

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Legislative Affairs

Chairperson
Mrs. Sarah Guillemard
Constituency of Fort Richmond

Vol. LXX No. 12 - 6 p.m., Wednesday, October 25, 2017

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mrs. Sarah Guillemard (Fort Richmond)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

*Hon. Mr. Gerrard, Hon. Ms. Squires,
Hon. Mrs. Stefanson*

*Mr. Altemeyer, Ms. Fontaine, Mrs. Guillemard,
Messrs. Johnson, Lagimodiere, Ms. Lathlin,
Messrs. Nesbitt, Wowchuk*

Substitutions:

Mr. Selinger for Ms. Lathlin at 9:50 p.m.

APPEARING:

Mr. Greg Selinger, MLA for St. Boniface

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 23–The Fisheries Amendment Act

Ms. Amanda Stevenson, WMM Fisheries Co-op

Mr. Frank Kenyon, private citizen

Mr. Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Mr. Sam Murdock, Commercial Fisheries Area 4–Fisher River Cree Nation

Mr. Langford Saunders, Norway House Fisherman's Co-op

Mr. Clinton Whiteway, Matheson Island Marketing Co-op

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff, private citizen

Mr. David Mackay, Southeast Resource Development Council Corp.

Mr. Donald Salkeld, private citizen

Mr. Paul McKie, Unifor

Ms. Marianne Hladun, Public Service Alliance of Canada

Mr. Darrell Rankin, Communist Party of Canada – Manitoba

Bill 27–The Elections Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Mr. Malcolm Bird, private citizen

Ms. Ellen Smirl, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives–Manitoba

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 23 – The Fisheries Amendment Act

Bill 27 – The Elections Amendment Act

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Madam Chairperson: Will the Standing Committee of Legislative Affairs please come to order.

Our first item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Rick Wowchuk (Swan River): Yes, I nominate Dr. Lagimodiere.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Lagimodiere has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Lagimodiere is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 23, The Fisheries Amendment Act; Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act.

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 of presenters before you. On the topic of determining the order of public presentations, I will note that we have out-of-town presenters in attendance marked with an asterisk on the list. With this consideration in mind, in what order does the committee wish to hear the presentations?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Out-of-town presenters first.

Madam Chairperson: Is that agreed by the committee? *[Agreed]*

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

First of all, if there is anyone else in the audience 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 photocopying, please speak with our staff.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, 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.

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

Thank you for your patience. We will now proceed with public presentations.

Bill 23—The Fisheries Amendment Act

Madam Chairperson: We will start with Bill 23, The Fisheries Amendment Act, out-of-town presenters.

I will now call upon Amanda Stevenson, president, WMM Fisheries Co-op.

Ms. Stevenson, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Amanda Stevenson (WMM Fisheries Co-op): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Stevenson: So, first of all, I would like to say thank you so much for giving myself, and all the other people who are here tonight to present, the opportunity to come and speak to you. This is a very exciting time.

I would first like to read an excerpt from a recent article from Blacklock's in Ottawa: MPs ponder death of Crown corporation called an absolute mess. MPs are questioning whether to wind up a Crown corporation so dysfunctional it failed three audits and fired its CEO. Members of the Commons public accounts committee yesterday cited jaw-dropping misconduct at the agency.

This audit is a jaw-dropping evisceration of this entire operation, said MP David Christopherson, New Democratic vice-chair of the committee. I've been here 14 years, and this is among the top three worst audits I've ever seen on how a Crown corporation is operated in this country. What an absolute mess.

Auditors in May 14th's special examination of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation said management hired unqualified staff for unnecessary positions, purchased useless equipment without board approval and failed to enact reforms recommended in previous special audits in 2005 and 2010. Management disregarded key controls, said Clyde MacLellan, assistant auditor general. Management filled positions without job descriptions and filled them without merit-based processes.

We found the board of directors and management failed to meet the responsibilities for oversight, said MacLellan, adding the audit represented the strongest negative assessment we can give in a special examination.

I could go on in the article, but that's enough to give you the general idea.

It's nice to see that the federal government is finally recognizing some of the difficulties that we've known have existed with the corporation for a very long time, but there is other places that we could have looked. If you had looked at the DFO, Department of Fisheries and Oceans statistics, the difference between fishermen in Manitoba and Ontario from 2000 to 2011, Manitoba fishermen were put at an economic disadvantage by having no access to the open market and therefore lower average prices. For whitefish in that time span, that

was over \$30 million in lost economic opportunity. And for pickerel in that same time span, it was over \$68 million in lost economic opportunity.

* (18:10)

There have been some good times, though. There are a few times where different groups were able to get an export dealers licence and—through Freshwater, and have an opportunity to have a small opportunity outside of the monopoly. In 2010 and '11, the co-op that I'm president of, we were able to get a small, limited export dealer's licence just for mullet. We sold ourselves over 750,000 lbs of mullet in that time period and doubled the income for our member fishermen, who were represented by over five lakes in Manitoba. We were very happy. Things were all going well, and then our licence was taken for what we feel are unjustified reasons by FFMC. So we proceeded to continue trying to draw the federal and provincial governments' attention to the problems and ask for an open market.

We're very happy to be seeing the change that's coming here. I always like to try and find positive things. I have nothing to say positive about Freshwater. All I can say is that having the opportunity to participate in the open market is going to change people's lives. It's going to absolutely, completely transform the economy of lots of small communities in this province. There are many buyers who are just waiting for the chance. There's a lot of people in the communities who are getting organized and are ready to move forward as soon as it's possible.

And I just want to say, on behalf of my members and also a lot of other fishermen who aren't necessarily members but who are excited about the chance, thank you so much for giving us this opportunity, and that you have any questions I—

Madam Chairperson: Yes, thank you for presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr.—yes, Mr. Altemeyer.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I think that's still me.

Thank you very much for your presentation and for making the trip here. Forgive my geographical ignorance. Your co-op is primarily north basin, south basin, some of both? *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Pardon me. Ms. Stevenson.

Ms. Stevenson: Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot. Thank you. Like, we have members—Lake Manitoba, Lake Winnipegosis, Lake St. Martin, lake Dauphin, Red Deer Lake and Cedar Lake. So from a fairly wide area, yes. That's—and we're really, really happy to be able to sell all the fish, not just mullets as well. That's going to be fantastic.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Yes, maybe you can tell us a little bit more about the history of your co-op and how long you've been working at this.

Ms. Stevenson: I'll try to be brief. We've been—a lot of us fishermen have been working for a long time, probably close to 15 years now, to try and make improvements, first working with Freshwater and then seeing that that was not possible, sadly, and then looking to see if we could convince either the federal or provincial government to make some changes so that we could have different opportunities.

Myself and my dad and a couple other fishermen travelled around many different communities years ago, talking to fishermen about what they saw as the problems in the industry, what they would like to see, what potential solutions were, and that's where the idea came to form a co-op. That happened shortly before we—not too long before we started operating and we started operating in December of 2010, once we were able to secure an export dealer's licence from FFMC.

An Honourable Member: Thank you.

Ms. Stevenson: You're welcome.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call upon Frank Kenyon, private citizen.

