

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

Chairperson
Mr. Dennis Smook
Constituency of La Verendrye

Vol. LXXII No. 3 - 6 p.m., Wednesday, May 29, 2019

ISSN 1708-6698

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	Man.
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	Ind.
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
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
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, Hon.	St. Vital	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
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PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Arthur-Virden	PC
REYES, Jon	St. Norbert	PC
SARAN, Mohinder	The Maples	Ind.
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Southdale	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Verendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	NDP
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Gimli	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

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

Wednesday, May 29, 2019

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

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

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Doyle Piwniuk
(Arthur-Virden)**

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Fielding, Wharton

*Messrs. Allum, Helwer, Lamont, Ms. Lathlin,
Messrs. Lindsey, Martin, Piwniuk, Reyes, Smook*

Substitutions:

*Ms. Klassen for Mr. Lamont at 6:24 p.m.
Hon. Mr. Gerrard for Ms. Lamoureux at
10:26 p.m.*

APPEARING:

*Ms. Judy Klassen, MLA for Kewatinook
Ms. Cindy Lamoureux, MLA for Burrows*

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

*Ms. Roberta Loughrin, private citizen
Mr. Dalvir Gill, private citizen
Ms. Tara Petti, Southern First Nations Network
of Care
Mr. Chandeeep Dhaliwal, private citizen
Ms. Louise McKay, private citizen
Mr. Lakhvir Sehajpal, private citizen
Mr. Mark Singh, private citizen
Mr. Gurjit Sandhu, private citizen
Ms. Elsie Flette, private citizen
Ms. Josephine D'Andrea, Kelburn Recovery
Centre
Mr. Jaserwt Singh, private citizen
Mr. Kulwinder Chahal, private citizen
Mr. Baljeet Singh, private citizen
Mr. Amitaj Singh, private citizen
Mr. Tejbir Singh, private citizen
Mr. Himmat Bhullar, private citizen
Mr. David Hill, private citizen
Mr. Ken Cranwill, private citizen
Mr. Vincent J. Bueti, private citizen
Mr. Harvey Greenberg, private citizen*

*Mr. Jim Humphreys, private citizen
Mr. Baljit Panchhi, private citizen
Mr. Gurminder Dhillon, private citizen
Mr. Sheldon Pinx, private citizen
Mr. Jadbar Gill, private citizen
Mr. Eugeni Morduhovich, private citizen
Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat, private citizen
Mr. Gurjit Mangat, private citizen
Ms. Fiona Haftani, private citizen
Mr. Ravi Chahal, private citizen*

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

*Bill 32 – An Act concerning the Leasing of
800 Adele Avenue, Winnipeg*

* * *

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

This meeting has been called to consider the following bill: Bill 32, An Act concerning the Leasing of 800 Adele Avenue, Winnipeg.

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A Standing Committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill except by unanimous consent of the committee.

We have a number of presenters registered to speak tonight, as noted on the list before you. On the—determining the order of public presentations, I will note that we do have some out-of-town presenters in attendance, marked with an 'asterik' on the list. We also have presenters registered to speak who have requested Punjabi translation. We do have translation staff in attendance.

Is there leave of the committee to allow the translator to sit at the table? *[Agreed]*

I would invite Jaskirat Sohi to join us at the table.

With this in mind, in what order does the committee wish to hear the presentations?

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Mr. Chair, I think we should listen to the out-of-town presenters first, if there's agreement of the committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it agreed by the committee to hear the out-of-town presenters first? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Helwer: I also ask if we could hear Tara Petti first. She's an out-of-town presenter and a—southern First Nations network care. And she is familiar with the lease to give us some information, if she could speak first.

Mr. Chairperson: What is the will of the committee? *[Agreed]*

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Mr. Chair, I wonder if the committee would also consider whether the folks who need translation could also go toward the top of the list.

Floor Comment: Excuse me, Sir. We can hardly hear you back here.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, Mr. Allum, that was one of the asks we have, so if you're—we would then do the people who need a translator right after the out-of-towners. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Okay, leave has been granted for that.

Before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider.

Can everybody hear me back there now? Okay.

First of all, if there's anyone else in attendance who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with staff at the entrance of the room. Also, for the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written materials, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, please speak with our staff.

I would also like to remind the members of the committee who are observing the committee meeting to please not disturb proceedings by applauding or making comments from the gallery. And, in accordance with our rules, photography is prohibited unless you're a member of the legislative press gallery.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for each presentation, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. If a presenter is

not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

I would like—now I would like to advise members of the public about the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in Hansard to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say that person's name. This is the signal for Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

We have a list of new presenters that have registered since—we have six new presenters, of which one of them requires a translator. These six, since they have registered, will go to the bottom of the list, unless the one that needs the translator would be moved up to the bottom of the list of the other ones that require translation.

Is that in agreement with the committee? *[Agreed]*

Thank you with your patience.

Bill 32—An Act concerning the Leasing of 800 Adele Avenue, Winnipeg

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with public presentations, and, as per the agreement, I will now call on Tara Petti from the Southern First Nations Network of Care.

Tara? Are you present? Petti? Tara Petti? Okay, Tara is not present. She will move to the bottom of the list.

Our next out-of-town presenter is Jim Humphreys, private citizen.

Mr. Humphreys, could you—are you in attendance? *[interjection]* Pardon?

Mr. Jim Humphreys (Private Citizen): I'm not from out of town.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, you're not from out of town?

Mr. Humphreys: No, unless River Heights is out of town.

* (18:10)

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. We had agreed to do the out-of-town presenters first. For some reason, your name shows up as an out-of-town presenter. So,

Mr. Humphreys, we will call you in order that you are on the list.

We will now move to Jeffrey Baranyk, private citizen.

Jeffrey Baranyk, is he here? Jeffrey Baranyk? He's been called. He will move to the bottom of the list.

The next—Carl Witt. Is Carl Witt present? Carl Witt is not present. He will be moved to the bottom of the list.

Roberta Loughrin? Roberta?

Good evening, Roberta. Do you have any written copies for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Roberta Loughrin (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Then you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Ms. Loughrin: Thank you.

Honourable members, tonight I wish to address Bill 32, highlighting the matter of what occurred at 800 Adele to the at-risk youth. Seeing those youth are not here tonight, I wish to defend what they experienced, seemingly hurried to say goodbye to their friends, crying, clearly exhibiting distress while abruptly discharged from 800 Adele.

The Premier (Mr. Pallister) is moving Bill 32 suspiciously fast in order to rationalize his agenda. There is no rationalization, however, in regards to vulnerable, indigenous, at-risk youth being made to pack their meagre items quickly only to be ousted from their secure surroundings. After that, left to cope with their battles once discharged untenably from the handily vacated facility of 800 Adele. These vulnerable teens deserve to stand in their light.

What internal message did they take, having been ejected from a grade A facility by this sitting government?

Firstly, they were sent to the city to receive the advantages of mental health therapy under the watch of trained physicians. Likely, they now really feel like throwaway children.

In recent years, despite the duty of hotel reduction teams meeting past deadlines of housing no foster kids in hotels, we the taxpayers need validation that the Pallister government will act on their jurisdiction to safeguard the indigenous, at-risk youth of this province. That said, even with vital

services promised at 800 Adele, an autocratic ruling turned that all away.

What you heard on the lease being bad or good depends on where you stand, but I testify what's really bad is that Manitoba has currently 11,000 kids in foster care. It's not good that indigenous children make up 90 per cent of that unsettling statistic. And still, Premier Pallister closed 800 Adele. That concerns me.

Do you know who's listening in close? The seemingly throwaway youth of our province; many citizens weary with the tone and tactics of politicians whom universally are indifferent to marginalized people. Now these at-risk youth are further displaced in a complex CFS system where a central computing system falls short on uniting the agencies and supervisors who are charged to protect our youth.

I assure you, each young spirit has dreamt of having a happier life. I think indigenous youth are really tired of being let down by adults. The statistics are heartbreaking.

The reason I care so much is because back in '89 and '91, I volunteered one evening per week of much of two years to teaming up with a large group of concerned adults trying to reach the indigenous people stuck in the vicious cycle of both addiction and the poverty that sadly leads to prostitution in a space of Higgins and Main near the Salvation Army.

We'd meet first at the Union Gospel and then disband from there to well after midnight. Building seeds of trust was my No. 1 priority. My two infants at that time were at home being babysat on those very long nights. I gratefully impacted just a few girls from leaving the cruel streets behind them.

Sadly, I witnessed many underaged Aboriginal teen girls who were very much pregnant in sub-January and February weather just wearing scantily—clothes, and, sadly, exploited by self-serving men as they drove away into the night, nameless. But I do know they appreciate a warm cup of coffee and a smile, and some of them phoned me at home.

Our elected government should be givers of hope. We need all governments to co-operate on building the indigenous people's capacity to care for their own at-risk youth, who are on the forefront of the future. Please, please do what a sentient humanity levels as right here so we can mitigate the suffering of these aforementioned at-risk youth.

Premier Pallister, please ensure that these kids still matter. The future recollections of their troubled youth depends completely on reframing tonight's matter at hand.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Roberta.

We will now move to questions.

Oh, Roberta, we still need you here. We got question period.

Ms. Loughrin: Oh, I'm sorry. I apologize.

Hon. Scott Fielding (Minister of Finance): Thank you, Roberta, for your presentation. And I think we share something in common: we want to protect vulnerable children, and our government is taking some strong action to reduce the amount of children in care. And so I appreciate you coming out here tonight and showing your passion for the issue. It's something that I think all parties very much support and want to make sure that vulnerable children are supported.

Thank you. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, I have to recognize you first.

You may proceed, Roberta.

Ms. Loughrin: Go ahead, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: No, before you can say anything, I have to mention your name. So what you said wasn't recorded. So now I'm saying Roberta Loughrin. So if you could continue what you were saying.

Ms. Loughrin: Yes, I do believe that all governments share the same agenda, and that is to mitigate the suffering of at-risk youth in our province. Thus, facilities are a benefit to mitigating that tragedies don't ensue in the future.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): Ms. Loughrin?

Ms. Loughrin: Yes.

Mr. Allum: Yes, I got your name proper.

I also, on behalf of the NDP, just wanted to thank you for coming into here tonight and to providing your very important testimony. Thank you so much.

Mr. Dougald Lamont (Leader of the Second Opposition): Do you have any—thank you very much for your comments and your commitment.

Do you have any idea where the—have you heard or do you have any idea where the children might be? Or—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, you cannot—so, in order—Ms. Loughrin, you may proceed. You can answer the question now.

Ms. Loughrin: No, I do not know where they've gone, Mr. Lamont.

Mr. Chairperson: Do we have any further questions?

We thank you very much for your presentation and we will now move on to the next presenter.

I will now call on Dalvir Gill. Dalvir Gill?

Mr. Gill, do you have any written material for the committee?

Mr. Dalvir Gill (Private Citizen): No, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation.

* (18:20)

Mr. Dalvir Gill: First of all, I would like to thank you, thank everybody, all the committee, and a special thanks to people who took their time out and came out here for those kids who cannot speak for themselves. And they are—I heard about—that they're not normal kids. They need help every day.

So what hurt me is what brought me here. You know, I couldn't even go to sleep last night when I was thinking about it. Nobody knows where the kids are and how they are and what they're doing, right, so it's very serious, and that's my biggest concern. That's why I'm here.

And the other thing is if we don't look after them today, right, they could become a serious problem for the society down the road. You know, they could be misguided. They could get into the prostitution or whatever, right.

I also like to tell you guys about—little about myself. I came to Canada when I was young, about 13 years old. My parents, they moved to this country with the hope of a better life, you know, which we experienced and I enjoy it. I own a business in Winnipeg, do farming, do transportation. You know, I have employees, and bottom line is I love kids.

And, you know, that's what hurts me the most when it's for the kids, and you know, I'm very concerned about them and I have a humble request to all the political parties and this committee, you know, please think about them and they cannot do anything for themselves. First of all, they're kids and they—next thing is they're not normal kids, right? So I request to the committee that, you know, we should do the best for them. The facility there was, it was for them, and it was really helpful for them.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you for your presentation, Mr. Gill.

Mr. Fielding: Yes, thank you very much for your presentation, for coming down and very much appreciate that, and, you know, appreciate your passion to make sure vulnerable children are protected.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gill, did you have a response to that? Like, you had said something, but I can't recognize you; it won't get put into—unless I recognize you, so you can't speak until I repeat your name.

Mr. Gill, did you have a response for the minister?

Mr. Dalvir Gill: Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Proceed.

Mr. Dalvir Gill: May I ask, could you please ask me that question again?

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, it wasn't a question. He was just—you just thanked him.

Mr. Fielding: I just said thank you very much for coming and making a presentation and for your presentation. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, Mr. Allum

Come back, we're not finished.

Mr. Allum: So, Mr. Gill, just for clarity's sake, there—after everybody presents, then you get a five-minute question period, if there are questions afterward, and then what happens is I ask you or one member asks you a question, then the Chair will repeat your name, then you can answer. Okay? And so you're not the first. Everybody makes the same issue.

I only wanted to thank you for coming and sharing your story with us tonight and for sharing your sentiments. Thank you so much for taking the time to coming in from out of town.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we have—*[interjection]*
Any more questions?

Well, we have—do we have to make that announcement?

Okay, Ms. Klassen.

Ms. Judy Klassen (Kewatinook): I just wanted to say thank you for coming in, and I feel your heart and I really appreciate you coming down to let us know.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Gill.

Any more questions?

Okay, thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Gill.

That concludes the questions that the committee has for you. Thank you.

Committee Substitution

Mr. Chairperson: We would like to make a following membership substitution effective immediately for the standing committee: Judy Klassen for Dougald Lamont.

* * *

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): I understand that Tara Petti is now with us and wonder if there's leave of the committee to allow her to present.

Mr. Chairperson: Question before the committee: is there leave to let Tara Petti present as an out-of-town—leave? *[Agreed]*

I will now call on Tara Petti.

Ms. Petti, do you have any written material for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Tara Petti (Southern First Nations Network of Care): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, if you have, then our staff is distributing it. You may proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Petti: Thank you.

Good evening, committee members. My name is Tara Petti, and I am the CEO of the Southern First Nations Network of Care, also known as the Southern Network. The Southern Network is responsible for managing the delivery of child and family services to members of 36 First Nations in southern Manitoba and others who choose to use the

Southern Network through our 10 mandated agencies.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight.

On behalf of the Southern Network and our board of directors, I'm here tonight to speak in support of bill C 32, An Act concerning the Leasing of 800 Adele Avenue, Winnipeg. *[interjection]* Is that better? Okay. Thank you.

On May 15th, 2019, bill C 32 was introduced in the Manitoba Legislative Assembly by the Honourable Scott Fielding, Minister of Finance and Minister responsible for the Civil Service. This bill terminates the lease of 800 Adele that was entered into by the Southern Network and a company registered as 516803 Manitoba Ltd. The termination date is effective November 30th, 2019.

In 2008, a 20-year lease was signed for the building at 800 Adele to provide an alternative to hotels for children and youth in the care of child and family services. In November 2012, the Southern Network was placed under an order of administration by the minister of Family Services from the Province of Manitoba. And then, in October 2015, a formal review of the lease at 800 Adele was undertaken by Grant Thornton LLP, in order to facilitate a long-term solution, and the report was released in February of 2016.

In January of 2016, the order of administration for the Southern Network was lifted, and a new board of directors was appointed. One of the key conditions for rescinding the order of administration was the Manitoba government committing to deal with the issues surrounding the 800 Adele lease. As the new CEO of the Southern Network, I inherited the ongoing issues and problems in regards to the lease at 800 Adele. At that time, the Southern Network could not continue to fund the lease deficits on an ongoing basis and was no longer able to use the facilities at 800 Adele for any purposes, including program service delivery.

Based on the review conducted in 2016 by Grant Thornton, several irregularities were documented in the original lease, and these included the 20-year term without any right for early termination, more than fair market value of the lease payments, responsibilities for repairs and maintenance and punitive penalties for breach of the terms of the lease, including early termination. The Southern Network has not been able to get permission from

Grant Thornton LLP to release the report in its entirety.

Working with the Manitoba government, it has continued to be a priority of the Southern Network to remedy this problem. Several attempts have been made to renegotiate the original lease with the landlord. However, the landlord has been unwilling to renegotiate any of the terms and conditions.

The Manitoba government has undertaken several measures to address this problem. The government has assumed program funding responsibilities for the building. The government has attempted to find new tenants for the building but has been unable to secure any tenants due to accessibility for disabled clients and staff, lack of an air conditioning system, inadequate parking, configuration of the office and the lease terms. The government has agreed to cover deficits for facility's costs, including lease, utilities and repairs and maintenance costs for the Southern Network.

The government has also tried to renegotiate the terms and conditions of the lease with the landlord, including terminating the lease, but these attempts have been unsuccessful. As a result, the government has taken steps to introduce bill C 32 in order to terminate the lease.

In closing, on behalf of the Southern Network and our board of directors, I leave you this quote from our former board chair, Allan Courchene: We don't want to be stuck paying this multi-million-dollar lease there. We don't want to pay that type of rate when we are a new organization and we want to continue to service our children in care in agencies. And you can find that quote attached to the CBC news article from April 6th, 2016.

And, again, thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Petti.

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you, Tara, for your presentation and your commitment to supporting vulnerable children in your roles—in your role, and I know the lease was in the neighbourhood of \$500,000.

What would you use the \$500,000—is there supports and services that you would use that money to provide for vulnerable children?

Ms. Petti: I think there is lots of opportunities that can be looked at to, you know, to spend \$500,000 a

year in times where, you know, funding for programs and services is, you know, we have to take careful consideration into what we're funding, really looking at outcome-based.

Just as an example, for the past 18 months or so we've been going through the steps of fundraising for Restoring the Sacred Bond, which is the landmark social impact bond for Manitoba. That kind of money could fund the program.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your answer, Ms. Petti.

Mr. Allum: Ms. Petti, thank you so much for coming in tonight, for travelling in here and certainly for the important work that the Southern Network does each and every day.

And also I just want to thank you for coming in, providing testimony to the committee tonight.

Ms. Klassen: Thank you, as well, for coming in.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, sorry—Ms. Petti had to answer to—no?

Ms. Klassen.

Ms. Klassen: I just want to say thank you again for coming in.

Ms. Petti: And, again, ekosi, thank you for hearing our—of the words presented tonight, and if there's no further questions I guess I'm concluding.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Ms. Petti, for coming tonight. I see from a news article here there've been a total of 250 children that were in that facility at one time. I take it they were under the care of the southern authority.

We've heard some people commenting tonight that these children were turned out onto the street and I want to hear your assurance that they are still in care and you know where they are, if they are in care of southern authority.

Ms. Petti: Yes, thank you. That's a really good question and I heard commentary already around, you know, the well-being of the children. You know that we're involved in the programming.

About 250 children did go through the program, which was called Ji-zhaabwing, and it was, you know, the vision of the program was a really good vision. And our—and what, you know, what it had kind of dwindled down to over the years was, you know, a crisis stabilization unit that was run by another resource that we were—and there was about—

there was five bed spaces and I think three children were—had to be relocated once they vacated the premises.

As the Southern Network, we have the ability to, you know, understand the movement of the kids that are under our care and we can confirm that the children that were moved from Adele into an alternate facility, still under the care of their care provider, were situated accordingly and they continue to receive services today.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any more questions for Ms. Petti?

Seeing none, thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Petti, and we will now move on to the next presenter.

But before we do that, we have five more presenters that have registered since this committee has started, of which one requires a translator.

So, is it the will of the committee to put the person who needs the translator on the list of people who require translation? Is that in agreement of the committee? *[Agreed]*

I will now call on Chandeeep Dhaliwal. Chandeeep Dhaliwal?

Do you have any written?

Mr. Chandeeep Dhaliwal (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation, Mr. Dhaliwal.

Mr. Dhaliwal: There's a few points that I want to talk about just because I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I played competitive hockey, junior A. I lived on a reserve. I was in Sagkeeng. I played for the Southeast Blades. I was housed there for two years. I saw first-hand the struggle: substance abuse, living standards, lack of education.

And a lot of those guys that I reached out back—because there's hockey year round—and some of the tournaments we played in, you slowly saw guys withering away from their hockey careers and kind of dabbling into drugs or gang life or selling drugs.

So their career was kind of going in a different direction from a lot of guys like myself who had a house to live in, good education, proper guidance. Parents always pushed us to be successful and do best for what's good for others and help as many people as you possibly can.

We already know in Winnipeg, Manitoba, that the city's struggling with a meth crisis. Everybody listens it on the news every single day. Some of the homicides that have been committed, they're linking it to meth. We don't know if all these kids are mentally stable. When we're taking away a facility that houses kids that are high risk, I think it's a poor job on our end as what we're trying to do for our kids, because I think the government as a whole is doing—is showing citizens of Winnipeg that we're trying to take care of the kids, but clearly, you can see by what's going on with taking away the lease agreement that we don't even know where these kids are.

Every province has its own problems. In British Columbia, you know, the Indo-Canadians over there is very—it's the dominant population. They struggle with gang violence, drug dealers, kids as early as 16, 17 years old are committing multiple homicides. It's the same kind as culture, different setting. We already know there's an opiate crisis out there.

The NDP over there seems like they're working hand in hand with the people that are struggling and providing facilities, safe sites for injections. I know it's—that's something that Manitoba talked about. I don't know if they're pursuing that.

But I have some friends that are correctional officers at Stony Mountain. They have a unit called SRE. And they say some of these young kids don't even know what's going on. They go through the facility, they go through the medical line, they get these prescription pills that are prescribed to them for their schizophrenia, whatever disorders they have—FSAD—or FSDA, or whatever it's called—fetal alcohol syndrome. And they're left there. Some guys are 18 years old, they don't have a bright future. So if we're taking off all these facilities at a young age, what are we actually showing these kids?

I know Winnipeg struggled maybe four years ago where CFS was putting the kids in hotels. And that was a disaster. I think there was a homicide committed, a young girl ended up dying.

So what are we doing as a whole, right? There's a few business guys that actually invested their money. And I don't think they were doing it for their financial gain. I think they were honestly doing it as genuine people for the kids. I think that's what all 'succeksful' people want to do is they want to give back to the community because what are you going to take when you pass away? You're not going to take all the money you made in your life with you to

the grave, right? You want to give it back to somebody, and I think kids are a great way to show that, you know? They can have a bright future. So.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Mr. Fielding—thank you for your presentation.

Members, for questions.

Mr. Tom Lindsey (Flin Flon): Just want to thank you very much for coming out and sharing your story and your thoughts on this whole issue. So thank you very much for being here tonight.

