

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

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

Vol. LXXIV No. 12A - 10 a.m., Thursday, December 5, 2019

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
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
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 5, 2019

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.

* (10:10)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: I just want to indicate that the Speaker's mic is not working, but the mic at the clerks' table will be picking up my voice, hopefully. So we're going to proceed with the debate this morning, and I would now recognize the honourable Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (Official Opposition House Leader): First, before I call the bill of the day, I would like to ask request—or request leave to extend to our private members' bill time until 11:10, which then, Madam Speaker, I would like to ask leave to push resolutions to 12:10 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave for those timetables?
[Agreed]

Ms. Fontaine: I'd like to call for second reading, Bill 204, this morning.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 204—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Teaching Experience of Principals)

Madam Speaker: We will now move to Bill 204, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Teaching Experience of Principals).

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I move, and seconded by the member from St. Vital, that Bill 204, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Teaching Experience of Principals), now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wasyliv: It's an honour today to rise and speak on this very important bill. This bill amends The Public Schools Act, and it requires for the first time in Manitoba that a principal must have the experience of having taught in a classroom for least—at least two years. They also must hold a valid teaching certificate issued by the minister under The Education Administration Act.

There is one exception to this bill. We want to recognize that we are a vast and diverse province, including our North and our rural areas, and that there are unique circumstances both in the North and in small rural school districts.

So this rule would not apply in cases of principals with schools with fewer than three teachers. It's my understanding, obviously, that in those type of situations often the principal is one of the teachers of the school, so we think that the policy reasons behind the bill would still be supported. We believe that the public will be protected in those unique situations.

I can tell this House, being a school trustee for the past eight years, I've spent a lot of times in schools and in a lot of different school communities, and you can always tell when a school is thriving and it's—a little hint for the members of this House. When you walk into one of your schools, look at the walls. See what's on the walls. If it's full of life, full of art, full of the students' expression, you know that there is something good going on in that school.

You're also going to want to find out whether or not that school has great programs, clubs, things for the students to do after school; what type of sports programs, arts programs they offer; how are they engaging with the community. Do parents and family members come in and volunteer? Are they welcome?

Well, these things don't happen by accident, Madam Speaker. They happen because of a principal—and this is all done because of a principal. And principals understand that teaching is about all those little things, and it's about connecting students with learning, and it's about connecting the community with that school.

And you'll see—a principal who has an experience as a teacher understands these things. They want to get better. They want to try new things and they want to

learn themselves, and they're trying to improve education culture of that school.

This bill recognizes the critical importance of principals as teachers in an education institution. The public school system is primarily concerned with education and welfare of students. School and system administration must reflect the primacy of teaching and learning. That's the core task of that institution, is to enhance learning. That's the focus.

And principals, yes, they're administrators, they got to make sure that the—you know, snow gets shoveled and the lights are on, but, once they get past that, what they're really concerned about is how well those students are learning, and how well they're going to achieve.

So an administrator does more than just pay the bills and—hire staff. They supervise teachers. They need to understand who makes a good teacher, and why, in order to hire the best candidates. They need to understand what good teaching is in order to guide those that do it, and of course, they may not be accountants or business managers, but there is an element of that job, but it's a secondary responsibility, not a tertiary one.

So a fundamental element of every school's culture is the vision, values and educational philosophy that the principal communicates and promotes to students, staff, parents, stakeholders through a partnership in the local community. So one of the key roles of a principal is to establish a school's culture: its vision, its values, its philosophy.

By establishing in Manitoba that we require principals to be teachers, we entrench that value into law. We need to send that message to Manitobans that we also value that as a Legislature, and that our schools are concerned about students first and foremost.

And, in order to make a better learning environment, you need somebody who knows how children learn. And they have to be able to relate to the challenges that the staff face, that they understand what it's like in a classroom, and they have to shape a vision for academic success. They're creating a climate hospitable to education, and they do that with laser focus.

So principals are mentors, Madam Speaker. One of their main roles is to mentor staff. They want to create that culture of continual professional development and improvement. They monitor and evaluate staff. If you are not a teacher, you're going to

have a hard time being able to do that with any sort of skill.

And how do you evaluate a teacher if you've never taught? How do you mentor a teacher if you've never taught? How do you provide constructive feedback to a professional teacher when you're not one yourself? How would you get a teacher to respect your insights and your vision if they don't know that you understand how and why they do the job the way they do? The whole school is diminished in that situation.

So why do we need this bill now, Madam Speaker? We need this bill now more than ever because it's going to send a signal to this Legislature that we value public education. And, to many Manitobans, right now they're questioning whether this government does, and we need to turn that around.

We need people in—our parents, our students, and our families to believe that their government's on their side and is willing to fight for a public education system. And the fact that we have to have these conversations on a day-to-day basis in Manitoba is concerning.

So it would send a signal that we support teachers and that we support student learning. It would send the signal that we reject that school can be treated like a business. We would be standing as a Legislature to reject the sort of patently ignorant notion that you can run a school like a business. You can't.

We've looked to the States. You can see they've tried that experiment. It's failed miserably. I don't think anybody in Canada would trade our system for theirs, and we need to elevate our schools and not to diminish them.

Schools are democratic institutions. Businesses are not. Schools work through collaboration, not through competition. We do not believe that there should be winners and losers in schools. All students should be winners. Well, it's a very different approach in business. And in schools, equality is cherished over a survival-of-the-fittest mentality.

* (10:20)

So, having spent so much time in education politics, I can make some observations.

It's one of those rare things in politics that everybody has an opinion about, because they went to school, but the schools that 20, 30 years—maybe more for some of the members across the way—have

changed significantly. We have more complicated and diverse schools with more needs.

At one time, if a student didn't fit in our school system, we just pushed them out. We now believe that we have to graduate every child, so we get every child with all the barriers and everything, and schools are more complicated.

Teaching is more complicated now, and you need that level of professionalism in our schools, and you need a school leader who is well-versed in that understanding; has studied it, has lived it and that's their focus. And that's what this bill is about.

Our world gets more complicated and we need to keep up, and having principals who are teachers is one of the tools that we can do that.

So, Madam Speaker, this bill does a number of things. It means that we professionalize the education system and we recognize that principals need the tools to do their job properly, and that one of those tools is having a professional teacher's background to be a principal.

This bill protects students. This bill is going to protect Manitoba families, and what's more, this bill is going to protect public education.

So I look to my friends across the House and ask them to join all of us here and unanimously support this bill and send the message out to our beleaguered education system that, yes, Manitoba politicians support public education and we do so today supporting this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Given our current issue with the Speaker's microphone, I am asking leave of the House to allow the Speaker and Deputy Speaker to preside over this morning's sitting from the clerks' table where the microphone is working.

Is there leave? *[Agreed]*

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will 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 Micklefield (Rossmere): I listened with some interest to the member opposite's remarks this morning and of particular interest to me was his reference to his own experience as a school trustee—I think I heard for eight years. I'm wondering how many years of teaching experience the member had in that role and if he would support a similar measure to ensure that trustees, who have significant influence over education, would have a least two years of teaching experience as qualified teachers themselves.

Mr. Mark Wasyliv (Fort Garry): I think the issue for the member is whether or not this government supports public education and whether or not they believe that the children—schools should have a qualified, certified teacher running those schools.

And I'm going to be very interested to hear my friend's response and to see whether or not he's prepared to stand up for public education today in this House.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Of course, I want to congratulate our colleague on having the opportunity to bring a bill to second reading for the first time in his legislative career, certainly an important accomplishment.

I know that this bill is one that is supported by educators in the province, and I think most parents would agree that they would like an educator to be in charge of their child's learning experience and setting that whole environment for the school that their child is going to learn in. And so this bill makes sense on its face.

I'd ask my colleague, though, to perhaps expound a bit and perhaps explain why it is important to have an educator in charge of a learning environment rather than, say, an accountant or a management-type professional.

Mr. Wasyliv: Thank you. I appreciate the question.

There's a number of things that principals do, and one of the main things is to set the learning environment and the school culture. They're mentors to other teachers. They have to be able to train up other teachers. They have to be able to develop strategies to enhance learning and to improve, make sure that everybody is growing as a professional.

They also have the responsibility of staffing the local school, so they have to be able to know what qualifications—what makes a good teaching—teacher, what their teaching philosophies are, and is it right for the local community. So these are professional

matters, and although somebody might be able to do the books—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this bill. We are going to be supporting the bill, but we do have a couple of questions about it.

We do know that more needs to be set in place for education here in the province, but with respect to this bill specifically, what brought on the idea? Did something trigger it? We're wondering who you consulted with, as well as what is the current protocol and qualifications that principals currently have to go through before becoming a principal?

Mr. Wasyliw: I thank the—my friend for the question.

I think the concern is being raised by the education community that we have a government right now in Manitoba that reduces everything to a business management book and treats public services like they're businesses without understanding that public service and business are two separate things and they're run in very two separate manners.

And, in order to defend a public education system, we have to make sure that the right people are steering the ship, so to speak. And this bill helps protect Manitobans. It helps protect public education.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): I appreciate the member from Fort Garry bringing it forward his first bill, as the Leader of the Opposition had mentioned.