Mr. Kenyon, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Frank Kenyon (Private Citizen): No, I don't. No.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Kenyon: I just imagine how much you lads must imagine me—a bush buddy like me being up here talking to you guys. But I certainly like the opportunity, and I want to do first the thanking. I want to thank provincial Conservatives for—we've

asked this for 15 years of many governments and many of them had a majority. I don't blame them for not passing this or not doing this. There was a lot of political strife in there, you know. You know yourself better than me; the politicians have to be very careful what they do, and none of them really had the nerve to go ahead and deal with this. It was kind of public knowledge that there was problems inside Freshwater, so it wasn't as if it was unknown. But you know how politics can play with people, you know.

Many people have suffered, so I'd like to thank the provincial Conservatives, especially Rick Wowchuk, Derek Johnson and Jeff Wharton who have most of the fishermen in our areas. Can he—they campaigned even in nomination on opening up the market, and I can say these are the politicians that kept their word and went through with what they said.

And we'd also like to thank the Liberals for when the vote was passed a few days ago; they helped pass that vote. So we'd like to them—for helping pass the vote. We certainly appreciate that. I've talked to Jon Gerrard many, many years ago in Duck Bay and it's always been very positive.

We know there's uncertainty in the new-coming market, but the good things that'll come out of it—it's just unbelievable. As commercial fishermen, we dump 20 million lbs of fish, of heads and guts—that's estimated, but it's for sure that—and bycatch into our lakes every year. And they contaminate our lakes. And the fish is 0.4 per cent phosphorus. And as we know, in Lake Winnipeg, we have too much phosphorus and nitrogen. The phosphorus is released when the fish dies or when we dump the fish into there.

And all this 20 million lbs can easily be marketed. Our co-op, in 2010 when we started it, that was the idea, to market that fish. So I should say something about the co-op just shortly, and you'll have to cut me off because I always talk to much. Anyway, the problem was Freshwater was not paying us enough for our mullets to afford to pay the freight to ship them in. Roughly that was kind of the idea. And we don't blame them. Freshwater is a very expensive outfit. If they use a low-quality fish that they can't get a lot of revenue from, it's hard for them to balance their books. We understand that. But as fishermen, we wanted to try to market it ourselves, because we had foreign buyers begging us for the fish that we were actually dumping in the lake,

wasting. And anything you produce, if a carpenter made 10 houses and at the end of the year he was asked to burn five down, even if it's economical, he wouldn't be very happy about it, because that's your work, eh.

So we got together and we decided we would make a co-op and lobby the provincial NDP for—and Freshwater for an export permit. It was a little difficult. Nine years ago, we had a protest right outside here and Christine Melnick was good enough to ask Freshwater's John Wood to give us an export permit. Reluctantly, they did that. We had to get buyers. They picked the buyer out for us. It was Mike Schafer. We couldn't just ship anyplace, they had to okay the buyer. It had to not go into their market; that was the idea.

So we got going on this co-op and we started shipping. We took mullets that we were dumping in the lake, the whole co-op—we have about 300 fishermen in there and 90 per cent are Aboriginal because most—it's 80 per cent Aboriginal fishermen in Manitoba, but 90 per cent in our co-op because it's the remote communities that are having the trouble. They need all the money they can get from the revenue of their fish. If you take one third away, they just can't afford to fish. So, anyway, we started shipping fish into—to make it short, after five months, we made a \$30,000 profit and we were able to pay ourselves 80 cents a kilogram instead of 35 cents a kilogram. What that meant is we could economically dress the fish and afford to ship them in and actually make some money. And that fish all went out of Canada. So that was foreign money coming into Canada. Like, there's 20 million lbs of heads and guts and fish that we throw away. That's all going to go to foreign markets. It'll be processed here to make organic fertilizer, too, but it's—they mostly will come in.

So, anyway, we shipped and we made a \$30,000 profit in five months, paid ourselves 80 cents a kilogram instead of 35, was very successful. And all the politicians were quite happy; it was very successful. But Freshwater said that we were going into their market and ruining their world market. And it always made me think of how someone like myself that has no ability could outdo them in the world market. But that was why they cancelled the export permit. They cancelled the export permit—to make it as short as possible, they seized \$20,000 of our fish at Duck Bay, from Metis and Aboriginal fishermen—some of them are here tonight. And they took the WMM co-op—the directors and president to court for

two years, fines us \$4,000 and then gave—Amanda Stevenson, who was just up here, my daughter, a criminal record, which is what she still has. This is all done for fishermen trying to market their fish that the government is forcing them to dump. This is what's wrong with the situation.

And the other problems that we have in—with Freshwater that we see is Freshwater was created to help the fishermen, in 1969 was created—we had fish buyers, and they took 50 per cent of our income. So the government created Freshwater, which is a good idea, to go ahead and make it better for the fishermen. But today, Freshwater takes 65 per cent of our income. That's how it's turned around. And it's not because there's bad people in Freshwater, they're just totally unaccountable. No one makes them accountable. The provincial Conservatives are the first government that's going to make them accountable, and I think they did a real wise thing. Because they didn't just go out to destroy Freshwater, they just said, we're going to have an open market so fishermen who want to support Freshwater in an open market can sell to Freshwater. Freshwater's going to have an opportunity to make themselves more efficient, to work it—to deal in the business place. And I have some fishermen come and say, oh, no, Frank, you should have to be forced to ship to Freshwater, because if you don't, Freshwater's going to go broke. I said, why? They said, because they won't be able to do business in the open market.

* (18:20)

Well, this is the way I look at it: Freshwater's got a \$50-million loan from the federal government. Fisherman have built up that whole thing in Transcona there, totes and everything else, 40 years of business experience, they got the head salesman flying all over the world, they've got all the workers build up in Transcona. They have the support of all the fishermen if they would pay the fishermen; all of us would ship there, but we don't get paid, we only get paid half as much as Ontario.

So why is it so hard to imagine that Freshwater couldn't compete with other foreign companies that have to come in and persuade the fishermen, now you have to deal with them? We had 40 years of Freshwater. The system is very good, shipping and everything else. The problem is we don't get paid and we don't have no say.

And that's—and the other problem with Freshwater—make sure you watch my 10 minutes because it's liable to go over—the other problem is the

environment. The environment is not only dumping of the fish—Freshwater's market is for the baby pickerel that haven't spawned yet, baby pickerel that haven't spawned. So that's what they pay the best price first. The carp and mullet's the other fish in the lake they don't want because they can't make money off of them. That's understandable. But as a fisherman, they're telling me if I don't put small nets in that lake and catch those baby pickerel that haven't spawned yet, you're not going to make money.

So what do we do? That's the fish we target. We go into pickerel holes, we put small nets in, as small as we legally can—in Lake Manitoba it's three and three quarter, Lake Winnipeg three inch, and we catch those baby pickerel that haven't spawned yet.

This will all change on December 1st because our foreign markets like China and all them, they want larger fish. They want bigger fish. They want the carp, they want the mullets, the jacks, those are the species they want, not so much the pickerel. So fishermen now will target the carp and the mullets and get them out of the lake.

The problem with them being in the lake, biologists tell us that the carp and mullets, the lower class fish, are very hearty, more hearty than pickerel. So they can compete with pickerel, drive them out of the areas because they can live in warmer water, they can live in more stagnant water, dirtier water, pickerel can't. So the pickerel just can't compete with these stronger fish. At the same time, you have the anglers and you have the commercial fishermen, if they're going to sell to Freshwater, targeting the baby pickerel, you know. So those are some of the things.

