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

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ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Please be seated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, we'd like to call Bill 214—we would like to canvass the House to see if there's leave to call Bill 214, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert).

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to consider Bill 214 this morning? [*Agreed*]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 214—The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert)

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): I move, seconded by the member from Gimli, that Bill 214, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert), now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Isleifson: Again, it is certainly a pleasure to stand before all of my colleagues today for my first private member's bill, being bill 14, The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert). Again, it's certainly a—I look at it as a non-partisan bill that will really enhance the work that was previously done in this House. And I believe that all members can support this bill going forward.

I think it's important to understand that The Missing Persons Act that came into effect in 2012 was authored, and we have the author in the House with us today. The Brandon police chief was seconded by the government of the day and they put

together this bill—the original bill—and it certainly gives the police forces—it gives the public access to information when individuals go missing.

Each day before we sit, Madam Speaker, and even this morning you recite a prayer in our House, and I want to quote just part of it, it says that we are to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare of our people. And I truly believe that the amendments in this bill do exactly that.

The Province of Manitoba, we aim to improve services to our residents by creating a safe and secure environment for all persons and to being able to have resources at hand in a fashion that is reasonable and brings resolution to missing persons as soon as possible.

You know, Madam Speaker, we could just certainly look around us, and we have an obligation as elected officials to look to the future to see what we're doing now as compared to what's going to happen in a year, five years, 10 years. We always have to be looking at ways to improve whether it's policies, whether it's bills, we have to look at efficiencies. And, again, I look at this bill as something that we can continue to provide the necessary tools and resources to our police forces that aid them in performing their duties. Again, it's another tool that will be in their toolkit should they determine the need to use a silver alert.

Changes to this act create a public broadcast message system that has proven to be an effective tool in raising awareness during a crisis, and it puts both the responders and the public on alert. Again, it is a move that will prioritize the actions of getting information out to the public in a way that is efficient and drawn on by the police forces.

It is also important to know that the use of colour codes in alerts are not new. As many in this House are aware, I had the distinct pleasure of working in the health industry in safety and security for 21 years. Part of my role in pre-hospital emergency services was working directly with the disaster and emergency preparedness team in planning and developing policy and direction on internal colour codes.

One of those colour codes was the code yellow, which we used internally when a patient went

missing and was then unable to be located in a certain time frame. We developed a process and a protocol that made it a top priority to ensure information was released to other workers in the health-care industry so that we could do a search of the property. Part of that was going beyond; if we could not locate the patient, then we would involve the police. It's important to understand that the police would then have a role to play in connecting with media, in putting the pertinent information out so that the community would be alerted to such a process.

Again, this code is initiated and it's been very effective in locating some folks. Unfortunately, it's not the end-all be-all, and I certainly don't believe that, you know, any bill that we put forward is going to be an end-all be-all. But let's keep in mind again our roles which is to ensure we move forward in creating safer environments for all our residents.

So Madam Speaker, it is certainly proven that the development of a national emergency code within Canada allows for its consistency, and it allows us to look from province to province to ensure we're doing the right thing—we're doing the same thing—and that's what happened with the colour codes in health care was we put it right across the provinces so that we knew when we heard a code, it was the same in every area.

It's no secret that there is an AMBER Alert out process that's out there that deals with children who have gone missing, have been abducted, and it's—I need to make it very clear that while this AMBER Alert process was started in 19—pardon me, 1996, I believe it was, when a young person in Dallas was kidnapped and brutally murdered. This process was put in place to help with the AMBER Alert system in the States. Nine-year-old Amber Hagerman was the young person's name.

*(10:10)

But I need to clarify, and why I mention that here is because we do have a distinct difference between the AMBER Alert and the silver alert, and I think it's important that we all need to understand that. So with the introduction, Madam Speaker, of a missing persons act amendment, the silver alert, when an adult person with a cognitive impairment is missing and feared to be at risk, a systematic search process may be initiated to locate the person, including and involving the police, as appropriate.

The introduction to this bill will make it clear that the silver alert is just that: it's an urgent public notification. And I believe the title, now, more directly reflects the process of a silver alert. It should be known that over 36 U.S. jurisdictions already carry the Silver Alert, and we have an opportunity here in Manitoba to be the first province in Canada to implement that silver alert.

Here's the cold, hard reality, Madam Speaker. We have an estimated 500,000 Canadians right now that have Alzheimer's disease. Manitoba alone, there are over 22,000 people with Alzheimer's, other forms of dementia and cognitive impairments. These numbers are expected to double, or even triple, in the years coming and, by 2039, our number is expected to grow beyond 45,000 in Alzheimer's patients alone.

So, again, the provisions of this bill would encourage and support agreements, and agreements between police agencies, broadcasters and other partners for the purpose of collaborating in order to realize swift results by issuing a silver alert.

There are some criteria, obviously, that we want to put in place that'll—that will assist the police officers in doing their job. And, again, when we look at—it must be determined that the person is a missing person as described in the definition of the act: the person must be an adult with a cognitive impairment; the person's safety and welfare are feared for, given hers—his or her cognitive impairment; and that there is information available that suggests that, if this does go to the public, it will assist in the person's safe return.

This bill also considers privacy legislation by allowing the police agencies to work through their media partners in order to provide eligible and pertinent information to the public. During a silver alert, information that will assist the public in identifying the missing person shall be limited to those that are already outlined in the bill.

Information available to the public at the discretion of the police could be: the name of the missing person; a physical description, including height, weight, age, clothing if possible, a photo if available; limited serious medical conditions or information; vehicle type and colour; and, obviously, the last-known or possible location, and any pertinent, valuable information that may arise from that.

Madam Speaker, during my preparations for this bill, I've had the pleasure of meeting with numerous

groups and individuals. I've already mentioned Police Chief Ian Grant, who has helped us tremendously in moving the bill forward. Some of our internal staff—Joey Dearborn, I do want to mention for his help in this, as well. We met with the Alzheimer Society, and I do want to acknowledge Wendy Schettler, who is the CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, for their valuable input into the changes into this act. And, of course, the Winnipeg Police Service, as well—we sat with the Winnipeg Police Service—pardon me—and they provided some valuable information in getting us to where we are today.

We vetted this through all the proper channels and got great feedback. But, since doing that, and since being on the Order Paper, Madam Speaker, we have had the opportunity to be in touch with folks—I'm going to hazard to guess Canada-wide, we've received a lot of accolades in emails and letters. I even did a brief interview on the radio station in St. Catharines last weekend, because they've picked up the story. Everybody is looking at Manitoba to be the innovator, and this gives us a great opportunity to do such thing.

So, again—I did receive one that I wanted to mention. One such support letter was received from the president and patrol commander of the Urban Knights and ladies veterans' outpost patrol, Patrick March. Patrick is an Aboriginal PTSD veterans senior and Metis elder who has applauded this initiative and looks forward to it becoming law.

So, just in closing, Madam Speaker, this is a non-partisan bill. I believe it is one that we can all get behind. It's—it certainly enhances the lives of 'Manitobas'. While nothing replaces the eyes and the knowledge of your families, your friends and your neighbours, again, it is one more tool that the police departments in our province can have to do their job effectively.

So, again, in closing, just—I would ask each member of this House for their support in this very important bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 10 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the sponsoring member by any member in the following sequence: first question to be asked by a member from another party; this is to be followed by a rotation between the parties; each independent

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

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I do thank the member for Brandon East for letting us have a discussion about what we can do to better protect seniors. The member, in his speech, talked about the AMBER Alert system which is now up and running in Manitoba and has been for several years and works with other jurisdictions.

Is the member aware that the AMBER Alert program came to be in Manitoba without the need for any legislation?

Mr. Len Isleifson (Brandon East): Absolutely. We also need to look at the fact that the AMBER Alert system is a North American-wide initiative where what I'm proposing is not. It's in 36 different US states, none in Canada and, again, it is a tool that can be used by the police.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): Can the member talk about stakeholders that he has met with in drafting of this legislation and if they are in support of it?

Mr. Isleifson: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

You know, absolutely. We've met—as I mentioned in my preamble, we met with the police chief of Brandon, we met with Winnipeg police, we've met with the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba. We've discussed issues with Health and with Justice, and, yes, everybody has been very supportive—even my comments from outside of the area, more people have called in to provide their support.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I note that Ontario looked at having a silver alert several years ago and decided, instead, to have what they call a finding your way initiative which would prevent people from wandering—seniors, in particular.

I just wondered if you could put in context the relationship with the silver alert and the finding your way initiative, and what do you think that Manitoba should be doing, one or both?

Mr. Isleifson: Great question. I really do believe we should be providing both. In discussions with folks from Ontario, they are watching what we do because they are interested in a silver alert. I believe they're going to re-look at the situation because they are re-examining the possibility of a silver alert. What you talk otherwise is prevention, and their other program is a preventative program and, sure, we always need to be preventative, but this will give the

police the tools to use in the event that someone does go missing.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): We know, of course, that the AMBER Alert system requires significant resources and co-operation, obviously, to be put in place and it's been very successful in that regard. What kind of resources will the government be providing to ensure that this particular program would be successful?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, another great question. When we look at resources that are available, the resources are already there in dealing with the police departments. They already have the system set up for an AMBER Alert.

