

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
CURRY, Nic	Kildonan	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FLETCHER, Steven, Hon.	Assiniboia	Ind.
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GRAYDON, Clifford	Emerson	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	St. James	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
KLASSEN, Judy	Kewatinook	Lib.
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Burrows	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Flor	Logan	NDP
MARCELINO, Ted	Tyndall Park	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	Morris	PC
MAYER, Colleen	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 17, 2018

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Madam Speaker: Good afternoon, everybody. Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Madam Speaker: Introduction of bills? Committee reports? Tabling of reports? Ministerial statements?

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Georgia's Journey of Hope

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): Madam Speaker, on October 6th, 2008, Michael Lucas and Kristin McDowell were blessed with a beautiful baby daughter, Georgia Lily Lucas. Her parents were ecstatic to welcome their new daughter, a new sister and a new granddaughter to the family. Their bundle of joy appeared to be a completely healthy baby girl, however, only three months later complications arose.

She was found to have a severe debilitating condition known as spinal muscular atrophy, also known as SMA. At the time there was no known treatment or cure for the disorder and, sadly, at the tender age of six months, Georgia lost her battle to SMA.

Motivated by their loss and inspired to help others suffering from this condition, her family began to fundraise and raise awareness of this terrible disease. In their daughter's name they founded Georgia's Journey of Hope, a 5-kilometre run and fundraiser for Canadian families afflicted with SMA. The annual event took place in the Island Lakes community and brought people in from all over the province as a united stand against this 'debilitating' disorder.

Today we know that Georgia's loss was not in vain. With the dedication of her family, her community and others around Canada who have been touched by this disease, their determination would finally pay off. In 2016 a new drug known as Spinraza was approved to treat SMA, and since that time it has been successful in improved motor function for those being treated with the condition. And even more recently, a promising new gene therapy approach to treat SMA has the potential to be even more effective.

Since the goal of awareness and leading to the treatment of this condition has been reached, Georgia's Journey of Hope no longer continues. However, Madam Speaker, Georgia's legacy will continue to live on as a shining beacon of hope for all those living with SMA.

I ask all my colleagues here in the Legislature to join me in honouring Georgia's family—Kristin McDowell, Michael Lucas, Calla Lucas, Maya Lucas, Aria Lucas, Jack McDowell and Betty McDowell—for keeping Georgia's memory alive and helping all those living with SMA.

Malaya Cueto

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): It is my honour to recognize the work of one of Manitoba's most incredible young leaders, Malaya Cueto.

Malaya is an eight-year-old activist attending Grosvenor elementary school involved in a number of school and community-development projects.

As the youngest member of the Bear Clan, Madam Speaker, Malaya has been on patrol throughout the North and West End while volunteering in events such as the Cooper Nemeth hockey memorial, a housing collaboration between Sagkeeng First Nation and Setsunan University students from Japan and the second annual Canada Women's March, where she was leading in the very front.

After meeting a man living in a cupboard—cardboard box in temperatures below -40°, Malaya understood how important the Bear Clan's packages are to people struggling in the winter cold.

In response, Malaya created the Courage of the Bear Cub project, a campaign to raise funds to support those struggling with homelessness by providing care packages.

Malaya enjoys smudging, singing on traditional drums at indigenous cultural celebrations, and whether she is delivering a speech about the homeless in our city or leading an oath of sportsmanship, people listen to her passionate, courageous and strong voice.

Malaya is currently running to become the first Kid Mayor of the City of Winnipeg, and so,

Madam Speaker, a special shout-out to Mayor Brian Bowman to seriously consider Malaya's application to join him at City Hall.

It is my pleasure, Madam Speaker, to acknowledge this young leader today and to say to Malaya how much I love and adore her and I look forward to our next girls' movie out.

I ask my colleagues to help me recognize this extraordinary young Manitoban.

Community Newspaper Day

Mr. Greg Nesbitt (Riding Mountain): Madam Speaker, today, April 17th, is Community Newspaper Day in Manitoba.

In the spring of 2005, the former MLA for Morris, Mavis Taillieu, received unanimous support of all members of this House for her resolution to acknowledge the important role community newspapers play in our province.

Fast-forward 13 years, and Manitoba's 49 community newspapers continue to document the history of communities they serve. Each week, nearly 400,000 copies are delivered throughout the province.

In a world where it can be hard to determine if news is real or fake, community newspapers continue to be a trusted source of information, documenting the activities of Manitobans weekly through words and pictures. Community newspapers are living history books, recording all facets of the lives of community residents from the time they were born, as well as providing news that is relevant to them.

Contrary to the narrative we hear so often, Manitobans read community newspapers. In fact, more people are turning to community newspapers than ever. A recent readership study done by ad media Canada shows that over 79 per cent of Manitobans read a community newspaper each week. This is up from 72 per cent in a survey done 10 years ago. The survey also shows that community newspapers are the No. 1 media source they tune–turn to for government advertising, everything from public notices to information about government programs.

The oldest newspaper in Manitoba, the Minnedosa Tribune, which I am proud to say is located in my constituency of Riding Mountain, is celebrating 135 years of publishing this year. In most communities across the province, the newspaper is

the oldest and longest continuously operating business in the community.

Madam Speaker, we have several publishers and members of the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association, my friends, with us today in the gallery. I would ask that all members in the House join with me in thanking them for their commitment to their communities and wish them all the best as they celebrate Community Newspaper Day.

Madam Speaker, I would ask for leave to have the names of those members of the Manitoba Community Newspapers Association in attendance today recorded in Hansard.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have those names recorded in Hansard? [*Agreed*]

Laurie Finley, The Carillon; Tanis Hutchinson, Manitoba Community Newspapers Association; Nancy Johnson, Glacier Media; John Kendle, Canstar Community News; Kim MacAulay, The Clipper; Brett Mitchell, Selkirk Record; Kevin Slimp, Newspaper Academy

Opening of New Jordan's Principle Offices

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I would like to take this moment to thank all the First Nation leaderships throughout the years for their tireless advocacy for the many 'crises' we've endured.

It is with great pleasure that I visited the newly opened Jordan's Principle offices in some of my communities. Children who have needed supports and resources are now finally able to receive what they require.

I would like to share the story of one child who had one wish. That was to ride a bike, but his mobility was restricted due to many medical conditions. His local JP office was able to grant his dream by getting him a specially modified tricycle. There wasn't a dry eye around when they got to witness this young child beaming from ear to ear as he rode a bike for the first time. The bike also had positive impacts on his overall health and well-being.

There are so many children in the North; thanks to the JP offices, their simple dreams—a new crutch or a wheelchair, ones we often take for granted—are coming true.

* (13:40)

For years the people in the North have tried to make former provincial governments address the health 'crises' we've faced. I will never forget when

the NDP government sent over body bags to my Island Lake communities during our H1N1 crisis instead of much needed medical supplies. My brother-in-law was one of them who opened the body bag boxes.

I've also had the pleasure of walking through numerous brand new homes built in communities which, for the past 10 years, have not built one single house.

I wish to thank my cousins, the Liberal Party of Canada, for finally listening to my leaders and sending the funds directly to them.

Kitchi miigwech.

Dr. Cheryl Rockman-Greenberg

Mr. Blair Yakimoski (Transcona): Academic, geneticist, clinician, scientist, researcher, leader, role model, advocate—these are some of the nouns used in the introduction of distinguished professor Dr. Cheryl Rockman-Greenberg, who has been in— at the forefront of metabolic and genetic rare disease research for many years, putting the U of M Children's Hospital Research Institute of Manitoba and HSC on the map globally with her research and advocacy, while improving the lives of generations of children and their families here at home and worldwide.

Last week, in a ceremony, she became one of a rare group of Canadians and rarer group of Manitobans with her induction into the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame, whose vision it is to honour our medical heroes of the past, present and future.

Her work and successes in research have had a profound, positive effect on the health of Manitobans at risk for the illnesses she studies and has led to targeted newborn screening programs to allow early life-changing intervention in our Hutterite and Oji-Cree communities.

As a young woman doctor in the 1980s, which was a rare thing at the time, she was the driving force behind the opening of the first laboratory in Manitoba for the diagnosis of genetic disease with DNA testing.

Dr. Greenberg recently was a principal investigator for a clinical study for hypophosphatasia, a rare metabolic bone disorder. This research has transformed a formerly untreatable, potentially fatal disease into a treatable one.

Though the accolades which have been heaped upon her are numerous, the true measure of her success is the relationship she has with the children she has helped. She would always find time to sit with, to talk to and encourage them in their struggle. They thank her by surviving and thriving, pursuing activities such as skateboarding, biking, running and playing as children should. These are activities which would have never been possible years ago without this research.

Please join me in congratulating and thanking Canadian Medical Hall of Fame Laureate Dr. Cheryl Rockman-Greenberg for her commitment to the improved health, education, treatment and advocacy of patients worldwide.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to oral questions, we have some guests that I would like to introduce to you.

Seated in the public gallery from Kildonan-East Collegiate we have 33 grade 9 students under the direction of Elliot Unger and John Thompson, and this group is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Wiebe).

On behalf of all members here, we welcome you to the Manitoba Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Opioid Epidemic Safe Consumption Site

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Madam Speaker, we know that there is an opioid epidemic confronting our province today. The Canadian Mental Health Association called this an unprecedented public health crisis. It says that, you know, 16 Canadians a day were hospitalized last year for opioid poisoning. In 2016 eight Canadians died a day. So far this year it's estimated 4,000 have succumbed to this epidemic.

Now, despite these shocking numbers, when we've asked the minister in Estimates recently what new initiatives there have been, he can't point to anything. One recommendation in this report released today from the CMHA is that new, safe consumption sites be added.

We know that so far there haven't been actions on this file, but we'd ask: With families, workers and now experts bringing forward the recommendation

for safe consumption sites, will the Premier support the creation of a safe consumption site in Winnipeg?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I appreciate the member raising the topic, Madam Speaker, and we have shown and, through our Health Minister's actions, demonstrated our concerns about the issues he raises, certainly, in terms of the VIRGO report that we've commissioned on mental health and related issues. We look forward to the information that it will provide and we'll be acting on the information that it provides, and we'll make that, of course, available, as has become our habit in this government, to the public in the next few weeks' time.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: Madam Speaker, the government's internal reports have been repeatedly delayed, and unnecessarily so. So we see independent experts coming forward with their recommendations in the meantime, and we would know that—and we would say that knowing that the provincial government has access to federal money to help treat mental health issues and combat addictions, that they act immediately.

It is a life-and-death issue. Again, the language is very clear in this report, and I quote here: Supervised consumption sites and overdose prevention sites are effective in saving lives. End quote. It's right there in black and white.

We know that Main Street Project, here in the city of Winnipeg, has expressed an interest in building a safe consumption site here in the city of Winnipeg. However, in order for their application to go forward to the federal government, the Premier has to sign off on it.

So, will he support Main Street Project's application for a safe consumption site here in Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: Although, Madam Speaker, we don't agree with the member's expressed desire in respect of the safe injection sites, we do agree with the need to address, proactively, the symptoms and associated causes of the concerns that have led to this pattern of behaviour, not only in Manitoba but across the country.

And so that is why we are ambitiously making available naloxone across the province to assist in addressing some of the symptomatic aspects of the

users, and also Suboxone as it relates to these same causes. These initiatives and others, along with the actions we'll take on the aforementioned VIRGO study, will be, we hope, positive steps in addressing a number of the concerns around this so-called epidemic.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: It's a disappointing answer, Madam Speaker. The measures that the Premier points to deal with people after they've overdosed. However, what the Canadian Mental Health Association says is that where there are supervised consumption sites, they have succeeded in preventing overdoses and preventing deaths as a result of opioid abuse.

Beyond that, they've also improved the surrounding communities. There's been a reduction in both people overdosing in public, but also less stray needles in the communities. Many people across the province are becoming increasingly all too familiar with seeing needles in their neighbourhoods.

This is a public health intervention that could save lives, but also help communities combat those visible sides, those visible symptoms to this scourge. So the chief of police in Winnipeg has said it's time for us to start talking about a safe consumption site. The Canadian Mental Health Association has said it's time for us to have a safe consumption site.

Why won't the Premier get onside with the experts and support an application for a safe consumption site right here in Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, I don't agree with the member's observations or his conclusion. This isn't Granville; this isn't the same situation that is faced, sadly, by British Columbia or by other jurisdictions across our country. We have not had the incidences, not even remotely close, of tragedy, of tragic overdose, for example, in the streets or on the street corners of the city of Winnipeg.

In fact, fully 70 per cent plus of the incidents are happening in homes of users or of users' friends. So what the member refers to as safe he may mistakenly draw the conclusion is safe. What we feel, Madam Speaker, is that the issues around supervised injection sites are different from the ones he proposes, and so we would, again, argue that listening to the advice of experts is what we have done, as opposed to the previous administration, and we'll continue to do so.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a new question.

* (13:50)

Mr. Kinew: I'll table the advice from the experts. This is the Canadian Mental Health Association's report that was released today, Madam Speaker.

It's disappointing to hear the Premier set out the standard of Downtown Eastside Vancouver as what we should expect to see before they will take action to actually save lives. It's right there in black and white in the CMHA report today: safe consumption sites save lives.

The very same report says that safe consumption sites actually help to reduce fatalities in private homes, the reason being that currently people have to use in private homes because there are no areas where they can do so with medical supervision. If those safe consumption sites provided an avenue where people could use and then be referred to treatment or potentially medical care, it will save lives in our province.

Will the Premier reverse course and instead support the application to have a safe consumption site right here in Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: No, Madam Speaker. As opposed to the previous administration, we'll commission the advice of experts. We have done so. We await the recommendations; we'll act on those.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Kinew: Again, Madam Speaker, there is a consensus among experts, amongst those who study harm reduction, that safe consumption sites save lives. It's right there in black and white in the report that I just tabled in front of the Premier. Safe consumption sites save lives.