Far as foreign investment, we already have millions of dollars put into Manitoba even before the market's open. We have Gimli under construction for a processing plant. Riverton's almost finished with a \$3-million plant. We have another one in St. Laurent, the land's only been bought, and in Oak Point, the land's only been bought. And we have five buyers after December 1st besides Freshwater. People can say, well, they haven't done nothing yet, well, they can't until December 1st. So we can say they won't do nothing, that's fine, but they're putting lots of money into this if they're not going to do nothing, and they're millionaires so they've got to have things figured out.

And two of these buyers are all ready to take our fish to China and sold fish in China successfully. Eva Luke [*phonetic*] who bought land in Oak Point took 40,000 lbs of year-old frozen fish from Freshwater

about six months ago and sold it in China and made good money. She comes to me and she says, Frank, if we can get fresh fish that all can go to China, can all be round, it will all be very valuable, you know.

So, as a commercial fisherman, I understand some fisherman will be concerned about the future because we had Freshwater for 40 years, you know, they've done everything for us. But at the same time, after December 1st, we'll have five buyers, plus, we have Freshwater, and we have premium market fish, and we won't have to be forced to dump our fish.

So that's—you guys did pretty good to listen to that for that long. That's amazing. Right, Rick? Yes.

And the most worst thing about the whole thing is that I feel baddest about is the northern Aboriginal fishermen, like fishermen from Duck Bay, you know, from Moose Lake. When that fish was seized on July 15th, there was six boats in Duck Bay employing three or four young Aboriginal fishermen fishing around the lake. After that fish was seized in July 15th, 2011, only one boat was left. Now these young Aboriginal fishermen and the whole crew, they have two choices: they can stay in Duck Bay because there's no other employment there and go on welfare and be a cost, or else they can leave their community and go get jobs elsewhere. And, traditionally, First Nations and Aboriginal people have sailed around the lakes, they've traditionally fished at, that's why we have 80 per cent of the commercial fishermen Aboriginal. So it's really the hardest on the Aboriginal fishermen and the Aboriginal families, you know—

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Kenyon. Mr. Kenyon, your time has expired for presentation.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

Are there—do the members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Well, I don't so much as have a question, but just want to thank you, Mr. Kenyon, for coming down here to make your presentation. And I really look forward to working with you and Miss Stevenson, and all the fishers that you represent, not only in getting good value for your product, but also working together with you and your fishers on sustainability practices for our fisheries.

So thank you so much for coming down here tonight.

Mr. Gerrard: Thanks, Frank, and you make a really good point about—this will take pressure off the harvesting of very young pickerel, which are not producing eggs yet and not spawning yet.

Floor Comment: Could I—comment on that?

Mr. Gerrard: Just let me finish my—but I will also want you to comment on—there's been a concern about the overharvesting of the really, really big walleye on Lake Winnipeg, and tell me what'll happen with them as well.

Mr. Kenyon: Yes, sorry. Thanks for catching me before I said anything.

Well, in all these things, you see fishermen when they're really down and out and not making much money, they're desperate. They want that little three-inch net to catch that baby pickerel. They want to catch that big female pickerel because they're really hard up for money.

This new market will bring money into commercial fishermen's hands. When they're getting paid well for their fish, they're going to be much more acceptable to screening themselves on their fishing, on their size of the nets and everything else. There'll be money in the situation.

As far as the large pickerel, my own personal opinion, we shouldn't target any pickerel before they've spawned. That's for sure, that. And when we have too many sizes, we target the pickerel all the way through. There's a good year class come up and, as a fisherman, I can go three inch, three and a quarter, three and a half, three and three quarter, four inch, four and a half, five inch, six inch. Every good year class, I can target that pickerel. I can catch 'em all the way up. And that's not really a good way to be harvesting the lake.

But the main thing is that we leave them alone for spawning even in Lake Manitoba now, because we're getting our markets in China we have a three and three quarter inch net which catches about small pickerel about that size. And a lot of fishermen now are quite willing to go to a four or four and a quarter for economic reasons, because we're going to get paid for the wrong fish we don't address, we'll have a bigger fish to catch, and that—if Lake Manitoba does that, there's roughly 112,000 pickerel that get caught in Lake Manitoba every year, there'll be 50,000 female pickerel natural spawning in Lake Manitoba every year, 50,000. That's 500,000 in 10 years on that simple move like that. And the fishermen are quite—there's a few that don't want to

give up their three and three quarter, but this market will come through, that money will be there, and in a group like the co-op, why we like that is it can influence a whole bunch of fishermen.

We can get together and we can say, yes, this makes sense for everybody, and it's much easier to operate. And I believe it's going to be better all the way around, and I hope it turns out that way, because I certainly don't want—people still—some fishermen are still scared to be without Freshwater, and myself, I don't have that fear, but it is uncertainty and we have to understand that, you know.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you, sir, for coming down to share your personal expertise.

I have a question and, you know, forgive my perimeteritis being a Winnipegger and not someone who gets to fish on our great lakes like you do.

If I understand your presentation, which I much appreciated, the demand—the price paid for the small fish is higher. That would be the target. Now, if we have increased fish processing capacity being built around the lake, presumably that's going to mean each one of those investor groups wants to get those fish, wants to get all the fish. The quota system and sustainability practices should be there to make sure that we don't cause unnecessary harm to the fish stocks.

But, if a whole bunch of additional plant capacity is built around the lake, how do we make sure that, you know, the dynamic that you just talked about doesn't end up leading to a deteriorating fish stock?

Mr. Kenyon: Sorry about that.

Well, first of all, we're not talking about overfishing pickerel; that's all covered by quotas. The Manitoba fisheries have to control that. That's—and you can lower the quota or raise the quota according to your test stats and fishermen are going to be more acceptable with that. But in reality, when Freshwater was created, Manitoba produced 50 million lbs of fish. The North, like Pukatawagan then, had seven million lbs of fish, now they have almost nothing, because all these other underutilized species under this Freshwater, we just waste, we just threw them away.

* (18:30)

So, when all these other processes has come up, we hear this: Freshwater can't exist with all these existing, too. But, if you go from 20 million to

50 million, 20 million was what Freshwater is getting now. Well, not really 20 million because they fixed the books, but pretty close to 18 million, okay.

No, that's right. They glue the suckers' heads on twice, but we won't get to that, but—*[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Kenyon, unfortunately we have reached the end of our question period time. Thank you very much for your information. Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call upon Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Mr. Rebeck, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Kevin Rebeck (Manitoba Federation of Labour): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Go ahead with your presentation.

Mr. Rebeck: Can I give another minute to Mr. Kenyon? He's a great speaker. I enjoy hearing his stories.

Madam Chairperson: Unfortunately, we have many presenters tonight. Go ahead.

Mr. Rebeck: Great. The Manitoba Federation of Labour is Manitoba's central labour body. We represent over 100,000 unionized workers in our province. This bill would eliminate the monopoly that the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, a federal Crown corporation, has in the marketing of freshwater fish in Manitoba.

