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of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Subcommittee of the Standing Committee

on

Privileges and Elections

*Chairperson
Mr. Peter Dyck
Constituency of Pembina*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

THE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON PRIVILEGES AND ELECTIONS

Tuesday, May 20, 1997

TIME – 7:30 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina)

ATTENDANCE – 5

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Reimer

Messrs. Dyck, Kowalski, Martindale, Tweed

WITNESSES:

Ms. Amelia Wesley, Private Citizen
 Ms. Victoria Lehman, Private Citizen
 Mr. Darren Berg, Private Citizen
 Ms. Alice Wright, Private Citizen
 Ms. Irma MacKay, Department of Social Work,
 Health Sciences Centre
 Ms. Leslie Galloway, Department of Social Work,
 Health Sciences Centre

MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:

The review of the sections of The Child and Family Services Act pertaining to the Office of the Children's Advocate.

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Will the Subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections please come to order. This evening the subcommittee will be resuming consideration of the review of the sections of The Child and Family Services Act pertaining to the Office of the Children's Advocate.

The subcommittee will be holding hearings in Winnipeg this evening and on the afternoon of May 21 commencing at 3 p.m. We have had a number of persons registered to speak, and I will now read the

names aloud of the persons who will be presenting this evening: Amelia Wesley is first, then Victoria Lehman, Darren Berg, Alice Wright, Irma MacKay and Leslie Galloway.

I should indicate to the public that it has already been agreed by the subcommittee that no additional registrations will be accepted. In addition, I would like to remind those presenters wishing to hand out written copies of their briefs to the subcommittee, that 15 copies are required. If assistance in making the required number of copies is needed, please contact either the Chamber Branch personnel located at the table at the rear of the room, or the Clerk Assistant, and the copies will be made for you.

I should point out that the subcommittee has established a time limit on presentations and questions. The time limit per presentation is 20 minutes, and a maximum of 10 minutes for questions to be addressed to each presenter.

At this time, I would like to call on and ask Amelia Wesley, please, to come and take the podium, and, as you do that, while you are coming, I am going to just introduce to you the members of the subcommittee here. I would like to thank you for coming, and taking the time to come and give a presentation.

Sitting right here, to my far right, on your lefthand side, is Mr. Kowalski, the MLA for The Maples. Then there is Mr. Martindale here, MLA for Burrows; and then, starting on this side to my left here is the Honourable Minister Reimer, the MLA for Niakwa; and then Mr. Tweed, the MLA for Turtle Mountain.

I want to thank you for coming, and I would ask you to give your presentation at this time, please.

Ms. Amelia Wesley (Private Citizen): Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Amelia Wesley. I am sorry, my husband, Ron, is not here, but he is babysitting our little one.

First of all, I have three grown children, and I have a fourth girl that I adopted that was a niece. I have raised all my children. I am a Cree Indian from northern Alberta.

It is kind of sad to see that none of my people are here. It is kind of hard for me to speak only to a white audience. (Cree spoken)

I ask the Great Spirit to help me tonight.

I have been fostering since 1978 in Alberta, children. Since 1978 I have fostered over a hundred children, Metis and aboriginal children.

When I came to Winnipeg in 1990, I started to foster from Ma Mawi but I transferred to Child and Family Services, and there they placed with me a special-needs boy with severe mental and physical handicaps. At the time, I did not know of the FAS-FAE which he had; in the end, it was diagnosed. But anyway, Jonathan was with me for almost four years. In that time, he was never really diagnosed with Child and Family Services, and one day while we were having supper he had a seizure and I had to rush him to the hospital. There they did all kinds of tests on him. They did a brain scan, and they said to me this little boy was pretty sick and he had a lot of problems. But I had no other children in the home at that time, all my kids were grown up, so I thought I could take time with this little boy, and he was a permanent ward.

Anyway towards the end, I could not get anything from the social workers; I could not get anything from Child and Family Central. They would not work with me. You know, I did not get any help. The little boy missed school a lot; he did not want to go to school. He had problems in school getting along socially. But, anyway, I called the Child Advocate in my last—I thought that is what they were, Child Advocate, but I found out different. I found out that they sided with Child and Family, and that almost ruined my husband and me.

Anyway, I sent you this letter that my husband and I wrote, and I will read it to you.

In response to your review of the section of the Child and Family Act pertaining to the offices of the Child

Advocate, I feel this office is a waste of taxpayers' money. Winnipeg has a high ratio of child poverty and child abuse, not to mention the gang-related issues of which children are involved at the age of eight, between eight and 12. I live in a core area. I have a powwow group at Orioles Community Club for the last four years, so I know what I am talking about. I work with these children and they come to see me daily at my house. I live five doors out of Greenway School, and I have been there for 19 years. We bought our home at 447 Banning.

Wayne Govereau and his office are well aware of this issue but do not advocate for all these children. We once fostered a special-needs boy, which I was telling you about, and he needed a lot of help from Child and Family Services. We did not get the response we were looking for, so we got the Child Advocate to intervene. They did not advocate for the child at all. They sided with Child and Family stating they were right and we were wrong. At one point, the child in question made allegations to us, and the Child Advocate's office worked with Child and Family in attempts to prosecute us which cost us \$4,000. We won the case; we proved everybody wrong. They had no regard for the child.

Other children at the time—we had two other ones at the time, one with Anishinaabe, but he was all right, and the other one which I am keeping, he is an FAS. I have had him since birth, and he is five years old, and we adopted him. That was taken from us for a little while. They apprehended Michael. To make a long story short, we won the battle in court and got custody of our little boy back. I feel the Child Advocate should be privately funded. Being funded through different levels of government before, it is open to too much conflict of interest when coming into contact with agencies as Child and Family Services and the police department. It seems to me when real trouble arises, Child and Family and the police do not advocate for children.

* (1950)

Where is the Child Advocate office at this point? I guess my question is: What is this office advocate for children for and to whom? They pick and choose the cases. Aboriginal people know nothing of this office and would have nothing to do with it. Now, you know,

and the way my powwow parents—I work with 15 parents. I told them, you know, do not trust them, because it is easy to take away your children. It is easy to split families and it is a spinoff of the Child and Family Services. That is what it is. We found out it was a spinoff. Advocates should be present on the streets when kids are picked up in the youth centres, in group homes, schools, et cetera.

In conclusion, my vote is no for the Child Advocate office as it sits at present.

That is from Ron and me—Ronald Wesley and Amelia Wesley.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Wesley, for sharing your story with us and for giving us your report. Just before we proceed, I am just going to indicate to you how we will do it. There are going to be questions asked. I will identify the person asking the question, then I will identify you as giving the answer. So I just want to thank you again for sharing your story with us. Mr. Martindale, please, for the first question.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Thank you for your presentation. I am sorry that there are not any Anishinaabe people on this committee. We do have four aboriginal members in the Manitoba Legislature in my caucus, the NDP caucus, but the reason I am here is that I am the Family Services critic.

It seems to me that the alternative to having a Children's Advocate would be to have Child and Family Services investigate themselves if there was a complaint. Now, in my view, the Children's Advocate is separate and external from Child and Family Services Agencies, but I realize that may not be apparent to members of the public. Some people have suggested that in order to make the Children's Advocate office more independent that he or she report to the Legislature instead of to the Minister of Family Services. What is your view of that?

Ms. Wesley: Well, for one thing, as an Indian, a Cree Indian, I have no trust with Child and Family or the Child Advocate, because I was involved with them. They are paid big wages to take our children, take native children. There is a lot of money.

The little boy that I have right now, that we have adopted, took guardianship, his mother committed suicide because they took all her children away and she did not know her rights. They put her on the stand and they called Jennifer all kinds of names, everything down. They called her right down because I am in touch with the family at Wayway. I went to Jennifer's funeral. I am very angry. Every time I stand here and I talk about Jennifer, I am very angry that the government can do this. First of all, my husband is a boarding school victim. I lived with a man for 33 years with the pain that the government did to these people, but I believe in God, I believe in the Creator, and what is happening is going to stop. Jennifer committed suicide and she left four little children behind. Right now the little one, Clarence, I am trying to take him out into tribal. I want to raise the two little boys.

When I last saw Jennifer in a good-bye visit, I promised her that I would take her son. I am 54 years old. All my children are grown up. My baby is 28; my oldest one is 32. I have raised 18 children already, but because I promised Jennifer to raise Michael, I will do it. With the help of God, I will do it. She is dead. Michael lost a mother, and the grandmother, Gloria, she said, they put Jennifer on the stand, the Child and Family, and called her all kinds of names. They had the best lawyers and Jennifer had Legal Aid. We found that out because they offered us Legal Aid. We said, you can stick your Legal Aid. We went and got our own lawyer for \$4,000.

Today, I sit in the committee of Child and Family Services Central because I do not want to fight with them any more. I want them to know how much they hurt our people by taking away the children. There is big money, you know, when you rip up our families. There is a lot of money when you rip up our kids. A lot of money comes from the government, and all these social workers have to be paid, but that has to stop. We love our children. We want our families back.

I was very fortunate. I do not know nothing about boarding schools. I do not know nothing about foster parents, fostering. My mother raised us. I was born at home. My first language was Cree. (Cree spoken) I never talked English. I only spoke Cree till I was 10 years old, and when I went to school, that is when I found out I was different. We are spiritual people. We

love our children. Our children are sacred. That is what you have to understand. You the government, you have to understand that. We love our kids.

