

First Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Social and Economic Development

Chairperson
Jelynn Dela Cruz
Constituency of Radisson

Vol. LXXVIII No. 9 - 6 p.m., Wednesday, October 30, 2024

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALTOMARE, Nello, Hon.	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JACKSON, Grant	Spruce Woods	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday, October 30, 2024

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – MLA Jelynn Dela Cruz
(Radisson)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – MLA Mintu Sandhu
(The Maples)**

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Hon. Min. Fontaine

*Mr. Balcaen, MLA Dela Cruz, Mrs. Hiebert,
MLAs Moroz, Sandhu*

Substitutions:

Mr. Balcaen for MLA Lagassé

MLA Lagassé for Mr. Balcaen at 6:06 p.m.

Hon. Min. Wiebe for Hon. Min. Fontaine at 6:19 p.m.

Mr. Balcaen for MLA Lagassé at 6:19 p.m.

Hon. Min. Fontaine for Hon. Min. Wiebe at 6:39 p.m.

Hon. Min. Wiebe for Hon. Min. Fontaine at 6:53 p.m.

MLA Lagassé for Mr. Balcaen at 7:33 p.m.

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

*Bill 217 – The Men's Mental Health Awareness
Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks,
Months Act Amended)*

Lisa Dyck, private citizen

Jeremy Wiens, private citizen

Bill 39 – The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act

Sel Burrows, Point Powerline

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Bill 39 – The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act

*Scot Halley, Manitoba Association of Chiefs of
Police*

*Bill 217 – The Men's Mental Health Awareness
Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks,
Months Act Amended)*

*Marcel Hacault, Manitoba Farmer Wellness
Program*

Gerry Goertzen, Riverbend Counselling & Wellness

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Bill 38 – An Act Respecting Child and Family
Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Other
Amendments)*

Bill 39 – The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act

*Bill 217 – The Men's Mental Health Awareness
Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and
Months Act Amended)*

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Clerk Assistant (Ms. Melanie Ching): Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): I nominate MLA Dela Cruz.

Clerk Assistant: MLA Dela Cruz has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Dela Cruz, will you please take the Chair.

The Chairperson: All right, thank you, everybody.

Our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Moroz: I nominate MLA Sandhu.

The Chairperson: MLA Sandhu has been nominated.

I—hearing no other nominations, MLA Sandhu is elected Vice-Chairperson.

The meeting has been called—or, this meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 38, An Act Respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Other Amendments); Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act; Bill 217, The Men's Mental Health Awareness Week Act (Commemoration of Days, Weeks and Months Act Amended).

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill

must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause by clause of the bill except by unanimous consent of the committee.

On written submissions, written submissions from the following persons have been received and distributed to committee members: Scot Halley, Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, on Bill 39; Marcel Hacault, Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program, on Bill 217; Gerry Goertzen, Riverbend Counselling, on Bill 217.

Does the committee agree to have these documents appear in Hansard transcript of this meeting?
[Agreed]

Some public presentation guidelines for folks here today: Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in a committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. Questions shall not exceed 30 seconds in length, with no time limit for answers.

For government bills, questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first, the minister sponsoring the bill; second, a member of the official opposition; and third, an independent member.

For private members' bills, questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first, the member sponsoring the bill; second, a member of another recognized party; and third, an independent member.

If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped from to the bottom of the list, and if a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is a signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

On the topic of determining the order of public presentations, I will also note that we have of-other out-of-town presenters in attendance marked with an asterisk on the list. With these considerations in mind, in what order does the committee wish to hear presentations? Are there any suggestions from the committee?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): I would suggest that any out-of-town presenters that are present be first, followed by in-person presenters.

The Chairperson: It has been suggested by Mr. Balcaen that out-of-town presenters come first in order, followed by those who are in town.

What is the will of the committee? Agreed?
[Agreed]

Thank you for your patience, and we will now proceed with public presentations.

**Bill 217—The Men's Mental Health
Awareness Week Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)**

The Chairperson: I thank the committee for their patience. I will now call on Mrs. Lisa Dyck, a private citizen. Is Ms. Lisa Dyck here?

Do you have any materials that you wish to be distributed to the committee? No? Sounds good.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Lisa Dyck (Private Citizen): Good afternoon, members of the standing committee. Thank you for the chance to speak in support of the bill proclaiming men's mental health awareness week in Manitoba. This initiative is not only important, it is deeply personal to me as it shines a light on the mental health crisis among men, especially in our rural communities.

Mental health struggles have touched my family. I never met my uncle, one of three uncles of mine who fought in the Second World War. He unalived himself before I was born, but I carry his memory and the weight of his struggles. And I am the keeper of his medals. He served in the war and was wounded, returning home to fight an invisible battle that claimed his life.

His story is a reminder that mental health issues among men are not new but have long been historically overlooked. Going to war is often viewed as an act of bravery, but the impact on mental health is frequently overshadowed by the tone of heroism.

My sister's journey with mental illness further shaped my understanding. Diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, she was a brilliant and talented woman, an accomplished graphic artist and photographer. She worked at the Manitoba Museum, or as it was formerly known, the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. The stigma surrounding her condition often eclipsed her achievements, leading her to isolation.

People often saw her mental illness first, not her accomplishments.

In December 2007, my sister went missing just days before Christmas. I remember the dread that settled over me as I searched for her, only to find out from an RCMP officer that he had driven her home just the night before she went missing. He recognized that she was acting unusually, but yet he let her go, unaware of the gravity of her situation.

Sadly, she left home soon after and disappeared into the bitter cold. When we found her two days later frozen under the spruce trees near my mother's house, my heart shattered. Witnessing her in the snow, I knew she would never come home again. A neighbour mentioned hearing a woman singing O Christmas Tree that night. That was my sister's voice echoing in the darkness, a haunting reminder of her struggles.

This tragedy highlighted the urgent need for better mental health support. The officer, though compassionate, realized the limitations of his training when it came to mental health crises. I understand this all too well, having worked in health care for eight years, where I often encounter individuals in distress.

I was concerned for the officer and wrote a letter to him, stating what had happened was not his fault and that I was grateful for his service in helping me find my sister.

* (18:10)

Men face unique challenges when it comes to mental health. Often pressured to remain silent and strong, my sister's ex-husband, who later took his own life, struggled to understand her illness, labelling her crazy. It is a tragic example how societal expectations can prevent open discussions about mental health.

Witnessing MLA Lagassé share his mental health journey in the Chamber of this Legislature was a profound moment for me. His courage and the support he received from colleagues from both sides of the Chamber showed that we can create a culture of empathy and understanding, where struggles are met with compassion rather than judgment. To me, bravery is coming forward to acknowledge mental health challenges and to say, as MLA Lagassé says, it's okay to not be okay.

Bill 217 is a crucial step toward breaking the silence surrounding men's mental health. By fostering awareness and encouraging dialogue, we can help prevent tragedies like those in my family from happening to others. It is time to dismantle the stigma

that keeps men from seeking help and ensure these resources are available for those in need.

I urge the Legislature to pass Bill 217, to bring hope and support to countless Manitoba families who silently carry these burdens.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Dyck, and thank you for coming here to share and be vulnerable with this committee.

Are there any questions from members of the committee?

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): It's obviously not going to be a question. It's more of a thank you for being here.

I have appreciated your friendship over the years and thank you for coming to present tonight. It has touched my heart. I—yes, this has opened an—very important conversation. I'm glad that you're part of it.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Would you like to respond?

Floor Comment: No, I just thank you for the opportunity to speak. I appreciate that.

The Chairperson: Sounds good.

