

Second Session – Forty-Second Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Social and Economic Development

Chairperson
Mr. Dennis Smook
Constituency of La Vérendrye

Vol. LXXIV No. 1 - 5:15 p.m., Thursday, December 5, 2019

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Thursday, December 5, 2019

TIME – 5:15 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Dennis Smook
(La Vérendrye)**

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Schuler, Hon. Mrs. Stefanson

*Mses. Adams, Gordon, Messrs. Guenter,
Lindsey, Micklefield, Ms. Morley-Lecomte,
Messrs. Smook, Wasyliw*

Substitutions:

Mr. Sala for Ms. Naylor

APPEARING:

Hon. Jon Gerrard, MLA for River Heights

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty
Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy for the
fiscal year ending March 31, 2018*

*Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty
Reduction Strategy for the fiscal year ending
March 31, 2019*

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Good afternoon. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

Our first item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson.

Are there any nominations? *[interjection]*

Just have to wait 'til I recognize you.

Mr. Micklefield.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I nominate Ms. Morley-Lecomte as Vice-Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morley-Lecomte has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations—oh, sorry—Ms. Morley-Lecomte has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Ms. Morley-Lecomte is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following reports: Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2018; and the Annual Report of the Manitoba Poverty Reduction Strategy for the fiscal year ending March 31st, 2019.

Before we get started, are there any suggestions as to how long we should sit this afternoon?

Hon. Ron Schuler (Minister of Infrastructure): 'Til 6 o'clock?

Mr. Chairperson: It has been suggested that we sit 'til 6 o'clock.

Is everybody in favour of that?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Mark Wasyliw (Fort Garry): Obviously, we want to make sure that our questions get asked and answered, and if it's at 6 o'clock, great. If it takes longer than that, we obviously would like to sit later and make sure the questions get answered.

Mr. Chairperson: What we will do then is we will sit to 6 o'clock and see what the will of the committee is at 6 o'clock.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

We will sit 'til 6 o'clock and then see what the will of the committee is at 6 o'clock.

Does the honourable minister wish to make an opening statement, and would she please introduce the officials in attendance?

* (17:20)

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Families): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'd like to introduce our—

my deputy minister, John Leggat. We have Heidi Wurmman with us as well as Carolyn Ryan and Karen Mackintosh.

And I will just proceed, Mr. Chair, with my opening statement?

Mr. Chairperson: The Honourable Mrs. Stefanson, please do.

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you for the opportunity to be here to discuss the progress our government is making to reduce poverty and improve outcomes for Manitobans.

I'd like to start by outlining the challenges that we inherited. Under the previous administration, Manitoba's child poverty rate was the worst in the country. The child-care wait-list doubled and the number of children in CFS care also doubled in our province.

In contrast, we are making life more affordable for Manitoba families while lifting children out of poverty and ensuring that they are thriving in safe, loving homes. I am proud to say that our 2018-19 annual report on Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy shows that we are making progress.

In March 2019, we released Pathways to a Better Future, Manitoba's Poverty Reduction Strategy, which has a clear target, timeline and indicators to measure progress. The data presented in this year's Poverty Reduction Strategy annual report shows that we are moving in the right direction.

The overall poverty rate in Manitoba fell from 12 per cent in 2015 to 8.7 per cent in 2017, a decrease of 27.5 per cent, according to Statistics Canada. Manitoba's child poverty rate fell from 16.4 per cent in 2015 to 9.5 per cent in 2017, a decrease of 42.1 per cent in just two years. In addition, we are improving outcomes for Manitoba's children. The availability of licensed child care increased by 3.3 per cent overall between 2014-15 and 2018-19.

We have also reduced the number of children in care in our province. Between 2017 and 2019, the number of children in care has decreased by 4.3 per cent. This represents the first year-over-year decline in the last 15 years in Manitoba.

Finally, the high school graduation rate has improved by 3.4 per cent. In 2018, almost 80 per cent of Manitoba high school students graduated on schedule.

Unlike the previous government, we are taking action to lift Manitobans out of poverty. The 2018-19 Poverty Reduction annual report provides data on the 13 indicators of poverty reduction that were identified in Pathways to a Better Future. Our annual report shows progress or stability on eight of the 13 indicators. We are making that progress by shifting individuals away from dependency on government programs and toward meaningful employment. And we are focused, above all, on keeping families together and children safe.