Again, we need to really keep in mind that this is separate than an AMBER Alert and—but I think it's important to realize, too, that while we hear of AMBER Alerts that happen across the country, the province of Manitoba and Winnipeg, I do not believe, have ever issued an AMBER Alert. And, again, that'll be the same as the silver alert. It's a tool that they can use in the event that they need to.

Mr. Wharton: Madam Speaker, can the member talk more about his experience in the health-care field and how that helped him in the drafting the legislation?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, as I mentioned earlier, you know, I've—I spent 21 years in health care as the regional manager of security services. Part of that role was working with disaster emergency planning in developing criteria and colour codes and response codes for various things. One, as I mentioned, being the code yellow.

So, again, I believe my experience in writing policy for the regional health authority and working 'collaboratey' with an emergency response team in acting out these scenarios is very—has helped me tremendously in putting this thought together.

Mr. Swan: I have a chance to read through the bill, and section 1.1(4) talks about certain information that can be released: a missing person's name, a physical description, a photograph, important medical information, vehicle information, where they were last seen in these circumstances. Can the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) say, is there anything preventing any police force from providing all that information at present?

* (10:20)

Mr. Isleifson: Again, as I mentioned earlier, the provisions of the amendment of this act is to create an area on a silver alert for adults who have cognitive impairments. There—really, there—the thing that's in the act right now, in the previous act, is exactly what the member states. And they're going to use that information regardless.

What we're doing is we're enhancing the ability to use minimum health information necessary, at their discretion, to find someone who is vulnerable and may be at risk.

Mr. Swan: Just to follow up, then, we know that police services across the province are already providing all this information when someone who may have a cognitive impairment goes missing.

Just to confirm: the member for Brandon East is not saying that the police are acting inappropriately, or in contravention of any existing law by doing that.

Mr. Isleifson: That's correct, Madam—absolutely not.

The police are doing a great job in what they do. And even speaking with both the Brandon police and the Winnipeg police—you know, I—they're fantastic. They're doing everything great.

Again, this just provides another tool for them to use at their discretion. And it really—it ascertains the importance of it and puts out information as a priority when an adult with a cognitive impairment goes missing.

Mr. Swan: I share the respect the member for Brandon East has for the police, but I just want to make it very clear: now that we know that this information can already be provided, there would be nothing stopping a police service from having an agreement with a broadcaster to create a silver alert if this law does not pass.

Mr. Isleifson: I'm a little confused, though. It sounded like the member said that they can still issue a silver alert if this bill doesn't pass. If that's the case, there is no such thing as a silver alert, unless this bill passes.

There's a missing person, so I must be—I might be misunderstanding him. But, yes, if this bill doesn't pass, there will be no silver alert.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I appreciate the line of questioning by my colleague here, the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), in the sense that, I think, the point that he was making was that the AMBER Alert was created not by legislation, and that the silver alert—I

think what we understand here—could be created in the same—very same way.

Just wanted to know if the member could tell me what agency would be responsible for administering and maintaining the silver alert program, and what department does this legislation fall under?

Mr. Isleifson: Again, we look at two departments, Justice and Health. And, when we look at responsibility for maintaining, there is no maintaining. It's a program, again, that will be under the discretion of the police to use. It's another tool in their tool kit. So there is no records to be kept by anybody.

The police will continue to do what they do; it's just we're just now adding adults with cognitive impairments into the existing bill.

Mr. Wharton: Can the member speak about what other Canadian jurisdictions have in the way of legislation?

Mr. Isleifson: So, again, as I mentioned, there are no other silver alert legislative programs in Canada. British Columbia currently uses a citizens program. They have a community Silver Alert in which volunteers sign up to receive media releases when people go missing, and they go out and look on their own.

Other than that, other than some preventative programs that we've heard of, no other jurisdiction in Canada currently has a silver alert. We would be the innovators.

Mr. Swan: Just to return to the line of questioning I had before—and this isn't a criticism of the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson), or the bill, but the point I was making is there's nothing stopping a progressive police force like the Brandon police force from entering into an agreement with a broadcaster and calling it a silver alert, in Brandon or Westman or anywhere else.

Is that the case?

Mr. Isleifson: I understand the question, I appreciate the question.

Just for clarity, sure, anybody could go out and go to the media and issue a silver alert. What we're trying to do is we're trying to make it standard. We're trying to make it something that falls in line with the jurisdiction that's already in place in 36 U.S. states so that, regardless where you are, if you're travelling

along and you see a silver alert, you have an understanding of what it is.

Madam Speaker: There any further questions?

There are no further questions, debate is open.

Debate

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I do thank the member for Brandon East for bringing this forward today because I think it is important to have a discussion about what we can all do and how we can best support our police services and others to assist individuals, whoever they may be, who go missing. And, certainly, the bill today speaks about efforts, perhaps, to help people with cognitive impairments, primarily elderly Manitobans, to try and find better ways to make sure those people return to their homes safely.

And I do want to take the chance. I enjoyed the member's member statement yesterday, recognizing Chief Ian Grant of the Brandon Police Service. I am very proud to know Mr. Grant and I wish him all the best in his retirement. We know the Brandon Police Service has been a leader in the province of Manitoba, coming up with good ideas, with solid ideas for policing to make their citizens safer. I look, for example, to Community Mobilization project which is now under way in Brandon. The model, I suppose, comes from Saskatchewan with Dale McFee, who tells us if it's predictable it's preventable. And I know that Brandon Police Service is working with a host of helping organizations and other professionals to try to find better solutions.

I also know that the City of Brandon, the Brandon Police Service, was one of the first to come up with the RID 911 program, which really deputizes people across the city of Brandon to assist if they see someone who's an impaired driver, to make sure there's immediate police response. As I was joking with the member for Brandon East just the other day, it's made the McDonalds on Richmond Avenue one of the biggest crime fighters in the city of Brandon as they've had people pull out of the drive-through line to wait for their special order, and their special order is a car from the Brandon Police Service to come up and arrest them if they've been driving impaired.

I'm not surprised, again, that it would be a member from Brandon who would bring forward something which I believe is a good idea. The questions that I asked and the points that I've been raising is whether this bill is actually necessary,

given the law and given the practice that we already have in place in Manitoba.

As the member correctly mentioned, there is a program called AMBER Alert. It started in American jurisdictions to try and come up with a better co-ordinated response when a child goes missing, when some very, very strict criteria are met. In the AMBER Alert system, it must be a child that's missing and there must be a reasonable reason to believe that they've been abducted, whether it's by a parent or a guardian, another family member, or a stranger and that that child is potentially in danger.

And the member correctly says that AMBER alerts aren't triggered that often and, I suppose, we can be happy about that, but in speaking with individuals in the police, with the Manitoba Association of Chiefs of Police when that came into effect, speaking with the RCMP, speaking with professionals in the field, they said that one of the things that is very important is that an AMBER Alert gets the kind of attention that it should receive.

And I know the member correctly says it's not very often an AMBER Alert is triggered. When that does happen, Madam Speaker, I know that my social media goes crazy. There's a lot of people that share that information. People are told to be on the lookout for a particular car or for people of a particular description, and it has a particular status that give people cause and reason to pay attention.

And I know that there were some efforts that were made at that time by people to expand the—what an AMBER Alert would look like and expand the criteria for when an AMBER Alert would be triggered and, to my surprise, there was a lot of push back by the police and by others saying, no, there is a very specific purpose for an AMBER Alert. We want it to have maximum exposure when it happens and we need to make sure that we protect this criteria very carefully.

When I was the legislative assistant to Gord Mackintosh, then the Justice minister, I did some of the legwork to prepare Manitoba to enter into arrangements with other jurisdictions—with the neighbouring Canadian jurisdictions, but also our American partners and, again, I was a little surprised. But I understood why jurisdictions were very, very cautious about expanding the nature of an alert system like this. They wanted to make sure that in their jurisdiction, in the receiving jurisdiction and the sending jurisdiction that the criteria were identical and that they were very, very clear to make sure that

when we do get reports of someone coming, potentially from a province like Saskatchewan, that we know exactly why that AMBER Alert has been triggered and why it is so necessary that people pay attention.

* (10:30)

This bill has the best of motives, and I think that should be made absolutely clear today. I think there are two pieces to it. One is that the police already have the ability to provide all of the information that's contained in the bill. And, just to make that clear, the bill would make it clear that police could—and broadcasters could—share the missing person's name, a physical description, a photograph, information about any medical conditions, pertinent vehicle information, the location of where they were last seen and the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of the missing person.

Well, I know that police are already providing this information, and broadcasters are already quite willing to share this information with the public. The amendments aren't necessary to allow police forces to do that. It's not necessary for them to continue to do that.

Now, what I believe the member is saying is the rationale is to try and raise the profile of cases like this. And, again, I don't disagree that there is some benefit to doing that. The concern is this. With AMBER Alerts, it was made very clear to us that there should be very strict criteria to make sure that everybody is aware. I don't, in any way, suggest there would be anything wrong with a force like the Brandon Police Service entering into discussions with local media to say that, when someone in that community goes missing under these criteria, that the broadcasters will certainly provide that information. We don't need this piece of law to get there. The Brandon Police Service, like all of the police forces in Manitoba, is already doing this, and the experience I've had is that broadcasters are quite prepared to help out. Broadcasters feel they're part of their community, with good reason, and they already provide this information.

