

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

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Speaker*

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 20, 2017

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Please be seated.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 28—The Public Services Sustainability Act

Hon. Cameron Friesen (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 28, The Public Services Sustainability Act; Loi sur la viabilité des services publics, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Friesen: Bill 28 sets out the principles of responsible fiscal management and the need to protect the sustainability of public services. Establishing a rolling four-year sustainability period will create a framework for future increases to public sector compensation.

Bill 28 takes a balanced and moderate approach to ensuring the sustainability of public services and will protect front-line services for Manitobans in a fiscally responsible way.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Bill 29—The Health Sector Bargaining Unit Review Act

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): I move, seconded by the Minister for Crown Services, that Bill 29, The Health Sector Bargaining Unit Review Act, be now read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Goertzen: I am pleased today to introduce The Health Sector Bargaining Unit Review Act, legislation that will enable improved patient care by reducing the number of bargaining units and increasing flexibility to better deliver care in the health-care system.

With more than 180 bargaining units and collective agreements within the health-care system, the structure of our system is complex. This bill will improve patient care, flexibility and reduce administrative cost, and I look forward to the debate in the House, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [*Agreed*]

Bill 31—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Growth, Enterprise and Trade (Mr. Cullen), that Bill 31, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act, be read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Wishart: Manitoba's post-secondary education system is a key driver of our economy. In order to ensure that this system is sustainable and competitive our universities need greater flexibility and less administrative red tape.

The existing legislation has constrained funding for university programs without providing necessary supports to students who face financial barriers for post-secondary education. This bill introduces a more flexible formula to control the increases to tuition while still ensuring that Manitoba's average tuition is the lowest amongst the western provinces. It also removes the unnecessary processes to review course-related fees, a feature that did not demonstrate any value.

The amendments will increase the—will limit the increase in a tuition to a rate of no more than 5 per cent plus the consumer price index. In addition, these amendments will enable the Manitoba government to deduct a portion of the grants to universities if the average tuition fees in Manitoba are not the lowest amongst the western provinces.

Our government is committed to supporting a high-quality post-secondary system for the benefit of all Manitobans. This is why these amendments have been designed to be part of a broader strategy for post-secondary education that also includes significant investments and changes to student financial assistance. Together these initiatives will ensure that Manitobans are able to have access to high-quality, sustainable university education.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 30—The Local Vehicles for Hire Act

Hon. Eileen Clarke (Minister of Indigenous and Municipal Relations): I move, seconded by Minister of Manitoba Infrastructure, that Bill 30, The Local Vehicles for Hire Act; Loi sur la gestion locale des véhicules avec chauffeur, now be read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Ms. Clarke: The purpose of this act is to provide a municipality with specific powers to make bylaws regulating vehicles for hire such as taxis, limousines and other vehicles, including those hired by way of an online application, a digital network or platform, a website or any other similar matter—manner. Pardon me.

Among these things, the act enables municipalities to create bylaws to allow the operation of ride-sharing companies, or transportation network companies as they are also known, such as Uber.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 26—The Election Financing Amendment Act

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 26, The Election Financing Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections, be now read a first time.

* (13:40)

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Bill 26 amends The Election Financing Act to enhance clarity and fairness of rules governing contributions by individuals and advertising by candidates and political parties and communications by third parties. These amendments will allow for more appropriate limits on

contributions and provide needed improvement to the law governing advertising expense limits, the definition of election communication and the limits of third-party spending.

I am pleased to present this bill to the House for its consideration today.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 27—The Elections Amendment Act

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi électorale, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Bill 27 amends The Elections Act to create a new permanent and continually updated database of eligible Manitoba voters. It also includes a requirement for voters to present proof of identification when they vote. Further amendments include provisions requiring schools to have an in-service day on the day of a fixed-date general election, and absentee voters will be permitted to cast a ballot for a registered political party, rather than a candidate, so they can vote before nominations close.

I am pleased to present this bill for the House for its consideration.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

Bill 25—The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act (Various Acts Amended)

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 25, The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act (Various Acts Amended); Loi sur la réduction des méfaits du cannabis (modification de diverses dispositions législatives), be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm pleased to introduce Bill 25, The Cannabis Harm Prevention Act, and various acts amended, to the Legislature this afternoon. The purpose of this bill is to prevent harm during the gap period between the anticipated introduction by the Government of Canada of legislation to legalize the non-medical use of cannabis and the coming into force of such legislation. This bill will make changes

that will make our roads safer, respect smoke-free places and ensure that, where appropriate, marijuana will continue to be treated as it is now in public schools and in mental health and anti-exploitation laws.

I'm pleased to present this bill to the House today.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 32—The Statutes Correction
and Minor Amendments Act, 2017**

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health, that Bill 32, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017; Loi corrective de 2017, be now read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Stefanson: Bill 32 is primarily concerned with correcting typographical numbering and minor drafting and translation errors.

Part 1 of the bill contains minor amendments to various acts—a variety of acts. Part 2 of the bill amends several acts that establish independent officers of the Legislative Assembly, such as the Ombudsman and the Auditor General. The amendments make the language that describes the appointment process for the officers more clear.

And I'm pleased to present this bill before the Legislature this afternoon. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: No? I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

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

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

* (14:00)

Order, please.

The question before the House is introduction of Bill 32, The Statutes Correction and Minor Amendments Act, 2017.

Division

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

Yeas

Allum, Altemeyer, Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fontaine, Friesen, Gerrard, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Kinew, Klassen, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Lindsey, Maloway, Marcelino (Logan), Marcelino (Tyndall Park), Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Pivniuk, Reyes, Saran, Schuler, Selinger, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Swan, Teitsma, Wharton, Wiebe, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

Clerk (Ms. Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 53, Nays 0.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Madam Speaker: Committee reports?

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I'd like to table the annual report for 2015-2016 for the Manitoba Learning Resource Centre.

Madam Speaker: And, the honourable Minister of Education and Training.

Mr. Wishart: I'd also like to table the annual report ending June of—June 30th, 2016, for the Public Schools Finance Board.

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Crown Services): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries Corporation quarterly

financial report for the nine months ending December 31st, 2016.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Madam Speaker: The required 90 minutes' notice prior to routine proceedings was provided in accordance with rule 26(2).

Would the honourable Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage please proceed with her statement.

Journée internationale de la francophonie

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage): Madame la Présidente, j'ai le plaisir de prendre la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner la Journée internationale de la francophonie au Manitoba. Aujourd'hui, nous nous joignons à plus de 250 millions de francophones sur tous les continents qui célèbrent leur langue et font partager leur culture.

Une communauté francophone dynamique est présente au Manitoba depuis le 18^e siècle. C'est une caractéristique essentielle de l'identité manitobaine. Près de 45 000 Manitobains sont de langue maternelle française et plus de 100 000 Manitobains peuvent parler le français.

Madame la Présidente, le gouvernement du Manitoba est déterminé à appuyer la vitalité de la communauté francophone du Manitoba. Nous avons fait adopter la Loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine afin que les francophones de la province puissent vivre et s'épanouir dans leur langue. De plus, nous reconnaissons que les francophiles et les nouveaux arrivants renforcent et accroissent la francophonie manitobaine, et la rendent encore plus diversifiée et inclusive.

En ma qualité de ministre responsable des Affaires francophones, je suis fière de rendre hommage à la communauté francophone du Manitoba et de célébrer ses contributions à la diversité économique et culturelle de notre province.

Madame la Présidente, je demande à tous les membres de l'Assemblée de se joindre à moi pour féliciter la communauté francophone de son succès continu. Bienvenue à l'Assemblée. *[inaudible]*

Translation

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to recognize the Journée internationale de la francophonie in Manitoba. Today, we join over 250 million Francophones from every continent as

they celebrate their language and share their culture.

A vibrant francophone community has been present in Manitoba since the 18th century and it is a fundamental characteristic of the Manitoban identity. Almost 45,000 Manitobans have French as their first language, and there are over 100,000 Manitobans who can speak French.

Madam Speaker, the Manitoba government is committed to supporting the vitality of Manitoba's Francophone community. We enacted The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act so that the province's Francophone citizens can live and thrive in their language.

Furthermore, we recognize that Francophiles and newcomers enhance and expand the Manitoban Francophonie, making it ever more diversified and inclusive.

As Minister responsible for Francophone Affairs, I am proud to honour Manitoba's Francophone community and to celebrate the contributions it has made to our province's economic and cultural diversity.

Madam Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating the Francophonie on its continued success. Welcome to the Assembly.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): Madame la Présidente, aujourd'hui, dans le cadre de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie, des centaines d'activités et événements auront lieu à travers notre pays et autour du monde, pour célébrer la langue française. À l'occasion de cette journée spéciale, je prends la parole pour reconnaître la diversité culturelle qui existe dans nos communautés francophones, ici au Manitoba.

Cette année, le thème des célébrations est La francophonie en 3D : Diversité, Dualité et Dynamisme. Je peux dire avec confiance que la francophonie manitobaine incarne chacune de ces valeurs.

Grâce aux efforts des nombreux organismes historiques, culturels et éducatifs francophones ainsi que des membres de la communauté, la francophonie manitobaine est plus forte et dynamique que jamais. Ces organismes et individus continuent de tisser des liens entre les communautés anglophones, francophones et les nouveaux arrivants, afin de promouvoir le fait français au Manitoba. Par

conséquent, tous les Manitobains et Manitobaines peuvent bénéficier d'une francophonie prospère.