FFMC was created in 1969 and it's located right here in Winnipeg. It was designed to give our small fishing communities strength and stability of price and quality, similar to the Canadian Wheat Board's monopoly, which was dismantled by the Harper government.

FFMC purchases and processes fish from over 1,200 commercial Manitoba fishers, many of them in remote northern locations. Hundreds more fishers from Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories also send their fish through Freshwater Fish. Fish such as pickerel, sauger, perch, mullet, northern pike, carp, go through this Winnipeg facility.

FFMC generates tens of millions of dollars of economic activity annually. We're concerned about the impacts this bill would have not only on the fishers who rely on FFMC but also the people who work at the FFMC itself in Winnipeg.

While this bill would still provide the option to sell through the FFMC, we've seen this movie before with the Canadian Wheat Board where ending the single desk system negatively impacts producers and has led to job losses.

We know that the majority of the economic activity at FFMC comes from Manitoba. Ending the monopoly will likely lead to job losses and threaten the economic security and stability of Manitoba fishers, many of them small operators.

As we saw with the dismantling of the Wheat Board, a number of small producers went out of business and the negative economic impacts have been felt throughout the province, including the town of Churchill, which had relied on the wheat board monopoly marketing system and its grain shipment through the ports. We've all seen the economic consequences this is having on Churchill today. We're concerned about the lack of explanation from the government on what will be done to protect jobs at FFMC and to protect small fisheries that are served by FFMC.

We're also concerned about the lack of explanation about what the government plans to do for workers who might be impacted if the FFMC does close its doors as a result of the bill. There hundreds of good-paying jobs that we're talking about. People are engineers, skilled tradespeople, assembly-line workers who make decent wages that can help them support their families and contribute to our economy. Putting these jobs at risk by withdrawing Manitoba from the monopoly is unfair to these workers, to their families, and it would mean good-paying jobs are being taken out of the economy.

I'd hope this government's having conversations with the federal government about the long-term vision of FFMC. The government should be working to support good-paying jobs that allow families to build bright futures, not making decisions that could put those jobs at risk.

We urge this government to reconsider its approach and continue the single desk FFMC to support jobs and economic benefits for northern and fishing communities here in Winnipeg, and I'd encourage involving and making sure that that FFMC is managed and supported and run with a board that has voices like Mr. Kenyon's and other fishermen, that their concerns are being heard and dealt with appropriately. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Gerrard: How many people are currently working at the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation?

Mr. Rebeck: I don't have the exact number, but I think it's in the realm of two to four hundred, somewhere in that range.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thanks very much for coming down. You do a very good job of bringing good perspective to lots of bills here in the building.

As, you know, head of a very important organization in our province, can you give us a sense of, you know, how the workers and their families are feeling, knowing that their jobs at Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, the processing plant here in Transcona, could be under threat or change in some way with very little input from them. Can you give us a sense of just how they're holding up with this development by the government?

Mr. Rebeck: I know some of the unions directly working with those workers are speaking tonight as well, but I would imagine they would be feeling some unease and some frustration about what does this process mean, what might this result, and, if there is going to be a change or if there's going to be layoffs or changes coming, what supports are there in place to help them find transitions elsewhere and use those skills and make sure they stay here in Manitoba and continue to contribute to our economy.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, thank you. A supplemental to exactly that: to your knowledge and—perhaps, as you say, future presenters might be able to enlighten us further tonight, has the government reached out to the workforce at the Transcona plant at all with an indication of what is going to happen? Are there going to be any supports provided, or is—has it just been radio silence so far?

Mr. Rebeck: Yes, I'm not aware of any of those discussions happening, and I'm hopeful that it's not too late to make sure those discussions take place and that the provincial government and federal government together can make sure that they address those types of concerns.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, one final comment. I mean, as the official opposition critic, on behalf of our party, anyways, please pass on our support to those

workers, and we will certainly strive to see that the government does reach out to them and, you know, at least provide some information. We're going to hear, and have already heard, a wide range of views tonight, and I think it's incumbent upon the government to be engaging everyone, not just some of the interests that will be here in the room tonight, and the workers absolutely deserve to be part of that conversation. So, please, pass that on if you have a chance.

Mr. Rebeck: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Okay. Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call upon Sam Murdock, Commercial Fishers Area 4—Fisher River Cree Nation. Mr. Murdock, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Sam Murdock (Commercial Fishers Area 4—Fisher River Cree Nation): Yes, I do.

Madam Chairperson: Okay. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Murdock: First of all, I just want to take this opportunity to thank the members of Parliament for hearing the presentation that I'm about to deliver—just got to put on my glasses here. Age is starting to catch up to me.

So, after much discussion with our leadership, Chief Crate and his council members along with our commercial fishers as well as our legal counsel and those that are involved with this—within this industry, we came up with issues that would directly affect us and the challenges that we face.

The open market reality in Manitoba puts pressure on the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation to adjust its business model. It is imperative to our northern economies that a viable method of processing, marketing and keeping the fishery sustainable is found. The most at-risk populations are Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Northwest Territories, indigenous fishers.

It is estimated by way of payment geography that over 80 per cent of fishers are indigenous. Of Freshwater 49 delivery points, 42 of them are in communities comprised of predominantly indigenous Canadians. Many of these fishers would be financially 'roained' should they not be able to sell their catch to FFMC.

If we have learned anything from the province of Saskatchewan pulling out of the act and still having 100 per cent of its commercial fishers' harvest still being sold to FFMC, it is that very few dependable options exist for inland fishers to sell their catch. Using this as an example, we can expect Manitoba fishers to be in a similar situation. The provincial politics will not change the need. FFMC has also invested heavily in assuring food security for our local and export markets. We feel this could be compromised if FFMC were not to exist.

We are at a crossroads in this industry. The government of Manitoba has a legal obligation and duty to consult with the First Nation leaders and its community members that are directly affected by this decision made by the governments of the day. And as a result, legal action is currently being explored.

* (18:40)

We see the greatest challenges facing us today as being our ability to (1) sell and transport our catch; guarantee food safety for export; carry on with a sustainable fishery for generations to come; start-up costs for the locally based fish-packing facilities; provincial loans program; the CEDF, the Communities Economic Development Fund; employment insurance; the current relationship between FFMC and Service Canada to a federal institution that is part of Employment and Social Development Canada; annual profit-sharing by FFMC to fishers based on individual production; posted guaranteed prices based on market; the ability to sell all species harvested by catch—meaning the bycatch that was earlier talked about; the loss of the current provincial northern freight subsidy; and the recommendations that we discussed in order to keep the freshwater fish industry safe. And viable fishers need to be able to sell their catch to Freshwater Fish or a reasonable, dependable alternative with similar business and transportation supports to accommodate northern, indigenous fishers.

Without FFMC or a similar alternative, many communities will suffer greatly. For example, Fisher River First Nation commissioned a study that found losing FFMC would cost their community \$600,000 annually. And I'm talking about social assistance programs. And it's our goal, and the leadership's goal, to try our best to have as many people as—employed as possible. But, when you live on a First Nation community, that reality is very hard to come by. So every time opportunity comes up, we try and grab it. But when something is sustainable, as

it is today, and is taken away, then it gives us a greater—well, the efforts of trying to employ everybody is very limited. And this is a huge impact on a First Nation that depends on commercial fishing. The impact is expected to be even greater in other, more isolated First Nation communities.