So, although I know that the member's motives are good, I know that he is knowledgeable in this area, the question we have to ask is why this bill is necessary. We have already experience in Manitoba where the AMBER Alert system—which I think everybody agrees is useful and has actually helped children get back home safely—has been done without the need for legislation, but with the need for

consistent, regular attention to the AMBER Alert system.

And I was a little concerned in response to the question by my friend, the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe), that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) did say there wouldn't be any need for maintenance or for upkeep of the silver alert system. I'm afraid that isn't the case, and it is actually necessary for there to be a regular maintenance and upkeep of those systems. I know, with the AMBER Alert system, there is a list of individuals who are to be contacted. Every organization is responsible for updating those things. And there has to be some sort of central control to make sure that those people continue to be ready to spring to action any given moment; in fact, having backups and having other systems in place in each of those situations.

So I'm a little concerned that the suggestion is the bill can simply pass, that the government doesn't have to put any attention or resources toward this, and it will just work on its own. That isn't the way that these kinds of things work. It would be necessary to have an ongoing system to make sure that, if somebody does go missing, there is a structure in place to make sure that organizations, groups, police services have the ability to know that, when they announce something like this, there's going to be an immediate response in whatever appropriate area that is. Whether that's only in the city of Brandon or the city of Winnipeg, only in a particular town or municipality or, in certain cases—if it is the right set of circumstances—across provincial or even national borders.

So I'm glad we're debating this bill today. I think there'll be, maybe, more clarification by members from all parties today, and that we can then decide what should happen with this bill. Again, I do applaud the member for Brandon East for bringing this forward. I certainly applaud the Brandon Police Service as a very, very progressive, solid police organization. I know that they will miss Chief Grant when he retires, but I know that they will find a successor. I know he has a great team, and we look forward to working to make the city of Brandon, and the rest of the province of Manitoba, safer. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jeff Wharton (Gimli): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of The Missing Persons Amendment Act (Silver Alert), brought forward by my friend and colleague from Brandon East. Our government is

committed to ensuring all Manitobans feel safe and that no rocks are left unturned when it comes to someone missing, a family member gone missing. To that end, we are always looking for ways to enhance services that we provide to make sure that our police forces have the tools they need to keep us all safe.

One of those tools is the AMBER Alert system, as my member—the member from Minto had spoke about, with which no doubt all members will be aware. AMBER Alerts also use a systematic search to be undertaken and ensure that the public is made aware when a child goes missing. AMBER Alerts are used with great success across the continent. Since they first introduced in the 1990s, AMBER Alerts have, without doubt, saved lives.

Madam Speaker, of course children are not the only 'demograph' that is vulnerable in our society. The elderly and, in particular, those with dementia are also at risk of becoming lost or going missing. One in six Canadians with Alzheimer's disease or dementia will wander and become lost each year, endangering their health and safety.

Madam Speaker, of those seniors who go missing, some of them will be found in a timely fashion; however, that is not always the case. We know that wandering seniors will be at risk if they are not found relatively quickly. In fact, nearly half of the wandering seniors not found within 24 hours risk becoming seriously injured or dying.

This legislation will give law enforcement an additional tool in the toolkit when it comes to finding missing persons with a cognitive impairment. It allows law enforcement, health-care providers, families and media to work together to find an individual who has gone missing or become lost.

Madam Speaker, while, of course, this bill is targeted towards seniors, it is phrased in such a way that a silver alert could be issued for any adult with a cognitive impairment. Alzheimer's and dementia can start early and, of course, there are other types of cognitive impairment to consider. We believe that allowing silver alert to be issued for anyone over the age of 18 with a cognitive impairment makes sense; that decision should be left to the judgment of law enforcement.

Madam Speaker, our government is committed to protecting the most vulnerable people in society, and this bill will do exactly that. As a matter of fact, in conversations earlier today with Police Chief Ian Grant, the police chief was sharing a story that

happened in his jurisdiction several years back where an individual had gone missing and was unfortunately not found, was suffering from a sort of cognitive impairment, and unfortunately that story did not go well. And we, of course, hope that this silver alert and this bill will certainly help build the brand towards making sure that we get the message out and folks with these particular issues can be found on a more timely fashion.

Speaking from experience, I have a family member, my grandfather, who passed away several years ago, suffered from Alzheimer's, unfortunately 'surcumbered' to the disease. And I can tell you that without family being available and around to secure my grandfather's safety in the day-to-day concerns, that challenges that we take for granted were some of the issues that grandpa was suffering with.

And, you know, cognitive impairment is, and I'll just read from a note here that—a call for action that I picked up recently—cognitive impairment is when a person has trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating or making decisions that affect their everyday life. Cognitive impairment ranges from mild to severe. With mild impairment, people may begin to notice changes in cognitive functions, but still be able to do their everyday activities. Severe levels of impairment can lead to losing the ability to understand the meaning of important things—and sometimes the ability to talk or write, resulting in the inability to live independently.

*(10:40)

Well, for Grandpa, it was fortunate that Grandma was around to help, and family members, so when he did have the—and he did once in a while want to get up and go for a walk, we were able to control that and make sure that he didn't go out the door and in turn get lost and go wandering. So this bill will certainly—it's special to me because of those circumstances, and that disease in particular is something that we need to be very aware of.

As my friend from Brandon East pointed out, the legislation is the first of its kind in Canada. Silver Alerts are, however, relatively common south of the border. Over 36 jurisdictions, Madam Speaker, in the United States have implemented Silver Alerts, including California, Florida and Texas. New York City has a system at the municipal level, as well. Silver Alerts have been proven effective in recovering wandering seniors, and we believe that it can work here too.

As we know, our population in this province is aging, and Alzheimer's and dementia are becoming more and more common. Today, more than 22,000 Manitobans have Alzheimer's disease or dementia. In only 20 years, Madam Speaker, the number is expected to reach 40,000. With the number of Alzheimer's patients on the rise, we want to ensure that there is a system in place to ease the minds of the growing numbers of families affected by this terrible disease.

Of course, Madam Speaker, seniors are not the only people who are vulnerable. So, for that reason, this legislation would apply to all adults with a cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's, dementia, autism, Asperger's, et cetera, who are over the age of 18. We know that vulnerable adults will continue to go missing, and this will be happening more and more often. Therefore, we have to put a system in place to respond when people do go missing, to find them and return them safely home as quickly as possible.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba will be the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement the silver alert. I'm very proud of my colleague from Brandon East for stepping up and taking the lead on this piece of legislation. I do believe that in implementing this we will be setting an example for the rest of the country.

Now, obviously, the last couple of weeks, Madam Speaker, we've had some pretty heated debate here in this House, some pretty intense partisanship in place from members opposite over issues like the Interim Supply bill, and there's nothing inherently wrong with that. A lot of us enjoy the cut and thrust of debates. However, there are times when you have to set aside and come together to do the right thing for Manitobans. I hope that this bill will be one of those circumstances where we set partisanship aside.

We're discussing the bill that amends The Missing Persons Act, Madam Speaker. That's a bill that was introduced by the previous government and which was supported. What we are doing today will build on and strengthen that legislation.

As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, I do hope that the opposition will be able to set aside partisanship and support this bill.

We look forward to moving this along to the community-committee stage and, no doubt, there will be some interesting conversations that will come forward at that stage. Also, no doubt,

Madam Speaker, a lot of people will have their say on this issue. We welcome that and look forward to hearing peoples' suggestions in committee.

Madam Speaker, we will be—and I am certain some concerns will be coming forward from committee, and I want to begin to pre-emptively address some of those today.

First of all is the issue of personal health-care information, as the member for Minto (Mr. Swan) had alluded to in his preamble. You will note that section 1.1, paragraph 5 of the bill which will protect people's health information. Only the absolute minimum amount of personal information will be shared under the legislation with the goal of returning vulnerable Manitobans home—and when they go missing from their loved ones. In order for any information to be disseminated, it must be determined that: the person is a missing person as described in the definitions of the act; the person must be an adult who has a cognitive impairment; the person's safety and welfare are feared for given his or her cognitive impairment; and there is information available that is disseminated to the public would assist in the person's safe return. Our government is committed to ensuring the private health-care information remains confidential, and this bill will be drafted with that in mind.

Madam Speaker, I'm running a little short on time and I certainly would like to speak further on this bill. But I will close by saying that, given the reality, it's going to become more and important to have the system in place that enables us to recover wandering seniors in a speedy manner. Lives will be saved as a result of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I rise to talk about this bill, the—which would set up a silver alert system in Manitoba. I think it's pretty important that we're paying attention to individuals with cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease, individuals, adults with intellectual disabilities and others.

And I am therefore thankful that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) has brought this forward and we can be discussing it today. It is, in general, an initiative which we're ready to support on behalf of the—our Liberal caucus, and I think that implementing this needs a little bit of thought.

Let's start out with thinking about how it is implemented province-wide, if in fact there are the

number of people who may be—where this may be raised, where there may be silver alerts. Do we know the number of people in a week, a month, a year? Who would we be issuing silver alerts from? Certainly, that would be important in designing such a system.

Second thing, I note in the United States that they have a system where the Silver Alert can be local or it can be regional or it can be statewide. And I think it would be important, given the circumstances, that this be looked at quite carefully, because in some circumstances, you have a situation where an individual who had—with cognitive impairment has—we're almost certain it's going to be very local, but in other circumstances, that individual—we've had examples—has got in a car and travelled quite some distance. And so you would need a considerably broader silver alert if it were to be effective.