Le Manitoba français a tant à offrir. C'est pourquoi on était fiers d'appuyer le Projet de loi sur l'appui à l'épanouissement de la francophonie manitobaine, qui a pour but d'agrandir l'espace francophone et protéger des services en français. En dépit des progrès réalisés au cours des années, il faut toujours que des efforts soient faits pour fournir aux Manitobains et Manitobaines des services en français, surtout dans les domaines des garderies, les soins de santé et l'éducation.

Madame la Présidente, en cette Journée internationale de la francophonie, reconnaissons le rôle essentiel de la francophonie manitobaine dans le tissu culturel du pays, et le monde. Merci.

Translation

Madam Speaker, today, in the context of the Journée internationale de la francophonie, hundreds of activities and events will take place around our country and around the world to celebrate the French language. On this special day, I rise to recognize the cultural diversity that exists in our Francophone communities here in Manitoba.

This year, the theme of the celebrations is The Francophonie in 3D: Diversity, Duality and Dynamism. I can say with confidence that Manitoba's Francophonie embodies each of these values.

Thanks to the effort of the many Francophone historical, cultural and educational organizations, as well as the community members, Manitoba's Francophonie is stronger and more vibrant than ever. These organizations and individuals continue to forge ties between Anglophone and Francophone communities and newcomers, in order to promote the French fact in Manitoba. As a consequence, all Manitobans are able to benefit from a prosperous Francophonie.

Francophone Manitoba has so much to offer. It is why we were proud to support The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act. The goal of this act was to expand the Francophone space and to protect French-language services. In spite of all the progress that has been made over the years, efforts are still required to provide French-language services to Manitobans, in particular in the areas of day care, health care and education.

Madam Speaker, on this Journée internationale de la francophonie, let's acknowledge the vital role of

Manitoba's Francophonie in the cultural fabric of our country, and the world. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, I ask leave to speak to the minister's statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the member have leave to speak to the minister's statement? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Gerrard: Madame la Présidente, aujourd'hui c'est la Journée internationale de la francophonie.

Translation

Madam Speaker, today is the Journée internationale de la francophonie.

English

The francophonie and the International Organization of the Francophonie are very important in today's world to allow discussion and co-operation among participating countries including Canada. I know from personal experience as I represented Canada at a meeting of science ministers of the Francophonie in 1995.

Today, one of the countries of the Francophonie very much in our local news is Djibouti. The situation in Djibouti is of great concern and so many people are leaving.

As an example, I met a gentleman from Djibouti over the weekend who's been involved in construction at US bases around the world and is very accomplished. He went initially to the United States, but with the current situation, he has opted to try to make his home in Canada and joined other asylum seekers in coming to Manitoba in the last few weeks.

* (14:10)

We expect that, with his ability to speak English and French fluently, and with his established knowledge skills and capabilities, he will do very well in contributing to our province and our country.

Célébrons nous aujourd'hui la Journée internationale de la francophonie. Nous avons, ici au Manitoba, beaucoup qui sont francophones. Et avec ceux qui arrivent de pays comme Djibouti, notre population francophone continue d'augmenter, et continue d'avoir une place importante dans notre province.

Translation

Let us celebrate today the Journée internationale de la francophonie. We have, here in Manitoba, many

who are Francophones. And with all those coming from countries like Djibouti, our Francophone population continues to grow and continues to have an important role in our province.

English

The international connections we are building will serve us well in our economy, our trade and in our social development as a diverse multicultural province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Natasha Vokey

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): It is my pleasure and honour in the Legislature today to recognize Natasha Vokey of Steinbach, who on December 18th was named the Female Athlete of the Year by Manitoba Special Olympics. The award takes into consideration the athlete's achievements over the past athletic season, and for Natasha her skill and ability in curling and swimming are what had coaches taking notice.

Some of Natasha's athletic achievements include competing in the 25-metre and the 50-metre backstroke, the 100-metre freestyle, and the 100-metre backstroke. She has also competed in Newfoundland as part of the provincial curling team, taken part in the 2016 National Winter Games, participated in the junior curling program in Edmonton and has become the skip of her team.

Natasha's friendliness, personality, energy, self-discipline and her willingness to always improve her athletic skill set, makes her an example of what it means to be a true Special Olympian. It is no surprise that what makes Natasha stand out is her compassion and empathy for other athletes, one of the many qualities in which she is a role model for many in Manitoba.

In addition to being a talented athlete, Natasha is a passionate advocate for community service and can always be seen volunteering her time around the community. On behalf of the Manitoba Legislature, I want to congratulate you, Natasha, on your athletic achievement. Thank you for your hard work, determination and compassion, that you—and you continue to inspire us and demonstrate the best of Steinbach and Manitoba.

Colleagues, please join me in recognizing Natasha Vokey, who is with us today in the gallery.

Arlene Last-Kolb

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I rise to pay tribute to Arlene Last-Kolb who works every day to make the world a better, safer place.

Today, March 20, would have been her son Jessie's 27th birthday. Jessie was a young man who overcame a childhood impediment to graduate at the top of his class. He worked in the family business and owned his own home at the age of 19. Jessie won't be here to celebrate his birthday today, Madam Speaker. He succumbed to an overdose of fentanyl in 2014.

Since then Arlene and her family have struggled with the profound despair that comes with losing a beloved child. And yet, during these years of struggle, Arlene has worked tirelessly and courageously to make sure that what happened to Jessie never happens to anyone else so that no other family will suffer such a terrible loss.

For her incredible efforts in the face of this most difficult challenge, Arlene has received many tributes and honours. Just last week, the Winnipeg Police Service gave Arlene an honoured citizenship award.

Since Jessie's death, Arlene has challenged each and every one of us in this Legislature to do one thing: to save lives. A lot of good work has been done, but there is more work we can do toward this goal.

I want to ask all members of the House to join with me to honour Jessie on his birthday and to thank Arlene and her family for rising above the depths of their grief to be a champion for all those who, like Jessie, need our love and support. Thank you, Arlene, may you find peace and consolation in the memory of a great son with a beautiful soul, and may your work continue to save lives.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I Love to Read Month

Mr. Andrew Smith (Southdale): I rise in the Legislature today to speak about I Love to Read Month and the importance of reading for our children. Last month, I had the privilege of reading to elementary students in and around my community. It is a feeling of fulfillment when you spark the interest of young minds with a book. At times, I even

found myself captivated by the connection between myself, the story and the eagerly attentive students. Many had questions about the stories after the reads and demonstrated interest in reading the books themselves.

In an age dominated by the Internet, television and video games, we must not forget the value of reading for our children, as it shapes young minds with crucial knowledge and heightens their imagination and creativity. Readers are achievers at the academic level, and here in Manitoba our government is making improvements of students' achievement a top priority. Provincial educational initiatives like I Love to Read Month focus on the importance of literacy, starting at an early age where the seeds of such fundamental abilities are so vital.

Education and training form the fundamental building blocks of Manitoba's future economic success. Our government will focus on the fundamentals of a quality education and will embark upon the development of a comprehensive, long-term literacy and 'numeracy-cal' strategy that will provide Manitoba children with the skills they need and the opportunity they will need for success. These efforts will create the kind of sustained growth and opportunity that will make our province a richer place, not only for the impact on our economy, but also for the future we are creating for generations to come.

With us here today are the student groups and teachers who took part in the I Love to Read Month. Please welcome teacher Tim McIntyre and his grade 5 and 6 class, along with teaching candidate Kirsten Hudson, from Island Lakes Community School; Dr. Anju Bajaj and her grade 7 class from Holy Cross; Pam Kolochuk and her daughter Brooke, Jennifer Campbell and her daughter Sophia, representing the parents and students of École Van Belleghem.

Thank you.

Collective Bargaining Process

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I'm joined today in the gallery by many concerned union leaders. They know that the nature of work is evolving; that there's less job security; few, if any, benefits; minimal control over working conditions. Precarious work is on the rise, and protecting vulnerable workers is more important than ever. Ensuring that workers have a right to meaningful collective bargaining process is more important than

ever. Respecting the collective bargaining process and the agreements that come from it are more important than ever.

We recognize that every worker has the right to fair wages, to come home safe at the end of the day and to be heard. These are rights that are enshrined in our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I'm deeply concerned with the direction this government is taking, because it's clear to me, and to Manitobans, that Bill 7 was just the beginning of the Pallister government's attack on labour.

Laying off hundreds of workers, making deep cuts to important government services like health and education are at risk. What will it mean for patient care if there are fewer doctors and nurses? What will it mean for Manitoba students, parents and teachers with larger classrooms, fewer educational supports and higher tuition? These are all questions that this government has consistently refused to answer.

With this Premier (Mr. Pallister), it's not all hands on deck. Instead, he decided to take a 20 per cent pay increase for himself. The freeze he is asking for just doesn't include himself.

Madam Speaker, I know that Manitobans value front-line services and the people who work hard to provide them. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes the rights of workers. Now I ask this government to stop their attacks on labour and to do the same thing.

Thank you.

Sandi Knox

Mr. Nic Curry (Kildonan): I rise today to recognize an outstanding resident of Kildonan, Sandi Knox, owner and operator of Body Balance and a recent recipient of the canfitpro Fitness Professional of the Year.

*(14:20)

Personal trainer is not the title Sandi envisioned for herself 15 years ago, but she found her calling through helping people reach their full potential through a multi-faceted approach to health and fitness. After an attempted robbery in 2001, Sandi was motivated to learn self-defence and martial arts. This Riverbend resident took a traumatic experience and turned it into a new life path.

After training in self-defence and martial arts, Sandi began instructing fitness classes at Red River Community Centre where she established herself as a

personal trainer who specialized in anything from yoga, plyometrics to retaliatory training programs.

