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Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
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PROCEEDINGS
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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CHIEF, Kevin	Point Douglas	NDP
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 20, 2016

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, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly for the glory and honour of Thy name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

House Business

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Two points on House business: Pursuant to rule 33(8), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Saran). The title of the resolution is Accurately Reflecting the History of Newcomers in the Provincial Curriculum.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the honourable Opposition House Leader that the private member's resolution to be considered next Thursday will be one put forward by the honourable member for The Maples. The title of the resolution is Accurately Reflecting the History of Newcomers in the Provincial Curriculum.

Mr. Maloway: And, on a second matter under House business, I would ask whether there is leave to move to Bill 211, the labour relations act.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to move to Bill 211, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Applications for Certification), this morning?
[Agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

**Bill 211—The Labour Relations Amendment Act
(Applications for Certification)**

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): I move, seconded by the member from Point Douglas, that Bill 211, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Applications for Certification), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lindsey: I guess we've spent a lot of time in the House talking about the government's Bill 7, some more than others, perhaps, but Bill 7 really is meant to take us in a regressive fashion. As far as labour relations go, its sole purpose was to limit workers' ability to organize, to limit unions' ability to form.

By the introduction of this Bill 211 we hope to attempt to bring some sort of balance back to the system, although it still won't be where it should be. There's things in the bill that will make it less egregious for working people that are trying to organize to make their lives better.

We have to understand, Madam Speaker, that a workplace is not a democratic institution. It's not something where everybody has a vote every day of the week as to what takes place in that workplace. Certainly, history has shown us, and there's been multiple examples introduced into this House, about workplaces, employers, that have taken action against workers that were attempting to organize, that they've been fired, they've been intimidated, they've been threatened. So the whole premise of democracy, as the government would like to have us believe, isn't what takes place in a workplace.

With the introduction of this bill, it attempts to limit how much time, at least, an employer has to intimidate workers and threaten workers and try and get rid of workers. By lessening the amount of time that the Labour Board has to hold a vote, it limits, really, how long employers can crank the pressure up on employees and threaten them. And by attempting to bring in some balance as far as mutually agreeable places to hold a vote, keeping in mind that the workplace is controlled by the employer—it's not controlled by the workers; it's not controlled by the union—there may be very well some workplaces

where holding a vote at the workplace is the best place to do it, but there may be instances where the employer-employee relationship is so bad, that the employer is so egregious in their attempts to threaten workers to try and dissuade workers from voting in favour of a union, that some employers are just so bad—and those are the ones, really, Madam Speaker, that really want to be unionized, that really need to be unionized, but in those workplaces, perhaps, holding a vote somewhere other than actually in the workplace is the best answer.

So, Madam Speaker, if the Labour Board can find a mutually agreeable place outside the workplace to hold that vote, that would be a good thing. Keep in mind that irregardless of where the vote is held, of course, it has to be accessible to workers. It presents unique challenges, particularly in, say, northern mining camps, where workers don't actually live anywhere close to the workplace. In cases like that, a properly supervised vote by the Labour Board, held in conjunction with the employer and the union at the workplace, may be the best answer, simply because workers spread across Canada to fly home from those workplaces.

There may be other workplaces where employees—some walk to work, some drive to work—where holding the vote at the workplace is not the right answer. Then the Labour Board needs to be cognizant of that and listen to what both the employers and the unions have to say about why they want the vote held somewhere else and take that into account.

* (10:10)

The other thing that this bill really introduces is right now we know that the Labour Board is not all that successful at holding votes in a timely fashion. I could be wrong in this number, but I think it's like 70 to 76 per cent of the time that they actually manage to meet their deadlines, with no consequences if they don't meet those deadlines. Well, I shouldn't say no consequences, because, of course, there are consequences to the workers.

Because the longer the time from when the employer becomes aware there's a union drive going on to when the employees, the workers actually get to vote on whether or not they want to join a union is more time that those bad employers have to put the pressure on, to put the intimidation on, to really crank it up in the workplace, to try and scare workers, to try and threaten and intimidate. So the

more time they have to do that, the less likely the drive will be successful.

So this bill attempts to put some control in place that, really—if every vote, as the government would like to have us go along with is—every drive has to have that second vote, then, really, the Labour Board needs to step its game up. They need to ensure that every vote is held within the time frames possible, and they need to ensure that those votes are held in a really timely fashion. And, if you, again, stretch it out longer—seven days, 10 days, 20 days—it's just that much more time that the bad employers have to get into workers' heads and threaten them and intimidate them.

And keep in mind, Madam Speaker, that that threats and intimidation isn't always as blatant or as open as some people would think, that the threats quite often are more of the veiled nature. And employers are not stupid. They realize that there's certain lines that they have to be careful not to cross. Some of them obviously cross that line with great impunity. Other ones dance right on the line with how they threaten employees. But, again, it gets to the heart of the matter that the more time they have to threaten and intimidate workers, the less likely that drive is to be successful.

So this Bill 211 attempts to not just bring fairness between the employers and the employees but to really hold the Labour Board accountable, to make sure that they do what their mandate is, which is to hold the votes in a timely fashion. And there's a consequence proposed in this bill that really makes—drives the Labour Board to be successful in meeting those timelines. If they fail to meet the timelines, then automatic certification is granted. Now that may have some members opposite pulling their hair out, but, again, it's about ensuring fairness and balance in a system that this government has attempted to skew out of balance.

This bill is really about—well, it doesn't get us back where labour really wants us to be, where working people really need the legislation to be. It's really about trying to get some kind of balance back in a system that's been skewed way out of balance in favour of the employers.

Madam Speaker, I strongly urge all members of this House to really look at this Bill 211 and to vote in favour of it, because it is the best option other than the government opposite withdrawing Bill 7 altogether. And let's get back to running the business

of the government that's fair to all people, not just to one side or the other.

The current legislation, as it stands, is fine. Bill 7 is not fine. This Bill 211 attempts to bring us back into some kind of balance, although the system will still be skewed in favour of the employers and may not lead to labour peace. We've had many years of labour peace, and this bill will get us somewhere back to that.

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Questions

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

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): I do have a few questions relative to Bill 211.

First of all, I appreciate the member bringing forward this legislation and, I guess, maybe the first question is the premise of actually voting and having a secret ballot vote. I'm just wondering why opposition members are—don't want the—to allow the right of workers that may want to be unionized the right to secret ballot vote.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Clearly, the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade failed to stick around for, like—sorry, I withdraw that—didn't listen to what was being said in my earlier comments for some length about what really and truly democracy is in a workplace. Workers already have the ability to vote and do vote when they sign a union card. Anything else that the minister or the government likes to say is not exactly true. The vote takes place when an employee signs that card.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): When I read the bill, one of the things that it would do is it would reduce the time for the Manitoba Labour Board to conduct a vote on the certification application from seven days down to four days, meaning that if a union had an organizing drive take place, they could walk into the Labour Board on Monday and presumably have that vote happen as early as Friday.

Could the member tell this House why it is important that those votes do happen quickly, even more quickly than happens at present?

Mr. Lindsey: Like to thank the member for that question, and it's a very good question and it really gets to the whole heart of the matter of what we're talking about here.

The longer a period of time from the time the employer, particularly the bad employers, become aware that there's a union drive going on, that workers are attempting to organize, the more time there is for that employer to intimidate, to scare, to threaten, to fire those very workers that are trying to protect their rights. The longer that period of time, the more time there is for that employer to really step on those workers' rights and try and refrain, stop them from organizing.

Madam Speaker: I just have a caution for the member that it is not appropriate to be saying not exactly true. Those words are not recognized as parliamentary, and I would ask the member to be cautious about using that because it does imply lying and those are not words that are acceptable in debate in the House.