EIA caseload growth has been decreasing. Growth in the overall caseload, which was 6 per cent in 2016-17, decreased to 1.5 per cent in 2018-19. The general assistance caseload, which grew over 20 per cent in 2015-16, decreased by 0.5 per cent in 2018-19.

Pivotal to success and reducing caseload growth to date has been the introduction of Jobs On Market. Jobs On Market was established as an employment centre dedicated to serving adults without children who are applying for or receiving EIA benefits. The centre quickly engages with clients who are assessed as being ready for the labour market. Centre staff identify client needs, make referrals and monitor client progress. Since February 2017, Jobs On Market has served over 6,000 people, and over 2,800 Jobs On Market clients are no longer dependent on EIA for financial assistance.

We are further changing how we provide EIA benefits by creating a new income support program for people with severe and prolonged disabilities that will be separate from the regular EIA program. Our government is currently undergoing consultations as we develop the new program which will help ensure that Manitobans with disabilities can lead lives of dignity.

In addition, our government is providing Rent Assist to nearly 3,000 more low-income Manitobans than the previous government and will extend the benefit to nearly 1,000 more this year. Today, our government also announced \$750,000 in funding over three years for End Homelessness Winnipeg, which will support co-ordination and alignment of services for individuals experiencing homelessness and the implementation of Winnipeg's extreme cold weather response strategy.

We are also always looking to improve outcomes for Manitoba's vulnerable children and youth. Initiatives to reduce the number of children in care, increase access to child care and improve educational

outcomes are well under way. We are working on major reforms to the CFS system, based on recommendations from our Legislative Review Committee. We have moved toward a single-envelope funding model for CFS authorities, encouraging them to allocate more funding to prevent the apprehension of children. Our 2017 single-envelope pilot project involving eight CFS agencies resulted in an 18 per cent decrease in the number of children entering care in participating agencies. And we have launched a new child-care-development tax credit and a funding model review of early learning and child care to create more child-care options for Manitoba families.

As part of this review, our government will be developing a new portable child-care benefit, so that Manitoba families are supported in finding the child care of their choice, regardless of whether it comes from the non-profit or private sectors.

Finally, my colleague, the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), has 'launched'—launched a comprehensive review of the K-to-12 education system to improve the numeracy and literacy skills of Manitoba's children. This is all part of our government's plan to move Manitoba forward, lifting families and children out of poverty.

I'd like to close by thanking members of the Poverty Reduction Committee, including community members Zully Trujillo and Jennie Wastesicoot, as well as my ministerial colleagues, the ministers of Education, Economic Development and Training, Indigenous and Northern Relations and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

I would also like to welcome the MLA for Dawson Trail to the committee. He is a good friend and colleague who cares deeply about vulnerable Manitobans, and I know that he will bring a valuable perspective and important skills to the table as we continue to work reducing poverty in this province.

Thank you, again, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to put a few words on the record, and I look forward to discussions on this annual report, as well as the previous annual 'recort'—annual report on the agenda for this evening.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the honourable minister for her statement.

Before I recognize the critic, I just would like to remind—I neglected to say that questions or statements or answers will not go any longer than 10 minutes. Just so, you know, it's on record that people know that.

Does the critic for the official opposition have an opening statement?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams.

Ms. Danielle Adams (Thompson): At a time when our province is dealing with unprecedented levels of crime, it is imperative that we as legislators work to reduce and eradicate poverty.

My NDP team and I recognize that poverty is one of the root causes and that needs to be addressed in order to address public safety crisis that is gripping our province. And many of us find themselves in poverty that is due to past trauma, struggles with mental health and addictions and lack of social and community supports to help throughout the difficult time. No one chooses to live in poverty, but the government's actions make it more difficult to escape. Having less access to post-secondary because of 'hising'-rising cost of tuition, lack of new and affordable housing and lack of adequate child-care only exasperates the problem. I look forward to discussing the poverty reduction annual report today.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member for her statement.

The floor is now open for questions.

Ms. Adams: Are there any vacancies on the committee?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, we've gone through a pretty significant review and changes with respect to the poverty reduction and social inclusion strategy. And, again, I mentioned two individuals earlier, who have put a significant amount of work from the community on this committee.

We do have currently two vacancies that we will be filling very soon.

* (17:30)

Ms. Adams: With me being new to the critic role, could the minister please explain the background of the professionals who are serving on the committee?

Mrs. Stefanson: Jennie Wastesicoot was—or is a First Nation professor at the University College of the North, and Zully Trujillo was a recommendation from the United Way and she works in the area of—she's a social worker.