Sandi and her husband Sheldon opened Body Balance on Henderson Highway in 2008. Sheldon Gephter is a registered massage therapist and their studio includes space for his practice. Together they are a one-stop shop for fitness needs. Sandi's studio works to fit the needs of any client, whether you are a teen, on crutches, over 90-years old, Body Balance will work for you.

Her many local accolades were not enough and in 2015 Sandi won canfitpro Fitness Professional of the Year, the first person in Winnipeg to ever win this national honour.

Sandi sets an empowering example for individuals who experienced a traumatic event and used it to better themselves and others. Featured on local TV and print media, she carries her motto as something we can all aspire: healthy body, healthy mind.

Madam Speaker, Sandi Knox is an inspiration for those she works with and does to improve the wellness of our community through fitness, and I'd like to thank her for her dedication to her craft and her clients.

Thank you Madam Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Health and Education Government Intention

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Leader of the Official Opposition): Hundreds of Manitobans representing thousands of New Democrats gathered this weekend. We heard a strong resolve and commitment to hold this government and the Premier to his promises to protect services and to respect the negotiating process with workers.

Yet, today, Madam Speaker, the Premier is breaking his word: cuts in education and in health, and now these regressive bills now before this House.

What is most offensive, Madam Speaker, is that the Premier does this while taking a 20 per cent salary increase and two months paid off—months off paid in Costa Rica. It's not fair and it's not right.

Will the Premier change his course on his regressive agenda? Will he at least lead by example and give back his salary increase?

Madam Speaker: I would just like to draw to the attention of members that are visiting here in the gallery today that there is to be no applause, because that means you're participating in the debate here and that is not allowed in our parliamentary rules. So I would ask that there be no applause from the members in the gallery, and thank you for your understanding of that rule of our House.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): Thank you to my colleague. I know it was a weekend of somewhat mixed emotions for her as she was advocating on behalf of the members of her party for an innovative approach, or something that would pass as innovative, I guess, in the party opposite: to give all members of the party a chance to have a vote on who they wanted as their leader and was unsuccessful in her efforts, but I know that she made an honest effort to achieve a change which was not forthcoming.

And the democratic austerity of the members opposite was put on display this weekend: the unwillingness to change, the willingness to continue to have rules—which are antiquated by any standard—in place whereby two or three public sector union leaders get to decide, with a white puff of smoke from the union hall down on Broadway, who the leader of the party is. This satisfies the establishment of the party, but doesn't satisfy its members. I understand the member is saddened by that change. So are those of us who love democracy, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms. Marcelino: We know the Tories choose their leader in the back room of the Manitoba Club, but here we debate it in the light of day.

Madam Speaker, it is deeply unfair to Manitobans that the Premier locked in a 20 per cent pay raise right before he attacks workers and students. Manitobans expect the Premier to lead by example. The Premier has had 119 days to bring forward legislation before the House to assure its consideration and chose, on the very last day, to try and ram through these regressive legislations, the likes of which has not been seen for a generation. The Premier is simply out of touch. Workers and students don't deserve the Premier's approach.

Will he change course?

Mr. Pallister: Accepting none of the premise of the member, because it is totally false, of course. The

members opposite gave themselves a million-dollar raise—a million-dollar raise—by exempting themselves from the balanced—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —budget law. At the same time as they were giving they were giving themselves that million-dollar raise, Madam Speaker, they were broadening the PST to include items like home insurance, benefits on workers, fees on cars, taxes on cottages, taxes on beer and wine. They were raising and broadening taxes even as they gave themselves a million-dollar raise.

Now, they had a law in place, which they changed to suit their purposes, and we are abiding by the law they made, Madam Speaker. So the member's continued assertions, no matter how frequent, do not give any truth to the argument she is trying to make.

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

Ms. Marcelino: We have now seen the full shape of this government's agenda: perks for the Premier and cuts and freezes and more cuts for everyone else.

It is deeply concerning that the Premier has tried to hide his agenda. He threw a copy of his plans in his suitcase on his way to Costa Rica but refused to share it with Manitobans. Now his plans are in full view, that impact workers and students, and cuts for health and education. It's simply not fair that the government would try to hide its agenda and now try to ram through some of the most regressive legislation in a generation.

If the Premier won't listen to me, will he listen to students and workers who are telling him that his approach will do damage to Manitoba and hurt so many Manitobans?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the previous administration ran on an agenda that said they would not raise taxes and did. They doubled the provincial debt in just a matter of six years, handed the obligations at \$3 million a day—handed them forward, the opposite of what Manitobans would say was responsible is exactly what they did.

This year, as a result—*[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —as a result, we have to pay \$30 million in additional debt service costs, because our credit rating as a province went down not once,

but twice. And we have a warning of a third credit rating downgrade, Madam Speaker. This takes millions of dollars away from front-line services and sends it to happy moneylenders who applauded what the NDP did, because they benefited from it. But students certainly did not. Seniors certainly did not. Indigenous people certainly did not.

And, Madam Speaker, the former deputy premier of the party over there has said that the NDP should—the NDP members should give up on their party and start a new one, because they've forgotten who they're supposed to be representing. We have not. And we will fix the mess they created.

Collective Bargaining Agreements Introduction of New Legislation

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): They certainly haven't forgotten who they represent. Unfortunately, it's just the 1 per cent; it's not all of them.

Madam Speaker, it's a sad day when the Premier cannot take responsibility for his actions—will not take responsibility for his actions. The Premier refuses to acknowledge he took a 20 per cent pay raise, then locked it in. The Premier refuses to acknowledge he doesn't even work for two months a year when he's off in Costa Rica. Now we see a Premier who will not take responsibility for actually governing.

When will this Premier stop scapegoating front-line workers?

* (14:30)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I really appreciate the member's rant, Madam Speaker. And I appreciate the personal attacks, too, because I know that when someone starts launching into personal attacks, it's because they've lost any coherent and rational argument. They have nothing to say, and the member and his colleagues demonstrate that every time they put false information on the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, after a decade of debt we're going to fix the finances of this province and after a decade of decay we're going to repair the services in this province, which the NDP drove down to rank last in the country.

And after a decade of decline we're going to help build the economy, but we're not going to do it on anything but the backs of workers because the

workers of this province will help us to succeed, because the workers of this province are the people who we're counting on. And, in fact, Madam Speaker, it's the workers of this province that the NDP have taken for granted for so long who we are counting on to help us rebuild the economy of this province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

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

Mr. Lindsey: For nearly a year this government has refused to reveal its plans to Manitobans. They refuse to reveal its studies on provincial finances—studies that Manitobans paid for—even after they promised they would.

But we now know that the Premier was meeting with his political staff just days after he was sworn in to plan out the unjustified attack on our front-line workers.

Why did this Premier mislead Manitobans about his real plans to cut front-line services and front-line workers?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, I'm very, very proud of my record in working, and my government's record in working, with front-line workers.

We've actually taken steps to correct the damage already that was done by the NDP. They doubled the size at the top of union organizations around the province, including but not limited to core government, RHAs, post-secondary institutions. They raised the size of the non-front-line personnel and the budgets of the non-front-line personnel while they ignored the needs of the people at the front line. That's why we have the longest wait times in Canada, the lowest educational outcomes, the highest poverty.

Madam Speaker, they didn't stand with the working people of the province when they were government any more than they stood with the working members of their own party this weekend when they took away their right to determine who their next leader was.

Madam Speaker, the leader—the former leader, the former premier was anointed leader because one union boss walked across the hall. That's not the way to determine who the premier of this province should be. We don't support it. We don't think the NDP

should either. That's the way to ignore the democratic rights of the people of your own party and the people of Manitoba at the same time.

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

Mr. Lindsey: This Premier said he would not attack front-line workers during the election. We know now that he's broken that promise. But he broke his promise not because he actually committed to what he's saying, but because, really, it's a political attack.

Will this Premier stop this attack, do the right thing and quit attacking workers?

Mr. Pallister: Madam Speaker, the NDP in the previous election walked around the city. They went to every household, knocked on the door, and they looked people right in the eye and they said we're not going to raise your taxes, and they jacked up their taxes. Now, that's—if that's helping front-line workers, I'm not sure how.

Madam Speaker, they took money, hundreds of millions of dollars off the kitchen tables of every household. The households in Manitoba—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Pallister: —that needed that money, Madam Speaker, don't have it anymore because the NDP took it away and then took credit for ribbon cutting with it while they were running up our debt in this province and handing our debt for the kids, the next people that come along. They said it was good enough for them. Well, it's not good enough for us.

The Manitoba way we have a social is some people hang around and clean up the mess after and leave that hall better than it was when they walked in. That's people on this side of the House; that's most Manitobans. I'm just disappointed the members opposite won't do the part of sharing that responsibility with the rest of us.

Collective Bargaining Agreements Introduction of New Legislation

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): It becomes more clear every day, this day more than ever, that the Premier is more focused on himself and not the needs of Manitobans.

He didn't consult Manitobans when he decided he was entitled to a 20 per cent pay increase. He didn't consult Manitobans when he decided he was

entitled to two years off a year in the tropics without so much as access to email and he did not consult—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: —the front-line workers before he launched this attack today on the very people who provide the services that Manitobans rely upon.

Madam Speaker, which front-line workers did this Premier talk to before he decided to dictate the terms of future collective agreements in Manitoba?

Hon. Brian Pallister (Premier): I thank the member for the question.

It was about two years ago that the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Selinger) was re-elected the leader in an historic leadership contest instigated by the member for Minto, who accused that leader, his own leader in his own party, of the same things he just attacked me on.