So I—the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Lindsey: I certainly apologize for that, Madam Speaker, and withdraw those words.

Madam Speaker: Thank you, I appreciate that.

Mr. Cullen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Relative to Bill 11, there's a clause that talks about automatic certification if application is unanimous, and I'm wondering what the member—what the intent of that particular clause is and how that would work and what—how would the term unanimous be applied? How would the—how would that happen? Is it, I mean, something that would be undertaken by the board, or what does clause unanimous mean and how would that be—come to fruition?

* (10:20)

Mr. Lindsey: I guess I'm left to wonder the minister not understanding what unanimous means. Certainly, if every employee in that unit has signed a union card, that's unanimous. If all of them—I don't know how one could be more clear in saying that.

The Labour Board, of course, makes determinations about what the suitable bargaining

unit is today, as they will tomorrow. If they've made the determination that every one of those employees has signed a card, that would be unanimous.

Mr. Swan: One of the other things that Bill 211 would do is it would provide that a vote of employees would be held at a place that must be mutually agreeable, meaning both the employee—or the union and the employer must agree. That might be the workplace, but it might not be. It might be somewhere else.

Could the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) tell this House why it is important that there be a mutually agreeable place for this important vote to be held?

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member for that question and, again, it speaks to the heart of the matter of a union certification that workplaces are not democratic institutions. They are very clearly controlled by the employer. The employer believes they have the right, then, to put up whatever signs, notices that they see fit and to conduct their business as they see fit.

Now, in some instances, the employers may very well be not that bad, and the union will agree that that is the most suitable place to hold the certification vote. It's where there's already been threats and intimidation that the union may say that's not the suitable place, so let's find another place.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): I'd like to ask the member for Flin Flon—and I thank him for bringing forward Bill 211. I mean, there's always an opportunity here, in the House to—that this is the role that we need to play, debating legislation, debating ideas and policies.

The member for Flin Flon has made comment and suggestion about consultation and the process of consultation. So, in regarding his legislation that he's bringing forward today, I'm wondering if the member can advise the—any meetings he may have had with the business organizations, whether it's the Manitoba Employers Council, the chambers, CFIB, the Winnipeg or Manitoba chambers, and when and—when those meetings were and the outcome of those discussions.

Mr. Lindsey: Certainly, I probably consulted with as many business organizations as the Premier (Mr. Pallister) has consulted with labour organizations when it came to introducing Bill 7 or making the promise to introduce Bill 7. So, certainly, that wouldn't be my go-to place for consultation.

It—this bill really is about getting back into balance so that both sides in an—a drive can feel satisfied that their rights have been protected, and that's what this bill does.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to ask the member for Flin Flon why this bill is being introduced—or why isn't this bill being introduced as an amendment to Bill 7?

Mr. Lindsey: I guess this was an attempt to really put into legislation some rights, and I suppose an amendment could have been introduced and maybe still can. We want to ensure that we've done everything possible to first convince the government to withdraw Bill 7, because it's wrong. It's wrong-headed. It starts with the wrong premise and leads us down a path that will not lead to labour peace, that does nothing to protect working Manitobans. So, if this is one more step in the process that we can hopefully convince this government that a more reasonable approach needs to be taken to get us into balance—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Swan: I just want to follow up on the question I asked earlier about a neutral polling place. This bill would provide that a polling place that's chosen by agreement, or by order of the board if there is no agreement, has to be reasonably accessible to the employees, including employees without access to a motor vehicle. I wonder if the member for Flin Flon could tell us more why it would be important that a neutral place be accessible to all employees in the workplace.

Mr. Lindsey: I thank the member for that question.

The employees, the workers' ability to vote cannot be impacted by their inability to get to the polling place, particularly when we're talking about new Canadians. They may not have access to the same transportation that the rest of us would take for granted. There may be a bus that picks them up, an employer bus, perhaps, that takes them to the workplace which then gives the employer another opportunity to put the pressure on. So making it mutually agreeable really starts the relationship down the right path.

Mr. Martin: The member for Flin Flon has suggested that signing a card is equivalent to a vote and is a valid approach. I'm wondering if the member will be putting forward any kind of amendments to alter the election of the Speaker of the House, the leader of his own party, the president of the

Manitoba Federation of Labour or, indeed, the general election, to bring it in line with the suggestion that the signing of a card is a more preferable testament or appreciation of open democracy here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Lindsey: I'd like to thank the member for really pointing out why we on this side believe that signing that card is a democratic process. Because that is exactly what it is: is signing the card is a democratic process and it's the best democratic process in a non-democratic workplace.

Madam Speaker: The time for questions has expired.

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade): Indeed, a pleasure to debate Bill 211 this morning, and I respect the member opposite bringing forward this piece of legislation. You know, it's been fairly clear that we, as two parties, do not agree on this premise. We've had some debate over Bill 7 over the course of the last week or so, and I'm sure we'll have some ongoing debate over Bill 7.

And, clearly, we don't agree on the principle moving forward and, you know, our view is that the secret ballot is the ultimate way to resolve an issue. It's the ultimate way democrat society works: the secret ballot. And we're trying to get away from the intimidation and coercion that we've heard about. And, you know, our view is just by signing a card you're not getting away from that intimidation or coercion. And we've got all kinds of reports here of people that have been intimidated or they've been coerced into signing cards and, quite frankly, we don't think that's the right premise.

You know, as the member from Morris just quite rightly pointed out, if the opposition believe that signing a card is a sign of a vote, well, then, maybe we should be rethinking the entire voting process we have. You know, clearly, six months ago, Manitobans had a secret ballot vote on who was going to form government in Manitoba. You know, if you have that secret ballot vote there's no intimidation, no coercion. You can go in and you sign that X on the line of your own accord so there is no coercion there.

Madam Speaker, there's a few clauses in this particular legislation that's being proposed this morning in 211 that I think we should have some

discussion about. I think they could bring forward some concerns. I'm sure the Labour Board would have some concerns about some of the provisions in this particular legislation.

In one of the clauses that's used, it includes the words as described in the application. And I think what that may do, it appears maybe it could be an attempt to override some of the board's power in terms of their ability to alter the proposed bargaining unit as it deems appropriate under the current section 39(2). So, given that a union could, in this case, describe or propose a bargaining unit in any way it sees fit, this could result in certification of unions—sorry, units—that don't make sense for bargaining purposes.

* (10:30)

So, for instance, the proposed unit could include only half of the employees in a given job classification in the workplace. So this could certainly present some options or some considerations going forward.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, in terms of this legislation, there's talk about the intimidation and coercion and threat relative to this. And there's some clauses that have been added in this legislation sort of over and above what currently exist.

So removing the board's discretion in some of these conditions here could take away its ability to consider all relevant factors in its decision. And, for example, Madam Speaker, requiring the board to certify a union in the case of just a single minor instance of coercion in respect of—in some case, maybe just a single employee out of a large number might be inappropriate. So there's some, certainly, considerations here that go over above and beyond what is existing legislation now.

And I know the other clause that looks quite vague to me makes reference to the union has evidence of membership support adequate, in the opinion of the board, for the purposes of the collecting bargaining. That, in my view, Madam Speaker, is a vague, very vague—in terms of that particular clause going forward.

Our view is—pardon me, Madam Speaker, but there is provisions in the existing act, not subject to Bill 7, that would maintain if there is coercion by an employer, that the board can ratify that union. And that is in the existing legislation. Bill 7 does not change that particular clause, so that's something that's, you know, quite important. We've consciously

just left that particular clause in the legislation and—so that any employees that were subject to coercion by an employer, that particular bargaining unit could be automatically certified.