And, certainly, when we're looking at people in different parts of the province, there are different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and practices. In the North, a silver alert might be different than a silver alert in the south. There are so many different ways now that we can get out information. It's not like the years when there was just a couple of TV stations. You've got many organizations now, whether it's print or radio or TV or over the Internet and Facebook and Twitter and so on that, you know, there's the capacity to spread this very widely. And in some parts of the province, you have more use of one than another.

Certainly, it would seem to me that a degree of planning would be pretty important before this is actually implemented. And I would look forward to getting more information from the member for Brandon East, to the extent that he's engaged in this sort of planning, to know just how this would work if deployed in Manitoba, what the costs would be and so on.

And, certainly, with that additional information, we'd be, I'm sure, even more ready to support it, but I think that that would be very valuable information to have in hand before we proceed with this initiative, but—so I thank the member from Brandon East for bringing this forward. It is certainly an initiative which is talking and meeting a very significant need for vulnerable people in Manitoba. And let's hope that this can proceed after we have a little bit more information about how it would work and, you know, what the costs would be.

So thank you, Madam Speaker. Merci and miigwech.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House today, appreciate the opportunity to learn more, and want to commend my colleague from Brandon East. I see nods across the way. Thank you very much for bringing this forward. I certainly appreciate the opportunity and, as I said, the chance to learn a little bit more about this particular piece of legislation that's been proposed about the idea of a silver alert.

* (10:50)

And I know that the questions that were asked today in the House by myself and some of my colleagues certainly reflected our sincere need to understand a little bit more about what this bill is proposing and some of the options that are on the table.

And, in particular, as the critic for seniors for our caucus, this is an issue I must admit I didn't know much about, an idea that I had never heard of before. So, once again, I want to commend the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) for bringing this forward, for presenting this as a topic of debate this morning.

And, again, to echo my colleague from Gimli, the member for Gimli (Mr. Wharton), in his words, saying that this place can be very partisan. It can be a place where we have vigorous debates over ideas. But, certainly, what you're hearing this morning is a genuine interest in unpacking this piece of legislation, understanding the proposal, understanding, you know, what some of the issues are and some of the concerns, and, again, hearing from all members to ask their very good questions and to debate this here before the House.

I also appreciate in the sense that—as I said, I'm the member—the critic for seniors for our caucus, and, as such, I've spent quite a bit of time meeting with seniors groups throughout our city and our province. And it's always an opportunity for me to learn, you know, not just because of the life experience that seniors bring in our province, but also because of their commitment to safety and health for seniors—and I know that there's a number of community groups, a number of individuals and, even if you extend that to law enforcement and other first responders who are acutely concerned with health, safety and well-being of seniors. And so it's always a great opportunity for us to listen to them,

to understand their perspective and to gather information about what has been important to them and what they see as priorities. And I take the member at his word that he's met with a number of these groups as well, and I'm sure this is where this idea has come from. And so I appreciate that he's done that work, as well.

I think it's also important for us to understand that a little bit more, and so I—you know, this is just sort of me, you know, trying to—again—understand this and understand how we can go forward as a Legislature. But, you know, when there's consultations specifically on a private member—a piece of private member's resolution, I don't think we have any—or, sorry, private member's bill—I don't think we have any specific mechanism for reporting back or sharing that information. I'm sure the member would be more than happy to share some of the correspondence he's had with those organizations. But I think, you know, as we go through these bills—and then, of course, they would come to the committee stage. I guess there's an opportunity at that point to do any kind of amendments or, you know, suggestions—it could be friendly or otherwise—but an opportunity for us to kind of get to the real meat of the—and the horse trading that goes on in terms of getting the idea as good as we can get it as legislators. That might be an opportunity for us to be a little more briefed about some of the correspondence and the organizations that he's met with.

And, again, this is just sort of my idea as somebody who has met with many seniors and knows that they are passionate about creating a healthy, safe environment for Manitobans to grow old in here in this province. So I appreciate that work that's been done.

You know, it's something that this caucus feels very strongly about, and that is the support for those specifically with cognitive impairments and other vulnerable individuals and seniors as they age in our communities. It's something that, certainly, has been front and centre for many people in terms of their knowledge and appreciation for—mostly for, you know, the big media stories, the stories that have captured everybody's attention when it comes to the vulnerable people.

But I think what this particular bill speaks to—and this is something that's key to understand in this particular instance—is that there are a number of other situations that don't quite get, you know, the big

attention in the media, but are very important to understand and to have all of the information laid out as thoroughly as possible so that the public can then engage in a process of making sure that individuals and seniors are safe, as well.

And, you know, again, this goes back to our line of questions with regards to our—the AMBER Alert, the success of that program. Once again, a program that is national—international. I know there was a lot of work that was done by the previous government to implement that and to make sure that the standards fit with what we were doing here in Manitoba and the ways that we could bring that and make that the most effective. You know, I see this in very much the same light.

I can't imagine that there's any jurisdiction throughout Canada and, you know, I did run out of time in my questioning so maybe this is a sidebar that I can take up with the member after this debate, but to just unpack exactly which jurisdictions. I think he mentioned 37 other jurisdictions in the United States and then other members were mentioning in Canada that they had looked at this as well, so I think this is a great opportunity and I'd hope that this would be very much in line with what has been done in other jurisdictions. I think there's a lot of, you know, benefit for us to learn from one another and this is a great opportunity to do that, so I'm certainly excited to unpack that and continue to learn more about this particular issue with the support of seniors' organizations.

The AMBER Alert, though, again, is something that, you know, has been successful, you know, obviously because of the publicity campaign or the public's knowledge of that campaign going up through the work of law enforcement, first responders and so many others. You know, I think that this would certainly be the case for the silver alert. I think that there's an opportunity for government to sort of put on the table and say, you know, this is something that needs to be established and maintained; we feel that there's particular resources that could be shared, and especially co-ordination, because we shouldn't downplay how important the co-ordination process is for the AMBER Alert system. And it only works because that co-ordination is there. Because, again, law enforcement and others have been great partners in that.

But it really—especially when we're bringing forward a bill rather than a private member's

resolution, for instance, which would be the opportunity for us to talk about it in terms of raising awareness but not necessarily the bill itself. This is an opportunity, if we're going to put it in a bill, that we can actually talk about what concrete resources, then, the government could provide to actually support and sustain this. And I think that's certainly something we could explore as a legislature and I think that this could be something that could positively benefit this bill and ensure that it has the greatest success possible.

So, once again, I think this is a great opportunity. We often do this in this Legislature where an idea is presented and, you know, and again, to go back to the member for Gimli's (Mr. Wharton) comments, you know, some issues are clearly partisan or, you know, an opportunity for us to sort of, you know, state very clearly who we are and why our particular caucus or party supports one item or doesn't. In this case, I hear a lot of questions from all members, and that's a good thing. I think when a bill is introduced that can spark this kind of debate, can ask—begin to have us ask questions that are relevant and help us learn more about this type of system, I think it's always a positive day and it's a great opportunity for us to come together; you know, put down our partisan hats and begin to start learning more and understanding more about how this could go forward.

So, you know, kudos to the member opposite, kudos to the members—all the members in the Chamber who I'm sure are eager to speak as well to this and I hope that this is something we can spend a lot of time debating, understanding, unpacking, and, again, once, you know, we've had an opportunity to step out of the House, as often happens, I'm sure the member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson) will want to continue to educate the members of this House and I think that's an important part of the process as well. And then certainly, going forward, we can work together on this.

So thank you very much, Madam Speaker, I appreciate it.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Oh. The honourable member for Tyndall Park.

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): It's always a pleasure to be up and about and speak to something that might apply to most of us. There is a certain amount—

* (11:00)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

When this matter's again before the House, the honourable member will have 10 minutes remaining. The hour is now—okay, the honourable member will have nine minutes remaining.

RESOLUTIONS

Res. 4—Protecting Children and Youth from Viewing Violent, Sexually Explicit Material Online

Madam Speaker: The hour is now 11 a.m., and time for private member's resolution. The resolution before us this morning is the resolution on protecting children and youth from viewing violent, sexually explicit material online, brought forward by the honourable member for Radisson.

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I move, seconded by the member for Fort Richmond (Mrs. Guillemard), that

WHEREAS protecting children and youth from viewing sexually explicit and violent material online is extremely important in order to create a society free from sexual harassment, exploitation, abuse and violence; and

WHEREAS the majority of sexually explicit material features violence, domination, degradation and humiliation of both women and men; and

WHEREAS many of those consuming this material are under-aged youth as the average age of first exposure to sexually explicit material for boys in Canada is age 12; and

WHEREAS exposing a child to violent sexually explicit material is a form of child sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS Article 17 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child requires Canada to develop appropriate guidelines for the protection of children from information and material that is "injurious to his or her well-being"; and

WHEREAS the Provincial Government is raising awareness to prevent sexual violence and harassment on all Manitoba campuses by introducing The Sexual Violence Awareness and Prevention Act.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba condemn the ease of access children and youth have to violent and degrading content in sexually explicit material online and be urged to call on the federal government to pass legislation requiring meaningful age verification on adult web content.

Motion presented.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: I would just like a moment to introduce a guest that we have in the loge to my right. We have with us today Joy Smith, the former MLA for Fort Garry and former MP for Kildonan-St. Paul. And, on behalf of all honourable members here, we welcome you back to the Manitoba Legislature.