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mrs. Dyck, thank you so much for coming to share incredibly touching stories, multiple stories and multiple experiences that you've had. And I just really want to thank you for taking the time to share with all of us. It really does help us, as legislators, to hear these stories directly from folks and from folks who are willing to share.

So I just wanted to say thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Moving on to other out-of-town presenters, we have Mr. Jeremy Wiens on the list.

Thank you for joining us, Mr. Wiens. Do you have any materials that you wish to be distributed? No?

All right, you may proceed to your presentation.

Jeremy Wiens (Private Citizen): First of all, thank you very much for allowing me to come speak. I truly appreciate that. This is something that I think is truly important, and I can speak a little bit from my own personal experience.

Back in 2015, 2016 I went through a separation and divorce. And I was left alone with three kids that I had to figure out how to raise. I had to figure out what I was going to do with them and how to do this.

But before I could even figure that out, I was absolutely devastated by my divorce at the time, and I didn't know how I was going to get through that. I spent a lot of time alone, kind of—the kids would be going to bed and I would just be in my room going, like—I didn't see people. I was very secluded. I felt isolated in that.

I looked for help in different ways, and some of them—seeking churches and seeking counsel there. And you could get, to some degree they would—they were there to help, they were there. But they didn't understand the full grasp of the mental struggle that we can go through.

I looked for resources and if—for men, there just wasn't resources there available unless I had to deal with anger management or alcohol or this or that or deal with something specific. But for my own mental health, there was just nothing available that I could do.

And kind of going through this dark area in time in life, I was able to somehow summon up enough to pay a psychologist out of my own pocket, which was substantial. I think it was well over \$200 an hour to go—and multiple visits. It was not cheap. But it was something that I was able to go see—get mental help, go get the help I needed so that I could actually go and be a dad to my kids, so I could go be a parent, so I could raise my kids to show them that we can get through tough times, right?

And it was something that—it was a very dark period in my life. And that's why this is something that's so near and dear to me, because this is something that actually I've gone through, I've experienced, and yet I also know that there's many men that go through the same thing; they feel that isolation, they feel alone and they don't have the resources. I was blessed that I was able to afford to go seek that help, but there's many that don't. They just—they don't know where to go, and they feel isolated, they feel alone.

Being a man, you feel a sense of shame when you have to ask for help at some point, and we're just not aware that—it's becoming more aware to the public, but I think to take that step up and have a week where we actually say, hey, look, we actually need to recognize this, this is something that's important, it's going to be a huge, huge thing, because, like I said, a lot of men do just suffer in silence and isolation and to let them

have a place where they are able to be, hey, like, this is okay, it's okay not to be okay, it's okay to work through life, it's okay that we don't have to feel alone, right?

And I just kind of want to end a little bit with what I got asked this—and I was debating on whether I should do it, a little bit—nerves a little bit, everything—and I asked a few people around me and absolutely everybody was like, I can't believe this, this is amazing, why would you not do it, right? And this is an opportunity to bring awareness, like why would you not do this, right? And so, like I said, I was honoured and I'm blessed to be able to be here today after going through some of my struggles and coming here and being able to help many men.

And I've—especially I've noticed in the last year, the conversations I've had with men and some of them are ongoing where they feel that, oh, the suicide is coming on, they feel those thoughts, and like, I'm there for them, I'm trying to be there because I've gone through it, I can relate. So if I can be that, like, to bring this awareness I think is absolutely essential to what we need to do.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Wiens. Again, it takes a lot of courage to share such a personal story, and thanks for coming to this committee.

Questions?

MLA Lagassé: Again, along the road of not necessarily a question, but more of a thank-you.

I remember the day we met, and I remember, you know, our openness and our conversation about mental health. And I know you and I are very passionate about this, and I, again, thank you so much for what you do in the community. And for all the men that are reaching out, we'll definitely keep this conversation going somewhere men can talk and not—we don't lose any.

The Chairperson: Would you like to respond?

J. Wiens: Just thank you for bringing this forward.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Any other questions from the committee?

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): Thank you, yes. Not a question so much, but as a thank-you to you for coming here.

I went through a similar process. I was a product of a divorced family, and so you make the commit-

ment to yourself as an adult that you'll never put your children through that, and then of course, if it happens to you, the profound sense of loss and failure. So I recognize the emotion in you.

Thank you for being brave enough to come and share that with us, and I want to thank, again, here at committee, the member from Dawson Trail for bringing the bill forward. Thanked him in the Chamber but I wanted—want to thank him again here in committee.

So thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

We've now exhausted the list of out-of-town presenters.

To save the bout of musical chairs here, we have one more presenter on Bill 217.

And with that being said, I will now call on Mrs. Fernanda Vallejo, if Mrs. Fernanda Vallejo is here.

Seeing that Mrs. Vallejo is not in the room with us today, we'll drop her name to the bottom of the list and proceed to presentations on Bill 39.

Thank you, MLA Lagassé.

Bill 39—The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act

The Chairperson: I'll call the honourable minister, Minister Wiebe, to the chair.

All right, thank you, everybody.

I will now call on Mr. Sel Burrows from Point Powerline down to present.

Sel Burrows (Point Powerline): Hello, everybody.

The Chairperson: Oh, Mr. Burrows, do you have any materials you wish to be distributed?

* (18:20)

S. Burrows: Yes, I'd like permission to pass around a fridge magnet to each member. It's a—not paper.

Can I?

The Chairperson: Yes, we'll have that received by the page for distribution. *[interjection]* Yes, it's all right.

All right, you may proceed with your presentation.

S. Burrows: The second thing I have is, I have an article in the newspaper that refers to my involvement

with the previous government. It's got a wonderful picture of myself, but it's the only copy I have and I wonder if we could just pass it around, people can have a look at it.

Is that permitted?

The Chairperson: Okay, the page will receive that as well and then we'll have copies made.

Thank you, Mr. Burrows. Please proceed with your presentation.

S. Burrows: Yes, I hadn't—I've been involved in the issue around machetes for well over 10 years, for those—some of you I know, there's some new people I don't know.

I've been involved in the community of North Point Douglas. I've been involved in crime prevention issues in Thompson, and out of that, you know, I was given the Order of Manitoba. I am proud to have two certificates of appreciation from the Winnipeg Police Service. And interesting enough, I also have the Joe Zuken citizen activist award.

I think, for me, that expresses my belief that there's no one answer to these horrendous issues that we're dealing with right now. And machetes is a symbol of a problem we have in the inner city and the north, and in our First Nations communities.

And I'm—want to talk directly to Mr. Balcaen, as a former police officer, and I do want to say I think you're probably very familiar with the Brandon jail. Back in Sterling Lyon's day, I helped supervise the construction of that, and I also lived in Brandon as a front-line social worker, my first job out of university back in 1965.

Anyway, the issue of machetes is a symbol of the horrendous problems we have in our society. You're reading the newspaper about the person who was attacked in St. John's Park. The other people—I want to say, clearly, that there are at least 10 other assaults with a machete for every one that's reported.

At my house, on the corner of Grove and Rover in North Point Douglas, I had at least two experiences with machetes and another with what would probably be called a long knife, at the time.

My house was known as the place that people could come; there's a knock on my door and there's a guy standing there, just blood pouring out of his hand. Could you phone an ambulance? And of course I did. And then I looked up; standing 10 feet away was another guy with a big smile on his face, holding a

machete. And they were friends and they were both high on meth at that time.

I—of course, the ambulance wouldn't come 'til the police came. The police came, the police officer was a supervisor, highly skilled; took the machete away from the fellow, got him into the police car, the ambulance came.

What kind of society do we want?