The other issue that was raised in this legislation, and we have had some discussion in the past, is in terms of the location of votes. I know it's an issue that has been raised, and I'm looking forward to the bill getting to committee, and get the comments from the public in terms of this particular concept of where votes are heard. And I know there's talk about mutually agreeable in this particular Bill 11. Obviously, a mutually agreeable place would be the ultimate for both employer and employees, but that could lead to some considerable discussion and maybe disagreement and, quite frankly, that could lead to delays, quite honestly, in terms of getting the vote done. So that's something that may be an issue relative to this legislation.

Obviously, too, if you're looking at location, there could be an additional cost that come to bear in terms of the vote. There's no reference in this legislation in terms of who would pay for those particular added costs. I recognize the member added a clause respect to access for those that don't hold—have motor vehicles. That's an interesting clause that I hadn't thought about previously.

The other provision in this particular legislation is in terms of reducing the actual timeframe of the vote from seven days down to four. I know I certainly have had some discussions with the Labour Board in terms of the existing clause and some of the challenges the board has in terms of getting the votes done within the current five-day time period. We certainly recognize there's challenges, especially in terms of, you know, getting the information from the company and then getting the list together and then, in some cases, travelling to remote locations throughout Manitoba to get the vote done. So those are certainly the challenges that the board currently has. We know there's some issues currently in not getting the process done within the five days that are in the current legislation.

I don't—doing some research, there's no other jurisdiction that we're aware of in Canada that has a less-than-five-day provision in their legislation. We just don't think it's going to be manageable to go anything less than five days. But, again, we'll look for input from Manitobans when they come to committee on this one to see how important that is in terms of moving forward.

And I know the member opposite made comments about the shorter time frame that would allow for less intimidation or coercion. Our view is: if we have a secret ballot, at the end of five days or whatever that time frame is, that would completely take away the intimidation or coercion factor because the—because you would know—you'd not know how that particular member voted. And that's the premise behind a secret ballot. And that's really the nuts and bolts, I think, of the argument over Bill 7 and what Bill 211 proposes. In our view, either there could be intimidation or coercion over the course of four days or five days or seven days, whatever it would be, but at the end of the day that particular worker has a secret vote, a secret ballot vote. So no one else knows how that member, that employee voted. So that, in our view, takes away the premise that there would be intimidation or coercion over that piece of time. And that, Madam Speaker, is the just and the simplicity of Bill 7, is allowing workers that right to have that secret ballot vote and that's really what it's about.

Obviously, Bill 11, I appreciate the member bringing it forward. We certainly have concerns about the clauses within Bill 211.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It's pleasure to speak about Bill 211 this morning. I want to thank the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) for bringing this bill forward. And I think the government minister has just stood up and has just given a great 10-minute speech on why it is very important that this bill pass this morning and it go on to committee. And just as we'll be hearing from Manitobans on Bill 7, I think the minister has made some great points as to why Manitobans should equally have the right to debate the very, very good ideas which are brought forward by the member for Flin Flon in Bill 211.

This bill would amend The Labour Relations Act by providing for automatic certification when an application for union certification is unanimous or if there has been employer intimidation, fraud or coercion. The bill would also specify conditions for the timing and the place for a vote on the application for certification, and this bill would provide the vote must be held a mutually agreeable place. It might very well be the workplace; it may not be the workplace, and there could be some very good reasons for that, especially in situations where there is evidence that the employer has acted in a way which intentionally or unintentionally is intimidating or coercing employees to vote in a particular way.

And it is helpful in those times that the vote take place in a spot that is not within the employer's ownership or control.

And—but to get back to the main principle, having fair and balanced labour legislation is the key to strong and stable labour relations in Manitoba. It's central to keeping labour peace in Manitoba and I think any objective view of the record over the past 17 years demonstrates there has been a positive labour relationship in Manitoba. There's been very few strikes, which has been helpful. There's been very little in the way of violence on the picket lines when a strike does occur. There have been a reasonable number of applications that have been brought forward, some after a vote, some where employees have demonstrated by signing union cards in sufficient numbers, almost two thirds, where employees have had a certified bargaining unit atomically certified.

Unfortunately, there have been a number of cases where the Labour Board has had to intervene, and the Labour Board either has put certain conditions on what the employer can or can't do, or in a number of cases, has actually gone ahead and has simply declared that the workplace will be certified because of the actions of the employer.

What have we not seen in the past 17 years? In fact, what have we not seen, as far as I know, going back to 1992 when the Filmon government first introduced card check—

An Honourable Member: Integrity.

* (10:40)

Mr. Swan: Well, the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) can listen to this. There is not a single case where the Manitoba Labour Board has found there has been union intimidation in a union organizing drive—not once—not once has that occurred. It is a typical right-wing trope. It's a straw man that the minister is prepared to build, the member for Radisson is prepared to build, that others are prepared to build, which simply doesn't exist.

The other day when we were debating the very good Opposition Day motion, I likened it to the Republican voter fraud straw man. Let's effectively take away people's rights to express their views democratically because we believe that somewhere out there there's somebody who's trying to cheat the

system, even though 1.1 billion votes are cast and there's only 31 examples.

Well, and the member for Radisson will continue to chirp. I hope he gets up and speaks because when he speaks, we can mail that out to our constituents and to people across the province and really understand how he feels about workers' rights, about the rights to people to exercise their right to be represented by a union.

And, of course, when we ultimately vote on this bill and we vote on Bill 7, well, strangely enough, there is no secret ballot. We're all going to stand in our place and we're either going to stand on the side of workers or we're going to stand against workers. Or, as happened in the—on the second—the vote on the second reading of Bill 7, of course, Hansard shows that the Liberal members in this House didn't vote at all. So everybody gets to stand in their place, or not stand in their place, as the case may be, and there's different forms of democracy based on the different circumstances. And in this House, there may be a secret ballot for a speaker. There's not a secret ballot when it comes to putting your name on the line, either on the side or workers or against.

And, so, too, in a workplace, is it entirely appropriate that workers exercise their democratic right to join a union by signing a union card. And I know we'll hear more about the government members saying, oh, well, there's intimidation—intimidation that has never, ever been proved in the Manitoba Labour Board the entire time that automatic certification has been in existence in Manitoba. And, if the member for Radisson has a Manitoba Labour Board case that I've missed, then I will stand corrected. I will stand corrected if he's able to do that, but I don't think I'm going to have to be corrected, Madam Speaker.

Now, this bill would eliminate procedural roadblocks for workers and it would prevent them from the very kind of intimidation, fraud or coercion that the Labour Board unfortunately has had to rule upon many times with respect to things that employers say and do. And, again, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey) has put forward quite clearly, a workplace is not a democracy. Even when there is a collective agreement in place, if a worker is unhappy with the task they've been given or what it is they're supposed to do, as long as it's not a matter of workplace health and safety, that worker actually doesn't have the right to refuse to do the job. Obey and grieve later is the proper term in labour law. So,

too, is a workplace not a democracy—a true democracy—when employees decide they want a union to protect them, to speak for them, to negotiate with the employer.

And I think it's very important and I was pleased to ask and to get the answer from the member for Flin Flon about why it's important that votes are held quickly and, right now, it's seven days. I think there is something quite appropriate about shortening this date to four days, meaning their union, which has conducted an organizing drive—which could take days, which could take weeks, in some cases may take months—can then come and be dealt with very, very quickly.

And, again, when there is an organizing drive going on, it is not unusual that the employer will be aware that this is happening. Of course, when 100 per cent of employees already agree that that's what should happen and nobody says anything, there's no concerns. It would not be unusual in a workplace when there's an organizing drive that an unhappy employee, an employee that doesn't want to sign a card, goes to their employer and says, hey, here's what's happening. And many times, that's when the intimidation and coercion by the employer starts, when they start to threaten employees with very serious things.