* * *

Mr. Teitsma: And I, too, want to echo those words, and specifically thank Mrs. Smith for the work that she's done on ending human trafficking and working and advocating against the kinds of issues that we're going to have an opportunity to discuss today. And, in fact, I'm going to begin with a story of a young boy who's quite familiar to Mrs. Smith.

When Joseph was just eight years old, a pop-up appeared on his screen. He clicked on it. Joseph then began a steady descent into what became a full-blown pornography addiction. By the time he was just nine years old, he was viewing porn multiple times a day. Joseph's parents noticed a change in him. He began to disrespect his mother and act out against his sister, to the point where she wouldn't want to be left alone in the same room with him.

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Thankfully, his parents discovered what Joseph had been pulled into. They spoke with him and put more and more filters on their computer. But the addiction had taken a firm hold of young Joseph. He found ways around the filters and continued to feed his addiction. Finally, his parents took away every source of Internet. They asked their son: If that was mom in that video, would you be okay with it? If that was your sister, would that be okay? And, thankfully, he still knew that that would not be okay.

Joseph gained national attention after writing about his porn addiction to MP Joy Smith at age 10. He's now 14 years old and continues to be active in raising awareness and advocating for change. His

website, SaveMyGeneration.ca, lists over 25 specific initiatives he's taken.

When he heard about this private member's resolution, this is what he had to say: As the founder of Save My Generation, and as one who's been ensnared in the trap of pornography at the young age of eight years old, I believe that the member for Radisson's private member's resolution, Protecting Children and Youth from Viewing Violent, Sexually Explicit Material Online, is a huge step in the right direction. I am so thankful that the MLA for Radisson has taken this step in faith in calling on the members of the Legislative Assembly to pass this resolution. If meaningful age verification legislation were in action when I was introduced to pornography, I may not have been scarred as badly as I have been. I believe that it is time for Canada to turn to concrete action to protect the lives of my generation, which is what this resolution has the potential of doing. Once passed, this resolution is going to help further the cause in bringing forth meaningful age verification in Canada. Thank you for leading our nation in the fight against the harmful effects of pornography.

Joseph's from Crystal City, Manitoba, in the Midland constituency, and I'm pleased to tell you that Joseph and his parents are in the gallery today. Let's all show our appreciation to Joseph and his family for the work that they continue to do to advocate for positive social change in Canada.

While I suspect that most of the members of this Legislature have had some exposure to porn growing up, the experience of young people today is very different from that of the older generation. The ease of access that young people have is unprecedented. Children are accessing porn on home computers, on school computers, on laptops in their bedrooms and virtually anywhere on their smartphones, and the type of material they are accessing is significantly more violent and exploitive than 30 years ago. And these depictions have consequences for their viewers.

Studies show that regular consumption of today's violent, sexually explicit material leads to more acceptance of violence against woman, a willingness to use physical or verbal coercion to have sex and increased sexual attraction to children. Much of today's pornography is misogynistic and based on the humiliation, degradation and hatred of women. It fuels rape culture by blurring the lines around consent and it's shown to be addictive, activating the same parts of the brain associated with additions to

drugs, alcohol or gambling. Those addictive effects are even more pronounced in adolescence with neural pathways permanently scarred during the brains development process, and the harms do not stop at the person doing it. Just as Joseph's sister was adversely affected, so many individuals are harmed by so-called second-hand effects of pornography.

Consider the case of Rehtaeh Parsons, her mother, Leah Parsons, has this to say: I believe that we're—if we are to change the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence against women we must start at one of the root causes. Easy access to messages and visuals online that condone violent pornographic templates for our youth is setting the stage for what is the norm when it comes to the treatment of females. If my daughter was treated as a human being and not as an object to conquer, she'd still be here today. Societal messages directly influence rape and violence towards women. End quote.

Research shows that pornography is a gateway to criminal behaviour and a portal into the world of sex trafficking. All told, the effects represent a significant social issue, and it is now a public health issue. Public health issues involve problems that affect individuals or groups of people beyond their capacity to correct them. Then the responsibility shifts from the individual to holding external causes or influences accountable. That's why it's incumbent on us as legislators and for all legislators across this country to act.

Recently, the Parliament of Canada joined together in unanimously passing motion 47, calling on the standing committee of health to examine: the public health effects of the ease of access and viewing of online violent and degrading sexually explicit material on children, women and men; recognizing and respecting the provincial and territorial jurisdictions in this regard; and that the committee report its findings to the House no later than July 2017. And it is important to study the issue, but it's even more important to take concrete action, and that's what this resolution that is before us today speaks to.

Many of our federal colleagues understand the importance of this issue and passing this resolution will surely be an encouragement to them. My own MP, NDP Daniel Blaikie, wrote to me about motion 47. He says, I share your concern about the ease of access to sexually explicit, violent and degrading material, and the harm it can do to our children.

I look forward to when we can move from study to concrete action.

And former MP, Joy Smith, who's with us in the loge today, writes: The member for Radisson's resolution is important in that it continues the very important conversation around the violence in online sexually explicit material and the impact it has on men, women and children. This issue is truly one of the top concerns for families across our nation. All legislators and parliamentarians have a responsibility to stand up and protect our citizens to responsible legislation, and this resolution calls on government to do exactly that.

And federal NDP MP Brigitte Sansoucy had this to say: The NDP recognizes that the increasing ease of access to violent, sexually explicit material online can be a problem for our society. It's also been proven that individuals who watch such material, to be more inclined to normalize sexual violence. We must take action to ensure that violent and sexually explicit content is not readily accessible by children. We must do something about this. We believe that action must be taken and access to this type of content must be controlled on several levels and in a consorted manner. We want to protect our children from sexually explicit content that could impact their health. End quote

*(11:10)

This resolution doesn't only have support from other legislators and parliamentarians, but it has broad support. In the short time since I was—since it was approved by Legislative Counsel less than two weeks ago, I have received letters of support from: Lianna McDonald of the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, which operates Cybertip.ca; Jared and Michelle Brock, the directors of Hope for the Sold and producers of the documentary Over 18; Janet Zacharias, a registered nurse who teaches at Red River College and has studied the health impacts of pornography; T.J. Okunnu, pastor of a Nigerian church in Winnipeg, who is also here in the gallery with several members of his congregation; Mark Penninga, executive director of ARPA Canada; and Glendyne Gerrard, the executive director of Defend Dignity; and Marilyn Evans from ParentsAware.

There's a lot more that could be said, but I also want to give others an opportunity to speak so I'll end with this: We owe it to our society, to our children, and to kids like Joseph to join together as legislators across party lines to condemn the ease of access our children and youth have to violent,

sexually explicit material online and to ask the federal government to take meaningful and concrete action to stem the tide. Thank you.

Questions

Mr. Deputy 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 members from another party; any subsequent questions must follow rotation between parties; each independent member has—may ask one question; and no questions or answers shall exceed 45 seconds.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I would like to ask the member from Radisson what would meaningful age verification look like in practice?

Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson): I thank the member for the question.

There's a variety of forms it could look like but, certainly, I think we don't have to reinvent the wheel. This is already being done and—in the United Kingdom. There is research being done there that will do meaningful age verification. And I also think, you know, our own gambling sites are protected against youngsters using them.

Why can't we do the same things with adult websites?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Can the member explain how this resolution protects young people in Manitoba?

Mr. Teitsma: I thank the member for the question—the minister for the question.

Protecting children in Manitoba is what we are all dedicated towards doing, and I hope we all can come together to do that today by passing this resolution. By passing this resolution, we're going to demonstrate that this government and this Legislature does not stand for the traumatic effects of violent and explosive pornography on children. And, by calling for meaningful age verification, we can help reduce victimization and other effects, both first-hand effects and second-hand effects, on the rest of our society and especially on our children and youth.

Ms. Fontaine: I'd like to ask the member again, because I'm not sure he really did answer my question. So, if the member would be able to provide

some specifics in respect of what he feels, what would be some meaningful age verification look like in practice?

Mr. Teitsma: Sure, we can speculate. At the end of the day, the federal government will have to make their decision as to what approach they'd want to take.

One technique that could be used is credit cards. Credit cards are often—are known to be owned by an adult or by someone who's underage; that's one technique that can be used. And there's nothing that's going to be perfect. I'll be completely honest is that the idea here is to reduce harms, and it's a public-health issue that we need to work together on.

I think the same arguments and the same discussions were had around child pornography so many years ago, and think of the progress and the steps that we've taken and that we've made and that groups like the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and cybertip.ca, and I recently heard Ashton Kutcher even making a statement on the work that those groups have done and what's been accomplished—

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

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): In respect, you gave the example of the use of debit card. Most banking systems now have the virtual Visa card. My child, who is 14 years old, even as young as 13, I believe, can have a Visa card that they can use online. So, you know, we need to know what this meaningful age really is. Thank you.

Mr. Teitsma: Sure, my understanding is that credit card companies are required to know if the person who's holding the credit card is of sufficient age or not.

But I don't want to get into speculation. Quite frankly, I think there is a variety of approaches that could be taken. And we need to look at what's being done in other jurisdictions and the progress that is being made around the world.

Ms. Fontaine: Would the member also share with the House what other components would the federal age verification have?

Mr. Teitsma: I'm not sure I heard the whole question, but what other impacts it might have, is kind of what I heard.