I'm—as he's dodged the last couple—the government side's question and the independent member's question, I'm going to ask him a straightforward, easy question for him to answer.

So how many principals right now—administrators in the province of Manitoba do not have teaching experience?

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, I don't have that figure in front of me. I'm sure we can get it to my friend.

But the point being is that this bill is about enshrining in law a protection. It's about protecting Manitobans—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: —from potentially reckless governments that don't value public education and don't value teaching experience when it comes to administering schools. So this is a bill that will

protect our students and your young families. And we often do things in Manitoba in a, you know, pre-emptive way to prevent problems in the future.

So, I would ask my friend, given all that, would he support this bill?

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'd like to thank the member for bringing in this important bill. Obviously, education has been topical in the news recently with some of the test score results coming out. But we want to know, really, how can we act positively to help the students in Manitoba?

So I want to ask the member speaking towards this bill: Why is it so important that we show a united front, that we all help and care about education, and why should the government really be supporting this bill?

Mr. Wasyliw: This past term of this government has been a very difficult time in education. And I think when you talk to people in the education community, be they school trustees, be they parents, be they teachers, they feel under siege. They feel that the schools that they love, that they're connected to, aren't being valued, and that they're being diminished. And that this government is not interested in them and doesn't want to hear their voice.

* (10:30)

This is an opportunity that we're giving, a gift, a Christmas gift, to our friends across the House, that they can, with their vote today, support public education and send a message to Manitoba families that when it comes to education they're going to support them.

Madam Speaker: The time is expired.

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Yes, with the challenges that we're facing in recruiting teachers in a lot of the remote northern communities, how would this legislation address the situation where a principal would be absent and teachers in that particular school would all have less than two years' experience? Who would take on the role as principal?

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, I appreciate that question because that is something that we took into account, and there is an express exception provision in this act for exactly those situations that you're contemplating. So in schools that are very small, that have very few teachers—two, in fact—this—there would be an exception so they wouldn't be held to the standard. But—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Wasyliw: So we are—we're taking all of Manitoba into account, and we certainly urge this government to follow our lead and maybe, perhaps, with your legislation you can start doing that as well.

Mr. Kinew: I want to thank my colleague for answering the question that he had already previously addressed in his opening statement, and, therefore, just giving ample opportunity for the members in the Chamber to really, really have some time with the information that he's presented.

Perhaps I won't ask him to repeat himself again with my question. We could push the debate a little bit further, but he can choose with his answer to repeat himself again, should he choose to do so.

Again, I want to acknowledge that we have guests here today from the Council of School Leaders and with the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and so we know that principals and vice-principals have been talking about this subject. I know that my learned friend here has had many conversations with educators. I'd just like him to put a few remarks on the record about what he has heard from teachers—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Wasyliw: Well, I—again, I'm happy to.

Teachers are concerned. They are absolutely worried that this government may not be as committed to public education as they would hope, and they are worried that in their rush to save a penny to spend a dollar, they are going to swap out professional teachers who are, you know, principals, and bring in bookkeepers—or whatever they view from whatever management book they've read that week—to, you know, do whatever they're going to do to our schools.

And, of course, we've known from the past three, four years that the government's changes end up costing Manitoba more. We don't actually save any money and we're seeing with—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Micklefield: We're going to finish this question section off where we started, because I asked the member earlier a very simple question and he dodged the question; so here we go, round 2, right back to where we began.

The member stated he has eight years of experience of serving in a school board capacity. I want to know, would this member support measures to require school board trustees to have a minimal—

let's say two years of teaching experience before they would control whole divisions at a time? That's my question. That's the question we're waiting for an answer for; didn't get it last time.

I certainly hope we'll fare better this time, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Wasyliw: In fairness, Madam Speaker, I don't think our questioning got answered, so I'll ask it again and give my friend an opportunity—*[interjection]*—is this government prepared to support teachers, support parents, support students and support this bill?

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

I am going to see if the mic at the Speaker's Chair is now working, and if it is we will resume debate from there.

Testing one, two, three. Is it on?

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): The member just asked if we support teachers. Madam Speaker, 20 new schools—seven of them, shovels already in the ground—sounds like supporting teachers to me. A comprehensive system-wide review—the first of its kind in half a century—sounds like support to me as well, but I was actually asking a question, for the second time, this member fails to answer.

So we're here this morning to discuss Bill 204, a bill that undermines school boards and takes power away from local, democratically elected decision-makers by applying a one-size-fits-all law imposed by legislators on Broadway.

No one would disagree that you need the most competent person in the principal's office. Some may suggest two years isn't even enough, but that is not what is at stake here, Madam Speaker. Probably there are very few situations where this is a live issue but the point is this: these are not decisions best made in this Chamber but by the divisional boards democratically elected to oversee schools in their jurisdiction.

For 17 years, the New Democrats held the reins of government, and for 17 sessions they had every opportunity to use their majority to push through whatever legislation they wanted but they never touched this issue.

And now this: a bill introduced by a new NDP member, a former school board trustee himself, who now wishes to strip the school boards of the power vested to them by the public, who elects them, to hire principals at their discretion.

The honourable member is suggesting that decisions be taken away from school divisions when it comes to determining who they appoint and hire to lead their schools and serve their students, families and communities. Does the member have the endorsement of a single school trustee or a single board, and why was this not mentioned in his opening remarks?

As this sweeping change is proposed in the House today, have boards across this province been informed and discussed this curtailing of their power and discretion? I very much doubt it, as the bill has only been public for a few days.

Does the honourable member have a letter of support from the Manitoba Association of School Trustees in favour of limiting their own hiring authority? I doubt that, too. Does he have a letter from the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents suggesting support for changes be made—to be made to The Education Administration Act limiting discretionary hiring decisions of school divisions and superintendents? I doubt it.

He certainly didn't mention it, if he does. The member knows divisions would have questions. He knows school boards have the final say. He knows they would contest this restriction of their oversight, but he does it anyway.

Is the honourable member signaling that he and the NDP wish to restrict and limit the power and discretion of democratically elected school boards by bringing forth this bill? Does the honourable member and his party have issues with the current structure and process of hiring school principals?

Does he not realize his bill implies that local school boards cannot be trusted to make sound hiring decisions? Is this a veiled signal that the member and his NDP colleagues would happily revoke the powers of democratically elected school boards and centralize local decision-making at the Legislature?

I note with some interest that the member reflected little on the upcoming K-to-12 review results, where some have speculated that there could be changes to board structure. Bill 204 clearly signals the need for change.

And from someone who apparently knows best, a former trustee himself, Madam Speaker, Bill 204 falls flat on other counts, too. Aside from revoking the power of locally and democratically elected school boards, it fails to acknowledge realities in this province the member seems to know nothing about.

Does the member not know that there are teachers without education degrees teaching in Manitoba under temporary teaching permits? These teachers are often employed in situations involving specialized knowledge. When no teacher can be found, such a provision is made and provides the best education available to those students.

And I would add, Madam Speaker, there are times when that special teaching certificate has allowed students to learn from extremely competent individuals who might be the very best in their field. This is not the norm, but it does happen and it is a provision which has enhanced, rather than restricted, the quality of education.

And I think of subjects like art or welding, where it sometimes is very difficult to find the right person to do the job. Temporary teaching certificates are used in remote areas, in northern communities and in situations requiring specialized knowledge.

The accommodation and recognition that there are unique circumstances where exceptions should be made is the better part of wisdom, but when it comes to principals, we see room for no such accommodations in this bill.

Surely the member knows there are circumstances where principals are taken ill or unable to perform their duties due to unforeseen circumstances, and so school boards can appoint a leading teacher or a vice-principal into the principal role, someone who knows the school culture and routines and who is respected by the staff and known by the students. Would the member not support the local decision of that board and those trustees in those situations?

* (10:40)

What about acting principals? There are times where a principal, perhaps for a mat leave or for a medical or personal reasons or even just for a few days, must step aside temporarily. Bill 204 could 'provide' worthy—sorry—could forbid worthy candidates, and make what may be the most common sense solution illegal.

Surely, the member appreciates that someone could have a master's degree in school administration

and a principal's certificate, and if Bill 204 were law, would be unable to serve even for one day as a principal.

Are there any other jobs within the school system that the honourable member and the NDP wish to designate as unavailable to fully qualified and credentialed teachers? Would they support a law requiring school board trustees to have two years of teaching experience?

I listened to the member's speech for anecdotes of incompetence, illustrating that this is a real problem. But I heard none, and that's because it's not a real problem. It's an imagined one. This bill is a solution looking for a problem.

There were no allusions to policies put forward by his forward division or to any or—any other to address this imaginary issue, though, understandably, there are probably very few principals with less than two years teaching experience currently practising in the province.

Is the member signalling that he and the NDP wish to restrict and limit the power and discretion of elected school boards by bringing forth this bill? Is he suggesting that these school boards cannot be trusted to make sound hiring decisions?

