what the NDP believe privately. And so, we need to ensure, we—so we talk about trust, well let's talk a bit about trust. When an individual member puts something out on Twitter and then his coms people tells him to take it down, and yet the party still stands by those comments. And a lack of trust there.

But we'll remind Manitobans that every political entity in Canada supported bail reform except for the provincial NDP. And thankfully, tweets aren't written in disappearing ink; you know, we were able to take a picture and we still had it and we can continue to show Manitobans.

But the good news is that last week, in Ottawa, there was unanimity and the federal government came forward and said there needed to be change to bail. They did say that when it comes to repeat violent offenders, bail is not operating as it should. There should be a reverse onus; you should have to demonstrate when you're a repeat violent offender, why it is that you're safe to be released back into the community if you've been convicted of a crime—a violent crime before.

So we made progress. It's one of those times when all provinces came together, a federal government who was before reluctant, listened, said they're going to make changes, said they're going to make it as early as this legislative session in Ottawa. So we look forward to seeing those changes happen.

And it's because provinces united. It's because of the people like the member for Springfield, who took on this issue and said, we need to be loud about this. It's about the safety of Manitobans. We need to ensure that Ottawa understands our concerns. It's because the premiers came together, united and made that call and said, we need to make sure that everybody hears these concerns, that it happened.

It wouldn't have happened if people like the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw) or the NDP caucus had their way, because their belief was that more violent criminals should be left out on the street, when every other political entity said, no, it's exactly the opposite.

That's the issue of trust; that's the issue of trust that should go to the ballot box. There's no reason why any Manitoban should trust the member for Fort Garry or anybody else who sits near him in that caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Just order, I just want to remind the minister that—and other members of the House, that you have to refer to

members of the House by their constituency or their ministry.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to rise this morning and speak to the resolution.

You know, violent crime has risen over the last two decades here in Manitoba and there needs to be a much, much larger focus on restoration and conditional sentencing. Yesterday, in question period, I had the opportunity to ask a question after I had worked on it with members of Morberg House and the question was about Ethan Wildcat, a 21-year-old who participated in a therapeutic recovery model over the course of two years.

Now, Ethan was drug-free, he was pursuing education, he had full-time employment and through this full-time employment, he was actually paying for his own recovery. He completely turned his life around. And even though he was a first-time offender and he has a three-year-old son, he was sentenced to three years at Stony Mountain. Now he's there and he's terrified for his life, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is a perfect example of how we could be doing way better here in Manitoba that—to provide these opportunities of restoration and just conditional sentencing, a conversation that we do not have enough here in these Chambers, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to thank Morberg House for the work that they're doing, as well as the native clan association. They work with many people who are provincial offenders here in the province, but I can't help but think about the resources, such as John Howard Society and the Elizabeth Fry association and how their funds have continued to be cut under this PC government.

These were facilities and resources here in Manitoba that many would then go into when they were released from prison; it was like a halfway house. And these facilities helped get—allowed people to get one foot in front of the other. It gave them shelter, it gave them food, it gave them employment opportunities. And we took that away from them here in Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think about the Build program, building urban industries for local development. It's closing down because of the lack of funding. And over a thousand people have used this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I think about youth justice committees. And this was actually under the NDP government. That's why

it's not just this PC—although they have not helped at all, but the NDP, when they were in government, they actually cut youth justice committees. Youth justice committees were a phenomenal resource here in the province of Manitoba. It allowed for youth, who have made perhaps poor decisions but were regretful of their decisions, to give back to the community rather than be sentenced to time or have to go to the Winnipeg Remand Centre. It was a restorative approach that was cut under the NDP.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no wonder why recidivism rates are so bad here in the province. Ultimately, we do, we believe that reform needs to happen, but I think that the province needs to accept some of the responsibility for the crime that happens here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Blaine Pedersen (Midland): First of all, I'd—I just want to thank our Minister of Justice, the member for Steinbach (Mr. Goertzen) for leading the provinces and getting the federal government to actually come to the table to talk about this important initiative.

And it's about the Criminal Code and the bail reform for violent offenders. This is what needs to happen, and now the federal government, the federal Liberal-NDP coalition, needs to do the right thing now, and I'm encouraged by the comments from the minister that the federal government may perhaps bring forward legislation in this coming session. We need to keep up the pressure on them to make sure that they do, indeed, bring changes to the Criminal Code for—against the violent repeat offenders.

And the provincial NDP party in this province can do a lot to help bring those changes forward by talking to their federal cousins and making sure that when this legislation does come, should it come, that they are in support of it.

People are concerned about—for their safety. There's no doubt about that. And we need to—this is just one; we have many programs and ventures here in this province that this government is doing to address crime, but this is another one that will help in terms of these repeat violent offenders. And it's the illegal guns, it's the bear spray and the knives that are used in these crimes that are just out of control, and we need to address this.

* (11:30)

And the Liberal-NDP coalition needs to address this rather than doing their—targeting legal gun owners

in—across Canada, the farmers, the hunters and Indigenous people who are actually—have legal fire-arms, the federal government seems to be targeting them, trying to make them the scapegoats for crimes, but really it's that illegal import of handguns that's coming in across the border that we need to address.

And also, as I said before, it's the bear spray and the knives that are also being used in violent crimes. And these are repeat offenders. We need to make sure that we address this. This is only one part of an overall challenge that we've got in terms of crime rates, but our government will continue to work both with other provinces and the federal government on these changes. This is a one good step.

The provincial NDP party here in Manitoba needs to support this resolution and get behind all the other provincial governments and help convince the federal government to introduce—not only introduce legislation, but make sure it passes and comes into effect.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Seeing no more—is there any more speakers?

Seeing none, is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

I declare the resolution carried.

* * *

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Government House Leader): Could you canvass the House to see if it is the will of members to call it noon, 12 p.m.?

The Acting Speaker (Brad Michaleski): Is it the will of the House to call it 12 o'clock? Agreed? [*Agreed*]

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

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