It is not unheard of in Manitoba that individual employees are threatened. They're threatened with their livelihood. They're threatened with demotion. They may be threatened with a transfer. They may be threatened with any kind of changes to their working conditions. Employees in general may be threatened, and I'm glad the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) is now agreeing with me, they may be threatened with the closure of the workplace altogether. And that is not unusual, unfortunately, that an employer says, well, if you vote in favour of the union or you're automatically certified, I'm out of here. I'm closing. Well, how often does that happen? Not that often. Unfortunately, it has happened with the Walmarts of this world, not a place that I ever shop. Of course, in Quebec, there was a successful certification drive at a Walmart store, and Walmart ultimately shut that store for no reason other than the fact that they wanted to intimidate other employees in other stores across Canada that that is what that corporation would do.

And, in fact, there was a case that all the way to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court sided with the workers. Of course, they couldn't force the

store to reopen, but they forced Walmart to pay compensation to these employees who had lost their job.

So there's a number of reasons why it's so important that vote happen quickly. I believe that the minister has acknowledged that seven days is not the right time, that it should be shortened. We think four days is appropriate. But by all means, when this bill goes to committee, let's hear what Manitobans have to say. If they say five days, if they say three days, or four days, that may be something that comes out by way of an amendment, that is not an unreasonable thing.

I'm very pleased as well that the member in his bill has considered accessibility for employees to be able to vote. And, again, in many cases it may be mutually agreeable that vote take place in the workplace; if it isn't, we want it to be accessible, not just physically accessible for employees who may have a disability, who may have limited mobility, but also accessibility in terms of where that vote happens. And we know that many employees, especially in retail, in food services, earn at or close to minimum wage. They may not have a vehicle. They may not have easy access to the workplace, and I think it's very, very strong that this member has put forward an amendment to The Labour Relations Act which would ensure that employees have the ability to cast their vote.

So I look forward to this bill going to committee and another further debate, and I think the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Lindsey)—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I will keep my remarks short.

We as the Liberal Party of Manitoba are puzzled as to why the NDP introduced Bill 211, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Applications for Certification), as a private members' bill rather than as an amendment for Bill 7, The Labour Relations Amendment Act.

I find that the expectation that the NDP have of Bill 7 passing to be a little presumptuous. I also find it worrying that earlier this morning the member from Flin Flon suggested that the bill doesn't quite cut it, but it will do. Why introduce a bill without confidence?

Madam Speaker, I recognize the government if in the House will pass or will not pass what they

choose to. With that said, I am optimistic that if there is a convincing case at the committee stage, the government will vote with sensibility and what they believe to be true.

Now, Bill 211 amends The Labour Relations Amendment Act by allowing the automatic certification for union certification to occur under two specific conditions: No. 1, when employees are unanimous in their interests to have applications granted; and, No. 2, if employers engage in intimidation, coercion or fraud with the goal to influence an employee's decision concerning certification.

Bill 211 also specifies conditions for timing, as well as the place of a vote on an application for certification. These specifications—this specification is easy for me to immediately support as it is critical that decisions such as this are conducted in: (1) a safe space; (2) a space of neutrality; and (3) a space that is accessible. The safe place would be decided by the board and is guided with the objective that no party has an unfair advantage prior to the vote. It is one factor in permitting individual employees to freely exercise their right to vote on the basis of their own thoughts and opinions.

Now, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that the conditions pertaining to unanimous support be further considered. Firstly, the conditions that determine unanimous support is vaguely articulated and needs to be clearly stated. It is unclear and it would be difficult for the board to be made aware of such unanimity without any means of demonstrating any proof of unanimous support. Essentially, clarification of how unanimous support would be determined would need to be further elaborated on.

Currently, unfair labour practices refer to employers infringing on union membership rates. This includes rights such as being a member of a union, participating in the activities of the union and participating in the organization of a union. Therefore, section 41 as it stands can be interpreted by the board as infringement of the aforementioned rights. There are sufficient protections for union rights already in place.

* (10:50)

This all brings me back to questioning the intention of members of this House pushing through legislation. I genuinely want to know, was the government asked by Manitobans for this bill? Were

the NDP asked for Bill 211? Or was it done with the idea of political gain and tradition?

Madam Speaker, I have been talking to the constituents of Burrows as well as a few individuals I had the great opportunity to meet at the Seven Oaks job fair exhibit. First, it's important to note that many people are unclear as to what Bill 7, and now, I'm sure, Bill 11, are. I welcome opinions. But, from what I have heard thus far, those working under unions do not seem overly concerned. Unless the government can provide evidence of the desire for Bill 7 to be brought forward, they are only stirring the pot. And we need to consider to what degree the NDP solicits support from both union and management. Union harmony is so important here in Manitoba. Everyone in these Chambers should know that, especially after the 1919 General Strike. I hope we all learned from that.

The last aspect of Bill 211 that I would like to discuss is the reduction of seven days to four days, shortening time allowed for the vote. If the vote is not held within four days of the application, the union is automatically certified. This would essentially mean that the employees would get unionization faster. It can also be viewed as risky, knowing that automatic certification in this case is hinge on procedural technicalities that can be taken advantage of. We as the Liberals still stand by the position that government should not interfere with labour issues unless it's a consensus.

In closing, it all comes back to the importance of balance when changing legislation. Let's not have two exaggerated sides. Let's deal with labour laws together and try to form a consensus the best way that we can. I say it again: unions should be very, very proud of their accomplishments here in Manitoba. And we as the Liberals are very interested in hearing the public presenters at committee.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 211, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Applications for Certification).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

I declare the motion lost—the honourable member for—the honourable Opposition House Leader.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I request a recorded vote.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested by the Opposition House Leader, please call in the members.

The question before the House is second reading of Bill 211, The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Applications for Certification).

* (11:00)

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Chief, Fontaine, Gerrard, Klassen, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Saran, Selinger, Swan, Wiebe.

Nays

Clarke, Cullen, Curry, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Graydon, Guillemard, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Smith, Smook, Squires, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 15, Nays 29.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—Provincial Anti-Opiate Strategy

Madam Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m. and time for private members' resolutions, the resolution before us this morning is the resolution on Provincial Anti-Opiate Strategy, brought forward by the honourable member for Fort Garry-Riverview.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that

WHEREAS the number of overdoses and deaths related to the use of the highly potent opioid fentanyl are continuing to significantly impact people across Canada; and

WHEREAS increased use of illicit fentanyl has caused officials to declare public states of emergency in British Columbia and in parts of Alberta, meaning a provincial strategy to prevent an escalation in fentanyl overdoses and deaths should be an immediate priority for the province; and

WHEREAS 29 deaths occurred in Manitoba last year alone as a result of fentanyl use, an increase from the 75 fentanyl related deaths that the province saw between 2009 and 2013; and

WHEREAS public drug programs in Canada use one out of every five dollars of new healthcare transfer money on opioid prescriptions and addiction medications, totaling \$300 million across the nine provinces; and

WHEREAS the costs on the health care system in Canada have increased with the number of hospital stays due to opioid related disorders, and at \$15 million per year has become the second highest impact on hospital resources in Canada; and

WHEREAS unknown levels of fentanyl being cut into other illicit drugs is a significant danger to drug users; and

WHEREAS in 2015, one in every two Canadians was prescribed fentanyl, which calls for a review of prescription practices for this drug to prevent fentanyl's movement from prescription use to illegal street use; and

WHEREAS a need has been identified for better awareness, education and support for the families of those using fentanyl; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government has a responsibility in ensuring the safety, health, and wellbeing of the people in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government should continue the former government's investments in addressing these growing concerns such as: supporting the naloxone distribution program in and beyond Winnipeg; expanding support resources for fentanyl users by reducing wait times for assessment and treatment services; and improving information sharing protocols between health care professionals and law enforcement as determined by the fentanyl task force.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to establish an anti-opiate strategy that takes action against the rising number of fentanyl-related deaths and provides supports for those who are struggling with addictions.