So, Madam Speaker, he doesn't like anybody, so why would he like me?

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

Mr. Swan: Well, I recognize the Premier's missing his infinity pool and his 35 acres in the tropics, but maybe he can focus on the question and give Manitoba workers an answer.

Last year, while campaigning, this Premier promised he would not break his word to front-line workers. In an unsurprising and sad turn of events, we now know just how prepared this Premier is to break his word and how he even refuses to admit things he says in this House and outside even the day before.

Will he come clean today, and will he admit that he's broken his commitment and his word to our front-line workers by dictating the terms of collective agreements?

Mr. Pallister: Well, again, Madam Speaker, the member is the one who accused his own leader of being a dictator. He's the one who said his own leader wasn't listening. He's the one who launched a rebellion, a historic rebellion, which took the entire government's eye off the ball on what mattered to Manitobans. He's the one who was part of that rebellion and he wasn't successful. But now he thinks he can launch his leadership campaign here today.

And he should understand that he's alienated every thinking member of his own party with his conduct over the last two years, and that that's not likely a good use of his time, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Swan: Well, Madam Speaker, I've got 12 colleagues who do a much better job of running this province than that part-time Premier.

Madam Speaker, it isn't complicated. If you want a deal—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Swan: I would suggest to the Premier that if he wants a deal, you do it the proper way. You sit down at a table and you negotiate and you come to an arrangement and you shake hands.

But the Premier, by the law introduced today—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Swan: —shows that he does not respect that.

And he can attack me all he wants. He can attack my party all he wants. But he only does this to distract from the attack on front-line workers, from doctors to nurses to home-care aides to sheriffs and correctional officers.

What right does he have to dictate labour agreements in Manitoba?

Mr. Pallister: The member's a lawyer and he should give legal advice. He has some qualifications in it. But when he gives me advice on the proper way to treat people, he's ill-equipped, Madam Speaker. When he says, the proper way to do things—he's the one who showed total disrespect for the rules of his own party, for his own colleagues.

He says I should do things the respectful way. I've done them the respectful way all my life. I wish I could say the same of the member.

* (14:40)

The fact remains, Madam Speaker, that even this weekend, when given an opportunity to show the proper respect for the former premier of Manitoba, the member sits in his seat. I think we should show proper respect for the former premier of Manitoba and give him an ovation right now.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

**Tuition Increase
Indexed to Inflation**

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): The Premier's (Mr. Pallister) plans are hurting families. He's cutting good-paying jobs, he's freezing salaries, he's raising property taxes. And now he wants to raise tuition by 5 per cent, plus fees, plus inflation.

That means undergraduate tuition can go up by \$300 this year and by \$1,250 when this year's first-year students are in fourth year. Double that if you plan on sending two kids to university. That's a huge burden to place on working families, Madam Speaker.

Will the Premier do the right thing by working families, forget about Bill 31 and limit tuition increases only to inflation?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question.

We're very pleased to bring forward a bill that we think will improve the sustainability, afforded ability and predictability of tuition here in Manitoba. And we have already announced Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative that we believe will be of great value to 'manitoba' students.

In fact, it is five times the funding that the previous government put forward in 17 years. We have done it in one year what you didn't do in 17.

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

Bill 31 Concerns

Mr. Kinew: The number of the day is 5 per cent, plus fees, plus inflation, Madam Speaker.

That means that over the course of a four-year program, the Premier wants to raise tuition by 30 per cent over the first year for Manitoba students, plus fees, however. That means more lab fees, more course fees, more program fees, so thousands more dollars over a four-year degree, plus, potentially, hundreds of more dollars in fees.

Will the Premier admit to the students in the gallery today that his plan for tuition increases are too high and that he won't move forward with Bill 31?

Mr. Wishart: I thank the member for the question, but I cannot accept the numbers that he put forward. They're simply not accurate.

They are using multipliers that they find suitable to their purposes, trying to play politics with the reality of trying to build—[*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: —a sustainable, quality education for post-secondary students in Manitoba.

We want good quality education. We want to be world-class education here in Manitoba. So we need to work with our post-secondaries.

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

Barrier to Education

Mr. Kinew: The one group that he didn't mention working with is students.

Students have come out today to speak out against these tuition hikes. Tuition remains the No. 1 barrier to post-secondary education, and the Premier's new tuition increases mean that even more students may not have the path to post-secondary.

In my own constituency of Fort Rouge, students are already using food banks to make ends meet.

Does the Premier expect students who are using food banks to come up with another \$1,250 over the next four years, each and every year?

Will the Premier walk back this tuition hike and help make sure that every student in this province has a pathway to post-secondary?

Mr. Wishart: Thank the member for the question.

But it is very clear that our path forward in terms of providing support for students, in terms of paying tuition for those that are low income, on a merit base, at five times the rate the previous government had been able to do, is far more likely to provide Manitoba students with the opportunities that they need.

The previous government had a record number of people using the food banks. [*interjection*]

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Wishart: They obviously could not help the students because they made sure that they were using the food banks all the time. We are going to help Manitoba students, and we are going to help make sure that Manitoba's post-secondary education is the best in the country.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order.

**Permanent Voter Registry
Changes to Electoral Process**

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): This Premier (Mr. Pallister) does not want to include more Manitobans in our democratic electoral processes. Curiously, the Premier wants less Manitobans to be involved. This Premier does not want to reduce barriers to electoral participation. In fact, Madam Speaker, he's legislating more barriers for Manitobans to fully participate in elections. We know this Premier is out of touch with regular Manitobans and how they live their lives day to day.

Does this Premier actually think making it more expensive and harder to participate in our elections is good for democracy?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Well, there couldn't be anything more undemocratic than what took place at their convention this past weekend, Madam Speaker, so I will take no lessons from this member.

Madam Speaker, Manitobans, voters, are required to show identification when they vote in Manitoba in federal elections and in municipal elections in Winnipeg and Brandon, and they are also required to show ID in the provincial election when they vote at the advanced polls. This is simply extending that to election day as well, and it's—it brings us within other jurisdictions across Canada. This is the right and responsible way to approach this issue.

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

Ms. Fontaine: I'm glad to see that members opposite are so obsessed with us on this side of the House that—paying attention to our convention all weekend.

We've seen, in our neighbours to the south, what happens when you make it harder for citizens to participate in elections. It hurts the most vulnerable and 'disenfranchied'—disenfranchised. It targets indigenous peoples and economically marginalized people. So, instead of the Premier engaging with and encouraging all Manitobans to participate in their electoral right, he is strategically and methodically legislating that they actually do not.

Why is the Premier legislating a more difficult electoral process instead of an equitable, inclusive democracy?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think it's important to note that under the previous NDP government, we are the last jurisdiction in Canada to, in fact, develop a permanent voters list. And I hope that members opposite will see the value in that and will see the value in supporting us and making sure that this legislation moves forward. I hope that they will support us for this very, very important part of this piece of legislation.

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

Ms. Fontaine: The minister is asking for our support in the same way that they're actually supporting students outside? This government needs to get used to that yelling and that screaming and that lobbying because they're going to hear a lot of it.

* (14:50)

This Premier and his government should be working hard and purposefully to ensure that all Manitobans participate in democracy. In case he's not sure what that looks like, it means that he should be raising the minimum wage. He should be making sure that indigenous peoples are respected and included. He should be presenting a plan to combat poverty.

Instead, this Premier is making it harder to hear the voices of marginalized groups.

Will the Premier withdraw this needless legislation today?

Mrs. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I know that the member opposite and members opposite don't respect the democratic process, but we on this side of the House do, and Manitobans respect the democratic process. And that's exactly what this bill is doing, is providing that permanent voters list for Manitobans moving forward.

It's very important and I encourage members opposite to respect what Manitobans want when it comes to a free and democratic society. Join with us and support this bill.

**Post-Secondary Education
Long-Term Funding Plan**

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): This government has introduced legislation which removes the cap on tuition fees being increased by post-secondary institutions. This legislation is similar to the 1990s when the then-Conservative government

cut back on education funding and allowed for tuition fees to rise.

Madam Speaker, my question is: Why is this government trying something that has failed in the past rather than seeking a long-term, affordable solution to the funding of post-secondary education?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for the question.

The legislation we have brought forward to do—today makes sure that we have long-term, predictable rates of increase in Manitoba's tuition, 5 per cent plus CPI, well into the future, to a point where we will end up being lowest in western Canada. I consider that sustainable and affordable for Manitoba students, and it will help build for us the quality education system that we need in this province.

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

Removal of Tuition Cap Affordability Concerns

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I suppose old habits die hard, Madam Speaker. By taking the same approach on education fees for a second time, it means many individuals will struggle in affording post-secondary education.

During the campaign this government claimed that they would be—that they would help students in making post-secondary education more affordable, when, in fact, this new bill is doing quite the opposite.

According to the PC Party website, it states that they will, and I quote, ensure tuition fees remain affordable.

Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Education: By removing the existing cap on tuition fees, how can you ensure education will remain affordable?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): Perhaps the member missed our announcement last December when we talked about Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative, when we increased the amount of funding that we as a Province were putting forward and also levered even more investment from the private sector to improve the amount that we would have available for scholarships and bursaries, based on merit, to Manitoba students from \$4 million a year to

\$20 million a year. I consider that great support for Manitoba students.

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

Ms. Lamoureux: We have said time and time again that investing in areas such as education that there would be long-term benefits and savings here in Manitoba.