Ms. Adams: Who are the standing people on the committee?

Mrs. Stefanson: If I could just get some clarification, is the member asking who is on the committee?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mrs. Stefanson: So I went through that earlier in my opening statements and the member can refer back to that, but it's the Minister of Education (Mr. Goertzen), the Minister of growth—sorry, of Economic Development and Training (Mr. Eichler), as well as Indigenous and Northern Relations (Ms. Clarke) and—*[interjection]*—yes, and the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Cox) as well. As well as—there was Stanley McKay as well as Zully Trujillo and Jennie Wastesicoot, which I mentioned as well.

Ms. Adams: And what is the background for Dr. Stanley McKay?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, he's a doctor of theology and he was from Fisher River First Nation.

Ms. Adams: Some of the baseline data that is being used to indicate the progress is more than 10 years old, specifically, on page 10 for the core housing need. Does that—is there more recent data does not exist?

Mrs. Stefanson: So the 2006 information was most, I guess, recent information. They didn't have a census in 2011, so that was the most recent data to be able to use for the report.

Ms. Adams: Who wrote the Manitoba poverty reduction strategy?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, it was written by the government of Manitoba and, certainly, it was compiled as a result of, you know, lots of consultation in the communities and many meetings that we had as well with the community members and with the members of the committee.

Ms. Adams: Were any consultants hired to produce the report?

Mrs. Stefanson: No.

Ms. Adams: Who wrote the annual report?

Mrs. Stefanson: The government of Manitoba.

Ms. Adams: Were any consultants to—hired to write the annual report?

Mrs. Stefanson: No.

Ms. Adams: In 2017-2018, you used 21 indicators of poverty reduction. The 2018-2019 report, you used only 13.

Why were the other eight indicators removed?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes. So, originally this was done as a result of much consultation out there in the community; we heard from community members that there were too many indicators. And, as well, this brought this in line with the federal government indicators as well.

Ms. Adams: The total number—the total units of social and affordable housing supported by Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corp's indicator and a new household served through MHRC were removed. Housing First strategy is a proven approach to help uplift people out of poverty. That is why it is concerning to see that—this indicator removed.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, the reason that this one was removed is that the indicator may not completely and accurately capture the government's efforts at serving the housing needs of low-income Manitobans.

Certainly, we've moved into other areas and enhancing other areas like Rent Assist, where we've increased significantly the number of people that we're helping out in the area of Rent Assist. And so those types of things take into consideration, and so we don't believe that that's an indicator, and we had heard through our consultation process that that may not accurately reflect what we're trying to achieve here—and that's ensuring that Manitoba families and indicating, you know, which Manitoba families and how many Manitoba families are getting access to the affordable housing that they need.

Ms. Adams: Who was consulted on removing that indicator from the Poverty Reduction Strategy?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, there were over 2,000 Manitobans that were consulted as a result of this, and they were people that ranged from—that advocates for—advocates to people with lived experience and—from all over Manitoba.

Mr. Adrien Sala (St. James): I appreciate the information from the minister.

I'd just like to ask about the Rent Assist reduction that we saw under this government. Could you just describe the reduction, the total amount of Rent Assist available to individuals who qualify for the program?

Mrs. Stefanson: I think the important part of this is that we're offering Rent Assist to a broader number of people across the province who need it.

* (17:40)

So we've actually—since taking office, we've increased almost 3,000 already those that we're helping in the way of Rent Assist, which is a very positive thing, I believe, in our province. And this year alone, I think we're looking at about 1,000 more this year that we're helping out on Rent Assist as well.

Mr. Sala: I thank the minister for the information. I'm not sure how it qualifies as a good thing that we've got more people who are asking to sign up for things like Rent Assist, but surely there are a lot of people who are experiencing a lot of additional struggle because of that reduction in the total amount available through that program.

Just turning now our attention to questions about the sale of social and affordable housing units here in Manitoba. I'd like to ask the minister about the total number of social and affordable housing units that have been lost since her government has taken office.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I think in—you know, it's very important that we consider what we inherited first, because we inherited over \$1 billion in deferred maintenance charges, and I know—or in deferred maintenance costs, and you know, that's a significant number of units that were not available because they were in deplorable conditions and then people not able to live in those.

So we've focused efforts over the last number of years to ensure that we put more money toward maintenance and bringing them up to speed with some of those—with those units. And we have also increased the number of affordable housing units in the province since we took office as well, so that would be wrong to say that we have decreased. We have increased the number.