* (18:40)

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Dhaliwal, did you have a response to that?

Mr. Dhaliwal: Thank you.

Ms. Klassen: I just want to say thank you for coming in and presenting.

Mr. Dhaliwal: Thank you.

Mr. Shannon Martin (Morris): Again, I mean, obviously, I thank you, but I just want to clarify. You may not have heard Ms. Tara Petti. She was the CEO of Southern Network. You said nobody knows where the children are, and Ms. Petti had indicated there was three children when the facility—removed from the facility, and that Southern Network is in full care, control and safe, secure of those three children.

So I just want to make sure you were aware of that, when you'd said that no one knew where the children were. So I just want to put you at ease.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Dhaliwal? Did you have a response?

Mr. Dhaliwal: Yes, I guess I didn't hear that aspect of it, but that's just one set of group of kids, right? Just—I'm sure if you go into the north side of the city or other aspects of the city, there's a handful of kids that need a place to go and that don't have places to go.

Hon. Jeff Wharton (Minister of Municipal Relations): Thank you, Mr. Dhaliwal, for your presentation.

Just—were you aware that a portion of the building has been vacant since 2014?

Mr. Dhaliwal: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions for Mr. Dhaliwal?

We thank you very much for your presentation, and we will move on to the next presenter.

Okay, this concludes the list of out-of-town presenters I have before me.

Are there any other out-of-town presenters that wish to make a presentation? Seeing as none—oh, sorry.

Louise McKay? Louise McKay?

Do you have any written materials for the committee, Ms. McKay?

Ms. Louise McKay (Private Citizen): No. Just from here.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Ms. McKay: And it's McKay.

Mr. Chairperson: McKay?

Ms. McKay: Yes.

My name is Louise McKay, and when this all started, I was staff at the southern authority, and I was involved right from the beginning.

So I got a call on Aboriginal Day many years ago saying that there was this building and could I come and have a look at it. So I went with the late Bill Harris [*phonetic*] and had a look at this building. And I knew what it was we were looking for, and we were quite excited. I was quite excited about what this building offered.

The building was owned by a group of nuns, I forget which order they were, and I understood that there were more than one offer on this property, and that they preferred what it was that we were wanting to do with the facility, and that's why they were looking at us to be the ones to purchase this property.

We spent many hours talking about what it was we wanted to do. And I have a friend who's from a well-known architect firm in Winnipeg, and he tells me that buildings have a life. Buildings have a personality and buildings are built in such a way to deliver something specific to a group of people.

So, when we looked at this building, this building suited our purposes and it spoke to us as to what it was we wanted to do with it. And so right from the get-go, the nuns wanted us to have the building; we wanted to have the building.

And so one of the things we did almost right off the get-go was we created a committee, a committee

that was with all the four authorities, the landlords and Winnipeg School Division, because we wanted to have an assessment of the kids coming into that program, something that wasn't offered anywhere else in Winnipeg at the time, or Manitoba, maybe even Canada. I don't remember all the research we did.

And so as a team, we sat at these tables and we talked about what this organization would do, who the people would be that would provide these services, and how we would go about doing what it was we wanted to do.

The landlords were people that I had just met in passing. They were not people that I had met before, but we were excited that here was private enterprise and social services wanting to work together, and these landlords were interested in kids, in making life better for kids and were interested in providing something, giving back to the community. So we had a good partnership, sitting at the table talking about how we were going to do what it was we were going to do.

So government was at the table. The other authorities, the First Nations north and south and the Metis and the Inuit were represented at that table, and it was all of us working together to make this program work, this program that nobody else offered at the time. So we were very excited about that. We developed a program in partnership. When you look at how the program rolled out, we had ceremonies at the time, about guiding us on how to do all these things. The name of the program was gotten through ceremony. When it was changed later, it was changed through ceremony again, and the people that had sat at those tables were the ones who came to ceremony.

So when you look at the birth of something, when this program was birthed out of the ashes of the sisters who were there before us, it had a good birth, and it had a good start, and we did it the right way. And so, today, when I heard about what was going on and, you know, and trying to keep up with what has gone on with this building, for me, it shouldn't go on. That shouldn't be happening. This building and the program that we ran in that building, we did it the right way. There were no politics involved in those days, not in that program, not in the purchase of the building. So it's kind of a shame, in my opinion, that we're here today having to talk about this.

Miigwech.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. McKay.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you so much, Ms. McKay, for your presentation tonight, and thank you for your service with, of course, the southern authority during your time there. I'm sure you helped make a difference for those children.

A question I have is as was reported by the CBC, the authority paid \$573,466.50, basically 11 months plus final month deposit to the landlord before the lease was signed and renovations commenced, the audit found. Ms. McKay, did you see this as questionable?

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. McKay.

Ms. McKay: I know; I heard him. I'm just trying to figure out how to phrase my response.

Mr. Chairperson: No, I have to mention your name before they can record your conversation, so I have to mention your name; otherwise, you don't get recorded.

So, Ms. McKay.

Ms. McKay: Thank you.

The specifics of the finances I don't know, so I don't want to stand here and begin to address things that were not in my area. My area at the time was having a look at this building and seeing if it met the needs that we were talking about. My area was in bringing the people together to make—to try to make happen what it was that we were going to make happen. Everybody came to the table. We all worked collaboratively, and we were all on board together. So that's the best I can answer your question about finances.

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): Tansi, and welcome to the process here for the committee for bill C 32, and I want to thank you for sharing your experience and your time.

I just wanted to ask you: What do you see, you know, for the future of this property in regard to our children and youth and in care?

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. McKay.

Ms. McKay: You almost caught me there again that time.

* (18:50)

When you look at how we started this process and we started the programming there, we started it

in a good way. We had a ceremony. Everybody that was involved came. So we all started it with a good heart.

So when you look at the government of the day, they were at the table. And when you look at the other people who provided service in those days, they were at the table. So when you consider that and you look at what's going on today, if we can—if we were able to go back to that same kind of process, we would probably end up with something better than what we're doing right now.

Look at the money we're spending. Look at all of you. You're all being paid to be here, right? So you're spending a lot of money to do that. And you know what, where is it going, right? Where is it going? We could be providing a lot more service for children. The number of children in care keeps going up. You know, you provide more money and there—we still need more services. So let's sit—why can't we sit down together and talk about, you know, in a collaborative way? Why can't we do this the same way we did it before? Because, you know what? That program provided good service. I could tell you stories about some of the kids that started out in that program and how they ended up, you know.

Some people—I'll tell you a story about one kid. People were afraid to provide service to this young man. And in order to provide services, he needed more than one person at a time to be with him. And many people were scared. They were afraid. They were afraid for themselves. They were afraid to be hurt physically and whatever. About a year and a half, maybe two years later, I had that young man alone, me and him alone in my vehicle. And we went out for lunch together, just him and I. That program, through the beginning, through that program, that young man changed from where he was at and on his journey—his journey became facilitated. And in my opinion, it became facilitated because that program helped him, you know? When the kids came to that program, a lot of them were broken. A lot of them needed—I don't know—I saw—I heard in this movie one time, there's no prosthetic for a broken spirit. So when those young people would come to that program, that's what it was. And the work that—it wasn't just us. It was all of us working together at that time. We worked together in partnership. We created a better life for that young man—for not just that young man, for his family, for his community.

Miigwech.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you for your presentation, Ms. McKay. We are—we've got a couple seconds left for a question. If—Mr. Wharton, if you could do it in about 10 seconds.

Mr. Wharton: Sure. Quickly, then, 10 seconds.

Thank you, again, Mrs. McKay.

So you had mentioned a number of stakeholders around the table during the building process and what have you. Would—was there any discussion about going to tender?

Ms. McKay: About what?

Mr. Chairperson: Could you repeat the question, Mr. Wharton?

Mr. Wharton: Was there any discussion with all the stakeholders and political leaders around the table about going to tender for a building?

Ms. McKay: I only half understand your question. I'm going to repeat it because I—just to clarify in my mind. Was there any question around the table about something going to tender—what going to tender?

Mr. Wharton: Going to tender to find the most reasonable building for your needs.

Ms. McKay: When we were sitting around the table, the discussion was about that particular building. My assumption is that that had already happened. My work had to do with bringing the people together to try to make happen this program that we were talking about.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you very much for your presentation and answers to the questions, Ms. McKay.

Time has expired. We will be moving on to the next presenter. Thank you.

This concludes the list of out-of-town presenters I have before me.

We will now move to the presenters that require a translator.

The first name on the list I have is Himmat Bhullar. Himmat Bhullar? Mr. Bhullar does not seem to be present. We will drop his name to the bottom of the list.

The next person I have on my list that requires a translator is Lakhvir Sehajpal. Could you pronounce your—so I don't make a mistake in your name, if you could please pronounce your name.

Mr. Lakhvir Sehajpal (Private Citizen): My name is Lakhvir Sehajpal.

Mr. Chairperson: And you require a translator?

Mr. Sehajpal: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: So we have Ms. Sohi that will translate for you. She needs to be behind the mic so you can speak to her, and then she will translate for the committee.

You may start your presentation.

Mr. Sehajpal: Okay. *Punjabi spoken.*

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, you have to speak to the translator, and then she will speak in the mic.

You may proceed.

Ms. Jaskirat Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Sehajpal: I was very hurt to hear about what happened to these kids. Children should not get affected by the government policies. Government should continue with whatever policies are going on, and they can make new policies, but they should continue with the old ones, as well.

We are all intelligent, educated people. They are immature; they need help. And that's what we need to do: help them as a community. They are immature and we have more experience, so we should help them as much as we can.

I have given my time here. I have left my work and come here just to talk about them. And if we don't help them on humanitarian grounds, and—then who else will help them? If the government and the community and people will not help, then who else will help them?

They're not my relatives but, on humanitarian grounds, we should help them, make policies to make it better for them to live and continue with the old ones. But we can—if we have to make new ones, they should be for their betterment.

We are the bench, we are the people, and it is in our hands to help them out. We can't just depend on God for everything. We as humans should help them.

We have trust in the committee and we are here to just support them. And we believe in you and we trust in you, and we hope that something good comes out for them.

Thank you so much.

* (19:00)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Sehajpal.

Mr. Allum: I wanted to thank you for taking time off work today to come in and to testify before the committee and to share in your thoughts that clearly come from your heart. So, much appreciation and thank you.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Sehajpal: Thank you.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So I want to assure you, as we heard earlier, that there were three children there. They are in the care of Southern First Nations, we—in good care.

But I'm curious—do you want to tell him that?

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Sehajpal: He says that they will be happy where they are. It's not important that if you give them a mansion to live they'll be more happy.

Mr. Helwer: My question then is—I'm wondering who told him that—falsely—that children were evicted?

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Sehajpal: He says he lives in Winnipeg and he's heard it, like, as everybody's talking about it.

Ms. Klassen: I just wanted to say thank you and I think your language is beautiful. I'm so honoured every time I hear people speak in their own language.

Both my parents went through residential school and their language was beaten out of them and so they didn't pass it on to their children, and so I myself didn't know my language growing up. And so I really appreciate hearing your being allowed a translator here in the House, and I hope that, as a First Person of this Canada of ours, that one day I will only be able to speak in my own language and that I'll need a translator for myself in my own country.

Megwetch.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Sehajpal: He says thank you. He's understood what she said.

Mr. Chairperson: Do we have any further questions?

We want to thank you for your presentation and we will now move to the next presenter. Thank you.

Our next presenter is Mark Singh. Mark Singh? Is Mark Singh present? Mark Singh?

Mr. Singh, you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Mark Singh (Private Citizen): Good evening, everyone.

When I heard about the news, I was very upset and wondering why this is happening and what the government is doing.

For their own personal reasons or for their own motives or personal reasons, this—all this that's happening is not appreciated by him. It should not be done, whatever's happening. We should stop what's happening.

That's it. Thank you.

Mr. Allum: Just wanted to thank you for taking time out to come and speak to us in your own language and also to share your thoughts with us tonight. Thank you so much.

Mr. Mark Singh: Thank you.

Ms. Klassen: I want to say thank you for coming today.

Mr. Mark Singh: Thank you.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Mr. Singh, for coming. I want to reassure you the children are well-cared for and have been looked after by the authority.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions?

This concludes the list of presenters we have that require a translator.

Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation in Punjabi?

Seeing none, does the committee agree to permit the translation staff to leave the meeting? *[Agreed]*

The translation staff may leave the meeting. Thank you very much for your services. *[interjection]* Oh, do we have—

Mr. Gurjit Singh Sandhu, you require a translator for your presentation?

Mr. Gurjit Singh Sandhu (Private Citizen): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: You may proceed with your presentation, Mr. Gurjit Singh Sandhu.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Sandhu: Good evening, everyone. My name is Gurjit Singh Sandhu, and I am an engineer by profession, and I—when I came to Canada, I came in 2004. He moved to Canada because he was fed up with the Indian politics. Each

time the government changed, whatever contracts were there, they were cancelled; every time the government changed, the previous contractors, their contracts were cancelled, so he was not happy. They even send the contractors to the jails.

Each time the government—new government came in, they changed the systems every time we had a new government. Every time the government changes, the leases—all the previous lease agreements, everything was cancelled and they were given to different people and new agreements and new lease policies, everything was made new.

And he feels it's the same thing is happening here in Manitoba. And government has 200 reasons to cancel the lease. I feel there's no difference between the Indian politicians and the Manitoba politicians. So he says, I have a question that if it's the same story there, then I've moved to Canada, but why is—like, the story is still the same.

* (19:10)

Thirty years back, the economy was better in Canada, but now, the economy has gone down and so has the Indian economy.

Okay, you say it then.

Mr. Sandhu: Years ago, like when we—when the Indian system was right, politicians are not cancelling all the leases and agreements. That time, Indian economy is so high. It's like dollar equals to dollar as a US dollar, like we are. But now, these corrupt politicians make the Indian government like—their economy is—now is like 50 per cent down. You can buy a \$1 equal to 50 rupees because of all these agreements—we cancel all the agreements one day, we put a lot of money and a lot of time spent to do the—another agreement. So when we guys keep cancelling the agreements, nothing—like, if we cancel one facility and open up another one, other one won't serve you as a free. The second facility costs us the same money, maybe more. Plus it adds up over time. What we're spending here adds up a lot of engineers' times, adds up a lot of other people time.

So if we want to save the time, we keep our—all the agreements, I think, the way we do. We think before doing the agreements, not in the halfway. What I feel. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Sandhu, but I must remind you that—to carefully use your language in here. It is a—parliamentary, so

just to be—just to caution you on the language you use.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Sandhu, thank you so much for coming tonight, sharing some of your background and some context for us and your thoughts and observations. It's much appreciated that you would take the time to address the committee tonight.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Fielding: Yes, thanks as well. And we sometimes ourselves have some problems with the language as well in terms of the language we use amongst our—each other. But I want to thank you for coming out, sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Any other questions?

We'd like to thank you for your presentation, Mr. Sandhu.

And at this point, that concludes the list of presenters requiring translation services.

I'd like to thank Ms. Sohi for translating for us. We thank you very much for coming out this evening and helping us out.

We will now call on our next presenter.
[interjection]

You cannot speak in committee unless I recognize you. We need your name. Everybody who registered was supposed to say that they needed a translator when they registered.

So we will move to—

What is the will of the committee? Apparently, there are three more people who require translation services. Should—and we don't have their names handy here. They registered, but they don't have those names handy. Should we move on to the first person on their list for the sake of time, or—

An Honourable Member: I make a motion that we move to the front of the—from the top of the list.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that in agreement with everybody in the committee, to move on until we can get that—we have the translator, I believe, 'til 9:30? Correct?

Floor Comment: And, overtime, you need me.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, so is it an agreement then, until we can list those three other presenters?
[Agreed]

Mr. Lindsey: I just want to make sure what we're agreeing to: that we're going to move back to the list until we get the names straightened out for those that need translator, and then we'll revert to the translator?

Mr. Chairperson: That is correct.

Okay, so in the meantime, until we can get the list of people organized here, we will call on Elsie Flette, private citizen.

Elsie Flette? Ms. Flette, do you have any written material for the committee?

Ms. Elsie Flette (Private Citizen): I have pictures. Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Staff will distribute that for you.

Ms. Flette: I don't know if there's enough colour copies, so you'll have to argue about who gets colour and who gets black and white.

Mr. Chairperson: And you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Ms. Flette: Okay. Well, thank you for the opportunity to speak to bill C—to Bill 32. You should know offhand that I'm opposed to it.

I'm speaking as a private citizen right now. However, I was the CEO at the southern authority, or the network, and was one of the key principles in negotiating this lease.

And so, a lease that at least one member of this government has characterized as indefensible, I am here to defend and to explain and provide some background for you as to what this lease was about, what this facility was about and the steps that we took to negotiate the terms of this lease, and the purpose of it.

So, I'll refer to the pictures in my presentation, but I want—I just want to share with you the history of the arrangement. I want to highlight some of the inaccuracies that I have heard in the media from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and, as well, in reading Hansard, from the presentation when the bill was introduced in the House.

And I also want to highlight at the end, I guess, some of the concerns with a government taking this kind of heavy-handed approach to terminate a lease.

In social services, we have struggled for a long time to engage the business community because they have resources, they have money and, in my opinion,

an obligation to help out with the social issues of the day.

And I believe that this government shares that because they have committed and are engaged in a process regarding social investment bonds, which also involves investors and paying them a return on their investment for programs. And the return on that investment is higher than would normally be a rate of return, I guess.

So concerns related to when a business community is treated or when the business partner, in this instance, when government is—has the ability to heavy-handedly enact legislation to terminate a contract, which no one else can do. If I have a dispute about my lease or my mortgage or any contract I have signed, I have the ability to go to the court and it's in the court's jurisdiction to resolve those contractual disputes, and it should not be brought to a legislative table where a bill can be enacted specifically on one address.

* (19:20)

I know when the Premier was asked about this in the media, and I saw the clip, and he referenced the Jockey Club—unfortunate reference, in my opinion, because we're not talking about a club for jockeys; we're talking about a home and a residence for kids in need of services.

So I know that the questions—and I've seen them today, but when the bill was introduced in the House, there were comments made about the untendered agreement for a facility that was never appropriate for child care and that the building lease and its terms were not in the public interest, and that the landlord had refused to agree to reasonable termination, which the landlord can speak to. But I can tell you about the process that led up to this and how this was a joint—a partnership. And every step of the way, the authority—myself and our CFO—engaged with the Province and walked this lease through, dealt with the issues that—the concerns around the tendering, around the rate. There was negotiations to bring this lease finally to a place where everybody could agree to it. The southern authority did not sign the lease until we had a letter from the Province telling us that it had been through civic—civil legal, it had gone through property management and infrastructure—whatever those committees are—it had gone through supply and services, it had gone through Treasury Board, Treasury Board had approved it and so had Cabinet. And once we got that letter, that is when we signed the lease.

This whole issue started—or, the need for this began as a result of the hotel reduction strategy. And many of you will recall—and certainly members in the government now, who were very vocal on the opposition at that time about kids being in hotels—and rightfully so, that is not a place for kids in need—that initiative started in November of 2006, or thereabouts.

The authorities and agencies were given some start-up money. There was some funds set up for the hotel reduction strategy. Those funds were time limited to the fiscal year. So that was another piece with the urgency of the matter to get something going, because if we didn't have something going, we would lose the ability to access those dollars.

In April of '07, we received a letter. And by we, I'm talking about the authority where I was CO at the time, but I'm speaking now on my behalf. We received a letter from the minister of the department and—advising that the Province was prepared to support the Southern First Nations Network of Care in the regard and to commit to a long-term funding arrangement.

We were particularly concerned with not just creating another shelter system. There are shelters out there. They are full of kids, including infant children. They continue to be full of kids, including infant children. We did not want that. We wanted an emergency facility where kids could come—high-needs kids. We looked at the older age group in this instance. We also wanted an attached facility where assessments could be done so that when a child came in, was there for 90 days, there was a proper assessment done with the hope and the vision and the plan—the objective that when that child left, there would be a good match of a placement for that child because there would be a better understanding of the needs of that child.

And you'll see from the diagrams I handed out that the section of the building that was for the assessment unit, we had the medical people involved, we had the police involved, we had MATC and the mental health involved, we had youth corrections involved, we had the education system involved. The vision was that those partners—and they worked with us in a committee as partners—would all place a staffperson in the facility. They would supply the operating dollars for that staff person so we would have a fully staffed assessment unit with really no new cost to government because those costs were already being borne by another agency. The

authority put two of its staff there to monitor the stream of emergency placements.

In addition to this facility, the authority also set up a group of emergency homes where kids could go in just a more of a foster home setting.

We had explored numerous options for such a facility that would meet this proposal. So Adele was not the first and the only option we looked at. In fact, we were approached by the businessmen that became the owners because they had heard that we were looking for something for this purpose.

Our goal was to eliminate hotel placements, but we also wanted to reduce our use and reliance on shelter placements. Those shelter placements are very costly. At the time, probably the cost is the same or somewhat higher, probably, on average three to four hundred dollars a day.

And in a shelter, children get no programming and no service. It's basically a roof over their head. They're not secure settings. A child can go in one door and out the other the same way—the issues that were part of the problem with hotel placements as well. So we wanted a facility that could be semi-secure, not that the kids were locked up, but that the front doors were locked and a child could not easily leave.

So, when we were approached by this group of businessmen who said there was a building up for sale—it was owned by sisters, as someone has already said, and they wanted the use of that facility to be similar to their objectives and their values that they had had as sisters. They were all retiring, and so they were selling the building.

So that led to the purchase of Adele by this particular group and solely for the purpose of providing us with the resource to develop this assessment unit and the emergency placements.

The funding streams that we propose in the proposal and were all—were all vetted through by Treasury Board, were that there would be a residential section, so the residential care costs would—could be covered there through the per diems, and then the assessment unit, primary cost would be covered by the partners, like police, education. We had a teacher in there; we had—MATC had committed to a therapist being seconded there at their expense but to pay operating costs and so on.

So we had a very active partnership. We did a lot of work with the community. We had community

information evenings, and when we did the grand opening, we had a lot of people from the community there.

In the time I was there—I left the authority in 2013—we had had no incidents with the community.

We set out an RFP for proposals to people who provided residential care, and through that process we selected Marymount, and Marymount was the one that was providing the residential-care services. They are a known, credible organization that looked after these children.

These children were not in care with the authority. That is mistaken information because children are in care with agencies, and we had children—children were placed in that facility from any one of the authorities, primarily the indigenous authorities because this was an indigenous-operated facility with a very strong emphasis on indigenous programming—our cultural programming.