We know that lives are being lost to overdoses in our province, but there is also a real issue with the lives that are being ruined by addictions. Safe consumption sites offer the opportunity for people to have an on-ramp into addictions treatment. If they can use in a facility where they have access to medical help, then potentially they could also receive a referral to treatment.

The expert consensus is clear. Why doesn't the Premier get on board, support Main Street Project's application to have a safe consumption site right here in the city of Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, because I don't accept the premise of expertise on the part of the member.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Kinew: He doesn't need to rely on any expertise on my part. He can look to the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Were that not enough, I know that there are people who are here in the gallery today who are combatting this opioid epidemic on the front lines, and when I talked to them they said, yes, it's time for a safe consumption site.

What's more, when I attended the town hall on methamphetamines hosted by my colleagues from Point Douglas and from St. Johns, I listened very closely what the chief of police, Danny Smyth, said, and in his comments there he said, yes, it's time for Winnipeg to start talking about having a safe consumption site.

So, again, this is not my pet project. This is bringing forward the recommendations of experts, bringing forward the recommendations of those in the community, bringing forward insight gleaned from the chief of police of Winnipeg.

When will the Premier reverse course and support an application for a safe consumption site right here in Winnipeg?

Mr. Pallister: Recognizing the reality, the sad reality of spiking incidents, Madam Speaker, I also recognize, as I'm sure all members should, that the opioid problem is not a new problem and has been around for half a decade at least, the methamphetamine problem predating that and perhaps going back a decade. No action taken by the previous government at all in respect of these problems.

We have commissioned expert study. We are going to, with great interest, follow the recommendations.

Winnipeg Free Press Premier's Response to Media Story

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Madam Speaker, freedom of the press is one of the hallmarks of a democracy. Being able to tell stories and hold the powerful to account without fear or favour, without the possibility of retribution hanging over their head is essential to a healthy democracy.

The Premier's threat against Manitoba's largest newspaper, the Winnipeg Free Press, is an attack on this fundamental value.

So I ask the Premier: Will he today withdraw his threat against the Winnipeg Free Press?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, no, of course not. All of us will leave public life with a reputation of some kind. I hope to leave with a reputation well earned over my lifetime, and so I have a choice to make.

When I see false charges laid against me by members opposite I have chosen to accept and ignore them as part of the normal course of trade of the NDP in this place and elsewhere. But when I hear them from others I have much more respect for, Madam Speaker, I choose not to ignore them, and so I will stand and I will defend my reputation, my integrity, against attack and I will continue to do so.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, this Premier's latest actions are part of a pattern. He lashes out and he threatens others when there are uncomfortable questions raised.

In this case, these are questions that he himself acknowledged were important just two weeks ago. This hangs over the press like the sword of Damocles, just like Bill 8 which would also impact newspapers large and small across Manitoba.

The Premier wants to use threats to try and control the press in our province, and that is unprecedented and it's anti-democratic and, as the Attorney General says, it is truly bizarre.

I ask the Premier again: Will he withdraw his threat—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —to sue the Winnipeg Free Press?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I did not hear the part of the preamble of the member, so I can't respond to that part I did not hear, of course. The part I did hear alleged that in defending my own integrity I am doing something wrong.

Madam Speaker, I have a record of always paying my bills. I have a record of obeying the laws, like most members of this Chamber—of obeying the laws of this province, this country and the countries I

visit. And so I will continue to defend my integrity in the face of false attacks against it.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Minto, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Swan: Madam Speaker, the damage this Premier is causing to the freedom of the press in Manitoba is real. The Premier's choice to threaten the Winnipeg Free Press was intended to cast a chill over reporting and over reporters. It's intended to send a message to reporters: if you seek the truth, if you ask difficult questions, there are consequences.

We know the Premier is already using the entire machinery of government to attack the media.

I'll ask the Premier today: Is he using taxpayer dollars to have his lawyer attack the Winnipeg Free Press? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: No, of course not, Madam Speaker, and again, I—nor would I ever use taxpayers' dollars to protect my own reputation. I use my own.

I would ask the member to consider, in this place, his attacks over the last two years on a number of things, a number of fronts alleging falsely, repeatedly that I was using taxpayers' resources for phone calls or for trips or for things like this, Madam Speaker, are more revealing of his character than they are of mine.

Indigenous Manitobans Judicial Reform Needed

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): A recent poll indicated that 44 per cent of Manitobans believe our justice system is unfair to indigenous people. This poll comes on the heels of two high-profile acquittals of non-indigenous men accused of killing Tina Fontaine and Colten Boushie. The poll means nearly half in our province believe Canada's justice system fails to 'fairly' represent and protect indigenous peoples. Such a strong response deserves a response and action from Manitoba's Justice Minister.

Does the minister believe Manitoba's justice system fails to appropriately protect and represent indigenous Manitobans?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for the question.

And, certainly, it's exactly why we put in place our criminal justice system modernization strategy that focuses on crime prevention; it focuses on better restorative justice initiatives and it focuses on responsible reintegration of those offenders back into society.

The reason that we came up with this modernization strategy is because of some of the indications out there. I will remind members opposite that after 17 years of mismanagement of our criminal justice system we had to take action. We are taking action to ensure safer communities and better access to justice for all Manitobans, including in our indigenous population.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a supplementary question.

*(14:00)

Ms. Fontaine: Certainly, Madam Speaker, this is a salient issue for Manitobans and has only been exacerbated by the murders of two indigenous youth. The acquittals sparked marches all over Manitoba and all over Canada, and Canadians of all backgrounds are calling for major changes to the judicial system.

The Minister of Justice has seemingly committed to an overhaul of Manitoba's criminal justice system, but actually she fails to acknowledge it is indigenous peoples who are most targeted and at risk by the system's failings.

Will the minister admit our justice system is failing indigenous peoples and put into place real action immediately?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, we take a different approach to the members opposite. The NDP's solution when they were in power was to spend more money locking up indigenous offenders.

Madam Speaker, while the previous government was nearly doubling incarceration rates in Manitoba, the member opposite, in fact, was employed as an adviser to Cabinet at that time. Maybe she should have brought up her concerns with the member for Minto (Mr. Swan), who was, in fact, the minister of Justice at the time, when he was Attorney General and she was the adviser to the NDP Cabinet.

So, Madam Speaker, we take a different approach. We take a proactive approach. That's why we have introduced our criminal justice system modernization strategy: to make safer communities

and better access to justice for all Manitobans, including indigenous Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for St. Johns, on a final supplementary.

Ms. Fontaine: The Minister of Justice can attack all she wants, but the salient point is that the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

The honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Fontaine: The reality is, Madam Speaker, the deaths of Colten Boushie and Tina Fontaine is a watershed moment for everyone across Canada.

Political leadership across the country has acknowledged that we must do better. The Prime Minister has admitted that Canada's system needs work. The federal Justice Minister and Indigenous Services Minister acknowledge, and I quote, we all have more to do to improve justice and fairness for indigenous Canadians.

It will take real action from the Province to translate these sentiments into real change.

Will the Justice Minister use this opportunity to make Manitoba a leader in justice reform for indigenous peoples in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not attacking. I'm simply stating the facts, and I know that sometimes those facts are hurtful, because they had atrocious statistics when they were in government. Doubling the incarceration rates for indigenous people in Manitoba is not something to be proud of.

We recognized that after 17 years of mismanagement of our criminal justice system that our system needed reform. That's why we came out with our criminal justice system modernization strategy. The member opposite should have a look at that, get on board, because this is about creating safer communities and providing better access and timely access to justice for all Manitobans, including indigenous Manitobans.

Efficiency Manitoba Power Smart Program

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Three months after the minister proclaimed his bill, there's no action from this government on Efficiency Manitoba. No amount of dithering or bungling can make up for the

fact that Manitobans aren't able to rely on power smart for access to energy efficiency.

Will the minister now admit that his attempt to establish Efficiency Manitoba was wrong and has failed, and will he now reinstate power smart?

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Minister of Crown Services): A question from the party of status quo. I know they—party opposite doesn't like to see change in Manitoba.

We believe there's an opportunity to provide a better way to do business, a path forward, and Efficiency Manitoba will be exactly that. It will be more efficient.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a supplementary question.

Mr. Lindsey: Doesn't take three months to name a board and meet with them. Well, maybe it does with this Premier.

But Manitobans are without real access to energy efficiency programs while this government tries to get its act together; clearly, can't organize itself.

Will the minister admit his new creation is a failure, and will he restore power smart today?

Mr. Cullen: Well, I will correct the record, Madam Speaker. Power smart is still available to Manitobans, and Manitobans can access that particular product.

I've also pointed out that, under the NDP, their No. 1 priority under their green plan was efficiency, and they never delivered on that in 17 years.

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Flin Flon, on a final supplementary.

Manitoba Hydro Call for Standing Committee

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Three months without a board at Efficiency Manitoba and, it seems, nearly 16 months without a committee meeting regarding Manitoba Hydro. Are these important issues to discuss? I would say yes. Have we heard from the new board since the mass resignation from Manitoba Hydro? No, not once. There is a need to clear the delay, and it's inexcusable that this delay continues.

Will the minister call the standing committee on Manitoba Hydro today?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Madam Speaker, I know that the new Leader of the NDP wasn't here, I know the member for Flin Flon wasn't here, but they should know, as a matter of accuracy, it's approximately seven years ago the NDP came out with a green plan, and their No. 1 component, their No. 1 priority, was Efficiency Manitoba. Took them seven years to get it done. They didn't get it done at all.

They came up just before the last election with a green plan on the back of a napkin, would have required every gas- and diesel-powered vehicle in the province to get off the roads to make it work. They haven't got a clue when it comes to efficiency; they haven't got a clue when it comes to Efficiency Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, we're celebrating two years tomorrow. We're going to get 'er done where they failed.

First Nations Communities Manitoba's GDP

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, I don't understand why this government keeps boasting about how the NDP in other provinces are doing such great things for their respective provinces, and the fact that they're trying to emulate them is puzzling. Perhaps we can look forward to a name change for this new NDPCT to my left.

Canada's GDP is \$1.53 trillion—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Ms. Klassen: Federal funding transfer equal to about approximately \$9.5 billion plus an additional \$5 billion in new spending promised for 2018: that's about 1 per cent given to the First Nations for the use of our traditional lands.

While my people work to address them with that, can the minister here tell us what percentage of Manitoba's GDP is given to indigenous peoples?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): After years of inaction, Madam Speaker, on the other side of the House, we've got Freedom Road under way. We've got Treaty Land Entitlement of tens of thousands of acres settled, where nothing happened under the previous government. We've moved forward on a mineral development protocol, working in partnership with First Nations. We've visited each

and every First Nation in the province. We've engaged with First Nations community leaders on duty to consult, and we are demonstrating our belief in that.

In every respect, we're demonstrating our sincere belief that the future of Manitoba belongs to all Manitobans—not just some, all—and that certainly includes indigenous Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a supplementary question.

Tax Burden Myth

Ms. Klassen: I hope the minister can still table the answer eventually.

Meanwhile, let me point out another glaring fact: 94 cents on every dollar that enters a First Nation leaves that First Nation. It is not my people who benefit from transfers to this date. This government, like many others, have benefited greatly from letting the general public assume that First Nations people are the cause of higher taxes, and that has to stop.

Can the minister—has the minister responsible ever looked into this? I know my leaders have brought it up several times. And what can that indigenous department do to dispel the myth that my people are a tax burden?

*(14:10)

Mr. Pallister: Well, Madam Speaker, they're everybody's people. They're our people. They're Manitobans and we're concerned about their future, and we'll work with them and we'll continue to demonstrate that in every respect. We've helped to make sure, in good partnership with the federal government, that we have people back in their homes and in their home communities that were unfortunately dislocated from them for half a decade.

We've initiated a Look North strategy and we are working diligently with communities in the north of our province to help develop real economic prospects. In partnership with many others, Madam Speaker, we have, yesterday, announced our commitment to helping bring back the lives of community members all around the Lake Manitoba basin with the largest project—infrastructure project, the building of a channel outlet at the north end of Lake Manitoba. That would include not only non-indigenous people and Metis people, that would include indigenous communities who deserve to be protected from flood damage and have sacrificed so much for the rest of us for so many years.

I would hope the member would get on-side with these initiatives because this is a compelling, compelling narrative that speaks the truth about our sincere commitment to the future of indigenous Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Kewatinook, on a final supplementary.

Housing Construction

Ms. Klassen: Working on that would help stop with the unjust discrimination we live with on a daily basis.

People of Manitoba, do you know why we have such a housing crisis? It's not—it's because we are not allowed to build our own houses, because we're not allowed to harvest our own wood on a large scale. Even if we did, there are further regulations in which we cannot grade our own lumber products. No First Nations can.

When is this NDPC team going to start addressing real problems? Will they join with me to ensure First Nations can build their own housing stock.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, without any evidence of compelling support by federal Liberals, or provincial Liberals, we have stood up against intrusions by the federal government into the lives of indigenous people that are unjustified. We have fought for better funding for First Nations health supports. We have fought for better supports in respect of land management practices. We have worked with indigenous leaders and councils to improve the relationships that we must build upon. We are making, in every respect, a sincere commitment to improve the lives of indigenous Manitobans.

I can only encourage the member to just take a look at the record and I'm always interested in her further suggestions, but she does not need to go any further than to look at what we've done in less than two years to support indigenous people in this province to understand the sincerity of our efforts.

National Housing Strategy Manitoba Participation

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): Manitoba Housing provides housing assistance for more than 35,000 Manitoba households. Now, recently the Minister of Families entered into an important partnership with the federal government that will further provide the support Manitobans need.

We know that efforts continue on a new made-in-Manitoba provincial housing strategy, but can the minister tell the Assembly how our PC government is, yet again, repairing the services Manitobans depend on?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): It was an honour to be in Ottawa to work with other provincial and territory governments to sign on to the national housing strategy. What that means is more than \$300 million, a federal dollar commitment in terms of housing over the next number of years—it's a long-term commitment that's much needed to provide housing solutions for Manitobans.