We see two potential outcomes to avoid economic catastrophe: one, FFMC continue on as a focus—is focusing on improvements as a dependable place for fishers to sell their catch on an open market; two, FFMC be taken over by a commercial-fisher-owned, interprovincial co-operative with proportionate indigenous representation. The co-op would have an advisory committee of commercial fishers elected based on regional representation that will elect board of directors from the advisory committee to government co-operative.

Thanks.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Miigwech, Mr. Sam Murdock. Miigwech for your presentation.

I'm just curious if you can provide some information in respect of this government's consulting with Fisher River Cree Nation and with chief and council.

Mr. Murdock: There was no consultation taking place.

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to allow follow-up questions? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Fontaine: So—and—so none of the ministers have met—or any of the government staff have met with chief and council from Fisher River?

Mr. Murdock: No.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you, Mr. Murdock, for making the trip and bringing your important contribution directly here to the Legislature, as this committee hears, as I said, from a wide range of voices.

First question for you, just to be clear: Fisher River Cree Nation's position on this legislation would be in favour, or opposed?

Mr. Murdock: Opposed. *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Altemeyer. My apologies, I have to acknowledge you before you continue with the question.

Mr. Altemeyer: Could you please explain for the benefit of everyone on the committee the constitutional duty that a government has to conduct proper consultations with a First Nations community? Because I don't think in this era of reconciliation, which is proceeding way too slowly, I don't think people here in the south and outside of indigenous communities get to hear the legal truth and the legal arguments that have evolved because indigenous leadership has fought to have their rights recognized. And you wrote an excellent—your community wrote an excellent letter to the previous minister laying out exactly what those are.

I wondered if you would be kind enough to share a bit of a synopsis or a summary here of the legal basis for that and the obligations all of us have as treaty people to honour those commitments.

Mr. Murdock: Thank you very much for the question.

I know it's a legal question, and I—we do have our legal counsel sitting in the audience, but I believe that this process went through the Supreme Court and, as a result of that, the duty to consult has to take place in order for anything, even such as Bill 23, I believe, to become legal. I mean, it is going to affect a lot of lives. We're looking at well over 200 families that are going to be affected by this decision, just in our area. And I—we haven't heard of any governments going to—or this government going to other First Nation communities to meet with the leadership.

And I just wanted to state here that our leadership, if it's an issue to deal with health, they'll have the people at the table regarding health. If it's to do with industry such as fishing, commercial fishing, then they'll have the people that are directly affected there as well. So that process hasn't happened.

Mr. Gerrard: Sam, I think you were chair of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation at one time, so you've got a lot of experience about how things work, and that certainly'd be respected.

Tell us how many fishers there are in Fisher River and give us a little bit of information about—do you haul them down to Transcona, or is there somebody who comes up and picks the fish up, or how does that work?

Mr. Murdock: Well, we have two delivery points. One's located on the west shores of Lake Winnipeg, which is McBeth Point. Fish is packed and—at that location and then a barge picks it up and then it's—from there freighted to Matheson Island and by road to the plant at Plessis and Regent.

The second delivery point is off of Goodman's Landing and the fish is picked up by a semi truck. So, in terms of the amount of fishers I'm talking about in that area, would be about 148 commercial fishers and also including their helpers, now that number, of course, doubles.

Madam Chairperson: The time for questioning has now expired. Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call on Langford Saunders, president, Norway House Fisherman's Co-op.

Mr. Saunders, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Langford Saunders (Norway House Fisherman's Co-op): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Go ahead with your presentation.

Mr. Saunders: Well, first of all, I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to come and voice my concern and our concern of our fisherman's co-op.

First of all, I'll explain where I'm coming—where I'm from. As part of the—as far as the presenters, I'm the more—the most northern community at this time, making a presentation here. My community's Norway House Cree Nation. I—it's located in Playgreen Lake, north tip of Lake Winnipeg. It takes eight hours to get to Winnipeg. It takes an hour flight, an hour-and-15-minute flight to get to Norway House.

We—since the announcement that was made, it caused so much concern in our community, in my fishers' community. When I seen on TV the announcement of dismantling Freshwater, and to see the chief of Norway House standing beside the ministers making that announcement, it was very disturbing for us, the fishermen, because nobody came and talked to us about the announcement that's going—be about to happen.

* (18:50)

We have a very high unemployment rate in our community. Fishing provides employment for our fishers, also the helpers. We—the employment that we

create is about 1,500 people out of 6,000 people. The economic spinoff of our commercial fishing is a 'bingpact' into our—impact into our community. We feel that this—what's happening here is pushing us back to where we started off from.

I'll go back 1929. Warren Landing there was four fish-packing sheds, fish-packing areas there. Private buyers. Montreal Point, there was one. Spider Islands, there was two. 1929, I lost my grandfather. He was fishing in a sailboat that was being tugged out to fish in the open grounds for the fish—the companies that he was working for. He was 19 years old. He had a child, who was my father. He had another one on the way. That was my auntie. So what happened at that time had a big impact on us. My father grew up. He was as—he migrated to Norway House down through the York Factory route to find employment, my grandfather. He did in Warren Landing. By doing this, by making this bill, by creating this problem that we have today, we're going back, step back, way back, way back.

Our co-op was established 1962. Fifty-five years we've been existing. Out of those 55 years, 50 years of it has with—been with Freshwater. Maybe more, maybe less. It hasn't been all good, but it is all we had and it was a good way of—we didn't have to worry about a problem—our problems of once we get off our boats, off the lake, then to market our own fish. We had a place that was established by our members that were board of directors at that time when they established the co-op that we can go directly to the sheds, sell our fish, then our worries are over. It was the co-op. Then, being partnered with Freshwater at that time—the co-op establishing the partnership created that safety zone for us.

I hear that there's fish buyers out there. Yes, prior to the announcement, we got asked to go to chief and council chambers where there was a meeting that was happening. There was a—what do you call that thing when you have somebody on TV? *[interjection]* Media conference. Sorry. Anyways, there was a Chinese lady there and another ex-politician that was there that brought her in to talk to us, offered us 25 cents a kilogram for all species. Fast forward a year, that same lady I seen at the last meeting that I was attended came and asked, there's no plan in place. There is no—they're not planning to set up a plant—processing plant anywhere. Instead, she did phone me and ask me if my—our fish—our plant itself, can it do the work for them. I said—I didn't even respond back, because there's a big hoopla created here that there is an open-market

system and this is what's going to happen, but at the end of the day we know what's going to happen.

When I look back at 1929 when there was four fish buyers in the Warren Landing, where our fishermen was not even paid dollars. Instead, they were being given a piece of paper and say you can take this to the co-op, and you—your credit—that's your credit, not knowing how much their fish was being bought. It is a passion for me to express my concern of our—my fishermen, because if I do not do it, who will. Just like I brought 49 fishers with me to speak on their behalf, today, we sign a five-year agreement with Freshwater marketing board. One of those 50 members is the chief of Norway House, Chief Ron Evans. He's a member of our co-op. He signed that agreement. It is very concerning for me, for us, not knowing what's coming because I—when I started I told you where I was from, how to get to Norway House, how in anybody's right mind will go up that far and buy fish where they can get fish within an hour from Winnipeg? Doesn't make sense.