The questions and concerns that have come up—I've heard come up here this evening and that were raised in media stuff around the tendering process, the prepayment of rent, those—amount of rent per square foot, those were all issues that went back and forth between Treasury Board probably over a period of—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Flette, your 10 minutes for your presentation has expired.

Mr. Allum: I wonder if the committee would grant Ms. Flette leave to complete her presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there—what is the will of the committee? Is the committee agreed to allow Ms.—

Mr. Martin: I think we have a full slate of individuals who have registered to speak. I agree with my colleague, but if we could set a time limit, say an additional two minutes to conclude your remarks, again in fairness to the other presenters who are also waiting to share their remarks.

Ms. Flette: So we signed a copy of the lease in October '08 and somewhere in '09 the program—residential care program started, and we started moving partners in for the assessment unit.

At the present time, while it was a 20-year lease, at the present time the cost of this lease is \$24.20 a square foot, which is well within or below current market rates, and the savings that were talked about, the \$500,000 and what the authority could do with it, much of that money really is for residential care and

those children are—there are still children in need of care and in need of beds, and money is still being spent in that regard.

So, in closing, I guess, I would also like to say, you know, the impact that this has on a business community and the ability of social service organizations who are strapped for money to approach this business community and ask for their involvement, I think, is jeopardized when government is able to use this kind of heavy-handed approach to terminate leases and terminate agreements instead of sitting down and negotiating the matter.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Flette.

Mr. Allum: Ms. Flette, I would be remiss if I didn't thank you for your considerable contribution to the well-being and care of children in Manitoba over your distinguished career. And I also think that, to my knowledge, anyways, no member around this table was here at the time, so the context, background, and information and detail that you provided tonight, I think, is helpful to all members.

* (19:30)

So I just wanted to thank you so much for coming in and providing testimony to the committee.

Ms. Flette: Well, thank you, and I would like to encourage this committee to take a step back.

We have a facility that is good, that can be used. There's children in need. And to take a step back and negotiate with the owners for—to find some use for this facility. If the southern authority no longer wishes to do it, there are other groups who would be willing to step up.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Ms. Flette, for your presentation tonight.

And I'll echo the comments of my colleague, that we certainly appreciate the work you do for the children, of course, that were—that you mentioned tonight.

And, really, I guess my question is, in your presentation, you talked about the owner—the owners approaching you about the building. How did they know your need? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Flette.

Ms. Flette: Sorry. The issue of hotel reduction strategy was in the media every single day and we were being interviewed every day about what are we doing, what are we doing. And so it was out there.

I don't know how the owners heard about it, but they phoned us. We had no relationship with these businessmen at the time, and they phoned us and said, we know you're looking and we think we have a building. And that's how the process started with them.

Mr. Wharton: Next question: You mentioned, too, in your presentation about, you know, of course, being a CEO—I'm a former CEO of my company—understand the importance of, you know, making sure we get it right and, of course, looking at rate of return on ROI is very important.

I guess my question would be, naturally, you're looking at a large commitment here. Was it—was this a tendered process? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Flette.

Ms. Flette: Sorry. It was not.

The authority is not obligated to tender. We are not obligated to follow—we are an arm's-length organization. We have the—the authorities have ability to raise their own funds, although they are primarily dependent on the Province. And we did raise—that issue was addressed with Treasury Board at the time, to their satisfaction.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Klassen, you had a question?

Ms. Klassen: Yes. I just wanted to say thank you for your presentation. We did have Tara Petti, the CEO of southern First Nations, come in and present, and she brought a great perspective as well.

We are moving towards getting our children back in our home communities and really appreciate all the work that you did, and this building is still located here in Winnipeg, and I would really rather see a building of such greatness located in a First Nation community because we do want our children back in our own home communities. But I appreciate all the work that you have done. Thank you.

Ms. Flette: I think that was one of our objectives in getting good assessments, why the children are there. Many of them did go back to home community. And we do know that most of the children in care are provincially funded and in the city. So it is necessary to have a resource here and then be able to move them back to communities from that facility.

Mr. Wharton: So, again, you mentioned that it—there wasn't a tender. So is it safe to say, then, that perhaps, that this was sole-sourced?

Ms. Flette: Can you tell me what you mean by that?

Mr. Wharton: Meaning that it didn't go to tender, so it was sole-source awarded. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Flette.

Ms. Flette: I talk too much.

It did not go to tender, as I already said. But as I also explained, we had looked at numerous other facilities, and we were looking for a specific facility in an area, and we were under a time crunch to use hotel reduction strategy funds.

Mr. Wharton: And thank you again.

And so, why did we—you end up choosing this company, as CEO of the company?

Ms. Flette: They were the only ones that came forward with a viable building that we could use.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Flette, as we are basically out of time for questions.

We have another out-of-town presenter that wasn't marked with an asterisk but is an out-of-town presenter, No. 10, Josephine D'Andrea. Is it—what is the will of the committee? That we hear Josephine before we move on to the rest of the presenters? *[Agreed]*

We will move on to presenter No. 10, Josephine D'Andrea.

Do you have written material for the committee?

Ms. Josephine D'Andrea (Kelburn Recovery Centre): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Our staff will distribute it, and as soon as they've got a bunch of it distributed, you may proceed with your presentation.

Ms. D'Andrea, you may proceed.

Ms. D'Andrea: Good evening, Mr. Chair and honourable members.

My name, as the Chair said, is Josephine D'Andrea, and I'd like to just first say just a little bit about me and why I'm here. It's been many, many, many years since I've made a presentation on behalf of a social service of any kind.

I also am an immigrant. I came here when I was eight years old. No one asked my opinion as to where I should go—or, where we should go, and I landed in Manitoba. And very happy about that and very proud to be a Manitoban. However, I was the oldest of all my siblings in an ethnic community, so at 15 years old I was out there working to help my family.

With a grade 8–grade 10 education, that doesn't leave much of a future. However, I've had an unbelievable amount of mentors who saw things in me that I sure didn't see and kept propelling me to achieve. I have achieved; even with a grade 10 education, I have achieved in Manitoba. Bless Manitoba.

I have had—excuse me—business careers that I have been a regional manager for western Canada for Equifax, plus administrative officer for a worldwide insurance agency and various other things. I have always felt unbelievably fortunate that I've been able to achieve what I've achieved with being an immigrant and also with my limited education. If I was a man, I'd be standing here and bragging about it, being a self-made man, but being a woman, we apologize for it.

Let me say that I wanted to give back. I have had a number of very successful social enterprises that I have founded. Villa Cabrini was one of them, and it stands in all its glory, bricks and mortar, when I didn't know what I was doing. But God bless the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy, who saw what I was capable of putting together and the team that we put together, and it became a reality.

After that came many, many projects. But let me just give a couple. The other one was the Italian chamber of commerce that is federally chartered by the Canadian government. And I then thank the then provincial premier of Gary Filmon, who helped mentor and bring it to fruition. And that chamber of commerce is one of 72 Italian chambers around the world.

After that, I said we need something more. I had family members that went through mental health and addiction, and looking for services in our province, 20 years ago our province was a wasteland, was a pathetic wasteland. And the services we found were always outside of the province. I thought, damn it, you know, I can do something about this. I now know what I'm doing when I'm doing a project, not with Villa Cabrini, where ignorance was bliss.

So I wanted to fill a gap in our province. I did not want to duplicate hundreds of agencies that were already in the mix doing whatever they were doing. And I founded St. Raphael Wellness Centre. I took it out of a basement as a church—little counselling session—and converted it into a community-based centre that is still, to this day, doing damn good work in the addiction field.

I left a business career to do that. Not to sound like Mother Teresa, but I thought I'll leave my business career for three years. And it was a very successful business career. I was earning good, big-time dollars when you could count on one hand how many female lawyers were in our ranks and how many female branch managers. I was a regional manager for western Canada—excuse me.

* (19:40)

I left my business career for three years, and I founded St. Raphael centre. Nineteen years later, I'm still at it because our system was dysfunctional.

I'm not going to go into detail on that system because our VIRGO report has very, very detailed and 'quantative' dysfunction in their report as to what we have in Manitoba. That's today's government that has had the foresight to call for a VIRGO report, and God bless the day's government.

However, let me say that 10 years ago, when I was still running SRWC, 10 years ago another entity, another government of the day was trying to fulfill their lease at Hecla to put together a wellness centre. I was asked to help them to have this become a reality—10 years ago—that there was going to be a state-of-the-art wellness centre to include mental health and addictions.

In those days, nobody was talking mental health. Me. That's it. Me, 19 years ago, saying, so you get people sober and so you help them, then what? You've got to put in the mental health. Ten years ago, the government of the day would not—would not—honour that lease, and it did not come to fruition. Let me say to you—just imagine for one second how many lives could have been helped—how many lives could have been helped—that would now be taxpaying citizens.

So unfortunately, these lease issues are not the privy of any one government, but governments seem to be attracted to being heavy-handed in some of the tactics that have been carried out in the past.

I'm here today because of the centre that the lease is in question of. That is the most vulnerable of our vulnerable. I've had many indigenous clients over the years—in these past 19 years, where I was only going to do it for three years. Nineteen years.

I'm an immigrant and my parents and various others from Europe came with trauma into this country. Our trauma is absolutely nothing, it's a cakewalk compared to our indigenous children and indigenous citizens, as to the traumas that they continuously have to try and overcome.

This centre that the lease is now in question of was critical, and it is critical to be honoured. These children are our tomorrow's taxpayers and citizens. Don't throw at me, three children or 13 children. Put a price on one child—put a price on one child—and I ask you, what will that price be?

Please, I beg you, please do not follow other governments. I am apolitical. I have had the great, great benefit of having Premier Ed Schreyer as a board member on SRWC; the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy as a mentor; the Premier Gary Filmon as a mentor; the Honourable James Downey as a mentor.

I do not discriminate, but governments of the day can make mistakes, and this is a huge mistake. Please honour your lease. Do not go to Bill 32. That's heavy-handed. That's autocratic. That's absolutely autocratic, and we in Manitoba don't do things like that.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. D'Andrea.

Mr. Lindsey: Just want to thank you for taking time to come and present and really give us a sense of your passion for what it is you've done and hopefully help us all make the right decision. So thank you very much for coming.

Ms. D'Andrea: Thank you.

Mr. Fielding: Yes, you know, further to the member's comments, thank you for coming out and making your presentation.

Ms. D'Andrea: Thank you again.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. D'Andrea? Sorry, I didn't turn the speaker on.

Mr. Helwer: Thank you, Ms. D'Andrea, for coming tonight. You sound like you have considerable

business and legal background and have been very successful. Thank you for your contributions.

I'm wondering, if you think back to the things that you've done, do you think it is reasonable and defensible for a government to pay \$500,000 a year for a building that was purchased for \$669,000? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. D'Andrea.

Ms. D'Andrea: So sorry.

Let me ask you a question. You're now playing politics, and so I'm going to throw it back at you because leases are entered into for a range of dollars, and it's not what the value of the building is and not what the value of the lease is, but what is agreed to. And, if it was agreed to as a fair and market value of the day—of the day—or whatever reasons, it was legally binding. And we as governments in our province do not overnight become autocratic because someone else did not like—that you did not like the way someone else did it. If it was legally binding, you hold to that legally binding until it is over and done with and then you renegotiate.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Ms. D'Andrea.

When you mentioned Villa Cabrini on River Avenue, the building, I believe, was built in the '80s. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. D'Andrea.

Ms. D'Andrea: Thank you, sorry.

Actually, there is a story to that. I started with this bloody vision in 1979, and the whole community was up against it. I then formed an Italian women association, and the male part of the Italian community was telling all the women, don't you know—or my husband—don't you know how to keep your wife at home?

So the building opened in 1985. There were all parties involved, all levels of party: the City, the Province and the federal. And the reason why all of them became involved was because of the opposition. Nobody wanted it there. And you know what? Because of all those parties being involved in the opposition, we became creative. That was the first building with underground parking. That was the first building with commercial space on the first floor. That was the first building where it had all the amenities that it had. And you know where we copied it from? Columbus Centre in Toronto.

So God bless opposition, because that building was then used as the model for across Canada.

Mr. Wharton: Well, thank you for that, and obviously you're passionate about it. And it's funny because when I owned my business, that was the first building that I was—had the opportunity with my company to bid on a tender to do all the moving into that building. So we were the successful proponent on the tender, and that's how we got our start in the moving business. So thanks for bringing back that memory; it was great.

Ms. D'Andrea: You owe me.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions for Ms. D'Andrea?

Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will now move back to the presenters—we will move back to the presenters that need translation services, presenter No. 8 and No. 18 that were there that now need translation services. We also have two new presenters that are asking for translation services.

Should we do those two as well so we'd have a total of four presentations? What is the will of the committee? *[Agreed]*

Okay, then, we will move on now to presenter No. 8, Jaserwt Singh.

Mr. Singh, do you have any written material for the committee?

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Jaserwt Singh (Private Citizen): I'll explain my thoughts verbally. I don't have anything written.

* (19:50)

Mr. Chairperson: You may proceed with your presentation when you're ready, Mr. Singh.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Jaserwt Singh: We supported the PC government. We've always supported, and we helped them and supported them. But, after hearing what is happening with the children, we are very upset and feeling that this is wrong, and we've made a wrong decision by having them in power.

The rules can't be changed overnight. Rules being changed overnight is not accepted, and we always thought that it's a good government and we supported them, but you cannot change the rules overnight.

We should think about the children and especially children who are challenged.

We should not break rules, and we should not throw children out like that, out of the building. The lease still has time, so you—we should make arrangements. All the facilities were there, provided in that house, and so we should take that into consideration.

We like the government, but we are surprised that why this—it—all this happened overnight. We are very worried about—and our whole community is very worried about these children and about what's going to happen, and it should—this overnight changes and—should not be there.

If this rule can be changed overnight, then all other rules can also be changed overnight, and nobody—the other communities will also feel insecure.

The lease should not change very soon if you have time. It's for 10 years, so then you can sit and talk to the landlord and discuss the lease instead of just cancelling it overnight.

We should think about the children's future, as well, who are living in the house.

All the—the building had all the facilities which were needed by the students, or by the children, as far with the challenges of special needs, so it should be saved and the government should think about it.

We should try and keep the lease and make a better future for the children. Everyone feels very safe and they feel right if the lease is kept and not broken.

We trust the country and we feel that, as immigrants, we love Canada and we trust the country, but if we feel insecure if the rules are changed overnight.

We come here with—and we work hard and we have a lot of trust in the government and in Canada and we feel if—we feel insecure as immigrants. As immigrants we feel insecure that the way the rules change, so if we work hard we—and we earn and the rules keep changing, so that gives us a little insecurity.

Thank you for giving me time to speak and I respect the time given to me. Thank you very much.

Mr. Helwer: And I'll do this in two parts so as to not overwhelm the translator.

I want to thank you for coming tonight.

I want to reassure you, as we have with everyone else, that the children that were in this facility are not at risk. They are well-cared for.

* (20:00)

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Singh?

Mr. Helwer: I've got another part.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, I know, but do you want to ask the rest of the question, then?

Mr. Helwer: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, Mr. Helwer.

Mr. Helwer: Just further confirmation: this is not overnight. The building has been vacant by the southern authority since 2013. The government tried to make use of the facility and tried for a couple years. And it did not work. We've worked with the owners, but this is—we were not able to make appropriate changes.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Jaserwt Singh: That time, the government was NDP, and now it's PC. So the building should have been saved. The building should have been, like, kept for the—to the children. And in 2013, the government was NDP government, and now it's PC government, so the building by this government should have been saved for the students—for the children, because it was made for one particular purpose.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Singh, thank you so much for coming out here tonight. I couldn't help but agree with the first part of your presentation. I think many Manitobans are having reservations and second thoughts about the Pallister government, and it looks like they'll get the opportunity to toss 'em out any time soon.

An Honourable Member: Oh, and I was being kind to you.

Mr. Allum: Well, he—I had to say it, whether you object or not.

I also thought you made a number of interesting and important points, and I want you to know—it's really important for you and other newcomers to hear: I thank you for coming to Canada and coming to Winnipeg and Manitoba. Keep using your voice to speak out. It's very important that you do. Thank you so much.

Mr. Jaserwt Singh: Thank you very much. Really appreciated, but we are coming here for hard work. So we want to support you guys, but I think you keep it—that building—so if I have a leasing agreement more than a year so everybody happy here. You guys are happy; the landlord are happy; this children happy. So good for you guys, good for everyone. Everyone having more safe inside. If you guys taking a little bit—like, give him—like, a landlord a little bit support. They are spending lots of money. And renovation inside and lots of money they are spending in renovation and lots of—so they can—really safe inside if you guys give us a little bit time, so they are safe and safe for children come back there. They have the same room, same home. So everyone is safe here.

Also, we are—our community always—I like I explained to you guys, our community, lots of people supports you guys. As well, me—support too much you guys in—who—when you guys elected. So we want support all life you guys, but if you guys give a landlord a little bit of support and the children, everyone happy here. Everyone is safe inside and feels safe.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr.—oh. Are you done?

Mr. Wharton: Again, thank you, Mr. Singh, for your presentation tonight and, of course, your passion, as we all around the table share, on the safety of our children. And, as my colleague said earlier, you can be assured that the children are being well looked after now and have been since 2013 and have not resided in that building.

I can also advise that, you know, that the Province and the government does have over—thousands of leases and contracts and—in our care and, quite frankly, this is the only one that we've seen like this.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Singh, we have a couple seconds left, so if you could just briefly answer.

Mr. Jaserwt Singh: Okay, so, really appreciate you guys listen to me. So I feel inside, feel safe if here you guys give him a little bit time, landlord, and like a little bit time for the children, everyone happy here. And all, you know, all life—our community has—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Singh, your time has expired. We thank you very much for your presentation.

We will now call on presenter No. 18, Jagtar [*phonetic*] Gill. Jagtar [*phonetic*] Gill?

Mr. Gill, you need a presenter? *[interjection]*
Sorry, a translator?

Do—you don't have any written material for the committee?

Mr. Jadbar Gill (Private Citizen): Yes, I'm here for Bill 32, so.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, so number—Mr. Gill, you may—oh, he's speaking in English now? *[interjection]*

Okay, if you do not need a translator, Mr. Gill, then we will move you down the list, because we need to make sure we get everybody who definitely needs a translator. So if you will just back up, we will bring you up when your turn comes.

So the next presenter that needs a translator is Kulwinder Chahal.

Kulwinder Chahal? Mr. Chahal, you need a translator?

You may—Ms. Sohi, if you may go up there?

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Kulwinder Chahal (Private Citizen): If the lease is broken midway, how will we trust the government? We trust the government, but if the lease is broken in between, then how do we trust the government?

There are a number of children in that building, so if the building is not given—if they are take—told to leave the building, then what is the future of these children? The children are—they have a few challenges, so—and they need support, they need help. And if they are just taken out of the building, then what kind of a future and security do they have?

If they are moved out, the money will be spent on the new building and on the new facilities that you will be catered for. So money is going to be spent there as well.

* (20:10)

Children feel more comfortable and they are—at wherever they're staying. And they know the no-how of the whole place. They are familiar; they feel more secure. And, if you take them to a new place, they'll have to adjust again and take time to adjust.

If the children are not taken care of and if they're just left like—then it'll be very harmful. And anything—anybody can mistreat them. So they need to be taken care of.

Thank you.

Mr. Allum: I just wanted to thank you so much for coming out to committee tonight. We're one of the few provinces in Canada that have hearings like this where individual citizens can come and voice their opinion. And so I think it's very important that you came here and that you shared your views with us and that you're very concerned about the well-being of the children of Manitoba.

So thank you so much for coming out tonight.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Kulwinder Chahal: Thank you.

Mr. Martin: Thank you very much for attending this evening. A common concern of yours was about the children, and you made the comment about the children in this building. And you may not have been here for an earlier presentation from the CEO, but this building has been vacant for six years. There are no children in this building. There have been no children in this building for almost six years, since about 2013. And the three children that were displaced, she advised, are all safe and secure.

So I know the safety of the children was a concern of yours, so I just wanted to put that to rest.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Kulwinder Chahal: Thank you.

Ms. Klassen: I want to thank you for your presentation.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Kulwinder Chahal: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Any more questions? We now will proceed to our—

For the information of the committee, we have four new registered presenters that are requesting a translator. What is the will of the committee?

Mr. Allum: Well, I believe that we should continue with the process we've been following in order to—that our translator, who's performing so admirably for us tonight, can hopefully finish up at some point and go home and enjoy the rest of the evening.

Mr. Chairperson: What—is that the will of the committee? *[Agreed]*

Okay, then we will continue on with the presenters that require translation services.

Our next presented is Ghulab Singh *[phonetic]*. Ghulab Singh *[phonetic]*? Mr. Ghulab Singh *[phonetic]*? Is Mr. Singh present?

Floor Comment: He's gone to the washroom.

Mr. Chairperson: We will go to the next presenter and then come back to Mr. Singh.

We will call Baljeet Singh. Baljeet Singh.

Mr. Singh, you require a translator?

Ms. Sohi.

Mr. Singh, you may start your presentation when you are ready.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Baljeet Singh (Private Citizen): What's the reason for just cancelling the contract, existing contract, whichever that was existing contract? And what was the reason, what was the motive behind just cancelling it?

What is the reason for Bill 32, and what is the reason for starting a new building? The government should continue the way it was going on earlier. Now it's going to affect the taxes. That's what he feels: that if any new changes take place, that is going to increase the taxes. As it is, we are paying the highest taxes in Canada and, like, in Manitoba.

The carbon tax is also going to be affecting. That is also included, so the tax is increasing and with the new decisions, the tax is going to go up.

The public should be told about what is happening and what are the—all the expenditure that's going to take place when the move is going to take—moving from one place to the other.

There should be an online poll, and public opinion should be taken into consideration about the changes that are being made.

Public should be made aware about what's happening so that—and so that they can also give their opinion in the poll, maybe an online poll.

Were the children asked if they were wanting to move to a different place? Were they asked? Are they happy? Have they been asked? Are they happy in the old residential area or the new one?

* (20:20)

As it is, they are—they have challenges and if you move them from one place to the other, it can give them more emotional stress. Shifting is not so easy, so it can affect them.

What was the need to make this decision? There was—when things are all going fine, so what was the need to do all this? It's just like dictatorship. Everybody should be told on what's happening, and

the children should be asked, the public should be asked, and it should not be just a sudden decision.

Why is the meeting taking place now and not when you moved the children in about five years, six years back? Why is the—why is this meeting held now after so many years?

That's it.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Mr. Singh, for your presentation. I appreciate the time you took to come out tonight and share your concerns, and certainly we have concerns as well.