Ms. Fontaine: So, if I could just clarify for the member, my question is: What other components would the federal age verification have?

Mr. Teitsma: I do thank the member for the question.

Today the resolution that we have before us is not about a mechanism. It's not about specific approaches that we're going to take. These are things that absolutely need to be worked out. And the beauty of this resolution and also of the work that parliamentarians will have to do is that we don't have to do it alone. We can do it together with groups.

And just think of all the groups who've contacted me just in the last week and a half: the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, who's a leader in this kind of thing; Save My Generation, represented by Joseph in the gallery; the Joy Smith Foundation; Hope for the Sold; Defend Dignity—these are all groups that have a vested interest in this and that will—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Honourable member's time is up.

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I just want to thank the member for the work he has done on this resolution and for his focus on protecting children and youth in this fashion.

Can the member please share with the Chamber: Which stakeholders are in favour and offer their support with this resolution?

Mr. Teitsma: I'd be happy to do that. I just listed several of them, but by way of reminder: Canadian Centre for Child Protection, Joy Smith Foundation, SaveMyGeneration.ca, Hope for the Sold, Defend Dignity, Hark Families, Pastor T.J. Okunnu, ARPA Manitoba, Janet Zacharias, ParentsAware.

And I'm just going to read a quote, if I may, if I have time, from Glendyne Gerrard, who's the executive director of Defend Dignity. She said: Today's Internet offers wonderful benefits to children and adults but it also opens up access to misogynistic and sexually violent images, as well as to sexual predation. These images are easily accessible and available and consequently pose one of the biggest threats to our children's health and safety today. Action must be taken to treat this issue as the public health crisis it is.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): We are familiar with motion M-47 that was passed by the House of Commons, and that motion provides that the

standing committee has to report back to the House with its findings no later than July 2017.

Does the member know: Has this committee now reported back to the House or is that still in progress?

Mr. Teitsma: I do thank the member for the question.

My understanding is that the work of the committee for public health is ongoing. They have held meetings and taken testimony in various forms, and they'll continue to do so. And the report, as you mention, is due in July, and we very much look forward to seeing what that has to say.

Ms. Squires: Can the member tell us what led him to proposing this legislation?

Mr. Teitsma: I do want to thank the member for the question.

I'm a dad. I've got lots of kids. As many of you know, I have six kids, three girls and three boys. This is something that my wife and I, who's with us today, as well—there's my wife and my daughter, 16 years old—this is something that we deal with on a day-to-day basis in our home.

When I heard stories, stories like the one I shared about young Joseph, and there are so many other stories that just sadden you, that make you realize that parents are not equipped to be able to handle this on their own, that parents need the assistance of legislators and parliamentarians to provide a safer environment—

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

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this resolution. It is a good one.

I've met your family and your children, so I can appreciate why it holds close to heart for you.

* (11:20)

My question is: Right now in schools are there not filters for these pornographic images being viewed? And if so, how will this resolution contribute towards that?

Mr. Teitsma: I thank the member for the question.

There are filters, as I understand, in certain contexts, and even restaurant chains, actually, are getting in on it. I think Tim Hortons and McDonald's

are both agreeing that they'll also enable filtering on their Wi-Fi's. So, yes, that does provide some protection when a child is in the school, but so many students, as we know, carry around smart phones with data plans; they can get it any—pretty much anything they want, at anytime of day, wherever they are. And that's simply the reality of the society that we're in right now, but it doesn't have to stay that way.

Mr. Swan: Part of the resolution calls on the federal government to pass legislation requiring meaningful age verification on adult web content. Again, I think we're somewhat hazy as to what that would look like.

Does the member for Radisson agree that that legislation is properly for the federal government and is beyond the power of the provincial government?

Mr. Teitsma: I do thank the member for the question.

That's my understanding. So the research that I've conducted—originally, I was hoping to bring forward a bill that could potentially take action just within the Manitoba context. But the advice that I received and the research that I've done has indicated that the federal context is the best equipped to be able to deal with this particular issue and to be able to also work with other countries because, frankly, we don't need to solve this problem alone in Canada; we can work together with the United States, with the United Kingdom and develop a concerted approach much like we did with child pornography.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Time for question period has expired.

The debate is open for—is open. Any speakers?

Debate

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): So, again, I just want to thank the member for bringing forward this discussion to the House. I think it's an important discussion that everyone here in the House, as parents or grandparents or just as citizens of Manitoba, of course, understand and appreciate that we all have a sacred responsibility to protect children in Manitoba and across Canada and certainly across the world.

So I do want to just concentrate a little bit in respect of some of the really amazing work that the NDB did in the last 17 years in respect of child sexual exploitation. I do want to begin my narrative, though, by sharing a couple of stories in respect of

Manitoba citizens and, really, the consequences of child sexual exploitation.

I want to begin by sharing with the House the story of Fonassa Bruyere. So Fonassa Bruyere was from my reserve; she was from Sagkeeng First Nation. Fonassa went missing in early August of 2007. Her body was found just a little bit outside the city, still within the city limits, in late August 2007. She had been missing for about three weeks. She was murdered and she was the victim of sexual exploitation that often takes place within—among indigenous young girls and women. She was—had been sexually exploited at a very young age and, tragically, actually, I think, fell through the cracks—the gaps of many of our systems.

Immediately after—I think why I always begin with Fonassa Bruyere, because one of the things that happened with the murder of Fonassa Bruyere, who, again, I want to stress, was only 17. One of the things that happened, that actually shifted everything here in Manitoba was that the community organized almost immediately. So I believe that we had our first meeting probably in the first or second week of September. We met at Sage House.

So Sage House is a social service agency that works with women and young girls who are sexually exploited every single day on our streets, and do phenomenal work at advocating for women who are sexually exploited. We had, in that space, probably a good 50 people, and 50 people who represented just a wide range of stakeholders in Manitoba, and just to give a sense to the House of the number of organizations and stakeholders that are working in respect of child sexual exploitation, I'll just mention a couple of them, and it's not the full list, but Ka Ni Kanichihk, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata, Marymound, Ndinawe, New Directions, The Salvation Army, Southern Chiefs Organization. We had members from the Winnipeg Police Service's—at the time it was called the Morals Unit; it's since changed its name to Vice.

We had members from the RCMP in attendance as well. We actually had Judy Wasylcia-Leis at the time, Doug Martindale at the time attend as well. There was a whole group of Manitobans and organizations and stakeholders that got together to try and look at, in a very co-ordinated response, at the issue of child sexual exploitation here in Manitoba.

That group was called the—we named ourselves the Sexually Exploited Youth Community Coalition. What happened was, at the time the minister responsible was Gord Mackintosh, and what Gord Mackintosh was—he started this process of engagement between the government and all of these community stakeholders, and so we had spent hours upon hours upon hours doing a path session and mapping out where the gaps were, so where, you know, individuals like Fonassa were falling through, and came up with a very co-ordinated, strategic and methodical strategy for Manitoba, and what ended up happening is that that was embedded into the Phase II of Tracia's Trust, which is Manitoba's Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy and was named, rightly, after Tracia Owen, who was a young indigenous girl who was sexually exploited and who tragically took her own life.

Some of—the things that we did out of that was—have actually never—at the time had never been done across the country, and so Manitoba was a lead in respect of trying to address sexual exploitation, and some of those things look—were legislative. We started doing, every year, public awareness information workshops or forums. The first couple of years—and I sat on that group with a variety of different stakeholders—which was through the child protection branch, where community organizations—Sexually Exploited Youth—the SEY, as it was called, was allocated \$30,000 to be able to put on this public forum which saw a variety of different speakers from across the country, including families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, including ex-predators—I don't use the word john but individuals who sexually exploit children. We actually were able to get a couple to come and present.

We had experts on the Swedish model—the anti-prostitution act that came in. We had grandmothers and elders and, you know, community stakeholders who were all experts in respect of child sexual exploitation who presented there.

We actually got, almost every year, close to 300 participants, which was a really phenomenal way to really start having this, you know, honest, in-depth conversation of what child sexual exploitation in Manitoba looks like.

Out of that path session and that second phase of Tracia's Trust came StreetReach, which was a co-ordinated response in respect of outreach workers that work in different agencies trying to protect, on

the ground, 24-7, children who are being sexually 'exploited'—sexually exploited here, even on our streets.

I'm really, really proud to say that also out of that path session from our elder Mae Louise Campbell, who I'm sure many individuals know here, she had shared with the minister at the time, Gord Mackintosh, the vision of having a space that children who had been sexually exploited, little girls who had been sexually exploited, would have a space where they could go outside the city to find healing and to deal with the myriad of issues that they're facing just as children and as sexually exploited, vulnerable, vulnerable little girls.

* (11:30)

And actually, I'm so proud that our government took that vision and those recommendations and that direction from Mae Louise Campbell. And out of that, we have Hands of Mother Earth, or HOME for short.

And again, it's one of the first times across Canada where we have this healing centre, protective centre, outside the city so that we were able to take young indigenous women from outside the city and bring them to—on the land where they could get healing and counselling. I've had the opportunity to be there. It is a beautiful space. It's something that I'm incredibly, incredibly proud of.

I just want to share that, you know, every day, every single day, every minute that we are here, on the streets of Winnipeg, across Manitoba, across Canada, there are children who are being sexually exploited. There are individuals who prey upon children.