I have a powwow group that I feed, over 50 kids sometimes, every Wednesday at Orioles. The only person that never gives me a hard time is Dave Northcott, from Winnipeg Harvest. No, I can get no donations for my kids. I cannot. Nobody will give us any funding. I feed these kids out of my own pocket too. I started that powwow group out of my own pocket. Where is everybody? You guys always talk about poverty. Where are you? Come and see me, what I do at Orioles. I want you to come and see what I do. I want you, the NDP. I used to vote NDP, but I do not know if I will vote anymore, because now I found out that government and politics is nothing but a bunch of lies. I want to see things change.

I see Cadillacs sitting out here. Who is worth a Cadillac? Jesus Christ, the Son of God, never rode in a Cadillac, and He died for all of us. We have to remember that. We have to remember these things. I hurt a lot, but I adopted Michael. Michael is ours, and he was labelled FAS-FAE, but he is a sacred child. He is a child of God. He shows me a lot of love, that child. I am sorry to be sometimes upset, but that is my feeling. Please do not take away our children. Help us. You, when Columbus came here 600 years ago, you disrupted our way of life as Indian people, but we are going to get it back. No money will ever pay what has happened to us Indian people. (Cree spoken) But we know our Spirit, we know our Creator.

All I say is, God bless you all. I hope you know what you are doing. I hope you advocate for the children the right way. Feed the kids, look at the schools, go look at Greenway School. A lot of abuse happens to children in classrooms, verbal abuse. I volunteered there, I see it, and these teachers get paid to abuse our children verbally. That is why you have gangs. That is why you have all these kids running away. None of our kids hardly graduate. They either end up in the cemetery or they are in gangs or they are in the Youth Centre or they are in Headingley. I have seen it. I was in Headingley. I went there on a powwow. It is all our children, and people are getting paid to lock our kids up. You cannot lock up children. You have to clean

the root of the tree, you have to know what you did to the people before you can lock them up.

Things have to change, and this is why I am here tonight. I went and presented at the child welfare act last winter. I am in there too, and I am here again tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I remember meeting you at the Orioles Community Centre, because we had a public forum on poverty there.

A number of presenters to this committee, including the Children's Advocate, have recommended aboriginal staff, including people who speak First Nations languages. Do you think that the presence of aboriginal people working in the Children's Advocate office would mean that the investigations were more sensitive to your culture? Would that be an improvement if there were aboriginal staff?

Ms. Wesley: I want to tell you something. Our people are bought too. You have to know who you hire. All my work that I do with children is free, it is volunteer. I was janitor for 26 years. I do not need to get paid. Everything I do now is for God, for the Creator, because I will one day meet my Creator. I am going to meet Him, and I have to pay back. I am very lucky, like I said, I have never been in a foster home. I had my father for almost 100 years. My mother just passed away at the age of 89 last year. I had 12 brothers and sisters. I came from paradise. I grew up in paradise. My father was a fur trapper-trader. I never saw a family allowance. We had no family allowance. We had no welfare. We had no soup kitchens. We had nothing. My dad was—he hunted moose, he raised his kids.

* (2000)

I never saw what I see today. The money—like sometimes when I read these reports, the billions of dollars, money that goes in here, where does it go? Our children have no shoes, \$180 every two weeks. A single mother lives with children, four kids, five kids, you know. How can they buy milk? Then the welfare comes along and takes them away because the kid is

dirty. Give the welfare mother a proper wage to raise her children so she can raise them good so they can maybe one day sit here and wear a suit like you, so they can have an education. Then when they come and fight for their kids in court, they are told they are nothing but glue sniffers and alcoholics and drunks and no-good Indians.

I have a spiritual son here that just found his mother. After 25 years he is still very angry that he was adopted out, and he was abused in his adopted home—a white Mennonite home he was in. He sits here, our Rob. So when you are trying to think that you are taking kids from their parents, God bless the parents with that birth, that child. It is their child. You help the parent to parent the child. Do not take away the kids.

Like you ask me—beware, too, what kind of Indian you hire. You could hire a red apple and it is no good, because Wayne Govereau was one of them. He is a big fat red apple. That is all he is. He just looks Indian on the outside, but he is white inside because he likes the money you pay him. He will say anything. He will jump for you whichever way you want. But I do not. I go there and I tell him, you big fat Indian, I said, you are going to be sorry. One day you are going to meet God, you are going to find out. He cannot even look at me. He says he goes to sweats. He is a liar. He cannot even go on a sweat. I heard he ran away. So these are things you have to watch. When you hire the people, you had better make sure.

We have a Ms. Spooner at Greenway School. She is supposed to be an Indian. She did a medicine wheel and I went. She did not even know what the heck she was doing. She was trying to teach a medicine wheel, so she told Winnipeg No. 1 that she was an Indian. Anybody can say they are Indian. I have got nieces and nephews that have got blue eyes and blonde hair, and they have Indian blood. But they know nothing about Indians.

So you have to beware who you hire, you know, even the ones with the chiefs heads on. I am sorry, I have seen it. You buy them.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Unless there are any further questions, I want to thank you, Ms. Wesley, for sharing your story with us and for giving us your ideas as to the

recommendations that we are looking for regarding the Children's Advocate and, again, thank you for your presentation tonight.

Ms. Wesley: Well, thank you for having me and listening to me. Yes, I am 54 years old, and I have been trying to heal for the last 10 years, and I do not know if I will ever heal because I have seen a lot of pain and a lot of injustice.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you again, and we wish you well.

I would now like to call on our next presenter, please, Victoria Lehman. Welcome here and go ahead.

Ms. Victoria Lehman (Private Citizen): I have to compose myself. The last speaker was very powerful, and I have not experienced what she has experienced. I experienced the situation differently, but I truly believe in the depth of her feeling and of her experience, and I respect that greatly.

I myself am a lawyer, and I have had the opportunity to work within the legal system. I thought that I would come down. I have not prepared anything in advance, but I thought that I would share a few thoughts.

I understand that there is probably dissatisfaction from a number of different angles with regard, perhaps, to the function and the results of Wayne Govereau and the Child Advocate's office. However, from the perspective of a lawyer who has worked within the child welfare system, I believe that in terms of what we do have before us, it serves an extremely valuable function.

I have had the opportunity to call upon the resources of the Child Advocate's office in aid of aboriginal people who have hired me, whom I have represented, and I have found that it has been very useful, particularly because under the child welfare act, when the child welfare system is underway, the mechanism begins, there is very little public accountability for the people who are acting within that system, unlike there might be for a lawyer where, in fact, even discipline actions now can be in the public eye, the medical

profession, other professions. Even in terms of the criminal justice system, what really concerns me is that if a child might be involved in the criminal justice system, and I think it is called the fourth estate, the news media and so on, can be permitted to go in and report but to protect the identity of a child who is involved.

However, in the child welfare system, I am afraid I am left with thinking sometimes who is being protected by all the secrecy. Is it the child that is being protected, or is it the system itself or those unfortunate, often what appear to be injustices of the system? We have a difficulty in terms of the fact that many of the front-line social workers, whom I respect because they have a very difficult job, and I am talking about people from all backgrounds and all ethnic groups, but they very often are not very well trained. I think that is something that is recognized within our system that we do not always have the most experienced people on the front line.

It seems that, by having at least the Child Advocate's office there, there is some small measure of accountability. I have to admit that I was one of the people who initially applied for the job of the Child Advocate. It was publicly listed, and very often when I would be reading about something that Wayne Govereau had expressed or some situation that I found the Child Advocate's office in, I often thought to myself, although I am not a person of huge courage, but I am not that shy either—and I often thought, my goodness, better that person than me. What would I do in that situation, because these are very, very challenging situations?

One of the concerns that I have had is the fact, I believe that the Child Advocate reports to the Minister, if I am not mistaken, of—is it Health?

Mr. Chairperson: Family Services.

Ms. Lehman: Family Services, thank you. I would think that if I were in that situation functioning, that would not be the most helpful situation to be in, in terms of where I felt my accountability lay and where I should be reporting. I think that ombudsmen and child advocates and the like, generally speaking, are considered to be very independent. I cannot see,

frankly, how independent someone can be when they are reporting to a minister as opposed to the Legislature.

The other concern that I do have is that, under the Child Advocate's office, the only children who appear to be under the auspices of their mandate seem to be those children who are involved in Child and Family Services. It would seem to me that, if we are going to give every child in the province an opportunity to have the services of a Child Advocate, it is not the Child Advocate of Child and Family Services; it is supposed to be the Child Advocate. It seems to me that a Child Advocate should have a broader mandate to be able to relate to children, to help children in all walks of life.

Recently, I noticed in the newspaper there was a child whose family was involved in Munchausen syndrome, and the Child Advocate's office got involved, and I thought, I wonder how that could have been. But of course that was because I gather Child and Family Services had intervened, and then the Child Advocate's office was involved at that point. I think that is truly unfortunate. I think it should be the opportunity of every professional, not only myself, but, say, a doctor, say, somebody from the child abuse unit who would have an opportunity, not necessarily to call in Child and Family Services whose mandate is, allegedly, to keep families together, but also to have someone there for the child.

Some of these children are younger than children might be who would be represented, for instance, even by—there is an arm of Legal Aid that represents children, but it would seem to me that an independent office would be very helpful.