Motion presented.

Mr. Allum: I am honoured and privileged to get up and speak to this resolution. I thank my friend from Concordia for sponsoring—helping to sponsor this resolution, all members of our caucus for supporting it. I know that the Liberal Party will be good supporters of this resolution and I'm looking forward to my friends across the way to embrace this resolution, and today to do the right thing.

I want to begin, Madam Speaker, by acknowledging the guests we have in the gallery with us, and I want to read out their names. We have Karen Pitsanuk, Carly Tshuncky—if I said that wrong, I'm sorry, Kathleen Petrush, Sherry Isaac, Joanne Brown, Christine Dobbs, Lang Watson, Arlene Last-Kolb, and Nicole Last-Kolb. I believe that's everyone. I want to thank them for coming and joining us here today and to being part of it and actually being the inspiration for this resolution. And I want to say, Madam Speaker, that they are here today joining us here in the Legislature because their kids aren't here, and I need to say that again to my friends across the way they are here today because their kids aren't here.

So today this resolution isn't about politics as usual in this Chamber. It's not—and I want to reiterate it's not about politics as usual in this Chamber. This is about doing the right thing for these families and then more than that, it's about saving lives right now from this point forward, from 11 o'clock today right on forward so that not another child dies from

fentanyl-related addiction or opiate-related addiction and that they have the chance to live the lives that our own children are able to have.

It breaks my heart to think about the circumstances that these families find themselves in there. Madam Speaker, these are more than just constituents to me; these are my neighbours, my friends, my kids went to school with these kids. My new son-in-law was the best friend of one of the kids who died, Jessie, and so this is my very small, very modest, very humble attempt to bring all members of this Legislature together to rally behind these parents and to get the kind of work done that needs to be done to save lives, and it's that simple.

I can hardly do better than Christine Dobbs who, when she said, and I want to quote, opiates are grabbing the minds of our youth with no means of escape. We have failed our children who only wanted to fit in. We are not talking a few deaths; we are talking about a public health emergency. We are talking about young people dying.

Now my friends across the way might say to us, well, what did you do? And we hear that all the time in the Legislature, you had all this time; what did you do? And I want to say to you quite plainly we didn't do enough. We should've done more. True, we established the fentanyl task force. True, the former premier tried to meet—met with parents in the dying days of the government.

But I want to say to you, I'll admit it, we didn't do enough. We failed those families. We failed those children. Let's not let that happen again today.

So Madam Speaker, I'm going to bring my comments to a close, but I want to read something that Arlene Last-Kolb—is up in the gallery—asked me to read into the record, and so I'm going to do that and end my comments and let others speak to this resolution.

And it goes like this, Madam Speaker: Hello, my name is Arlene Last-Kolb. On July 18th, 2014, a Thursday night, my son died in a stranger's home of a fentanyl overdose. They didn't call for an ambulance; they cleaned the house. Jessie was a minute from the Grace Hospital. My son was much more than an overdose.

Not an hour goes by that our family doesn't miss our Jessie. Our son was only 24. Jessie was and will be always a great kid. He bought his first house on

his own at 19. He had a girlfriend and two cats. He worked with his dad in our family business since he was 14, and was to take it over some day. He and his dad were best friends.

We will never get to see our son get married or have children, all the things he wanted, family was important to him. He will never see his friends get married or play guitar with them again. I will never hear my son say he loves me as he did every day.

It has been a hard two years since my son's passing to bring awareness and to let my community know that if it could happen to me, it could happen to you.

* (11:10)

Everyone here will either be affected by drugs or know someone who has lost someone or know of a family that is struggling with addiction. I have said what I think we need here in Manitoba and have worked hard to help educate my province and I believe change is coming, but today, I leave you as a mom who loved her son a great deal and struggles every day to find a new way.

I ask you all as parents, as a community that cares, to put aside politics and think of this as a community problem that will affect us all. There is only so much that I can do as a parent, but there is much that you can do. Grief is the last act of love we can give those we loved. Where there is deep grief, there was great love. Please think of me and my family tonight and my son Jessie, and say to yourselves that you will do what you can so other families don't have to do—have to go what my family is going through. You never get over a lost child, especially someone like Jessie. End quote. That's from Arlene Last-Kolb.

As I said, Madam Speaker, let's do the right thing in this Chamber today. Let's start saving lives right now.

Thank you very much.

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 parties; each independent member may ask one question; and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Are there any questions?

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, it is my understanding that the Government of Canada is engaging provinces and territories in a discussion on this topic in order to try to develop a pan-Canadian approach to the opioid crisis facing our country. Would it not make sense to wait the outcome of those discussions before articulating anything on the part of the provincial government?

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I thank my friend for the question, and I think it's safe to say that we're pleased that there's a pan-Canadian approach in development.

But, as I said in my opening remarks, we need to start taking action now and we can do that right here in Manitoba, here today, starting today and then moving forward. Every day forward, there are actions that we can take in terms of education. We can start making sure the distribution of Naloxone gets done in a way that ensures that any kid who's suffering from an overdose has that cure right there in front of them.

There's so much we can do. We're glad that there's a pan-Canadian strategy under works, but let's get to work right here in Manitoba right now, today.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I want to thank the member for Fort Garry-Riverview for bringing this to the House this morning, giving us an opportunity to debate this. He spoke a little bit about his discussions and some of the personal experiences that he's heard from families with regards to this crisis. Could he talk about the scope of the problem here in Manitoba and across Canada and across the United States right now?

Mr. Allum: My friend from Concordia asked a great question, and he's been nothing but supportive as our Health critic in trying to get this issue forward, get it addressed in the House.

What I can safely say is that this is a public health emergency established already in other provinces in Canada, and the families up in the gallery today are saying to us it's a public health emergency right now, here in Manitoba. And that's why it's incumbent upon us as their political representatives to put aside the politics of this particular question, to accept that we didn't do enough, to accept that more that can be done and that all of us rally around these courageous people here today and try to take action right now.

Madam Speaker: Just for the record, our policies and procedures here do not allow any interaction with—from members from the gallery. So I'm sorry, but it includes not applauding. Appreciate that you might be liking the responses, but we do ask that members in the gallery refrain from any involvement in the proceedings that are going on on the floor. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question to the MLA, who—good friend who has presented this this morning. I would ask, what would—what is the current situation where, in the facilities for detoxification and treatment, what do we need today in terms of detoxification and treatment.

Mr. Allum: I thank my friend from River Heights who put this question on the floor of the House just last week, and I have great admiration and greatly appreciate that he's working with the families as well.

What we know, Madam Speaker, is that in the cases that are—I've referred to earlier, there simply weren't the supports there that were available then for an immediate response to the actual situation of the overdose, but then there was no longer term help to address addictions, so we're looking for the government to take action on both those areas.

Mr. Jon Reyes (St. Norbert): First of all, I want to thank the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) for bringing this resolution forward once again. We're all here to work together, and you had mentioned this issue shouldn't be politicized, so no political party has a monopoly on good ideas, as we all know.

What options do you suggest to Manitobans who feel their only option is to turn to abusing drugs?

Mr. Allum: Well, I thank my friend from St. Norbert for their question—for that question. Of course, we would like to think that in a perfect world that there would be alternatives and there would be opportunities, but the fact of the matter, we know that our kids are getting caught up in addictions, and not merely kids; adults as well, Madam Speaker, getting caught up in addictions that are a function and by-product of the heavily drugged society that we currently live in.

What we're hoping for, as we did in our task force, is to establish a more and deeper and more profound harm reduction strategy. We want to make sure there's better co-ordination between Justice, Education, and the Health Department in responding

to these issues. But you're quite right to say this is a collective issue and collective responsibility. I'm counting on you to vote for this resolution today.