I work with a family who is one of our missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and her daughter was murdered at 17. That little girl was 10, and she went to 7-Eleven, and there was an individual that was waiting there because he knew that he would be able to find somebody or he thought that he'd be able to find somebody that he could sexually exploit, and he did.

And every day, that happens in this city and in this province. And I'm really proud to be part of a legacy that took that up in a very tangible, methodical and strategic way to deal with and to protect children here in Winnipeg and Manitoba against sexual exploitation and really having an honest discussion about what child sexual exploitation is and, actually, even changing the

narrative so that we don't talk about, you know, children as prostitutes. They are children who are sexually exploited, and we're a part of that and we did that in consultation—

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

Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond): I am happy to stand beside my colleague, the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma), and second this very important resolution about protecting our children and youth. It is our collective duty to speak with one voice when it comes to the prevention of harmful influences in a child's life. I have no doubts that my colleagues from all parties will stand with the member for Radisson on this particular issue.

When I was in elementary school, there was one computer that was shared with the entire class. The teacher would demonstrate how to give directions to the turtle, who we called Logo, then we would be given a chance, one by one, to have Logo follow prompts to draw a picture. Montezuma's Revenge was the only game on my home computer, and we were only allowed to use it, my siblings and I, when my father was not working on it.

My father is a geneticist. Part of his job is to research very rare diseases. And when the Internet was brand new, he thought he could just plug in this new syndrome that he was researching and come up with some information in his research. The syndrome was called Triple X syndrome, and I assure you that what came up was not medical information. And this just demonstrates how quickly and easily accessible some really inappropriate images can be to the general public.

Growing up, I did not have access to the Internet; it wasn't even developed yet. Cellphones were still in their infancy, and certainly not for children. We watched out for white vans with no windows. That was the danger in our perception while we were out playing in the neighbourhood.

Today's world for children and youth is so much different. Information is available anywhere, any time, at the click of a few buttons and the swipe of a finger across a screen. Predators no longer need to hide in white vans to troll for prey—troll for prey. They have access to children right in their own homes, and many parents are unaware.

Technology has developed at a very rapid pace and far outpaced our ability to keep up with the laws to protect our most vulnerable. Too many children

are exposed to unhealthy sexual images and messages and are growing up with a skewed idea of what love is.

Unfortunately, in most online pornography, the messages are clearly geared towards sexual violence against women. When young children are exposed to this kind of messaging, it's no wonder our youth have difficulty maintaining relationships.

One study by the Institute for Public Policy Research in the UK found that two thirds of young women and almost half of young men agree that it would be easier growing up if pornography was less easy to access.

It is high time we adults act in a way that shows we are listening and that we care. Although mandating age verification may not prevent all access, it certainly is a step in the right direction towards protecting our children and our youth.

My husband and I have two teenage sons and two daughters. We have done our best to limit access to inappropriate activity online, but kids these days learn a lot faster than their parents do. I know there are no guarantees, and it is my hope I have raised my children with the values to know how harmful pornography and sexual images can be to their hearts and their minds. Even with our careful planning, there have been instances where exposure has occurred while visiting friends' homes where access was not limited or pop-ups on screens have caught them off guard. Their friends will share images with them that they find funny now, whereas in previous generations it would have been appalling or unheard of to share these types of images.

Parents have quite the challenge, keeping their children safe from harm in today's digital and online world. It is time the federal government begin the conversation around mechanisms to limit the abilities of minors from accessing the world of pornography.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I am pleased to be able to speak to this today, and I know I have many of my colleagues who also want to be able to get up and put their views on the record.

The member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) tells us that he wants to take concrete action to protect children. And the NDP caucus has always—has always—been involved in taking concrete steps to protect children in a host of different ways, and I do want to talk a little bit about that today but also talk

about what is specifically contained in this resolution.

And we are familiar with motion M-47. I think it's important just to put the contents of this motion on the record. I know this is not the only government motion moving ahead in Ottawa that may not be fully understood by Canadians, but here's what the motion says: That the Standing Committee on Health be instructed to examine the public health effects of the ease of access in viewing of online violent and degrading sexually explicit material on children, women and men, recognizing and respecting the provincial and territorial jurisdictions in this regard, and following completions of its study report back to the House no later than July 2017.

The member for Radisson has quite correctly put on the record that this was a federal motion that was passed with the support of all parties in the House of Commons. It's not been handed to a standing committee, who are going to treat this issue as a public health issue, and I think we have common ground on that, that this seems like a reasonable approach. I didn't know whether this committee had reported back. I thank the member for Radisson for his answer. His answer is that, no, this committee has not reported back. The House of Commons is awaiting the results of what I think is an important study, an important question to be answered, and the federal government will then go ahead and decide what action they want to take. And it is why I asked the member the question, what is the action called for in this resolution, to call on the federal government to pass legislation requiring meaningful age verification on adult web content. And the member for Radisson gave his answer that he did research this, he received some advice, and, indeed, it's the federal government which would have to pass legislation actually dealing with meaningful age verification, whatever that is going to look like.

So does that make the resolution wrong? No, it doesn't. But, if we're looking at concrete action, it's clear from the member's own answers that there's very, very little that the Manitoba Legislature can do in this specific area to protect children.

And I do want to talk about some of the other things that we've brought forward to try to protect children. Just last week my friend the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) again brought forward a private member's bill that would restrict the use of pill presses. I know everybody in this Chamber and people up in the gallery as well know the risks of

opioids and other drugs in Manitoba, and, unfortunately, we're losing our young people to that very, very deadly situation. And my colleague the member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe) brought concrete action, something within the control of the Province of Manitoba to say, you know what, this is not going to be the be-all and end-all. We're going to take the steps that we can as a Province to protect children.

* (11:40)

And I'm afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Progressive Conservative government members used their majority to vote down that bill before it even could go to a committee, before we could even have average Manitobans come forward to give us their view. And what was their justification for that? They said, well, it's federal responsibility.

So, you know what? Another child may die tomorrow because of an opioid overdose, but, you know what? That's up to Ottawa.

And now here we are this week with a very, very different situation where we know the federal government is studying an issue. We support that work being done, and I think every member of this House is going to be interested to hear what the federal government has to say.

Now, I'm very pleased that Joy Smith, former MP, is here today. She and I actually worked on a number of things together. And I know, to paraphrase Free Press reporter Mia Rabson, she said, well, how could it be that a suburban Conservative and an inner-city lefty are working together on an issue? And that issue, of course, was protecting women and children and men from being sexually exploited. And I want to thank MP Joy Smith for being a strong voice on this issue. And even though people wouldn't have expected the two of us to be shoulder to shoulder on an issue, indeed, we were. And as the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Swan: And, as the attorney general of Manitoba, I did take forward our position that the Nordic model that my friend the member for St. Johns (Ms. Fontaine) talked about, was the right law for Canada, that it was the right thing to do. Criminal law, so it's beyond the ability of the Province, but as minister, I did take that to the federal table.

If you want silence in the room, be the one Attorney General around a crowded room talking about the need to deal with prostitution. And I

looked around at my colleagues, and they all happened to be looking down at their BlackBerrys or consulting with their aides at that point. And I do want to give credit to Peter MacKay, then the Justice minister, who knew that there was a court decision and it was going to be heard by the Supreme Court. He said, yes, you know, we don't have time to talk about this. Why don't you just send me what we should do? And I referred to a lot of the work that Joy Smith had done, and I put Manitoba's position forward, which was concrete action on our part, and I was pleased that the federal government did move so that the first time in Canadian history the buying of sex is illegal. And that changes the dynamic in the way that the member for St. Johns has talked about so that we recognize there are perpetrators and there are victims. And for the first time in Canadian history, we actually straightened that out and sorted out which is which.

Now, I'm disappointed that I've waited for the new provincial government to say or do anything on this ground. I don't know that many Manitobans know that it's illegal to buy sex. Representing the West End of Winnipeg, there's—I've got some very strong views on that, and I hope that there will be concrete action taken by this government to get word out so that we can stop young people being preyed upon and we can stop all of the misery and the injury and, yes, the death that comes from sexual exploitation.

There's other areas where we took concrete action. My friend, the member for St. Johns, spoke about Tracia's Trust. And, you know, I can tell you, as a Cabinet minister, we always—you always want to step up for more resources, and I often felt we weren't doing enough, but then I would travel across the country and be told that Manitoba was actually the leader in Canada and we'll be pressing the government to keep taking real steps to protect young people from the risk of sexual exploitation. And I know that we will have support across, maybe, traditional political lines to get that done.

There were other steps that we took to protect young people. One of those was Bill 18 a couple of years ago, to protect children in our school system. And we know that children who may be coming out as gay or lesbian or who may believe, who may know and have known for some time, that the biological equipment they've been given does not match who they are. And we wanted to protect those children and to do nothing more than to let children have an organization or group within their own

school. Some call it a gay-straight alliance; different groups have come up with different names. And we thought that was a great way to help young people struggling with these issues who suffer high rates of suicide and attempted suicide; who suffer, who often have a much higher rate of alcohol or substance abuse. And we thought one way that we could have their back was to let young people create their own group or their own committee within their own school. Maybe home was not a safe place to talk about these issues. Maybe the community was not a safe place to talk to these issues but, surely, we could create a safe space for these young people in their own schools.

And we brought that bill in and, unfortunately, it was the Progressive Conservative members who opposed it and who spoke after it, day after day after day.