It is extremely difficult to accept the fact that very many, a very high proportion of children who are involved in Child and Family Services have aboriginal backgrounds, and there is a very strong historical reason for this, what would be called, I suppose in many senses, the genocide of the aboriginal culture with the residential schools, but even before that. So it is not surprising that there are very many aboriginal children who are the subject of apprehension and focus.

* (2010)

Of course, we are all thinking that it is a very positive move that more aboriginal people be involved, but, again, I have to echo our last speaker in that ethnicity itself, being aboriginal itself, is not the only qualification for a person who is concerned about a child, no matter what background. We need to have people who are child focused. The other thing that we need is enough money and financial resources to properly support an office of a Child Advocate. It seems to me that the funding does not seem to be there, and if the funding is not there, to me, that means that the will must not be there either. If we have the will, we have to have the resources. When I have contacted them, they seem to be very overworked. They seem to have very few people trying to do an enormous job.

Finally, I would like to also say that I believe that having the Office of the Child Advocate enables more forms of resources to be brought to bear for assisting children and their families. I am a great advocate of mediation; I believe that, just as Family Conciliation of the Queen's Bench does assessments and they also do the conciliation work, if there were more resources with the Child Advocate's office, perhaps they might be able to distance themselves from the power base that has been identified by the last speaker and be more independent and be able to work with children to try to use other forms, such as mediation, both in their relationships with Child and Family Services and with their families. There do not seem to be a lot of resources at the present time left after all the budget cutting and all the lack of resources, I believe, sadly to education and the like, to really have anyone here advocate on behalf of the child.

If we look at places like Ontario, where I took my legal training, they have had, for a long time, the Ombudsman, the Child Advocate's office and, in fact, for instance, every child support in past years, now that we have got, as of May 1, a change in that, but every child support amount was going through there to be seen if the child's needs were taken care of. That is a child centredness that, I am afraid, it seems that we may have lost sight of. I know that Child and Family Services is going through a revamping of their mandate, but I would hope that in the revamping of their mandate there is a still a place left for an advocate for the children per se, without being confused in terms of the family as a whole.

I feel, though, that in advocating for the child, one has to advocate for the child within their cultural and familial environment, but still from the point of view of the child. That is what I have to say today.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Lehman, for your presentation. I will open it up for questions. Mr. Martindale will be first.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Lehman, for a very good spontaneous presentation. It did not lack for not being in writing. We heard a very interesting presentation before supper tonight from a number of aboriginal Child and Family Services agencies, and their Recommendation 3 says, that the concept of a separate and parallel First Nations advocate's office be given due consideration in the process of reviewing legislative options.

Given your remarks about cultural genocide of aboriginal culture, do you think that there is a need for a First Nations advocate's office? What do you think of that concept?

Ms. Lehman: I have worked within the First Nations sphere, and I know how politicized it is. I know that people have their agendas; they have their turfs; and there is also a lot of, what was referred to by the last speaker, big money there as well. Now, my concern is that certainly the aboriginal agencies themselves could organize within their own structure, I believe, if they felt they wanted an independent aboriginal advocate.

I believe that we seem to be moving, sometimes, more in the direction of apartheid. I worry about this. Sometimes I feel that we are in Winnipeg, Alabama, and that we are moving very close to it. I recognize the need for aboriginal people to have their own self-determination and forms of self-government, but I suspect that there are as many forms of concept of self-government out there, within the aboriginal communities as well as without, as there are interpretations of almost anything else legal you could think of.

I would hope that we all will grow to respect each other so that we may have people respected for what they are, so that they do not have to have a separate entity. However, as I say, it would seem to me that

there is a great deal of federal funding coming to aboriginal people, particularly in terms of the aboriginal agencies, and I cannot see what, frankly, would preclude them from having their own child advocate; certainly, at the very least, working within the groups of their own agencies.

Of course, then there is also the sphere—and I am not an expert. I have experienced a lot of this, but I am not, in any way, an expert, nor can I speak for aboriginal people, but there is also the aspect of the movement between the urban and the rural of aboriginal people. That seems to be expressed by the fact that there is just very little economic opportunity left in the rural areas, so people are very much drawn to the urban areas.

Unlike the last speaker, whose family appears to have been able to make a dignified existence economically in terms of their own survival, I gather, outside of the cities, that option seems to be more and more cut off for aboriginal people. I understand the despair that can come from that. I come from a European background, and I know, not to rattle on too much, but if I may share this, one thing that concerns me about our community in general, of Manitoba, is that I know that people came from Europe—people come from Europe still—they may have funny-sounding names, they may have accents, but they are working very hard, because they know that they can assimilate, and their children, particularly if they Anglicize their name, because that still goes on and I know it went on for generations past, if they can assimilate and they can appear to be like the dominant culture. I can only imagine the despair of an aboriginal parent, particularly an aboriginal parent of colour, to know that their child will be discriminated against as much, if not more, than themselves.

If they do persevere through school, it is like what they used to say about women, you had to be twice as good to get half the credit that they have to show themselves to be tremendously dedicated. I say to myself, why should these kids have to put out such an effort to get just the reasonable amount of respect of everyone else?

So I think that it is not as simple as simply hiring someone to represent aboriginal people. I think that this whole area has to be given a lot of consideration. Think about who the stakeholders are, who is going to

benefit from this? I am just hoping that whoever we have as a Child Advocate can be child-centred and can advocate on behalf of a child no matter where they are. I would be happy with that start.

I would be very concerned about dynasty building when people are, you know, trying to have something that is separated from something else, but then again, there may be some extremely good reasons for doing that. I think that it would seem to me that it could almost exist now, particularly within the aboriginal agencies. I think there are five or seven, if I am not mistaken, who are independent.

So I hope that is responsive to your question.

* (2020)

Mr. Martindale: You correctly pointed out that the Children's Advocate section of The Child and Family Services Act limits the authority of the Advocate to investigate only complaints from children involving Child and Family Service agencies. Do you think that the mandate should be broadened so that the Advocate could investigate complaints from children regarding any or every government department?

Ms. Lehman: I would say, yes, because if we are truly having a Child Advocate and if people are looking to it as a Child Advocate, it is unfortunate that a child or someone on behalf of a child who might be able to bring that child's interests forward to the Child's Advocate's office has to be turned away. Where can that child go? It is very difficult I think that some children are excluded simply because they are not in such allegedly desperate need as to have to be apprehended or under the care of an agency. Just because someone is within a family, even if that family has been blessed with a child, sadly that family, no matter what their background is, may not have the resources to be able to meet the needs of that particular child.

I was just speaking to someone today who works at MATC, Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre. I think of all those children, and I think that there are some of them whom I represented in Youth Court, because they have been—well, I have had the charges thrown out. I mean, when a child is confined in a

facility because of psychiatric problems, if they do something in that facility like break something, it seems kind of ridiculous that they are going to be punished for it. It seems to me a problem of supervision. Thankfully, the Crown attorney also agrees with me; it does not go any farther.

To give a child like that a record seems just very objectionable, but the point that I am making is many of those children are not under the care of an agency. Many of those children need a voice, and where are they going to get that voice?

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I enjoyed your presentation very much, and I enjoyed the candour of your comments. It is refreshing.

I am a firm believer in research-based decision making, and one of the responsibilities of the Child's Advocate is to advise the minister on matters relating to the welfare and interests of children who receive, or may be entitled to receive, services under the act, or relate to service providers available to children under this act.

In order to provide the minister with advice, other than if it is just going to be purely subjective, the Child Advocate requires good research. Now, knowing that you applied for the job, I imagine you probably researched the legislation on what was possible. Do you feel that the Child Advocate's office—is there something we could do in the Legislature that would mandate the Child Advocate to do more research so that the information the Child Advocate gives to the minister will carry more credibility, or will we be duplicating research that is already out there?

Ms. Lehman: I go back to my earlier comment in that when I was in a position to call upon the Child Advocate's office, it seemed that they had an overwhelming task for what they had to do already. It would seem to me that they did not really have the resources because, after all, research requires researchers and researchers are expensive.

So it would seem to me that obviously empirical research—I wonder if even in terms of whether they are able to keep track of many of their own statistics. I am sure they do in terms of some respects, but in terms of

the sense of progressive research, you know, in terms of making progressive change, it would seem to me that they would require many more resources than they already have. It would, I would think, be a radically different type of an office.

For me, the first part of the mandate of the Child Advocate is to attend to the needs of the children that come to them, you know, to him in this case, if we are referring to Mr. Govereau, and it would seem that the legislation envisaged a much more ambitious amount of resources and series of tasks, that it seems to me that they are barely able to manage with on the resources that they do have.

Mr. Kowalski: Looking at the duties of the Child's Advocate—this is in Section 8.2 of the act—it seems that one of the criticisms or critiques we have heard about the Advocate's office is that it is only doing the one role, review and investigate complaints that he or she receives. We have heard from a number of child care agencies of the lack of proactive work done, looking at systemic improvements that could be done into the system. Would you say that is again a lack of resources, and is there any way of mandating that in the legislation that you could see?