And I'm just central Manitoba. Guess what's going to happen north of me? Wabowden, Cross Lake, Nelson House, Split Lake, York Factory, York Landing, Thompson, The Pas, Roussin, all those communities, Ilford, that commercial fish, what's going to happen to them? The opportunities of providing employment for our communities are going to go down. I know if this happens our fishery, it's all in Norway House, is going to go down. We are impacted by this information. Also, we've been impacted by Manitoba Hydro development since they established in 1971 or 1963, whatever, Hydro opened up 2-Mile and 8-Mile. We're impacted.

So I plead with you, do you understand where our concerns are? And we're open the doors for anybody that wants to come and talk to us and talk to our other fishers.

I will leave you with that. I'm very passionate and when I speak, and I always give thanks to the Master upstairs for what I say. I don't have anything in front of me, but I speak from here.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Does the—do the members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Ms. Squires: Thank you, sir, for coming here tonight to present to us. And, again, I don't necessarily have a question for you. I've listened very carefully and I would like to just offer you my commitment that I look forward to working with you and all the fishers that you represent.

Mr. Saunders: Thank you.

Ms. Fontaine: No, I'll pass.

Mr. Altemeyer: I scarcely know where to begin.

Mr. Saunders, you should feel very proud of the presentation that you've given here tonight. You can, in all honesty, go back and look all 49 of your colleagues in the eye and tell them you did a great honour to the issues that they are facing and to the pain and the hurt that will hopefully be avoided somehow, but which is undeniably a potential for your community.

And I just want to say it's completely unfair how this has been done, the absence of consultation and the, really, the disrespect that has been shown to the entire North in not looking at what the impacts are going to be in communities like yours.

And I'm wondering perhaps there might be a way to build on the minister's comment just now. Perhaps, well, would your community be able to host the minister perhaps before this legislation is passed? Maybe the legislation can be delayed for a time so she can come to your community and engage in proper consultations directly between the Crown and the leadership of your community, yourself included. Is that something that you would like to see before this legislation passes?

Mr. Saunders: Of course, and so is every other community that's been affected. We alone cannot change the mind of the minister, it's a provincial-wide issue and it has to be dealt with that way.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. I've been up in Norway House and impressed by the activity of fishers like yourself up in Norway House.

* (19:00)

It plays—the fishery plays quite a role in economically in the community. Maybe you could tell us a little bit more about that, and I don't know if you've got any sort of numbers in terms of the dollars that are brought in, but I would think it has a substantial impact.

Mr. Saunders: Okay. In regards to how much quota that we harvest: first of all, we fish from June to

maybe second week in July in the summer. We fished—we fish in the second week in September 'til the second week, third week in October, normally. We harvest approximately 108,000 kilograms of fish—quota fish from Lake Winnipeg.

Majority of our fishery on Lake Winnipeg is whitefish. Seventy-five per cent of our catch used to be whitefish. Now it's more like 85 per cent, 90 per cent. We had—we used to catch some pickerel, but there's no pickerel now that is coming up north. We have a quota on lake—Playgreen Lake that has been affected by the hydro development project. We have 100,000 kilograms of quota there. In the last six years, seven years—maybe more than that, I guess, we only took 50 per cent of that quota every year.

And, in regarding jobs, you have—a fisherman has two helpers. There's 50 helpers, so 50 times three is what? So and then you look at their families, each household has about five family members. Times that by, what? So you can do your multiplications, you add them up. It is close to 1,500 people that is affected.

And, in regards to the dollar amount, we help the economy over a million dollars every year.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. The time for questions has expired. Thank you very much. You may have a seat.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I wonder if we could give the MLA representing the area an opportunity to make a brief comment or question.

Madam Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to allow the MLA for The Pas to ask a question? *[Agreed]*

Ms. Amanda Lathlin (The Pas): First of all, Langford, I want to welcome you, and I'm very honoured to have you here today speaking on behalf of our community. In August, I had the honour to sit with our fishermen who met with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in—at your fishery co-op office there.

There I sat for a good—an hour and a half listening to our fishermen talk about their concerns and the consequences regarding this bill. And also, too, it was an honour to look at the pictures of our past board of directors on the wall. You know, a lot of our elders were up there, and to me that just showed many, many generations that will be affected and—by fishing in our own traditional territory.

So, with that, I just want to share that I was there to listen, talk to what—many of our families there, and after that, it was as usual in our culture, we share a meal afterwards. And, again, I just want to thank you for coming here and expressing and relating your concerns to our minister regarding this bill.

Thank you, Langford.

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Saunders, do you have a response?

Mr. Saunders: Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call upon Clinton Whiteway, Matheson Island Marketing Co-op.

Mr. Whiteway, do you have any written material for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Clinton Whiteway (Matheson Island Marketing Co-op): Yes, I do.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Whiteway: Good evening, everybody.

First of all, everybody hears me loud and clear? I'm not used to being on a mic. Good?

So I'm speaking on behalf of Matheson Island co-op. Also, a concerned fisherman myself. So we at the Matheson Island co-op have been in business since 1962, my grandfather being one of the founders of the co-op. We've been operating as a fishing community since 1969. We've heavily relied on the Freshwater Fish Marketing co-op to buy our fish and market our fish for our fishers over these years.

We currently have 120 active fishers from Matheson Island, Pine Dock, Princess Harbour, Bloodvein, Fisher River, that rely on our co-op.

We, as a co-op produced, 469,060 kg of pickerel, 61,383 kg of sauger, 91,973 kg of whitefish in the year 2016; 2017, to date, we have produced 437,557 kg pickerel and 21,290 kg of sauger, 110–766 thousand whitefish, not to mention all the countless bycatch that is sold to Freshwater.

Our forefathers have told us about the rough times they had when the fish companies were in business. On Matheson Island alone, I believe, there was probably half a dozen companies at one time. They never knew what they would be getting for their catch when they came in off the lake. They

never knew if they were going to be able to sell their catch when they came of the lake. Simply put, they were owned by the fish companies.

Adding to my material, I remember my grandfathers and forefathers speaking that they would be promised 50 cents a lb, let's just use that as an example, in the morning. Well, if you weren't the first three or four boats to come and fill their freezer, by the end of the day—you might have been the top producer of the day, now you get two cents—he has nowhere to sell it, nowhere to put it. Whereas the single-desk Freshwater—the marketing corporation—all the fish is—all legally fish caught is bought by Freshwater.

With the FFMC the fishers know what they are getting for their—each species that they are bringing in to sell. They can purchase their nets and they are needing to try to get the most profitable catch for their quota. They know the payments are made for CDF and employment insurance. They know they can rely on them to market our catch and get the best price to us. We, as fishers, in turn, see this from returns we receive on our final payments when they are able to get a better price for our fish and have passed that along to fishers. If they profit, we profit.

If Freshwater is shut down, then where do we go? We have nothing. We're a three-hour drive from Winnipeg. In order us—for us to sell our fish, we need to have someone to sell it to. As of this date, we have not had any other possible buyers to buy our fish.

This is our livelihood. This is what clothes and feeds the houses of our community and surrounding communities. This is the only employment they know. Fishing has been passed down from generation to generation in these communities.