You brought up the issues of high taxes, and we know that Manitoba, under the former government, was the highest taxed jurisdiction west of Quebec, so we certainly agree with you and we have the honour and thank you for the privilege to trying to turn that ship around.

Also, too, with the carbon tax, you know the federal government has currently hoisted that on taxpayers of not only Manitoba but Canadians as well.

So, to your question, though, on why, you asked, the need for this. Well, I'd mentioned it early in one of my comments that the government in Manitoba has thousands of leases and agreements, Mr. Singh, that are negotiated on a regular basis, and this particular one needed to be looked at.

And I can assure you, too, as well, that the children are safe and have been safe since 2013 under the current care, of course, of the southern authority, so your concerns are being heard and we're certainly ensuring that we move forward in a very good way, sir.

Thank you.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Baljeet Singh: Why was the lease not renewed and why was it discontinued?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Singh, thank you so much for coming. You've asked a number of important questions here tonight. We were hoping the minister might answer some of them, but you don't seem to be getting many answers, but thank you so much for coming tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: We want to thank you for your presentation, Mr. Singh, and we will now move on to the next presenter.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Baljeet Singh: Thank you so much, but I did not get my answers. I'm not satisfied.

Mr. Chairperson: Amjit [*phonetic*] Singh. Our next presenter is Amjait [*phonetic*] Singh. Amitaj?

Mr. Singh, you require a translator?

Okay, Mr. Singh. You may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Ms. Sohi?

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Amitaj Singh (Private Citizen): Whatever is happening is not good. The children were very happy where they were, and now it's going to be difficult for them to adjust to a new environment.

The government is supposed to be democratic, but it seems to be that it's more like a dictatorship. The public opinion should have been taken into consideration before passing any bills.

All the expenditure, the new expenditure that's taking place while making arrangements for the children, the taxes are going to get higher. And the taxes, obviously, it's the public that—who has to pay the tax. So taxes will increase just because you—the expenses for those children. The facilities—the new facilities that they're going to get there, all that expenditure is going to be added, and it's—the public is going to be taxed more.

The money spent on the new contract could have been saved and spent on the children and on other—on improving Manitoba rather than on just unnecessarily having a new contract and giving it to the contractor with new facilities. So it—they were fine where they were. There was no problem. So why all this has taken place? Because it's increasing the taxes.

The other provinces—we are setting a wrong example for the other provinces. So if we do this, they will follow, and it's not going to be democratic then.

* (20:30)

If this continues, it'll be difficult for—to get the same government back, to get—difficult to get votes. We came here because this was a democratic country. But it's—doesn't seem to be democratic; it seems to be dictatorship. And things are just happening without public opinion. It's not right what the government is doing with the children, take—moving them from one place to the other.

I am not in favour of Bill 32. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Singh.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Mr. Singh, for coming tonight and sharing your concerns. I would—appreciate the time you've taken for tonight.

Thank you.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Amitaj Singh: Thank you so much.

Mr. Lindsey: I just want to take the opportunity to thank you for coming and really taking part in the democratic process that we have in, particularly, this province that allows citizens to come out and voice their opinion on that.

So I really want to thank you for coming out and doing that.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Amitaj Singh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions?

We want to thank you for your presentation, Mr. Singh.

And we will now—before we move on to our next presenter, though, I'd like to just remind the public that are observing the meeting tonight that photography, taking pictures, is prohibited unless you're a member of the legislative press gallery. So I would like to just caution everybody that no picture taking is allowed.

We will now move on to our next presenter, Tybir [*phonetic*] Singh—Tejbir Singh.

Mr. Singh, you require a translator? Okay.

Ms. Sohi.

And Mr. Singh can start his presentation whenever he is ready.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Tejbir Singh (Private Citizen): Good evening, I'm Tejbir Singh. I'm from Punjab, and I moved here because of the country. It's a beautiful country, and it had democracy.

But, after coming here, it seems to be dictatorship. And same as—he feels there's no change in India and Canada.

Bill 32 should not be passed because it is not the right thing. The lease should be renewed, and the children should not be moved out. Children are just wasting time.

Thank you.

Mr. Wharton: Mr. Singh, thank you for coming out tonight. We appreciate your comments. Thank you.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Tejbir Singh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Lindsey.

Oh, just wait, we have more questions for you.

Mr. Lindsey: I don't really have a question for you, Mr. Singh, but, again, I just want to thank you for coming out and taking part in democracy, because that's really what makes democracy work, is when people such as yourself share your opinion and participate and make sure that you hold people like us to account for decisions that governments make. So, thank you very much.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Tejbir Singh: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will now move on to our next presenter, Himmat Bhullar. Himmat Bhullar? Himmat Bhullar?

Mr. Bhullar, you require translation services?

Mr. Himmat Bhullar (Private Citizen): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Sohi.

And Mr. Bhullar may start with his presentation as soon as he is ready.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Bhullar: I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for giving me a chance to speak, and I just want to say that I am against this bill.

The organization that was already running there, running the show, was already doing a very good job, and instead of giving it to somebody else, maybe you could have—the government should have helped them improve their facilities. And why are they being asked to move out?

The—whichever party wins, it's their people who are in the front and not the party—opposition party people; it's the people in front are the people of the ruling party.

It seems to be the same as in India: the ruling party has their own people, and it's the same in Canada. The ruling party, the winning party, have their own people, and—in front and all the

opportunities are given to the people of the ruling party, just the same as in India.

What is the motive of the government? It was first now with this building and now even with Seven Oaks. There is an issue. So what is the motive behind all this?

* (20:40)

I am—I've been here for seven years, and I'm a transporter, and if the—in a truck, everything—where the truck moves, if every—all the parts are functioning. But, if one part is not functioning well, it—the truck—will be at a halt. So, same goes for the government. The government should take everybody in—everybody's opinion and do what's right. And take everyone's viewpoint, and it—we came here from India, thinking it was—be different, but it seems to be the same with—whatever was in India is the same in Canada. And we are worried that our children, who are born citizens here, will—what kind of a future they will have if the rules keep changing like this, so they feel insecure.

The 'orgination'—organization that's already working with them is doing a good job, so they should be encouraged and they should be helped instead of giving the contract to the new person.

The community is very worried that if every time a new government comes, they will have their own rules, and it gives them insecurity, that way the rules keep changing with every government coming in in power. So the previous government should be—the previous organization should be helped and encouraged and not given to anybody else.

We should not make this as a political issue. We should just think about this children, and the facilities which they had were very good, and they should be provided with the same facilities or maybe better.

The previous organization was familiar with the problems and knew how to handle them and what kind of activities they needed, what each one was—what—needed, and it was given to them. But this new contract, they will not know and they will take time to understand them and the children may feel insecure and not too happy.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Bhullar.

Mr. Wharton: Mr. Bhullar, thank you so much for coming tonight and sharing your stories and your concerns; appreciate that. Thank you so much.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Bhullar: Thank you so much.

Mr. Lindsey: I just want to take the opportunity to thank you again, the same as we've thanked some other folks for coming out and participating in the democratic process and sharing your views. And hopefully people in charge will listen to some of those views and act appropriately.

So thank you very much.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Bhullar: Thank you so much.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): I, too, just want to thank you, Mr. Bhullar, for coming out this evening and sharing a little bit about yourself, a little bit about where you're coming from as far as wanting to be able to entrust that your province has your best in mind.

And I think that we all want to be proud of our province and we want to have confidence that, when there is a contract made or a deal made, that that contract is fulfilled.

And so I was hoping that maybe you could expand just a little bit in talking about the fears that you might have. Like, you used the word insecurity. Do you mind expanding on that a little bit more?

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Bhullar: Insecurity is because the rules keep changing. And if the contracts are not being continued and the lease is getting discontinued, so that is giving the insecurity to the community. And then, like, he's giving examples of Seven Oaks emergency—urgent care. That is being discontinued.

So the rules are changing, and that gives insecurity to the community.

The previous bill—organization has—is trusted. People trust the bill—trust them. They know what—how the children are looked after and how to cater to their needs. So it's not—we are not very sure whether the new organization is going to do the same, and that little bit of fear is always there.

Ms. Lamoureux: Just want to thank you again for coming out and presenting to the committee. It's very nice to be able to hear from Manitobans from all different walks of life. And I think you bring that perspective to tonight's committee. Thank you.

Ms. Sohi, on behalf of Mr. Bhullar: Thank you so much.

Mr. Chairperson: We want to thank you for your presentation.

Seeing no further questions, we will move on to the next presenter.

* (20:50)

Mr. Ghulab Singh [*phonetic*]? This is the second time we are calling Mr. Singh. Ghulab Singh [*phonetic*]? Ghulab Singh [*phonetic*]?

This is the second time Mr. Singh has been called. He does not seem to be present. We will now move to—with the remaining presenters on the list. Mr. Singh has been dropped from the list.

We will now move to presenter No. 2, Mr. Dave Hill, private citizen. Dave Hill?

Before I recognize you, Mr. Hill, we'd like to once again thank you—thank Ms. Sohi for her translation services, and is it necessary that Ms. Sohi stay around or we have—

We want to thank you very much for your services. You may leave the table when you feel like it. Thank you very much.

Mr. David Hill (Private Citizen): I'm a private citizen but I also am with the firm that are acting for the owners. So our firm's getting paid for me being here tonight, but looking at the pride that the honourable Mr. Wharton had in being the CEO of a company that tendered for a job in 1985 and was successful, I'm equally proud that our firm has been hired by the Pawley government, the Filmon government—so we'll go to the wall here—the Doer government and the Selinger government, as well as the Chrétien government.

But let me just take up the point that the honourable Mr. Wharton made. This power that was exercised in the Jockey Club case, and that's—I have a handout for that—I should have put that to you before, and I'll get to it, but that's what the handout's about, the Jockey Club case.

This power doesn't depend on whether a contract was even a contract. This power doesn't depend on whether it was a written contract, a verbal contract, a gentleman or gentlewoman's agreement, a funding promise. It also doesn't matter whether the contract, if it's a contract, was tendered. So the power that I learned about as a result of taking this case—and I've expressed this—I was surprised that I thought I knew

a lot of law, but every day you learn more. This power is so pervasive that even if Mr. Wharton's company had tendered—and that was a government contract during the Pawley years—that could've been undone by any of the next three administrations. So it doesn't matter whether something's tendered.

It's like expropriation. That's what this really does, except expropriation usually requires a public purpose. This power, as I've understood it and come to learn about it, doesn't. It's a tremendous power, and in my respectful submission—there's the lawyer in me talking—I'm going to suggest that it should be exercised sparingly.

So the reason I have given you the handout on—which was a CBC online production, I think, in 2014, about a year after the Jockey Club case. And I have to pause there. It's kind of ironic; the judge who decided against the Jockey Club and found in favour of the Province of Manitoba was my partner. The firm used to be called Hill Abra and Dewar. So it's a little ironic that I'm now—and he had the right to do what he did based on the law, but he wasn't asked the question whether the government of the day could destroy this contract with the Jockey Club without compensation.

And so I've given you the end result because in the press conference—and I won't call it a press conference—in the press questions to the honourable Premier the day that the first reading was given, he cited the Jockey Club as an example of the power being exercised. I learned about the Jockey Club when the Justice Department sent me five cases and—of which I knew nothing.

So—but the point is, the government of the day was upheld by Justice Dewar. He refused to give an order quashing the government's decision. So this wasn't legislation, but they were going to move towards legislation. So he ruled in favour of the government and said this power exists. But obviously, the government of the day must have felt some obligation to the owners of the track, the Jockey Club, and perhaps also to the Peguis First Nation, who was going to enter an agreement with the government. And so this tells you they went on to negotiate a settlement.

And so I don't think the Premier had a chance to give any more to his answer than to say that the Jockey Club was an example of the power being exercised. I'm sure he's aware that there was this end result which was negotiation.

But let me clear up one fact which I've heard tonight. My information from my clients—and they'll both be speaking—this—these children, this facility, was not vacant since February of 2013. The children moved out in February of 2019. So, as a lawyer who goes to court, and we try to deal with the facts, if this committee is legitimately under the misconception that this building was sitting there for six years more and then the government of the day said, well, then why do we lease this building if it's just going to be used for nothing, that's not the facts as I understand them. But more importantly, if the members in this room are under that misconception, if the government of today is under that misconception, if every member of the Legislature is under that misconception, then in my view, it's reason enough to reconsider passing this bill.

Because this power is very pervasive. Some people would call it draconian. The firm that we started in 1980 was called Hill and Walsh. Young lady named Sherri Walsh, now the integrity commissioner for the City of Winnipeg, was—had enough whatever—I won't say the word out loud—to join me when I left Winnipeg's largest firm. She had never heard of it. Our counsel, who's the former chief justice of the province of Manitoba, had not heard of this, which just shows you nobody knows everything about the law.

So I'm saying, listen to the owners. Ask them what happened in February and—of 2019, not February 2013. And then ask yourself the question, are we all going down the wrong trail or track here because we haven't been informed properly?

Let me also mention this. As a litigator—in our firm, it's called litigation, so we—I don't do criminal litigation. I don't do—we don't do domestic litigation; you would never want us to do a house deal, we'd screw it up badly—but you try to convince a judge or a committee or a member of—that she should make a decision that's fair. Or if it's more than one, that they should make a decision that's fair. And if it's a man, he should make a decision that's fair. And I've always gone by that precept in the last 44 years. The law is one thing, but hopefully, the law and the Legislature who pass laws will be guided by one principle: if you get the facts correct, is it fair to let this bill go ahead? If you get the facts correct, even if you let the bill go ahead, shouldn't the government of the day follow the lead of the government of the day in 2013 as the Premier relied upon and negotiate with the owners? Because if you don't, it's virtually expropriation without compensation.

But the problem is, in expropriation, like with the City of Winnipeg, they have to show there's a public purpose for putting somebody off—people got—are getting moved off the Parker Lands because there's going to be a bus route. Whether that's in the public interest or not is—but it's supposedly in the public interest to do so.

So ask yourself the question, is it fair to let this bill proceed? And ask yourself the question, if I now get the facts straight, and if you listen to Elsie Flette and the other people who've talked about not only how it was entered into—because it wouldn't have mattered whether it was tendered or not. I made that point. And also how apparently things were doing well in this facility. And then, all of a sudden, these people were yanked out in February of this year. Ask yourself, is that fair?

* (21:00)

So the handout is there to show you the end result. I'm not suggesting that you just simply sit down and negotiate with my client because I'm suggesting that this bill is unfair when you hear what good this facility was doing and promoting.

So, I don't think I've—I haven't seen the Chairman put up the two-minute sign—one minute, okay. I go by two Shakespearean principles; you might go by the first one. He said you should shoot all lawyers. I don't really subscribe to that. It's not one of my favourites, but also he also said brevity is the soul of wit.

So I ask you to reconsider this. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Hill.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Mr. Hill, for coming out tonight, and I certainly appreciate your words on the record. And you mentioned many times about getting the facts straight, and I just wanted to be clear and put on the record that not once tonight did I mention anything about the Jockey Club, so certainly we could look back on the record in Hansard to confirm that, but I never mentioned it once other than now to correct the record.

And, of course, with Villa Cabrini I was honoured to, as you mentioned, be the CEO of my moving company at the time and have the opportunity to compete in an open tender to be the exclusive mover for the Villa Cabrini, and I certainly thanked and I know that as Ms. Josephine said, I

probably owe her one, but it was certainly a great opportunity to be involved in the tendering process and be successful.

So thank you, and I just wanted to make sure the record was clear.

Mr. Hill: I hope I never used your word when I said the thing about the Jockey Club. It was actually in the press, questions from Jeff Keele, that the Premier referred to the fact that there was precedent for this in the Jockey Club. So then, I didn't know this fact, just as I didn't know about this law. But then I'd been advised, and you have public record of what happened. It was negotiated. So I just—that question wasn't asked of the Premier. I assume he knows the answer, though.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Hill, thank you so much for coming out tonight and giving us the benefit of your legal experience and advice. Of course, it's the government and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) who introduced the bill, and so, as I said earlier, that I don't believe any member of this committee was here at the time when the original deal came together.

So I just want to say to you that I appreciate you trying to bring some clarity and some factual information to the table as the committee struggles to understand the government's intent here. So thank you so much for coming tonight.

Mr. Hill: I have to tell most clients, and I'll tell this committee: I get paid; you don't have to thank me.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Hill, for coming out this evening and presenting to the committee. I appreciate all the facts. You're very factual, logical, and very direct, to the point.

You mentioned a little bit how—you really emphasized about fairness and I think that's important and we should be taking that with a grain of salt, and maybe it is—would you say it's fair to say that we want to explore all of the facts, make sure that everyone, all the Legislature—legislators, everyone who can vote on the bill, is aware of the facts, like you said, and I believe you mentioned that it was the owner who had told you that children haven't actually left until this past February in 2019. That is news to me, for example. I believe that other members of the Legislature may need to be brought up to date with the actual facts.

I'd like to know when you say the owner, who is the owner? I'd like to know some more details.

So is it fair to say that this bill should not be passed until we've discussed those further details at the very least? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Hill.

Mr. Hill: Sorry, I jumped the gun. Two of the owners are sitting just to my left and they'll be speaking. They've signed up to speak, okay. So my ignorance was I didn't know about the law. I also didn't know about the results of the jockey case.

But, in answer to your question, if I was in front of a body that was making a decision and they acknowledged that, not with any fault, they just didn't have the facts straight, I would hope that that body or that woman or man would say let's hold off, let's make sure that I get the facts straight, and what's the hurry.

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for your presentation.

Maybe I'll ask—I'll kind of phrase this in kind of a question just so I'm able to get information out, but you're right, using a legislation to end agreements is something that is not used frequently with governments. But there is numerous examples, and I will quote a few of them just for your record.

So, in 1994, the Liberal government, through the Pearson airport legislation, legislation—it was in 1994—was passed by the House of Commons but was approved by the Senate.

There's also a lot of provincial examples, using legislation for contracts. One, of course, was very recent with the Ontario government, the Cap and Trade Cancellation Act of 2018. The Saskatchewan government, with Roy Romano's government, in 1992, same measure was taken, an act respecting amendments to certain farm income insurance legislation. And, in Alberta, the Insurance Amendment Act of 2003 were also acts that were involved.

And just the final question, is are—if you're aware of this, that in Manitoba, of course, the legislation regarding the cancellation to lotteries—

Mr. Chairperson: Our time has expired on this question, but we will allow Mr. Hill to make a brief response.

Mr. Hill: In 60 seconds or less, all the examples that you cited, Mr. Fielding, Mr. Minister, involve matters that—what I would say were matters of public

interest. This is a lease. Mr. Wharton had a contract; whether it was in the public interest or not would depend. That, I think, is the distinction, sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Hill.

We will now move on to our next presenter, Mr. Ken Cranwill. Ken Cranwill, private citizen?

Do you have any written material for the committee, Mr. Cranwill?

Mr. Ken Cranwill (Private Citizen): I do. I have—I'm not sure if you have this already, but I will pass it out anyway. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: You may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Mr. Cranwill: Ladies, gentlemen, honourable members of Legislature, I wanted to start out by telling you my name and that I'm a shareholder of 800 Adele.

The very first thing I would like to address is what my lawyer, Dave Hill, mentioned and that Elsie Flette actually put into her package when she gave to the committee. And that is the website, 2017-2018, from Marymound, who is a subtenant to the southern authority, which will show that there was children there. And we were told by the superintendent of the southern authority that the children were—left crying in the middle of the night from the facility in February at the prompting of this government.

So with that, I will speak to this.

I stand before you to speak to Bill 32. I am a Manitoba businessman in good standing, and I proudly employ over 60 taxpaying Manitoba voters. My family has been in Manitoba since 1906.

I would like to share with you our experiences with 800 Adele and the Southern First Nations Network of Care, as well as this current provincial government. Our lease and contract was between our numbered company and the Southern First Nations Network of Care. Back in 2007 or thereabouts, my business partners and I were made aware through multiple media sources that the then-NDP government, led by the right honourable Gary Doer, had identified a very important need to 'riscue'—to rescue at-risk indigenous children from being housed in hotels. His mission was to have these children brought into a proper facility where they could be

professionally assessed by medical staff that included doctors and psychiatrists. After this process, it would be determined if short- or long-term care would be required. This was referred to as a one-stop facility.

As my partners and I own multiple properties, of which several we felt might potentially work for this need, we proceeded to call and inquire about talking with the southern authority to showcase our building. It was then that we were introduced to Ms. Elsie Flette who was the CEO of the authority at that time, and her team, which included Dan, her CFO; Louise, who spoke earlier; and Donna.

These are truly amazing people that had a vision and a mission to do the right thing for the at-risk indigenous youth. They shared their goals with us, and we were immediately struck by their genuineness and good intentions. We quickly gained deep respect for them, and that respect remains to this day.

* (21:10)

Despite our current government's misguided claim that the southern First Nations authority is somehow obligated to go through a tender process, we believe they are incorrect, as the authority is not a department of the government. So to simply throw out claims of untendered contract, in our opinion, is simply ill-informed. The actual facts are that the authority had done an exhaustive search for a suitable facility that would be close to the hospital and police, as well as being in a community that would accept and support them. Maybe the government could ask Scott Oake how difficult a task this was for him and his family. The southern authority discussed this process at great length with the Cabinet ministers, and it was decided that a tender process would have no purpose here at all. We are not buying vehicles here; this is a care facility.

Our partnership group purchased the 800 Adele building from the Roman Catholic Church as it had been a home to the nuns for 100 years. They always liked to sell their properties for a caring cause and not just to the highest bidder. The plan for a full-service assessment and care facility for at-risk indigenous youth was an exceptional use for this grade A property. Needless to say, the nuns and the Roman Catholic Church were thrilled and proud that their legacy building would be put to a meaningful cause for the next 20 years and, hopefully, beyond. Again, our current government wants to spin this as political propaganda to have you believe

that this building was inappropriate—and I quote: inappropriate—for the care of children. Perhaps they would like to tell this to the Catholic sisters that kept this facility pristine for 100 years.

Once we showed 800 Adele to the southern First Nations authority, they knew that this was not only appropriate, but that it was a perfect fit for their children. It exceeded all of their expectations, and those are their words not my words. It should also be noted that, contradictory to our honourable Premier's (Mr. Pallister) recent statements, the current staff of the southern authority said in front of our lawyers that 800 Adele was more than appropriate and that they never wanted to leave but that it was political, and that's all they could tell us. Interesting.

Also, please know that the current person in charge of Marymount, who was a subtenant of the authority, also told us in front of witnesses that the facility was excellent and appropriate and that it was his opinion that the only reason they were moving was because of our autocratic Premier—his words not mine.