Mr. Sala: Could the minister describe—sorry, I'll wait until she's—so we didn't get an answer to the question about the total number of housing units that have been lost since her government's taken office, so I'll ask it again.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, there's over 600 and—over 600 that have been added, as well as about—over 110 or 115 or so that have been approved and are in the process of being built—in construction, I guess.

Mr. Sala: So we know CBC just recently reported only three days ago that over 90 properties have been

sold off in the last several years, last handful of years, including a building only a few blocks from here at 185 Smith where they had 373 units of social housing. I'd like to ask the minister how we can square the sale of that level of social housing or that number of social housing units in a context where we have a significant number of people in this province that are in dire need of it.

Mrs. Stefanson: I thank the member for the question, and I—it gives me an opportunity, I think, to clarify and put some facts on the record with respect to what he's referring to. And certainly the 94 units, or the 94, were—the majority of those were sold to families in the communities, various communities across rural and northern Manitoba, and they were done through the Rural Homeownership Program. So—and then the rest were sold as well to individual families, so, I mean, we're moving towards home ownership. We believe that Manitobans should have the ability to own their own home, and so that's why we're working to—and that—this is a good-news story, actually, that these 94 were sold to individual families in the communities all across Manitoba, again in rural and northern as well, Manitoba, so. That's a very-good-news story.

We're also partnering with organizations like Habitat for Humanity, where—and we know, I think we all know around this table the wonderful work that they do in our communities, and they work on a lease-to-own and those who are chosen to live in these facilities participate in building their own homes, which is a wonderful thing. And so we're trying to move more towards individual home ownership as a part of this, and that's what this is all about.

Ms. Adams: Thank you for your answer, Minister. You have indicated, Mr. Chair, you've indicated that you sold—that 94 units have been sold, and they were majority sold to rural and northern communities. Which communities purchased the properties?

Mrs. Stefanson: There were a number of communities all over rural and northern Manitoba and certainly, yes, these were sold to individual families who wanted to purchase their own homes which is, we think, certainly on this side of the House and believe that it's a good thing to move towards affordable housing and people who want to own their own homes and bring their families up in those homes.

Mr. Sala: And I apologize for the jumping back and forth between members here. I'll—just like to follow up in relation to this question about the disposal of 373 social housing units at—on Smith Street and just

to place this in the context of the wait list that we're seeing within Manitoba Housing.

So, again, thanks to a FIPPA by our colleagues here down at this end of the table, recently as reported again by, I believe CBC, we've seen there were 8,449 applicants for Manitoba Housing in September, and that's 1,600 more individuals than were on that wait-list than in January in 2019.

So, when we square that against the disposal of 373 social housing units only blocks from here, the—I appreciate that was a desire to see more Manitobans be put into position of being able to gain home ownership. I think the partnerships with Habitat are laudable and it's an outstanding organization and there's certainly nothing but positives to come from those types of partnerships.

But it's very concerning to me, and I know to members in the community, when we look at this increasing level of need as expressed through wait-list numbers that have gone up, just ballpark here, 25 per cent in a matter of six months, while at the same time we're disposing of 373 units just, again, just a matter of blocks from here.

So, again, I'd like to ask the minister: Does she feel that home ownership is a suitable strategy for responding to the housing needs of these 8,449 people who are sitting on a wait-list right now looking for shelter?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, there's a couple of things here. First of all, I'll go back to what I mentioned earlier and I've mentioned time and time again, and this is the reality of what we inherited from the previous NDP government—over a billion dollars in deferred maintenance charges on existing facilities.

These were facilities that the previous government, over their time in office, allowed to deteriorate. So as we fix those up and we are putting more money towards maintenance and renovations within those facilities, as we move, you know, more of those, I mean, this'll be a positive thing, but it's not something that's going to happen overnight.

This is a significant setback for people in Manitoba, and we share your concerns, certainly from, you know, what we inherited, and we want to move towards that, and that's why we're making significant investments when it comes to modernization and improvements for units—affordable housing units in Manitoba.

I think it's also important to mention that there were new policies that were introduced when we first came into office that made it easier to apply for Manitoba Housing and so, you know, again, we want to make it easier for families to be able to access the affordable housing that they need, want and deserve for their families.

Mr. Sala: I thank the minister for the information.