Now, this government constantly claims that they are cleaning up the mess that was left by the former government. However, in doing so it appears as if they are making post-secondary students pay for the government's mistakes. Madam Speaker, students should be encouraged to focus on their education and not worry about paying for the mistakes of the government.

Why are students being forced to pay for more education?

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

As I have said, we are focused on making sure we get quality education for Manitoba students in a sustainable manner. We are certainly prepared to work with the post-secondaries to make sure that in—quality of education improves in Manitoba.

The member likes to go to the '90s. Maybe she could remember, wasn't it the federal Liberals that cut transfer payments and hurt Manitoba so bad?

Cannabis Harm Prevention Act Updating Existing Legislation

Mr. Scott Johnston (St. James): My question is to the honourable Minister of Justice.

Can the minister advise the House the major components of the cannabis harm reduction act, which she tabled earlier today? *[interjection]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for that very, very good question today, and, in fact, it's been an honour, Madam Speaker, to introduce Bill 25, the cannabis harm reduction act.

This bill amends The Drivers and Vehicles Act and The Highway Traffic Act to better enable us to tackle drug-impaired driving. The Child Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking Act is amended to ensure that cannabis remains a controlled substance. The Non-Smokers Health Protection Act is also amended to ensure that cannabis is included in

the legislation prohibiting smoking in enclosed public spaces.

Madam Speaker, this is the first bill of its kind since the federal government announced that they will be legalizing cannabis, and we think that this is very important for the safety and health of all Manitobans. We look forward to members opposite, and all members of this House, joining with us to the better safety and health of all Manitobans.

Hospital Home Team Cut to Program

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Last week, this government created confusion and distress for workers and families by cutting the valuable health-care program that provided chronically ill patients a quality of life, and it also cut down on hospital costs.

The recent cuts to the Hospital Home Team has forced the majority of the program's nurses to find other jobs and increased the burden on hospitals, on health-care workers and on families.

Despite his promises, the Health Minister has already begun to slash those front-line services and cut front-line jobs. He's standing in solidarity with a premier who plans to dictate contracts for public sector workers while locking in a 20 per cent pay raise for himself. His vision for health-care system means less for workers and ravaged services.

Will the minister admit he broke his promise—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Hon. Kelvin Goertzen (Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living): Well, Madam Speaker, the member will remember that it was his government who gave their party, their political party, along with the members of their Cabinet, a million-dollar raise just a few years ago. He'll remember that. Of course, he doesn't want to remember that now, because it doesn't reflect well upon his former Cabinet colleagues who sit next to him and who sits in front of him. But he might want to reflect on that.

We continue to look for ways within the health-care system to make sure that it's sustainable, and not just for today, but for the future, Madam Speaker, because we know that Manitobans value a strong health-care system today, but also in the future.

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

Mr. Wiebe: As a pilot project, the home team program reduced hospital admissions by more than half. Five hundred and fifty patients were seeing an improvement in their quality of life.

It was a program that would have benefited from more resources to expand and improve the capacity, but the minister refuses to build on a good start. Instead of looking for innovative ways, as he says, to improve care and cut costs in our system, the minister's first and only solution here is to cut. His vision for Manitoba's health-care system is narrow-minded and it doesn't prioritize patient care.

Will the minister admit that this innovative program was improving patient care in Winnipeg, and what innovative health-care program is next to be cut?

Mr. Goertzen: Madam Speaker, the member will know, perhaps from reading media reports, that it was the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority who made the recommendation.

* (15:00)

And experts in the region, they indicated that when they did a review—and they did two evaluations of the program—that it lacked a clear purpose. There were eligibility criteria problems, there was a clear referral-process problem, and it was hindered as a lack of a response from other programs. They recommended it not proceed as a pilot project because of these challenges, the challenges that were set up under the former government.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Madam Speaker, make no mistake; it's this minister's short-sighted decision to force the RHAs to cut across the board that has led to this reduction in service. As a pilot project the home team program reduced hospital admissions by more than half. This was an important program for Manitobans to improve their quality of life.

Despite this promise, this Health Minister, he's already begun to slash these services and cut these front-line jobs.

Will the minister just admit that cutting the home team program will cause harm to families and clearly reneges on his promise to protect front-line services?

Mr. Goertzen: The pilot project of which the member refers to underwent two different evaluations by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. On both of those evaluations the regional health authority reported that it produced limited outcomes in relation to the significant cost of the program, Madam Speaker, and they made the decision to not continue with the program.

Now, it is the same member, the member for Concordia, who last session begged me—in fact, demanded that I listen to the health-care professionals within the region. He said don't make a decision without listening to the health-care professionals. Now, a few months later, he says whatever you do, don't listen to the health-care professionals. He doesn't have to be right, but he should at least be consistent, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The time for oral questions has expired.

PETITIONS

Neighbourhood Renewal Corporations Funding

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): I wish to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly. The background to this petition is as follows:

(1) Since 2001, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program has supported stronger neighbourhoods and communities in Manitoba.

(2) Neighbourhoods Alive! uses a community-led development model that partners with neighbourhood renewal corporations on projects that aim to revitalize communities.

(3) Neighbourhoods Alive! and the neighbourhood renewal corporations it supports have played a vital important role in revitalizing many neighbourhoods in Manitoba through community-driven solutions, including: employment and training, education and recreation, safety and crime prevention, and housing and physical improvements.

(4) Neighbourhoods Alive! now serves 13 neighbourhood renewal corporations across Manitoba which have developed expertise in engaging with their local residents and determining the priorities of their communities.

(5) The provincial government's previous investments into Neighbourhoods Alive! have been bolstered by community and corporate donations as well as essential support from community volunteers, small businesses and local agencies.

(6) Late in 2016, the minister responsible for the Neighbourhoods Alive! program said new funding for initiatives was paused and the future of the Neighbourhoods Alive! program was being reviewed, bringing hundreds of community projects to a standstill.

(7) Neighbourhood renewal corporations and their communities are concerned this funding freeze is the first step in a slow phase-out of the Neighbourhoods Alive! grant program, which would have severe negative impacts on families and communities.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows:

That the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba be urged to support the Neighbourhoods Alive! program and the communities served by neighbourhood renewal corporations by continuing to provide consistent core funding for existing neighbourhood renewal corporations and enhancing the public funding available for specific initiatives.

This petition is signed by many Manitobans, Madam Speaker.

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

Grievances?

ORDERS OF THE DAY GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you please canvass the House for leave to have a vote on the concurrence and third reading motion for Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, upon conclusion of the honourable member for Wolseley's (Mr. Altemeyer) speech.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Is there leave to have a vote on the concurrence and third reading motion for Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, upon conclusion of the honourable member for Wolseley's speech? Leave? *[Agreed]*

Resuming debate on third reading of—*[interjection]*—oh. The honourable Government House Leader?

Mr. Micklefield: Madam Speaker, we would like to resume debate on Interim Supply.

**DEBATE ON CONCURRENCE
AND THIRD READINGS**

Bill 8—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017

Madam Speaker: Resuming debate on third reading of Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley, who has nine minutes remaining.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Well, Madam Speaker, I wish I was rising on a happier note, but after what we have just seen today, what we have seen in previous days, this government has demonstrated now for everyone its complete contempt for the democratic process, its utter irresponsibility towards the future of this province and its overt disdain towards the causes of social justice.

How on earth this Premier (Mr. Pallister) and these Cabinet ministers and all the backbenchers who are supporting them can believe that increasing the salaries for the Premier and the Cabinet ministers is anywhere close to appropriate when they have just tabled legislation that will freeze wages for tens of thousands of other Manitobans.

What makes them so special? What is it about their families that they deserve a raise but the other ones do not? What is it about them that says they deserve a 20 per cent raise increase in their salary but the students who joined us here in the gallery today, even though it's very busy exam time for them, they came down here out of concern, not just for their own welfare, but for the well-being of every single student going to post-secondary education after this. What about them and the incredible, unbelievable and completely inappropriate increase in tuition that this government is imposing on these students?

This government has absolutely no comprehension of the harm that they are causing to all Manitobans, and I've said it before in my previous speech on this matter, and I will repeat it here again: When a government brings in its budget, which is what we are debating right here—it is a budget bill—when a government brings in its budget, it is adamantly clear to everyone what it is that this government believes in. They only believe in themselves. They only believe in representing the interests of the 1 per cent, the top of the very top of the pyramid.

Why on earth could you otherwise rationalize the decision by this government to increase, not decrease, but increase the amount of influence that

the 1 per cent has at election time by increasing the amount of money that they can donate to a political party, taking the additional step of locking in that privilege for the 1 per cent going forward under legislation they introduced today?

But the indexing for the minimum wage, where's that? Where is that indexing, Madam Speaker? Where, even, is any increase to the minimum wage? The students who were down here, a lot of them work at the living—at the minimum wage. They have to work multiple jobs at the minimum wage, and this government did not see fit to increase it a nickel per hour, not a single increase from this government and no indication that they are going to increase it.

The attack on workers, the attacks on students, the attacks on democracy are simply unacceptable, Madam Speaker. In this day and age, to have a Harperesque strategy, a legislative agenda torn straight out of the books of Stephen Harper or Donald Trump, unilateral decisions—let's bring in eight bills, no less than eight pieces of legislation brought in on a single day when this government has been in office for closing in now on almost a year, it's on the very last day of session that they bring in eight bills all at once and expect us to just roll over and say, oh, well, that's fine.