We know this agreement will look on areas like expiring operating agreements, which we know is an important area. We know that it'll have a portable shelter benefit component, which we think is extremely important, as well as ensuring provincial priorities are met, and that's something that we have done, consulted with Manitobans. The opposition, of course, forgot to do that, but we consulted over 1,500 people with our national housing strategies. This partnership will help us augment our plan to address housing solutions for Manitobans.

Changes to Rent Assist Program Impact on Low-Income Manitobans

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): All of this talk and still rent increases.

We hear, last year, that this minister raised the Rent Assist from 25 per cent to 28 per cent. He's raising it yet again to 30 per cent. Why does he continue to pick on poor people? We have no poverty strategy in this province. He's going to put more people in poverty.

When will this attack on our poor people end?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): We take great pride in the Rent Assist program. In fact, the program wouldn't be there unless, when opposition with—the Conservatives pushed the NDP government to the dying days to establish this program. With our initiatives in our budgets, close to 3,300 more Manitobans will be supported—will be supported—than coming to—first coming to office.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a supplementary question.

Mrs. Smith: More people are going to need assistance because they keep laying off people and cutting jobs in this province. They're putting more people in poverty that depend on this.

Kids are going to school without the food they need, families are having to make hard decisions and they keep cutting Rent Assist.

When will he stop the cuts on these poor people?

Mr. Fielding: Well, first of all, I'd like to put on the record that the member's completely wrong when she looks at the numbers. We've got some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country—in the country, Madam Speaker.

Some other interesting stats that I'd like to say: since taking office, there's more people that are supported under the Rent Assist program. In fact, in terms of seniors, there's over 353 more seniors that are supported under our plan than the NDP's plan. That's something that I think is important. That's a support that needs to be supported. That's why we've invested the money to make sure this program's sustainable for the future.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Point Douglas, on a final supplementary.

Mrs. Smith: There's actually 7,500 less full-time jobs in this province, so I don't know what this minister is talking about. And he's talking about more people needing Rent Assist. That's because this austerity of this government.

When will this minister tell us how many more low-income Manitobans will lose their Rent Assist, this benefit that they rely on?

Mr. Fielding: The government is not just there to create jobs. The private sector creates a lot of jobs, and that's why we've made important investments to do so.

But let's see what some of the changes in the Rent Assist program. Did you know that over 1,578 more families are supported from the Rent Assist program? Are you aware that, in the Point Douglas area, close to 47—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fielding: —per cent more people are supported on the Rent Assist program? That's 113 more people that are supported. That's going to be a tough conversation for the members opposite to have, to say why they ignored those people for such a long time that our government has made important investments in.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Animal Welfare Monitoring Budget Reduction Concerns

Mr. Ted Marcelino (Tyndall Park): Reports of animal abuse have increased rapidly in Manitoba. In 2017 reports within Winnipeg were up 40 per cent over what they were just two years before. Yet, this year the minister has cut staff and is seeking options to outsource animal welfare monitoring.

Why is the minister only focused on the bottom line?

Hon. Ralph Eichler (Minister of Agriculture): Well I thank the member for the question, and it is an important one.

We've been focusing, as a government, on ensuring that checks and balances are in place to ensure that animals are treated fairly and respectfully. One of the other parts of the 'components' is the educational component on what it really means to have a pet and an animal that's going to be well felled—wed—well fed and looked after. We'll make sure we get it right, Madam Speaker. *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a supplementary question.

* (14:20)

Mr. Marcelino: The minister says he cares about animal welfare, but it's clear from his recent request for proposals—*[interjection]*—I am sorry—that it really is just an effort to cut costs, not improve outcomes. In fact, his own Animal Health and Welfare division saw its staff decrease this year, even while animal welfare complaints have skyrocketed.

Why is the minister only focused on the bottom line?

Mr. Eichler: Let's be clear. We're making sure that animal welfare is a priority for this government. We have efficiencies that we can find within that organization. We've been working with the human—animal—the department in order to ensure that we get it right. Our CVO has also been focusing and working with the general public to educate pet owners and livestock owners to make sure we have the safest regulations in all of Canada.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Tyndall Park, on a final supplementary.

Mr. Marcelino: For five years running, Manitoba had the best animal protection laws in the country, but in 2017 our province lost its standing, falling out of the No. 1 position, according to the Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Now the minister is making staffing cuts in his department and looking at containing costs for animal welfare complaints.

Why is the minister only focused on the bottom line? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Eichler: Let's be very clear. The RFP is one that's going to focus on results for our pet owners and animals across the province of Manitoba. I can assure the members opposite that when we come back with our proposal and working in consultation with the general public we'll, have the opportunity to make sure we get it right and carry on the way we should be doing within the province of Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Stevenson Aviation Campus New Facility Purchase

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): I certainly appreciate the House's support.

Madam Speaker, Manitoba is the home to the third largest aerospace sector in Canada. Red River College's Stevenson aviation campus offers diploma programs for aircraft maintenance, aerospace manufacturing technicians and gas turbine engine repair.

Madam Speaker, 5,000 people are directly employed by the aerospace and aviation sector in Manitoba. There are 400 students in these programs, boasting high graduation rates in 80 to 90 per cent range.

Can the Minister of Education update the Assembly on this important announcement that will help Manitobans and the aerospace industry in our province?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank—like to thank the member for the very good question on aerospace manufacturing here in Manitoba, an industry that contributes \$1.9 billion towards our 'economy' and something that our government recognizes as very important and something we want to build on.

We're pleased to work with Red River and Stevenson aviation to facilitate the purchase of the Stevenson aviation facility at the airport here in Winnipeg. That'll save them nearly \$1 million over the course of the mortgage period that they can actually apply against further training so that we can expand the services provided to Manitoba students and they can do a better job and have better opportunities now and into the future.

We are repairing Manitoba services.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kinew:—and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students,

faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition was signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: In accordance with our rule 133(6), when petitions are read, they are deemed to be received by the House.

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years old, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement and—the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, Royal Commission on Aboriginal People and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to implement—to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the

function of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

Signed by Mina [phonetic] Castillo, Mike Payne, Tania Wiebe and many other Manitobans.

Medical Laboratory Services

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The provision of laboratory services to medical clinics and physicians' offices has been historically, and continues to be, a private sector service.

It is vitally important that there be competition in laboratory services to allow medical clinics to seek solutions from more than one provider to control costs and to improve service for health professionals and patients.

Under the present provincial government, Dynacare, an Ontario-based subsidiary of a US company, has acquired Unicity labs, resulting in a monopoly situation for the provision of laboratory services in medical clinics and physicians' offices.

The creation of this monopoly has resulted in the closure of many laboratories by Dynacare in and around the city of Winnipeg. Since the acquisition of Unicity labs, Dynacare has engaged in anti-competitive activities where it has changed the collection schedules of patients' specimens and charged some medical offices for collection services.

* (14:30)

These closures have created a situation where a great number of patients are less well served, having to travel significant differences—distances in some cases, waiting considerable periods of time and sometimes being denied or having to leave without obtaining lab services. The situation is particularly critical for patients requiring fasting blood draws, as they may experience complications that could be life-threatening based on their individual health situations.

Furthermore, Dynacare has instructed that all STAT's patients, patients with suspicious internal

infections, be directed to its King Edward location. This creates unnecessary obstacles for the patients who are required to travel to that lab rather than simply completing the test in their doctor's office. This new directive by Dynacare presents a direct risk to patients' health in the interests of higher profits. This has further resulted in patients opting to visit emergency rooms rather than travelling twice, which increases cost to the health-care system.

Medical clinics and physicians' offices service thousands of patients in their communities and have structured their offices to provide a one-stop service, acting as a health-care front line that takes off some of the load from emergency rooms. The creation of this monopoly has been problematic to many medical clinics and physicians, hampering their ability to provide high-quality and complete service to their patients due to closures of so many laboratories.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

To urge the provincial government to request Dynacare to reopen the closed laboratories or allow Diagnostic Services of Manitoba to freely open labs in clinics which formerly housed labs that have been shut down by Dynacare.

To urge the provincial government to ensure high-quality lab services for patients and a level playing field and competition in the provision of laboratory services to medical offices.

To urge the provincial government to address this matter immediately in the interest of better patient-focused care and improved support for health professionals.

Signed by Larry Stuart, Tatiana Mandel, Corey Smit and many others.

University of Winnipeg—Campus Safety

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

This petition is signed by Joshua Cook, Elise Diplock, Erin Sinclair and many other concerned Manitobans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba and the reasons for this petition are as follows:

(1) Students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university are troubled about the number of incidents that have occurred on and around the University of Winnipeg's campus.

(2) Six notable incidents have emerged during the 2017-2018 school year, including stabbings, robberies, sexual assault and an attempted abduction.

(3) Individuals should not feel afraid to walk around the university or community at any time of day or night.

(4) The university's security/safety measures have changed over time to address these issues, but it has not been enough.

(5) Students should be able to trust their institution to protect them and make them feel safe during their post-secondary experience.

(6) The university is located in the downtown area, so it is still important to keep the university's doors open to the wider community.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) That the provincial government be urged to support a funding increase towards the safety and security of the University of Winnipeg students, faculty members, members of the community and/or individuals with close ties to the university.

(2) That the provincial government be urged to recognize that the University of Winnipeg is an institution located downtown, which needs additional support to be able to make sure that the doors remain open to the wider community.

And this petition is signed by many Manitobans.

Tina Fontaine—Public Inquiry

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly—here we go.

These are the reasons for this petition:

(1) Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years, and her body was found in the Red River on August 17th, 2014.

(2) Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

(3) Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

(4) Tina Fontaine was failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

(5) Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, MMIWG, as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

(6) Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of indigenous peoples and children, including the Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

(1) To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a public inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine, as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

(2) To urge that the terms of reference of a public inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

Signed by many Manitobans.

Madam Speaker: The petition was not read as printed. Is there leave to accept the petition as printed? *[Agreed]*

TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA:

These are the reasons for this petition.

1. Tina Fontaine was murdered at the age of 15 years and her body was found in the Red River on August 17, 2014.

2. Tina Fontaine was robbed of her loving family and the Anishinaabe community of Sagkeeng First Nation.

3. Tina Fontaine was failed by multiple systems which did not protect her as they intervened in her life.

4. Tina Fontaine was further failed by systems meant to seek and pursue justice for her murder.

5. Tina Fontaine's murder galvanized Canada on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) as she quickly became our collective daughter and the symbol of MMIWG across Canada.

6. Manitoba has failed to fully implement the recommendations of numerous reports and recommendations meant to improve and protect the lives of Indigenous Peoples and children including the: Manitoba Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People; and the Phoenix Sinclair Inquiry.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

1. To urge the Premier of Manitoba and the Minister of Justice to immediately call a Public Inquiry into the systems that had a role in the life and death of Tina Fontaine as well as the function of the administration of justice after her death.

2. To urge that the terms of reference of a Public Inquiry be developed jointly with the caregivers of Tina Fontaine and/or the agent appointed by them.

Madam Speaker: Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Cliff Cullen (Government House Leader): On House business.

Madam Speaker: On House business, the honourable leader of the—or the honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. Cullen: Yes, Madam Speaker, pursuant to rule 33(7), I'm announcing that the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Isleifson). The title of the resolution is Celebrating a New School in Brandon.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that, pursuant to rule 33(7), the private member's resolution to be considered on the next Tuesday of private members' business will be one put forward by the honourable member for Brandon East. The title of the resolution is Celebrating a New School in Brandon.

Mr. Cullen: Would you call the following bills: Bill 18, Bill 9, Bill 17 and Bill 14?

Madam Speaker: It has been announced that the House will consider second reading of Bills 18, 9, 17 and 14 this afternoon.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 18—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Taking Care of Our Children)

Madam Speaker: Starting, then, with Bill 18: second reading of Bill 18, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Taking Care of Our Children).

* (14:40)

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): The Child and Family Services Amendment Act—*[interjection]* Oh, sorry.

I move that the—*[interjection]*—second by—sorry—seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Eichler)—first day here, of course—that the Bill 18, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Taking Care of Our Children), be now read a second time and referred to the committee of the House.

Her Honour lieutenant governor general has been advised the bill, and I table it here.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Families, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture, that Bill 18, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Taking Care of Our Children), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and the message has been tabled.

Mr. Fielding: The overrepresentation of indigenous children and families in the child-welfare system is one of the most challenging issues we face as a province. I think I can say that quite clearly and probably have unanimous consent to that. That is, it is an—a very important issue, an issue that's been impacting Manitobans for many, many years.

Each of us know that the—of a First Nations or Metis child that really has suffered terribly when—while in care of the Child and Family Services. There are countries, other than those who named here that we know, that are part of this and part of the system, and we all truly want to reform the system in a way that makes sense for Manitoba families.

Although we must acknowledge that the CFS agencies do their best to involve extended family, the current act does not reflect the importance of customary involvement in indigenous communities in the care of the children. First Nations and Metis people have continuously called for greater influences over the decisions of their children, children whose lives are profoundly affected by the intervention of the Child and Family Services. For decades they have advocated for child-welfare reforms and changes to legislative framework to better reflect indigenous customs and customary-care practices in the care and upbringing of their children.

Madam Speaker, I think about the passion and the commitment as stands before us here today before we speak to the amendment to the—of The Child and Family Services Act. The new bill, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, and take care of our children, will support community-led models of customary care that really reflect unique customs and Manitoba's indigenous communities.

We have taken time to listen not just to First Nations communities, but to Metis leadership, to community members, to our indigenous CFS authorities and agencies to make sure that we're getting this important piece of legislation right. We met with First Nations leaders and community members in communities across Manitoba. We're also honoured to be invited to forums hosted by the northern and southern indigenous leadership organizations and governance, as well as the Manitoba Metis Federation. I think in all, total, we went to probably—well, four or five different sessions that were held across the province to make sure we were getting legislation like this and the upper elements of our reform right.