So, I'd argue that making a process for applying for a Manitoba Housing unit that you can never obtain much more efficient isn't necessarily a net benefit to Manitobans in need.

If we look at all the funding agreements that are expiring with the feds right now that have supported social and affordable housing organizations and groups providing the housing, one of the big risks that we're seeing is the loss of RGI units, because as those agreements expire and those housing organizations are placed in a position of needing to meet the financial requirements of operating without the benefit of those subsidies or those agreements with the feds or the—there's then a need to ensure that the tenant balance in the mix in those buildings allows them, again, to meet their ongoing operational costs.

That creates a significant threat to the presence of RGI units in those buildings or in those complexes because as those organizations, those co-operatives are forced to meet those higher costs of operating without that subsidy, they have to look at shifting those tenant mixes.

* (17:50)

What is this government doing to ensure that with the expiry of those housing agreements with the feds that we are not losing RGI units? And I would ask: Have any RGI units been lost to date as a function of the expiry of federal housing agreements?

Mrs. Stefanson: So I thank the member for the question, and I think it's important. Certainly, last, believe it was June, we had the opportunity to sign a bilateral agreement with the federal government to move forward on a housing strategy. And I think that goes a long way to addressing the issues that you're—the very issues that you're talking about. So we look forward. This is not something that is going to be solely the provincial government's responsibility. It's not solely the federal government's responsibility. In fact, it's the responsibility for everyone to ensure that we have the affordable housing for Manitobans who need it. And so we think that that bilateral agreement

will bring forward some solutions, certainly, to some of the issues that you refer to.

Mr. Sala: So I'll just repeat the question one more time.

Have we seen any net decrease in the total number of RGI units here in Manitoba since your government has taken office?

Mrs. Stefanson: So this primarily affects urban indigenous families as well. And, prior to signing the bilateral agreement with the federal government, we stepped up to ensure that we were providing this affordable housing to Manitobans unilaterally as a province prior-like, even prior to signing that bilateral agreement. But, by signing that bilateral agreement, this will further enhance that moving forward.

Ms. Adams: I was hoping that the minister would be able to provide me with a list of all of the 94 units that were sold, where and who they were sold to.

Mrs. Stefanson: I don't have a copy of that here right now, but certainly we can endeavour to get the communities-what-we can give a list of the communities that-where the units were sold. Be very difficult-I think it would be a, you know, a freedom of information issue if we started to give away names of people. So I don't think that that would be appropriate.

Ms. Adams: At this point, the list of the communities would be fine.

Mrs. Stefanson: You know, I believe you could ask your friends from the-and your colleagues from the Liberal Party; I think they tabled it in the House the other day, so it should be part of the, you know, part of the record anyway.

Ms. Adams: Could the minister who-could the minister please go into detail on who was consulted with removing the following indicators: sense of community belonging; the average weekly earnings and minimum wage; post-secondary participation; participation in adult learning; low-income rates; early development and instruction scores; teen birth rates; potential years of loss of life by income inequality; prevalence of chronic disease and income inequality; average number of persons receiving co-ordinated home care; potential continuing physician care; and the number of people using ACCESS centres.

Mrs. Stefanson: So, again, I mentioned to the member earlier that, you know, we heard loud and clear from those people that we consulted in the

community, and those were communities all across Manitoba and experts in various fields. So experts were sought out for their input in each of the individual indicators as well.

But we heard loud and clear from communities that-and members who participated, that they felt that the 21 indicators should be reduced to the 13, and so the reason we made these changes was as a result of those consultations that took place.

It also brings it more in line with the federal government and other provinces across Canada to give a more accurate depiction of how we compare provinces in these areas.

Ms. Adams: Why was there a reduction in the indicators?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I think I just answered that. There was a reduction because of-as a result of the consultation that took place, and we heard loud and clear that people wanted to simplify the indicators, and we heard that loud and clear. So it's not something that I unilaterally said that this is what we want to do. We did it on-as a result of the advice that we received from people, again, with lived experience, with expertise and knowledge in these areas.

Ms. Adams: Could the minister please provide me with a list of all of the people who were consulted in organizations?

Mrs. Stefanson: I can certainly endeavour to get the information on the individual organizations that were consulted. I think, again, it would be inappropriate to give out individual names.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being two minutes to 6-we had agreed to sit until 6 o'clock and then revisit-what is the will of the committee?

Mr. Wasyliw, you had your hand up first.

Mr. Wasyliw: We wish to continue. We have a significant number of questions that haven't been answered.