I'm sorry. That is not fine. That is not acceptable. They have known for months that today is the deadline to bring in their bills. They've deliberately waited to reveal their true colours, their elitism, their out-of-touch nature and the fact that they're only in this for themselves. They've only wanted to reveal this at the last possible moment, and we are going to be telling Manitobans from one end of this province to the other what this government really stands for, and they should get used to hearing the protests at this building and inside of this building over the next several years, Madam Speaker. This type of behaviour is not acceptable to us and it's not acceptable to the majority of Manitobans.

Thank you very much.

* (15:10)

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, is the House ready for the question? *[Agreed]*

The question before the House is concurrence and third reading of Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017.

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Speaker: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Recorded Vote

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

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote having been called, call in the members.

* (16:10)

Order, please.

The question before the House this afternoon is concurrence and third reading of Bill 8, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2017.

Division

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

Yeas

Bindle, Clarke, Cox, Cullen, Curry, Eichler, Ewasko, Fielding, Fletcher, Friesen, Goertzen, Graydon, Guillemard, Helwer, Isleifson, Johnson, Johnston, Lagassé, Lagimodiere, Martin, Mayer, Michaleski, Micklefield, Morley-Lecomte, Nesbitt, Pallister, Pedersen, Piwniuk, Reyes, Schuler, Smith, Smook, Squires, Stefanson, Teitsma, Wharton, Wishart, Wowchuk, Yakimoski.

Nays

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

Deputy Clerk (Mr. Rick Yarish): Yeas 39, Nays 16.

Madam Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

Hon. Andrew Micklefield (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, we'd like to proceed with second reading on bills in the following order: 9, 11, 10, 12.

Madam Speaker: It has been announced by the Government House Leader that debate will proceed in the following order on second reading: Bill 9, 11, 10 and 12.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 9—The Advocate for Children and Youth Act

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, I'd like to move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Stefanson), that Bill 9, The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, be read a second time and referred to the committee of the House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and I table the message.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Families, seconded by the honourable Minister of Justice, that Bill 9, The Advocate for Children and Youth Act, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

His Honour the Administrator has been advised of the bill, and the message is tabled.

Mr. Fielding: It seems like a very long time since I've been able to stand up and we're able to introduce this. This is important legislation amongst this House, and I'm very proud to introduce the independent, stand-alone legislation for the advocate for children and youth.

Through the introduction of the bill, government is responding to a number of the recommendations—key recommendations—made by both the current Children's Advocate, Darlene MacDonald, and the commissioner of the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry, the honourable Ted Hughes.

Guided by the principles set out in the preamble, the bill recognizes that children and youth in Manitoba have a right to be safe and protected from harm and learn and develop to their fullest potential. Our children deserve services that meet the needs and accessibility and effective value, the cultural backgrounds, values and beliefs that respect the rights, interests and the viewpoints.

I believe that I speak for everyone present in the House that says that children are our most precious commodity. Collectively, we have a legal and a

moral obligation to assess and assume the safety and well-being, and work towards building a province in which children and youth have every opportunity to thrive, and—thrive and expand as individuals.

In addition to establishing the independent legislation, The Advocate for Children and Youth Act significantly expands and strengthens the mandate of the advocate. The proposed legislation—the proposed act provides added protections for children and enhanced advocacy role of the advocate to ensure that the rights of children and youth are respected here in the province of Manitoba.

Going forward, the advocate will have the mandate to advocate on behalf of children youth who are entitled to receive designated publicly funded services. Designated services include Child and Family Services, disability services provided through the Department of Families, education programming for children who are eligible to have an individual education plan, mental health, addiction services provided by the government and health-care facilities.

Victim supports are also important; that's a part of this legislation provided to children for their families by our behalf of the government of Manitoba and criminal justice services for children in custody under supervision.

With respect in recognizing that transition to childhood—to adulthood can be very challenging for at-risk children and that the room for improvement services co-ordination for youth during this period of their life. As such, the bill expands the advocacy mandate of the advocate to include vulnerable children from age 18 to 21, which matches our current legislation.

Under the expanded mandate, the advocate will provide assistance to young adults age 18 through 21 who have intellectual disabilities as they transfer from Child and Family Services to supported living in their own communities. The bill also extends the services for the advocate for CFS-involved youth during the transition to adulthood.

This enhanced mandate will allow the advocate to more effectively respond to a lot of the complex needs of the children, youth. Recognizing the value of the roles, the bill also strengthens the powers of the advocate to obtain information from the designated service providers when advocating for children, youth and vulnerable young adults.

Advocacy services provided by the advocate may include helping children, youth and vulnerable children—or vulnerable young adults to know their rights and what they will do in respect to helping children youth, vulnerable young adults to access publicly supported services designed in the act and support children, youth and vulnerable children—adults to participate in discussions about the services they receive as well as the decisions made by the care providers. Recognizing that the advocate must play an important role in raising awareness of the United Nations convention on the rights of children, the role has been added to the responsibilities of the advocate.

As recommended by Justice Hughes, Commissioner Hughes, the proposed legislation expands the death review and investigation mandate of the advocate beyond Child and Family Services. It also grants the advocate some autonomy or authority to review and investigate serious injuries of children, youth, and young adults involved in renewable services—or reviewable services, Madam Speaker.

Ensuring that we learn from tragic events and work collaborately and strengthen publicly supported services is truly critical to preventing similar tragedies from happening in the future. For these reasons, the advocate will have the legislative authority to review and investigate serious injuries and deaths of children involved with the Child and Family Services, youth justice, mental health and addictions services, Madam Speaker.

The advocate may also review and investigate serious injuries of death of a young child who is a former permanent ward and who has received transitional child-family services. In keeping with the current practice, Madam Speaker, the advocate will continue to receive child-death reports from the Chief Medical Examiner. The process ensures that no child death fails—falls between the cracks that's happened in past.

Although the advocate will have the discretion to review and investigate child deaths, he or she must access each child-death report to determine whether investigations in the publicly funded services, supports for child could provide insights and learning opportunities for service providers in government. So it gives them the independence to look at that.

In addition to reviewing and investigating serious injuries and death of children involved in renewal—or reviewable services and those young adults receiving services under The Child and

Family Services Act, the advocate will have the responsibility to make recommendations for systematic improvements and to monitoring compliance for those recommendations. Formally, the responsibility of the Ombudsman, transferred this duty of monitoring the compliance of it to the advocate is an important aspect of strengthening his or 'hoor' independence, their office—as an officer of the Legislative Assembly.

* (16:20)

Additional provisions have also been added to strengthen the independence of the office and the powers of the advocate to be in line with those exercised by other independent officers of the Legislative Assembly. Specifically, the length, the term of the office of the advocate has been extended for three to five years, with a maximum of two terms. And this is a small but we think an important aspect of change that will give the advocate greater opportunities to really carry out his or her responsibilities in a more effective and promote system-wide change, ensuring that there's openness and transparency in the system.

The proposed bill also expands the public-reporting powers of the advocate. In the interests of the public accountability, the advocate will also acquire the publish annual service plans outlining the advocate's goals and objectives and the performance measures that will be used to evaluate the important work that they're doing on behalf of Manitoba families and children.

The advocate will also be required to report to the public the work carried out by indigenous children—or the work—and the families throughout the year, and it's my belief that new reporting responsibilities will really raise the profile of the system-wide issues that indigenous children and families face here in the province of Manitoba.

Notably, the bill includes a provision allowing the advocate to publicly release special reports in order to improve the effectiveness and the responsiveness of designated services. Special reports may include recommendations for the minister responsible for the provisions of the designated service or for the entity responsible for the provision of service. Special reports may refer to and provide comments on matters related to serious injury and death reviews and investigations—any other information the advocate deems appropriate in relation to their responsibilities.

These special reports play a critical role, Madam Speaker, of identifying and analyzing circumstances and trends that are happening which will allow the public the needed awareness to understand and make systematic changes. Special reports also enhances our ability to develop services and supports that keep children, that keep youth, keep vulnerable young adults safe and to strengthen the support necessary for them to grow and thrive.

Striking the right balance is always important with these types of legislations and protecting the privacy rights of children and family while increasing public accountability and transparency is truly an important aspect of this bill, Madam Speaker.

The proposed legislation allows the Advocate to release personal information, other than names, about children and the parents or guardians if it is in their opinion, the advocate's opinion, that the public interest in the disclosure outweighs individual privacy rights. Where personal information, including names, is already available in the public, the information may be included in the advocate's report. This is an important departure from the current legislation framework that prohibits the advocate for publishing any identifiable information.

Madam Speaker, the bill expands the mandate of the advocate. It strengthens the public reporting capacities and abilities, and establishes independent stand-alone legislation that Manitoba name—that Manitoba's new-named advocate for children and youth.

I'd first like to—I'd also like to acknowledge the invaluable and dedicated work carried out by Commissioner Hughes in terms of providing a number of the recommendations that—brought forward for the Children's Advocate.

I also want to recognize Darlene MacDonald, who, of course, is retiring fairly soon, of being the Children's Advocate, who's provided in-depth information that's critical to the progression in terms of the child-welfare system, and also critical advice in framing this legislation.

The contributions of Commissioner Hughes, as well as Mrs. MacDonald, will really be a lasting testament in terms of this legislation that's going forward.

So the advocate of children and youth is an important step in strengthening and protecting our most vulnerable citizens. Really, the bill sets the

stage for a strong, independent advocate, will have broad mandate to realize system-wide changes on behalf of Manitoba children and families. It truly is an honour to bring this legislation forward.

I would welcome debate from all sides in this, and I also encourage all members to encourage them to pass this legislation quick. We know this has taken far too long to implement and ensure that we have the independence, we have enhanced ability for the advocate to make these important system-wide issues, and we think this legislation is a step in the right direction.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Questions

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

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, miigwech to the minister for his words and for the bill that we're debating here today.