These engagement sessions were truly inspiring and it told us exactly what needed to happen from indigenous communities. We know passionate and moving calls for legislation that does not prescribe to communities how they should provide customary care for the children. Indigenous leaders underscored the importance of taking the lead in developing their own community models for the provisions of customary care for indigenous children.

I was honoured to hear elders and community leaders speak powerfully about the collective responsibilities. Taking care of our children is translation of a phrase that really resonates with thousands of years of history of shared values and very fabric of what means to be indigenous.

We have listened to these calls and I'm proud to speak to you today about legislation that will open the door to indigenous communities to lead the development of care plans. Through these amendments we are changing Manitoba's child-welfare law in a manner that acknowledges and is permissive to key principles that communities have in inherent responsibilities to care for their children, which is very much needed and talked about in the 'digenous' communities and have been for a long period of time.

Recognizing the many First Nations and Metis communities in our province, the bill establishes

expectations for CFS agencies to work with their respective indigenous communities and develop culturally specific models of customary care.

The bill also is—was drafted to allow the communities—which is really important—each of the communities decide how they wish for customary care to be provided to their children in—as long as the approach does not compromise child safety. In developing these arrangements, indigenous communities will be able to draw on the strengths of their community and share the responsibility of keeping children safe.

I've heard from indigenous leadership that the notification of CFS involvement is the missing link for communities to rally together to provide the care and support to prevent further family breakdown and more intense child-welfare interventions.

Notification to a child's indigenous leadership when a child is apprehended for safety reasons is very important. For a long—for far too long, too many children have lost their ties to their home communities where they're brought into CFS care. By notifying the child's indigenous leadership, communities will have a role to play ensuring that indigenous children remain connected to their home communities, their relatives and to the 'indigenous' identities and cultures, Madam Speaker. In practice, the amendments will require agencies to notify indigenous communities when a child's parents or guardian expresses an interest in customary care.

With the support of indigenous communities, customary-care agreements may be entered into for the purposes of caring for the First Nations, Metis and Inuit child. Individual customary-care agreements must articulate how children will be kept safe, the supports and services that will be provided and how issues that arise under the agreement will be resolved. Communities and families will share the responsibilities to identifying caregivers who will give effort to the community promised to care for the newly born, for young children and for the youth. We have heard that these families and community members will be chosen because of their love, their nurture and support for the children who are entrusted for their care.

At a 'minum', the child's parents or guardians, the Child and Family Services agency and the customary caregiver, if the child is to reside with someone other than the parent or guardian, must sign a customary-care agreement.

The legislation allows—also allows for other persons who will play an important and significant role in the care to be—the care plan of those individuals, for the children of the individuals, to be a signatory to the agreement including the representatives—individual's community, which we think is truly important. Each community is going to be very much different and to allow them to be part of this signatory legislation provides some flexibility in terms of recognizing the fact that different communities are different.

Customary-care agreements will be the shared responsibility of the community, parents and guardians, the CFS agencies and the customary caregiver. These arrangements—these agreements will give effort for the community promise that is reflective in the shared values of Metis, First Nations and Inuit culture. The shared values that resonate in the phrase take care of our children, whether spoken in Cree, Ojibwe, these types of languages are very much incorporated in the legislation.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to share another significant change that will be made through this bill. Under the current CFS act, CFS agencies are obligated to seek temporary, followed by permanent, orders of guardianship for parents who cannot meet the conditions that they're allowed for safe return for their children. If passed, the bill would allow indigenous birth parents to retain their parental rights. That's an important piece, Madam Speaker, it's a very important piece, ensuring that parents have parental rights and parental rights are not lost through the legislation that we're introducing, regardless of whether there are child protection concerns.

If the customary-care agreement can be entered into, agencies can abandon court proceedings that would transfer guardianship to the agencies, which is good for the system because there's less processes that we have to follow in terms of the governance, in terms of the court processes that are there. It allows communities to make decisions. Parents retain their legal rights or signatories to the customary-care agreements, allowing them to participate in the important decisions about the child, even if their child lives with a customary-care provider.

Because parents need time to heal, there is no legislative time frames imposed on the customary-care agreement. This creates an opportunity for parents to heal from the trauma that has been or could be inflicted by years of residential schools and

other things, whether it be adoptions of indigenous child in non-indigenous families.

Madam Speaker, we are also using the bill as an opportunity to add new lens through which the existing declaration of principles must be applied. The purpose of this change is to highlight the decisions that must be made about indigenous children inclusive of First Nations, Metis and Inuit children.

* (14:50)

The principles of the CFS act are underlying shared values that drive the decisions under the legislation. Notably, the courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have been clear that agencies and courts must apply the principles of the CFS act when making decisions about the child. Going forward, care decisions must reflect the shift in how the CFS act articulates shared values and cultural identity, community connections, customary involvement of indigenous communities with the child-welfare system. Under the proposed amendments, agencies will be obligated to support, whenever possible, the customary involvement of indigenous communities in care for their children when providing services to indigenous families.

Madam Speaker and honourable 'members'-members, I believe that this bill really responds to the long-expressed wishes of indigenous communities in terms of care of their children within the child-welfare system. I also believe by creating spaces for child-welfare legislation for indigenous communities to participate in the care of their children, we can provide for the safety of their children in a way that supports a better future for indigenous families.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, just as I close, that we are very honoured to have the support of all the mandated agencies and organizations, the indigenous leadership that is a part of the CFS system there with our chiefs from MKO, Grand Chief Sheila North Wilson, as well as Grand Chief Jerry Daniels of the Southern Chiefs' Organization, as well as President Chartrand from the Metis-Manitoba Metis Federation. They were all here in a ceremony in respect to that. I think this is an important piece of legislation going forward and I think it's going to help address issues in the child-welfare system, but it is only one of the elements of our legislative reform package that we are engaging in communities and we anticipate coming in the next coming months.

So thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties, subsequent questions asked by each independent member, remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Will the minister invest resources into indigenous communities alongside the new customary-care model so that communities are able to care for their children in their families?

Mr. Doyle Pivniuk, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Our government has and will continue to invest money not just in indigenous communities but children that are vulnerable within the child-welfare system. We don't have to look as far as our budget process this year to know that the budget for the CFS system increased by over \$35 million. Those are investments.

We are working with the federal government, who are also talking, re-engaged in reforming the child-welfare system. We have extended-extensive consultations with indigenous communities to get it right. Funding is one element of the problem, but we really need a systemic change of the CFS system, and that's what our reforms and customary care is doing.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): You know, I mentioned several times that in my First Nation communities up to 28 people can occupy a three-bedroom home. I'm worried that since we still don't have any commitment on—from the government to work in addressing our housing crisis that we will again just be caught in a situation where we can't house these children.

So I'm wondering, can the minister commit to helping me go to the federal government, go to the provincial government, to address the housing crisis issue that we have? We want to build our own houses. Can he help with that?

Mr. Fielding: It does allow me to speak a little bit about the National Housing Strategy that the

provincial government just signed on to with the federal government. That could bring, on a federal level, just the federal component of it, close to \$300 million of housing investments that are there. We know, as it relates to the child-welfare system, providing affordable housing and solutions is 'orviously' a key component of that.

I can tell you there's—we really are operating in a system across the country where there's almost two child-welfare systems: on reserve and off reserve, where I think there are some true partnerships. And I am travelling to Ottawa over the next few weeks to meet with the federal minister on child welfare partnerships that transitioning off-reserve on-reserve is an area that we truly think is important in making investments in their early age is important and housing is—*[interjection]*

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

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the opposition for allowing me to ask a few questions.

The question goes to the minister on this very important issue: In section 8.28(4) describing child indigenous communities, there seems to be a lot of loopholes in for so far as where and who is eligible for or under this act.

Can the minister please clarify the definitions of indigenous, Metis, and Inuit, and where—if there's any residency requirements for these individuals?

Mr. Fielding: Well, right now the legislation does look at indigenous communities that are there, whether it be indigenous—the concern that we had with the previous bill that was entered into was that, for instance, Metis were not included in on the definitions of indigenous, so what we need to ensure with the legislation is that indigenous communities are supported from this as it relates to customary care. Each of the communities will actually have a say in terms of what customary-care agreements can be had.

An indigenous community, for instance, potentially could have a band council that would make some resolution in terms of overarching piece for it. It could be something like an elders group with the capacity that could be making the decisions and customs.

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

Mrs. Smith: Will the minister tell us how this government will ensure that indigenous children who are living in non-indigenous homes in customary care or are permanently adopted by non-indigenous foster parents, will maintain access to their language, their culture, and their traditional rights, as well as their families?

Mr. Fielding: Well, and this is something, first of all, this augments the current system that's in place. For someone to enter into a customary-care agreement, that is something for the parents or discussed with the CFS agencies.

What's different than the current system that's in place is a signatory, a part of the customary-care agreement, would consist of the family members. They wouldn't lose their parental rights as an example of that.

It would also include the service providers, so the same safety standards that would be in place.

But what is also important as well as the customary-care provider is someone that's going to take care of the individuals, and what's important about this is each individual community can make up the customs and cultures of their own community, and that's really up to their own communities to decide that, so that's something—flexibility that we've added—

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

Mr. Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, again, the minister, I'm afraid, did not answer the previous question.

There has been a recent Supreme Court ruling where non-status or First Nations people off reserve are entitled to all the same rights and privileges, et cetera. This bill does not seem to catch those people, nor does it seem to adequately deal with the issue of definition of Metis. It includes the Metis Federation, but there is also an or there and also, if someone is from Nunavut, comes down, clearly Inuit, whose jurisdiction do they fall under and does Inuit—or does Nunavut—

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

Mr. Fielding: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what I can tell you is the normal system is in place. Customary-care agreements are something that can augment the existing system that's in place, so unless a community decides they want to enter into a customary-care agreement, that really is up to them.

Number one, we would suggest that each community can set their own parameters apart of what that customary agreement could look like, who the caregiver is, or what arrangements are made from each of the communities.

So I guess my answer to that is each community is going to set their own parameters in terms of what the customary-care agreement.

If there's not a customary-care agreement, then the existing system will obviously be in place.

Mrs. Smith: I think what the member is trying to get at is that there are children who are non-status that aren't connected to their community that live outside and are living with non-indigenous people, so I think what he's trying to get at is how are these children going to be included in customary care if they're not connected to their community, and let's say their indigenous parent is deceased. Could the member answer that?

* (15:00)

Mr. Fielding: Absolutely. So each of the communities will decide upon the customary-care agreements that's in place. So the decision is made, number one, there's a discussion that happens with the parent right now, it happens with the caregiver, and the choice is made whether they want to enter the customary-care agreement or they want to go into the existing system. So that is really up to the parents, that's also up to the service provider. They'll make a determination of which system, which communities they want to be a part of, and then notification is given to ensure that there is some sort of customary-care agreement within each of those communities. But, really, that is the decision of the parent. What we think is an important part of this is that parents don't lose their parental rights that are part of the legislation that's there. We think that's a growing part of giving communities—

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

Mr. Fletcher: Again, no answer. Section 8.28(4) of this bill that we're talking about today, the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc.: If the child's parents or guardian is a member of the Manitoba Metis Federation, or has requested its participation in planning or providing customary care for the child; there is no community, there is no parent, and it's not clear if the person is Metis or not. There is a lot of people that fall in that category, and this bill doesn't address it. What is the minister going to do to

address the people who are falling through the loopholes?

Mr. Fielding: Well number one, each of the communities will establish the exact customary-care agreement that's in place. So, unless there's a customary-care agreement for that community, they'll have the existing CFS system where you work with the CFS agencies to develop the services and supports that are there.

Mrs. Smith: So I'm going to give the member a chance to answer this one more time. So, and I'm going to give him a good instance. So my sister is missing; my niece and nephew live with their dad who's non-indigenous; my niece and nephew are not connected to their community.

A year or so ago, my niece and nephew were apprehended from school. We went to court as family; there was many family members who could take care of them. None of us were given custody. How is this minister going to ensure that this does not happen in the future to other families that are able to take care of these children?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I would say that each—the parents will be consulted; a part of that. That's, of course, a normal process that happened in the current CFS system that's in place. They establish what community they want to be a part of, that's very similar to the process that's in place right now. They work with the communities in terms of developing a care plan, a customary-care agreement. Each one of these are going to be different for each community. And as we move forward with this, each community obviously will be asked to develop a parameter in terms of the customary-care agreement, so there's a choice for those individuals and the families, see, they go through the regular CFS system or they enter into a customary-care arrangement agreement that's in place. And each of the communities are going to be quite different in terms of their approach, in terms of the services, in terms of the—

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I just would like to clarify the minister's intent. Is it the minister's intent that a people, wherever they are in the province—north, south, east, west—will be treated equitably, whether they're being looked after in customary care or whether they've been looked after in—as foster parents. Just what is the intent of the minister in this respect?

Mr. Fielding: Right. So I'd say that the intent of legislation is to involve communities and individuals to have more say in the care plan for these individuals. This is something that we heard extensively in indigenous communities, whether it be the Metis communities, whether it be indigenous communities, that they'll have a greater say and a role in terms of the care plan for these individuals. So, of course, we want to have equity across the province.

I can't tell you that certain things will be laid out in regulation that's a part of it. But I can tell each community will be different. There will be equity. And what's important is the same safety standards that are in place right now will be in place as well. But the only thing that it does add is community will have a say in terms of the care plan for these individuals.

Mrs. Smith: Will the children that are in customary care still be counted among the number of children in care?

Mr. Fielding: Part of the annual report, we will be incorporating—we will—all—looking at the customary-care children—the part of it.