So I would like to ask the honourable Premier if the southern First Nations authority felt that the building—if they felt that it was appropriate, and if Marymount felt that it was appropriate, and the children were literally crying, as we were told by the staff, when they were removed at this government's request, and given the fact that he has, to our knowledge—the Premier—never even set foot in our building, would he like to withdraw his misinformed comment regarding the appropriateness of our grade A facility at 800 Adele?

The other statement made by our current leader is when he said, and I quote: Don't enter into an indefensible contract at the behest of a government that is misguided in its efforts.

We would like to ask the honourable Premier exactly which government should we have asked for, given that there's only one party in power at any given time.

And when he uses the term indefensible—I quote, indefensible—is that not what he's trying to pass in Bill 32, denying us the right to defend ourselves?

The honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) states that this facility was, I quote, not in the public interest. I would like to ask the honourable minister, does the public not have interest in at-risk indigenous children? We find this statement by the minister appalling to the First

Nations in particular, but also to every caring, decent citizen of Manitoba.

We would also like to call into question the coincidental timing with regard to the rush to vacate our building and discharge the children when there clearly was no need to do so since the intentions of this government seemed to be that they planned to pay the rent up until November 30th. Was this simply that they wanted to be able to tell the public and the parliament that—or Legislature that this was a vacant facility? If so, this seems disturbing that vulnerable children were put through needless stress so this government could make this rushed Bill 32 look justified.

We were again in front of our lawyers with the southern authority's building superintendent telling us that the children were hurried out of their rooms and that they were crying as they said goodbye to their friends that were being sent to different locations. Can this Premier (Mr. Pallister) tell us today what has become of these children? Whose facilities has he sent them to? How much is he paying per day? And are they being properly assessed in appropriate facilities?

We would like everyone to know that because of this government's bullish and unnecessary rush to vacate and discharge, that our building was severely damaged. We are currently having an insurance company estimate the damages, and we expect it to be tens if not hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars.

The destruction included broken windows, holes in the walls, destroyed cabinets and cupboards, damaged woodwork throughout, food left out to rot, scarred and torn up floors, missing handrails and much, much more. All needless damage due to a midnight move marching order given by this government.

When we asked the building superintendent how could he let this happen, he replied that Marymount were told specifically by the Province not to tell the landlords or the first—or the southern First Nations authority about this evacuation and midnight run, another unconscionable act.

Again, we are left to wonder: Why would this government behave in this fashion? What are their motives?

On February 26th of this year, 2019, my partners and I received a phone call from Deputy Minister Scott Sinclair requesting us to come to his office to

discuss the lease at 800 Adele. We accepted this invitation, even though our lease was with the southern authority and not the Province. So we found it a bit suspicious, but we went in good faith to the meeting.

Mr. Sinclair greeted us and, without delay, proceeded to slap two pieces of paper in front of us with a pen on top of one of them. He then tells us: You have two options. Option 1: You sign a nine-month lease and then we are done with you and your building instead of the 117 months that we are legally—that were legally owed to us by a mutually agreed upon legal contract. Option 2: Sinclair tells us that the building has never been any good for them and they never used it, and the provincial lawyers have found a loophole in the law, by way of case law, that they are going to break our contract and legislate their way out of their commitment by passing a new law just for us.

We were stunned. Is this what this government considers a negotiation? We suggest—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Cranwill, your time has expired. I put up the one-minute warning.

Mr. Allum: Is there leave for the committee for Mr. Cranwill to very quickly conclude his remarks?

Mr. Martin: Again, with the same parameters, in respect to the other individuals, that any time he uses to conclude go towards his total time.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. I would like clarification for the committee that this would go back to Mr. Cranwill's total time off his question period, then? Or what is the will—[interjection] Mr. Wharton, I have to recognize you.

Mr. Wharton: Mr. Cranwill could wrap up his comments and we'll get to questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that the will of the committee, that Mr. Cranwill wrap up his comments? [Agreed]

Mr. Cranwill: I'll be brief.

We were stunned. Is this what this government considers a negotiation? We suggest most fair-minded Manitobans would consider this a form of extortion or a shakedown. We declined this ultimatum and left his office and proceeded to call our lawyer, Vince Bueti, who said he had never heard of such a law and suggested we call a top litigation specialist. He then hired Dave Hill—or we hired Dave Hill and his firm, who researched and consulted with his team, who had also never heard of

such tactics, but after further review, it was determined that this loophole that Sinclair told us about has indeed the chance to work for them.

So, yes, it incredibly might be possible that this government, through case law, might indeed be able to slip out of a legal commitment with a Manitoba business. But we ask this Premier and this government, is this ethical and moral behaviour from a Conservative, pro-business leader? Where are your values? What message does this send to the business community? What message does this send to the indigenous community? And who in their right mind would do business with a government that can pull a midnight run without consequence, an act of bad faith and what we feel is an abuse of power for political purposes? We ask, what is a bank manager to think when he assesses the risks associated with his clients on government contracts that potentially aren't worth the paper they're written on? How can they possibly consider granting a mortgage? A Manitoba businessman or -woman, are you going to invest your hard-earned dollars and leasehold improvements to a building or property that this government can destroy and escape all of their obligations through loopholes in case law?

I find it interesting and disturbing that every Conservative and NDP member has voted in favour of Bill 32 so far to this point without hearing all the facts. I would like to thank Ms. Cindy Lamoureux, the honourable member from Burrows—was one of the few members that voted no until she heard the facts. I want to thank her for being fair. I sincerely hope the fair-minded members of Legislature will vote their conscience and not simply rush to follow their uninformed leaders.

* (21:20)

Thank you for your time. Please vote no to Bill 32. It is wrong on so many levels—wrong for the children, wrong for Manitoba business and the economy, wrong for abuse of government power.

Have a good evening.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Cranwill.

Mr. Fielding: Yes. Well, thank you for your presentation.

Just wondering if you could provide some comments—obviously, the CBC has reported about a Grant Thornton report that talked about the length of the lease being 20 years when the vast majority of

leases tend to be about five years. The fact that it was sole-sourced contract and the cost per square foot was in real far—excessive from the actual what a market sounding would be of other centres.

So that's something that was reported through the CBC. It's obviously a credible accounting company that does a review. It's not us; it's them saying this, through the CBC.

So could you please address the discrepancy between what you're saying and what was produced in the Grant Thornton report that was been reported on CBC?

Mr. Cranwill: Yes, and thank you for asking that question.

The 20-year term was asked for by the southern authority, not by the landowners, not by the building owners, my partners. So I think if you check back with the previous, say, Elsie Flette from—the CEO—was the former CEO of the southern authority, she will tell you that it was her that wanted 20 years for this very reason: that the government, when it changes, things happen, things that shouldn't happen. And she was protecting the interests of the indigenous at-risk children and she did not want this process to happen. And that is why they chose the 20 years.

We were satisfied at that time with 10 years because we were going to adjust our mortgage accordingly. We now have a mortgage, a 20-year mortgage that I've asked my bank manager if I can rip the contract up. And he laughed at me and he said, I can't rip up a mortgage contract. And I said, oh, really? Well, our government's ripping up our contract, so perhaps you could rip up your contract.

And I would ask the honourable member to please ask the second part of that question I missed.

Mr. Fielding: Sure. The two other parts is the fact that this is a sole-sourced contract and that the square footage was far in excess of market value rates.
[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Cranwill.

Mr. Cranwill: Yes, sorry. Thank you for asking that question.

We deal and I deal a lot in properties and so I know the value of buildings and I know right now, I believe right now, and what I've heard is that this government just did a contract with a company that I

will not mention for a 25-year lease at \$30 a square foot.

And also the building at 1075 Portage, which is now Peguis First Nation, one of my associates knows them well. I happen to know Chief Hudson myself, and he's asking \$30 a square foot for a building that is not customized.

Let's not forget we put a million five of our own money in this building for a specialized commercial property, \$20 a square foot. And as I said in my CTV interview, I challenge anyone to build a facility and customize it as we did and lease it out at \$20 a square foot and get any kind of a return on their investment.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Cranwill, thank you for coming tonight.

I just—for point of one—clarity, when we voted, we voted to send the bill to this committee so that we could hear from you and others like you. This is a very unique-in-Canada process. We're the only province that does it and what we were trying to do is to make sure that the facts could be heard and Ms. Lamoureux voting against it was almost voting against the public hearing, so I just wanted to make that clear for you.

But this has been a murky process for us; this bill came out of nowhere, so I just wanted to thank you for trying to provide some clarity, as with Mr. Hill and others to come, on the circumstances surrounding this lease.

Mr. Cranwill: I thank you for your comments but I still doesn't excuse the fact that Ms. Lamoureux was one of the only people that said no because she doesn't have all the facts, whereas the honourable members from NDP and from the Conservative Party went ahead and didn't—they voted yes to proceed and they do not have all the facts.

And I'll use this time also to say about the tender process that it was not our responsibility as landowners to go through a tender process; this was the responsibility of the previous government. So what crime have we committed that we are being punished for? And also to that note, I'm understanding from Elsie Flette, who is the CEO of southern authority, that they looked at several different properties, not ours, and including building their own facility. So I'm at a loss.

And also, this was an 'approven' use for the community. The community had approved this use.

So this was also an eliminating factor for a lot of places. It was also core—in the city centre, with hospital and police, so it was the facilities close—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Cranwill, we are out of time for questions.

Yes?

Mr. Wharton: Mr. Chair, this is obviously a very good discussion. Could I ask the committee for leave to have a few extra minutes on the clock for some extra Q & A?

Mr. Chairperson: What is the will of the committee? *[Agreed]*

Then we will continue this for an extra two minutes.

Mr. Cranwill, you may continue, unless you're finished with that.

Mr. Cranwill: Well, I would just like to talk about the fact that as a business owner in good standing, it's disturbing to me that—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Cranwill, this is in answer to the previous question.

Mr. Cranwill: Yes. Okay. Well, I—could you please repeat the question.

Mr. Allum: Very simple observation, and it was only an observation I was trying to make, is that when you're—come to public hearing like this, then all members of the committee get to hear directly from you and your side of the story.

I think that's been productive tonight, and I think it would not be productive if you weren't allowed to come here and give your side of the story. So that's the only point I was trying to make, sir.

Mr. Cranwill: Yes. Thank you. I completely agree. I hope, though, that by me telling the facts, that this will convince some people to take a step back and reconsider.

Mr. Chairperson: The Honourable Mr. Wharton, and I'd just like to ask everybody to kind of speed up because we have Mr. Wharton and Ms. Lamoureux to ask questions yet. So I would like to do this.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Mr. Cranwill, for coming out tonight and, obviously, presenting the committee with your account.

According to public record, you have a \$3.7-million mortgage on the property that is assessed just over \$1.1 million. Are those mortgages

only guaranteed, Mr. Cranwill, by excessive contract you signed with the southern network for over \$500,000 per year? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Cranwill.

Mr. Cranwill: Oh, sorry.

First of all, I'm not sure where you're getting your information from on the mortgage because you're way out on the mortgage. It's nowhere near that amount.

And as far as—if you're speaking to \$500,000 a year, why don't we call it what it really is, it's \$20 a square foot. So \$500,000 seems like a grandiose number. And I saw numbers on CTV quoting \$9.4 million. If you do the math, it's not \$9.4 million. But if you did it over 40 years, it would be eighteen point million—\$18.8 million.

The true facts of it are: this is a specialized, customized building. It's \$20 a square foot, which is far below market value.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Cranwill, for coming out this evening.

As I'm listening to all the other questions, a lot of questions are coming to mind and I realize we don't have a lot of time. But I did just want to address the fact that even that question about the mortgage, we do not have the correct facts. And so this does—needs to be revisited. The topic, the conversations—it should be an ongoing conversation. There shouldn't be any rash decisions.

And what I initially had wanted to ask about is—I believe in humanizing bills, doing that. And—so you talked about the children being evacuated from the homes. I'm under the impression that the children had no heads-up, no warning on that, and that's why they were all crying and having to say goodbye and being rushed out, and parts of the home being destructed in the attempt to do so.

Do you know where the children went? Do you know what sort of impact this had on the children? Like, at the end of the day, that's what we need to be focusing on, correct? So, could you elaborate on that a little more?

Mr. Cranwill: Thank you for that question. You bring up a good point. I don't stand before you today to seek sympathy for our loss. The real tragedy in this story is the children, okay.

* (21:30)

And we know—as we were told in front of our lawyers by the southern authority employees and by the building superintendent hired by southern authority—I'm quoting them. This is not me seeing what happened; this is them telling us, to our lawyer, that the kids were—left the building, crying, in a hurry.

This is why so much damage was done to our building because they had to get out of there. They left the food out to rot, they pulled things off the wall, they wrote obscenities on the ceilings, they broke the windows, they ripped the railings off. These were children that were traumatized and so this is the disgusting part of this and we would love to sit down and try and work something out, everybody take a step back, and we're willing to do that as fair-minded people, but it doesn't seem to be a willingness when you get an ultimatum—not a negotiation—an ultimatum put in front of you that tells you that, oh, you better take this, otherwise we're going to use the hammer over here. This is not a negotiation. I'm not sure what this is or what country we live in anymore, and this is why I think you see the response tonight from the different communities that have left countries where this exact thing happens.

So, I'm a pro-business person, you know—I'm really more of a PC than anything, but how do I do business in this province is what—this is my reaction.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Cranwill. We have gone over five minutes, already, over, so we thank you very much.

We will now call on our next presenter. On the list we have presenter number four, Mr. Peter Ginakes, but I believe Mr. Ginakes has informed the committee that he does not wish to speak tonight. Okay. So Mr. Ginakes will be removed from the list.

Our next presenter is Mr. Daniel Richard, private citizen. Mr. Daniel Richard. Mr. Daniel Richard is not present. He will be moved to the bottom of the list.

Our next presenter is Vincent J. Bueti.

Mr. Bueti, do you have any written material for the committee?

Mr. Vincent J. Bueti (Private Citizen): I do not, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Mr. Bueti: Yes, thank you very much.

Approximately a week ago, when I contacted the clerk and asked to be allowed to present, I was assured that I would receive notification ahead of time as to when the hearing would be—or rather this committee meeting. I did not receive any form of notification. I'm alerting you so that in the future people who desire to appear before you will receive notification. I was contacted approximately, well, 5:30 or so, and I quickly grabbed my material and I'm here before you now. As a result, I apologize in advance if my comments tend to wander. But on the other hand, we are in the Legislature, and I have been present when honourable persons have wandered a bit, to the chagrin of their opponents. So, nonetheless, I will do my best.

As some of you may know, I, as well as some counsel here, am a lawyer in the city of Winnipeg. I've been practicing for approximately 30 years—36, I beg your pardon—and I was the lawyer who was acting for this particular landlord at the time that I was contacted and informed that they were in the process of negotiating a lease with the southern authority. At that time, there was an offer to lease that was signed between the southern authority and my client, which at the time was composed of three individuals, three businessmen who are property-type of property owners and who are familiar with the business community here in the city.

I was instructed to prepare a lease, which is the normal procedure, such that it's the landlord's lawyer who prepares the lease. I did prepare a lease; in fact, I prepared various versions of the lease based upon the offer to lease and then based upon information provided to me by my own client. And those leases initially contemplated a 10-year term and then it was switched to a 20-year term. And during the course of my dealings in 2017—I beg your pardon, 2007—I was dealing with Harold Cochrane of D'Arcy Deacon, who was legal counsel, according to my understanding, for the southern authority. During the course of those dealings with other counsel, on occasion I did have a limited amount of contact with—I can't recall—there was a deputy minister who was in contact with me at one point and we had a brief conversation. He had a question and some suggestions, et cetera. And so what I was doing for my client was fully with the knowledge of the provincial government and it was an NDP administration.

At the time, I, like most Winnipeggers, were fully aware that there was a problem in terms of accommodations for children in need of specialized care. So the facts that were presented to me and information provided to me was of no surprise. The form of lease that I drafted at the time and distributed to, of course, to my own client and to other counsel, strictly on the normal commercial terms—nothing unusual, nothing elaborate. And when I was informed that no, it was the request of the future tenant that it be 20 years, that was great, fine, no problem.

But throughout that period of discussions and negotiations that I was involved in, there was counsel on the other side, lots of involvement by government and you have three fellows who were three Manitoba businessmen trying to complete a transaction involving a special building in the right location, as we've heard this evening.

So the negotiations at a certain point in time bogged down, and I was instructed by my client that they no longer needed my services. From that—and this was in early—in January of 2008, and from that point forward, the landlord was unrepresented by legal counsel.

The Province of Manitoba, of course, has the Department of Justice and the civil-side lawyers; there's an army of lawyers there. The southern authority, I do not know about how many lawyers they would have, but certainly they would have deeper pockets than this group of three businessmen.

They negotiated in good faith to the best of their ability and with the know—with the full understanding that they would have to borrow substantive monies from a credit union in order to build or renovate a building specifically for government. And I'm going to call it government because for your average citizen, as you've heard this evening from the people who attended here from various communities, the southern authority is government.

When people do business with government, they expect that a deal is a deal. They expect that they can trust their government. I never saw the lease that was signed by my own client until a couple of years ago, and only at that point in time did I realize they were unrepresented. The terms in that lease that is currently the signed lease did not have the protections that I had built in mine for my own client, which is normal, okay. And yet, the project proceeded; they invested a huge amount of money to

build a premises specific for the needs of our community, yours and mine.

And they did their job; they lived up to their end of the deal. I was shocked when they were contacted a number of months ago and informed that the government is—the current government is now going to try and cancel this lease. I said to them, as Mr. Hill indicated, I said, well, the government can't do that; I've never heard of that and I've been practicing for 36 years.

Now, I'm aware that under certain circumstances, a government will have legislative authority to, for public policy reasons, for public interest reasons, change something that they had done or something that a previous government had done, but never in my wildest dreams did I think that they were, quote, above the law. Our government is the law. How can it be that you sign a contract, a lease—a lease with your own government—and then be told, we don't like the lease? The previous government, well, maybe they were fools. We're going to change the lease.

* (21:40)

Now, the Conservative government right now should consider that because in the future, if you do not become re-elected and either the Liberals or the NDP take over, your good planning could be changed by virtue of this type of a precedent. It is completely outlandish, ladies and gentlemen. And the business community—if the government is unfair to this group of investors, who built what the government asked them to do, the business community will tremble. Who the heck is going to want to invest hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars if they can't trust their own government?

I practice commercial law. On occasion, it's a little bit of litigation and I have to go against excellent lawyers like Mr. Hill, and what he said earlier is perfectly correct. The case law that the government lawyers are presenting is unique to a certain set of circumstances. What you have here before you is highly unusual.

And I'm shocked that members of the Legislature are not fully informed of the facts. It reminds me of what took place with 'vice-anibal'—Vice-Admiral Norman, for heaven's sakes. The previous government wasn't even consulted, the government of the day and the civil servants of the day, who knew the facts. Is that what's happening here? Surely that can't be the case. Surely the

government would go back and speak to the civil servants of the day, and speak to those that were—thank you, sir—speak to those that were on Treasury Board and understand how the government went into this arrangement and requested them to do what they did, with their eyes fully open.

And now their government is acting in a fashion which, frankly, ladies and gentlemen, is horrible. It's inappropriate. Manitobans will be disturbed if the government were to be unfair. Because if you're unfair to this group, then they would think you might be unfair to the next group.

And whether you're someone who's trying to build Villa Cabrini or Villa Nova, that I was involved in for eight years with government, and we relied on letters of intent. And we gathered money and we signed contracts, binding upon us, to our detriment. Had the government tried to turn around and break that deal, which ethnic community would be capable of doing anything? Which group of businessmen would be able or—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Bueti, your time has expired.

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for your presentation.

I got two questions I'd like to ask you. You made the presentation, and, you know, what I referred to courses before that is reported in the CBC—the Grant-Thornton report that was reported on the CBC, that there is a number of issues with the lease.

So how do you—is the accounting firm that did this report—is it not accurate, do you not agree with it or can you maybe give us some comments on that?

Mr. Bueti: Yes, honourable member Fielding. I have never seen the report. I feel—I would be ignorant if I—I'm—I would speak from ignorance if indeed I tried commenting upon the—whether they looked at the right factors and the right variables, and then pass judgment on their report. But I can describe to you my experience at the time and my personal recollection as to what was going on in our city in terms of the needs of children in distress. And that's the best I can provide to you.

I have not read that report. I don't think the gentlemen that wrote the report, or the ladies that wrote the report, I don't think they spoke to Mr. Cranwill. I don't think they spoke to the other two gentlemen who are—were the shareholders. And if they had, I don't think they would have come up with the conclusions—if the conclusions were that this is a bad deal—\$20 a square foot, come on. There's

properties all over the city that are being leased out for a lot more money than that. Anyway, that's—sir, I apologize if I couldn't give you a more precise response.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Bueti, thank you so much for coming out tonight. I just wanted to comment a little bit about your observation about the meandering nature of debate here at the Legislature. I can assure you that that only happens on the government side. Here on—with Ms. Lathlin and Mr. Lindsey, we're always concise, direct and to the point, and almost always understated, as well. Never any histrionics on our side.

But I thank you for bringing the information to the table tonight, and to try to educate the committee as you've done.

Mr. Bueti: Thank you members and you have a very, very difficult job; it's often thankless. The public expects a certain level of dedication but also wisdom, and I urge you all to think very carefully about this because it will have a ripple effect in our community, and in particular, the business community.

Thank you, sir.

Ms. Lamoureux: One more question for you.

Just wanted to thank you too, for coming out and presenting to the committee tonight, and I personally like the passion. I'm all for the passion, so don't apologize for that.

I was wondering if you're aware of—was there any sort of attempt to renegotiate and if there was, if there wasn't, maybe you could expand on that a little bit, and also what would you advise we do at this point in time going forward? What would you do if you were sitting around the table right now?

Mr. Bueti: Let's deal with your first question: Was there an attempt to renegotiate? I, as counsel—corporate counsel, for this landlord, was never made aware of any attempt to renegotiate until what Mr. Cranwill indicated, that he had received a call from a deputy minister here and was informed that the government had a certain desire to make a certain decision and go in a certain direction. Prior to that, I was not aware of any attempt to renegotiate at any point in time, and I have been legal counsel to this group of individuals for many years.

In terms of the second question—and I am grateful for your asking me what would I recommend—that facility is a very specialized

facility. I don't know where the children are now being accommodated. I would think that the minister should look at whether or not that facility and the lease should be left intact so that it can be used for the needs of our children, or for some other group that is in need of that kind of a facility. And I don't pretend to be a social worker, or anything of that nature, so I think the lease, if possible, should be left intact. It was a good lease then, it is a good lease now.