What about smaller schools, Madam Speaker? What about remote schools? It is no secret that some northern schools struggle, and though the bill exempts schools with, quote, less than three teachers—which, I think, means one or two—what about schools with three teachers? Or four teachers? Or maybe five teachers? There are small schools with more than three teachers or, perhaps, three teachers. We have to allow for local autonomy and flexibility here.

Does the member believe collective bargaining agreements currently in place need to be opened up and reviewed so that teachers who do not fit into this category cannot be appointed by superintendents? I'd like to read from section—from a section from one bargaining agreement I looked up this morning.

It says, a teacher in charge shall be appointed annually by the superintendent on the recommendation of the principal in each school without a vice-principal, the annual allowance—and then there's details there—shall be set out in any school where the principal is absent for more than 20 full-time equivalent days. So there's 'prison'—provisions for these types of situations which Bill 204 does not take into account and does not respect.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, the member cites concern about fiscal takeovers that Conservative-appointed consultants would be placed in principal offices to enact draconian cuts and gut schools of money, ruthlessly staving off funds to Conservative coffers, but this narrative betrays a distinct lack of understanding. Principals do not control budget priorities; boards do.

Budgets are created, regulated and designed by boards in tandem with school administrators, and administered by principals. These budgets are guided by formulas taking into account student enrollment numbers and numerous other factors set and established by the board. Principals lack the power to enact the kinds of money-siphoning measures the member fears.

If he really wants to safeguard against those kinds of abuses, it is the division boards he should take aim at, not the principals. It is the boards who set the budgets, the boards who oversee the principal's behaviour and the boards who have disciplinary power to promote or remove principals, and it is the boards who are elected.

To summarize, Madam Speaker, I've pointed out the weaknesses of Bill 204 on several grounds. First, it takes power away from democratically elected school boards with knowledge of what is best in a local situation. Second, it fails to account for realities in Manitoba today.

Teachers teach without degrees in some cases and principals can be appointed at the discretion of the board in others. Sometimes leading teachers or vice-principals can take a principal's job, if needed, but such discretion or flexibility would be unavailable if this bill was to go forward.

The member's speech provided no endorsement from school boards, from superintendents, and offered no examples of incompetence and no numbers of people in this situation. Bill 204 does not address the provisions in existing bargaining agreements. Bill 204 does not address the fiscal concerns it claims to because it does not recognize that as the boards who have had ultimate—it is the boards who have ultimate say in budget decisions.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): I just want to put a few words on the record here.

It's a pleasure to stand and speak to Bill 204, The Public Schools Amendment Act, and we know that it's

comely—coming at a very timely spot here, just before the holidays, with the recent articles that have come out from CBC about records here in Manitoba.

I know Manitoba students are currently last in writing and science, and second-last in reading, I believe, were the stats. I don't have them in front of me right now, Madam Speaker. And I think that it's really important that we're clear that, yes, these changes are currently happening while the Conservatives are in government, and they have the ability to improve education here in the province.

But we are very quick to forget that education plummeted here in Manitoba under the NDP government. And so we need to be mindful of that, Madam Speaker. But it is important, and worth reminding the House that there is a third party, an alternative to all of this a member should consider.

Madam Speaker, we do think it's a good idea, and we are happy to be supporting the bill. We're a little bit curious, though, about who the member from Fort Rouge consulted with and, really, what schools were consulted with.

We—he wasn't able to provide us with very many answers during the question period portion of this bill debate. And we're curious, too, in which—what sort of protocol and qualifications are currently set in place for principals here in the province of Manitoba?

And, if this bill is—the idea behind it is to implement two years of experience in teaching, is that anywhere in Canada, Madam Speaker, or is that anywhere in the world, and then it would be accredited here in Manitoba? I think there are a lot of details that still need to be discussed.

We do agree, though, in theory, that a principal of any school should have teaching experience, and—you know, I liked what the member said during his opening remarks about how you can tell when a school is flourishing, when there's artwork all over the walls and the students are in the hallways. We want to see those things. We want to see schools prosper and flourish here in Manitoba. We want to have strong academics so students and parents can be proud to be here in Manitoba.

And, you know, I want to give a very quick shout-out to my favourite principal in Manitoba here, too, Mr. George Heshka from Sisler High School. I see my fellow Spartan across the way agreeing with me. And, Madam Speaker, again, we're going to be supporting this bill, and we're looking forward to further debate on it.

Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Good morning, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to get up and put a few words on the record. I would like to extend my welcome to the Chamber, the representative from 'concil'—council of school leadership.

I've had the pleasure, Madam Speaker, of being in the school system and not just going to school, as the member from Fort Garry mentioned—actually teaching and working within the school divisions for 17-plus years before I entered this wonderful role here at the Manitoba Legislature. I also have my level 1 admin certificate.

So I feel that our side, the government side, has quite a diverse group of talent and experience, to be able to speak quite openly and honestly in regards to education in this great province of ours, Madam Speaker, because we have, on our side of the House, four, five teachers, and also spouses of teachers, and also members who have got school trustee experience.

I know that the member from Fort Garry, you know, he stood up and he brought forward Bill 204, and again, much like the leader of the Kinew—opposition party, Madam Speaker, mentioned, this is his first bill he's brought forward in the House.

And I do commend him for bringing forward a bill during private members' time. And I know that this, in the new sitting of this Legislature, he actually—this is the first opportunity for the NDP to bring forward a bill to private members' hour.

* (10:50)

So they picked Bill 204, which is titled The Public Schools Amendment Act, and he mentions in his statement about the amount of years that he spent as a school trustee and he felt that he had extensive knowledge and experience in education to be able to make some of those decisions.

And our member from Rossmere asked some very pointed questions and direct questions, and I think answerable questions, Madam Speaker, in regards to does he then feel—the member from Fort Garry, that is—does he then feel that trustees should have some form of education training to—because they, in fact, hold the reins, the purse-strings, on to schools.

And I know that his former boss, Sherri Rollins, who is now a school—or a city councillor, had commended the previous Education Minister, the member from Portage la Prairie, for lifting the cap on

class sizes. And because the member from Portage la Prairie—at the time when he was Education minister—made the comment in regards to giving that power, that authority, to—they've—that—to school boards that had the power to then figure out their own class sizes within their school divisions.

And Sherri Rollins, Ms. Rollins, actually made the comment that she applauded the minister for that decision because it gives more decision-making power to the grassroots, to the people who are involved on the front lines with—in education.

So now the member's bringing forward this bill, Bill 204; again, commend him for bringing the first bill. It's interesting that the NDP today decide to use their first private members' time to bring forward this bill where all yesterday during QP—I have the pleasure to sit in the front bench of the Manitoba Legislature and, of course, I get to listen to various questions and answers from this side of the Chamber to the government side.

And I know the member from—the MLA for Union Station brought forward a bill yesterday, Bill 205. And during question period, it was quite interesting that she—that they had—the member from Union Station had questions in regards to nursing.

Well, her—their bill—I apologize—their bill that they brought forward on protecting nurses, obviously, is not that important to the NDP party, Madam Speaker, because why would they not have put that bill forward today? I know it sits at the front page of the Winnipeg Sun today—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —and all of a sudden today we're debating Bill 204—which, again, the member from Fort Garry—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —mentions—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —the reason why that they're debating Bill 204. [*interjection*] Oh. Okay.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The member from Fort Garry decides to bring forward Bill 204, and what does he say in his statements? This Bill 204, and I quote—almost directly quote because I don't have Hansard in front of me, Madam Speaker—this bill is there to protect, to protect

the students in Manitoba schools, to protect the Manitoba students and their families and their lives.

Coming from the member who, as he's mentioned, eight years school trustee, but also is a lawyer who then stands up for people who have been caught drinking and driving and defends those people. So, with all due respect, Madam Speaker, I cannot take the member from Fort Garry seriously when he stands up much like his predecessor—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Ewasko: Madam Speaker, the member from Fort Garry, he is filling this—the role of the—of these—of his former counterpart, Jamie Allen [*phonetic*], fantastically because he, too, would stand in his seat and he would say he's protecting, protecting those kids, those protecting those lives.

Meanwhile, his predecessor—and, matter of fact, I commend the member for St. Vital (Mr. Moses) standing up and asking the member from Fort Garry a couple questions. The member from St. Vital's predecessor and the member from Fort Garry's predecessor, they really had first-hand knowledge and their hands on the wheel, Madam Speaker. They were Education ministers.

Those two people alone, their predecessors, had taken us in the Manitoba education system, on our scores—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —took us from third in the country in 2003 to dead last, at even farther behind ninth, Madam Speaker. Those two members—predecessors—so Nancy Allan and James Allum were both Education ministers. They had their hands on the wheel and absolutely drove our education system into the ground. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: In fact, Madam Speaker, that is one of the reasons why I decided, in 2011, to throw my name into the hat, into the ring, and run to be an MLA because I could not stand back and see those representatives have their control on the education system and run it into the ground.

So back to Bill 204, I think—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —as far as making comments and being able to, whether it's support or not support a bill and those types of things, Madam Speaker—we, on the

government side of the House, absolutely support education.