Mr. Chairperson: Would you like to set a time as to when we'd revisit it, or-

Mr. Wasyliw: Let's revisit this issue at 6:30.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, can we set the time as 6:30, and then if the committee wants to extend it, it would have to be done by consensus, by agreement.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that in agreement?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: It's by leave, then, Mr. Schuler?

Mr. Schuler: Then I would move that the committee sit 'til 6:30 and then continue to sit by agreement after that.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that the will of the committee?

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): We'll sit 'til 6:30 and then revisit it the same as we did at 6.

Mr. Schuler: I move that we sit 'til 6:30 and then anything further would have to be by agreement.

I guess, then, that's a motion, and I put a motion on the floor.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, we must—we require a motion to be in writing.

Mr. Gerrard, you had a question?

* (18:00)

Mr. Schuler.

Mr. Schuler: I move that the committee sit until 6:30 and then continue by agreement of the whole committee only.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been moved by Mr. Schuler that the committee sit until 6:30 and then continue by agreement of the whole committee only.

Does anybody wish—the motion is in order. The floor is open for debate on this motion.

Mr. Lindsey: We have to vote on this motion, I assume? Or—this motion has to pass by consensus, or what is the—

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I would just make the point that I would like to be sure that I get a chance to ask a few questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gerrard, not being a member of the committee, if it's the entire committee's wish to rise at 6:30, then that's what would happen. I mean, if there is agreement made, they allow you—the critic allows you some time, that would be up to the critic.

Mr. Gerrard: There's a precedent going back many years to when I was not in the status of having official party status, in a very similar situation, and in that precedent, almost without exception, I was allowed to ask some questions, just as a tradition of fairness and respect for others.

Mr. Chairperson: I would suggest that Mr. Gerrard talk with the critic, because the critic controls the floor

for asking questions, and if that's like—I don't—it's not for the Chair to rule on previous instances. It is in this matter. So I would suggest that he talk to the critic.

Okay, right now we have a motion on the floor. All in favour—oh, Mr. Lindsey.

Mr. Lindsey: I just want to address Mr. Gerrard's concern, that if we are forced to adjourn this committee at 6:30 because Mr. Schuler doesn't wish to be here past that point in time, unfortunately, we probably won't be done asking questions at that point in time. So, sorry, Jon, but if we carry on until we're actually—feel like we've accomplished what this committee is here for, then, certainly, we would be not opposed to affording Mr. Gerrard some time.

Mr. Schuler: Could the committee take a three-minute break and allow some discussion between the opposition and the government?

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams.

Ms. Adams: I would say no. If he—if the member opposite would withdraw the motion, I'd be more than happy to allow a three-minute break, if he feels he needs to consult with his colleagues.

Mr. Chairperson: The question on the table right now before we can go back to the motion, is the leave of the committee's on the table right now. So, we need a no, or—*[interjection]*

I'd like to ask if there is will to recess for three minutes. There seems to be a debate going on; if we could get it solved in a couple minutes.

Is it the will of the committee to recess for three minutes? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: No? Then we will continue on.

Mr. Micklefield: Mr. Chair, I defer to your continuance. That's fine, you go ahead.

Ms. Adams: Can I go back asking questions?

Mr. Chairperson: Mister—sorry.

There's a motion before us, and there is—we cannot go back into asking questions until that motion is either debated or withdrawn, or—*[interjection]*

Mr. Micklefield.

Mr. Micklefield: Yes, Mr. Chair. There was a previous agreement that we would rise at 6, except we would revisit at 6. We've not yet been able to establish

with members opposite how long they would like to sit for. Now, we could always—we could call a vote and the committee could rise right now. We're open to negotiating. I think a three-minute recess is not unreasonable; it's not unprecedented. But it's very difficult to negotiate when one side refuses to talk to the other.

So I think that the suggestion of a recess to discuss—*[interjection]*—and I hear member—members opposite, you know, chirping a little bit. So, again, I would like to propose we have a three-minute recess. We can talk; we can negotiate; and that way, all of us can call our spouses, send regrets to our events, or whatever the case may be, but, you know, we need to come to some kind of agreement.

Mr. Wasyliw: All right. So, to put everyone out of their misery, let's have a three-minute recess.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to recess for three minutes? *[Agreed]*

The committee recessed at 6:10 p.m.

The committee resumed at 6:13 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Will the committee please come to order.

Mr. Schuler: I'd like to withdraw my motion, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: To withdraw the motion, the member needs unanimous consent of the committee.