The other one was a case where there's a young woman standing in the middle of the road, waving a machete; well-dressed, nice woman, waving a machete, totally plastered on meth. The police came, got the machete away from her. In both those cases, nothing serious had happened.

The—what happens to a kid who's walking along with his bicycle and somebody walks up to him with a machete and says give me your bike? Those are the ones that aren't reported to police, you know?

Sorry. Those are—the reality is that we must do so many different things to deal with the issue of crime. But the issue of making our community safe—particularly our inner-city communities—for people who live there, the huge majority try to make a living, good citizens, but threatened and intimidated continually by issues like bear spray and like machetes.

I'm sorry Kelvin Goertzen isn't here today. If you take a look at that article you'll know that Kelvin and I worked closely together. Everyone who knows me knows I'm a strong New Democrat. I was a candidate for the NDP in 1966. But my principle is that anybody who is trying to work hard to try to make our society a better place, I'm quite happy to work with them.

And the bear spray legislation that we do have in place, I think if Kelvin was here, he would accept that it was largely done because of my pressure and the—I mean, of course, he didn't do exactly what I wanted, but something happened.

I also lobbied him very firmly around the issue of machetes three and a half, four years ago, and he made the decision not to proceed on that.

And I want to say to my Conservative—I'll say friends, hopefully—that one of the things I really hope you will look at as we deal with these horrendous issues of crime, the horrendous issues of intimidation in our inner city, is we will look at recognizing that none of us know the right answers. If we did, we wouldn't have this problem. But that we need to try all sorts of different things and perhaps support somebody else's issue who's doing something that's—you

don't quite agree with, but also look at maybe getting them to do some of the things that you propose.

I had a representative from the Manitoba Business Council come to my house Monday and—to spend an hour, and ended up spending two hours discussing how we could work together on larger issues of crime.

So coming back to machetes again for a few minutes. Machetes, bear spray, illegal cigarettes, all of those are sold in small shops throughout the inner city and in smaller communities. James Favel, who many of you may know, founder of the Bear Clan, now runs an organization called Anishinaabe Ambassadors. One of the things—and he and I talk quite often. One of the things he talked about was the imagery in the small stores in the inner city, of when his children go to shop and they see machetes, they see bear spray and they see cigarettes being sold cheaply, all of which are harmful to our community.

And one of the things I want to talk about is the fact that you have set up that there are severe penalties to stores that do not abide by this legislation, and I know, Mr. Balcaen, that was one of your concerns. Well one of the things I'm asking is that once this legislation is in place, would you please prosecute immediately.

One of the things we've learned, those of us who've lived and worked in the inner city, is people need consequences, and one of the biggest prevention of other people doing bad stuff is when there is reasonable consequences for people who are doing it.

So I will tell you that if you managed to prosecute one or two stores fairly quickly—they get a \$5,000 fine or more—you will find we will not have a big problem of sales of bear spray and machetes in the inner city.

I do want to add a little bit on bear spray. The minister hasn't announced it yet, but the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Kostyshyn) has sent a letter out to Amazon and all the companies that are selling bear spray online. Health Canada has declared bear spray to be a dangerous pesticide, and there are very strict shipping rules that have never been followed before. And I'm hoping that the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) will work with the Minister of Agriculture and make sure that the companies who have—now are aware of the rules on shipping bear spray, that they will be, and we will ensure that they are, following those rules, and if they aren't, that there will be consequences for them as well.

The reason I gave you my fridge magnet, that's just a little bit about what we did in Point Douglas,

and I want to talk a little wider on the issue of crime prevention.

Manitoba has, well, definitely the worst crime problem in Canada. The North End of Winnipeg, from Statistics Canada, has approximately 4,000 violent crimes per 100,000. The highest violent crime rate neighbourhood in Toronto has 907 violent crimes per 100,000. We need solutions.

One of the things what we did in Point Douglas is—when I moved back there many years ago, I became involved with the residents committee—we got delegations coming, talking about their kids being scared, the crime that was going on. And a small group of us got together—one couple, an Indigenous couple, and my wife and I—and we formed a little thing called the Powerline.

* (18:30)

And we had four Indigenous elders and two, I'll use the term settler elders, wandering around the community—people who'd lived in the community for 20, 30 years; they knew every nook and cranny.

And they'd come back to me, because I knew how the system worked. If you weren't aware, I was Ed Schreyer's executive assistant at one point. And at one point, I was the assistant director of adult corrections, running the—helping run the corrections system. So I had a pretty good idea of how systems worked.

I've been—got in touch with a guy named Keith McCaskill. Keith and I became good friends with—he and his wife, and my wife and I, we'd go for breakfast on a regular basis. He lectured me quite vehemently.

But anyway, we got—what we did is we had the community saying: you are the eyes, you have the responsibility, you can identify who is selling meth, who is selling crack at that time, who is carrying guns, who's carrying machetes, and, largely, who is sexually assaulting women—young women, which was a—was and still is a serious issue.

And these guys, I remember—

The Chairperson: Pardon me, Mr. Burrows. Time has expired.

Floor Comment: Could I get a little extension?

The Chairperson: Is there leave for Mr. Burrows to finish his remarks? *[Agreed]*

How—

An Honourable Member: Just let him wrap up. Leave it ambiguous.

The Chairperson: Well, is there recommendation?

An Honourable Member: 'Til he finishes his current thought.

The Chairperson: Okay. We will allow Mr. Burrows to wrap up his current thought.

S. Burrows: Our Indigenous community elders would go around and they would come back and say, hey, Hells Angels is there; Posse's there; you know, the Cracker Jacks *[phonetic]* are there. Get rid of them. They would use stronger language than I'm allowed to use here. And we—it wouldn't be my responsibility to find out—get the pressure to do it.

And one of the things they taught us, it was very important for us to learn, was that we didn't need to use the criminal justice system—that, on their communities, they used banishment to penalize people who were not behaving properly in their community.

And we used eviction. We used eviction. But something happened during the previous government and all of a sudden, we weren't able to get evictions anymore, and I've been pressuring this government. And I must say, Heather Stefanson's staff actually worked with me and Mr. Teitsma on trying to get the Residential Tenancies Branch back willing to evict drug dealers. And so I'm hoping that will come.

There. I finished that thought, so.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Burrows.

Questions from the committee?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, thank you so much, Sel. Always appreciate your perspective. I love how you're always looking for practical solutions and you're so community focused, so it's right in line, I think, with what our vision is. And I like how this melds well with what we're doing here today.

It's been suggested that this kind of legislation might be a burden on retailers, to be able to adhere to this legislation. What do you think about that?

Oh. You got to recognize him.

The Chairperson: Yes.

S. Burrows: Yes. It's not a burden to retailers. You talk to all of the retailers who have this burden on them for bear spray and I check on them regularly to make sure they're abiding by it.

But I have a group of inner-city activists, we took on the vacant buildings. We identified 200 vacant buildings for the City of Winnipeg, and the minute this legislation is in force, I will be organizing them and they will be going around and identifying the small stores that are selling these dangerous weapons. And we will let them know we're coming in because we'll be online, and I'll guarantee you that, very quickly, they will stop selling these dangerous weapons.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Burrows.

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Thank you, Mr. Burrows, for your presentation. And I notice that you did direct a lot of your comments to me. You're preaching to the choir. I believe that there has to be safety within all of our communities in Manitoba.

So my question is: Do you think this legislation goes far enough?