And, you know, there's a picture that—a file picture, I guess, that's used, and I look very angry in the picture, so much so that when it ran in the Free Press one time, my mother called me and said, why were you so angry? And I had a look at the picture, and it was the very last day of that debate—the very last day of that debate—and I remember a member—I won't say who it was—got up to ask a question of why we were spending money on helping kids get on and off school buses safely. And I said, well, who could be opposed to kids getting to and from school safe? Only people who are opposed to kids being safe in schools.

So we fought that fight and we won that fight for young people, but I know it's not the only fight that we have. So, yes, there's concrete action that can be taken, and there is more concrete action that will be taken to protect children a whole host of ways.

This resolution is premature because it deals with a study which is still going on in Ottawa. We'll look forward to what that is, but the actual concrete action sought by this resolution doesn't actually do anything to protect children. But I do look forward to what all other members are going to say about this, because we do have the opportunity to put thoughtful comments on the record.

Thank you very much.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I have said many times in this House that our children are our future. As a mother of six, I have strived to raise my children with the best possible values so that they may grow up to be amazing members of society and

the community. Part of this is teaching our children respect, not only for themselves but for other people. We must encourage them not to mistreat others, but to be kind and humble.

However, we are not at—always able to be there for our children, and there is much that we cannot control. We are in the age where information-communication technology can retrieve and send information in a heartbeat. Friends can talk to friends on the other side of the world instantaneously. Despite the many positive aspects of Internet communication, there remains issues of the type of information our children can access via computers, laptops, mobile phones, video game consoles and other devices instantly.

While we trust that our youth can use Internet responsibly, we must also realize that we cannot always monitor everything they say—they see or do online. Therefore, we must have those protections in place.

The proliferation of Internet technology is truly astounding. Before, Internet could only be accessed through home computers. However, the amount of Internet-enabled devices have rapidly increased. With this increased connectivity, there are downsides.

Many adolescents are finding themselves able to access violent and sexually explicit material online much easier than ever before. Research has shown adolescents have been increasingly accessing sexually explicit material intentionally or accidentally in recent years. This sexually explicit material is often degrading, particularly to women, but in the worst cases, to other children.

Acts of domination, humiliation and violence undermine the social fabric that we as parents try to instill in our children. The act of viewing such material has been correlated to psychological impacts, especially when viewed by developing youth.

We must seek to raise awareness about the dangers of viewing sexually explicit material online. This presents a new challenge to both governments and to our educational systems. The availability and access of explicit and degrading material online is seeing an increase in our province and our country.

Research has shown the effects is linked to delayed maturation, issues with cognitive control and impulsivity in teenagers. Research has also shown correlations that teens who have viewed this material

have lower degrees of social integration, increases in conduct problems, higher levels of delinquent behaviour, higher incidences of depressive symptoms and decreased emotional bonding with caregivers.

* (11:50)

The accessibility of this material impacts the mental health of many of our youth. Our young girls feel as though they must live up to unreal physical expectations while our boys feel as though they need to display some of the same veracity, lack of respect and dominance found in degrading content available online.

Indeed, the research suggests that viewing this material may lead to unrealistic sexual values and beliefs. Such ideas weaken the capability of youth to form healthy and mutually beneficial relationships as the notion of what a normal relationship is replaced by images that they view.

My federal colleagues have already begin considering this issue with the standing committee on health, currently reviewing the motion 47, a bi-partisan motion aimed at examining the public-health effects and the—of the ease of viewing online violent and degrading sexual material on children, women and men.

While further research is being done on the impacts of viewing that material is under way we must begin to act now. Understanding the health effects in degrading material and sexual violence in Canada are important to creating a culture of respect and mutual care where all people are treated equally.

And I quote the member from Radisson, I look forward to move from study to concrete action. I hope that you can carry that sentiment back to your caucus especially to your Executive Council. Many Manitobans are waiting for this current government to move from study to concrete actions in respect of the mental health and addiction strategy which will take 'til the end of the year, education in respect of CFS, I can keep going but I'll end there. Thank you Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): As the Minister responsible for Status of Women, I would like to focus much of my comments in regard to this resolution on sexual violence a topic I know much about.

I say this because one cannot spend any amount of time working on women's issues without being

drawn into an awareness of the overwhelming prevalence of sexual violence and how it disproportionately affects women and girls.

I want to thank the member for Radisson (Mr. Teitsma) for bringing forward this private member's resolution, because I believe that taking steps to protect children and youth from viewing violent, sexually explicit material online, we also take steps towards reducing the prevalence of sexual violence towards women and girls.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are just weeks away from April 1st, which is the beginning of Sexual Violence Awareness Month.

Talking about sexual violence towards women and girls and talking about viewing sexually explicit material is not a pleasant conversation, but it is one that I believe is incumbent on us to have. It is hard to look at the facts that one in four women have experienced sexual violence, and almost half of all violent crimes against girls in Canada are sexually—are sexual in nature.

It's hard to realize that there are on average six sexual assaults committed every day against women and girls in Canada, and that Manitoba continues to have the highest provincial rate of police-reported sexual assault. These numbers are just the tip of the iceberg because we know that upwards of 95 per cent of sexual assaults go unreported. With such a strong prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment occurring in our society one struggles to comprehend what is occurring.

As more women and girls come forward and report incidents of these assaults we get a better understanding of who our survivors of sexual violence are. I honour all survivors of sexual violence and commend those who have made the painful decision of transferring the burden of shame from within them to the perpetrators, where it belongs, by seeking justice through law enforcement.

And so, as more women and girls come forward with their accounts of sexual violence, we find out more about who they are. We know they are our daughters, our nieces, our sisters, our neighbours, our friends in school and on university campuses, young professional women, doctors, lawyers, politicians, actors, girls who are lost and looking for a way back home. We have a clear picture of who these women and girls are, they are all of us.

But what about the perpetrators? Who are these boys and men who are violating our women and girls, and what can we do to alter the trajectory of their path?

While I'm not suggesting that the reduction of access to sexually explicit and violent material will cure sexual deviance, I do believe it will help prevent the further normalization of sexual violence against women and girls. As a society, I think we need to do everything within our power to shift from a rape culture to a consent culture. We have to do everything we can to support healthy attitudes towards sex and counter the negative stigmatizing perpetuated in violent sexual 'content' that is readily available online.

Let me be clear: sexual curiosity is a normal part of adolescent development, but what isn't normal is the unmonitored and unprecedented access to online pornography. This is not about a moral judgment but, rather, protection for youth and for our women and girls.

Let's listen to the voice of our youth. Seven out of 10 18-year-olds say that pornography leads to unrealistic attitudes towards sex and that pornography can have a damaging impact on young people's view of sex or relationships. Almost 90 per cent of mainstream sexually explicit content features violence towards women. It is not surprising, then, that studies have shown the effects of pornography on our youth are numerous: notably, an increased negative attitude towards women and decreased empathy for victims of sexual violence. By calling for meaningful age verification, we can reduce victimization and other negative effects of pornography on children, the most vulnerable and impressionable in our society.

This resolution deserves multi-partisan support because it will also prevent the normalization of sexual violence towards women and girls. I hope members opposite will join us in supporting this motion.

Thank you.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): It's an honour again to stand here within the Chamber to partake in this very important discussion in regards to the private member's resolution, protecting children and youth in viewing sexual, violent and explicit material online.

I can tell you, right now, as a mother raising four girls, one daughter, three nieces, ages 13, 12, six and

three, I can tell you we have multiple uses of technology in my household, such as laptops, tablets, iPhones, BlackBerrys, iPods, so we have—there's many, many ways for my children to come across these images, which I hope they don't.

But I just want to add that there've been a few times where my daughter would mention that—she's the age of 13; however, she looks quite older than what she does, looks older than the age she is, and there's times where she shared with me where she'll have grown men asking questions about her, and she would share with me personally and make me aware of what's going on. And there's been a couple of times where I would respond by saying, do you know my daughter is only 13 years old? Gone. End of conversation. Friend request deleted.

So, with that, it is very important to me about this private member's resolution because it's in regards to protecting our children. And, like I said, you know, the multiple uses of vices in my house, and there's some more—more quite aware. Even my six-year-old is learning how to navigate around all these vices. And one day she may accidentally pop into one of these explicit sites without even knowing it, and she'll be exposed to this.

So, with that, I just wanted to put on record here to questions about this private member's act, which I was really looking forward to the answer today, was: What would meaningful age 'verification' look like in practice? Like I said, my six-year-old is able to maneuver around these mechanisms, so I'm still looking forward to what the age 'verification' will look like in practice.

Also, another question, is: What other components would the federal age 'verification' have? What other steps can the federal government take to protect children from violent sexual imagery? And what research shows that the majority of sexual explicit material features violence, domination, 'degradation' and humiliation of both women and men?

Other questions I have is: What other supports can we offer to children and youth and you to aid in their development? What do investments—how do investments in the education system help children and youth develop? And how does the creation of a publicly funded child-care system help children and youth develop? And also how does antibullying legislation help children and youth, especially LGBTQ, have a normal and healthy development?

So these are all important questions and discussions that need to be had, need to be held in regards to this private member's resolution.

Also, too, I wanted to put on record our fight against—fight towards protecting children—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for The Pas (Ms. Lathlin), will have remaining of—six minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, March 14, 2017

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