Ms. Lehman: I suspect that this has a lot to do with the fact that the Child Advocate is hampered by the constraints of the legislation in terms of who the Child Advocate reports to and what is done with the reports. At least in what I have seen in the newspapers, I have detected a strong sense of frustration in many of Mr. Govereau's statements. It appears that he has at various times made certain recommendations but does not seem to be confident that they are being constructively dealt with. In fact, he may have a mandate to advise but, as I described to another nonprofit organization I was with recently which I will not name, and you will see why, is that advising is a wonderful definition of a powerless office or organization. Advising is a powerless thing. I realize that knowledge is power, and just bringing things to the public's attention, you know, certainly is helpful, especially if one has a fourth estate, the media that might listen and might pick up and do its own investigation. But truly to advise is really just quite a powerless function.

Mr. Kowalski: Having reviewed the annual reports for the Child's Advocate, I failed to detect any reluctance

by the Child Advocate to say anything in the annual reports even though he is reporting to the minister. Do you think those reports should be any different if he was reporting to the Legislative Assembly?

Ms. Lehman: I do not believe that the—and to that degree it appears that he shows courage. But what I was referring to was not the frustration that is expressed in what he sees, but in the sense of powerlessness to do anything about it. That is what I am detecting, the fact that it is in some ways similar to the previous speaker in that one is looking at total devastation. One is looking at children whose eyes hold no hope, and one is seeing this day after day, and knowing, as I described, that their parents even cannot hold out hope for their children.

One can analyze this; one can lay it on paper; one can show how it might be changed, but I believe that the frustration is that there does not seem to be either the resources or the will, probably both, to actually do something about it.

On the other hand, perhaps this serves a purpose, because there are people like the previous speaker that, because of what they perceive as the stonewalling, people sometimes have to take things into their own hands. That also gives me very great concern, because I also know that the high proportion, for instance, of aboriginal people in the prison system and so on who not only have no hope, but they are starting their own economy, they have their own parallel existence. This parallel existence, particularly in a time of no opportunities for other forms of employment, is impacting on us and I believe will continue to impact upon us individually more and more in the coming years. I hope that is responsive to your question.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, I want to thank you, Ms. Lehman, on behalf of the subcommittee for giving us your presentation, and wish you well. Thank you very much.

Ms. Lehman: Thank you. I am grateful to be here, and thank you so much for listening.

Mr. Chairperson: I will call on our next presenter, Darren Berg, please. Do you have extra copies for us?

No, you do not. Okay, in that case, I would like you to proceed and give us your presentation.

Mr. Darren Berg (Private Citizen): Good evening.

Parental Alienation: Parental alienation results from the attempt by one parent, the custodial parent, to behave in such a way as to alienate the child from the other parent. Parental alienation is abuse. Parental alienation is supported by the following groups in Winnipeg: the children's advocacy, Child and Family Services, the family courts, divorce lawyers, the Winnipeg police department, Women's Health Clinic, Women's Healing for Change Inc., women to women counsellors, women's safe housing, EVOLVE, Manitoba Women's Advisory Council, Manitoba Women's Institute.

I personally contacted each of these groups to report that my daughter is being abused while in the custody of her mother. Most of these groups do not even listen to you if you are a man; the others laugh. Parental alienation is abuse. These groups and yourselves are aware of this abuse but do nothing. These groups along with the courts use the father's love for his children to destroy the relationship with his children, also to destroy him emotionally, mentally and financially. Parental alienation is abuse. I compare these groups with any racist groups such as the KKK or Nazis. You are and know you are discriminating against fathers, creating a fatherless society. You as a group have had a hand in creating an industry built on the backs of our children. You use our children to create your own job security. You all claim that they are the priority of the children. This is a lie. The children are simply your meal tickets. You all allow children to go into women's shelters that are nothing more than a concentration camp. Children enter these shelters under the pretence of safety. They are then segregated from their mothers for programming and then the support workers go to work on the children. Like the gas chambers in Germany, this is the death sentence for a child-and-father relationship.

* (2030)

How many counsellors, support workers, therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists does a child have to see,

and for how long? You do not know. You do not even have an inkling where to draw the line. This is abuse. Out of the shelters come the well-supported false allegations, the zero-tolerance laws and the parental alienation syndrome. Everything designed to destroy and control the relationship with his children. Up until the point of entry into these shelters, children love their fathers. What happens after they enter? No one knows. These shelters go unchecked. They are unpoliced. This is unacceptable. Restaurants and meat packing plants are inspected. Why not women's shelters? Women's shelters inspected by an unbiased party, heaven forbid. Right now as I speak, children are being tortured in these facilities right here in Winnipeg. You sit there in your very secure position, while children cry out for the love of their fathers.

Just who is monitoring these shelters? Support workers, counsellors, social workers, feminists, bigots—all these people with backgrounds in abuse, their own personal, horrid little stories, walking around with the power to destroy families, using children to accomplish their own private agendas.

The courts are no better than anybody else. They, too, are corrupt, and if not corrupt, certainly ignorant. If the child's true interests were at stake, they would put a stop to parental alienation, false allegations. Parental alienation is abuse. Our legal system has gone astray, led by the almighty feminist movement. Our judges are puppets to their every whim. They hand out restraining orders and nonmolestation orders like it was candy. Why? Because it is easy and it covers their own ass. The cop-out quote for all judges is we have to be cautious on behalf of the child. The setup for parental alienation. Parental alienation is abuse.

A child is not born with hatred genes for his father. The hatred is placed there by his or her mother with the full support of you and your groups. Fathers and all men would like an equal system, but in the environment there is not a light at the end of the tunnel. More and more groups are created on the backs of children and the taxpayer. Children's rights are being taken away from them, a system you have created. It is a black future for all of us when we allow the legal abuse of our children. There is no one here that is stupid. This system has been created deliberately, and I love my daughter. That is it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Berg, for giving us your presentation. There will be a few questions for you, if you would just remain at the podium, please. I will, first of all, call on Mr. Martindale, please.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Berg, for your presentation. I detect a lot of anger in your voice, I presume, as a result of your personal experience. A lot of what you said, I do not agree with, although I think I understand where you are coming from, but I do not want to take time to rebut all of the things that you said.

Some of us are trying to advance children's rights, and I think not only me, as the NDP official opposition critic for Family Services, but also the government of Manitoba, since this province endorsed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. I have had some experience dealing with parents who have been alienated from their children, namely by negotiating access, court-ordered access to children. I was dealing with fathers, for example, who were being denied their legal right to visit their children, and through using volunteers and mediation, we were able to arrange visiting rights.

I believe that the Children's Advocate is not part of the Child and Family Services and court system, so maybe I disagree with you on that. Right now the Advocate can only investigate and make recommendations. A number of people have suggested to us that there is legitimate role for the Advocate to play in terms of mediation, conciliation, healing circles, et cetera. I am wondering if you think that those are appropriate roles for the Children's Advocate. Would you find it helpful for a child phoning the Children's Advocate office for help if the Advocate had the authority to arrange for mediation amongst all the estranged parties to help that child? If so, do you think we should write it into the legislation?

Mr. Berg: I think that there too many fingers in the pie, so to speak, and I think that everything takes too long, and in a child's life it is too long. I mean, as soon as the woman leaves the home, or the man leaves the home, then somebody should step in. That is the bottom line. The child is too young to be phoning up the child advocacy group or anybody. Who helps the man out there? Nobody. It is totally lost, and I am not speaking just for myself. I knew the epidemic long before it came into my own backyard. I have friends

that their little boys come at three years old and start calling them "shithead." Who teaches them that? Everybody is told to go to this program that they are having at the Child and Family Services for the sake of the children, and the women just use it as tools against their ex-husbands or ex-boyfriends. When does it stop?

Mr. Martindale: My understanding of the way it works now for a lot of people is that each side gets a lawyer and it drags on, and sometimes it can take years. Would you be in favour of a system if it was speedy? If, for example, people could go into mediation immediately so that you could get either custody or the visiting rights that you feel you are entitled to, if it was a speedy process of mediation, conciliation, would you be in favour of that?

Mr. Berg: Yes, I would be in favour, but I feel that even in the courts in the systems that I have been running into, they do not care what I have to say. It is the mother that has the total rights, and we are all looking at the children. It is the children that we are worried about, and I am saying, well, let us look at both sides, but who are you going to get? You are going to have a panel of women deciding the decision.

I just do not see it. I do not see how a system can change. I was following Bill C-41 and it just died out there. I might be ignorant, but it got all watered down. Sure, there are pros and cons to every bill, but where am I? I am still stuck.

Mr. Chairperson: Unless there are any further questions, Mr. Berg, I want to thank you for sharing your story for us. Thank you very much.

I will call in our next presenter, please. Alice Wright, please. If you could just wait for a moment until we have our copies, and then I will ask you to address the committee, please.

Okay, Ms. Wright, on behalf of the subcommittee, welcome here, and we look forward to your presentation. Please, proceed.

* (2040)

Ms. Alice Wright (Private Citizen): Would you please turn to page 3. This is the beginning of my problem.

Now, you will see, this is my granddaughter's birth certificate. She is five months old, and my husband and I have not seen her. You know how angry I am? My son was denied access too. He finally got visitation rights April 27 because she put "NOT STATED," and do you know who advised this mother? Every social worker in the maternity ward of this hospital. The social workers in the maternity wards advise single mothers who come in without the father to put that "NOT STATED," and it destroys a family.