S. Burrows: No legislation ever goes far enough to satisfy me. I would've—I tried to convince the minister that he could bring this into place through regulation rather than waiting for—and this is the type of compromise, the same compromise I made with Kelvin Goertzen. I wasn't happy that the ban on bear spray wasn't a complete ban, but one of the things—one of the reasons I tend to be successful in what I do, making our community better, is that I accept compromises. And one of the other things I do is, quite often, I can define the issue, and there's experts in the field who can come up with the actual implementation—the solution. I'm accepting of this.

If two years from now, we're still having a major problem—if it's on the front page of the Free Press that somebody's attacked with a machete, I will guarantee you, I will be back, and I will ask you to help me lobby the minister to make it tougher.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, please come back any time, Sel, and you can lobby me directly, you know that. And I'm happy to work with you on all this stuff.

If we were to lobby the federal government, and that's—I'm talking now as minister in-responsible in terms of the provincial government. If the provincial government was to lobby the federal government to be more restrictive on these dangerous edged weapons, do you think that would be an effective next step in terms of something that we can do to kind of move the ball down the field, so to speak?

S. Burrows: Can I go ahead?

Yes. There's something that could be very helpful. If anybody goes online, there is actually a thing of all

the knives and types of knives that are banned at the moment. And it's—for people like me in the community, when I can flash that at a store when they're selling a spring knife, and I can say, hey, what the hell are you doing? It's there—getting the machetes and the other long weapons listed on that as well.

But one of the things is that there's three levels of government. If we are going to be successful in making our communities safer, we need the federal government; we need the city government and the provincial government all to be working. And I'm going to make a comment about the city.

These are young men, mostly, that are carrying these machetes. My joke is that the new City of Winnipeg recreation program for the inner city of Winnipeg is juggling machetes. Over the last few years, all of the recreation programs in the inner city have been—have gone.

You've got Mark Chipman, a private sector person, running a—hockey teams. Otherwise, there's no teams. I was a rec director in the inner city 45 years ago, and I had the director—the deputy chief of police, John Tronerad [*phonetic*] at the time, driving around, trying to find out why the juvenile crime rate in urban renewal area 2 had just about disappeared.

So, particularly to my Conservative friends here, if you could have a little chat with the mayor and tell him that \$150 million for a rec centre in south Winnipeg is not the priority; the priority is get a professional recreation director in every inner-city community centre. It's cheap at the price. It's one of the things I was able to do.

I got phys. ed students on the practicum. I got all sorts of resources from the outside. I twinned with River Heights community centre, and we brought resources in for recreation, and recreation is one of the major things to prevent juvenile crime.

We need to take the pressure off the police so the police can be dealing with the real hard-core stuff. But when we cut back on programs in the inner city, we're just creating more problems, so—

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Burrows. Time has expired.

We'll move on back to Mrs. Fernanda Vallejo, who joins us on Zoom.

Mrs. Vallejo has been removed from the speakers list. She's been called a second time, so her name has been dropped off.

This concludes the list of presenters that I have before me.

* * *

The Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with the clause-by-clause consideration of these bills?

An Honourable Member: Numerical.

The Chairperson: Numerical has been suggested.

Bill 38—An Act Respecting Child and Family Services (Indigenous Jurisdiction and Other Amendments)

The Chairperson: We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 38.

* (18:40)

Does the minister responsible for Bill 38 have an opening statement?

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister of Families): First and foremost, I want to say miigwech to everyone who has put so much time and effort into developing the legislation that we have for committee review here today. There are folks sitting with us, our amazing team in this room right now with us, and so I just want to say miigwech for all of the expertise and all of the hard work that goes into this.

I don't know if folks, you know, across the way realize how much work has gone into this. And so a lot of consultation, a lot of discussions everywhere. So I really just want to acknowledge the folks that have put so much time into this.

I take the input into the development of the legislation by Indigenous and CFS partners very seriously. Bill 38 is part of ongoing legislation and policy changes to support Indigenous nations on their path of reclaiming CFS jurisdiction. Since my very first day as Minister of Families, it has been my priority to collaborate with Indigenous governance—governments and communities in returning the care of children and youth back to the families and nations where it belongs, where it has always belonged.

I was pleased to see a broad support for Bill 38 during its second reading on October 10, 2024. It was clear both sides of the House recognize its importance. I also want to acknowledge something that my opposition colleague said in her speech—*[interjection]*—that happens to all of us, all good—in supporting the bill. And I quote: This is not just a piece of legislation. It is a commitment to supporting Indigenous communities in reuniting children with their families and

ensuring that children grow up connected to their culture and their families. End quote.

I do acknowledge my critic—I think my critic and I have actually a pretty good working relationship, and I appreciate the support for Bill 38, so I say miigwech to you as well.

While our government has been explicit about prioritizing this legislation, I want to acknowledge that statement because it reminds us that we cannot let partisan politics get in the way of this sacred decolonizing work.

On May 13, 2024, myself and our team hosted a roundtable with First Nations rights holders, joined by the Premier (Mr. Kinew). We signed a declaration of understanding to show our shared commitment to restoring jurisdiction of child welfare to First Nation rights holders. This is something that's never been done in the history of Manitoba, and I'm so proud our government was able to sit in a respectful way with leadership from across the province on this shared priority.

And just last Friday, we hosted—one of our commitments at that May meeting with rights holders was within six months we would host a roundtable with technicians, and we just did that on Friday, and we had technicians from all across Manitoba, including our PTOs and including chiefs that came to support the roundtable as well. And so that also—pulling together all of the technicians has never been done in Manitoba's history, and so I'm really proud of the work that our team is doing.

And I actually just want to give a little shout-out. We had a really phenomenal yet adorable and funny presentation at the roundtable by two matriarchs/grandmothers/front-line support workers from St. Theresa Point. And they were showing their program that they support new moms and families, and one of the things that they do in their program is they give traditional little baby cradles, like Anishinaabe baby cradles. And they were showing all of these pictures. And as I was watching these women, and they were so funny and so cute. But as I was watching their presentation, and you just see our beautiful babies, like, our beautiful babies literally wrapped in our culture. And that's the type of work that we're talking about when we're talking about decolonizing child welfare and restoring that which always existed in our communities. And I thought that their presentation of their program was such a fitting example of that.

So, I don't know if they're going to watch this but I just want them to know that they were the stars of the show on—at the roundtable, and I just thought that they were so beautiful in the work that they're doing.

These proposed amendments support the transition to Indigenous CFS laws with ongoing co-ordination between provincial child welfare systems and services delivered under Indigenous CFS laws. They were shared at the roundtable and the changes outlined in this bill are part of the transformative collaborative work being done between our government and Indigenous partners.

We work closely with technical staff from Southern Chiefs' Organization, MKO, AMC, MMF, and a good relationship with the leadership at our leadership council, which I also want to acknowledge, all of our leadership.

I believe that the outcome of this work is historic legislation and it's deserving of the full support of this committee.

And again, once again, miigwech for all of the hard work.

The Chairperson: Thank you to the honourable minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mrs. Carrie Hiebert (Morden-Winkler): I don't have any formal opening statement prepared, but I just want to say a few words of how important it is for children to be able to stay home with their parents and mothers if they can, and that we should be doing whatever we can to support those parents so that the children get to stay home.

And I think that's just such an important part and have—being the new critic into this role in Families is—it's been very new for me and I'm looking forward to working together with the minister and with both sides of the government to try to do whatever we can to set families up for success. Excuse me.

And that's my goal and it is to make sure we can do that, and just to make sure we set up the agencies, as well, that are going to be, you know, taking over the child welfare and just to be able to give them what they need and make sure that these children don't fall through the cracks.

And I think that's a priority that we all have, that we just want to make sure that everybody's needs are met and that we can do the best we can. And I'm really

happy to support this and as it goes forward and—today.

So, thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Hiebert.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clauses 3 through 6—pass; clauses 7 through 9—pass; clauses 10 through 13—pass; clauses 14 through 17—pass; clauses 18 and 19—pass; clauses 20 through 23—pass; clauses 24 and 25—pass; clauses 26 through 28—pass; clauses 29 through 33—pass; clauses 34 through 37—pass; clauses 38 and 39—pass; clauses 40 and 41—pass; clauses 42 and 43—pass; clauses 44 and 45—pass; clauses 46 and 47—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

* (18:50)

Bill 39—The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act (*Continued*)

The Chairperson: Our committee will be moving on to the clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 39.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 39 have an opening statement?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I'm pleased to speak this evening on Bill 39, The Long-Bladed Weapon Control Act.

Knife and machete violence has tragically increased in our community over the past year. In fact, recent horrific crimes involving these weapons have left Manitobans fearful for their safety and the safety of their loved ones.

No one should be—should live in fear of random acts of violence as they go to work, as they take the bus or as they walk around their neighbourhood and streets.

Our government is taking action to keep Manitobans safe. Bill 39 is precedent-setting legislation in Canada, and it will make Manitoba the first province in Canada to regulate the retail sale of machetes and other long-bladed weapons, helping to

get them off our streets and get them out of the hands of criminals.

Bill 39 creates much-needed restrictions on the availability of these dangerous weapons in our province. These restrictions will ensure dangerous criminals cannot purchase the machetes along with other long-bladed weapons through retailers.

Many of these restrictions are modelled after Manitoba's successful regulation of bear spray, which resulted in nearly a 25 per cent decrease in crimes involving bear spray within the last year. Restricting access keeps Manitobans safer.

Our government stands up for victims and for their families whose lives have been torn apart by violence, and Bill 39 is an important first step in our fight against this violence, specifically with machetes. The safety of our communities, it's not a partisan issue. Manitobans are counting on us, on our government, to come together to make Bill 39 law. We need to send a clear message that we're getting tough on crime and we're getting tough on knife violence in Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chairperson: Thank you, honourable Minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): It's a great pleasure to talk on this bill that's been brought before us.

Of course, as mentioned in debate and in the Chamber, I am in support of this bill. I am in support of anything that will help reduce crime within not only Winnipeg but, of course, all of Manitoba.

I spent my entire adult life, and still am, advocating for justice and making sure that justice is served. Sometimes justice delayed is justice denied, and I was hoping that this would've come out much earlier, a bill to protect Manitobans. And I know, oftentimes, myself, through the minister or our party, is criticized on different aspects.

But, you know, I look back. Even the very strong NDP supporter that was here today presenting brought a newspaper clipping and the headlines jump out: Tories praised for police task force. And we look at these and the work that the Tories have done. There's a picture here with premier Heather Stefanson, it said at a press conference at The Forks on Thursday—and I'm not too sure of the date—Premier Stefanson

announced an integrated provincial police unit to target high-risk offenders.

So all of these are actions that are done by this, and then the next part talks about the funding on detention centre in Brandon and funds that were flowed there.

So I say this; I'm trying to make the relevance here is that I have always been a backer of laws that will help our communities, that will help Manitobans and keep us safe. As I mentioned to the one and only speaker on this bill, I asked does he think this went far enough, and, of course, it doesn't, and I agree. I think the bill could go much further, but I will concede it is a very good first step.

And with that, I'm ready to open up the clause by clause.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Balcaen.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there's an agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Shall clause 1 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I heard a no.

Mr. Wiebe: I have an amendment to propose. I move

THAT Clause 1(1) of the Bill be amended in clause (a) of the—proposed—definition "long-bladed weapon" by striking out "metal blade" and substituting "blade made of metal or other prescribed material".

The Chairperson: Is there leave from the committee to consider the amendment as printed? [*Agreed*]

THAT Clause 1(1) of the Bill be amended in clause (a) of the definition "long-bladed weapon" by striking out "metal blade" and substituting "blade made of metal or other prescribed material".

* (19:00)

So it's been moved by the Honourable Mr. Wiebe that clause 1 of the—it has been moved by the Honourable Mr. Wiebe

THAT Clause 1(1) of the Bill be amended in clause (a) of the definition "long-bladed weapon" by striking out "metal blade" and substituting "blade made of metal or other prescribed material".

What is the will of the committee—the amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Wiebe: This amendment gives us a little bit of regulatory wiggle room with regards to these weapons that we're talking about.

Of course, we've talked about this as the—a machete bill. And so of course, there's no, you know, set definition of a machete. There's a lot of sort of ambiguity about exactly what constitutes a machete. What we do know is, is that there is—there's sort of an understanding in the public of what these weapons are. And of course, there's an ability for us to capture some of that in the bill.

What this amendment is going to do is give us some room outside of that to, you know, understand where this might be going. We—you know, we've talked a little bit about 3-D-printed weapons or other items. Of course, you know, working with our public safety division folks, law enforcement. I should mention that the MACP has—you know, wasn't here tonight but submitted a submission, a letter in support of the work that we're doing. They understand that we want to just make sure that any kind of, you know, future, different material that might be used in these kind of weapons, that that's also captured in the legislation.

It was an important amendment to make. I hope we have support of all members of the committee.

The Chairperson: Are there any other members wishing to debate?

Mr. Balcaen: I think this is a very good amendment. I know it was discussed when the bill briefing was on, and I brought this forward both about the fact that 3-D printers could be used in the future, hard-edged weapons that are other than metal, compressed plastics and those sort of areas. So I appreciate the minister listening and bringing this—forward this change.

I do have a question is—where it talks about other prescribed material. Is there a definition of that, or do we just go with anything that meets within the act?

Mr. Wiebe: No, there isn't. And I appreciate the question.

As I said in my opening statement, what we hope this does is gives us a bit of regulatory wiggle room. We understand sort of the landscape or the lay of the land with these weapons maybe today, and that might change in the future.

So by presenting it in this way, it does give our regular regulators a little bit more freedom to understand the current environment in which these weapons are being used.

The Chairperson: Is there any other debate?

Is the committee ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

The Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT Clause 1(1) of the Bill be amended in clause (a) of the definition "long-bladed weapon" by striking out "metal blade" and substituting "blade made of metal or other prescribed material".

Amendment—pass.

Clause 1 as amended—pass.

Shall clauses 2 through 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: Clauses 2 through—oh, I hear a no.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, I have an amendment to bring forward regarding clause—

The Chairperson: Sorry, Mr. Balcaen, we'll just—so proceeding clause by clause.

Clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass.

Shall clause 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, I do have—sorry, I'm just getting some feedback here. I do have an amendment, a proposed amendment to bring forward to strengthen this bill.

The Chairperson: Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, so the amendment that I would like to move is to change—or to add 4.1, and the title being, no sale if purchasing for minor.

And the script of that being, a retailer must not sell a long-bladed weapon to a person if the retailer has reasonable grounds to—

The Chairperson: Mr. Balcaen, you'll have to read the motion as written: moved by and so forth, or, so I move that. [*interjection*] No worries.

Mr. Balcaen: I move

THAT—sorry—the following be added after Clause 4 of the Bill and before the centred heading "SALES RECORDS":

No sale if purchasing for minor

4.1 A retailer must not sell a long-bladed weapon to a person if the retailer has reasonable grounds to believe that the person is purchasing the long-bladed weapon to give or sell to a person under 18 years of age.

The Chairperson: The amendment is in order and the floor is now open for debate—oh, my apologies.