So the answer to that is, yes, it will be incorporated in the annual report. There'll be a section. Because it's a highlight piece this government has introduced, we'll probably have a design in terms of the annual report that talks about how many customary-care agreements when we establish the annual report. Of course, we'll have the design laid out, but they will be incorporated—a section of it to—reviewed in the annual report.

Mr. Fletcher: Again, very quickly, the minister hasn't answered the question about Metis, for example, in section 8.

But I find it astounding that the critic is able to, from her own personal experience, point out exactly the problem which I pointed out in the legislation from a—just using a thought exercise. We are not colluding; that was a total fluke. Theoretical and practical; practical from a member who knows.

Why won't the minister simply add—answer the critic's question? Please, just answer the question and we move on.

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

Mr. Fielding: Well, I have answered the question. Member—the member isn't listening effectively.

In terms of the approach, I can tell you that customary care is something that we truly think is important. It provides the safe—same safety standards for individuals. The current CFS system is in place until communities get a customary-care agreement for their own communities. That is a system that will be in place.

But we truly think that a customary-care agreement is something that is important, that will provide communities with a say in terms of the care plan for these individuals. We think it's also important because individuals, you know, will take into consideration the customs and cultures of their communities. The same safety standards are in place. In fact, the best interest of the child is incorporated, enhanced from existing—or, the bill that was left on the Order Paper when the election was called.

Mrs. Smith: Will the extension-of-care model be included in the customary care?

Mr. Fielding: The extension-of-care agreement is something from 18 through 21. That's something that is taken into consideration within the bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The time for question period has expired.

Debate

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The floor is open for debate. Any speakers?

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): I just want to first say that, you know, this customary care was brought forward by the NDP government. Unfortunately, we didn't pass it then. So we are pleased that this is being brought forward again because we think that this is a step in the right direction.

As the minister alluded to earlier, we do know that there are way too many kids in care. We do know that there are families who are able and willing to take care of children. I do hope, though, that the children that we were talking about in the families that aren't connected to their communities or have non-indigenous parents can somehow be included in this bill, because through my story and what I've shared with my sister's kids being apprehended, there are a number of our family members that could have taken my niece and nephew.

It took six months for them to get into our care, and three months later they were returned home. But, within those six months, my niece and nephew moved three times to three different homes, my

sister's being the fourth. So we hope that those kinks are worked out so no child has to experience that, because we know when kids are in multiple homes, it does more damage than it does good.

We know that it's unacceptable, you know, that there's over 11,000 kids in care that need homes, that, you know, were—that we don't have enough homes. And, as the member from Kewatinook was alluding to, there are people who are willing to take children. But, when workers will come into the home, they're expecting a bedroom for this child, for themselves. And often families don't have that space to accommodate to have those children living with them, but they have the good intent to take care of those children. It's someone that they care about, someone that they love.

So, you know, we're hoping, too, that that's a provision that's in the future taken into account, that more housing is needed to make sure that these children can be cared for in a customary-care model in their communities with whoever is willing to take them.

*(15:10)

We know that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has called on meaningful change with the five recommendations that they called for, from the federal government and the provincial government. So we're hoping that this government takes those into account, as well as they're putting that into—and making sure that this is meaningful change, and that children are not staying in homes where, you know, they're not connected to their community or their families.

The TRC established the placement of indigenous children into culturally appropriate care, whether it's temporary or permanently, but this must be a priority. As an educator, I saw many children in my classroom, in the school that I worked in and in the division that were kids in care. And Seven Oaks School Division has a number—the highest number of kids in care attending their schools.

Our division ended up doing one of the calls to action. That was reunification work with parents. So we took the circle-of-care model, and we made sure that parents were at that table that could be—that could have access to their kids, as well as anybody else that that child wanted to be a part of their circle of care.

So it's very important that we're making sure that, as we're putting children into these

customary-care situations, that they're not losing contact with the people who have supported them, who have been there for them, and that we're setting them up for success, that the resources are there that the parents need, or the caregiver—whether it's an aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew, whatever the situation may be—that they have the resources that they need to be able to take care of this child.

The TRC also confirmed that Aboriginal government have the right to establish and maintain their own child-welfare agencies, so I'm pleased that this government is working with some of the communities. We do know that there are 63 First Nation communities here in Manitoba, and we do hope that all 63 of those First Nations communities were—had some say in this bill, and that the minister had met with them and not just the grand chiefs.

We're supportive of allowing indigenous communities to create their own care plans for children and recognize—that reflect their own unique customs, teachings and cultural heritages. We know that some of our First Nations don't all practise traditional cultures.

Some First Nations, for instance, Poplar River, you know, the Catholic Church has had a huge influence on that community, and if a child is living in Winnipeg and they've also had access to their traditional, as they're going home, that we make sure that, you know, there's access to both and whatever the child wants, that that's what they get, that their needs are being met.

For this bill to be successful, we need to see that it's supported by, you know, community members. They did consultations so, you know, as this bill is passed and as this customary care is continuing to go along, that they're making sure that they're continuing to collaborate, continuing to make sure that children are taken care of and that we can do better.

I mean, we're here talking about children in the Manitoba Legislative Building. Children are not politics. You know, these are children. We care about them. It's everyone's responsibility to take care of kids and, you know, sometimes I stand in here and think, we're debating about children. Like, these are our kids, and I'm sure everyone in this House could agree that nobody would ever want their child taken from them and not be able to have access to them.

So, we also support the move to clearly identify MMF, the Manitoba Metis Federation, that they're

able to participate, and as the member from Assiniboine alluded to, that there's—they have a distinct recognition as Metis people, and there are things that you have to be—you have to get a genealogy and you have to be tied to the community. And if you're not tied to the community, then you don't fall under the Manitoba Metis Federation.

Some people, through Bill C-31, have been excluded from being status due to, you know, their mother marrying a non-indigenous person, and three generations later, their children have lost their status. So, you know, we want to make sure that any person that wants to participate in this is able to and able to get the same supports.

We need legislation that strengthens the legislative roles of indigenous communities in leading the development of their own unique models of care that will lead to better outcomes for children. So, making sure that those communities have the support that they need to set up those customary-care policies and procedures, so that we're not just saying, here's a pot of money, do what you want with it. But we're actually helping them to develop it and helping to support whatever model their community is coming—is wanting.

We believe that the government, you know, in terms of prevention, we need to be making sure that we have access to support for families. So, I'll tell you an instance of a res—one of my constituents last week, was visited. Somebody had called and said that her kids were playing outside alone. And, you know, she was in the house, she was washing her dishes and she could see her kids from the window. And her yard was gated. But someone felt that that—that she wasn't—she was neglecting her kids. That she wasn't taking care of her kids.

Had she not had support of neighbours that indeed went and advocated for her and said, this woman takes care of her kids. You know, she's—and had called us as well, so we were able to help in that matter. Her kids weren't apprehended, but had she not had support from other people, that might have been the fact. We often see families that don't have enough, you know, food in their fridge, so their children are apprehended. So we need to make sure that those types of things aren't happening. That if someone needs food, that we get them the food that they need, so that their kids can stay in the house.

We heard, you know, culturally appropriate care, as someone who was an educator, that often saw kids coming in to the school that were living in

non-indigenous homes. These children started to identify with the family they were living with. And there is nothing wrong with that, but they were also starting to lose their own identity. They were starting to speak the language of the family that they were living with. They were starting to be ashamed of being indigenous and, you know, we're doing a disservice if we're not going to put those resources in place to support those children, to ensure that whatever custom, culture or spirituality that they come from that that's going to be something that they could access.

So we think that, you know, having kids in homes with their families is the best direction to go. We know that families can take care of their own children. We know that families have lots of members who are capable. And if they aren't capable, giving those resources to be able to, like, whether it's housing or funding to make sure that they have a bed for that child to be in. When my sister got my niece and nephew, she was fortunate enough—she had a bedroom, it was a playroom for my niece—but the agency bought them bunk beds, so my niece and nephew were able to share a room and, you know, have beds.

So, to continue that, to make sure—and not waiting six months, like we did. You know, that's hard for kids to be taken from their home, and their schools. I had a little boy in my classroom that was apprehended. He was living in a non-indigenous home and he had disclosed at school that he was being abused at home. So, of course, you know, we, under legislation have to report that; it was reported to the social worker. They came out and seen the child. The child was taken from school and he was moved to a safe house, or to a group home. And they didn't want to transport this child to the school where the only stability in this kid's life was he trusted people in that school to—enough to disclose what was happening to him.

* (15:20)

So we advocated for this child, along with the parent, to have this child come back to our school. We even said we would pick them up. But what ended up happening is they got a driver. That little boy was driven back and forth to school. And I can tell you, just that little act of him having that little bit of stability, even though he had been taken out of his home—he was so happy. You know, he was—things started to happen for him in the school. He was a very introverted young boy who didn't smile a lot,

didn't play a lot, but because somebody believed in him and, you know, advocated for him, this little boy started to learn.

And we hope that those types of things don't happen through this, that the connections are maintained in the community so that kids can maintain their connections to whatever community they're leaving to go into a customary-care model.

And, when we think about reconciliation, you know, we think of it as it's this word, and my people use it as, you know, just a word, but in the indigenous community we think of it as 'reconciliation', so putting action behind the words to make sure that that is indeed happening.

So, as this bill is going to second—or, going into committee, we certainly will be bringing, you know, whatever concerns we have forward and listening to the many members that'll come forward and speak to the bill.

We are pleased, however, that they are bringing this bill forward that was brought forward initially by the NDP and that children will be able to stay in their families and that we will continue to make sure that supports are there for the families where these children move to and that collaboration continues to happen with the communities that are embarking on this customary-care model so that they can have the policies put in place that they need.

So, miigwech, Deputy Speaker, and I'm pleased to put a few words on the record.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I am happy that there's finally movement on the CFS file. I also have to note that it happened provincially shortly after the Honourable Jane Philpott, along with the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, and Grand Chief Arlen Dumas of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at achieving concrete outcomes in child welfare and supporting the needs and aspirations of First Nations in Manitoba.

Our children are the most important gifts to any of us. Many in this House know the joy of being a parent and watching their child grow up. However, a lot of parents do not get the joy of seeing their children grow. In First Nation communities, children that end up in the foster care system often end up being removed from their communities, their friends and from the only way of life they have ever known.

This has resulted in trauma for the family, especially for the child or children.

Our First Nations have long since asked for this model to become adopted, for our children not to be taken from our communities. Our people have always wanted nothing more than for our children to be cared for by our people in our communities. However, for these communities to fully realize the potential of customary care, they must receive the necessary support from this government as well as the funding received from my federal cousins.

It will take time and money to change our current foster-care systems and policies. Many communities will require people to be trained on a new way of doing things. We cannot expect a bill to pass and for change to come immediately. The success of this idea will come from having the adequate resources and training needed to see it to full fruition.

When we look at First Nations across Manitoba, we do not see many who have been able to fully transition back into traditional lifestyles. Indeed, for the most part, we have many broken communities due to the intergenerational trauma from residential scoops—from schools—sorry—the '60s scoop and the not-yet-talked-about abduction of our children for medical exploitation and experimentation.

We have lost children, literally. CFS has misplaced children. One child in the North, after much digging, was actually found to be from the Maritime provinces. How he ended up in the North will probably be kept forever quiet. This does not make it up to this child whatsoever. He needs to go home. He needs to be reunited with his family, his extended family, his parents who have obviously—must have been neglected from their agency, otherwise how does this happen? I know of many moms who have committed suicide after losing a child to CFS. Do not judge the parents until you know their stories.

At the recent MKO summit on child reform, there were three aged-out children who presented in a panel. Not one knew their original identity until adulthood. One young woman was told by her first foster parent, oh, you're Metis, and it wasn't until she was a young adult, nearly a decade later, that she learned that she was a First Nations status person. How does that even happen? And, before the people, again, start blaming the parents, she stated that her dad fought for her, did all the programs and went

through all the hoops to get her back from the CFS agency, but they did not grant him his rights back.

Everyone has to remember how racism exists and is permeated and entrenched within all the agencies that surround my people. Some parents are even convinced by CFS workers that the child is better off because the foster parents are given more money for food, shelter and clothing, and when you live on a res with high unemployment rates and only social assistance to help you buy your high-costing food and supplies, you start to believe that what those workers are saying must be true.

When your child is apprehended and you meet with a CFS agency, some conversations get heated, especially after you've passed all the programs and gone into treatment. Sometimes the CFS worker cancels or changes your scheduled visit and perhaps you get angry a bit. I know I would. Then they are ever quick to deem you as an unfit parent.

I have walked through many malls during shopping seasons and I've seen non-brown parents yell at their children or yank them in anger. I've always made a point of asking that child if they are okay publicly or I've asked the parent if they needed help to calm down and to check themselves. That's the indigenous law. Care for others; be part of the village. But believe me, I know if that were an indigenous couple, bystanders would readily get out their cells and call CFS on them, not that I've seen a case in that instance where an indigenous parent is yelling or yanking a child.

But, by no means, I am—I am I saying that the CFS always makes mistakes. My eldest had to take some training in which she had to learn to recognize the signs of abuse, both sexual and physical. I am not as strong as she and I am grateful that those children are placed into the safety in those—placed in safety in those cases.

The amount of CFS children in my First Nations in Kewatinook vary from reserve to reserve. One has as high as over 300 and one has as low as 10. That particular CFS agency with the low number does everything it can to keep the child with extended family if the parents have addictions or other harmful-to-child factors.

The community has always used a community—a customary-care model, so I know it works because it's based on our ways. The young parents would work all day and it was the older ones who kept the children, as mothers and fathers went about doing

their daily tasks. We used to work to live and we lived to work. That's the type of life we wish to go back to. We need these regulations that encapsulate us lifted so that we can resume our traditional life.

Most of us in the North are ready and willing and able to keep our heritage alive. It is not dying. We believe we can successfully adapt to emerging technologies and blend them into our ways, but we want our ways of life back. It's what's ingrained into us.