Now, I do not have any rights, but this mother, her whole family has seen this child, great-grandmother, grandmother, aunts, uncles, her boss, her girlfriends. Do you know what my husband and I got the day we found out? She was born December 12; we found out December 31. She had no intentions of letting my husband and I know. I found out from a girlfriend, and then when I contacted her to see my granddaughter, my husband and I, you know what she threatened me with? A goddamn-sorry-peace bond which she got earlier in November on my son when she was seven months pregnant so he would not be present at her birth.

I went to the Justice minister to say, what do they do, hand out these stupid peace bonds like they were greeting cards, without victim's proof or a doctor's proof that you need one? As of two weeks ago, you know it was Mother's Day, do you know it killed me? My first grandchild, this is the most cruel child abuse I have ever seen. I do not even know what she looks like.

Are any of you here grandparents? Do you know what your grandchild looks like? I do not. I have not hugged her, kissed her, cried or nothing. I do not even have a baby picture of her. Nothing.

Father's Day is coming. There is my husband there. You know what he is going to get? Zilch. He does not even know what she looks like. I want grandparents recognized in the laws, family law, justice laws, so I do not have to divorce my husband, go on welfare, and fight for visitation rights, because I do not have \$1,500. That is what it is costing my son right now, and you know what? This darn court case started in January. He is finally seeing the courts tomorrow. Five months away. This has cost me my health. I am on medication so that I will not have a heart attack. I am so angry, and

I am not the only one. There are thousands of grandmothers across. Do you know why they do this? So they can go on welfare and get cash value. If they claim the father and go on welfare, their support payments are taken off.

I know a girl right now, she has tried, she cannot get a job. She is trying to get pregnant because all her friends are on social assistance, living in low rental, and they put that, not stated, or in street terms, what every single mothers knows and women, is father unknown. I cannot even protect her.

I went to Children's Aid during the very beginning of the mother's pregnancy because the father is an alcoholic and threw dishes at her while he was angry. I tried to hopefully prevent this child from being born deformed, and also I have chronic glaucoma and it can be passed on to the baby. Do you know what I got from her obstetrician? I am sorry, Ms. Wright, it is patient confidentiality. He would not even tell the obstetrician, the nurse would not tell the obstetrician that I have chronic glaucoma and when the baby is born to have it examined, because of patient confidentiality, and I do not know till this day if she has got glaucoma or not. She is five months old. I do not know if she was tested or whatever. Until my son goes through, like this fellow said here, delays and delays and delays, because Family Court is all screwed up with Youth Court.

What is it going to take? A year or two before I see my granddaughter. I am sorry to be so angry. There is a member's bill being presented in the Legislature to recognize grandparents. We have to have a leg to stand on from the time that child is conceived and when it is born and after it is born. You know, common-law couples, the grandparents of these children are not denied access. Married couples' parents are not denied access, but single, unwed, unmarried parents are, especially when the mother, at birth, has custodial rights.

Now, to prevent that, I, like with this other fellow here that was there, have a solution. Make both parents have custodial rights, right there, whether they split up or whatever. This saves half the battle, half the legal fees, and all you go to court for is child support.

As I told you there, my granddaughter is used like rent-to-own bloody furniture. The mother wanted \$275. My son said no, because he has not seen her since she was born. The mother is living at home. Her father is an electrician who makes \$25 an hour. Her mother is a Transcona school bus driver who makes \$15 an hour. So they haggle down to \$150, down to \$130, like she is some kind of auction. Then, because he has never seen her, it is called these stupid bonding visits. I am not allowed. The mother decides where the places are.

One visit is Wednesday at her grandmother's. The other one is at her sister's apartment. I asked, can I be there, because the mother's mother is there as a drop-off person. She picks the baby up at 10 o'clock and drops it off at 11, and she stays. Now, this mother's mother, because she has got custodial rights, is she better than I am? If I am denied access to my granddaughter at birth, then the mother's side of the family should be denied access as well; only the mother, and see what they go through. You will have a bloody war at the Legislature if you did that and you would have the women's rights screaming at you.

And do you know why he only got an hour? Because she told the court she is breast-feeding. But, in the meantime, she does not think of the baby about breast-feeding when she sits in Robin's for two and a half hours without the baby. She told the court she could not leave the baby, so they granted my son an hour, but it is okay for her to sit in Robin's or go shopping for two and a half hours. This is what I mean when women manipulate the courts, and since my son is male, his lawyer is male, and 10 to one the judge is male. And this is continuing, this has been going on for years, and I will tell you, it even starts in senior high when you have pregnant teenagers going to school and having daycare right in there. They know this. They date guys. They know, if the guy says to heck with you, fine, put "NOT STATED." Then they will go on welfare, and they get their first welfare cheque and they are dating behind your back and every taxpayer is paying for it; except it hurts, it goes beyond that, the extended family have no access. When we find out, we are threatened with a peace bond, harassment.

You see the letters I wrote there? Have you read them, especially August 15? She is charging me with

harassment for that letter that I sent to her at Robin's, because I wanted to go to Child and Family Services in June to hear what her plans were, because her family would not let me talk to her. Also, she was moving and she was three months pregnant. I wanted to find out: If you were moving and you have a miscarriage, I want to be notified. I know one friend who told the father and his family that she miscarried. They broke up, she lied, the baby was born. She needed money after a year, comes knocking on the door and says, hi, guess what, you are grandparents, cough up the money. All because of this "NOT STATED" unknown.

I want it banned because it is the cruelest form of abuse to a child, especially at birth. The father has no rights. His side of the family have no rights; only the mother, and it is just pure greed. I asked her, like I said, Mother's Day, what is an hour, half an hour? She says, no, wait until after the court sits.

Another thing, the hospital social workers. You know what else they are told? To adopt the baby. Put it up for adoption. Do you know she had 19 days from December 12 to December 30 to put that baby up for adoption and put everything to Value Village? Do you know, if she did that, what I would have done? To my own flesh and blood, because the stupid law and the social workers and the lawyers tell a single, unwed mother to do this.

* (2050)

I want it changed. I want grandparents stated on the law, so I do not have to be threatened with a peace bond order or harassment order or a stalking order. And you want to know why about the stalking order or harassment order? Last Wednesday was my son's visitation. She put a peace bond on him. She is supposed to stay 100 feet away from him and vice versa. Now, the Wednesday visits are at her grandmother's. She picks up the grandmother so they can use their apartment. She comes purposely at five to 10 when my son pulls up. When I heard this, I phoned my son's lawyer and I said she can call the cops and say instantly he has broken the peace bond, end up in jail and pay \$1,000 fine.

I said, why can she not come five after 10 to pick up Granny? Granny can go down in the parking lot, and

she has done this twice. So his lawyer is going to put a clause in. We all live in Transcona, we all shop at Safeway, Wal-Mart, we all pay our bills at KP phone centre, and there are lots of grandmothers like me, but they do not have the money, they do not have \$2,000. Like I said, the week before Mother's Day, I was going to divorce my husband, force him to sell my home, and pay close to \$2,000, maybe \$3,000, to see my granddaughter. It might take another four, five months, and then after I have paid off my bills, the loan that we have and the lawyer's fee, you guys would be supporting me on welfare on top of my pension.

These mothers get away with murder. It even also stops any investigation from Child and Family Services because then it automatically goes. If I wanted to continue as a concerned citizen, and I would not even know what the heck is going on in that family—any of you grandparents, how would you like that the government and a social worker say, you cannot see your grandchild? I do not know what she looks like. I do not know whether she is fat, skinny, blonde or blue-eyed, what.

I want this, if you can, any of you MLAs or whatever, this "NOT STATED" banned. You know what it is for? This is part of The Vital Statistics Act. It gives the mother an option of not using the father's name, but they go one step further. Instead of putting like she did here, where it says the child's name, well, it should have been Wright there. It should have been Ashley Payton Horzempa Wright. Well, she dropped Wright and she went further than what the law states. In this unwritten loophole, she put "NOT STATED" on the father.

Now, you go into The Maintenance Act, it says you need a DNA testing to prove parentship. Well, obviously, whoever made these laws must have been male, because when you are pregnant, you have done a series of blood tests, and one of these is an Rh factor. Women who are Rh negative, the physicians ask that the father get a blood test done to prove whether they are Rh negative or Rh positive. If they are Rh positive, then the mother gets an injection from the time she is three months until birth, so that the baby will not die of her blood and she will not die of blood infection, because the mother's and the baby's bloods are different. This is why my son did not have to pay \$900

for a DNA testing, because he went to her doctor when she was three months pregnant to do the Rh testing.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Wright, for your presentation. Are there any questions from any?

Mr. Kowalski: Yes, Ms. Wright, your son and this Joanne—

Ms. Wright: They were engaged.

Mr. Kowalski: —how long did they have a relationship before having—

Ms. Wright: A year. Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: I am sorry. I will just identify you just for our presentation. So, Ms. Wright, you could now answer the question.

Ms. Wright: A year, a little over a year. They became engaged December 14, and the reason why they broke up is that when—in June she was living in an apartment with her sister. Her sister found a cheaper apartment closer to work. We all assumed that they were engaged, that she would be moving into my son's apartment when he moved into his apartment July 1, because he was living at home.

Well, she did not want to move into his apartment; she was going to go home. My son said, no, I do not want my child raised with an alcoholic, so that is when the trouble started. Her parents put a ban so that my son could not go over there and date. She was 21 years old at that time, and my son was 27. That is why he got this peace bond, because, you see, on my advice as father rights, I said, you should go over there and see what the baby needs; maybe what they have not bought, you buy.