And that's why we strongly feel that we needed to put forward a K-to-12 review because for years, Madam Speaker, I would go to various counselling sessions for school counsellors throughout the province and we would stand with post-secondary leaders, presidents—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ewasko: —executives and they would say: you know what, you guidance counsellors, you go back to the schools and you tell them that their—those teachers are not teaching those kids properly enough for what we need in post-secondary institutions.

Well, so what happens? What happens, Madam Speaker, is those two members that I mentioned earlier from St. Vital and Fort Garry—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

I have asked for order a number of times already and I'm continuing hearing from some members in this House that are speaking very loudly and heckling. And I would encourage members—you may not like the content, you may disagree, but we are working towards a better, civil room, in terms of showing some respect for people that do have the floor.

So I would ask members because, you know, when we have senior MLAs, they're not setting a very good example for the new MLAs in the House by doing something and then also turning around and being critical of heckling in the House. You can't have it both ways.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate your guidance and your advice.

Again, it gives me great pleasure to be here on—in—with a government that is taking the K-to-12 education system very seriously, moving forward with a commission and a review of the K-to-12 system.

We know that, unfortunately, the member from Fort Garry, we asked him a couple relatively easy softball-type questions and he couldn't knock them out of the park, Madam Speaker. So this is a good lesson for him, too, as a new member here in the Legislature—Legislative Building, to make sure he goes back and makes sure he does his research so that he's ready for some of these questions.

And it's not a court of law, Madam Speaker. He can't just skirt the questions and pick and choose

certain things that he wants. I mean, he's going to have to answer some of those questions.

So I think the problem is that he really didn't have the answers, Madam Speaker, and I blame the NDP because, unfortunately, he was not advised and given the proper information moving into this bill debate today.

Again, I applaud the former education minister, the member from Fort—from Portage la Prairie and the now member from Steinbach for carrying on with that K-to-12 review. I look forward to those results and then will see what Manitobans want to see happen to the K-to-12 system in Manitoba.

Mr. Scott Johnston (Assiniboia): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I've had the opportunity to speak in the House since being elected in the great constituency of Assiniboia. And I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate you on being re-elected to the position of House Speaker and I know that, certainly, as has been consistent, we'll be able to rely on your guidance and wisdom in the House. So my congratulations to you.

* (11:00)

And also, Madam Speaker, may I also, too, congratulate my colleagues on coming back as government, the second majority government within our—certainly our party's initiative under our leader, Premier Pallister, and certainly it's something that we all take a great deal of pride in, as well as also to—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order.

I would just remind members that, when referring to other members in the House, it is by their constituency name or by their titles. We're not allowed to use—in this case, the member had indicated Premier Pallister, and that is not allowed in the House. So just a reminder to members.

Mr. Johnston: I thank you, Madam Speaker, and certainly my apologies for that mistake.

Again, I would congratulate all members of the House on their election, and has been the tradition in this House, we look forward to working together for the betterment of all of the people of Manitoba. I am pleased to be able to speak today on my friend's bill today, Bill 204, who—he's brought forward. I certainly have—always interested in speaking on all issues in the House, particularly education, which is very close to

my heart, as it is to, certainly, the member from Fort Garry.

Madam Speaker, I—one of the reasons I ran as a school—as a member of the Legislature is because of my experience as being a former member of the St. James-Assiniboia School Board for a number of years. I was first elected in—to the St. James-Assiniboia School Board in 1986, and was fortunate enough to be re-elected several times and, ultimately, be very, very understanding and very passionate about education.

And then, certainly, coming here to the Manitoba Legislature and being part of the governing body who ultimately oversees education in the province of Manitoba—so I'm always interested in discussing education and participating in education initiatives.

Madam Speaker, I guess my dilemma with Bill 204 is I am having a tough time understanding the need at this time. I understand the position that has been taken by the member from Fort Garry, but I don't see this as being a priority in education in Manitoba.

Again, one of the reasons that I ran was because of a lot of the challenges that Manitoba education was experiencing. And gauges of that are the PISA tests, which is the Program for International Student Assessment, which we've had some discussion about recently in the House, and I'm sure that will continue to be discussed as the results certainly haven't been favourable in Manitoba over the last 20 years.

And it's something that obviously needs to be addressed. And if you want take it to even to another level, if you want to look at another gauge, you can look at what's called the PCAP tests. The PCAP test is the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program, which is actually put together by the Canadian ministers of education. So there's a great deal of credibility that the education community sees in these results.

And numeracy and literacy are certainly of a primary interest. And therefore, as I mentioned, when I look at that type of issue and I look at the member's private members bill, I'm—again, the urgency and the priority of this particular initial—initiative in education is in question, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity when I was first elected in 2016 and—to have conversations with the former member of Fort Garry—I believe I can say his name now, that would be James Allum—nice fellow, certainly very fiery in the House periodically.

And I had some very interesting conversations with him on education. And one of the things that we didn't agree on was the relevance of the PCAP tests and the PISA tests. I know that he was always under the impression that, really, the—those tests aren't really reflective of education in Manitoba, and I disagreed with him all the time because I believe that there is a gauge, and the—particularly the PCAP test, they're—the Canadian ministers of Education wouldn't be having that test if they didn't feel that it was warranted and had merit.

And I find it a little strange that the New Democratic government, in their tenure, continued to chastise these tests and continued to say that they weren't a reflection of what was going on in the educational environment in Manitoba, and yet now the official opposition continued to seem to make a great deal of a point of the results in tests, and we, on this side, believe in those tests. We believe that there needs to be a solution, and there needs to be constructive work proceeding to try to address the challenges that the Manitoba students—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

I would just ask the member that in his comments, he—I would ask him to be more relevant in his comments to the act that is before the House right now, and that is The Public Schools Amendment Act (Teaching Experience of Principals). I think the member has strayed a little bit from the relevance of the bill that's on the floor, and I would ask him to bring his comments back to the bill.

Mr. Johnston: And my apologies; once I start talking about educational issues, I tend to maybe go on in different areas, and I'll try to stick to the member's bill, the private member's bill.

As I think has been said by a number of my—or a couple of my colleagues in the House in regards to 204, there is a little bit of a dilemma here—is that this bill is infringing on the rights of elected boards to be able to accomplish what they were mandated to do, and part of their mandate is to staff their school divisions, and this bill infringes on that autonomy.

I understand the merit of the bill, you know, conceptually. I think probably it warrants discussion, and since the Manitoba government has embarked on the Manitoba education review, the issue that he brings up may well be addressed, as well as all the other issues in education that they are considering and meeting those challenges.

So there certainly is the possibility that we will see the concerns that have been addressed may be addressed in the review that we're expecting in February—believe late February, beginning of March.

So I sat on my—when I was on as a school trustee, Madam Speaker, I sat on a personnel committee on a number of occasions, and that personnel committee was charged with placing staff in the school division, certainly including principals.

And there was a criteria that was set up to be able to make these decisions, and there was a great deal of very experienced people going through the process to determine the appropriate candidate and the background of those candidates, and the qualifications of those candidates were always taken into consideration and were reviewed.

So what happened is that the administration identified an area or a school that we needed to proceed to fill, and the administration would put forward a posting, and individuals would apply for those postings—

* (11:10)

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

It is now 11:10, and, as we agreed, this debate would end at 11:10.

So, when this matter is again before the House, the debate will remain open.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 2—Call to Address the Urgent Public Safety Crisis

Madam Speaker: The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Call to Address the Urgent Public Safety Crisis brought forward by the honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Thompson (Ms. Adams), that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge,

WHEREAS the province of Manitoba has reached the 2011 record high of 41 homicides recorded in a given year; and

WHEREAS families have been left grief stricken by the impact of these crimes that have caused whole communities to search for solutions to end violent crime in the Province; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms dictates that Manitoba has a responsibility

to protect the right to life, liberty and security of the person; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government needs to commit to two-pronged emergency responses and long-term investments to address the root causes of crime; and

WHEREAS this commitment must include investments in community agencies, longer-term investments in healthcare, education, social and affordable housing and other supports such as for child care; and

WHEREAS the province must end the freeze to funding to municipalities so that police forces, community agencies and non-profit groups such as Bear Clan, Aboriginal Youth Opportunities, and Fearless R2W have the resources they need to keep communities safe; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government must develop a comprehensive plan to help reduce and end poverty for the people in the province; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has ignored community members and those on the frontlines who have said the solution must go beyond policing and the most effective solutions to end violence will come from the community itself; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government should be proactive in tackling the root causes of crime so all citizens feel safe and secure in Manitoba.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to take an immediate emergency multi-pronged response to address the ever-increasing violence and the serious harm being inflicted on Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable member for St. Johns, seconded by the member for Thompson,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to take an immediate emergency multi-pronged response to address the ever-increasing violence and the serious harm being inflicted on Manitobans.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm pleased to get up in the House today and bring forward this very, very important and timely resolution for us to be able to support and move forward collectively this morning, December 5th, 2019, at around 11:15 a.m.

We have an opportunity in Manitoba to collectively come together as legislators and demand that this government develop a comprehensive, co-ordinated, strategic, informed provincial strategy on dealing with some of the challenges that we find ourselves in today. Miigwech.