To be a successful thriving nation as we once were, we need our children home.

Minister, I cautiously thank you.

Miigwech, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (15:30)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. I am supportive of this bill. This bill can only help what is a bad situation.

There are some questions which perhaps at committee can be addressed and dealt with, even amended. I think there's good will in the House.

The issue of—there's some issues which we need clarification at committee. One is the residency requirements. It's not clear if or how this process would work if someone was, say—Sandy Bay, northwestern Ontario—a member of that band, but residing in Manitoba, which—how does that work? Like, which jurisdiction has the enforcement power? And how does the funding flow?

Jordan's Principle, for example, which I was very involved with in Ottawa, is the model where whatever the child needs, they get, and the jurisdictions—federal, provincial, First Nations departments—they sort out the costs afterwards. So does that exist in this situation, a Jordan's Principle for child welfare? That would be a helpful piece of information.

The minister has had the opportunity to answer those types of questions, and I hope he will answer them at committee, if—even if it—they weren't answered at this stage.

The issue of definitions. The act as amended, the one that we're debating today, deals with probably some long-overdue changes as far as what constitutes indigenous in the act. It includes First Nation, Inuit and Metis, which sounds very good. But now what does that actually mean in practice?

Manitoba does not have a large Inuit community, in fact I would suspect that most of the Inuit clients or individuals who fall under this care framework—and there obviously are, otherwise there'd be no mention of Inuit children—would be born and raised with their families in Nunavut, perhaps in the Northwest Territories, more likely Nunavut, or even northern Quebec. How does that work? It's not clear in the legislation.

And how does the funding work? Does the funding flow from—follow the individual, or is it absorbed by Manitoba? Like that has nothing—you know, there's no question that the child should get whatever attention he or she needs or even wants. So that's not the question. But the question is: What is the jurisdiction of this legislation? And it's not clear. Perhaps the minister will be able to clear that up at committee. And perhaps the minister would be able to provide clarity, if there is a Jordan's-Principle-like agreement with the federal government. And, if there is, that's good to know. If there isn't, that's good to know. And—but, if nobody knows, that is also good to know. And because we don't—nobody seems to be able to answer the question; that is not good. And they're not—no one's been able to answer the question outside the Chamber thus far.

There's also an issue of definitions. We deal with indigenous people, and, in section—I've just got to read the section, here—in section 8.3—or 8.28(4), it says the following: Determining children's indigenous community. "For the purpose of this Part, a child's indigenous community is (a) an Indian band, as defined in the Indian Act, if the child is, or entitled to be, a member of the band; (b) the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc., if the child's parent or guardian is a member of the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. or has requested its participation in planning or providing customary care for the child."—I'm not sure the grammar here is very good.

So, for the purpose of this act, a child's indigenous community is—has requested participation in—for this purpose of this act, a child's indigenous community is providing customary care for—the—yes, the—it—okay, there's a problem with the wording even, here. So I think that would need to be rectified. And (c), it says: an Inuit community identified by the child's parents and guardians. And the last part of it goes to the next page: "in all other circumstances, the indigenous community identified by the child's parent or guardian." In all other circumstances.

The problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is there are many circumstances where the parents can't—are not available or the community is not identified. There are almost 1 million First Nations persons who are off-reserve. I hate that word, but that's what it—that's the word, I guess. And the Supreme Court has recently ruled that individuals of First Nation background off-reserve are entitled to all the same rights and responsibilities as those who are on reserve. I see members are nodding.

So there—when it says all circumstances to go back to the band, well, there's at least, apparently, three hundred and—or 750,000 persons that don't have a band. And how does this bill relate to those people?

*(15:40)

The larger question of course, is, how is Manitoba and Canada going to deal with that Supreme Court decision? And it's the Supreme Court decision. People can debate about it and complain, or whatever, but it doesn't help meet the standards set by the Supreme Court. That's the way Canada operates. So, if we have this group of individuals that fall outside, how do deal with it?

Now, there was a suggestion earlier that there will be equity in the system. Well, what does that mean? Like, if equity means what happened to Tina Fontaine? No thank you. You know, equity is—you want to go to the highest common denominator, not the worst outcome. So, when someone says equity, so what is the desired outcome? And I think everyone in this place wants the outcome to be individuals live long, prosperous, fulfilled lives, reaching their full potential as human beings. I think that's a fair goal.

There are some good things in this legislation, which I'd like to point out. Can I see? Without the tag. Just wrap it here. Customary-care homes. Section 8.29: the parties to customary-care agreement may agree that all indigenous 'childs'—or children—or child is to reside with a customary care-giver, in a customary-care home. That sounds good.

8.29(2): "An agency must ensure that the customary caregiver and customary-care home meet the safety standards and other requirements set out in the regulations." Well, that's common sense. It says something that we have to put it in the legislation. But I guess that's good. Obvious, but good. And then, not a foster home. 8.29(3): For certainty, a customary home is not a foster home. That is, I think,

a progressive addition. There are many foster homes that—and foster parents that do wonderful jobs. There's a MLA—at least one that I'm aware, in this place, who's a foster parent and is amazing. I've had caregivers who have come from foster homes, including caregivers of aboriginal and Metis—and, I guess, indigenous now—descent, and have had outstanding lives.

In fact, the day the shooting in Ottawa occurred, the caregiver—and I believe the bravest one out of everyone—was someone who lived through and thrived in a foster home and is also of Aboriginal background. So there is definitely a role to play.

But it shouldn't be the only choice. Choices are good. Variety is good. And it's really difficult to deal in legislation when you're dealing with individuals, because each child is an individual and legislation is often geared to the average, the mean.

However, we still see that there may be challenges. The member from Point Douglas shared with this House earlier today—and I apologize to the member if I get this—but really a shocking situation where the family, the parents were not involved as the aunt—she was not allowed to help, and it went through bureaucratic red tape and nightmare. That is unfortunate, and I'm sorry the member had to go through that.

I wonder if the minister could tell us, now or later or at committee, if he has discussed this matter with the MLAs in this place that have experience in the foster care or child-services spectrum. I think it's well known that the member from Dawson Trail, who is, I think, one of the most amazing people in this place, party aside, just the way he conducts his personal life and what he believes in. I hope that he is involved in these discussions. The member from Kewatinook, obviously. The Leader of the Opposition, the House leader and other members who have first-hand knowledge. And, of course, the critic on this issue who shared with us this story.

Now this is not a partisan issue. I hope when this goes to committee, the committee will be open to listen to witnesses, reflect on what all committee members say, and not make any decisions about amendments right after, like in the same meeting as the witnesses, but to sit and think for a few days to allow members of the committee to bring forward amendments based on the public participation of the—and the Q and A between MLAs and the public.

* (15:50)

I've seen it too often now where legislation is presented, it goes to committee, it flies through the Chamber, and then the public is asked at a short notice to give their points of view, and then immediately in the same evening the committee goes forward to pass the legislation. And that's not a—again, not a partisan-problem cure. It is a cultural issue within the political framework in Manitoba.

Like, how can you listen to the public and then immediately pass the legislation without even having a chance to reflect on what the public's had to say or read the material that they have brought or give it—there should be a standing rule to force MLAs to reflect, have public presentations and then have a separate meeting to pass legislation. That doesn't exist.

That doesn't mean it has to happen that way. If the public has input at committee, on the record, I hope the minister and the government will reflect on it, but certainly not pass it the day of, and you know, it's just not good practice, and it's quite frankly disrespectful to the people who present and the public in general. But I understand that this is a long-standing practice in Manitoba, and hopefully that will change for the better.

And this is a perfect example of where committee could really help on a bill that everyone supports its intent. Everyone knows there's a problem, a big problem, a very difficult problem. You know, one would say the minister may have inherited a big challenge from the previous government, and that would be probably true, but that doesn't help us move forward. On a go-forward basis on this issue, I hope the minister will be open to public representation, perhaps amendments from the people who know best and most about it, particularly the MLAs in this place and the public at large.

Mr. Chair, when it comes to residency requirements, I notice that there does not appear to be any residency requirements in the legislation, and—or any of the companion legislation. Perhaps that's an oversight by the government, or maybe I have not been able to find it. And that would be fine as well. Or maybe there's another explanation. Open to all of that, but it does need to be asked: how does this work?

If there is someone who was born or associated with outside the boundaries of Manitoba, and for whatever reason, the supports for that child are determined to be in Manitoba, the best interests for

that child is determined to be in Manitoba, that has to be the governing principle, but how does that work in this legislative framework?

And what does the federal government have to say—or what is their role and responsibility in this? Because there is a federal role. The issue of care may ebb and flow across interprovincial or provincial-territorial boundaries, and how is that dealt with?

Again, the scenario that the critic from Point Douglas raised must be a common occurrence. I can't believe that the odds of this—it would be extraordinarily coincidental that I would raise that as a possibility and then the person whose spot is right in front actually lived through that scenario in her own family, and the legislation doesn't clearly address this.

It's also not clear—and I hope the Metis Federation, David Chartrand, will be able to come to committee and other members of the Metis community to explain section 8.2(4)(b), where it says the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc., if the parent or guardian is a member of the Manitoba Metis Federation Inc. or has requested its participation in planning or providing customary care for that child—or providing customary care for that child. So I'm not sure how that last one would work under the framework, if that's been tested or not.

The other issue is—and I leave it to others—is obviously the Metis Federation is the primary determiner who is Metis or not, but it's been a long time since the French came to Manitoba and Lord Selkirk and everyone else. There is probably a huge part of the population of Manitoba who would meet the definition of Metis, at least some definitions of Metis, even not directly. So how does, you know, how does that all work? I don't know, but it would be an interesting question. And how does that play out with this legislation? Again, an exercise for committee.

The minister, the bill, the government have a tough file. Asking questions is not a negative thing; it's positive. Conservatives—the Conservatives I know, the kind of conservatism I'm a part of is compassionate and fiscally responsible and transparent. In fact, I would argue that fiscal responsibility is compassionate, transparency is compassionate and compassion is transparent. Without one, it's difficult to have the other, especially over the long term.

In my last few minutes—seconds, I simply ask that the government genuinely listens and reflects on the various scenarios that may not have been contemplated when the legislation was put together. This is a very difficult file, and I think this is one where everyone can work together for the best results possible.

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

Any other speakers?

The House is ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

* (16:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is the second reading on Bill 18, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (Taking Care of Our Children).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On division?

Mr. Fletcher: I wonder if on division is needed on this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the honourable member for—of Assiniboia have the support of three other members for—on division and for a vote? No, so I—okay.

So as—the motion is accordingly passed.

Bill 9—The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers Respecting Governance and Accountability)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So now we'll go on to the Bill 9.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): I move, seconded by the minister of industry—growth, industry and trade—they change so often; I have to make sure it's here—that Bill 9, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers Respecting Governance and Accountability), now be read a second time and be referred to the committee of the House.

And the honourable—the honour, the Lieutenant Governor, has been advised of the bill, and I table this before us—the message before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister for Families that Bill 9, The Community–seconded by the member for Growth, Enterprise and Trade, that Bill 9, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act (Enhanced Powers Respecting Governance and Accountability), now be read for the second time and be referred to the committee of this House.

Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been advised of the bill, and I table the message—the message has been tabled.

Mr. Fielding: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to share details of The Community Child Care Standards Amendment Act. The proposed amendments are a first step in making improvements in our early-learning-and-child-care system. Manitoba trusts us to make decisions to improve service delivery, increase accountability and reduce red tape, whether it be in child care or other areas of government.

I'm very pleased that these proposed amendments accomplish this objective while maintaining the integrity of Manitoba's high-quality early-learning-and-child-care system.

Currently, legislation allows the director of child care to issue licences for no longer than one year. The proposed amendments will allow licences to be issued for three years. That, of course, was a part of recommendations brought forward by an independent office that we should move on.

Honourable colleagues, this means that child-care centres with a proven track record of providing quality child care be issued a licence that could be valid for up to three years. By cutting the red tape and reducing unnecessary regulations, procedures for facilities, we demonstrate a compliance to licence requirements. Department staff can spend more time supporting child-care providers and advancing standards of excellence in early childhood child-care and education.

We have listened to child-care providers, and we have heard the act and regulations are confusing and difficult to understand as we speak today, so that's why we're engaging in some changes.

Without lowering safety standards, we are using the bill as an opportunity to reduce duplication between the act and regulations, making the act more concise. The bill provides amendments to clarify the authority to require codes of conduct. Safety plans and fire safety are within the act,

while necessary prescriptive provisions are more appropriately found in regulation and in policy. By providing clear expectations, centres will have a better understanding of the requirements they must meet in order to operate as licensed child-care facilities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the bill also speaks—or seeks to give the director of child care the authority to recover funds for subsidy overpayments. This is a key part of 'hancements' in terms of accountability, and, quite frankly, it's more money in the system that can be delivered for child-care services here in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Until now, the department had no ability to recover subsidy overpayments occurring when recipients inaccurately reported their household incomes or there was errors made in that respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we know that low-income families rely on these subsidies to access child care for children. Often it is what makes it possible for these individuals to advance their education and/or keep employment. Truly, child care is a important function for working families here in the province of Manitoba.

Although not the norm, some people take advantage of the subsidy program by failing to properly declare their income. There are also times when the program provides overpayments in error. The department wants to prevent further loss and improve financial accountability with the amendment.

Ensuring that child-care centres keep operating is important for families. From time to time, centres struggle to continue to operate for various reasons. Currently, the act does not provide clear authority for the director of child care to mitigate or respond to cases of risk related to board governance, problems or financial concerns that increase the risk of centres. And I can tell you, on an ongoing basis, I would say, probably twice a month we hear of these circumstances, and whether you, as a government, need to introduce emergency funding, up to \$25,000, to help this enact. This is something that has worked effectively in the child-welfare system, and I think it's important and it is supported very much by, I know, the former spokesperson and—Pat Wege from the Manitoba Child Care Association has spoke very highly of that aspect.