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, I also wanted to acknowledge the words of the member for St. Norbert and agree with him that this isn't a political issue. This is something that affects families across this province and I think, maybe, if I could ask a question, I think maybe this is where he was going. What strikes me about this is that it's a very non-partisan resolution before this House.

Can the member just talk about a couple of concrete steps, very straightforward steps that can be taken today as suggested in the resolution, if passed, that could be taken in this province and start saving lives?

Mr. Allum: I thank my friend from Concordia for saying that. I think we know that the distribution of naloxone needs to happen on a much broader basis than it currently does. It's the corrective remedy to an overdose. Currently access to naloxone is not widely distributed, so in that alone, that most simple element, we could make sure that those kits are widely distributed across our communities, across our neighbourhoods, across our cities and our province to directly address someone in a crisis situation as a result of an overdose. There are many other things that I hope we can get to.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): And I do want to thank the member opposite for bringing forth this important resolution.

I'd just like to ask a question of the member: Is it your view that the opiate crisis represents primarily an addictions issue, or is it more a supply issue, and that recreational drug users are being exposed to powerful opiates unknowingly as a result of street drugs cut with powerful opiates such as fentanyl or carfentanil?

Mr. Allum: I thank my friend for his interest in the subject. I'm hesitant to say that it's all of those things, Madam Speaker, and all of the things that he just described are all pieces of a very complicated and complex problem, but that puzzle won't be put together—those pieces won't be put together unless all of us in this Chamber today decide to rally around these families, support this resolution, and then get on with the really difficult work of finding the remedies to keep our kids safe and, frankly, alive.

* (11:20)

Mr. Gerrard: My question for the member for Fort-Garry Riverview concerns the situation of one of the young men who died prematurely. And he was in a situation where he was—he overdosed and he was surrounded by others, but the others were reluctant to come forward because they were afraid that they would be implicated in some way.

Do you think we need legislation which provides protection to ensure that people will be able to come forward without being at risk or liable?

Mr. Allum: That's a tremendous question, and it's been raised by Arlene with me on many occasions, that we do have a good Samaritan act which prevents people from being implicated in the very situation that the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) just addressed. And so what we're hoping is that there will be a broader public education campaign on the good Samaritan law to know that saving a life is the most important thing to do.

Mr. Wiebe: In unpacking this issue, Madam Speaker, and starting to look at the impact that this public health crisis has had on our public health system, we certainly see just how big of an issue this is, how big of a problem it is.

But more specifically, for those addicts who end up in hospital and are seeking that immediate help, can the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) talk about a little bit about the family advocate portion that's mentioned in his PMR?

Mr. Allum: We know how difficult it is, almost in any health-care situation, but particularly in this particular matter to navigate through the health system to get the supports and resources that families need. So the family advocate would simply help to help in that navigation, to help to provide the supports and provide the very kind of things that (a) will keep kids alive and, secondly, will provide families with the supports they need to keep their children safe and sound.

Madam Speaker: The time for this question period is over.

Debate

Madam Speaker: The debate is now opened on this very important issue.

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to put a few words on the record regarding the private member's resolution, the anti-opiate strategy, concerning the very powerful opioid, fentanyl.

In discussing this matter—or this resolution—one needs to have a basic understanding of what an opioid is and what an opiate is. First of all, an opiate is a drug that is an all-natural occurring drug that is derived from opium. I think, more appropriately, we should be talking about opioids which includes all synthetic produced products of this nature as well.

Quite simply, fentanyl is an opioid and opioids are a class of drugs that are used to treat pain. Opioids interact with receptors, nerve cells in the brain, brain stem, gastro-intestinal system, nerve cells and decrease pain and create a sense of euphoria in the user. They act on the same receptors as endorphins which are natural occurring products in the human body.

The opioid fentanyl is a synthetic drug that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, to put that in perspective. It is designed by manufacturers to treat severe pain, usually experienced in cancer patients and those with chronic ailments, and it has been used by the medical profession in Canada since the 1960s.

Madam Speaker, death from the illegal use of this drug is a growing problem in Manitoba, across the country and internationally.

Madam Speaker, to help put the problem in international perspective, in October of—October 17th of 2016, in New York it was reported that the illicit opioid fentanyl was identified as being involved in 47 per cent of confirmed overdose deaths from July 1st until October 17th—staggering figures.

Nationally, there's been a shocking rise in the number of overdosage deaths due to this drug. This has been attributed to a greater availability of fentanyl. The data available suggests that the increased presence of fentanyl and the low cost of this illicit drug is driving the increase in the overdoses.

Madam Speaker, one needs to ask just where is this increased street supply coming from? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, most of the overdose deaths are linked to prescriptions—are, sorry, are not linked to prescriptions but to illicit, man-made fentanyl and pills that have been mixed and sold.

Here lies the danger. Since the dosage of illicit fentanyl pills is unpredictable, street pills or portions of pills that have hotspots that contain higher concentrations of the drug are very dangerous.

According to Health Canada, a lethal dose of fentanyl is two milligrams. Just recently, the Calgary Police report released statistics that say the fentanyl tablets they have seized have ranged from 4.6 to 5.6 milligrams per tablet, almost twice the lethal dose. And just recently, pop legend Prince became the most high-profile victim when he died of an accidental fentanyl overdose.

The current epidemic of deaths is unprecedented in scope. Illegally made versions began to skyrocket in 2013. This drug addiction is not bound by socio-economic backgrounds.

Here in Manitoba, we have a task force in place that is examining the rise in fentanyl-related overdoses. We have also committed to expanding access to anti-overdose medications and to do so quickly. Being aware of the risks involved as well as the signs of opioid abuse is vital to helping Manitobans and their loved ones get proper help. The signs of fentanyl abuse are euphoria, drowsiness, lethargy and mellowness. As with all illicit drug use, effective awareness, prevention and treatment programs are extremely complex. Manitoba's Fentanyl Task Force is examining the rise in fentanyl-related overdoses and deaths in Manitoba which have risen considerably in Canada and Manitoba over the last number of years.

The task force includes representatives from the Province, Regional Health Authorities, the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, College of Physicians and Surgeons, College of Pharmacists and the Canadian Border Services Agency. The intent of the task force is to provide an opportunity to share information amongst its members, increase knowledge of the capacity to respond to fentanyl use and implement strategies aimed at reducing fentanyl-related overdoses and deaths.

Madam Speaker, we understand that no task force, provincial strategy or other intervention is going to take away the pain and grief of those who have lost someone they are close to whose death was a result of their addiction. The Minister of Health has repeated that we need to do better at providing drug overdose antidotes. The minister has described the current distribution network for naloxone the most effective anti-overdose agent, as, and I quote, not adequate.

Naloxone is a drug used to counteract or reverse symptoms of opioids, including fentanyl, morphine,

codeine and heroin. The minister is actively exploring expanded distribution options for naloxone which can be administered by paramedics and fire-paramedic first responders as soon as they arrive at the scene of a suspected opioid overdose. Naloxone is widely considered safe to be used for the purposes of reversing an overdose.

To aid in making naloxone readily available, the federal government has changed the classification of naloxone from a prescription to a non-prescription drug. This will mean it will be readily available over the counter without a prescription and make it more accessible as a first-response drug in the event of a narcotic opioid overdose.

Our government is also working toward changing naloxone on the drug formulary to ensure it is made available as widely as required. A pilot project that began earlier this year has seen 127 naloxone kits distributed to drug users. Nine of those kits have been successfully used to reverse overdose situations. While we are pleased that nine lives have been saved as a result of the distribution of the anti-overdose medications to drug users, this number also demonstrates the need to do better in getting naloxone kits out to those who most need them and to do that quickly.