Madam Speaker, it's no secret to the House or to yourself that we have been bringing forward issues of public safety, certainly, since I was elected back in 2016. You will recall that very, very early on in that 41st Legislative Session, our colleagues on this side of the House started bringing forward issues in respect of the addictions crisis that we find ourselves in Manitoba.

And I do want to point out, it is not only in Manitoba. As I'm sure you know, Madam Speaker, this is something that provinces and territories are facing from coast to coast to coast. We are in the midst of an addictions crisis, an opioid and meth crisis. We know that some of the numbers that we see out in BC are extremely alarming. It's not only a crisis that we see here in Manitoba or across Canada, it is something that we see ever-increasingly in the States and, actually, in different parts of the world.

So, you know, when we get up every single day in this House and talk about and argue for supports, and demand a strategy and a level of compassion and care by the Pallister government—you know, I think it's important to note that this is something that all jurisdictions are dealing with.

But the difference is that—and I have brought this up before, Madam Speaker, in the House. In other jurisdictions we actually see action. We actually see governments who are working with a variety of different stakeholders. So we see governments that are working with folks that are on front lines 24-7 that are working with folks that are facing addictions who are overdosing at alarming rates.

We see governments develop a working relationship and a strategy, and often we see governments across the can—across the country that are taking the lead from these partners, these key partners. We see different governments across Canada that actually establish a co-ordinated meetings; weekly, monthly, quarterly meetings to be able to sit down with stakeholders to address the gaps in services, what is it that we need to move more towards.

We see different jurisdictions that have set up a—safe consumption prevention sites. We know, in BC,

in Vancouver, we've often spoke about Insite. But they've also moved to mobile clinics as well.

The member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and myself, I think last year, had the opportunity to tour Calgary's safe consumption site, and I did share some of that information in the room here. Calgary, or Alberta, Madam Speaker, I think it's really important that members in the House, as we're debating this resolution today, realize that actually Alberta's moving toward 10 different sites, so you have mobile sites, you have different sites, in Medicine Hat, in Calgary, Edmonton.

So here's Alberta—and again, Madam Speaker, that was under an NDP government; I mean, therein lies the difference—but they have 10 sites. We have not even one site. Not only do we not have one site, we have a government and a Premier (Mr. Pallister) in particular that has chosen to bury his head in the sand and pretend that the issue does not exist. I'm not sure why the Premier has chosen not to look at this issue and pretend that it doesn't exist, but when he does pop his head out of the sand, we have now seen in the last couple of weeks this very concerning kind of Liam Neeson *[phonetic]* approach to dealing with this issue.

We've seen a Premier that, you know, looked into the cameras very thoughtfully and very concerningly, and said we will find you. We're going to find you. I honestly think that he's watched too many Liam Neeson Taken movies and seems to think that he's going to go traveling all over Winnipeg or Manitoba with his, like, you know, driving fast and all of this—trying to find whoever he thinks is doing all of these issues. I would suggest to you, Madam Speaker, the Liam Neeson *[phonetic]* approach is not going to work.

There's something to be said about a Premier who, instead of showing compassion and care and understanding for all Manitoba citizens, chooses instead an approach that we only see in Hollywood movies. There's a reason why people pay \$10 to go to the movie to see Liam Neeson. You want to escape. You want to watch something that doesn't exist. But, actually, maybe in Manitoba we can start charging people that arrive in the airport and say you don't have to go watch a movie; you just have to come to question period or a media scrum and see Liam Neeson *[phonetic]* in the flesh.

So, Madam Speaker, it's important that we do and we understand that this issue is something that concerns all of us. It's not one segment of a population

or a community or an area in Winnipeg. It's not one, you know, segment of only Manitoba. We are all Manitobans. And, you know, we hear that quite often. We'll hear members opposite say, oh, we need to come together and we need work together and da-da-da-da when it benefits them. But we never hear the Premier (Mr. Pallister) or his ministers or any members opposite say you know what? Members opposite, NDP caucus, you're right. It's taken us four years to actually hear you and to listen and to finally understand what you're saying, but thank you, NDP caucus, because you're right. We're all Manitobans and we're all in this together, and Manitobans deserve care and understanding. They deserve a government and a Premier that will put in the resources to ensure that we're dealing with the root causes of these issues upon which we see things predicated upon.

I only have two minutes, Madam Speaker. I wish, you know—and maybe it's something we can look at the rules committee to extend these for, you know, half an hour speeches, because, you know, I love getting up and speaking for a half an hour. It's an opportunity for us to share what's important to Manitobans. It's an opportunity for us as legislators to do our job, earn the money that we're paid. And if there's ever an opportunity or an issue that we can earn the money that we are paid, it is to support this resolution. It is for members opposite to look at their boss and say hey, boss, let's do something on this issue. Hey, boss/Liam Neeson, let's drop the Liam Neeson [*phonetic*] approach.

* (11:20)

It's Christmas season. We have members opposite that are wearing their best formal Christmas attire. We could today say and come together and say, today's the day we're going to work together on behalf of all of Manitobans and, boss, we want you to drop the Liam Neeson. We want you to ensure that there are adequate resources financially for community organizations that are on the front lines of dealing with this issue. We want to ensure that we all earn our pay, and in that respect earning our pay means that we come together. We demand the best from the government. We demand the best from the Premier. We demand the best from each and every one of us in this House. We come together by consensus. We support this resolution. Heck, maybe we even come back early and start developing a provincial strategy, all of us together. Members opposite can wear their valentine best, their International Women's Day best. We can all work together over the next couple of months and develop a comprehensive, robust strategy on dealing

with the current situation that we find ourselves. Manitobans deserve it and that's the very least that we can do as Manitoba legislatures.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: 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 the parties; each independent party may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): The member claims to be concerned about public safety. My question for her is, how long will she tolerate the presence of someone in her caucus—namely, the member for Fort Garry (Mr. Wasyliw)—who believes that drinking and driving is not a crime? [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order. Order, please.

I would just maybe ask the table to stop the clock for—[*interjection*—okay—so that we don't lose any time in debate.

I would just ask members, I think we're going down a slippery slope by bringing up questions like that in the House. I was cautioning everybody the other day that we need to be very careful about reflecting on members in the House and going down the road of being, you know, asking the questions similar to what the member is asking, is really taking us down the road that I don't think is going to be healthy for debate here.

I would indicate that we do have to keep our debates relevant. We have to keep the questions relevant to the resolution that is before us, and going down that other direction really doesn't enhance the civil discourse in this House and it does not take us to where we want to be in terms of having a robust discussion on legislation.

Attacking somebody personally is not going to take us to where we need to be in terms of the kind of civil discourse that I think we have been working really hard towards.

So I would ask members—and I caution them because I don't think it's useful for this Chamber at all to be doing that. So I would issue that caution to members.

Mr. Teitsma: Madam Speaker, perhaps by way of clarification, I'm certainly not referring to any actions of any members opposite. I'm not referring to any criminal activities or anything like that. I'm simply referring to their publicly—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Teitsma: —their publicly published opinion that drinking and driving is not a crime—not their actions, not their conduct in any way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was my question.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'll be—I'll apologize on behalf of the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) for disabusing you of your instructions to the House.

But I do want to say in this limited time that I have, I'm very, very proud to be colleagues which, each and every one of these members opposite here, when you look across this way, these folks represent the best of Manitobans and I'm proud to call them my colleagues. I'm proud to call them my relatives. I'm proud to sit in this House day in and day out with them.

I'm sorry if the member for Radisson doesn't feel the same way. That's not my issue, that's his.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I'd like to thank the member from St. Johns for introducing this resolution, and also for her opening comments where she began by saying that, you know, we should get together—collectively together as legislators. This is so important. Community safety, focusing on crime prevention, focusing on what we can really do to help the next generation of citizens of Manitoba to prevent them from getting into crime, to getting—keeping people who are here safe, newcomers safe, people of a variety of backgrounds safe.

And, Madam Speaker, I want to know from the member why should the government focus on addressing root causes—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Fontaine: You know, I think that we've been pretty clear about the only way to deal with the issues that we are currently facing is to deal with the root causes.

Madam Speaker, it is well documented that folks that are dealing with addictions, folks that are living in poverty, folks that have underlying mental health

issues, folks that are dealing with the consequences of trauma need support.

Madam Speaker, I've shared in this House before, I had my own traumas, as well, that led me to make decisions that were not in the best interests of my path in my life. The only way that I was able to stay—stand here today is with supports to deal with those issues.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): I would like to ask the member from St. Johns, you know, further to the question that the member from Radisson asked, you know, if they were so concerned about public safety, why is it in their platform—the NDP platform—they didn't mention public safety at all?

Ms. Fontaine: I know that the member is feeling really good and, you know, super self-confident in his outfit today, and so he feels that he can bring forward things that are just absolutely not true—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Order, please. Order.