If the government has no willingness to do that, then I think that they should negotiate in good faith. The case law that has been cited by provincial lawyers, if you read it carefully, there is an underflow in there that indicates that the government has rights but there has to be good faith. And so this is a unique case, and I hope our current Premier (Mr. Pallister) and our current government really give this a thorough second look and be fair about it.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Mr. Wharton, we're just pretty much out of time. You're good? *[interjection]*

Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Bueti.

We'll now call on our next presenter.

Our next presenter is Harvey Greenberg. Mr. Greenberg?

Mr. Harvey Greenberg (Private Citizen): Good evening.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Do you have no written presentation for the committee, Mr. Greenberg?

Mr. Greenberg: No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Mr. Greenberg: My name is Harvey Greenberg, born and raised here in Winnipeg, been here all my life.

I came here tonight to voice my disgust on what had happened at 800 Adele street. I just can't understand what's going—I'm happy to say—*[interjection]* Oh, thank you—I'm happy to say that I'm glad the kids are okay, and were placed in a proper place, but to me, this really sounds like—if this bill goes through, it is going to be like living in a Third World country with communism, and what I can say here is say no to Bill 32. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Greenwell. *[phonetic]* The honourable—Greenberg, sorry.

* (21:50)

Mr. Allum: I think the minister was just saying there thank you for your presentation and I would just echo that. I also want to compliment you on your concision and brevity here tonight.

Ms. Lamoureux: That is a condensed speech. I want to thank you for coming out and presenting this evening.

And I was just wondering, do you know where the children—I'm genuinely curious—were placed? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Greenberg, in order for the—to recognize, you have to wait until I mention your name.

So, Mr. Greenberg, go ahead.

Mr. Greenberg: No, I don't know where they were placed, but I'm going on what they were saying, that they were placed. And I'm glad they were placed because I have a son that I adopted 22 years ago with mental issues and problems, and I know, when it comes to change, when he's taken out of a place and put in another place—not good, not good.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Greenberg. Is there any further questions for Mr. Greenberg?

If not, then we'll move on to our next presenter, Dhruvil Shah. Dhruvil Shah? Dhruvil Shah?

Seeing as Mr. Shah is not present, he will be moved to the bottom of the list.

Our next presenter is Mr. Jim Humphreys. Would Mr. Jim Humphreys be here?

Do you have any written material for the committee, Mr. Humphreys?

Mr. Humphreys: I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Mr. Humphreys: Honourable members and ladies and gentlemen, my name is Jim Humphreys. I've lived in Winnipeg all my life. My grandfather was president of the Canadian lands surveyors association and I've been with Investors Group for 34 years. I wish to address Bill 32.

When I first heard about it, I was shocked and bewildered at the same time. My main concern was the at-risk indigenous children that were essentially discarded. Where did they go? The public would probably like to know the answer to this.

These children grew up with trauma in their lives and now are being re-traumatized after a surprise, midnight, bullying tactic forcing them to vacate by the current government. In the years going forward, the resulting impact of this will be numerous on many levels to society. This means more drugs, which leads to more crime in a city already fighting hard to keep their citizens safe and secure. Our city's reputation is once again at risk.

My second concern is the current government's manipulation to change an existing lease contract and then attempt to pass new legislation prohibiting no legal recourse. This is bizarre. I too didn't think we lived in a Third World country.

So in summary, I would vote against Bill 32, and I think we will be deeply impacted negatively as a group if it does pass.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Humphreys.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Humphreys, first of all, I want to compliment you on your honesty. You could probably could've been done here at about 6 or 6:10, so I see by the clock it's about 5 to 10, so I compliment you on hanging in there. Thank you for coming and making a presentation to the committee. Every voice we hear helps us to understand these complex issues better. So, much appreciation for your words and also for hanging in there for such a long period.

Mr. Humphreys: Thank you very much.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Humphreys, for coming in and presenting to the committee tonight.

I asked this actually to the last presenter as well, but I was just wondering if you were sitting around the table, if you could take a step back and think about what the next step should be, what would you personally advise?

Mr. Humphreys: Well, there's a lot of lawyers here; I'm not one of them. So it's a complicated answer because you have a lease I know nothing about. You want to make sure the children are safe, and I mean, they should go back to the—where they were kicked

out of. I mean, it makes no sense that, you know, if they're happy there and everything worked out and, you know, if they're prevented from committing suicide and now they're—they may commit suicide in another location and all—by means, they should go back, and I think probably experts on leases and that type of stuff—which isn't me, but there's a lot of people in the room that have that expertise—that's what I would say.

Mr. Fielding: I'll ask a question, I'll ask—I'll put some information on the record. I'll form it being a question. I think it's important.

There was some discussions in terms of lease renegotiations, so I do want to put this on the record. In July of 2015, the Southern Network met with the landlords to discuss terminating the lease or revisiting terms. During the meeting, the landlord representative stated that they would not change any lease provisions concerning termination or other provisions such as the amount of the term.

In August 2015, Izzy Frost and Kent Taylor, the CFO at southern first networks, met with the deputy minister, Joy Cramer, to do discussions with them as well. And there was a third opportunity to renegotiate with the landlords in the last few months or so.

Are you aware of those instances to try to renegotiate out of those leases on three different occasions?

Mr. Humphreys: No, I am not.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any—

Mr. Allum: Just a point of order. I'm finished my questions, but a point of order, Mr. Chair.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: On a point of order, Mr. Allum.

Mr. Allum: Well, I couldn't help but notice the minister using his BlackBerry or phone to read his questions.

I'm just curious to know if that's within the rules of the committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that information that was from a private document, or from speaking notes? If it's something that the committee can see, then I guess obviously we—

Mr. Fielding: It was information from officials.

Mr. Chairperson: It's information from officials.

Mr. Allum: I certainly appreciate the conversation, it just interests me that staff is helping Mr. Fielding with his questions of our individuals here when you would expect the minister would be in complete control of the file, but understood.

Thank you for the clarification.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Allum, but it is not a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Helwer, on—any further questions of Mr. Humphrey?

Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Humphrey, and we will continue on to the next presenter.

Our next presenter is Baljit Panchhi. Baljit Panchhi? Baljit Panchhi? Is Mr. Panchhi available?

Mr. Panchhi, do you have any written material for the committee?

Mr. Baljit Panchhi (Private Citizen): No, sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Mr. Panchhi: Presentation to legislative committee.

Ladies and gentleman, this bill, B 32, is unfair. It sets a terrible precedent for the future.

Let's understand what this is all about: it is about government that will actually be wiping out lease value and property rights. We often think that we have rights in this country, rights that include property rights. This bill shows that we really have no rights at all.

*(22:00)

It takes away the value of the lease, a legally binding lease. Fundamentally. It takes away property rights with no process and no composition. It's such a terrible precedent. It's not the first time the government has done this. They did much the same to the taxi industry. They passed a bill that specifically said that there was no property rights for the taxi owners—no composition, nothing. What this government is doing is 'dictatorial'.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

It is also very short-sighted. Think about this for a moment. If you are looking at investing in a province or a jurisdiction here in Canada, around the world, are you going to invest in this province of Manitoba where the government can and will

honour—take away your property rights, devalue the value of your lease and do it all with no composition?

If there's one thing that are critical to investor confidence, it's knowing that you will be treated fairly here in Manitoba. If this bill passes, people will red circle us as a province and say this is a bad place to invest. Already, we are not getting very many investors in this province, and we really, as me being in real estate, we really have to work hard to get people here to invest money. Why? Because when you make an investment for a length of time, you factor in certainty. There's nothing more uncertain than being in a jurisdiction where the government, on a whim, can wipe out the value of your investment.

What really surprises me is that this is the second time this government is doing this. I always thought that Conservatives were supposed to be fair to the business sector, as in the past Filmon government ran, and that. And this is what we understood: that they would understand the 'impropriate' of contracts such as leases, that they would understand the importance of property rights. What you are doing with this bill is what you would expect in a Third World country. In many countries in the world, people have no rights, including investment property rights. Believe me, you don't want us to become like those countries, here. Where there is little incentive for long-term investments and little development, very little hope.

You do have a choice with this bill. You have the opportunity to take a step back. You have the 'oppornun' to do listen to the many people in the business community who are horrified by this bill. Not everybody's like us that'll come and talk, but people do talk. You have an opportunity to withdraw the bill. Many of the people that will be appearing before you today will be doing this for the first time. For most of us, we focus our energy on making investments, developing our economy and creating jobs, but that's why we are here tonight.

This bill is an investment killer. It's a job killer. It is grossly unfair. The iconic part is that if you pass this bill, property owners and lease holders will have fewer rights in this province than criminals. There are limits to what the Legislature can do—to take away this right of accused criminals. But with this bill, you're essentially saying that you can take away any and all the rights you have.

There's a—like, you know, we know things in the market. There's a property where the landlord has invested \$2 million to upgrade to government standard to lease it to them for 20 years or more. How about if you guys cancel his lease? His \$2-million investment is gone in a second, and he's sitting on a empty lease building, that's he's making millions dollars of mortgage payments. What should he go to the banker and tell them? Can you rip up my contract because the government ripped up the lease? Leases are not to be broken. They are contracts, made are binding contracts, and they could be taken up in courts. And here we are seeing a government that's using a very—I don't know, a kind of a fashion 'dictorial' method to do this to someone. And even, like—one second, now.

And to cancel a lease—bank's not going to give you financing when they see you have an empty building sitting, and once the landlord has an empty building, if he can't make the payment, what is he going to do? Give it back to the bank.

And same little thing, this is just a tip of the iceberg this government is starting. Next thing is coming is the liquor commission. Where it's going to be privatized, what we hear. And how about the government start cancelling liquor commission leases so they can sell it in the private sector as private stores, at a higher price with a new lease and new building and all that. So these are a lot of things going to happen and a lot of hearts going to be broken and people going to go broke here. And I think even, like, Adele, 800 Adele, which you guys are making an example to show to the City what you guys can do, and this is going to backfire on the government and it shouldn't be done. We are very against it as from the part of investment for other people. If we are in deals, start selling people buildings and we tell them here, there's a building here, this is a government lease here, 20 years, but, again, our government could break this lease in six months. If you don't say hi to the Premier (Mr. Pallister), he might—could break the lease.

This is what's going to get to and which is not right, you know. And this is—we think this should be cancelled and dealt with properly, not the way this government is doing.

Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Panchhi. Thanks for your presentation, and now we'll have questions.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Mr. Panchhi, for coming out tonight and giving your presentation. We certainly appreciate your input and thank you again for taking the time this evening to exercise your democratic right.

Mr. Panchhi: Okay.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: We have some more questions here. We have some more questions.

Mr. Allum: Thank you so much for coming and hanging in there tonight. It's just after 10, and so it's a long evening for everybody concerned, so thank you for doing that.

Mr. Panchhi: You're welcome. To help the public I can be here 24 hours.

Mr. Allum: Well, I'm glad to hear that. I have to say, with reference to one of your observations, we're never sure what this government is capable of either, so in that sense we're in agreement, but I do thank you for coming tonight and providing us with a presentation.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Panchhi, you can go ahead to—you could actually answer the questions or if any comments.

Mr. Panchhi: No, there's—

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Okay, Mr.—Ms. Lamoureux has a question too.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you, Mr. Panchhi, for coming out today, and appreciate your service and wanting to do whatever you can for the province.

You mentioned that this bill could hurt our province and may affect people who want to invest. I was hoping that you could elaborate on that a little bit, and could you expand on how this could potentially hurt or help our economy, either way.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Go ahead, Mr. Panchhi.

Mr. Panchhi: Helping our economy is like this, and if this bill is passed, unless there's investors who want to invest from—even from other countries and that, or even somewhere out of Canada and different provinces, they're looking for long-term leases, 10 years, 20 years, because when they go to the bank to get a mortgage, financing's done on leases; they get them on depending on the lease. The bank looks at it: how long is this lease? Who are the tenants? Yes, when they say a bank is a tenant or a government is a tenant and a certain body or company is a tenant, they are happy to come on

board and give you financing and they even try to give you more financing to accommodate the tenants, renovations and all the lease improvements and that, so they want to work with you.

When they find out, oh, it's a government lease, oh, this could probably be broken within four months' notice or six months' notice, no, sorry, we don't want to finance this or we are not with you on this. We'll be left hanging the bag if the government cancels the lease. And what option does the guy has? And investors are always looking for opportunities where there are good long-term leases.

Ms. Lamoureux: So, in short, you're suggesting that if this bill moves forward it could be breaking a lot of confidence people may have in wanting to enter contracts with the government? *[interjection]*

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Sorry Mr. Panchhi, we have to address you first before you speak.

Okay, Mr. Panchhi.

Mr. Panchhi: Yes, a lot of contracts will not go through; strip-mall owners, building owners, downtown building owners, even a lot of these government leases are, and when their leases are up, those people will be thinking, and next time they'll say, you know, for God, we're not going to give the government people any lease, because the government mostly don't own very many buildings; they're always leasing and that. Here they're trying to cut their own foot with an axe by doing this. When they going to start telling them, wait, you do the lease, you spend \$2 million on renovations to accommodate us, what our needs are, and then work it into the lease? What? With a six-month notice? We can walk out of here, you're left hanging the bag and so is the bank, and you guys do the math from there. Who wants to invest?

I am a type of real estate agent. I want to be truthful to people what type of people are your tenants. I will tell them, definitely, this is the government that's going to do that to you. They might not, but if they do, you're on your own, but it's my job to let you know what they're capable of doing.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Panchhi, thank you very much for your—your time is up for the question period so thank you very much for your presentation, and I want to thank you for coming out tonight.

* (22:10)

Okay, next presenter that we have on the list is No. 13, Gurminder Dhillon.

Mr. Dhillon, do you have anything to—any handouts that you want to hand out to the committee?

Mr. Gurminder Dhillon (Private Citizen): I do not.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Okay, Mr. Dhillon, go ahead with your presentation.

Mr. Dhillon: All right. So, please indulge me while I read this script to you, as English is my second language. I felt I would—it would be better if I wrote out my speech so I could express myself and my thoughts properly on this important issue.

So, a few years ago, my parents had decided that, you know what, we should move to Canada, and Winnipeg in particular, to live where there were more opportunities and a chance for a better life for us. This has turned out to be one of the best moves that we could have made. The freedom and the opportunities, and whatever we want to make them.

So this is why I was particularly upset when I learned about the situation regarding southern First Nations authority. Why would these already-disadvantaged youth be further subjected to displaced—displacement—upheave in their lives?

Removing them from this home seems to me to be another burden thrown on these children as they're trying to get into a 'society' in Winnipeg. A home that was patterned for them to be protected, nurtured and feel a part of a family setting—all very important elements of them to 'integrate' into Winnipeg's social structure and a valuable contributing members of our society. I think we can all agree on that.

I looked into their displacements and many angles. Certainly, one of them was from the angle of being displaced myself. And it was hard enough to fit in already in some of my newer surroundings, but I had a good family and influences as well, people that cared for me and guided me and protected me as I adapted. Seems to me that these youngsters are once again being discarded, told to make it alone without proper mentorship, easily available to them which could've been—this is certainly no way and no time in their young lives to be—sorry, one second—to be demonstrating to them that they are not included or valued in our society.

We look to the government to provide for those that are incapable of helping themselves. These

children are certainly among those that are most at-risk and they are our most needed. I speak as who knows, I—who had to adapt to a new, sometimes strange circumstances.

Thank you for your time today for allowing me to speak on behalf of those that are not here tonight. Therefore—sorry, furthermore, what type of behavioural skills will these children be taught in their—will be taught if they're simply left on their own devices? Can—I can only imagine, right? Contrast that to being provided for a proper shelter, good education, counselling opportunities, good nurtured food, regulated bedtimes and safe, comfortable surrounding and learning structures around responsibility.

This is success by choice, not by chance. Please consider your actions very carefully. This bill is not just a word—words on paper. It represents hope, safety, faith, growth, responsibility and, above all, confidence for each and every one of these youth.

It's setting a tone for their future and ours.

Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Dhillon, thank you very much for your presentation. Thanks for coming out tonight.

And so now we'll go on to questions.

And the honourable minister—no—Mr. Allum has a question.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Dhillon, thank you so much for coming tonight. First of all, your English is excellent and your prepared comments were also first-rate. We're so glad that you've chosen Winnipeg, and Manitoba, to make your home. By doing so, you enrich our culture, and more than that, by coming here tonight and participating, you're also enriching our democracy, as well. You've made a number of striking points tonight, and I think all members very much appreciate you coming here tonight, so thank you.

Mr. Dhillon: I hope it makes a difference in your opinion, right. And, you know—that's it. Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: We have a question from Minister Wharton.

Mr. Wharton: Well, thank you. Just a comment, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, Mr. Dhillon, for coming tonight. Again, I echo the comments of my colleague across

the table, that I certainly appreciate the time you took tonight. It's 10—almost 10:20 now, and certainly we appreciate you taking the time to come out and share your concerns with the committee this evening. Thank you so much.

Mr. Dhillon: Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Lamoureux has a question.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you for your presentation. You talked a little bit, near the end of your presentation, about the effect that this is going to have on the children who were removed from the homes, and I wrote down the words you used. You talked about hope, safety, faith, growth, responsibility and confidence.

Could you expand on that a little bit? Those are very humanizing factors. These children, we know, are going to be affected by this decision. And the decision has been already made; they've been removed from the homes. What is happening to these children now?

Mr. Dhillon: Oh, what I feel like is that they're removed from a home, but you're saying that they are gone to a safe place, but we don't know that, right. Now, they could be out on the street somewhere. We don't know that.

You know, as—growing up here, you know, as—what our parents taught us, you know, first thing was responsibility. This was huge for us, right. Growth, respect was definitely—honour was a huge one as well, right. Just, you know, things that help you grow up in life and kind of keep you off the streets, keep you away from the drug abuse or any other, you know, 'substance'. You know, that, I think, should probably be it.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Dhillon, that seems to be all the questions. And thank you very much for coming out and presenting tonight, and thank you.

Okay, next presenter we have is No. 14 on the list, is Sheldon Pince [*phonetic*]. Is Sheldon—

Mr. Pince [*phonetic*], do you have anything to hand out, or?

Mr. Sheldon Pince (Private Citizen): Yes, I have something.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Okay, we'll get someone in the staff to hand them out for you.

Mr. Pince [*phonetic*], while the staff's handing out, you might—

Floor Comment: Pronunciation is Pinx.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: You might as well go ahead.

Mr. Pinx: Pinx. Pinx is the last name.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Pince? Pinx?

Mr. Pinx: P-i-n-x.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Pinx? Okay, sorry.

Mr. Pinx: Pronounced and spelled the usual way—with an X.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Okay, Pinx—rhymes with lynx, right? Pinx. Okay, thanks.

Mr. Pinx, go ahead.

Mr. Pinx: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, honourable members of the committee, I'm here as both a private citizen and a member of the legal profession to express my shock and dismay when I heard of this government's intention to pass this bill.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

The bill demonstrates the extraordinary powers a misguided government possesses when it intends to pass a law that attacks the very democracy that this country is founded on and which it is elected to defend and protect. The foundation of democracy includes many important principles that ensures that its citizens are treated not only fairly, justly, but also with dignity and respect, particularly when at-risk indigenous children are involved.

One of the cornerstones of our democracy is its justice system, and I've always been proud to say that the Canadian justice system is regarded one of the most well-respected justice systems in the world. However, today is a very dark day for our justice system, as this bill targets a single property in the city of Winnipeg for the purposes of terminating its lease agreement with the Southern First Nations Network of Care and a numbered company.

The lease of this property, I'm advised, was negotiated in good faith, with the intention of the property being converted into a short-term care facility for at-risk indigenous children. This facility, I'm advised, has not only—has fulfilled not only the needs of the Southern First Nations Network of Care, that has over the past 10 and a half years fulfilled its

duty to provide safe facilities necessary to care for these at-risk indigenous children.

* (22:20)

The government has yet, in my respectful view, provided the public with a logical and rational reason for taking this action, which will not only result in the termination of this lease, but much more importantly, will deprive indigenous children of this city in need of protection of a facility that has served their best interest for the past 10 and a half years.

We have heard from the Premier, in his public remarks to the media that this lease is indefensible. This lease is hardly indefensible as it was a lease 'negotiated' between—with—between two parties in good faith. What is indefensible, in my respectful view, is the introduction of this bill by the Premier (Mr. Pallister), which chooses to ignore the wellbeing of the at-risk indigenous children and 'deprive' them forever from access to a facility that has achieved or exceeded the expectation of the Southern First Nations Network of Care.

In the past couple of weeks, I've had the opportunity to speak to many different lawyers who practice in a variety of different areas of our profession, and informed them of the contents of this bill and the intention of this government to put this bill into law. Each lawyer stared at me in amazement, as he had never heard of a government having this kind of power to terminate a lease without compensation that was entered into between a private company and an agency who's charged with the responsibility to care for at-risk indigenous children.

More importantly, the concerns summary's with me was if this government can terminate a lease at will in these circumstances involving at-risk children, no lease agreement between government and a private company would be immune from this action.

The government has yet to disclose where it is now housing these at-risk indigenous children since the closure of 800 Adele. Historically, I'm advised, prior to the southern authority entering into the lease for 800 Adele, these at-risk indigenous children were primarily housed on a short-term basis in hotels located around the city.

Additionally, the government is yet to disclose what the costs are for housing these children since the closure of 800 Adele, or the quality of care that they've been receiving since being forcibly removed

from this property. I liken Bill 32 to a surgical procedure intended to excise an important part of the infrastructure designed for care for at-risk indigenous children with any accompanying statements being made from the Premier (Mr. Pallister) as to how these children are being better protected now, since the closure of 800 Adele.

It's extremely insightful that the Premier and his public comments respecting this bill has made no comments whatsoever that I am aware of respecting the impact this bill has already had on at-risk indigenous children, and what the future impact on these children will be.

When I speak to you respecting at-risk indigenous children, I need to share with you now my own personal experience working with indigenous communities in northern Manitoba as a young lawyer following my call to the bar in 1973. I accepted an offer from Legal Aid Manitoba when it was initiating the legal aid system as we now see it today to work as a staff lawyer for them and appear as duty counsel at various court proceedings held in several northern communities. Over approximately a three year period, I travelled every month to several remote northern communities including Grand Rapids, Easterville, Norway House, Saint Theresa Point, Garden Hill, Island Lake and gods narrows. Many of these at-risk children may have originated from some of these communities.

Unless you have seen first-hand, as I have, the extraordinary difficult conditions the adults and children deal with on a daily basis in these communities, you cannot fully appreciate the struggles and hardship that these people endure every day. Many of the at-risk indigenous children that were residents of 800 Adele, they have lived through these very difficult conditions, and the closure of this facility could result in some of these children being forced to return to these remote locations.