* (11:30)

Access to life-saving drugs is only part of the solution. Drug users are often unknowingly subjected to fentanyl in the course of the use of other drugs. That is why we are engaged in an awareness campaign called Know Your Source? Campaign includes a website, bus shelter ads, printed posters. Information on the website includes tips to stay safe, understand the signs of the overdose and where to get help.

As I mentioned earlier, discussion on the fentanyl and other opiate-related drugs are not limited to Manitoba. Tuesday of this week, the Minister of Health met with his provincial and territorial counterparts along with the federal minister, and one of the discussion items was on opiate use.

I know that the Government of Canada is looking to further engage on this issue, and that one of the reasons it is important that we present an approach that is reasoned, measured and open to working with the Government of Canada and other jurisdictions in solving this circumstance which reaches clearly beyond Manitoba's borders.

For those struggling with addiction or if someone they know that's suffering substance abuse, I want you to know that there is help available. The Addictions Foundation Family Program provides support for those who are living with those with addiction issues. If you need help or someone you know needs help, I encourage you to reach out to the AFM today at 204-944-6200.

Our government is concerned about the national rise of fentanyl and opioid-related deaths. We are actively engaged provincially and federally to find a nationwide strategy that will be effective in addressing this issue across all provinces.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jim Maloway (Official Opposition House Leader): On House business, Madam Speaker, after the deferred vote at 11:55, I would like to ask if there's leave of this House not to see the clock after the vote so that all members can have the opportunity to speak to this important resolution.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to not see the clock after the deferred vote to allow all members wishing to speak to the private member's resolution to speak today?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: Denied.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I'd like to begin this morning, simply by saying what an honour and a privilege it is to stand in this House to speak to this issue on behalf of the families here in the gallery, but for all families across this province. And as a legislator we often—when we stand in this House we talk about how we're standing here on behalf of people. On this side of the House we stand on behalf of people, but it's in these rare occasions when we can have families here who are directly affected and we can hear their stories. And we can do our very small part to address this issue that is rampant across this country, across North America and right here in this province. So it's an absolute honour that I can stand this morning and be a small part in, hopefully, bringing about some change with regards to this.

In particular, Madam Speaker, this is an issue that I've been following for quite some time as an interested citizen, but also as the critic for Health and the impacts that it's having on our health system. But I can say that it wasn't until I sat down with the parents, specifically with Arlene and Christine, and

heard their stories and heard straight from them the impact that this has had on their families. And, once again, I just want to acknowledge them, the work that they've done, and they truly are honouring their sons Jessie and Adam in bringing this and I applaud your courage and thank you for coming.

Before I continue, Madam Speaker, I understand our Opposition House Leader has asked for extended time to discuss this issue and has been denied. I do hope that this simply means that the government side is eager to get to the vote, and I appreciate that and I hope that's where we're headed because this is a non-partisan, a not-non-political issue, and I think that's been echoed by members of the government. This is something that affects Manitobans across the spectrum, and it's particularly a sickening drug, as we know, because it affects those who wouldn't probably identify themselves as drug users a lot of times. You know, these are, you know, mostly kids, but adults as well, people who are maybe using drugs recreationally. Maybe it's their first time using a drug, and maybe they're using a drug that they don't even think is fentanyl or carfentanil or has no connection at all to it.

And that's the particularly scary part for parents, for all parents, but particularly those who think that their kids are immune to this. The message must get out that no child, no adult, in this province, is immune to this problem. These drugs are everywhere and they are affecting all of our children, and that's what we're here to discuss this morning.

So casual drug users are getting caught up in this, sometimes with fatal results. And what's come is an absolute health emergency, and I hope that this language is something that the government side will start to use and will start discussing because it's been identified as such in other provinces. I had some—an opportunity this summer to travel to the United States where I sat down with legislators from some of the Midwestern states, and this was discussed as a public health emergency in some of those states. And we know that by designating it as such that the proper attention can be given to it and that the proper resources can then be applied to deal with this problem because it's already affecting our health system; it's already affecting our public health-care system. You know, we're talking costs as high as \$15 million: the second highest impact on hospital resources is now being spent on treating and dealing with opiate addiction and overdoses.

This is scary, Madam Speaker, that this is happening without the acknowledgement of the public health-care system to say: If this is already impacting our hospitals and our health-care system to this degree, can we not, instead of treating this on the backend, look at the front end and how we can address this problem before it gets to that point? And that's why I'd like to thank the member for Fort Garry-Riverview (Mr. Allum) in particular for bringing this resolution, which is not political. It's not partisan, right? So sometimes what we do in this House is we try to use politics to say, well, we care about this issue more than someone else. We don't. We know that the members of the government care about this issue, and all it takes is a vote in this House to stand on this issue and to say that this is something that they will take seriously and they will act on. And I hope that they do that and we get an opportunity to do that today.

So, again, going back—so I'm talking about the numbers in the health-care system. But, to be honest, Madam Speaker, that's not what's important here. That's the—to talk about the scope of it, but the impact that it's having is the impact that it's having on the families that join us today and so many across our province. Just last year, 29 deaths because of fentanyl, carfentanil and other opiates, and this is just—this isn't even the whole picture; this isn't the full story. Just before we came into this House, we had an opportunity to chat with the families, and they talked about how the number that's being reported probably doesn't describe even a portion of the actual impact that it's having in the community; you know, the coroner's office is not identifying specifically those individuals who have died of fentanyl overdose, and oftentimes when we see an obituary in the newspaper, if it's a young person, as was described when we sat down with the parents, if it was a young person, and it said, died suddenly in their home, this probably means that there were drugs involved and, most likely, fentanyl because this is what's impacting our young people right now.

* (11:40)

So, Madam Speaker, I don't want to talk all morning. I don't want to take up all the time. I do want to want to give an opportunity to others to speak.

But what I simply ask for this morning and what we are simply asking for with this very important resolution is just an acknowledgement of this problem and a simple commitment from this

government to do something about it. There are very straightforward suggestions in this resolution. Not from us. Not from the NDP. But from the families, and we're just simply here to bring that to the floor and give an opportunity for the government to support it.

Simple things like enhancing the naloxone distribution programming—program, getting it into the hands of all pharmacists and first responders. Things like reducing the wait times for assessment and treatment and allowing the families—the families to help support the users, which is, again, something that the families have indicated is so important to creating an atmosphere that can help these users and get them out of a lifestyle a potential downward spiral.

Things like the 24-hour family advocate on hand in our hospitals. Again, the resources are already being spent in our hospitals. We're already seeing the impact in terms of dollars and cents. Having a family advocate can make all the difference in giving the individual affected a fighting chance, just a fighting chance, Madam Speaker.

And, at the very least, I would hope that the government would commit to public education of this drug, of its dangers, of the Good Samaritan law, which, in and of itself, would have saved the lives of Jessie. And I just ask that this minister take the time now to meet with the families, to sit down to hear from them, as I have and as others have had, and just hear from them some of their good ideas and just commit to working on this issue.

The time for talk is over. It's time for action. We implore the government do the right thing and vote for this resolution today.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Good morning, Madam Speaker, and thank you for this opportunity to speak to a very important and emotional resolution. I want to thank my friends on the other side for bringing forward the resolution.

I have had the opportunity to speak with the member for Fort Richmond about this issue and—sorry—Fort Garry, friends in Fort Richmond as well, but Fort Garry, and committed to him to me with families that have been affected by this addiction and have lost loved ones as a result, and I know that those meetings are being arranged and I'm happy to meet with other families as well.

This is, unfortunately, a sad pattern that we've seen through different governments and in different jurisdictions. It wasn't that long ago when this discussion was happening about methamphetamine and methamphetamine which was prevalent in the mid-western United States and then came to British Columbia and moved across into the west, and there was difficulty getting information on methamphetamine in Manitoba at the time because it was such a new and emerging drug. And I went down to the US, actually, and got a lot of the information about methamphetamine and helped to distribute it in our schools and in communities so people could learn about it and then the government came on side as well after and brought forward information on methamphetamine and that was important.