The honourable member for McPhillips, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Shannon Martin (McPhillips): Yes, on a point of order, Madam Speaker. And actually, I use—the member for St. Johns, I recall once, the member—the minister for conservation made reference to her wearing the colour blue. And the member of St. Johns got up on quite a rant and a point of order about how dare anyone comment on the attire of any individual in this Chamber. And yet, on a number of times this morning, she has constantly commented on the attire of colleagues within this House.

I would ask the member to simply follow her own advice, and apologize to this House.

Madam Speaker: I would indicate the member does not have a point of order, as it is not a breach of any rule.

But I would ask members to be respectful to each other and, you know, again, as you are dealing with a specific resolution or a specific legislation, that we try to be relevant to what is being discussed on the floor, rather than going off on a tangent on any other issues to embellish the situation. So I just urge some caution and ask for some respectful back-and-forths from everybody.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, to conclude her answer.

Ms. Fontaine: In respect of the member's question that he asked, clearly the member didn't read our platform. Had the member read the platform, he would have understood, you know, that we had spoke about community safety.

And the more important thing, Madam Speaker, so that I can disabuse the member from what he's putting forward—in fact, all members putting forward, is that we walk the walk. We've been doing that since we got elected.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Ian Bushie (Keewatinook): I would like to thank the member from St. Johns for bringing forward such an important resolution, and we fully support the issue raised.

And I ask why she feels it's concerning that the government won't undertake a review of the northern justice system during this public safety crisis.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech to my colleague for that very important question.

We've seen recently just really horrible examples of how the justice system is failing northern Manitobans. And I do want to put it on the record, we know for certain that the vast majority of the folks that are being failed under the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Cullen) leadership are indigenous peoples.

* (11:30)

So, when you have a justice system that is not working in the best interests of indigenous peoples and northern Manitobans, it bears that there should be a review. And so it's concerning that the minister has continued to say that there's going to be no review. It's a violation of people's human rights within the judiciary.

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, crime is nothing new here in Manitoba. I just think back a few years ago, 2013 and 2014, where I had the opportunity to sit as the vice-chair of the Brandon Police Board and the amount of work we did back in that day from a municipal viewpoint. I'm just wondering if the member from St. Johns could please tell us, the House, what her colleagues have done for the 17 years that they were in power to fight crime?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, actually, Madam Speaker, one of the first things we did when we took office was we unwrapped the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry that was sitting on a shelf in some minister's office that couldn't

even unwrap the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. And in those 17 years we undertook—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Fontaine: —many of the recommendations that were found in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. We also commissioned the Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission which went even further at undertaking a comprehensive review of all those resolutions and executing those recommendations.

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): Thank you to the member from St. Johns on bringing forward such an important resolution. How can the government—how is the government currently failing to address the public safety issues across this province?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, I want to say miigwech to the member for Thompson, who's actually doing some really good work in the area of justice in the North in her constituency. And as I said in my, you know, short time that I had in respect to the resolution, we have a government, we have a minister, we have a Premier (Mr. Pallister) who has these blinders on and refuses to understand the issues that we're facing in respect of justice. And so how are they dealing with it? It is by simply burying their head in the sand or kicking the can down the street at some further time by another review or another meeting or instead of real tangible action, they keep kicking the can and burying their head in the sand.

Mr. Teitsma: The member talks about unwrapping reports. I know that we on this side of the House have been looking high and low for the report that she had ostensibly produced while she was employed here in the Legislature, but so far we've been unable to find it. But, speaking of the contents of reports, we can look at the policy of the NDP in the previous election.

And my question for the member is: How is it that that policy platform had nothing to say about crime, nothing to say about justice, nothing to say about public safety? You don't make it an issue in an election. Why is it an issue for her now?

Ms. Fontaine: I know that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) is just reading his notes and not coming up with anything new or informative because that is a reflection of how utterly divorced the member for Radisson and actually several members opposite are from actually what's going on in the community. They wouldn't be able to find a report if it came up and hit them in the head. That's the bottom line. They don't understand what's going on in the community because they have no connection to community. They have no

connection to stakeholders. They have no connection to families that are dealing with the issues that we're facing.

Again, Madam Speaker, it's not my issue or my problem that the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) doesn't understand what's going on in the province.

Mr. Moses: You know, we, during the election, focused on community safety. We continue to focus on community safety, and that's why I want to commend the member from St. Johns who's not only participated in community safety public events but she's actually led community safety public events that involve so many people and important groups from our community in public safety.

So I want to ask her why it's so important that this Throne Speech didn't even mention poverty as it relates to public safety.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech to my colleague from St. Vital. You know, one of the things that I think is really important to understand is that the member for Point Douglas (Mrs. Smith) and I took it upon ourselves to co-ordinate a community gathering. At that community gathering, we had over 400 community stakeholders and families and citizens that came to express their concerns, their recommendations and resolutions at what's going on.

What's important to note here is that the report that was just released a couple of days ago only had 174 submissions. We beat that by almost three. What would have been really beneficial from—for the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and his ministers was to actually attend the community event, and actually all of the subsequent community events that we have all, on this side of the House, had the opportunity of supporting and listening and learning.

Miigwech.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this resolution. And I think we'll make some clarification for the record today.

I know the member opposite was talking about head in the sand, but I think the members opposite have refused to acknowledge the good work that our government has done in terms of public safety here in Manitoba. We feel that public safety is indeed a

priority for this government. It is clearly a priority for Manitobans, and we respect their wishes. I know in the past, public safety has been ignored by the previous government, but we take it to heart, and we will do whatever we can to make sure that the public is safe and the perception of safety is there as well.

Madam Speaker, we as a government just recently introduced a Policing and Public Safety Strategy. Certainly, this is a cornerstone of public safety here in Manitoba, and how we deal with police around the province, and we certainly appreciate the good work the police do around the province, certainly understand and appreciate the challenges that the police community are facing here in Manitoba.

Mr. Greg Nesbitt, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

And clearly this strategy—and again it was put together in consultation with police forces and municipalities across the province—and we had certainly a good team and a really—an informed team within Justice that led this strategy. And this strategy focuses on eight clear pillars, or eight clear goals, and everything we do as a government in terms of bringing forward policies—of bringing forward policies or projects and making investments is geared to the positive outcomes around this particular strategy.

So just to highlight the eight areas that we are focusing on in terms of our strategy: (1) is improving policing effectiveness through better intelligence and collaboration, (2) is targeting communities with high rates of violence, (3) improving traffic safety, (4) alleviating 'extrenuous' demands on police, (5) enhancing community mobilization and hub tables, (6) improving support to vulnerable people and victims of crime, and (7) expanding police participation in early case diversions, and (8) collaborative policing initiatives respecting indigenous communities.

So, as I said, Mr. Acting Speaker, we take this strategy to heart, and everything that we do is focusing on those positive outcomes around that particular strategy. And we are working in co-operation with municipalities and police forces across the province, and we're working in co-operation with the federal government as well. We just signed on a Guns and Gangs Suppression Strategy with the federal government. This is a five-year funding agreement totaling over \$13 million to be allocated here to Manitoba, and this money will be used to combat guns and gangs. So we certainly have a strategy around how we will be investing that money around the

provinces, certainly put it to good use as we go forward.

I know respective police forces around the province also have their own strategies. We clearly work with them in making sure that there's no duplication and overlap, that our strategies are congruent, and that we are providing positive outcomes for Manitobans. And we think that is key to success. And, really, it is about these positive partnerships that we have with communities around the province.

* (11:40)

Certainly, we've also engaged with the City of Winnipeg and the federal government in the Illicit Drug Task Force. There were certainly a lot of recommendations that were brought forward on that particular task force. A lot of those recommendations have been implemented, and many more, of course, are in the works as we speak.

Another key program that we brought forward—an action plan, really—is our Safer Streets, Safer Lives Action Plan. And the intent here is to more broadly look at the issues in respect of public safety and crime. We recognize there's a lot of mental health and addictions issues in society these days that quite often are intertwined with criminal activity.

So our Safer Streets, Safer Lives Action Plan is a three-pillared approach. It talks about security in terms of public safety; it talks about education; and, thirdly, it talks about treatment. So we are, as a government and across government, many different departments engaged in this particular action strategy. We are investing so much money on those three elements.

When it comes to security, certainly I and some of my colleagues in later discussions will talk about some of the investments we're making in terms of security and public safety all around our great province.

And also education—education to the members of the public is very important as we go forward, Mr. Acting Speaker, especially when it pertains to mental health challenges and addictions challenges. We as a government understand it's important to get the message out to individuals, especially the youth, not to get involved in drugs and drug use because, obviously, that leads down a bad path for those individuals and for those families.

So, certainly, we are focusing on education, making sure programs are available to all Manitobans, both young and old, and, as part of that, we've certainly put out some videos respecting drug use, videos respecting involvement in gangs and potential drug use within gangs. And, also, another key pillar of us—our government moving forward is in terms of redesigning the curriculum within the K-to-12 system so that there is—each student would have that exposure to education when it comes to mental health and illicit drug use. So it's certainly very important.

And the third key pillar of our Safer Streets, Safer Lives Action Plan is the treatment. And we recognize that treatment is very important for those individuals that want the treatment. Clearly, those that are involved in drug use, it is a journey, and we want to be supportive on their journey to rehabilitate themselves, get themselves back into a successful and useful part of society.