As we all know how well opting out of Freshwater Fish worked for Saskatchewan, they are still selling their fish harvest to FFMC. What makes you think that Manitoba's going to be any different? A good portion of the fishers are already signing contracts with FFMC as there is no other option currently available.

So, in closing, we want the government to think long and hard on how many lives they are going to destroy with opting out of the fresh fish water—fresh fish act. We believe the government needs to work harder on helping FFMC become more accountable, rather than throwing the act out.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you, sir, for coming in, making the trip to bring your views here. A very strong presentation.

First question for you: Was your community consulted directly by the government before they made the announcement they wanted to pull out of FFMC?

Mr. Whiteway: No. We—not as far as I know. Other than the meeting with DFO last summer but, of course, that was way beyond the fact that this bill had been introduced.

* (19:10)

Mr. Altemeyer: And what was the reaction from your membership when they learned that not only was a third party, the Fisheries envoys, going to be asked to go and talk to fishers rather than direct consultation with the government, but what was the reaction of your members when they learned the government had already told the envoys doing that work they weren't going to listen to whatever they wrote in their report because they'd already made their decision?

That story emerged publicly in the media and was a big shock to me, but I'd be interested to know what you as a fisher and your community—how that made you feel to know that that was the government's concept of consultation with fishers.

Mr. Whiteway: You're talking with—the meeting with DFO?

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes. There's been a couple of different fisheries envoys that have been traveling in the province, one of them federal, one of them provincial. Did the provincial fisheries envoy come to your community, talk to your co-op?

Mr. Whiteway: No, and like I say, the federal did come through but, basically, many moons after the provincial government had decided to impose this.

Mr. Gerrard: What I'd like you to tell us a little bit about is the Saskatchewan experience, that people ended up using the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and whether you think that that's likely to happen this time around for Manitoba, even with the market open.

Mr. Whiteway: Well, I mean, I think the writing is on the wall as far as that goes. I mean I'm speaking on behalf—the research that I have about Saskatchewan, isn't—I don't have a whole lot of facts other than the common knowledge that that's going on is that even like after opting out and deciding they were going to have their own plants and they were going to move their own fish, and all of a sudden there's all the logistics involved in getting this fish, for one thing, from the northern communities just to a plant, let alone all over the world where these phantom buyers are apparently going to buy, which—I believe now a lot of these fishermen are—almost 100 per cent of them are selling back to FFMC with no benefits of the EI and no benefits of the logistics that they had in the past. So, in comparison to their province to ours, I don't know why you wouldn't think that that's—good chance that's going to happen.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, one further question, if I may. Has the provincial government been in any conversations with your co-op about their intentions around the freight assistance? Of course, fishers in the north basin would have a much tougher time getting their catch to market than fishers in the south basin, and I'm wondering, have there been any conversations that you are aware of discussing what the government intends to do, because currently the practice, of course, is to support northern fishers so they can get their catch to market and earn a living same as everyone else. So, if you have any insights or comments on that, I'd love to hear it.

Mr. Whiteway: No. There's been no consultation that I know of, of the provincial government. However, yes, there is a lot of logistics that go on between me and these other fishermen taking that fish out of the lake into your boat and getting it to where it needs to go, and a lot of times within 24 hours of when it came out of the lake. Our delivery point at Matheson, the fish gets trucked in daily, okay. So that's a six and a half hour turnaround. For instance, communities a little north of us, Berens River and what not, the fish is barged in. There's ice that needs to be provided—who's going to—what private enterprise is going to be worried about all the stuff that needs to be worried about?

There's a lot more than just buying the fish, okay. It has to get to the buyer. Like, a private enterprise is going to be worried about one thing, and it's the bottom line, and you get a bunch of them in the mix, supply and demand, who's guaranteeing anything.

Right now FFMC is obligated to give a price—and their price has fluctuated through the season, but mostly only for an increase, not a decrease. I mean you know what you're getting at the beginning of the season. What more do you want? You got to go out and catch the fish. Don't get me wrong, there has been issues with FFMC that do need to be looked upon, monthly, quarterly, whatever, and that's why I mention in the last line, government needs to work harder on helping FFMC become more accountable rather than throwing them out—

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Whiteway, the time for questions has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call upon Tom Nevakshonoff, private citizen.

Mr. Nevakshonoff [*phonetic*], do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: First of all, congratulations on that valiant effort to pronounce Nevakshonoff. Gary Doer couldn't get it right in the 10 years that I worked with him, so thank you for that.

And I'd also like to just acknowledge the members of the committee and the staff as well. Having had the opportunity to sit in this room for thousands of hours myself, I know that these are very long days, that a lot of you are looking at 18-hour days, so congratulations to all of you for the hard work that you do on behalf of the people of Manitoba, and congratulations to the new members that are here as well. I wish them well.

I'd like to begin on, I think, what is the most important component of this whole question, and that is the section 35 constitutional duty to consult and to sincerely seek to accommodate the needs of indigenous people in this land when it comes to something like this, which is fundamental to the very survival of indigenous communities across this land.

I've read that the government's response is that this does not infringe upon their constitutional rights to hunt and fish for food, but I would suggest that the commercial fishery is so fundamental to the survival of indigenous communities that, in this day and age, with the spirit of reconciliation that we're feeling across this land, that a government, when

going down this path, would have given some consideration to that and would have gone and consulted with the people first before making their decision.

In fact, in this case, the exact opposite has occurred. The announcement was made, and then a group was sent out with a preordained decision, so I anticipate that there will be, Madam Minister, a constitutional challenge to this, and that will be to the detriment of the people of Manitoba who are going to have to pay for that.

Now, when Signature Mediation went out and did their consultation, the question was put to them, given that they were the ones that orchestrated the demise of the Hog Marketing Board was something similar likely to occur in the case of the commercial fishery. And that was indeed the case, that if we go ahead with this and if we look at the whole concept of quota, individual community quotas—this is the greatest concern to me.

When I went to the meeting in Fisher River, there was a lot of talk about a quota exchange. And I put the question to Signature Mediation: What does that mean, a quota exchange? For decades, the practice has been to try and retain quota in these individual Aboriginal communities around the lake, and any attempt to sell or move that quota out of these communities has been opposed by the government. Now we're talking about a quota exchange. Madam Minister, what is that? Is that going to be like a stock exchange where quota is put up to buy and sell with no limitations whatsoever? This is of grave concern to me.

You heard Mr. Saunders; you heard Mr. Whiteway; you heard Mr. Murdock—all of them referring to how important this industry is to communities, and, if this quota is lost, these communities will suffer. People don't have a wide range of employment out in these remote areas. Fishing is fundamental. Jeopardizing this will be to the detriment of the industry.

* (19:20)

Now, one topic worthy of discussion as well is the fact that Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation owns fish on behalf of fishers right to the end point. That means that they take them; they process them; they package them professionally; they label them; they store them in very expensive freezers; and sell them out at a uniform rate over the course of the

year. And, at the end of the day, the profits from that end sale are returned to the fishers.

There's no scenario with the buyers that are going to be going out into the market and buying these fish from the fishers where that end profit is going to be returned to them. That's nonsensical. The buyers themselves, obviously, when they sell the fish—they're in the business—will be pocketing that profit themselves as is the case in a free market system. But that doesn't help the fishers. That won't benefit them when they just get the initial price at the dock, and who knows what it's going to be. We've heard speakers before me make reference to the bad old days where nobody knew what kind of price they were going to get. So, you know, I think we have to bear that in mind, the lessons of history. If we don't learn from the lessons of history, we are doomed to repeat them, and that's going to be the case with this.