I question the government's timing and motive in tabling a bill of this importance at this time, and the apparent urgency in having it pass into law as soon as possible. This government has been in power for over three years, yet waited until the eleventh hour to table this bill when it is likely we're going to hear in the next two weeks an announcement of its intention to call an election. It is clear from this bill that its focus is entirely on the termination of this lease as opposed to the consequences of this action and the impact it will have on at-risk indigenous children in this city. Others have addressed this committee today

and have confirmed for you the exceptional quality of care that this facility has provided to these children for the past 10 and a half years.

It appears that the termination of this lease has been given far greater priority than when—the well-being of these at-risk indigenous children. It is most unfortunate that for the past three months, so I understand, this facility has remained empty, and when it could have been used to care for these at-risk indigenous children.

This government must act with great restraint in the matter in which it chooses to exercise extraordinary powers, which when exercised can have a significant negative impact on the rights and lives of its individual citizens. One would expect that before government exercises this power, it should only do so in the most clear and compelling circumstances. However, on a fair examination of the issues addressed by this bill, I do not see how the termination of a lease is of such importance to override the impact it has and will continue to have on the at-risk indigenous children of this community.

These are vulnerable children and this government is duty-bound to protect and—whose lives we must all value.

Those are my comments.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Pinx.

Committee Substitution

Mr. Chairperson: But, before we move on to questions, I'd just like to—there's been a substitute in the committee. The Honourable Jon Gerrard is in for Cindy Lamoureux. So, just to inform the committee.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: And we also have, since committee's been sitting, seven more new presenters that have been added to the list. So we will now take questions.

Mr. Allum—sorry, Mr. Lindsey.

Mr. Lindsey: I just want to take the opportunity to thank you for coming out and certainly recognize your concern with kids from First Nations communities. I, too, have been to some of those communities and seen first-hand. So I really appreciate those comments that you made. So I just wanted to really thank you for coming out.

Mr. Pinx: Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, I'd ask you two points.

First would be, one of the claims that has been made is the government tried to renegotiate this, or the Southern Network of Care tried to renegotiate, I don't know exactly what was involved. But was there a real effort to try to renegotiate this, or was this—what happened?

And the other question is, if this lease is terminated, that would have—and you've got a contract which is cancelled, that has implications for all sorts of other dealings that the government would have with other organizations, I would guess.

Mr. Pinx: If I could answer your first question this way: I was not counsel for the group that owned this facility. I have not been involved in the intimate details of the history of the facility in terms of whether negotiations took place or not. But you were not here to hear the presentation of Mr. Vince Bueti, who has been counsel for these gentlemen for several years. And to the best of his knowledge—was asked the same question and provided this answer—he is not aware of any other negotiations that have gone on in the past but for the most recent offer made by the government. Which was, with respect to an option that they were given, one of two, in, I believe it was May of 2019.

Sorry, if you could repeat the second question.

Mr. Gerrard: You're a lawyer?

Floor Comment: Some people say that.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, it's—and I'm just concerned about the implications for the government, you know, passing a bill to terminate a lease like this, and under the conditions that it's doing it. *[interjection]*

* (22:30)

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Pinx, I can't—you must wait 'til I recognize you.

Mr. Pinx: I think this answer has been addressed prior to your return, but I will repeat it for you.

In my comments, I said that if they're going to take this kind of action, to terminate a lease that is serving public good, with—the evidence presented here seems to suggest the facility was suitable for the use—that is, to protect these children—and the care that was offered was appropriate for the residents. That, under those particular circumstances—if a government is going to cancel a lease under those circumstances, then no other, in my respectful view,

government lease would be immune from this type of action being taken in the future.

And I think the concern that this committee should have—a real concern, because you've heard other people speak—is the impact this is going to have on the business community in this city. And that's long-term impact. This will resonate through the developers, the bankers, the businessmen who own properties, private properties, public properties and it will discourage potentially anybody risking millions of dollars if they choose to enter into a lease with the government, as they may do today if this type of bill is not passed.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Allum had a question first, I believe.

Mr. Allum: Defer to my colleague, of course.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Mr. Pinx. I just wanted to, again, extend a thank you on behalf of the committee as well to—for taking the time, putting together a comprehensive report presented and I really appreciate that. I know the committee has as well and certainly we appreciate the time you took to be here tonight. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Pinx? Did you have any response to that? No?

Then, Mr. Allum.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Pinx, I also wanted to thank you for coming and reiterate my—the comments made by Mr. Lindsey, who you may know as the MLA for Flin Flon, so has a deep appreciation for the issues that you raised.

But I was curious to say that there—you—some suggestion that there would be an election in a couple of weeks and as you probably know as a lawyer, that election date is fixed in law so it would be the government breaking the law.

So I'm wondering if you know something that we don't know? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Pinx.

Mr. Pinx: My apologies. All I can tell you is every once in a while I rely on rumour.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Pinx, but we're out of time. Thank you very much.

We will now call the next presenter, Jagtar *[phonetic]* Gill. Jagtar *[phonetic]* Gill.

Just to make the committee aware that there's been an agreement between the House that if somebody needs a presenter—House leaders, that if somebody needs a translator, that somebody will translate for them, so if you could tell us your name—translator's name.

Mr. Panchhi: Baljit Panchhi.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, so Mr. Panchhi, you are the translator for Mr. Gill. So, Mr. Gill can go ahead with his presentation when he is ready.

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: He is saying that Bill 32 is wrong, that is—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, could you repeat that?

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: He is saying that Bill 32 is wrong.

Mr. Chairperson: I had recognized him, so you may continue speaking because I had recognized him.

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: He is saying that we try to take care of our kids every day. And here what we see, the government—what they did, did not—did a—took good care of the disabled kids.

He said that where the kids were staying before, it was a good place, but the government took them out and then now they are cancel—trying to cancel that lease they had with the people who own the premises.

He's saying the kids that went from one place, they are shifted to another place, and the problem they got, first they are doing—trying to 'rebiliate' themselves, and then when they go to a new place, they could get some other disease or another problem; they might not adjust to it.

He's saying the kids that cannot take care of themselves—and we need our government to take care of those kids and that, and it is their, kind of, right that they need that kind of help, and government shouldn't do what they have done.

That's it.

Mr. Lindsey: I just, again, want to thank you for coming out, staying here—10:30 at night to make your presentation and take part in the democratic process that we enjoy and, hopefully, the government is listening to everybody that's out here tonight.

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: I wonder if Mr. Gill is a businessman and whether he has some experience with contracts and whether—what his opinion is of a government coming in to break up a contract like this. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gill, could you repeat that because I hadn't had a chance to recognize you.

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: Okay, what he said is that when you have a contract, as in being a businessman, that when you do a contract with somebody and you fulfill it, you don't break the contract in the middle and then kind of go away, which is not right—what he has learned.

Mr. Wharton: Thank you, Mr. Gill, for coming tonight. Again, appreciate the time you took to come out and express your comments on Bill 32. Thank you.

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: I was just saying to him what he said.

He said thank you.

* (22:40)

Mr. Gerrard: I—my question is this: If the government—if this bill passes and the contract is broken, will that have an impact on whether Mr. Gill would engage in contracts with the government in the future?

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: Okay, he said that it's very bad and when government breaking the contract like that, if anybody else wants to do a contract with the government, he will think twice before doing it with the government.

Mr. Gerrard: To explore this a little bit further, are there some conditions—if you'd ask Mr. Gill—where both parties renegotiate something, that would be acceptable, but just breaking a contract would not. Is that right, or?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable—no, sorry. Mr. Gill.

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: Okay, he said that it's good that they should sit and negotiate it and had the contract. If there's any kind of weakness in the contract or moment where he's trying to say something wrong, that they should renegotiate it and instead work it together. That would be a better solution.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you.

So just to sort of extend that, it would be acceptable in terms of renegotiating, but it would not be acceptable just to end the contract just like that with a bill like this?

Mr. Panchhi, on behalf of Mr. Jadbar Gill: Yes, he said it should be renegotiated, which is better.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Gill, but time has expired for questions.

We will now move on to our next presenter. Thank you very much.

Our next presenter is Eugeni Morduhovich. Eugeni?

Mister—could you please give me the proper pronunciation so I don't mess it up?

Mr. Eugeni Morduhovich (Private Citizen): It's Eugeni. Eugenie is a tennis player. Yes, Eugenie Bouchard is a girl's name. No, it's—

Mr. Chairperson: Eugeni Morduhovich.

Mr. Morduhovich: Eugeni Morduhovich.

Mr. Chairperson: Eugeni. Well, do you have any written presentation for the committee?

Mr. Morduhovich: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentations, Eugeni, when you are ready.

Mr. Morduhovich: Thank you, Mr. Chair, honourable ministers and MLAs. Some of you I know by the names, some of you even been couple of years ago mentor of mine.

I'm a PC. Jon *[phonetic]* been helping me with opening Russian-speaking business association, the network—Jewish network association at the Asper centre.

So, here today, I want to speak for Bill 32 as a businessman and present maybe little bit different point of view than just talk about kids, which I'm not saying any other point. Kids are important. I have—I'm a father of two kids, and it's maybe a terrible thing that's happening to those kids right now, but I want to speak about the points of—and the precedent that we might set if we passing the bill.

So, about myself. Coming from Soviet Union, Leningrad—born in Leningrad; it's Saint Petersburg right now, if some of you know. My parents moved to Israel and I've been 12 years old when I moved with them. So I grew up there, served in army, police

officer after. Then, for my own reasons, immigrated to Canada, married a Canadian girl, Trudeau, and she's a French Canadian. And happy here. Thirteen years ago, I moved to Canada. As I told, we have two kids. I've been driving a truck as my first job 13 years ago, and after that they have the—I had some several businesses, so—had a store, maybe some heard of you. I remember Brian [*phonetic*] was saying that he even shopped in the store; Russki Foodski it was called. Some of you still know that.

I sold it so I wanted to focus on my other business, which is Buffalo Driver Training. It's a school for truck drivers. Right now we currently, like, working together with the both government and honourable Ron Schuler about the MELT and implementing the MELT and back and forth with the information to MPI and new rules and what can be done.

So what I'm trying to say here, I am a PC member and I did a lot of canvassing and fundraisers and call a bunch of MLAs to different events with the Russian community, with the Jewish community, help a lot of MLAs with the fundraisers. And I brought PC members, but here I just wanted to show my opinion that I'm starting to little bit lose belief here in the party because I seen—like, I remember attending the Honourable Scott Fielding as the Minister of Finance talking about budget with the public, talking about how important to cut and level the bills and level the budget. It's—province is like a business and have to run as a business, and where you should cut and how fast you should proceed should be finished before those elections and level the budget or proceed a little bit slower.

So I believe situations like, for example, even cutting a budget from, like, planes, air ambulance and the fire planes, that's something, I guess, it's yours to cut because you funding; it's not business that you're dealing with. You have those planes as a government, and you opposite, you actually deciding to privatize and give it to the business that, who knows if it's good deal or bad deal? How are they going to use the planes? I heard about some pilot told me that they planning to use them in Europe while here is ice in the winter. So fire planes going to be going to the saltwater and be ruined after a couple of years. And the pretty old planes, and I guess this government are those people who will be buying those planes. But it's a deal. It's your decision. For now you're levelling the budget. And maybe it's good you—only time you'll answer.

But in our case, if you have a business that agreed to sign an agreement with the government, even it was a previous government, and you cannot walk away from that agreement. I don't understand how, like, you can walk away from obligations, deny them from fair opportunity for a trial to defend themselves. And, like, I'm trying to—correct me if I'm wrong. So if I am business owner and trying to maybe in the future, say a school, maybe even negotiate some deal with the government to do a better job than MPI and maybe test those class 1 drivers for the future. So you're signing with me a deal for 10 years, so 20 years. And then the next government, NDP or Liberals, coming and cancelling the deal. Is that sounds fair? Is that how I need to feel here in that province? So, because it's making me feel like I'm coming here from a country that Canada is saying about Putin, that is different and not a democracy. But, you know, like, everything is legal there.

* (22:50)

Whatever he doing for those oligarchs, whatever he—taking the businesses from those business people. It's all legal with the law being passed and bills being passed. You know, even I'm not going to put—say that something is done here is horrible, but even the Germany during World War II also, everything be legal. Hitler came legally to the power. Everybody was working, but I'm just saying what the next step, what we're trying to set here is a precedent with this bill and are we making the province better?

So, that's actually a question to the Minister Scott Fielding, yes? If our province getting better—it's enough reasons not to be in Manitoba, and I remember from 13 years ago, our city was population 650,000; right now it's 750—just go up by a mere 100,000 people, when other cities going up twice, three times, like Edmonton. And is it not enough reasons not to be here, if even it's not secure to own a business and be fairly dealt with with the government?

I know personally those individuals here that actually had the contract with the government, and one of them I bought a truck from, my first truck for the school. The other one was paid for for the communities and the fundraisers and all the events that we've been in his facilities, and I remember all those Russian-Canada hockey games and he been very helpful.

So, as individuals owning a trucking company and been dealing with me, so I know them as fair

business people and I just trying to, I guess, encourage you as a committee to consider fair negotiation as the next step instead of passing that bill and just being done as a dictatorship.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Morduhovich.

Questions from the committee?

Mr. Allum: Mr. Morduhovich, thank you so much for hanging in there and for your presentation tonight and for giving us some of your background.

I have to admit I was thinking about Canada-Russia hockey games myself as you were talking. Two great hockey nations; I have a preference for one. I'm not sure where you land on that important question, but I—on behalf—

Floor Comment: They both lost to Finland this time.

Mr. Allum: Yes, don't remind me about that. I've had a few sleepless nights since then, so—but I do genuinely want to convey our thanks, and I'm sure the members of the committee will want to do the same, for taking the time to come and present here tonight. It's very important that you've come.

Mr. Morduhovich: Thank you very much. Yes, I'm pretty much almost going to be off-duty, and my time as a 16-hour shift as a truck driver become illegal, so.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Mr. Morduhovich, and we're glad that you are here and feeling comfortable doing business here, at least until this came along. And I have the sense from you that this is really a question of business as being—feeling secure that they can do business here, that they can have a contract and if there was not—if there is a contract there is a way that you can renegotiate it, but you shouldn't be just killing a contract or legislating the contract be broken.

That's, in essence, what you're saying. Is that right?

Mr. Morduhovich: Okay, I learned something today. Yes, like any contract, you should be responsible and should be ready to stand in a court and defending the contract, and here this opportunity about to be denied, or I hope not, and yes, it's just—like, we hear a lot of reasons about the realtors and the bankers and the—what—how it's representing the lease agreement and the owner of the business. But

just for the future, like I'm saying, it's even in—as a contract, it's not the building, not the land, not—even any other contract with the government should be now scared. Like, businessmen should be scared to deal with them.

Mr. Wharton: Again, I just wanted to thank you, Mr. Morduhovich, for coming and sharing your story. And 13 years ago, when you came to Canada—welcome to Manitoba and Canada. And it's obviously great to have you here. I'm an entrepreneur as well, so I can appreciate some of your discussions about trucking and whatnot. And that was what I did early on in my working career.

So thank you again for sharing with the committee tonight your passion about Bill 32.

Mr. Morduhovich: Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, you've been here 13 years. Have you ever, in your 13 years, seen anything like this, the government bringing in a law to break a contract? *[interjection]*

Mr. Morduhovich: Team player, yes. I know, Dennis, it's late in the day so, yes.

I'm just—it looks like a first time and I don't want it to be a next time and I don't want it to happen. Hasn't happened yet; we have opportunity to cancel it and come to the negotiations—reasonable negotiations, also the reasonable people.

I think you both can get something. Scott can get a little bit cut of the budget and those guys can continue leasing the building and maybe bring even the kids back. Everything is still possible. Nothing is done yet.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. So you're—you work in the trucking industry. You've got experience with many contracts. Is that right? I just want to make sure that, you know—can you tell us a little bit about your experience with contracts?

Mr. Morduhovich: Yes. If I'm—like, some contracts done in trucking, like, for five years, and sometimes, some of the people cannot pay those contracts, but they still obligated to the banks and to the dealerships and to the loaners to pay that. So they can bankrupt, they can sell it for the—a lower price, lower than a fair market value, but they still need to do something, have to be some kind of exit that satisfying both sides.

And yes, I'm, that's how I think that it's supposed to be resolved today.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Morduhovich, but time has expired.

I'd just like to make an announcement for the committee. One of our pages here, Ravneet is—this is her last day, and she'll be leaving us at 11 o'clock. So I just want to thank her for all she's done for the Legislature in the last while that she's been here and enjoy your new future. Thank you very much.

Okay, back to business here. We will now call on our next presenter, Parminder Singh Mangat.

Do you have any written material for the committee?

Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat (Private Citizen): No, sir.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat: Good evening, and I would like to start by thanking everyone for being here, and everyone behind me as well.

So, as you guys know, my name is Parminder, and I'm studying—currently pursuing a bachelor of commerce at the University of Manitoba, focusing on finance and logistics. And I help my father, who's a local businessman here, owner of Champion Towing and Crane Towing, a family business that was started 10 years ago.

And from day one, my parents have always told us to cheer for the blue team, as soon as we turned 18, as well, too. But I was surprised to hear what was happening a couple of days ago to local businessman Ken, here. And it surprised me. It was kind of like a wake-up call that it can't just be automatic anymore, and I have to think twice, three times, four times before making a vote, no matter how I was raised.

* (23:00)

And first-hand speaking, I have family members who have been through some of the stuff that these kids have been through. Recently, one of my cousins was murdered in Calgary because he was put—he just fell in the wrong crowd. And it was sad to see, you know? It breaks families apart. And, even though he had a family growing up, there's still people that are put in this position and can't get themselves out. So I can only imagine how some of these kids who have no families feel.

And, like, the facility that was used at 800 Adele had all the requirements necessary 10 years ago and

made sure that the requirements were there. And it seemed like it was going very well. And in any contract, not just a rental, lease or anything, even in our own business, we have contracts that we focus on. And I can't imagine how it would feel—how we would feel if we had someone tell us that you can't pursue this contract anymore. And I don't know what—I haven't been through that situation, so I don't know exactly how that would feel. And I can only imagine and stay here and support what I think is right.

And—but, most importantly, these kids, what they went through, they had friends that they saw every day. They were pulled away from their families already before because of their life circumstances, and they were brought to this facility to be taken care of who was obviously a certified facility that the government would not have issued this lease or went through—followed through with this contract originally if it wasn't meeting the requirements.

And these kids obviously, like I said before, they had families. Or, sorry, didn't have families, but have—became friends. And, when you have friends and those are the only people you see every day, they become family. And to see that they were ripped apart and just taken and—you guys have said so many times that they're in a safe facility. I haven't heard once what this safe facility is. And I would like to know what this safe facility is that they are at right now. I want to know so that I can be at ease, so that someone else's cousin doesn't get murdered or killed—or son, brother.

And innocent lives being torn apart because of some of the stuff that goes on here every day—and that's what I have to say about that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Allum: Parminder—I'm going to call you by your first name—thank you for coming out tonight. I have no doubt that you're an excellent student, and I—of course, all members would want to offer their condolences on the loss of your cousin.

You raise a number of good points, and I think it's fantastic that you're here speaking to the committee tonight. You've been very helpful. I hope you'll come back many more times to speak on other issues because we need to hear your voice and others like yours around this table.

So thank you so much.

Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat: Yes, for sure. I appreciate that comment. And, for sure, as much as I can help out in the community, you know what I mean? Like, I see firsthand the families—not one but—not two, more than—different occasions. But, unfortunately, the most recent one happened to be fatal, you know what I mean. And, yes.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming and presenting and providing your perspective.

I'm not able to give any information in terms of where the children are because I'm in opposition in the Liberal Party, but—

An Honourable Member: And they're minors, Jon.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, I know. But it is up to the government to provide, you know, any details that would be forthcoming.

What I would say—I mean, you're—you and your family have been involved in business here. One of your concerns, I think, is relative to the contract. In this bill, it would break the contract, but it would also provide that there would be no compensation, that there would be no legal recourse.

Are those of concern to you?

Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat: For sure, it is a concern. Again, in business school, we're always taught to proceed with, like, ethics, morals and all that. And it doesn't seem like that's being used because, like, you had smirk and laughter. I don't think that was respectful, first of all, to begin with.

And, second, I mean, everyone does have a right to know where they are. It doesn't matter if they're minors, right? Or, at least say something, like, you know what I mean? Like, that's all I'm saying.

Mr. Wharton: And thank you, Parminder, for coming tonight to present to committee and certainly I, again, I'll echo the comments of my colleague as well, and we are sorry for your loss and certainly thank you for sharing that very personal part of your life with us and we really appreciate that.

You know, I, too, come from a family business and I certainly know your family business well. As a matter of fact, in my business, I probably use them a few times to tow some of my moving vans around, but certainly understand where you're coming from and the committee is taking your information tonight, and we appreciate your input and the time you've taken to be here tonight.

Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat: Thank you. I hope we can move some more vans for you too, in the future—[interjection]—I'll give you my card after this too.

Mr. Helwer: I was responding to the Honourable Dr. Gerrard through Mark [phonetic], and he knows well—very well that we cannot disclose where minors are in the custody of care for Manitoba, so I'm sorry that he asked that question of you. We do protect individuals' rights and those that are under the 18—under the age of 18 cannot be disclosed if they're in the care of Child and Family Services know where they are, so that is in answer to your question on where these children are at this point.

Please understand that they are in a safe place. We work as hard as we can to reunite them with their families and that is one of the goals of this government, to put them back with their families when it is safe for all of them.

Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat: You said reunite with their families. Should have been done long time ago, right, and if there is a facility who is helping—that was helping that currently, then it should have been used and there should be other resources to maybe help them find their parents rather than take them apart again and put them in the same situation again.

Mr. Fielding: Just to address that, we actually had the lady who was the CO-CEO for the Southern Network came in; it was probably before you—well, it was well before you presented, probably about four or five hours ago, and she indicated that the children were all safe.

I do want to add a couple things to the record. The original program by the Southern Network was never delivered out of 800 Adele and was originally designed—and this is my speaking point so I can use this—and developed in the Southern Network created to use and occupy the building for direct programming in 2013.

So they haven't been there since 2013, but as of January 2019, there was two programs: one for girls, one for boys, with a total of three children in the facility. This is a sublease arrangement between the Southern Network of Care and Marymount. Neither program located to the facility on a long-term basis, so they weren't there on a long-term basis, but were there on an interim basis until more appropriate program facilities were identified. Both programs relocated to more appropriate facilities with the boys

program locating to Marymound's main facility. No more than one third of the facility was ever utilized by Marymound during the short-term lease.