That is what he did. Her mother called the cops. The cops came and they said, well, there is such a thing as a peace bond if you do not want him bothering you. That was November 7. My son was so upset because the peace bond hearing was November 7; the actual court date was March. His baby was due December 19. He was so upset that he could not be there to see his daughter born. I said, yes, have to go through Child and Family Services.

Services was being investigated by Bonnie Mitchelson because of all the six dead children—the last one was Baby Sophia—and all the social workers.

So I phoned Bonnie Mitchelson's office to find out whether Transcona social workers were okay, and Pat Alphonso Cox phoned me, and Bruce Unfried, and they said, yes, Transcona social workers are all right. So we went after the court case, Harley and I, to make arrangement that a social worker from Transcona and a social worker from the hospital would, once the mother let us know that she was going into delivery, make arrangements for my son to see the baby being born and to fill out these joint forms that the baby's name would be named after the father.

Well, the mother never called, and she knew about these joint forms; and, in order for Child and Family Services to help me, they had to be told first when the baby was born. Well, if the mother is not going to phone you, so that just drops everything.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Wright, for your presentation. I take it that one of your main concerns is that you would like visiting rights as a grandparent, is that correct?

Ms. Wright: Right at birth. Equal right at birth, and I want grandparents recognized in the Manitoba Legislature, the word “grandparents.” Do not stick us underneath “extended families” or “others.”

Mr. Martindale: That concern is a legitimate one that a lot of people share with you out in the wider community, but it is not strictly relevant to a review of the Children's Advocate legislation. However, it is relevant to the review of The Child and Family Services Act, and we are expecting the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to bring amendments in within a matter of weeks. One of the issues that the review committee on the act heard presentations about and that the minister and opposition critics have been lobbied on is amending the act to allow a grandparent to go to court and get access to a grandchild. So in a few weeks we will know if the Minister of Family Services is going to amend the act to accommodate people like you.

* (2100)

Ms. Wright: But that means I would have to go to court, would I not, spend \$3,000 to get access?

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am not the Minister of Family Services—

Ms. Wright: Well, that is how it comes across. I mean, I have no rights, but—

Mr. Chairperson: Mrs. Wright, would you please wait for Mr. Martindale to make comment, and then I will turn it over to you.

Ms. Wright: I am sorry.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am not the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), and we will not see the bill until it is put on our desk in the Legislature. So I do not know what the minister is going to do, but one of the options would be to allow people like you to go to court. As for defending the policy, I will let Mrs. Mitchelson, the Minister of Family Services, defend the policy. If you have any concerns about the amendment you can come before the legislative committee that reviews the bill, you can make a presentation like you did tonight, and you can ask all the questions you want.

Ms. Wright: Is this before this bill is passed?

Mr. Martindale: Yes, it would be after second reading and before third reading. All bills have to go to committee, and you can register and make a presentation at that time.

Ms. Wright: So how will I be notified?

Mr. Chairperson: The question is, how would you be notified? I am going to try and answer that question, but, certainly, at that point in time, when the bills are going to be out, there is going to be opportunity, and it will be publicized for you to come and make presentation. So that will be out.

Mr. Kowalski had a question.

Mr. Kowalski: Just a quick comment. There is a private member's bill introduced by Neil Gaudry, my Liberal colleague in the Legislature, introducing grandparents' rights before the Manitoba Legislature

right now. The government has adjourned debate on that bill, but, if it passes, it would accomplish many of the things that you are looking for.

Ms. Wright: But I would like to see equal rights. I would like to see grandparents' rights without going through the court systems, because a lot of us, like myself, I do not have \$3,000.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, and presentations will be made on that. Any further questions? If not, I want to thank you, Mrs. Wright, for giving us your presentation. Thank you very much.

Ms. Wright: Okay. All right.

Mr. Chairperson: With the will of the committee, I would suggest that we take a short recess. Our next presenters are not here as of yet, so I would suggest that we come back here at a quarter past nine. Well, they are scheduled to be presenting at 9:30, so at 9:15, okay, let us return.

Thank you, brief recess.

The subcommittee recessed at 9:03 p.m.

After Recess

The subcommittee resumed at 9:19 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would like next to call in our presenters, Irma MacKay and Leslie Galloway, please. If you would come up to the podium, and I think you do have copies for us. I will ask our clerk to hand them out please.

The process we will use here—first of all, welcome, it is great to see you here—is that I will be asking you to give your presentation for about 20 minutes, which is what we have allotted. After that, I will open it up to questions from the committee, and what I will do then is, I will be addressing and giving the name of the person asking the question, then I would respond back to you for the answer. So just sort of to give you—it is a formality that we need for Hansard here. On the other hand, we want you to feel very relaxed.

Welcome here, and I will ask you to start your presentation please.

* (2120)

Ms. Irma MacKay (Department of Social Work, Health Sciences Centre): I will start. As you can see from the number of people who pulled us together, we represent nursing and social work at the Health Sciences Centre, and I am pleased that Leslie Galloway, who is a manager at Children's Hospital, is presenting this together with myself as the director of social work.

The Health Sciences Centre is a tertiary trauma centre for the province of Manitoba which provides services to children who face complex health issues which have an enduring impact on their families and their living situations. At times these children require supports to enable them to live with their families or return to their home communities. In other instances, this is not possible and alternative care is required.

Because of the very unique needs of medically fragile children, they pose a challenge to the existing Child and Family Services system, and often we and other health care providers advocate on behalf of these children to facilitate the best possible care in an expedient manner.

We have involved the Children's Advocate in assisting us to access the necessary resources to help these children and their families. While we appreciate the efforts of the Children's Advocate staff, we often felt that their impact has been limited. It is for this reason that we welcome the opportunity to present this to you today.

Our plan is to discuss the value of the Office of the Children's Advocate and express concerns in the areas of the reporting structure, the scope of authority and accessing legal counsel, and the need for an independent review process. We will highlight these issues through the presentation of case examples, and then we will give some recommendations which we believe will provide a better advocacy service for the children of Manitoba.

Ms. Leslie Galloway (Department of Social Work, Health Sciences Centre): Recommendation 1 is

retention of the Children's Advocate legislation. In the past 10 to 15 years, research, increased medical knowledge and advances in medical technology have resulted in many children surviving prematurity, chronic and acute illnesses and accidents. As a result, we have seen an increasing number of children who are viewed as medically fragile or technology dependent, a new morbidity.

Children's Special Services has been particularly successful in developing services for children with multiple medical needs and their families when they live within the boundaries of Winnipeg or in rural areas. However, children with multiple medical needs who live in aboriginal communities or who are in the care of Child and Family Services do not have access to the same services. Often the children need to remain in an urban centre due to their medical needs, and their families are not able or do not choose to relocate to care for them. As the family situations are often very complex, careful planning is essential.

The Office of the Children's Advocate has been extremely helpful to us in facilitating the coming together of systems to develop a plan.

The following two situations will demonstrate the complexity of these issues and resultant different outcomes.

A child who is now 32 months old was admitted to hospital with a severe respiratory infection. At the age of four months, a tracheostomy was required. At the time of the admission to hospital, this child was in the care of Child and Family Services as a result of concerns about neglect and alcohol abuse by the parents.

The Child and Family Services agency ultimately agreed to a foster home placement in Winnipeg. The Office of the Children's Advocate participated in planning on behalf of this child. Their role has facilitated this child remaining in one stable home with continued involvement by extended family members. The agency has frequently questioned the rationale for involvement of the Office of the Children's Advocate, but we have remained adamant in our need for their involvement to ensure increased understanding of and accountability for planning on behalf of this child.

The outcome at this time is positive. The child is living in a loving home. She has an attachment to her foster family, contact with the extended family, and her speech and language skills are age appropriate.

The second situation involves a child who is now 33 months of age. This child was initially admitted to hospital at age three weeks due to a congenital heart defect and remained in hospital for the first 14 months of her life. The family agreed to and acknowledged the need for a medical foster home in order to safely transition their child home.

For two months, efforts were made to facilitate the coming together of systems in terms of funding and locating an appropriate home. Her needs were viewed as solely medical by the involved child caring agency. Ultimately, the child returned home with extensive support by the nursing station. The family declined other community supports due to their concerns about confidentiality.

The child required frequent medical intervention, and was, 10 months later, finally readmitted to hospital diagnosed with a severe respiratory infection and nonorganic failure to thrive. Once again the family was in agreement with the placement in a foster home in Winnipeg, but it took six weeks of negotiation in arranging a plan for placement. During this time period, the family was advised by the local Child and Family Services supervisor to come to Winnipeg to pick up their child as this child belonged in the community, not in Winnipeg. No consideration was given to this child's needs or to the needs of the family.

At this time, the Office of the Children's Advocate was requested to be involved and once again facilitated the development of a plan. The agency was not happy about their involvement.

What has been the outcome? The child is now in a second successful placement, and extensive supports are in place, including day care, speech and language services, occupational and physiotherapy and child development services. All of these supports are now required to remediate the effects of a system that failed to recognize the needs of this child.

The long-term costs to the system and to society as a whole are significant. Fortunately, the Office of the

Children's Advocate was able to assist us in case planning and in our advocacy efforts. For this we are grateful.

The recommendation is that the position of the Children's Advocate be retained in legislation.