The proposed amendments will allow the director to refuse, suspend or revoke a license based on board governance risks. The director can also issue an order related to 'governance' of management of a child-care centre, to address problems before they threaten the viability of the child-care centre. The proposed amendments will also give the minister a new power to appoint a provisional administrator for government-related issues, such as board performance or fiscal management. We would—this would be done only if the necessary—if it's necessary to avoid risk of centre closure due to 'governance' concerns.

So, again, this is a power that we'll do to avoid risk of closure of child-care centres, which comes up on a everyday basis. This is an important tool to support child-care centres and to prevent centres from closure. For example, if the centre does not have a functioning board of directors, an administrator could step in and help the centre get back on track through appointment and training of a new board.

In addition to the amendments outlined, we are talking about—that we're talking about here today, taking this opportunity to amend the act to clarify and reflect gender neutrality. In terms of the legislation, the legislation is close to thirty years of age, and so there is some minor changes in terms of language that's a part of it. Since this time, legislated drafting—drafters or drafting, has moved forward using plain language and gender-neutral terms. The current legislation's complex, outdated and in need of streamlining. And by using this opportunity to update the act to make it more user-friendly.

Honourable colleagues, I invite you to support this bill as a first phase in our plan to make more significance improvements, enhance early learning and child care. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, just as I close up, in terms of the responses, this is the first phase of changes. We also are engaged by looking at other provinces, such as Alberta and Saskatchewan, to make sure our legislation and regulations match, to make sure that there isn't more red tape from starting and operating child-care centres, which we've seen for a number of years. And so we think that's an important process. This is a step in the right direction. The first phase of some of the regulatory or red tape, that we see in the child-care sector and it does have the support of advocates through the child-care sector as a whole. So with that, Madam Speaker, I'll wait to hear some questions.

Questions

Madam Speaker: A question period of up to 15 minutes will be held. Questions may be addressed to the minister by any member in the following sequence: first question by the official opposition critic or designate, subsequent questions asked by critics or designates from other recognized opposition parties; subsequent questions asked by each independent member; remaining questions asked by any opposition members, and no question or answer shall exceed 45 seconds.

* (16:10)

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Can the minister tell us how he'll ensure that there'll be enough affordable accessible child-care facilities?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): And red tape, ensuring that child-care centres have an ability to operate efficiently and effectively will allow for more child-care centres to operate. Reduced red tape and waste, that's something that we have taken across government in terms of reducing red tape, is not the only thing we're going to do. In fact, we've made a number of significant announcements, including investments of close to \$47 million with partnerships in the federal government to create child-care spaces.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Is the minister putting any effort into attracting more early childhood educators?

Mr. Fielding: We are investing more money in child care in the history of the province in our last budget. We've just made significant investments in \$47 million of new projects. In fact, we invested in close to 20 community-based projects, community and school-based projects, just in the last number of days alone. We've partnered with the federal government and there's times where we are going to disagree with the federal government and there's times where we're going to agree. This is an item that we've agreed upon with them. We've worked with them effectively, and there's a lot more projects that have been announced, and what that means for families is more accessible and affordable child care for people of the province.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): This bill discusses a lot about licensing for child care. I wonder if the minister would be open to licensing of drug treatment centres like the one that he has initiated and proposed for St. James, 255 Hamilton, which is a Manitoba Housing project, but the goal of

the Bruce Oake Foundation will have no licensing whatsoever.

I wonder if the member can address if he's open to creating a licensing for drug treatment facilities in St. James.

Mr. Fielding: Well, one thing this government is very much in favour is creating more child-care spaces, and we think the legislation before us here today deals with red tape that will help existing child-care centres; it will help centres that are in good standing, for instance; have longer terms instead of having to reapply; having staff come in and regulate one way or the other. We very much think that there's too much red tape, too many barriers to having child-care centres operate, whether that be in St. James, whether that be in Midland, whether that be in St. Vital or other areas of the province.

We think addressing this, having less red tape, is a very positive thing for the child-care sector.

Mrs. Smith: The government announced spaces, 2 per cent of the 17,000-person wait-list that we currently know of that was frozen in October.

What's their plan to address the needs of this list—570 new spaces versus 17,000?

Mr. Fielding: Addressing the mess that was leftover by the previous government, I'll tell you, is a full-time job, even though my responsibilities are broad in terms of social services. That is one area where I can tell you was left a complete mess. So that's why we're addressing it.

Part of addressing that, we think, announcing numbers of spaces last March—I think we announced 14 new projects—20 new projects are being addressed right here, and we think some of the mess that was left by the NDP in terms of red tape is an important area to address, and that's why we're addressing it, reducing the red tape, making it easier to operate and own and to start a child-care centre in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Smith: Why does the minister want to take families who are already struggling to court?

Mr. Fielding: Right now, in the current legislation, there is no parameters and there is times in the sector, in fact, over the last five years or so, there's been over \$600,000 of, essentially, money that was overpaid to families or there was errors that were made in the system. What this does is just cleans it up. It has an ability to have the right amount of

money that's given to individuals in terms of paying for the subsidy of child.

What's important about that is that \$600,000 that couldn't go to other families that really deserve it if people are getting overpaid. So we think having a bit of accountability in the legislation here because of the fact that it wasn't involved when the oppositions had legislation is important.

Mrs. Smith: Can the minister tell us how many families this would—how many families he's talking about here.

Mr. Fielding: Well, I can tell you a dollar figure. There's over \$600,000 in the last number of years that were associated with this. What is important about this, and I think what's important for Manitoba families who depend on subsidies, working families that are part of it, that there is fairness, there's accountability, that's a part of it. If someone is getting more subsidy than what is—dependent upon the rules, that means less individuals will get subsidy elsewhere.

So it is important to have accountability, that's a part a of it. That wasn't a part of the regulatory regime prior to the change—potential change in this legislation that we're talking about here today.

Mr. Fletcher: The minister for housing, and apparently responsible for drug treatment facilities, has, on one hand, said that licensing is not necessary—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would indicate to the member for Assiniboia (Mr. Fletcher) that we are not dealing with the content he is bringing forward in his question. If he does want to ask a question on this, he needs to be directing his questions in a relevant way according to the content of this bill, and I would urge him to do so now.

Mr. Fletcher: And the preamble is directly related. But there's no problem licensing child care, which seems to be in some ways adding red tape rather than making it more efficient. And, also, who's setting the standards? There just seems to be some room for clarification from the minister and I'd like to provide him that opportunity.

Mr. Fielding: I'm not sure why the member likes red tape in child care so much, but apparently he does. What I can tell you is that we're looking at other jurisdictions to see how we can be more efficient and effective with our dollars. We know that there isn't a

large amount of dollars that's going around in government these days. We've had some federal partnerships with the federal government to deliver more child-care centres and this is something that's supported by the advocates, people in the child-care sector, in fact, I can list off what they're saying about this bill if the member would like.

Mrs. Smith: Can the minister tell us how cutting red tape could potentially put children at risk?

Mr. Fielding: Cutting red tape that was established—in fact, I'll call it orange tape from the NDP in terms of child care—is a full-time job, whether it be a minister of the Crown, whether you'd be in Families, whether you're a minister for Finance, or any avenues that's here. This is nothing to do with safety. This is about being more efficient, more effective, making sure that child-care centres can operate in a more efficient and effective way. This is something that's supported by the sector in terms of addressing any efficiencies that can be created, any efficiencies that can allow businesses, child-care centres to operate more effectively is going to mean a big difference for the sector.

Mrs. Smith: Cutting fire regulations is a direct correlation to safety. If we don't have proper fire regulations in daycares then there's a potential for a fire to happen and for children's lives to be at risk. So can the member talk about that?

Mr. Fielding: I certainly can, Madam Speaker. And what I can tell you is that we have listened to child-care providers, and we have heard that the act and regulations are confusing and difficult to understand. Without lowering safety standards, the bill really is an opportunity to reduce duplication that exists within the act and regulations. The bill provides amendments to clarify the authority to require codes of conduct, safety plans, fire safety act, that's a part of it, it's a necessary component that's part of it by providing clarity, expectations; the centres will understand things better. It is something that is supported by the sector.

*(16:20)

Mrs. Smith: This government has a history of fighting with the federal government. We'd like to know how they plan on working with the federal government to ensure that there's proper child care in the province of Manitoba, and that more spaces are created with this minister supporting and matching the dollars that are coming into Manitoba.

Can this minister tell us about his plan?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I'll have to admit that the federal government does make a lot of mistakes, and I, quite frankly, don't agree with a lot of the policy positions they have. But, as a government, we're going to work with the federal government when it makes sense to work with them.

We recently signed—and a part of this we're talking about is regulation—but there is an agreement—there is a national framework that was established and a bilateral agreement. We're working with the federal government, and we announced with the federal government representatives—MP Dan Vandal—over \$47 million of new money invested in the child-care centres. That's going to mean close to 20 new projects just—that we announced just in the past little while.

So that's a concrete example of where we're going to work with the federal government to create better child-care situations here in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Smith: The minister referenced money from the federal government. Can he please tell us how much money the provincial—Province of Manitoba is putting towards child care?

Mr. Fielding: We are spending more money in child care than the history of this province.

There's well above \$170 million being invested in child care—provincial dollars that are on the table. And we've made important investments, and, I think, we've made some important advancements. Red tape is a part of that plan going forward, but it's also creating spaces and making sure that child care is affordable for working families here in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Fletcher: I was part of a government that provided—federal government that provided parents with direct financial aid and reduced dramatically, quote unquote, the red tape. Now it seems odd that that—there's more licensing being required.

How does this help in—from a Conservative point of view in regard to people who have arranged child care through their families and neighbours and friends? Do they—are they—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Fielding: There's been no change to the National Child Benefit that was changed over the past little while. That's a federal government initiative. That—there is no—absolutely no change that

we could even enact as a provincial government for it.

But I can tell you, if you talk to working families in St. James or in St. Vital or other areas, they're going to tell you that they need to create spaces. That's a part of it.

We think that reducing the red tape to allow—while child-care centres to open up, to expand, providing some benefits to home-based providers in a balanced approach is a step in the right direction, as well as some dollars investments. We've invested close to \$22 million last week for over 20 projects in the province of Manitoba. We think that's important.

Mrs. Smith: When will this government realize that Manitoba families are asking for more than they're giving? When will they change track and create spaces with provincial money, not just federal dollars?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I can tell you that, as a government, we've invested more money than the NDP ever have done in the history of the province. That's a fact. The member has a right for her opinions, but she certainly doesn't have a right to make up facts on the record, because the facts are that we're investing more money in child care, in any time, you know, of the history of this province.

And, when the federal government comes to us and says we want to have a partnership where we're going to create thousands of spaces that's a part of it, we're going to step up, we're going to have those negotiations, we're going to work with them to create affordable child care in the province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Smith: Creating affordable child care in Manitoba means investing provincial dollars and not just taking federal dollars.

When will this government adopt a universal child-care approach?

Mr. Fielding: Well, it's funny that the member talks about 'universal' child care. I didn't see any policy coming out when they were in government. In fact, the numbers skyrocketed under the NDP government in terms of the child care, probably because they took an ideological approach, Madam Speaker—an ideological approach to child care, where they essentially wanted to shut down home-based providers.

That, we think, is wrong. We are taking more of a balanced approach to address child care. There's many different child-care needs that are out there.

We think that, not only just with the work we're doing on red tape, but also making investments in child care is an important step forward for Manitoba families.

Mrs. Smith: We currently know of 17,000 families that are sitting on that list while this minister sits on his hands, talks about creating, seven—first it was 500; now, it's 700 spaces, spaces in schools that aren't even built yet. Can the member tell us actually how many spaces are being built this year and that'll be available to families?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I can tell you that we announced close to 1,400 spaces just in the last month alone, last three, two weeks alone, which is going to, you know, is investments of close to \$22 million. There's upwards of 600 to 700 new spaces above and beyond that will be created this year, really depends on when child-care centres that come online. But to somehow suggest that our budgets for child care are 'inacwet' when they're substantially more than the previous government spent on child care on any given budgetary year they brought forward is just false information.

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

Debate

Madam Speaker: Debate is open.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Pleased to rise and put some words on the record about child care. As a parent myself whose three children went through daycare, all three having to be subsidized because I was a single parent at one point in my life and needed safe, quality care which was available at the time. We have, you know, 17,000 families sitting at home, potentially at risk of losing their job because this minister is failing to build new spaces that would accommodate these families.

My daughter's 15 now—well, actually she's going to be 16. She was in a daycare, a home daycare, a licensed home daycare. That daycare was visited once a year to make sure the fire regulations were in place so that my daughter was safe in that home. This minister is proposing to take away that and give licensing for three years, which would mean you wouldn't have to be—have someone come in and check to make sure that safety was the No. 1 concern.

I can tell you, I would not put my daughter into a position where it was an unlicensed daycare because

there's no regulations. And I—my daughter to me is No. 1 and I want to make sure that she's safe.

My granddaughter who's five just started kindergarten this year. She's in a before-after school program in her school. We need to look at building more before-and-after-school programs in schools, so building the infrastructure on schools so that children can be going to school within those daycares.

In Seven Oaks School Division, they did have—they have a lot of agreements with different daycares to have their daycare in the gym after school. But before school these kids are bused from their daycare to the school. That poses, you know, sometimes difficulties for parents because, one—you have to pay for busing which is another expense which families can't afford. So, if we were to have daycares in schools then that would alleviate that extra strain on families. Because right now, you know, we have not enough daycare spaces for subsidy for parents that actually want to work.

So, if we don't have parents working, perhaps they're going on EIA, perhaps those are the families that are needing Rent Assist because now they have no job, now they find themselves unemployed. Employers aren't going to wait for the province of Manitoba to create enough daycare spaces for their children so that they can get a job.