Is it the will of the committee to allow Mr. Schuler to withdraw this motion? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Schuler: I suggest committee sit to 6:30 and then review the time again.

Mr. Chairperson: It has been proposed by Mr. Schuler to sit 'til 6:30 and revisit at 6:30.

What is the will of the committee? *[Agreed]*

The floor is now open again for questions.

Ms. Adams: The new report includes seven new indicators that were not included in the 2017-2018 report. How did the committee come to include these new indicators: base market measures not in education or in training, premature mortality rate, poverty rate, poverty exit rate, literacy and numeracy rates?

The poverty rate in Manitoba would—entered low—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams, are you continuing with the question?

Ms. Adams: No, I'm up.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, this is as a result of the significant consultation that took place and also wanted to align with the federal indicators as well. And so that's what the results are.

Ms. Adams: One of the major barriers for a single parent in low-income families to overcome poverty is lack of access to public licensed child care so when—so they can go back to school or work.

Could the minister please inform the committee what the most up-to-date child-care wait-list numbers is.

Mrs. Stefanson: I think it's important to understand that the wait-list itself was—we're in the process still of cleaning up that wait-list. There are many people, for example, who were on it that were—had their—wanted to go to different child-care facilities. Many of these in—these kids are already in child care and they want to move elsewhere. So we're trying to get a handle on what the real number is, and so we're in the process of moving through that.

But I think it is important to understand and also indicate for the member that we have increased the number of child-care spaces by 3.3 per cent. We recognize that there is still significantly more work to be done and that's why we're reaching out to partners in the private, not-for-profit sectors as well to see how can we move this, and in-home child-care spaces as well, which is another area that we have moved to. But we think we're making some progress, but there's still significantly more work to be done.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams, I see that Mr. Gerrard has his hand up. Are you allowing Mr. Gerrard to ask?

Ms. Adams: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams.

Ms. Adams: When will the—up to—when will the—when will this new list be available for child-care wait-list numbers?

Mrs. Stefanson: As soon as we work through all the details. We're just in the process of moving through that now. I don't have a specific date.

Ms. Adams: Has the wait-list for child care increased since the last time you released it?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I thank the member for the question, and we do know that there was—that we're still ongoing in terms of the work that's being done to do away with duplications. Many, you know, of these children are currently in daycare. They have—but they

may want to move to another daycare so they hand their application in to other daycare facilities. We're trying to really get a handle on exactly how many people are on that, on the list. And so I think it's important that we provide accurate information to Manitoba families so that they know exactly what we're dealing with.

But I will note for the member opposite that we do know under previous numbers that it did double under the previous NDP government. We do know that there is more work to be done, and that's why we are continuing to expand programs with partners in the communities, whether it's for-profit organizations. I think it's important that we put everything on the table in terms of being able to provide that child care for Manitoba families when they need it.

Ms. Adams: We know through a freedom of information request that the government has the 2018 data but will not release it publicly.

Why won't you release it?

Mrs. Stefanson: Sorry, the 2018 data for?

Ms. Adams: Child-care wait-list.

Mrs. Stefanson: It was posted June 30th of 2018.

Ms. Adams: December of 2018.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Adams?

An Honourable Member: I have no idea what the member's talking about. It was last posted—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Mrs. Stefanson. I should have recognized you when you started to speak; my apologies.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'm not sure what the member opposite is referring to. It was last posted June 30th of 2018.

* (18:20)

Ms. Adams: We know through a freedom of information that there is data for up to December 2018 and—but why has there—it not been released publicly?

Mrs. Stefanson: Because we're—as I mentioned earlier, because we're in the process of 'resiviewing' that data to ensure that we have an accurate number of children who are waiting for child care in the province.

Ms. Adams: What is the minister doing to address these inaccuracies in the list?

Mrs. Stefanson: We're, again, reviewing the list to ensure that there is transparent and more accountable

data for Manitoba families. I think Manitoba families have the right to know exactly how many children are actually waiting on this wait-list that aren't duplicated and waiting for, you know, other facilities that they want to go to.

I think it's important for Manitobans to understand, you know, how—you know, if people are—currently have child care that, you know, the—you know, what that wait-list really looks like.

So that's why we're reviewing this.

Ms. Adams: Page 5 and 6 of the report considers community health in Manitoba.