Ms. MacKay: Recommendation 2 focuses on a report to the Legislative Assembly. In reviewing the annual reports that were prepared by the Children's Advocate, we know that many of the recommendations have not been addressed or adopted. In addition, some of the recommendations extend beyond the responsibility of the Minister of Family Services. Examples of this are aboriginal program directorate, education for youth, Continuing Education at the University of Manitoba, curriculum changes at the Faculty of Social Work.

In addition, there is no clear agreement about who takes responsibility for aboriginal children who cannot return home due to high medical needs. Child and Family Services is reluctant to become involved as are the departments of Indian Affairs and the Medical Services Branch. Children's Special Services is not mandated to provide services to aboriginal communities.

One of the main issues is who will pay. Child and Family Services view these situations as medical, not as children in need of protection. Children often remain in hospital for months past their discharge date when no agency can be identified to assume responsibility. Once discharged, these children can remain in multiple caregiver institutional settings while government bureaucracies try to determine who is financially responsible. If the Children's Advocate were reporting to a committee of the Legislature, a broader review would occur of these situations.

Furthermore, a critic from within a department can also create mixed agenda in which other considerations can influence the action which results. The plight of a child can become a political issue, particularly when a child in care or under supervision is hurt or dies or is caught in the jurisdictional disputes as occurs with some of the aboriginal children.

For children of the Child and Family Services system to receive the optimum representation, political

interference must be removed. We believe that this will more likely occur if the Children's Advocate reports to a committee of the Legislature rather than to any one minister.

* (2130)

The following two situations are illustrations of these points. Children often become caught between two jurisdictional systems, neither system seeming able to meet the children's needs. For example, five children came into the care of a Child and Family Service agency in '91 after four of the five children had been physically abused by their mother. Prior to that, the six-year-old had disclosed several incidents of sexual abuse by a babysitter. These incidents had occurred when she was five years of age. Since 1991, the children have remained in care and numerous efforts have been made to work with the mother. The children have experienced multiple, that is, eight to 10, foster home moves and physical abuse in several of the homes.

The Office of the Child Advocate has been involved. There was a recommendation that the care of the children be transferred to the jurisdiction where the children's mother was living and that specialized resources be developed for the children. This recommendation was made in 1993. Since that time, only one child has been moved to a new jurisdiction. He has been in five foster homes since that move. He has encopresis and is extremely anxious. Four of his siblings are now living with an aunt. The aunt has not been aware that the 11-year-old had asthma until she was told by the child. The five-year-old was described in April '96 as depressed, withdrawn and significantly regressed in her behaviour. The long-term planning for these children remains under discussion by both agencies.

In another situation, two children have been involved with a Child and Family Services agency since their birth due to a history of their mother's substance abuse, concerns involving physical abuse, spousal violence, neglect, and frequent moves by the family. In 1989, one of the children experienced a serious burn as a result of being left in a tub. The children have been in care on a continuous basis since 1991 with several placements in the city. The most recent placement

occurred in '93. There were allegations of abuse in the previous foster home. Both children are delayed in their development, especially the oldest child who is 19 years of age and has fetal alcohol effect.

Many multidisciplinary meetings have been held. The multidisciplinary group has recommended that there was a need for the agency to proceed to permanency planning. The agency has indicated, consistently, an unwillingness to do this. Both children have special educational needs. This spring, the local child care committee recommended that the children be returned home to the care of their grandmother. Both children have expressed a reluctance to return to their home community. The youngest child, age 8, has stated, I will go home when I am older.

The Office of the Children's Advocate has been involved despite the needs and requests of the children and the professionals who were involved with them, the children have been returned to their home community.

It is evident in these examples that the involvement of health, family service and educational sectors are required to meet the multiple needs of these children. Therefore, we recommend that the Child Advocate shall report to a committee of the Legislative Assembly, and that the said committee take responsibility for evaluating former recommendations and implementing them as they see appropriate.

Ms. Galloway: Recommendation 3 is that the Children's Advocate can access legal representation for children.

Children in the care of a Child and Family Services agency do not always have their needs for a permanent home or a safe environment met. This is particularly concerning when it occurs over a long period of time, and the Child and Family Services legislation does not work for the welfare of the child. Legal counsel for the child may be an additional protection.

In The Child and Family Services Act relating to the powers of the Office of the Children's Advocate, there could be an additional clause granting the office the ability/responsibility to recommend appointment of legal representation for children under Section 34(2) of The Child and Family Services Act.

As *amicus curiae*, friend of the court, legal counsel could represent the children's issues to the court, and there could be determination as to their best interests. At present, Section 34(2) is silent as to who from outside the court system can make an application to the court for legal counsel. Therefore, an amendment under this section would be required to grant the Office of the Children's Advocate this status. The judges of the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench, family court, have a list of legal counsel from whom a suitable appointment could be made.

If the Office of the Children's Advocate could make application for legal representation for children, it could not necessarily direct or give instructions to counsel. There would be an expectation that the appointed counsel for the children would work within the parameters of the children's best interests. The process of legal counsel for the children might provide a better level of reassurance that their needs would be addressed and would hopefully ensure a greater level of accountability than has been practised thus far.

The following examples demonstrate the need for a strong voice for children. In 1991, five children, then aged one month to six years, were apprehended from their family as a result of allegations of physical abuse by their mother. Prior to the apprehension, the family had been involved with Child and Family Services as a result of concerns regarding parental alcohol abuse, family violence and sexual abuse of the oldest daughter.

Since the children were apprehended in 1991, they have remained in the care of Child and Family Services and have become permanent wards. However, no permanent home has been located for these children who have been separated and placed in multiple foster homes. Several of the children have been neglected and abused both physically and sexually while in foster placement. Concern regarding attachment issues and indiscriminate behaviour has been discussed with the guardian agency on multiple occasions.

In 1993, the Office of the Children's Advocate was contacted as a result of concerns resulting from the lack of case planning and the children being in an emotional, psychological state of limbo. A case plan was developed with the involved agencies and the Child and Family Support Branch. This plan was never fully

implemented but was instead altered by the agency. The Office of the Children's Advocate was again involved, and the placement agency decided that an extended family member would care for four of the five children.

This placement has lasted approximately one year, with the children being removed recently from the relative's home due to allegations of physical abuse. The children are now described as sexually abusing one another, their behaviour has regressed, and the 12-year-old is described as a substance abuser and out of control.

Beyond the children's need for permanency, their treatment requirements have also not been addressed in any meaningful way. The Office of the Children's Advocate was notified once more and is currently in the process of facilitating what one can only hope is a long-term plan. The Child and Family Support Branch is expressing concerns regarding the availability of funding for these now very emotionally damaged and needy children. These children's damaging life experiences have been expensive for them in many significant ways, but beyond the human costs one can predict that these individuals would require ongoing costly services from the government.

One of the many concerned professionals involved with this case example has stated: I am absolutely appalled and would question who was acting on their behalf to ensure their rights to a secure and nurturing childhood. Our recommendation is a revision to the legislation of The Child and Family Services Act, that Section 34(2) read as follows: In the case of a child who is a subject of the hearing, a judge, master or Children's Advocate may order that legal counsel be appointed to represent the interests of the child, and if the child is 12 years of age or older, may order that that child have the right to instruct legal counsel.

Ms. MacKay: Moving to Recommendation 4, Independent Review When Recommendations Are Disregarded, when children are impacted by several systems and a satisfactory, safe care plan is not evident, the Children's Advocate has been a resource for us. This is in keeping with the duties of the Advocate in Section 8.2(1)(b) to review and investigate complaints relating to children and to services.

It is always preferable in these situations to have a plan evolve with the co-operation of all involved agencies. However, this ideal too frequently is not achieved. The recommendations of the Children's Advocate may be ignored or may result in a paper battle which does not address the needs of the child.

An example is a two-year-old child from rural Manitoba who required temporary placement due to complex health needs. Disagreements arose almost immediately on where the child's needs could be met adequately and who would pay for the supports and the care. When resolution did not occur after a few months, referral was made to the Children's Advocate. Correspondence between the child welfare agency and the Children's Advocate continued for several more months. Policy and political issues were at the core of these letters. The needs of the child were of a lesser concern.

The issues raised were the inadequacy of government funding for child care agencies, responsibility for paying for supports of medically fragile children, interpretation of The Child and Family Services Act, Section 17, in-home supports in First Nations communities, differences between episodic depression and long-term clinical depression, interpretation of various discussions amongst child care and health workers, lack of community-based doctors, jurisdictional issues on responsibility for medically fragile First Nations children.

We recommend that a process be put in place to review, independently and in a timely manner, case situations when the Children's Advocate's recommendations are disregarded.

Ms. Galloway: In summary, our experience is with children who are struggling with complex health issues and who need the full support of the family, community, Health, Education and Child and Family Services system. We are now saddened by the number of times, particularly for aboriginal children, that supports cannot be accessed. The Children's Advocate has been a helpful ally but could be a stronger advocate for these children as well as many other children in our province.

In our hope that families, communities and society can provide a safe environment for children, we

summarize our recommendations as follows: that the position of the Children's Advocate be retained in legislation; No. 2, that the Children's Advocate shall report to a committee of the Legislative Assembly and said committee take responsibility for evaluating all former recommendations and implementing them as appropriate; No. 3, that revision to the legislation of The Child and Family Services Act, Section 34(2), read as follows: in the case of a child who is a subject of the hearing, a judge, master, or Children's Advocate may order that legal counsel be appointed to represent the interests of the child and, if the child is 12 years of age or older, may order that the child have the right to instruct legal counsel; and, No. 4, that a process be put in place to review independently and in a timely manner case situations when the Children's Advocate's recommendations are disregarded.