But that's part of our responsibility as legislators, to make those things happen, to make sure that kids have access to the needs so their parents can go to school or go to work or, you know, sometimes parents do community work and their kids go to daycare.

So we have currently 17,000 people on this wait-list that we know of because it was frozen in October of last year. So we're now at April; maybe there's another 5,000 on there. This minister talked about, you know, under the NDP government. Well, under his government there's 17,000 families, probably more around the 20,000 mark, sitting on that wait-list to get into daycare.

*(16:30)

He's proposing to eliminate red tape. Well, some of those red tape—things that fall under the red tape are regulations that ensure kids are safe in these spaces and he's saying, well, it's putting barriers to these centres. Well, I'm sorry, but making sure that there's a working fire extinguisher, that it's been checked, that it's been notarized—because those

have to be checked yearly—that the fire extinguishers are working, that the access to get out of these spaces aren't blocked, because, as you know, children like to play with toys and you accumulate and you accumulate, and we need to make sure that these things aren't accumulating in front of access—exit doors where children go out of.

And I can tell you as an educator that has visited many of these centres, because they're in schools that I worked in and I worked in all 23 schools in my division and visited many of these centres, that often even when I came in—because I was a workplace safe and healthy—or safety rep for my school—that there were often those accesses and exits were covered by something, whether it was toys, whether it was, you know, a storage unit. So these things are in place for a reason, and for them to eliminate them, you know, is putting kids at risk.

The other thing I think is really ironic is that I went to a briefing about this bill. I asked how many families were actually taken to court or could have potentially been taken to court and I was told only a handful. So a handful to me is five, but this minister said \$60,000 every year is lost—or \$600,000—whatever. That's an even more outrageous number—is lost due to people misrepresenting maybe their income or their income changes, and they don't report right away.

I can tell you, as a parent, I worked—when my husband and I split up and I had my two young sons, I worked shift work and casual just to take care of my kids, and my income changed every single month. It wasn't always the same. Taking care of kids, I was going to school at night as well. So I would get up, I would take my kids to daycare, I would go to work, I would come home, pick them up from daycare, go home and feed them, my mom would come over and watch them, and then I would go to college in the evening. I can tell you I was pretty tired, trying to make a living to make sure that my kids weren't going to grow up in poverty, to make a difference in their life.

So parents, I don't think, are trying to, you know, get away with this. They're not trying to pimp the system or whatever you call it. You know, these are honest mistakes, and going after families that are already, you know, needing the support, that are already living in poverty, that are getting these subsidies, is the wrong way for this minister to be taking Manitoba. And I wish that he would amend that and take that right out, because he's punishing

families for being poor. And they didn't ask to be poor. They're trying their best. Their kids are in daycare because either they're working or they're in school.

This minister is proposing to have home daycares. That's great. You know, we—the more spaces the better.

You know, I told you about my daughter being in a home daycare, but that home daycare was licensed and checked yearly and there were regulations around it. She had to have her meal plan up, so, when I came in as a parent, it was right there. I knew exactly where the exits were, because that was right by every single door so that you could see it when you came in. There were—they had fire drills once a month to make sure that if something was happening over here, the kids knew where to go so it wasn't chaos and that all of the kids were accounted for. And this minister is proposing to move it to three years; that's not the right direction. That's not what Manitoba parents are asking for. Yes, they're asking for more spaces. Yes, have more home daycares, but they should be checked yearly.

This minister is also taking away regulations around bullying in daycares. Well, I can tell you children who have same-sex parents are being bullied in these centres, and this minister is proposing to take that away. So parents have no recourse to come to the daycare and say, you know, this is happening, what's your course that you're going to take to ensure that my kid is safe and that they're not feeling discriminated because of who their parents are.

So there is a lot of holes in this bill. And when it gets to committee, you know, I'm sure that he'll be hearing about, you know, what Manitobans are asking for, and maybe he'll listen this time because this is not what parents are asking for. They're asking for more spaces. They're asking to ensure that their kids are safe in these places. They're not asking to be taken to court. And, certainly, they're asking for the Province of Manitoba to put—invest more money and to match the dollars that the federal government is putting in.

This minister did not answer my question about, you know—the federal government is giving the Province this amount of money, what is the provincial government giving? No answer. You know, it was asked on two occasions. So my inkling is that the Province is giving zero dollars. They're taking the federal dollars. They're taking the credit

for the monies that the federal government is giving. But they have responsibility to ensure that there's spaces for families as well.

These health-care cuts that, you know, are reducing care for our kids. He tried to take away the supports that children with disabilities receive in daycares. You know, that's horrible. You know, as an aunt of a little boy who's in a wheelchair that—getting emotional but—at one point in his life needed tube feeding and was in a daycare, my sister-in-law moved to another part of the city and she ended up moving daycares. But she wasn't allowed to take the person who was caring for my nephew to the other daycare. So it wasn't portable. My nephew had developed a relationship with this person, he also needed to be changed, and, you know, there's a lot of trust in that.

And this minister, this Premier (Mr. Pallister) tried to take that away from families. You know, thankfully family's organized and were on these very steps demanding that that not happen. And they changed their course and didn't make those cuts. But who knows if that's coming down. You know, this is a government of cuts and we never know what's going to be cut next, and people are fearful of, you know, any backlash from what's happening with this austerity.

Education, you know, cutting the—putting a cap on post-secondary. That limits families from being able to access daycare. They have higher tuition which means they can't pay for daycare. Which means they can't go to school. Which means their children are going to be in poverty and they're going to continue to be in poverty. We need a real plan from this government that's going to help people get out of poverty. And we know education is the key and having daycare spaces for those parents that wish to access the post-secondary or go to work.

We have, you know—we heard 17,500 people last year are now unemployed. Well, we have no strategy to ensure that those people get gainfully employed in the future.

This Premier decided to cut projects that expanded child care options, you know, despite the incredible needs of our communities. Families call us almost daily looking for daycare. We have post-secondary institute right on Selkirk in my constituency. We just built housing right behind Merchants Corner. There's a daycare right behind Urban Circle. But there's not enough spaces in my

community to fill the need of the people who want to go to school.

So, you know, why are—why do we have these institutes there if we can't help support them by making sure that there's daycare spaces for these children? So parents are forced to continue to live in poverty, not receive the support from this government that they need, in terms of tuition or whether it's housing or whether it's Rent Assist or daycare. They continue to keep the poor poorer and, you know, not invest in our Manitobans.

* (16:40)

So I encourage, you know, this minister to really look at this bill, make some amendments to it, listen to Manitobans, take child care in the right direction. And, you know, I look forward to listening to people at committee, and, hopefully, they hear what Manitobans are saying, and they invest—make some real investments in Manitoba child care.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): First of all, I would like to thank the federal Liberal government again; this time for making a historic investment into more child-care spaces in Manitoba. This money has created 780 new licensed early-learning-and-child-care spaces. The total funding for the spaces is 22.8 million and is supported through the Canada-Manitoba Early Learning and Child Care Agreement.

Not only is this good for kids but for women as well. Women are still largely the primary caregivers, and, when those women want to go—wanted to go back to work, they could not due to the lack of child-care spaces in their communities.

There's a thought for the Premier (Mr. Pallister). If he ever wanted to improve the economy, advancing women's equality in Canada has the potential to add \$150 billion in incremental GDP, in 2026, or a 6 per cent increase to annual GDP growth.

Manitoba itself stands to gain between four–4.5–7 per cent each year to our GDP. Three quarters of those working part time, in 2015, were women, and one quarter of the women reported caring for children as their reason for working.

I'm glad I once brought up the tax credit for creating child-care spaces, because I was happy to see it again kept within the last provincial budget. We also must remember, when it comes to children and approving facilities, due diligence must be

carefully exercised, as we all likely saw the recent Calgary article where the home-care operator forgot that little one in a closet and she passed away from that. That must be avoided at all costs.

Due to the bill's support of Pat Wege, executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association, the Liberal caucus will be supporting this bill. But—as we've heard the stories of many not-for-profit groups attempting to open new child-care spaces, but—were met with endless barriers that were put in place by the former government.

As of February 2018, there were 15,487 children on the Online Child Care Registry. We hope this bill remedies that.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Assiniboia): For the next half-hour, I'd like to talk about this very important issue. I first will acknowledge the parents who are brave enough to have children. I—they—I am told by my parents that children are very expensive, and my siblings tell me that my nieces and nephews are also very expensive.

Now I don't know who is advising my nieces—or my siblings, because if they had simply talked to my parents, they would understand that kids are expensive. But they are younger siblings, and I was the oldest sibling, so, obviously, I took the major financial hit, as the oldest always takes the brunt of breaking in parents.

The fact is we all benefit when kids have good lives, good early childhood development. Part of that is through child care; well, all of it's child care. It depends on what kind of child care.

There is the model of licensing which provides options. There is what the federal government did when I was a Member of Parliament and minister, and that was direct funds, not through the province but directly to families. There was a lot of pushback at the time from the other federal parties, even the provincial party, but it's interesting to note that as those funding agreements expired and the money was invested directly to families, the other political parties, federally, anyway, have fallen over themselves to try and out-conservative the direct support to families.

Now, this is relevant to today's discussion because we're talking about resources to help with children. There is a subcategory which I'd like to raise, and that is children with autism. And we know

from countless studies that early intervention with children with autism through ABA, and other programs, that an investment made up front by society pays off, not only in monetary terms but in terms of simple humanity.

Now, I was involved actually with Andy Scott. Now, some of you may not remember Andy Scott, but he was a Liberal MP from the Maritimes, but he and I worked together on a national autism strategy. The challenge that exists with autism from the federal perspective was that most of the responsibility fell within the province.

So, when we're talking about licensing of facilities and the types of licences, I hope, as this discussion unfolds, that we will be able to see that the licensing, if it does exist, does not impede on the supports that we need to support children with autism.

Now, Madam Speaker, there is an amazing organization in St. James called west Winnipeg equal opportunities. What west Winnipeg—what equal opportunities does, they have a space in a strip mall in St. James and they provide programs for young and people with developmental disabilities. And interestingly it's in the same mall as the former MLA for Assiniboia, Jim Rondeau; it's in that mall, and I am amazed at what they do. Madam Speaker, they allow—or get electronic equipment, like all our old computers and TVs, and provide employment opportunities to young people with developmental disabilities, and, in turn, those individuals are able to earn an income over and above what they would normally receive.

* (16:50)

And, also, the—they've—these amazing people are able to recycle things that would normally end up in the garbage heap, and that's important because there's rare earth minerals, gold, silver, all sorts of things, and—in these materials, and so these Canadians are helping improve our environment. There's a way of providing an income and purpose for these individuals, and it also provides an opportunity for the caregivers to rotate. During the day, there will be a high ratio of adults per person with disability or—you know, disability's such a—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

I would just urge the member that the bill that we are debating this afternoon is related to child-care standards and amendments thereto. I wonder if the

member could try to bring his comments around to the particularly bill that's on the floor for debate.

Mr. Fletcher: So I'm coming around to the licensing, which is what this bill directly deals with. And what it would be helpful to know is if this bill would affect the ability of entrepreneurial-type organizations, like Equal Opportunities West, to provide the services that they do.

Now they may not be eligible for a—like, will—how does that—I hope that is a question that the minister will be able to answer, if not today, at committee. And I will certainly encourage Equal Opportunities West to present at committee about licensing, because what we don't want, Madam Speaker, is there to be changes in a licensing program that—where there are unintended consequences.

I would also ask, again, on the sliver of those children with disabilities, if the licensing in any way would affect the eligibility of families, and, through their families, the children, to take advantage of the registered disability tax plan. This is like an RRSP but for children and persons with disabilities. And there are very large sums of money, over time—I believe it's up to \$5,000 for a family without—it's means-based, so a family without income. And, certainly, the person with disability doesn't have an income. But, if they are taking—are—if they're involved in a licensed provincial program, will that, in effect, disqualify them somehow? Is there some clawback?

Now, Madam Speaker, when I was going to speak on this bill, I wasn't going to make those connections, but the member from Point Douglas raised the issue of monies flowing federally, provincially, but did not mention monies that flow federally directly to families.

So the question would be: Is this new regime for family care—affect families that may have arrangements that are outside the licensing child-care framework? And there are a lot of parents who do that. And that is why the federal government, and all governments since, have directed monies directly to the individual.

I remember my mom used to get, I know, it was like 60 bucks a month in what was called family allowance, and that helped get through those corners, now, those tough times. And was certainly spent on the kids, of which my siblings got the vast share of, and I don't mind because my younger siblings are the

greatest success in my life, and that's how families operate.

Now a family may not be two parents, and in the way, you know, Leave it to Beaver is, it may be a single parent or same-sex parent or a trans; like, there are many definitions of families. I will point out that families, single-parent families and, let's face it, statistically, most of those families are single-female families, single-mom families, and because of this, there is a whole spectrum of challenges that exist for that mom, starting with child care. If that mom puts aside her employment opportunities in order to support children, that affects that mom when it comes to retirement. That's one of the reasons why single females are higher at risk for poverty after retirement. It goes right to the child care.

It is so important to get this right. Now, this legislation may streamline, but it may also add barriers. And it's really important that we sort this out at committee.

Some questions that I hope the minister will be able to ask or answer, and I'll give him a heads up;

one is, what is the effect of the new licensing system on individuals with, or families with kids with special needs, kids with autism? What is the effect of this licensing system on the availability of child spaces? What is the effect of the licensing on those families that choose, or parents that choose not to be involved, or choose not to go through a licensed child-care provider? And that's important because I think that many families come up with their own arrangement.

And what about babysitting? Are there, is there going to be some sort of regulation about babysitting? Like, is 12 years old, which was sort of the standard when I was growing up, but 12 years old doesn't guarantee the level of skills or maturity. There are some 6-year-olds who, I know, act better than many people—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 14 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 17, 2018

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