It has been moved by Mr. Balcaen

THAT the following be added after Clause 4 of the Bill and before the centred heading "SALES RECORDS":

No sale if purchasing for minor

4.1 A retailer must not sell a long-bladed weapon to a person if the retailer has reasonable grounds to believe that the person is purchasing the long-bladed weapon to give or sell it to a person under 18 years of age.

The amendment is in order.

And the floor is now open for debate.

Mr. Balcaen: Just a little bit of background on this. Again, with discussions with the minister and during our various discussions on this topic, one of the areas I've—was concerned with was what's known as straw purchases, or somebody who goes in and makes the purchase for another person. In this case, minors are already exempt from making the purchase.

So I'm hoping that adding a little bit more legislative authority, it will stop adults from purchasing for youth, which often happens in a gang lifestyle or in other areas. So that is my hopes of this amendment, to strengthen the act that the minister has brought forward.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Balcaen.

Any other debate?

Mr. Wiebe: Appreciate the opportunity to address this proposed amendment before the committee this evening.

I got to admit, I'm a little confused, because as I mentioned in debate just the other day, I was keenly listening to the reaction of the members opposite. Wanted to hear—I was hoping for their clear support of this bill. But instead I heard the member opposite go out in the media and talk about the burden that this was going to—that this new law would place on retailers.

Now, I first of all want to set the record straight, because retailers have been in full support of the work that we've done. We, of course, have heard from some of them, you know, publicly in the media. And we're not talking big retailers. We're talking about retailers of all sizes, who have said very clearly that they understand the regulatory environment that we're proposing to set up here, the rules and laws and exactly what they need to do to be in—to adhere to the law. And they've been very supportive of our work and supportive of the bill as we presented it.

That being said, I think there's always room for improvement. There's—you know, we brought our own amendments here this evening.

* (19:10)

What puzzles me here tonight is that the member opposite is bringing forward a bill—an amendment to this bill which puts a lot of burden and onus, I would say, on the retailer, when he asks the retailer to, you know, justify what reasonable grounds might be to believe whether the person is purchasing the long-bladed weapon for someone else, someone who is under 18.

Now, you know, this is all speculation on my part. I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done to, you know, go back to retailers, understand the concerns that they might have. But maybe a more substantive argument might be that we need to have the legal advice whether—you know, unfortunately, I think we mentioned this in our earlier debate, that there is a, you know, there is a Criminal Code element here that we're very much, you know, working within.

Of course, I—as I mentioned to Mr. Burrows earlier, the presenter, I'm very happy to push the federal government. In fact, we were just in Yellowknife at an FPT meeting, you know, talking to the federal government, talking to the federal ministers about ways that they can help us protect Manitoban citizens. We're going to continue that work.

But I guess what concerns me in this amendment is that, you know, it doesn't seem like the member opposite has done any of that work and, in fact, I guess

what I'm concerned about too is that, you know, he had one position yesterday or day before, and now he comes out with one that seems to go counter to that—comments that he made earlier.

This is focused on the point of sale, and it's important to understand that the work that—or the bill that we're presenting here this evening has very strict penalties attached, fines that would be levied against individuals and against retailers. These are serious penalties, and this is a serious bill that's going to address those by broadening this out in this way. You know, there might be some concern about the ability of retailers to adhere to this in a way that, you know, speaks to the spirit of this bill and to the focus and to the purpose of what we're trying to do here.

So while I appreciate that members opposite want to be—work collaboratively, and I'm always open to new ideas and new ways of going about this, I think he's off base on this particular amendment because it really doesn't have the backing that I think he hopes it would.

And it gives us definitely some concern to bring it here in committee rather than going through the normal process of, you know, amending the bill or speaking to the stakeholders and ensuring that this meets the legal standard.

So for those reasons, we are not going to be supporting this motion here tonight.

The Chairperson: Mr. Balcaen, would you like to respond?

Mr. Balcaen, go ahead.

Mr. Balcaen: I'd certainly like to respond to this.

So obviously it has gone from a collaborative approach, one that really shouldn't be political, to a complete political approach by this minister.

He talks about wanting to make sure that Manitobans are protected, that Manitobans are safe. This legislation amendment is doing exactly that. It's looking out for Manitobans, making sure that the bill itself could actually have a little bit more teeth, a little bit more process. But of course, because the minister didn't think of this himself, honourable Chair, it's not a good idea.

So I've seen this time and time again with discussions about collaborative approaches, and this minister has no interest in working collaboratively with myself or with anybody who doesn't agree with his ideology or his thoughts on a bill.

And so, again, I came into this role as a new MLA, hoping I could, you know, work with government, make a difference, advance things forward. Obviously that is not the case with this minister nor this government this time.

He says it's a serious bill. I agree, it's a serious bill. So let's get serious about prohibitions on people that can buy it for minors, that can purchase it to make a straw purchase.

If the minister actually had law enforcement experience or any experience at all in the justice system, he would know that this is a major point, straw purchases and purchases made for other people. But the minister lacks this fundamental understanding of justice systems.

He talks about the Criminal Code. This is a provincial legislation, this has nothing to do with the Criminal Code. And you know, I'd be happy to provide lessons later on, the difference between provincial legislation and federal legislation. I'd be happy to meet anytime with him and educate him on that area. But it's disappointing to say the least, that this minister is playing politics over safety with Manitobans.

I would hope that he would reconsider, and if he wants to follow through with saying, you know, have to go back and talk with retailers, then now's an opportunity to stand up, withdraw this bill and go and talk to retailers and get more powerful legislation put forward that will benefit all Manitobans.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

Mr. Wiebe: Now let's talk about putting politics over public safety. This is the member who wasted the Legislature's time for months on end debating a bill that, at the end of the day, oh, lo and behold, sounds like they wanted to actually support.

He knew, and he should know if he's—talks about his law enforcement experience, he should know very well the importance of that bill and the importance of those folks who, in our department and in law enforcement, were calling for that bill, were asking for us to pass it. Day after day, day after day, he blocked the bill, he—amendment to the bill, and all kinds of procedural games, and he refused to pass it.

Well, all of a sudden, at the end of the day, he says, oh, we're all in support. Well, I find those words to ring hollow, honourable Chair, because this member has clearly listened to his political advisors rather than acting in the best interest of Manitobans as a

former law enforcement official. He had that opportunity to do that and to show his mettle and show what he was made out of. He refused to take that challenge seriously and he played games with it instead. That was his record in the spring.

Now, that being said, here we are. We've got another opportunity. We've got another opportunity to bring a piece of legislation forward that—you know, I mean, we hear from community activists. He says he's law enforcement; he knows the best. Why is it that the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police is supporting this legislation? Why is it that law enforcement lines up behind the legislation that we bring forward? Why is it that we have our Indigenous partners at the table, we have the Winnipeg police at the table, we have absolutely everybody at the table saying get this legislation passed. He goes out in the hallway and he says, ah, window dressing. Window dressing, Honourable Speaker. Window dressing.

Can you imagine the disrespect that shows to those folks who worked with us to pull this legislation together and to get it in a state that can make a real difference in our communities? I think the member opposite needs to reflect on what it means to be a legislator and somebody who comes to this building in the true sense of trying to make things better rather than, well, there's lots of games to be played. I know there's lots of people in his ear who spend a lot of time telling him, you know, the nice—the snappy words he can say and the tactics in the Chamber and all this kind of business. I know exactly how that game is played, and I thought he might be different; apparently he's not. Apparently he's willing to, you know—

The Chairperson: Order. Order.

I will have to caution the honourable minister to keep his remarks relevant to the amendment that's up for consideration.