So we are investing, up 'til date, about \$20 million in the mental health and addictions to increase capacity here in Manitoba. So there's a lot of things going on, on that front, and I hope some of my colleagues will talk about the investments we made in terms of mental health and addictions, again, all across this province. And there is so many components to dealing with individuals and families who face those addictions and those mental health challenges. We certainly recognize we have to increase capacity and programming for those individuals, and they certainly go through different phases on their journey, and we want to be sure that we are there along that journey and are supportive in providing those services to those individuals and to those families.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in closing, I want to talk briefly about certainly downtown safety. I know it's top of mind for those in Winnipeg, and certainly we are cognizant of that, and we are taking steps to deal with downtown safety. We did commission the Manitoba Police Commission to review the situation and make some recommendations around public safety in downtown Winnipeg. There was an extensive consultation with Manitobans over that. They did look at other jurisdictions and brought back some best practices that potentially could be adopted here in Manitoba.

So we look forward to working with the Downtown Safety Partnership which has been formed in Winnipeg, and thanks to the good people like Mark Chipman of True North, the downtown business

organizations. Obviously, the Winnipeg city police are involved there, and the City of Winnipeg is involved in that partnership as well, and we look forward to working closely with them and their efforts in respect of downtown safety. And we know, with a co-operative and a collaborative approach, many good things will happen, and I will also note, in closing, that we will be asking the Manitoba Police Commission to further consult with Manitobans, not just in Winnipeg, but all over the province. So we will be engaging Manitobans in the public safety discussion as we move forward.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I'm pleased to rise today. I was hoping to hear some more from other members of the NDP caucus. That doesn't seem to be the case, but if they don't have much to say, I guess that's not a big change. Not a big change from the way that the NDP approached this policy, this issue in the—in a previous election where they had very little to say about it and very little to include in their platform.

I know the member opposite, the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine), has made quite a number of claims. I think our Minister of Justice (Mr. Cullen) has done a fine job of repudiating many of those claims and showing them to be what they are. And I appreciate very much the work that the Minister of Justice has done, together with our Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the rest of our government to take significant initiatives in this area, to make significant steps.

The member opposite claims to be concerned about public safety, but I think the—her actions don't necessarily reflect that concern. Now it also seems like the member opposite has gone to the Catherine McKenna school of propaganda, shall we say, because she thinks that if she says something loud enough and often enough, people will believe it. And that may, in fact, even be true that people will believe it, but that doesn't mean they should—that doesn't mean they should.

And there was actually another politician in the past who has also been known for saying those things. I'll leave it to the members opposite to google that and figure out who that might be. But most recently, I think we all heard a member of the—our Liberal Cabinet espousing that and that—that's simply not helpful in public discourse.

What I would say is the member opposite claims that she would like us to listen and we are listening, but she doesn't seem to return the favour, and so when our minister stands up, when our minister makes clear all the—and he's done this not just today, but in question period after question period throughout this session—about the numerous initiatives that we've taken on: helping fight addictions, the numerous actions that we've taken for safer streets, safer lives, the numerous actions and initiatives we've taken with our guns and gang strategy, the numerous actions and initiatives that we're taking with the illicit drug taskforce. All these things have been happening in the last few days—many of them, last few hundred days—the last—many of them were actually outlined in our 100-day plan, and I'm pleased to see that the Justice Minister is continuing to soldier on, continuing to do the good work of our government in this area.

So, if the member opposite would acknowledge that, I think then she might have more credibility but, unfortunately, she does not. So, this is a—well, this is a concern.

Now, I'm just going to take a little turn here and share some personal perspectives because, you know, certainly, I think it's important to recognize the connection that each of us has in our community to issues of public safety. I think not just members in the city of Winnipeg, but all members of our—of my caucus have been speaking with their constituents about concerns about public safety in their areas, whether that's in rural Manitoba, whether that's in Brandon, Portage or right here in the city of Winnipeg and, certainly, you know, we even had members of the MGEU through Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries, Michelle Gawronsky, come to the Legislature—had a very good conversation with her—with the many staff members that she brought with her and the concerns that they have as they go about their work.

I was pleased to have met a few of the people there who work in my constituency and, in fact, I was at the Liquor Mart only a few days later and ran into one of those very same people, and we had an excellent conversation. She also gave me some good wine recommendations, so I much appreciated that. But we had a great conversation about the changes that were coming and the initiatives that had been put forward by our government and also the opportunity to—for them to speak and for us to listen, and that's the way it should be.

* (11:50)

Now I did mention I was going to get a little personal, and the members may recall I recently gave a private member's statement in which I described that my father was a parole officer. That certainly gives you a daily opportunity to interact with the public—with public safety, with the justice system, and I also shared that he was a parole officer not like many others because he would have his number listed and his address listed in the phone book. He would regularly invite his clients to have, you know, tea and crumpets, so to speak, at our family home—well, it's usually something more Dutch, quite honestly, but it was koek, k-o-e-k, koek. Yes, we would give them that.

And, but in any case, they would come over and we would chat and we would learn to treat them like the human beings they are. We'd learn to understand that these are members of our society—these are members of our society. And, although the member opposite might want to think that there's something that separates—[*interjection*]-that separates members like myself from people that you might find that are bound up in the criminal justice system or that have been to prison or that are experiencing poverty or addictions, nothing could be further from the truth, Madam—or Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As my father also told me: There but by the grace of God go I. And I can echo those words as well. I'm well aware of what separates me from those who may be bound up in the criminal justice system, those who may be serving time. And the answer is, it's actually very little; it's very little and it's important to remember that because that gives you compassion, that also gives you a good perspective and I think this is where the member opposite could take some notes. It gives you good perspective on how you should treat those individuals, because when you're experiencing addiction, for example—and my wife and I, not that we took pleasure in this, but we definitely recognized a need within our own community that there were members of our community that were suffering from addictions, addictions to alcohol, addictions to drugs, addictions to pornography. And we opened our home to them. They had a—these are generally younger individuals that had a very rough and not particularly the wholesome home life, shall we say, and they needed a place to reset. We opened our home to them. We were pleased to share the love of God with them and it made a difference.

And, if you want a connection with community, I'd encourage you to consider doing the same because when you actually help people, when you help people

who are—genuinely help them; don't use them for political purposes, don't try to trump up some advantage from them but genuinely reach out and help them, then I think you'd gain perspective and perspective is what is needed on this issue, and it's what I believe our government has been demonstrating consistently throughout it.

Oftentimes, these issues come down to the question of choice. I know the member opposite has—seems to believe, she seems to believe that when there are adverse circumstances that a person is born in, that a person grows up in, that they somehow don't have a choice, but they do. It might be more difficult; we acknowledge that. There are roads that are easier for some than others, but there are still choices, and I know, you know, growing up, much like the Premier (Mr. Pallister), we didn't have much. I grew up very poor and I didn't really even realize how that—how poor we were until the day that I delivered a Christmas hamper to a family down the street that had a bigger TV, nicer shoes and not hand-me-down clothing or things that you could pick up from Value Village because that's all I was wearing at the time. So that made me realize that, yes, we were not well off and yet, there was no complaints. There was enough. And there were choices that we made that I regret and I think that all members of this House could say that as well. But there's choices also that you make that you should justifiably be proud of.

So government needs to make choices in this regard. Government needs to understand its role, the public need to make choices. Public can take steps.

I know when the Winnipeg Police Service came out to my neck of the woods, they made a great presentation in the Kildonan Place mall and they spoke about the things that individual members of the public can do to protect themselves. That doesn't mean that it's their fault if they are victimized, no. But it is things that they can do because the idea is to minimize and contain the criminal actions, the evil within our society.

And that's government's role as well; is to serve as a restraint. It's to encourage choices that enhance public safety; it's to discourage choices that reduce or destroy public safety, and that includes the reasons that we have a criminal justice system at all, that we have courts.

What are those courts actually doing? Those courts are doing is discouraging choices—

The Acting Speaker (Greg Nesbitt): The member's time has expired.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (St. Boniface): We are more than happy to support this resolution. It is an important resolution—it's incredibly important to recognize the fact that we really have a crisis in Manitoba when it comes to violent crime, when it comes to poverty, when it comes to dealing with the root causes of crime.

And frankly, the lack of action on the part of this government is really shocking. There have been a number of sort of piecemeal approaches. They've boasted about what they have promised in their own platform when it was also totally inadequate.

This is not going to be—this is not a crisis that's going to be solved with SWAT teams, and it's not going to be solved with better communications with RCMP, or between—when what we really have is an addictions crisis.

And I just want to say for the record, we talk about poverty, we talk about mental illness and addictions as being related to crime; it's extremely important when we talk about mental illness, is that there's this idea that people who are committing crimes are committing crimes because they are mentally ill. In fact, what needs to happen is that we need to triage out.

There are people who are mentally ill. There are people who have addictions. People who are mentally ill and addictions should be treated in the health-care system and not in the criminal justice system. And that's not happening. We have a huge problem with people reoffending because people are not getting the treatment they need.