If the minister would be so kind as to share with the House why didn't the party prioritize this bill a year ago when we introduced The Children's Advocate Act?

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Families): Madam Speaker, it's a question that we asked when we came into office, and we realize the fact that these recommendations—a number of these recommendations, not just including this, but things like the protecting of children act, weren't enacted by the previous administration. We're happy that they're here today supporting it, but our question probably is in response to yours, why you didn't implement this more.

We know that the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry came out in either 2013—there's a number of years before a lot of the recommendations were brought forward. We're happy as a government that we've introduced a number of bills, legislation that's a part of this. Probably close to 13 of the recommendations, depending on how you look at them, has been

implemented in terms of our legislative agenda in the first year of our office.

Ms. Fontaine: Madam Speaker, I recognize that the minister is a new member. I'm a new member, but I did go through Hansard and I did note that, actually, we did put forward The Children's Advocate Act and members opposite had actually stalled it and stonewalled it, so I do want to just put that on the record for the minister.

My question is: Why did the minister not include the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action in the preamble of the bill?

Mr. Fielding: Well, first of all, we think that is important. There's a number of aspects that you look at in terms of legislation. Some, in particular, obviously the preamble in terms of the legislation, talks about the importantness of ensuring the rights and privileges of all children that are incorporated in this.

This also looks and does talk—the legislation talks about ensuring the work of Aboriginal children is respected and is a part of this. That's a part of the legislation.

We also know that the deputy advocate needs to have indigenous experience. That's a part of it. We think that the legislation before us does adequately include things that look at indigenous welfare of children. That's a part of it.

So we are very proud of the legislation that's before us and we think that it also helps to advocate for children and youth, especially indigenous.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): Madam Speaker, may I ask, what is the current number of kids in care?

Mr. Fielding: Well, the last reporting date, I believe there is over 10,500 kids in care.

Ms. Fontaine: In an era in which the country is on the path of reconciliation, which is borne out of the testimony of residential school survivors and founded in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action, I ask again the minister why the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to actions weren't omitted from the bill in the preamble of the bill.

Mr. Fielding: I'll give you four points: Our provincial indigenous populations are super important, especially when looking at child-welfare areas. We also know the current legislation before us

does take a look and has a call of action. We also know in the preamble, the guiding principles talk exclusively about the respect for values, beliefs, the customs of traditional community indigenous people. We know, as mentioned as a third point, that the deputy advocate has to have indigenous responsibilities. That's a part of it. And we also made—the most important part, Madam Speaker, in the legislation, is the need to include information in his or her annual report on the work undertaken with indigenous children and family and their families.

So we think those are four important points in the legislation.

Ms. Fontaine: So I'm going to ask the minister again for a third time: That in the context of the path to reconciliation in this country and in this province particularly, why was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action omitted in the preamble of this bill? It is a simple question, and noting every other indigenous aspect of the bill, is not answering the question.

*(16:30)

Mr. Fielding: I'll 'reiterate' my response to the back questions. There's four important elements that deals with that, that talks about the preamble, it talks about important natures and considerations as a part of it.

We also know that the advocate, the deputy advocate, needs to have indigenous experience. And also the legislation talks about the need to include information or his or here report in terms of the work undertaken by indigenous child and family services.

Ms. Fontaine: I'm not sure if the minister is fully aware of how divorced it is from the reality of indigenous families and in the indigenous community, that the conditions in which our CFS system is actually predicated upon actually is borne from the residential school experience.

And so, again, I ask the minister: Why are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action not in the preamble of the bill?

Mr. Fielding: Well, first of all, I don't believe that is true at all, in terms of what the—in terms of what the members opposite put on the table.

There's four important elements that deal with indigenous individuals, and especially children, throughout the system. The most important of those four, as mentioned—in terms of the bill, we know that the advocate will need to include information in his or her annual report on the work undertaken with

indigenous children and youth with their families. We know that, No. 2, we know that the deputy advocate has to have indigenous experience, experience in the field, which we think is extremely important.

We also know that, in the preamble, they talk about the guiding principles. And we know the important is to respect the values, the beliefs, the customs and the traditions of the indigenous community.

So we think we got it right in terms of this, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Fontaine: I would ask the minister to clarify which part I got wrong, the part that our current CFS system and the trauma of intergenerational families is predicated on residential school? Did I get that wrong? Can the minister explain to me what, as an indigenous MLA in here, did I get wrong?

Mr. Fielding: Well, I guess, to respond to the members opposite, I guess what you did get wrong is not being able to introduce this legislation, waiting such a long time—in fact, waiting to the vast—the dying days of last administration to put on the Order Paper before having this pass.

We think this is critical information. That's why we highlighted this. That's why we have introduced over 13 of the recommendations of Phoenix Sinclair inquiry.

We think the indigenous piece ensuring that the advocate puts information in terms of the annual report, that's within their annual report, in terms of any activities and responsibilities of indigenous youth and children, we think that it's important that a deputy advocate has that responsibility, and we have the parameters that are talked about in the advocate's point of view.

So we think that we got it right. We're always wanting to—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Are there any further questions on debate?

The honourable—[interjection]—now I can recognize the member for River Heights.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I'm—my question is with, you know, that there are changes that the minister is trying to bring into the system. And yet we still have ongoing struggles, as exemplified by—I think it was a 14-year-old boy who died recently on the ice up in the Island Lake area,

even though he wasn't supposed to be in those communities at all. It was under odd circumstances.

And there clearly are some important issues which relate in part to whether the minister is going to provide the support to people who are trying to improve the system, which is obviously needed. And I would also like some—

Madam Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr. Fielding: I didn't get all of the question but we have ensured that the legislation is expanded in terms of the services where the advocate can make change and made difference. So that is something that we tried to incorporate. It's very similar to the services, supported services, that were brought forward by The Protecting Children Act. It's also very similar to the model that Justice Hughes talked about in BC in terms of some of the supported services. We think it's a broad scope, but we also think it provides independence and it provides accountability that's built into the legislation. So we're very happy with the legislation.

So, if the member would like to expand upon his question, that would be—I'd love to hear more.

Madam Speaker: If there are no further questions, debate is open.

Debate

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I'm pleased to be able to put some words on the record today.

I'll actually start by sharing with the House that in March of 2006, I was actually the director of justice for the Southern Chiefs' Organization. And, like many non-profit indigenous organizations, I had multiple files, even though I got paid for only one file, I did seven other different files.

And one of those files was CFS. And I remember getting a call very, very early in the morning by our grand chief telling me that I had to go to Fisher River first—Cree nation. And I rushed down there and met with Chief David Crate and council, and that was when Phoenix Sinclair's body had been found. And I remember sitting in the band office with so many people, including, again, all chief and council. There was the RCMP there. And I just remember how heavy the room felt. The room was so heavy. And there was just such a sense of disbelief that this poor little girl had suffered so much.

And elders came to the meeting, and then we were taken out with the RCMP into the bush where her body was found. And so there was actually—if you went into the bush, there was a part of it that there was just a path. And we were brought—we trekked through the path. It was still snow everywhere. There was snow. And we stopped at this one place, and you could see further out where we weren't allowed to go, I don't know how many feet into the bush there was a white tent. And that was where the RCMP and forensics were gathering all of, well, all that remained, I suppose. And it certainly does affect your spirit to see something like that. It's something that you—if you're watching TV, you see in TV, and yet here we were, community and elders, and it was so quiet and we were so hurt.

We were just so hurt for this little girl. And there was almost this unspoken understanding and connection between all of us. The effects of residential schools and the effects of inter-generational trauma that, for generations and generations and generations, that brought us to this particular moment, that here's all these people standing in the bush in the winter looking at a tent for what we knew were, you know, remains, and very little remains of this little baby.

I also know that, actually, I remember driving back to Winnipeg late that night, very, very sad and very, very heavy, and I remember thinking to myself, I want to make change. I was already trying to make change in the various files that I worked on and the various community work that I did. But I wanted to be able to make legislative change, and I remember that very, very distinctly, driving home. Anybody that's been to Fisher River knows it's a two-and-a-half-hour drive. And I remember that it was actually on that drive that I said, one day I want to run for political office. And it was actually born in that moment, sitting in the bush, looking at, you know, again, the remains of this little girl.

* (16:40)

So, you know, I'm glad that this bill is on the order table. I congratulate the government for really bringing forward the bill that we had brought forward, and including my private members' bill. At the end of the day, and I've said it multiple times in this House, I know—and I believe—that we all want the best for children. We must—it is our responsibility. It is our responsibility as parents; it's our responsibility as Manitobans; and, certainly, it's our responsibility as legislatures.

I—one of the first things I did—when, after the election and after you get over the shock and blur of being elected—was, very quickly, asked our staff to secure a meeting with the Children's Advocate because I, again, wanted to put forward legislation that would make things better for children and young adults, because I know all the years that I've worked in advocacy, I know that a huge amount of work that I did involved children or involved families advocating. And certainly there's a lot more that we could do, and I knew that I wanted to be able to provide support to the Children's Advocate office to be able to put forward and continue to push this.

So, again, I'm glad that we're here today. I think that the bill, you know, supports the commitments that we've made to strengthening supports for Manitoba children.