So just to clarify the point for you that all the children are safe that were there and they are in appropriate care providers.

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Lindsey, on a point of order.

Mr. Lindsey: Just a—like, I know we've had a previous conversation about the minister using his cellphone for notes, but now he's reading from something that—I don't know what it is, and perhaps maybe it should be shared with all of us.

Mr. Fielding: That was my speaking points. My understanding is I can quote from my own speaking points. That was my—we had that discussion with the clerk about an hour ago.

Mr. Chairperson: There's not point of order here.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Mangat, we are out of time, but if you had a quick response to the minister, I would allow you a few seconds to do that.

Mr. Parminder Singh Mangat: Yes. I just want to say thank you for your time. So thanks.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Mangat.

We will now move on to our next presenter.

Our next presenter is Gurjit Mangat. Gurjit Mangat?

Do you have any written material for the committee?

Mr. Gurjit Mangat (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Then you may proceed with your presentation.

*(23:10)

Mr. Gurjit Mangat: No, I do not.

I moved to—I guess we came to Canada over 30-some years ago. And, as a child, I lived in downtown, seeing all kind of the friends that used drugs, alcohol. And some of those friends are gone; they're not alive today because of that stuff.

And the biggest concern we have is children. There was a comment made on the right-hand side of the table here: half a million dollars for a kid—that they spent. I think that's worth it. If that was your kid, was put into that position and you tell me you're not going to spend \$500,000 a year or something else to protect your kid—because we just went through that, and my family member moved from Calgary just to protect his other kid so he could live—because one was shot, he doesn't want to see the same thing repeating.

And this all happens when they're young. They start from having a joint, maybe, you know, alcohol, and they step the wrong way. Nobody deserves to go the wrong way and die. It actually starts from—it starts from smaller things, from a friend giving you a cigarette or whatever it is, and those kids were actually put in a nice position—place where they were in a place where they don't have to worry about suicide—oh, maybe kill each other—and they were making friends.

Maybe there was—the progress was not as much as we were expecting as a community. Maybe we were expecting, okay, every child should go there and come back hundred per cent right—maybe it's not going to happen. We're not God, we can't fix everybody. We can only fix certain people. We can try to fix everybody. We can't even fix ourselves. We can't fix everybody, that's for sure.

But, if there was an outcome coming, even—they were putting 10 child a year through that program, and out of the 10 maybe we were fixing two of them, eight of them went back the wrong way again—that's what happened. But at least we tried. As a community, as a taxpayer, as a businessperson, we tried to fix that. But we didn't just left it alone.

And taking a contract away from somebody—as a business now—I'm talking as a business, too—that's not right, either, because when we shake—I was taught as a child, son, if you shake your hand with somebody, that hand is your contract. Legally at one time that was a contract. When you shook your hand with somebody, said, hey, this is a deal we have. That was done. And that's just still today. Lots of my deals done for hundreds of thousands of dollars over one handshake. The handshake means everything to me.

And now you guys put a contract—the government before the blue party was in power put in a contract with this individual company for 20 years, whatever. And 10 went by; there was

10 more to-left before somebody actually came up and just said, hey, here's your contract, I'm not going to like it. There it is, have a nice day. You like it? This is our offer.

That's not the way to do business, is that? You guys—none of you guys would appreciate if that would happen to you. And, if that would happen to you, then you would feel the pain of that businessperson, which I do because I'd—run a business, too. I have small kids, too. And my kids are going to have kids, too.

Obviously, maybe that facility was not used for Aboriginal anymore. I'm sure the government could find somebody else to use it. I'm sure they could find somebody.

And we're always saying, hey, we're here to protect you guys. We're here standing. We hear your voices. I don't see any voices. It's their own decision. It's the decision whatever the guy wants to make. Oh, I'm the power guy, I'm going to decide. This is my voice and this is what I'm going to do—you like it or not. If you don't like it, go home. And, if you like it, you're sucker to like it—whatever I decide for you. And that's not the way to do business.

I'm actually a blue party guy. I'm truly blue party guy, and I have always been. I always taught my kids, you know what, blue party, blue party. Last time, I listened to my wife, I voted Liberal. And, you know what, I thought I did a mistake. But I don't think so I did a mistake. I think I did a mistake by following the blue party. If the blue party is going to pick up whatever they decide and they're going to decide whatever they want, not even listen to people, not even negotiate with the businesspeople or maybe have a discussion among all of us or him saying, hey, send out something of—people could vote the—hey, is this a good decision we're doing? What should we do with this property? Then come up with the solution, not just here's a bill.

And you know what that bill is going do to other contracts? So is that going to allow me to go—like, if the government of Manitoba requires my service, I'm going to think twice. Hey, I could go buy a million-dollar truck—some of those trucks I have is worth \$1 million each. It's literally 16 wheels, \$1 million.

Would any of you guys—you guys probably think this guy's stupid to pay \$1 million for one truck, but that's what it is. That's what my job requires. If my job requires to buy me that tool to do that specific

job, that's what I'll require. And that's what they did. They went and invested their money to acquire whatever the government at that time requested. And they did. So the contract was put in place. And then somebody comes along; maybe today you guys put a blue party, we'll have a contract out and somebody else will go in there and say, bid on the contract and dispense millions of dollars, and we don't know how that poor guy went through to gather up the funding to bid on that contract to have that contract. And now election comes, a red party or NDPs in power. Now guess what? Oh, your contract, you know what? Those guys did it; we don't like it. Here it is, have a nice day, or here's our offer, have a nice day.

So, really, is this—this is what we do, called business. Canada was supposed to be a lot better place, not—I was never lived in India, so you know what? But it sounds like Indian politicians here. It does sounds exactly like those Third World, third countries. I'm saying they decide for themselves; they don't decide for the public. Public has no say. This is what I'm seeing here. I'm seeing the public has no say. The business person has no say. The—it doesn't matter how much money you spend with the government or how much you supported that government, that government is going to—if it doesn't like you, they going to decide what they want. And here, they're targeting one business; today they target that business; tomorrow they come after my business. But does that make me unsafe? I don't think I feel safe.

And back to children, they got—I was talking as business and you know what? Some of this conversation already has thrown at you guys before I did. Unfortunately, you know, I'm the last guy—not last guy but at the last hour—to say, and some of the stuff I'm repeating it, but you know what? If any of us and if any of our children was in a bad decision—they made a decision, they doing drugs, they're alcoholic, we would spend every dollar in our jeans to protect that child, to make sure that child comes out of it. You would quit your job, move somewhere else. You'll—all of you guys make six digits, and you guys would in a heartbeat for your children or for your family leave this province, nice, beautiful city, to take your child where he's protected.

So when we putting numbers—a number correct is someone's human—one life is only worth \$500,000; that's what the numbers we're throwing. It should—I'm not a news guy; I don't look into news until couple of days ago; somebody brought it to my attention, and I did some studying, not much; maybe

I don't have all my clues in; maybe I don't have all the points. But you know what? Somebody brought up half a million dollars, \$500,000. That actually bothered me. So our life—so someone's kid can die over half a million dollars; that's what we're deciding right now.

Okay, you know what? We—if the next 10 years we save 10 kids out of there, that's \$5 million; half a million dollars a year is \$5 million. I think we did pretty good. Maybe those guys—maybe out of the 10, five of them are going to be very successful business people. Make us the money back, pay their taxes, not rob, not steal, not go to—*[interjection]* Well, one minute, sir, I know. But they're not going to rob the bank or rape somebody or do something wrong because we took him out of that society and moved him to work closer to us, welcomed him, not just said, hey, you know what, we are worried about our money; I don't care about your life. My kids are doing good because I'm successful. I have money in my bank account. They're doing good. Hopefully, maybe somebody will come in and give me a great big nice cheque, it'll be all good, but that's not the way it is. Those kids never even got a chance.

I lived downtown. I don't know how many of you guys live downtown. I actually lived on Langside between Ellice and Sargent. I seen those things. I seen people getting killed over a shoe—shoe. What's a shoe worth? Ten dollars back then, back in 30 years ago? Ten dollars. For \$10 someone was getting killed.

So—

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Mangat, for your presentation.

Mr. Allum: Mr. Mangat, thank you, (a) for hanging in there until this hour, and for your very forceful and passionate presentation. It's hard to summon that kind of emotion at this time of night, so I have great admiration for that, and if our previous presenter is your son, I've got a feeling you're very, very proud of him as well.

* (23:20)

I have to say I have the same concerns about the team blue and team red that you stated earlier, and so there's always a home with you—for you here, but I do really want to thank you for coming out. And I say this quite sincerely that you've made a very, very good presentation tonight and it's deeply appreciated.

Mr. Gurjit Mangat: So I appreciate, sir, I really do, and you know what? The voice I was actually typing it up on my phone first. I was going to say this, say that. You know what? The time came; my heart came out. That's—I spoke my mind. I'm sorry if I offended somebody. This was not to offend anybody or insult anybody.

You know what, I'm not saying what party's good, what not. They're all the same for me as long as our government makes the right decision. That's all we want. As a general public, as a business owner, all I want is the people that we vote for, or people that our tax dollar goes against, or they work for, you know what, they make the right decision for us as a general public, for our kids, for my business, for our business partners, because if there's no business, guess what? Most of you guys wouldn't have a job because there would be no taxpayers. That's where the tax money comes from; it's all businesses, because business hires employees. If there's no employee, there's no me. If I have no customer, I don't need my employees. It's a vicious circle.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming and presenting, and you've clearly done very well in the trucking business. And one of the aspects of this bill, I mean it—it's as you describe it, that it's—it's wrong for a government to come in and break contracts. But, if a government does break a contract, then there should be some ability for compensation or there should be some ability for the person who—to go to court.

But this bill says not only is the government breaking the contract, but it's also saying there will be absolutely no compensation to the businessmen and it will say—it says, also, that the businessmen can't take the government to court over this. And so it's a very one-sided and autocratic bill, and I just wondered whether you would comment on this part of it.

Mr. Gurjit Mangat: So this is an example: That's an ant; I stepped on it; I killed it, because I had the power to do it. So what the government's showing is you know how we say there's gangs, there's bikers, there's this, well, you know what? If the government's going to come and do that and push—pull somebody out of their authority or rip up a contract, they're no different than a criminal. I believe they're doing the same—exact same thing. What's the difference?

If your word and your writing does not mean nothing, that's the same as any criminal. The word—

you know how they say, Judge, let me go once; I will never come back. You will never see my face. Next week, again, oh, he's lined up right there. Sucker—third time, fourth time.

So that's exactly what our government is doing if they don't—especially when you're passing somebody a bill that, oh, you can't sue me. So tomorrow I have a contract I don't like; I will rip it; I will throw it in the guy's face and say you know what? You can't sue me. Oh, I forgot; I'm not the government. I'm just the general public. I'm just an owner, a normal businessman. You could sue me; the government could sue me. If I'm late on my GST for even one day, penalty right away. I could be good for the last 20 years, one day—why is that? Because you're government, you have power, you could do whatever you want. That's not right. That is not right.

But—and them saying that, hey, we've got to pass a law or a bill that it's going to allow us to pull any contract—good luck trying to find somebody that will bid on a contract next time with you guys. Have fun. Maybe nobody will be fixing those roads that already busted for the last 30-some years I've been looking at it. Nobody will fix that. And guess what? They will probably say, you know what? I could bid on this contract, but middle of the contract they'll tell me, have a nice day. That's exactly what's going to happen.

Mr. Chairperson: We want to thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Mangat, but, unfortunately, we are out of time.

So we will continue on to the next presenter. Thank you very much.

I'd just like to remind the audience that there's supposed to be no applause, no picture-taking, so just to remind you.

Also, I'd like to remind the committee that we just had two more presenters register. They will be put at the bottom of the list, so the list keeps getting longer.

Our next presenter is Fiona Haftani. Fiona? And if you could please let me know if I'm—how close I'm coming to presenting your name correctly.

Do you have any written material for the committee?

Ms. Fiona Haftani (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Then, Fiona, you may start your presentation as soon as you are ready.

Ms. Haftani: Ladies, gentlemen and honourable members of the parliament, my name is Fiona Haftani, and I would like to briefly talk about my background.

I was born in Iran and lived under the undemocratic and dictatorship regime. A job opportunity at the organization for defending victims of violence as a child rights committee co-ordinator turned my life around, and I learned to become a voice for children.

For more than 15 years, I worked for non-governmental organizations, such as Iranian Civil Society Organizations Resource Centre, and House of Culture, and Sustainable Development. These organizations were associations with the United Nations Department of Public Information, UNDP; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF; and member of NGOs' coalition for international court.

When the new president, Mr. Ahmadinejad, came to power in 2004, he closed NGOs, and I left Iran to live in a democratic country who recognized the human rights and freedom of speech. Today I'm here and I stand before you to speak to Bill 32. After 30 years living in Alberta and Manitoba, for the first time I heard the surprise news that reminds me the undemocratic regime that I ran away from, and I felt bad for the governments that make a decision based on the current government favours and cancel a contract without any responsible explanation.

As a business owner, as a member of UNICEF Canada and a board member of Manitobans for Human Rights, I would like to ask a few questions from our current government.

Our current Premier (Mr. Pallister) wants to believe that the building was inappropriate for the case of the children. If the building was inappropriate, why did he wait so long and move the children before the coming election? Did he reach out the landlord or Elsie Plate [*phonetic*] or southern authority to solve the problems and help them to improve the building facilities? Is there any report from current government to show why the building is inappropriate?

I heard that the children were hurried out of their rooms and they were crying as they were saying goodbye to their friends, that they're being sent to their different locations. Can this Premier tell us today what has become to these children? Whose facilities has he sent them to? How much is he

paying monthly and is the building assessed as an appropriate facility?

Mr. Chairperson, 800 Adele was a perfect building close to the HSC hospital and police department for any emergency situation. Now do children have a quick access to the Children's Hospital of Winnipeg?

What was the reason to rush children to the different building and damage the current, you know, building? The honourable Minister of Finance, Mr. Scott Fielding, states that this facility was not in the public interest. I would like to ask the honourable minister: Does the public not have interest in at-risk indigenous children? Based on article 12, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, that Canada ratified in 1991, no child should be treated unfairly on any basis. Children should not be discriminated against basis on their race, religion or abilities, they were think or say, the type of family they come from, where they live, what language they speak, what their parents do, what gender they identify with, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. And article 3 places the best interest of children as the primary concern in making decisions that they—may affect them.

* (23:30)

All adults, including those who are involved in making decisions related to budget, policy and the law, should do what is the best for children. When adults make decisions, they think—they should think about how that decision will affect children.

Thank you so much for your time, and I would like to ask you to do not in a rush on Bill 32. It is wrong in so many levels. It is wrong for the children. It is wrong for the business, and it is wrong for the government power.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mrs. Haftani.

Mr. Fielding: Well, thank you for your presentation, and just for clarification, you may not have been here when the CEO of the southern authority came, and so just for clarification that all the kids are very much supported. The vulnerable kids, they are being taken care of by—with the southern authority, so I don't want you leaving the meeting and presentation thinking that vulnerable children aren't being supported. They are, just not at the facility that's in question.

Ms. Haftani: I would like to know that if you are mentioning that they are in a safe place, what does it mean by the safe place, because NDP government, you know, sent those children to the safe place, and now the PC government is saying that is inappropriate building. So I'm kind of, you know, like to clarify and see that who's going to make decision that the current building is appropriate or is not appropriate.

Mr. Fielding: It was verified by the CEO of the southern authority that the children are being protected and they are within the southern authority's mandate, and so they are being supported. So that was reassurance from the CEO of the Southern Network.

Ms. Haftani: I'm hoping they're going to be, you know, in a safe place, but I would like to know more about the inappropriate and appropriate place. You know, just telling me that, you know, they are safe is not an answer, you know, because I would like to know that, you know, what does it mean by they're safe. You know, when the current, you know, government are saying that the building is inappropriate, the previous, you know, government is saying that is appropriate and who knows what's going to happen in the next election. If the Liberals or NDP or the PC again, you know, took their power, then they're going to move the, you know, those kids, you know, all around the city, and they're going to build, you know, another building with a huge budget or with huge money to make it appropriate.

Mr. Allum: Ms. Haftani, thank you for coming here tonight and hanging in here. I know that you were here very early, so you've really endured with the rest of us and with the breadth of your experience that you shared with us tonight, your work with NGOs, your references to the United Nations charter on the rights of people—or rights of children, are all very important for—considerations for us, and I just want to say you've raised a number of questions for the minister. And I think we're all looking for the same kinds of answers, and so I thank you for raising those questions and for participating in tonight's session.

Ms. Haftani: Thank you for your time.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming and presenting and being so passionate about kids and knowledgeable about business as well.

The—you've been involved with human rights, and one of the things that we pride ourselves in

Canada is that, you know, when you have a contract that you can believe that that's a real commitment, and that it can't be just torn up. And you have experience in Iran and I think things may have been different there, but, certainly, here one of the good things is one should be able to rely on a contract and the validity of that contract, and I just wondered whether you would comment in terms of the importance of that for doing business here in Canada. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Haftani—sorry.

Ms. Haftani: That's a question that I like and I think I asked in my speech, too, that it doesn't mean that any parties or any colour, you know, is going to come and change the government, you know, contract.

I would like to know that, you know, the building that right now the kids are there, how much, you know, money the government is going to spend to make that building appropriate. How much is going to be the rent? That is completely different by, you know, a place that they are living, you know, right now. What was the rush, you know, to take all these children and put them in another place? Is the rent much lower? Is the building is appropriate, but by who? You know, all the building has facilities and has everything. Is it going to be something that the government is going to spend another half a million dollars or \$2 million or \$3 million to make a building and pay the rent and everything, and then in the next term, another government is going to come and say, oh, that contract is not, you know, is not accurate and—or the building, it doesn't, you know, follow our facilities or appropriation.

So now, the next government has to, you know, cancel the contract.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Haftani, the time for questions has expired. So if you're just about done or if you'd like a couple more seconds to finish it off.

Ms. Haftani: Thank you so much, and I'm just wondering about the children, and I'm just wondering about the businesses in future, and I'm just wondering about the government because I see lots of these things back in Iran, and I'm just worried about that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Haftani.

We will now move to the next presenter, Ravi Chahal.

Ravi Chahal? Mr. Chahal, you require a translator? Okay, you may proceed when you are ready.

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal (Private Citizen): He's saying that he's been living in this city since 2004. He thought PC Party was a good business party. He has his business into trucking. He's asking, like, when they took the kids out of the building and then what are they doing? That building is sitting, like, basically empty and where the new building is they also paying rent over there, and now, what are they doing for the tax money two places, so far, like, 'til now.

He's saying that, you know, they want to—he wants to know, like, the kids that were taken out, where they put them and that and what is the progress; what they found out; how they are doing and that, and is everything—they are good? Like, how good are they, and because they want to know, those kids going to be getting into trouble-type things again or—because there's already a lot of kids running around, troubled child.

And also about the law that government wants to break and that about the lease. If the contract started to be broken like that by the government, then how would it affect the business? How would people will do the business and that where the government is breaking the contracts?

And like, basically, in our country, the governments, which are known to be a little corrupt and that and break laws, and we are learning that our governments are doing the same thing here.

* (23:40)

He said we're already paying a lot of taxes and that in our transfer industry on fuels and all that, paying so much money, and we do contracts, and he said if customers started breaking contracts like the government, then what will they do? In their industry, it'll affect a lot when contracts are broken. That's about it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Chahal.

Mr. Allum: Thank you. I just want to get the pronunciation of your last name proper—Chahal?

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: No, Chahal.

Mr. Allum: Chahal.

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: Chahal.

Mr. Allum: Chahal.

Some Honourable Members: Chahal.

Mr. Allum: Well, you don't have to yell at me, the way I was saying it.

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: C-h-a-h-a-l.

Mr. Allum: Yes, I appreciate that. I just—I wanted to make sure that I got it right because you spent a long time here tonight, waited your turn, gave a very good presentation.

Has there—have you heard anything the government had said tonight that puts your mind at ease, or are—you still have concerns, having listened to what the government has said tonight?

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: He said, I haven't heard any decision of the government. I've been just hearing the people. That's it.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Chahal, thank you for coming and presenting. You've been in the trucking business since you came here in 2004, and you've probably had experience with quite a number of contracts. If that's right, and maybe you can comment a little bit about the problems if a government starts breaking contracts.

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: He said he does contracts with a lot of companies of their business in trucking, and nobody has broken the contracts and that, and they were always fulfilled.

What we see here is the government breaking the contracts. This is something very unusual.

Mr. Wharton: And thank you, Mr. Chahal, for coming tonight and making a presentation and certainly commend you for being in one of the best industries in the world in the trucking business. I'm a little biased because that's where I come from, too, so congratulations on your business, and thank you again for sharing the information that you have in a very good presentation this evening to our committee. Thank you.

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: He's saying—can I say something?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Chahal, go ahead.

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: He's saying that, you know, before it was a good business, now that trucking is a downfall business and we are not doing very good, and then the contracts—what's happening?

Mr. Gerrard: This bill not only breaks the contract; it says that there will be no compensation, that there will be no way for there's any legal recourse. It's a very unusual bill, and, as you've already pointed out, and I believe, government should be exemplary in the way that they operate in terms of business and fulfill contracts and, you know, make sure that if they're not happy with a contract that they're exploring alternatives and can be negotiating and compensating if they want to change some, but just to break a contract just seems very wrong.

Mr. Panchhi, on Behalf of Mr. Ravi Chahal: He said, like, you know when you have a contract and you're in the middle of the contract and you break the contract, that is not good. So you should increase the contract to go further. But then to break it.

And you should—if there's a problem, you should talk to the party and renegotiate it. And where both parties are kind of—people are happy, in other words.

Mr. Chairperson: We'd like to thank Mr. Chahal for his presentation. The time has expired for questions.

Pursuant to our rules—we thank you very much for your presentation, everything is done. Thank you.

Pursuant to our rules, a standing committee to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill unless by unanimous consent of the committee.

Therefore, does—there are still 29 presenters.

Therefore, does the committee agree to sit past midnight to conclude public presentations and to consider clause by clause of the bills?

Mr. Gerrard: You know, we've got 29 people to go. We have a rule which, I believe, is a good rule that we should end at midnight. We've already been going for six hours. And, with 29 people, I think we should, you know, have the committee reconvene on another night.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, there is not enough time for another presenter, so what is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to rise at—now because we don't have time for another? *[Agreed]*

The time being 11:47, committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 11:47 p.m.

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