When you look at the people who have been arrested for some of these crimes, it's—they may have—they are accused of committing 10, 20, 90, over a hundred different robberies. But, if you read the cases, there are individuals who all the stealing—that they were doing was actually to—because they were alcoholics. And the reaction from the court is to tell them to stop—that they have to completely stay from drinking which is a completely unrealistic thing to do for somebody who is going through withdrawal.

We actually need to have withdrawal programs, and we need to have proper detox programs for people who are doing—if we're dealing with people whose activities are being driven by addictions.

The other is that I think we have to be very careful in how we talk about mental illness and crime because if we actually look at statistics, people with mental illness are much more likely to be victims of crime than perpetrators of crime. We have to separate out people who are organized criminals, and there are criminal gangs, and we need better enforcement.

But, fundamentally, I know that the government members like to say that the NDP didn't do anything on crime—it was the case that the former attorney—NDP Attorney General boast that he was building more jails than Stephen Harper. And there was actually a tough-on-crime mentality that was pushed. They supported the omnibus—Conservative omnibus bill—crime bill that was presented by the Harper government, which was really part of criminalizing poverty, which is something that we oppose.

So it—and when it comes to safety and to community safety and preventing and actually reducing crime instead of reacting to it. This government, I—if I'm not mistaken, reduced funding to the John Howard Society, it reduced funding to the Elizabeth Fry Society, they eliminated funding to the Main Street Project where there used to be people—used to be able to stay.

We need addictions treatment facilities, we need wet treatment facilities so that people aren't—people who have alcohol problems do not have to—have a place to go where they can actually drink safely. There is a thing, it's a form of regulated—it's like a safe consumption site for alcohol. They've done it in Ottawa with great success. That's the sort of thing that needs to be considered.

* (12:00)

Fundamentally, we need to be treating people as human beings.

And I'm extremely concerned about the new report for downtown which is essentially an abdication of responsibility on the part of this government. It hands over police responsibility and public safety responsibilities to the private sector who—and which is a problem, not just in terms of how it'll be paid for but of accountability. What happens if a private sector security guard hurts somebody or detains somebody? These are powers that are reserved for a very special reason: that depriving someone of their liberty is one of the most dangerous things, it is one of the strongest things that a state can do and it's not something that should be considered lightly.

I'm very concerned about the downtown safety report because of its focus on what I think of as being superficial or perception rather than actually on dealing with root causes or with the deeper problem of saying, well, we need to deal with problem panhandlers because they frighten people. Well, really, what we need to be doing is making sure that people can have jobs or that they can earn a living or that they have a safe place to stay. And that is something that we see has been getting continually worse.

So I want to thank the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) and I want to thank the NDP for bringing forward this important resolution. We're happy to support it.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Lagimodière): It is an honour to stand in the House today to put some words on the record with respect to this particular resolution. This will be my last opportunity to speak in the House for 2019, so I do thank you for the opportunity to do so and I think it's important to discuss a few things, particularly related to public safety.

I know that this has been brought up by a few of my colleagues prior to myself, but I think it's worth putting on the record again that the NDP never seem terribly interested in public safety. They didn't really typically care for public safety, didn't mention it in their—in the campaign. It wasn't until it became politically expedient to do so that they started to raise their voices on this particular issue. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do find it interesting that all of a sudden, now that it's a public emergency and that public safety has become the top priority—I guess it depends on the day; one day it's one issue, one day it's another issue. It's a bit of a floating priority list that comes up through the NDP caucus. So I guess we'll find out; we'll see what happens in—when we return to the Chamber in March. There'll be a whole new list of priorities that they've come up with, I guess, depending on what the news cycle is at that particular time.

You know, I do encourage members from the NDP to read our platform, and certainly the Safer Streets, Safer Lives Action Plan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you would look at that particular document, you'll see that a large portion of that is focused on public safety. Public safety is a huge component of that action plan. And I think that, you know, if you look at some of the points here that have been listed off, but one in particular was to direct the Manitoba Police Commission to offer advice. Well, we just did that and

we got a report that came back with 27 different recommendations.

You know, I'm not sure what the NDP's aversion to asking for help is. It seems to think that the NDP caucus has all the answers and that they don't need to ask for advice. We, on this side, believe that we ask people for advice to get the best solution. That side thinks they've always had the best ideas, and that's why they're in opposition and this side is in government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would let the record show here on December 5th at around 12:04 p.m., we have the member from St. Johns not showing any interest particularly in this resolution that she has put forward, more interested in heckling and speaking out of turn, but I'll let the record show and let her constituents consider that in the next provincial election.

You know, I do want to talk about—I know the member from Radisson spoke briefly about his personal experience and, you know, I myself have actually volunteered at Headingly corrections—I want to say year 2003, 2004 time frame. And it was quite an interesting experience for me. At that point I was tutoring, and at the time we called them—the facility called them offenders; I'm not sure what the—if there's a new terminology that's being used with respect to people in the prison system, but at time it was offenders, right?

And we were—it was actually quite an interesting interaction, being able to work with these gentlemen—and I say gentlemen because they were all men—and they—a lot of them were working for their GED, to get their high school equivalency, and it was interesting to get a perspective from these folks who, you know, and there's no—no one would argue that a lot of these men had difficult situations in their lives. They come from various backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, even socio-economic backgrounds; it was interesting to see the broad spectrum of people that end up in the justice system and the reasons that they ended up there.

But I do commend the men that looked at improving their life and improving their lot in life by pursuing further education and of course seeking help from volunteers who came from various educational institutions. In my case I was at the University of Manitoba at the time, and I found it very rewarding to help a lot of these men with some things like basic math skills and those types of educational pursuits that would help them pursue a GED or high school equivalency.

I—but I do believe that regardless of the situations you face in your life, I don't believe that you're absolved from your responsibilities, especially when it comes to committing crime.

If you commit a crime, I mean, unfortunately, there is a consequence to that. You know, the—and I do hear the member from Thompson speaking out of turn, and so let the record show the minister—the member from Thompson as well, does not show any particular interest in this particular resolution.

None of these members seem to really want to debate the resolution. They do prefer to heckle; they prefer to speak out of turn, but they won't actually speak up. I mean, if the member from Thompson really wanted to speak to this, he could have easily stand up himself and spoke and put words on the record instead of heckling from the back benches as he so gracefully does, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But, nonetheless, I do want to say that being a, you know—having a rough or a tough situation growing up, having different experiences throughout your life might certainly predispose you to certain choices later on, it does not absolve you from responsibilities of the choices you make, and I think that's a clear distinction between what we believe on this side.

There are, and even when I went to training, when I was trained at Headingley corrections, the one thing that we were reminded of is that yes, some of these gentlemen are making amends and trying to do better for themselves, but they still have a victim. There still was a victim on the other side of that crime, and never forget that, and unfortunately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP do not have a balanced approach. We believe in a balanced approach.

If you look at our three-pronged approach on the meth issue, and certainly addictions in general, and the crime that we're seeing in the city of Winnipeg and around the greater province—the treatment approach, public safety, and education, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, we think that this three-pronged approach is important because we need to make sure that not only are youth, and especially very young children, as young as

grade 3, are educated and understand the dangers of these dangerous drug abuses.

I mean, no one would suggest that methamphetamine is a drug to take lightly. We know its damaging effects. We know how addictive it is, and it is arguably, and I wouldn't say this—I say arguably one of the worst drugs available on the market, and unfortunately it's cheap, so we do need to know that our youth, our children, understand the value, understand the dangers of experimenting with methamphetamine.

Further to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do understand that there are people who, once addicted, do need treatment. They do need to get out of the life that they've—or down the path that they've chosen.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that this side of the House, we believe that if, you know, there is a personal responsibility, and if you are addicted and you take the initiative to try and help yourself, that's where government—and we believe that society can help you, and that's why we want to focus on the treatment side of public safety as well.

But, when it comes to protecting the general public, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know, crime isn't new. There is nothing new about crime. There's nothing new about drugs, and there certainly is nothing new about addictions, and if you go back to the 17 years that the NDP were in office, they had 17 years.

What did they do to improve public safety? What did they do? What did they do for treatment? What did they do for addictions? Mr. Deputy—

The Acting Speaker (Greg Nesbitt): Order.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have two minutes remaining.

The time being 12:10 p.m., I am leaving the chair with the understanding the House will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 5, 2019

CONTENTS

ORDERS OF THE DAY		Resolutions	
PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS		Res. 2—Call to Address the Urgent Public Safety Crisis	
Second Readings—Public Bills		Fontaine	424
Bill 204—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Teaching Experience of Principals)		Questions	
Wasyliw	413	Teitsma	426
Questions		Fontaine	427
Micklefield	415	Moses	427
Wasyliw	415	A. Smith	427
Kinew	415	Bushie	428
Lamoureux	416	Isleifson	428
Ewasko	416	Adams	428
Moses	416		
Wowchuk	416	Debate	
Debate		Cullen	429
Micklefield	417	Teitsma	431
Lamoureux	419	Lamont	433
Ewasko	420	A. Smith	434
Johnston	422		

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings

are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>