I'm going to keep my question—or, my response here very, very brief. I do just want to say—and I want it a part of the official record—how important it is to recognize that where we are today in respect of the numbers of children that we have in the child welfare system is absolutely—a hundred and fifty per cent—predicated upon residential schools. And so, you know, I think that it is unfortunate that there's no mention of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action in the preamble. And I know that I've said this here before, and I want to say it here again so that it's perfectly understood that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action were born from very courageous, resilient, forgiving individuals who shared their stories with all of us. Who shared their stories of physical abuse, of sexual abuse, of emotional abuse, of spiritual abuse, of cultural genocide to get us all to a place where we can walk truthfully on the path to reconciliation. And my job as a legislature, but particularly as an indigenous woman, is always to bring and lift up those people that shared. None of us would understand this if it wasn't for their courageous strength to share their stories.

So I think that it—and I would ask the minister to consider—to reconsider and to include in the preamble the Truth and Reconciliation's calls to action, which then, again, I think, is so important to understand as we're on this path to reconciliation. I—and that's all.

Miigwech, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Dawson Creek.

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 9, The Advocate for Children and Youth Act.

As a foster parent and MLA, my heart broke when I learned of the death of Phoenix Sinclair. Phoenix Sinclair and her tragic death are a prime example of the failings of the previous system when it came to protecting children.

In 2014, the commission of inquiry into the death of Phoenix Sinclair recommended that Manitoba enact a stand-alone legislation for the Children's Advocate, which the previous administration failed to act on. It also recommended that this legislation should provide the Child Advocate with an expanded mandate beyond the child and family services system. Another recommendation to the commission was made by the child—that the Child Advocate be granted stronger public reporting abilities which, again, the NDP failed to act on.

By introducing Bill 9, our government is following through on our commitments to this province and its vulnerable children.

Madam Speaker, in introducing this bill, our government has introduced legislation to create a stand-alone Children's Advocate, thereby enhancing the independence of this office and increasing accountability within our province's child welfare services.

Part of the services that will be expanded under the bill are the Child and Family Services under the CFS act and Adoption Act, disability services as defined in the regulations, educational programming for children who are eligible for an individual education plan. Our bill also expands the advocate's power to advocate for vulnerable young adults between 18 and 21, who, as children, received services under the CFS act and who are now eligible to receive services to assist them in their transitions to adulthood, disability services as defined in the regulations, educational programming for young adults who need individual education plans.

Our work on this began with the—in the previous session with Bill 8, The Protecting Children (Information Sharing) Act, and is now continuing with Bill 9.

Madam Speaker, our government knows this is a very important piece of legislation for children in care and children who have come into contact with the CFS system. The lives of children in care are a priority for this government, and we plan on making

sure that there are better outcomes for those most vulnerable children.

As I've said before, part of the reason I ran to be an MLA was to bring a voice to children and adults in care, to be a voice for those who have none or are denied the right to have a voice. Our PC government has worked closely with the Office of the Children's Advocate in developing this bill to ensure that it has the elements it needs.

In addition, as the Minister of Families (Mr. Fielding) indicated earlier, the expanded mandate of the office will give the Children's Advocate a reporting responsibility that will expand and elaborate on the systemic issues that indigenous families experience in our province.

As someone who has been involved with the CFS system for 17 years going on 18 in September, I can say that these are positive changes for children and adults in care, and that are needed and long overdue for the Office of the Children's Advocate in Manitoba.

It's incredibly important that we work together to ensure that our province's families and its children are safe and supported. I would like to thank the House again for the opportunity to speak to this bill and a topic that I hold close to my heart.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I would just like to correct the record and indicate that it was the member for Dawson Trail (Mr. Lagassé) that had just been speaking in debate.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): We all should have learned what this building stood for. We all should have been more vocal in our advocacy for our CFS kids. Now is not the time for pointing fingers; it gets us nowhere. It is time to fix the system.

The Children's Advocate is a highly important organization in ensuring the needs of youth in the CFS system—that they are met. Having the amazing opportunity to visit their offices and meet their staff, I could fully understand the hard work and dedication of anyone who worked in that office.

I have always been a strong advocate for children in care and have only wanted the best for our most vulnerable in our society.

The recommendations offered by the final inquiry report from the death of Phoenix Sinclair must still be a priority. I can still see my sister-in-law

falling as she learned the death of one of her relations. It has been over a decade since the death of that baby girl, and yet not all the recommendations from the inquiry have yet been implemented.

There are children who are still falling through the cracks of the CFS system. As I've said before, we could fill the seats of the MTS Centre with all the children currently in CFS care.

* (16:50)

I am trying to provide a voice for those children. For far too long now, their concerns have gone unnoticed and their concerns unheard. The OA—OCA allows many of these children an opportunity to be heard about the unfair treatment in the system that they were forced into. The Children's Advocate has long since—waiting for changes to their mandates to better serve and help our youth in need. These changes are needed to ensure the safety, security, well-being and care for our children within the system, but the system is not the only place where our children and youth go unnoticed or unheard.

Expanding the reach of the Children's Advocate to include the ability to provide services to other areas outside CFS presents a much-needed change. There are many children in need, allowing the Children's Advocate to be a voice for all—it is an amazing goal that must be accomplished.

Children receiving disability, mental health, addictions services must all be considered when ensuring we are looking after our most vulnerable. Early childhood development and children involved in the child-care services need a voice as well. We must not also forget those within the criminal justice system or in custody as those are some of our youth who need the most help of all.

However, the problems of these youth in care do not disappear the moment they hit 18 years of age. As many transition into adulthood, some feel neglected and forgotten as the services they once received are now inaccessible. Allowing the Children's Advocate to advocate for those young adults who have previously received services ensure that our vulnerable youth do not become vulnerable adults. This will hopefully ensure that they are fully capable of becoming productive in their lives and living to their fullest potential.

Growing up in the CFS system or any of those other systems, it is the hardest road for such a young life to take. Despite all our desires to see a better future for them, we continue to see serious injury or

even death among those vulnerable youths. Expanding the mandate to investigate the death or serious injury of a child or a young adult previously in care will hopefully allow for preventative measures to be developed.

My colleague mentioned the young 14-year-old that passed away on the ice in my communities. I still can't function normally because of it.

Our dedication to ensuring children, especially those most vulnerable, will continue unabated. We will also continue to work with all Manitobans to see a better future for all our children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Speaker, a few comments on this legislation.

First of all, I want to compliment the minister. There are many good aspects to this legislation. We are, I think, all well aware that there's far too many children in care, which, as the minister said, not very long ago is about 10 and half thousand and that we need to change and improve the system so it's better supporting families, and helping to change the situation so children don't have to be apprehended and put into care.

There are two aspects of this legislation which I'd like to discuss particularly. And the first has to do with the issue of representing families. If we go to section 11(1)(ii), it says that the advocate has the following responsibilities, which include: by representing the rights, interests and viewpoints of children and young adults receiving or eligible to receive designated services, including by advocating on their behalf.

Now, one of the problems which has been there for many years has been that the Children's Advocate all too often is not really able to represent families. In fact, I have had many parents come to me and say that they have gone to the Children's Advocate and said, can you help me? But the Children's Advocate has said, no, I'm here to represent children; I'm not here to represent families. I can't help you. I can't advocate for you, because my job is to represent children. That's been the position of the Children's Advocate.

Now, things may have changed a little bit in that the Children's Advocate is at least more aware, in recent year or two, of the importance of families, and

there is a little bit more language in some section of this bill which talks about families.

But here we are in one of the really critical sections of the bill, and there's no mention of any possibility of being able to advocate for families. And, when families are such an important part of the lives of children and play such an important role in supporting children and in trying to raise children and doing their very best in large measure—there are a few exceptions—but, by and large, we need to be able to support families and to do the job that they need to do to raise their children.

And so one of the things here, which I would hope that the minister would have a look at, is the possibility of enabling the Children's Advocate to better represent families, so if parents come to say, look, I want to talk to you as the Children's Advocate and I need your help in terms of our family sticking together and us being able to raise these kids, these are the kind of supports that are needed, that the Children's Advocate would actually be able to look at that.

I know in the past that it's been seen as kind of a conflict of interest, but, you know, if we're really devoted to keeping families together and we're keeping to—helping and supporting the families to raise their children, then we need to be looking at this as part of the approach that we need to change, and this bill doesn't get us there in terms of that change. And I would ask the minister to have a look at that, and, hopefully, even when we come to committee stage or at report stage, there's room for looking at amendments to add families there in terms of what the Children's Advocate can actually advocate for.

The second point that I want to talk about has to do with the transition. Now, currently in the transition, when a child reaches 18, there is a possibility of extending the time that the child is in care, or there is a possibility of the child leaving care and really not having very much to do with Child and Family Services or the supports that have been built up to that date or the parents.

And I would suggest to the minister that, rather than keeping children in care at age 18, that there be support mechanisms put in place so that children, after 18, can be supported—educational programs—can be supported in a variety of ways so that they can do well, and that by keeping them in care, we actually

are limiting their possibilities, and we should be making sure that we have a vehicle and a way to support kids who are not necessarily in care, but who have aged out of care after 18.

And I think if the minister could look at this area so that there is a possibility of having much better supports for kids after 18, leave care, then we wouldn't need to have very many kids at all actually stay in care at age 18 because we'd have a really good mechanism to be able to support these children after they leave care and make sure that they really have the best opportunity to get an education, to get work, and to do really, really well and be productive members incorporated and doing well in our society and in our community, and making sure that there

are opportunities that these children have as they move forward and flourish, we hope, after they become 18, because I think that would be really, really important if we could do that. Certainly, there are things that could be—there are things that we can do in providing supports to children when they become 18, and I think the minister should look very carefully at this—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Order, please.

When the debate resumes, the member will have 23 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 20, 2017

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