Thank you very much for your time.

* (2140)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. MacKay and Ms. Galloway, for your report and for the time that you have put into giving us this comprehensive report. I am going to open it up now for questions, and Mr. Martindale is going to ask a few, and then I will as Mr. Kowalski to ask a few as well.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you to the presenters for a very thorough and thoughtful brief and to the other people who helped prepare it as well. I find your examples very disturbing. They remind me of some of the examples in the Children's Advocate's reports; however, yours have more detail. For that reason, they are even more disturbing, that, you know, agencies and organizations cannot co-operate to find solutions that meet the needs of children. It is very, very sad.

I think everyone who has presented to us so far is in agreement that we should keep the Children's Advocate, so I agree, and all the other presenters agree, with your first recommendation. I read parts of a very interesting document called Taking Children Seriously, a proposal for a Children's Rights Commissioner from a publication in Great Britain, and they recommended that there be a Standing Committee of the Legislature to which the Advocate report, and that this committee would have the ability to question ministers and civil

servants to follow up on the commission's recommendations.

Do you think that there would be advantages if the Advocate reported to a committee of the Legislature, and would you like to see the committee have the ability to call ministers and civil servants?

Ms. MacKay: It was certainly our feeling, as we were reviewing these situations, that there seems to be a lack of accountability right now, that people and agencies are not called forward to examine what their action is on the life of a particular child. It seems that if you have a committee that could raise questions and ask people, both at the civil service level as well as at the Legislature, to be accountable, that that would close the loop that we have concern for.

Ms. Galloway: I agree with Irma's comments. We feel very strongly that it would be very helpful for the Office of the Children's Advocate to report to—we would support, certainly, reporting to a committee who would have the ability to ask appropriate questions and, hopefully, to be able to act in a way that would ensure that children's rights and needs are addressed properly and that there is no vested interest in keeping anything in-house; that there is a genuine attempt to look at the serious issues that are facing some of the children that we care for today.

Mr. Martindale: Regarding your third recommendation, it seems to me that the current role of the Advocate is to be a voice for the child, but maybe what you are saying is that it is not enough to have an agency going to court, arguing in the best interests of the child; that, instead, what we need is for the child to have their own legal counsel, in order to be their own voice. Is that what you are suggesting?

Ms. Galloway: I think that one of the things that we have certainly looked at in time past is the guardian ad litem system that they have in the States where, indeed, children do have their own legal representation. Now, I am sure that there are both pros and cons to that system, but I think that, particularly, in the one situation we addressed tonight, I really feel the system did not act in any way, shape or form, even with intervention by the Children's Advocate, on behalf of these children who, at the time of the initial apprehension, were six

and one month of age. Six years later we have six very, very damaged children who are going to require maximum supports from our system.

The system alleged to be there to look after them, our child welfare system, has not been successful. Would these children have done better if they had had access to legal counsel who could have potentially acted more on their behalf and not had to—I believe the agencies have good will, but they do not always act on behalf of the children. There are many, many intervening factors, and I think that maybe an independent legal opinion for the children would be helpful.

Mr. Martindale: Regarding your fourth recommendation, this is probably one of the most difficult areas that this committee is going to have to grapple with in writing its report, and many people have commented on this issue. I think the way I would define it is this: The Advocate has the ability and the authority to investigate and to make recommendations, but what happens if the Advocate makes a recommendation and nothing happens, if there is no change, if systems do not change or workers do not change? Well, right now nothing happens, and he has commented on that in his subsequent annual reports. So some people have suggested a compliance or enforcement mechanism, and I guess my first question would be, is that what you are recommending? Secondly, who would have that enforcement or compliance authority? Would it be the Advocate or would it be some other body or someone else?

Ms. MacKay: We were recommending that it be someone else, acknowledging that there may be times that there are agenda items that get caught up between perhaps even the Advocate and the agency, and I think of the example that we give of where you have a child who is two years old, and just even looking at the amount of staff time and some lawyer's time that went into writing, you know, pages and pages of correspondence towards the Advocate that had nothing to do with, or very little to do with, this particular child. They were important issues, no question, but they certainly were not the essence of our concern for this child. So there needs to be some way of making these recommendations to be examined and to stop this kind of paper battle that certainly went on in this situation and has gone on in other situations.

As to who that should be, I do not know that we came up with the answer of who that should be. We did talk about the Child and Family Support office, but we were not sufficiently assured that they were the people who could do that effectively. Perhaps, if there is a standing committee of the Legislature, they could appoint someone who would report to them; that would do it.

Mr. Kowalski: Yes, I will try to pick up from where Mr. Martindale left off. Again, thank you for your presentation. I enjoyed it immensely. Ultimately, no matter how many advocates, how many committees, under our parliamentary system the person who eventually has responsibility is the minister. The Minister of Family Services has ultimate responsibility; and, whether or not the Child Advocate reports to that minister or reports to a committee—and the committee will always have majority members, government members—the minister is always going to be responsible, and I think in some of our discussions we forget that ultimately the minister is the one who is going to be held accountable.

I want to understand this one recommendation: “The Child Advocate shall report to a committee of the Legislative Assembly and said committee take responsibility for evaluating all former recommendations and implementing them as appropriate.” Now, I am not too sure if I understand. Is that the systemic recommendations that we see in the Child Advocate's review? Are we talking about cases where the Child Advocate has recommended certain actions be taken and they have been ignored? Are we just talking only about the systemic? I would be concerned if it were cases, because of the confidentiality. If my child had been taken by Child and Family Services and the Child Advocate became involved, I would not want a group of politicians talking about my child.

Ms. Galloway: I think what we were referring to in that situation was that, in terms of the recommendations that have been made by the Office of the Children's Advocate in their initial two reports that refer primarily to systemic issues, those issues be addressed, and, if indeed changes need to occur, there be a process developed for that situation, those situations to be addressed. The third report of the Office of the

Children's Advocate, as you know, does not have any recommendations in it because of the fact that, in the previous two reports, the recommendations, I understand, have not been fully addressed.

* (2150)

In terms of the individual situations that you would describe, I would agree with you, from an issue of confidentiality, that that certainly would not be the appropriate place, but I think that there needs to be a mechanism where, in case situations, if recommendations made by the Office of the Children's Advocate are not followed by the agency, then who indeed is going to be responsible for that happening? You know, in 1993, if we could have done a better job with those five children, we might be looking at a different outcome today, but there was no way that we could support the Office of the Children's Advocate in having a plan put forward that we all supported. It ultimately became the agency's individual decision to do what they thought was best, not necessarily what was thought to be best by the professionals and the community systems involved.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am also concerned about those five children and the other examples that you used, and I am wondering if there is not a process that could be found, because it seems to me that the agencies were involved in turf wars and there is lack of co-operation and all kinds of problems, and that it is just dragging on and on. Now, some people have suggested that there should be a process of mediation available. So what would you think if at some point you as staff at the hospital or professionals or the Children's Advocate or the agency could say that this is not working out, what we need is mediation, maybe even binding mediation or maybe family group conferencing or healing circles or conciliation? Would you be in favour of some kind of mediation technique? Maybe you might refer a problem to Mediation Services or to someone who would sit all the parties down and negotiate something that was in the best interests of the child, and if so, do you think we should write it into the legislation?

Ms. Galloway: I would like to just comment initially, and Irma then. I am not sure that we should ever have to get into these adversarial positions. We are all sitting

at the table for the best interests of children, so my agenda and the agency's agenda basically should be the same: we should be all looking at the best interests of children. I think adding another layer in as a person a mediator, you know, it seems to me that it is not—we spend so much energy being upset sometimes over the way in which our children in this province occasionally are cared for, that that energy could be much better spent sitting at the table in a constructive manner coming up with the solutions. We all have the ability to come up with the solutions. We need the will to follow through with it. I would not disagree with your concept, but I am not sure—I wish that we had the ability not to have these adversarial-type relationships.

Ms. MacKay: I agree with Leslie, and in my mind what is most important is that there can be some kind of closure to these situations so that the best planning that is possible can be done for these children. These children grow up very, very quickly. You know, I have a lot of respect for healing circles, and I know that some of these communities that these children go to have a lot of issues that they need to sort out, but I think we have to be very careful that we do not lose some of these children in that process. Whatever system process is put in place, there has to be some closure so that these children can be in as safe and as nurturing an environment as possible so that they can grow up to be productive, happy citizens in our province.

Mr. Chairperson: On behalf of the subcommittee here, I wish to thank you for taking time to give us a very comprehensive and good report. Thank you for coming out on an evening and taking time, and all the

people who are supporting you; we want to thank you all for coming. So thank you very much, and we wish you a good evening.

Before we disband, by agreement of committee, Mr. Tweed would like just a moment, please.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I would like to make a committee change again for tomorrow.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement? [agreed]

Committee Substitution

Mr. Tweed: I move, with the leave of the committee, that the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) replace the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) as a member on the Subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, effective May 21, with the understanding that the same substitution will also be moved in the House to be properly recorded in the official records of the House, signature today.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: What is the wish of the committee? On May 21, 3 p.m., we will continue the consideration of this matter. Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 9:56 p.m.