Mr. Wiebe: Very good caution, and in fact exactly where I was headed right now, because when we're talking about this amendment, you know, again, the member opposite—you know, like I've heard other—I won't get into which members, but there are some members that think they always know best.

This member seems to think that he understands the amount of consultation and work that went into designing a bill that is in adherence with the law but is also something that we can work with retailers and community activists who, ultimately, are the ones who are pushing for this change to happen. And, you know, the member opposite decided to run for a party

that for seven and a half years decided to do nothing. We heard directly from Mr. Burrows today. He had a close personal relationship and contact with the former minister who refused—we have public comments from the minister who refused to act on this. We're not refusing to act on it; we're acting today where this is a first step but there's lots more to do. We're going to get it done.

And, you know, again, the member opposite can show his mettle. He can show who he really is. If he believes that public safety is the most important goal, then he should support this legislation. Let's get it passed tonight.

The Chairperson: Before I proceed to opening the floor back up to debate, again, I would just like to remind the committee that we will have to keep our remarks and our debate relevant to the amendment at hand, as well as direct all remarks through the Chair as well.

Is there any further debate?

* (19:20)

Mr. Balcaen: I would certainly like the chance to respond to that and put on record that this turned into a personal attack rather than discussing the fact that we're talking about legislation here that's very important for Manitoba.

So the minister mentioned that he's got the lineup of support from the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police and a letter supporting that, and that is good. But I also had opportunity to speak with a number of executives of the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police and chiefs of police proper, their deputies and their inspectors in this last week, and they all said that there is no police oversight in this. There is no police authority.

So, you know, the backing that the minister believes he has on this is for the initial start, but he's also lacking this.

I also spoke with the individuals who told me that this would be something that would be very important—this amendment that we're bringing forward—to make sure that there is another option for them to look at, because they're very familiar with straw poll—straw purchases, and this would help strengthen this legislation.

I assumed, and I guess I've learned obviously shouldn't assume, but I thought and, you know, had enough integrity to look at this bill—look at the safety

of Manitobans and choose policy over politics and bring something that would really help Manitobans.

So again, this would be the minister's opportunity to show that he respects law enforcement and he respects all people that he's in—he's charged with to protect their safety.

Thank you, honourable Chair.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Balcaen.

Once again, before proceeding to further debate, I would like to remind the committee that the matter at hand is the amendment proposed by Mr. Balcaen. While we may not all agree on everything under the sun, we have to be able to discuss what's at hand in a productive manner in a committee of this stature.

Mr. Wiebe: Very good guidance, honourable Chair, and thank you very much for keeping us on track here this evening.

You know, again, I—you know, I'm a bit perplexed because in the minister—in the member's opening statements, he says, you know, how appreciative he is of our amendment and how—look at how well we work together. And, you know, he wants to take credit for every change that's made and he says, well, you know, we're willing to work together.

And yet now he thinks this is a political—some kind of political move or endeavour, you know. And I'm seriously curious to know why, you know, this member seems to think that the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, the law enforcement that we've consulted with, the retailers that we've consulted with—that he knows better than them or that he's somehow thought beyond what they have to say.

And I'm just—you know, I'm really—I'm surprised, because, you know, we know that our Public Safety Investigations unit is going to be doing incredible work to, you know, enforce this piece of legislation. They are eager along with the community, as you heard; Mr. Burrows is willing to have his input, you know, law enforcement's having their input. This is going to make a real difference.

But of course, the member opposite seems to think that he knows better than all of them and—you know, and doesn't want to take any advice or guidance from them.

That's not the approach that we're going to take. It's about that one Manitoba, and it is about making sure that we're bringing everybody together and bringing forward legislation that makes a big difference.

The member opposite—you know, I take—maybe take from his comments tonight—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Point of order, from Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes. I believe, honourable Chair, you mentioned that we should be discussing the amendments, not going off on 'diatrabs' and making things political.

So I would suggest that the minister brings us back to the amendments.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Balcaen. This is a point of order and I will ask the honourable minister to return to the amendment that's at hand.

* * *

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate that. That is exactly what we're talking about here and exactly the kind of substantive conversation I think that we need to have.

But, you know, it's just—it's surprising to me that the member opposite is—seems to think that he somehow knows better than—in all of the collaborators that we have on this particular piece of legislation—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: We have a point of order, for Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes. Again, from your guidance and from what you've said thrice now: keep on topic. And the minister keeps going on personal attacks. We're here to debate a bill and an amendment and I think it needs to come to some decorum and bring it back to what we're talking about.

The Chairperson: That is, in fact, a point of order, and I will remind the honourable minister once more to keep the debate relevant to the amendment that's on hand, so that we can proceed back to the clause-by-clause debate of this bill.

* * *

Mr. Wiebe: Again, I appreciate your guidance there, honourable Chair, and I think you're exactly right. It's about this amendment and it's about the impact that it might have when it comes to the intent of the bill.

And that's really what I think the point—the larger point that I'm trying to make is that I think the member

opposite has missed the point of the bill and I don't think he's—I don't think he's on the right track.

Now, that being said, I do think that there is room for collaboration and again, why we are ensuring that when it comes to this bill, we're going to keep working with the community to make sure that we're listening to them, and we're going to continue to take action on public safety. That's what our government's all about. And that's what we're going to endeavour to do.

So with that, thank you very much, honourable Chair, for your indulgence.

The Chairperson: Is there any further debate on the amendment at hand?

Seeing no further debate, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: Okay. The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT the following be added after Clause 4 of the Bill and before the centred heading "SALES RECORDS":

No sale if purchasing for minor

4.1 A retailer must not sell a long-bladed weapon to a person if the retailer has reasonable grounds to believe that the person is purchasing the long-bladed weapon to give or sell it to a person under 18 years of age.

Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

The Chairperson: All those in favour of the amendment, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

The Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Chairperson: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

The amendment is accordingly defeated.

Recorded Vote

An Honourable Member: A recorded vote.

The Chairperson: A recorded vote has been requested.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Ayes 2, Nays 3.

The Chairperson: The amendment is accordingly defeated.

* * *

The Chairperson: So moving back on to clause by clause—oh, okay. So returning to clause 4.

Clause 4—pass.

Shall clauses 9 through 11 pass?—oh, oops, I skipped; my apologies.

Clauses 5 through 8—pass; clauses 9 through 11—pass.

Shall clause 12 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Wiebe: I move

THAT Clause 12(a) of the Bill be replaced with the following:

(a) prescribing metal—sorry—prescribing blade materials or blade length, or both, for the purpose of clause (a) of the definition "long-bladed weapon" in subsection 1(1);

The Chairperson: It has been moved by the honourable minister

THAT Clause 12(a) of the Bill be replaced with the following:

(a) prescribing blade materials or blade length, or both, for the purpose of clause (a) of the definition "long-bladed weapon" in subsection 1(1);

The amendment is in order.

And the floor is now open for a debate.

Is there any debate on this amendment?

* (19:30)

Mr. Balcaen: Certainly, and, again, I just want to put on record that I'm happy to see these amendments come forward and working collaboratively on these. It was brought through to this minister suggestions from myself to change this legislation, so, obviously, as much as he may think otherwise, he does listen at times.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I'm perplexed. I think somebody has described it as pickerel on a dock before in this Legislature, but, you know, I—it's hard to keep track of whether I'm collaborative in listening and working

with the member or not. Hard to keep track where he's at.

What I will say is we've listened very closely to, as I said, law enforcement, retailers and community activists who have done a ton of work on this, and, really, that's the genesis and reason why we're, you know, making small amendments but important ones—and important ones that add to a piece of legislation that really makes a big—or hopefully will make a big difference when it comes to public safety. It's about keeping you safe, and that's really what this legislation hopes to do.