And now sadly, today, we deal with another terrible drug, and I appreciate the families coming to the gallery here today to be part of the discussion in what is a very, I know, difficult environment and it's difficult to come forward and to talk about the hurt in the families.

As the father of a young son, I mean, we often think about what would happen with our children as they grow older and they're exposed to whether it was methamphetamine. Five or six years ago it was an emerging drug and that is still, of course, a problem in Manitoba, Canada, North America are opiates and other illegal drugs as they come forward.

My father died of an addiction when I was 11 years old. He was an alcoholic, so addiction isn't new to my family. It's not something that, until recent years, that I've talked publicly about, but I thought it was important a number of years ago to speak about it publicly because it wasn't actually something to be ashamed about, it was something to learn about and to learn from. And so I've often spoken within my own community about my family's experience with addiction and how serious the issues are. And addictions have, of course, been with us for many years in different forms, but in some ways it's more serious.

I returned a couple of days ago from meetings with Health ministers across Canada, and one of the Health ministers said this isn't just about addiction; this is really chemical poisoning because the drugs are so severe and so significant.

And members opposite will know that the severity of the crisis is greatest right now in British Columbia, and Alberta, of course, is also feeling a

growing effect of the opiate crisis, and it is certainly moving more dramatically in Manitoba and to—if there's even one family affected in a jurisdiction, to that family it is a crisis.

And in that way, I've spoken in this House about it being a national and a local crisis, because for an individual family it is a crisis whether it is—we often talk about young people but, of course, it's not just young people who face the addiction. It can be adults as well, and whether it impacts a young person where a parent loses a child or where it's the situation where a child loses a parent, for them that is a crisis. Having lost my father young to addiction, I know the difficulty that it put our family and my mother in, who was then a single parent and the challenge that we had growing up as a result of the loss through addiction.

So I understand as much as I can the difficulty that families are going through, and I appreciate that you have come here today to be part of this discussion.

I do believe that there has to be a strategy put in place. I think it's more than provincial, though. The discussions that we had in Toronto with the provincial Health ministers also included the federal Health Minister, the honourable Ms. Philpott, and she asked that the provinces come together in Ottawa on November 18th and 19th, I believe the dates are—I don't have my calendar in front of me, but I'm fairly certain that those are the dates—to talk and to develop a national strategy on the opiate crisis because we know from the methamphetamine experience that these drugs cross borders, and while Manitoba took good action and the right action, I think, in terms of trying to limit some of the over-the-counter drugs that had the ingredients within them that were used to produce methamphetamine, it had a narrower effect because other provinces weren't always doing the same thing or at the same speed. And, unfortunately, those who—those who distribute these drugs aren't limited or confined by borders, and that's the sad reality, that they won't confine themselves to a particular jurisdiction.

When it comes to fentanyl or carfentanil, of course, we know there are international issues at play where these dangerous drugs are coming internationally from countries, and that is why, I think, the federal Minister of Health wanted to see a national strategy and that was reinforced by British Columbia, who, I think, has experienced this most dramatically, as I've said, that they would like to see

a national strategy because so many of the drugs aren't coming from British Columbia; they're coming from other countries around the world, and it does require the federal government to be involved.

That doesn't mean that we shouldn't be taking steps in Manitoba and should be waiting for the national summit. We need to be taking those steps. I talked last week about the fact that I'm not satisfied with the distribution of naloxone and that it has to be more broadly available across Manitoba, and I was very clear in my comments. Members opposite can go back and look. Not to criticize the former government for the distribution plan they had on naloxone, I think that you were—that the former government was doing the best they could in the situation that they knew on this emerging issue. So it was available on a limited basis in Winnipeg, but not on a robust basis across the province, and that is not a criticism of the former government. I think, again, they were dealing with an emerging issue, so I steered clear of politics and said we want to be more robust around the province to have naloxone distributed.

And that is good in terms of harm reduction in terms of dealing with potentials for overdoses and helping families and those that they are with give them some assurance that they might have some remedy. But it's not preventative enough. It doesn't provide information. It doesn't deal with countries who are bringing in some of these drugs with being allowed to come in from other countries. That does need a national approach, and that does need cross-border co-ordination. And we do have to be involved with those discussions with British Columbia and Alberta as this moves west.

*(11:50)

And I am happy to report to the House that all the provinces agreed two days ago to have this national meeting with the federal minister, at the federal minister's request, specifically on the opioid crisis for two days to ensure that we have the right national approach, and so that individual provinces aren't doing their own thing that don't have an effect overall within the province because it's not happening in Saskatchewan or it's not happening in Ontario, and so Manitoba can take steps. But it doesn't actually change anything because these drugs are still coming across the border, as was the case with methamphetamine.

So I have committed to the federal minister that Manitoba would be a part of that. We'll ensure that

we have representatives from Manitoba Health who will be at the opioid summit in Ottawa on November 18th and 19th.

What I would ask from my friends opposite—and again I think that I've tried to keep this as non-political as any issue because it isn't about politics, and having my own personal experience I would never want to make this about politics—that this resolution not be defeated today. It shouldn't be defeated, but that it can be held until after the opioid convention—or the conference, sorry—with the federal health minister, and we can bring it back and we can ensure that it is more national in scope so that we can—are making that difference. There is limited, I think, effect to look at just as a Manitoba problem when these drugs are moving across the border.

Every province in Canada has agreed to this, including New Democratic governments in Alberta, including Liberal governments in places like Ontario. Canada is looking at this as a non-partisan issue. I think the Legislature should look at it as a non-partisan issue. I'm happy to work with the member who sponsored the resolution to bring it back following the national opioid summit in November.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would just like to draw everybody's attention to the loge to my left, where we have with us today the former member for Seine River, Theresa Oswald, and we'd like to welcome you here today. Welcome.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I will be quick because I think I just have about two or three minutes. I first want to welcome our guests, and I want to say to you, and I think all of us are having this discussion today to reach out to you to recognize the tragedies that you have been through and to say to you that we want to work together to try and do something about what is happening in Manitoba with fentanyl and other opioid overdoses and addictions.

There is a need for federal action and it's good that's happening, but we can't wait for that. We must act now because we do not want any more of our youth, any more of our citizens to die from overdoses if they could possibly be prevented.

With any complex situation, there are often some simple principles which can be used, and I would suggest several, Madam Speaker. One, naloxone needs to be available where and when it's needed. Two, in a complex system, there is often an opportunity to develop a symbol–single window for information for navigating the system. This was a major problem for many of the families. Three, there needs to be detoxification available in the right environment when it is needed, not 24 hours, or 48 hours, or three days, or a week, or a month later. It needs to be available right then. Fourth, the 'detoxification' needs to be in an environment where young people who are suffering overdoses are comfortable. They're not scared. It works, and they don't feel so intimidated that they're running away when they're going through a very difficult and often painful detoxification process.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

And before we move on to the next vote, I would just like to ask all members if we could just acknowledge and thank again the families that are here today that have participated in this. I think we would want them to know that it's a tough issue but their being here is helping to move this forward and to make a difference. And we are very sorry for their losses in their families.

Recorded Vote

Madam Speaker: The hour being 11:55 a.m., pursuant to rule 23(5), I'm interrupting the proceedings to conduct a recorded division that was requested during last Tuesday's private members' business.

Therefore, call in the members.

The question before the House is second reading on Bill 208, The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Day Act.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Chief, Clarke, Curry, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Fontaine, Gerrard, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Johnson, Johnston, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Saran, Schuler, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 45, Nays 0.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, October 20, 2016

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