Can the minister tell me a bit more about these reports and why—and what they tell us about health and well-being of Manitobans living in poverty?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, that information is released by the RHAs. And that can be—that's, you know, up to the RHAs.

Ms. Adams: On page 5 of the report, it says that all regional health authorities will be releasing community health reports in the fall of 2019. I don't believe that has happened. Unless the minister corrects me, from what I can see, they've also not been updated for some time, including the time period of the annual report.

Can the minister explain why these reports have not yet been released? Would the minister consider supporting holding off on passing the poverty report until such time as these community health reports have been released?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I actually—I'm not sure whether or not the member's preamble is accurate. I don't know if the RHAs have released their reports. And, certainly, it would be up to them to release those reports. And there is an opportunity for the member to request that information in other ways.

So I think it's up to her to do that.

Mr. Wasyliv: First question I have for the minister is one of the units of measurement in this report is the market basket measure. And there's a note here that the data doesn't include First Nations individuals or households living in reserve.

I take it the minister would agree with me that that would therefore under-represent the poverty rate in Manitoba?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, this information is provided by Statistics Canada and so, you know, it's up to them, but I don't believe that that—I mean, it's not up to us to

do that. The—this is Statistics Canada data that we use to compile the data that's in the indicators.

Mr. Wasyliw: You would agree with me that that is a very large qualifier and, when the minister states the poverty rate in Manitoba, she is, in fact, understating it. Wouldn't you agree?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, it's—again, I—it's not under the purview of the provincial government. Statistics Canada, it's up to Statistics Canada what they do. And so that's under the purview of the federal government, and I would suggest that, if the member opposite believes strongly in that, then he can ask his federal counterparts to follow up on that.

Mr. Wasyliw: Are you or are you not understating the poverty level in Manitoba by using that statistic?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, these are—this is Statistics Canada is the data that is used across the entire country and as the basis for all these indicators that is used by the federal government and other provinces as well. And so, you know, in order to get an accurate depiction of how we compare to other provinces, this is the data that is used across the entire country and has for a number of years.

Mr. Wasyliw: What steps are—have you taken to get more accurate data and to weigh those considerations into the number that you're using publicly?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, again, that falls under the purview of the federal government and we utilize the data so we can compare to other provinces across the country, as well as nationally. So that's the data that's been used for years and years.

Mr. Wasyliw: So, you're saying the position of the government in Manitoba is that you're prepared to use misleading data and to publicly give that without any consideration of actually gathering more scientific, more proper data for public consumption?

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I'm not sure where the member opposite is going with this. But I do know that from a staffing level, we certainly work closely with Statistics Canada to provide our input on various things. And, you know, the member opposite, I'm not sure what he's trying to get at here, but I've said now, three times, that this is under the purview of the federal government. These are the statistics that are used across the country.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the indicators here is the number of youth who are not in employment, education or training. And there has been quite a significant increase in the number of youth aged 15 to

24 who are not in employment, education and training. It's gone up by 12 per cent. I think this is of great concern. And, when one adds up to the fact that there's some evidence that there's more young people leaving the province, that's even more of concern.

So my question to the minister is: What is her plans to address the increasing number of young people who are not in employment, education or training? Because I suspect that, you know, when young people are not in education, employment or training that they're more likely to be causing problems and getting into things like crime.

Mrs. Stefanson: No, I want to thank the member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) for his question. And it is an important one. And certainly we are taking steps in a whole-government approach when it comes to this.

Manitoba Economic Development and Training delivers a range of employment and training services for all Manitobans and including targeted programming for youth under 30. Services are delivered directly by government front-line services and indirectly through partnerships with third-party organizations.

Youth under 30 make up over 40 per cent of the approximately 70,000 clients served annually across all labour market programs. And through front-line services of Manitoba Jobs and Skills Development Centres, youth job seekers are supported with employment and training assessments, employment counseling and support, including essential skills assessment and training, academic upgrading, pre-employment and life skills training, post-secondary skills training, work placement with a wage subsidy, self-employment assistant—assistance.

And so, certainly, we're working from a whole-of-government approach to ensure that Manitoba youth are getting the employment, education and training that they need. We have launched Jobs on 9th and Jobs on main as well, to ensure that youth—we get youth back to—and others—back to either work or into employment, and—sorry—into education and the training that they need.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour is now 6:30. As per the agreement, what is the will of the committee?

Mr. Schuler: I move that committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: As per rule 48(2), a non-debatable motion—the motion derived is non-debatable.

Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 6:30 p.m.

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