So thank you, honourable Chair.

The Chairperson: Further debate?

Seeing no further debate, is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

The Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT Clause 12(a) of the Bill be replaced with the following:

(a) prescribing blade materials or blade length, or both, for the purpose of clause (a) of the definition "long-bladed weapon" in subsection 1(1);

Amendment—pass.

Clause 12 as amended—pass.

Clauses 13 and 14—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 217—The Men's Mental Health
Awareness Week Act
(Commemoration of Days, Weeks
and Months Act Amended)
(Continued)**

The Chairperson: We'll move on to Bill 217. Thank you, everybody. We'll move on to Bill 217.

Does the bill sponsor, the honourable member for Dawson Trail, have an opening statement?

MLA Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): So I'm proud to be sitting here this evening with all of you.

With this bill, we are now the first province in Canada to recognize officially a week devoted to men's mental health. My colleague from beforehand, Blair Yakimoski, is in the room, and I use him as a reference for mental health. Blair was actually one of the first MLAs to share about his mental health, just

not on the Chamber floor; he did it in a very public way after his nomination in the riding beforehand.

I—since the introduction and since I've talked about this on the legislative floor, there have been multiple men and women who have approached me to share their stories. And I shared a little bit about that in the House, so I won't go too much into detail on it, but we're already making an impact just by talking about it. We're removing that stigma. We're now moving to having open conversations in coffee shops, gas stations and just generally in public about mental health, and we're making it normal to talk about this. We're removing that stigma.

I'm going to thank all the members on both sides of the House. You've all shared stories. I appreciate your stories. I've been approached on, again, all sides; this is not a partisan issue. This is an issue about, you know, men and their mental health. And, really, men's mental health affects everyone. It affects women, as well, because when you find yourself at your weakest, as I did, there are—excuse me, sorry—there are repercussions, and it did hit me quite—it hit my heart quite a bit when both people shared about divorce. In my case, it wasn't the divorce that broke my mental health but it is my mental health that broke and caused the divorce. So I'm with you; I understand.

I guess my final reminder is it's okay not to be okay, just don't go through it alone. And also that people with—you need to respond with kindness to one another because you never know what that other individual is going through on the other side. And sometimes, it's as simple as a smile that will make you reconsider or make your day just a little bit brighter.

I know—I think of my dad—and this will be my last remark on this. But I think about my dad who was brought up and was told to be tough, to walk it off, to not—men don't cry—which obviously didn't apply to me because I'm in tears right now. But he would also mask a lot of his emotions with humour.

I remember, though, when he found out that this bill was going forward and that it was going to be passed into law, he called me up—and this is something my dad will never really do—he simply said, I'm proud of you, son. And I thought, okay, so if we've started a conversation that's going to ripple through everywhere, and—this is good. This is going to be good for society. This is going to be good for men. We're losing them far too quickly and at an alarming rate, and my hope with this is simply that we don't lose any more men to mental health—and young men.

So thank you so much, all of you. This is incredibly important and not just to me but to Manitoba as a whole.

The Chairperson: Thank you, MLA Lagassé. Like I said to many of our presenters, it's really difficult to be vulnerable in a space like this, so thank you for sharing with us today.

Does any other member wish to make an opening statement?

MLA Mike Moroz (River Heights): I just want to, again, thank the member for bringing this forward. We spend a lot of time in the Chamber where debating things that at the end of it, I'm not certain whether we've particularly accomplished anything, and this is not one of those occasions. It's super clear to everyone who's engaged in the conversation the value of the discussion, the importance of it and how meaningful it will be moving forward for men for years to come.

And I want to just quickly retell the story that for me really reinforces the importance of this: the friend whose father was diagnosed with a mental illness. And the family was terrified. He was a carpenter in the community who contracted himself out. The family was terrified to let anybody know he had a mental illness. And the commentary was, look, if he had cancer, we'd tell everybody, and there'd be great waves of sympathy, and people would rush to continue to work with him. But that's not the case with mental illness.

Hopefully a bill like this helps us overcome some of that stigma and encourages men to reach out for the support that they need and for communities to understand why they need to step up and be supportive.

So, again, thank you for your work, and I look forward to passing this.

The Chairperson: Thank you for sharing, MLA Moroz.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The hour being 7:40 p.m., what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

The Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 7:40 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 39

Dear Committee:

As you may be aware, members of the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police (MACP) are derived from the leadership of all Police agencies in Manitoba – leaders of more than 4,000 Manitoba police officers, law enforcement and civilian staff. One of the core functions of our group is to enhance the safety of all Manitobans and be leaders in public safety and police excellence.

On behalf of the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police, we would like to emphasize our support for this legislation as an important tool in our fight to keep Manitoba communities safe. As we have publicly stated previously, in recognizing the rise in edged weapon attacks, this legislation will go a long way in limiting the supply of long-bladed weapons to individuals with dangerous intentions.

Keeping Manitoba as a safe place to work, live and play is a top priority for Manitoba law enforcement and this legislation clearly supports law enforcement in furthering that goal.

Please let me know if you need any further information.

Yours truly,

Deputy Chief Scot Halley
President
Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police

Re: Bill 217

The Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program is dedicated to supporting the mental health and well-being of Manitoba's farming community, offering essential services to farmers, their families, and their employees. Recognizing the unique challenges faced by those in agriculture, this program is funded by a collaborative effort of government, industry partners, and individual donors who understand the importance of mental health in the farming sector.

Our understanding is that Bill 217 seeks to raise the awareness of the importance of mental health and reduce the associated stigma, especially as it relates to men, by proclaiming a Men's Mental Health Awareness Week.

We would support his initiative because despite positive changes over recent years, stigma around mental health remains a significant barrier, especially in agricultural communities. We understand the impact of this stigma and are deeply committed to efforts that normalize mental health care and make these services more accessible. Every action that helps reduce stigma and promotes mental health is greatly valued and aligns with the core mission of our program.

With the financial support of the Manitoba Government and generous sponsors, the Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program can offer family farms and their workers up to nine free counseling sessions each year. Sessions are designed with flexibility in mind, ensuring minimal wait times and the highest standards of accessibility. Our counselors are not only qualified mental health professionals but also bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in agriculture, allowing them to relate closely to the concerns, pressures, and needs of the farming community.

Thank you for your efforts to foster openness and build awareness for mental well-being in our agricultural community.

Sincerely,

Marcel Hacault, Chair
Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program

Re: Bill 217

Hello,

I'm sorry I am unable to attend the committee meeting, but respectfully submit the following:

I am encouraged that bill #217 is being considered and sincerely hope for its passage. Our provinces and nation must welcome men and affirm that we are invested in their well-being, demonstrating our commitment to helping them achieve stability and purpose in their lives. By providing the necessary resources, our communities can benefit from the contributions of strong and capable men.

As a healthcare provider, I engage with men daily regarding their mental health needs, which range from mild depression to severe mental illness. Tragically, thousands of men lose their lives each year due to feelings of hopelessness and a lack of confidence in their ability to navigate difficulties. This is unacceptable. Our communities depend on men to fulfill their roles and responsibilities, advocate for fairness, engage in restorative justice, protect and guide the youth, and promote peace wherever possible. For men to succeed in these endeavors, they must feel assured of support and respect, rather than being marginalized and feeling judged.

Now more than ever, we need our men to demonstrate mental resilience; however, they face tremendous pressures and often feel misunderstood, with their needs overlooked. It is vital for the citizens of our province to express their support for men from all backgrounds so that we can collectively build strong and safe communities.

Gerry Goertzen, MA., RP.
Registered Psychotherapist

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>