My final point, I would say, is—has to do directly with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. They will be dependent on a provincial licence to continue to operate going forward. And all the various disparaging words I've heard about the corporation, I sincerely hope it's not the plan of this provincial government to, next year, maybe the year after, consider suspending the licence of the FFMC. That would be the icing on the cake. That would be the death knell of the commercial fishery as it's put together today to serve the Aboriginal people, the indigenous people of our province.

So that's the conclusion of my remarks, Madam Speaker, and—or Madam Chair, and just to conclude, my congratulations to the minister on achieving her position. I know it's a very diverse department and a lot of challenging issues. So my sincere best wishes to you going forward.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Nevakshonoff. Could you talk a bit about what you understand this quota exchange is all about?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, Mr. Selinger, that's a very good question, and that is specifically why I put that question to Signature Mediation in Fisher River when they give our presentation to us.

The individual quota entitlement system that is constituted around Lake Winnipeg is managed by the

provincial government, the objective, at least in our time in office, the objective being to retain that quota within these communities. A quota exchange, which smacks to me of a stock exchange, means that, potentially, the very opposite will occur, that there will be no restrictions on the sale of quota, that in a very short period of time it will be accumulated by large buyers. You'll end up with much like what occurred in the hog industry: a few—a low number of large producers and a lot of people that currently fish to—will be unemployed as a result.

Mr. Gerrard: It's good to see you back here in the Legislature, Tom, and welcome.

You had a fair bit of experience with the fishery and the Freshwater during your time in office, and maybe you can give us some ideas about what—there's been a struggle for many years to market many of the rough fish, or what people call—not the pickerel and whitefish and the sauger, and that has never really happened to any great success. Is there an alternative solution to what's happening now?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Just, first of all, I'd—I've left the Legislature and I hadn't really intended on coming back, but given that I'd served four terms in 17 years, representing a large number of indigenous people, had both these great lakes, Manitoba and Winnipeg, in my constituency and ultimately was the minister of the department, thanks to the faith Mr. Selinger showed in me; I appreciated that very much.

You know, the marketing of the rough fish is a challenge, to say the least, but that, I think, can be managed within the Department of Sustainable Development through regulation. The Province has domain over the resource base. If we can look at the quota system itself, which has a group of species in it, potentially, there's some hope there.

I think it's very important to note that under the Freshwater Fish Marketing Act, the corporation is obliged to buy all of these—all of the fish that's presented to it for sale. That won't be the case going forward, and if we think we have a problem with dealing with the rough fish now, if you get buyers out there that are just high-grading, just taking the fish that they want, then the problem will be a lot worse than it is today.

Mr. Altemeyer: Very briefly, as I don't imagine many of your five minutes are left, may I first say, Tom, it's great to have you back here. The building is better for you having made your presentation, and it was always a treat to work with you here. You are

tireless in your advocacy for people and causes that deserved advocacy. So thank you for your service. You did great.

You raised a really interesting point, and I wanted to give you a chance to expand on it. My first understanding of the potential threat of shutting down Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation through the licensing process actually came from this government's previous minister, a letter that she sent around to fishers advising them not to sign multi-year contracts with FFMC because their licence would only—would be coming up for renewal. It seemed like a veiled threat to me.

You've been around longer than I have in political circles. What did you think of that when you saw that information?

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Well, I think the point to take away from this is that, you know, if the government of the day—and they are in power, if they want to make such a fundamental change to something that is so critical to the survival of indigenous communities, then they should take the proper time to do that decision, that they should follow the law of the land, they should respect the Constitution and should pursue to the full extent of the law in sincerity an attempt to duly consult with Aboriginal people.

And, if it takes years to do so, then that's the way it should be done. Honouring the treaties, honouring the spirit of reconciliation instead of throwing it out there and then trying to cobble together some kind of policy—

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Nevakshonoff, the time for questioning has expired. [*interjection*]

Mr. Nevakshonoff, the time for questioning has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call upon David Mackay, southeast resource and development council.

Mr. Mackay, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. David Mackay (Southeast Resource Development Council Corp.): Boy, do I ever.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Mackay: Thank you, Madam Chair, Madam Minister, members of the Legislative Assembly, committee members, ladies and gentlemen. Good evening. Miigwech. Thank you for having me.

My name is David Mackay, I represent the Aboriginal fishers of the southeast resource and development council corp., otherwise known as the Southeast Tribal Council. Approximately, 250 fishers on the southeast side of Lake Winnipeg, the primary fishing communities of southeast are Poplar River, Berens River, Bloodvein and Hollow Water First Nations, with also some desire for black-Little Black River to also be participating in commercial fisheries.

I'd like to start with, I guess, a little bit of a factoid. How many folks here like salmon? And why do we eat salmon, besides it being a wonderfully tasty fish? A lot of us tend to like salmon because we understand that it's 'choked' full of omega-3 fatty acids, which is an antioxidant, a well-known anti-inflammatory agent and a health nutraceutical.

*(19:30)

It's interesting that a University of Manitoba study, in 2015, has actually proven that the levels of omega-3's in pickerel are two to three times higher than wild or farmed Atlantic salmon. Who knew? And we have it right on our doorstep. That's an incredible opportunity, and I use the word opportunity, because that's exactly what this is, is an opportunity. We see this as something that we are absolutely supportive of, enthusiastically supportive of.

We've consulted with all of the nations, all of the fishers, all of the leaders. Our perception of duty to consult is not that it didn't take place before, but it's going to start taking place now, and that we're going to work it out. There is much better that can be achieved, greater opportunity. I want to give you reference to these two pages, if you'd like to have a quick look at them.

This summer I had the opportunity to be in Falcon Lake, wanted to have some fish that evening for my family, so I walked into the Falcon Beach grocery and I looked at the fish, and look what I found? In that picture on the left you see on the top, that's pickerel, previously frozen Manitoba pickerel. Underneath is Atlantic salmon, fresh, not frozen.

Look at the prices on the right as you get a closer photograph. The previously frozen pickerel is \$43 a kilogram, whereas the Atlantic salmon brought all the way from the East coast is \$35 a kilogram.

What's wrong with that picture? That's—that's telling us that there's something wrong with the

distribution channels, perhaps the management systems.

Why are we paying a heck of a lot more for local Manitoba-caught pickerel when I'm actually in Manitoba, and it's previously frozen? That's absolutely absurd.

The next slide. It was not an anomaly. Falcon Beach can't be accused of gouging their customers because I went to Costco and Costco had the same issue—\$19 a kilo for Pacific cod; \$15 a kilo for Tilapia; \$29 a kilo for Manitoba pickerel.

So the issue is that somebody's doing something wrong with the distribution and the cost mechanisms.

How much do the fishers keep? They get about five to six dollars a kilo for pickerel—headless.

So look at the disparity between five and 43 and five and 29. Somebody's making money; it's not the fishers. We can do better.

There are eight nations of southeast, but as I said, four of them fish commercially. Right now they have extremely inadequate facilities and infrastructure for their fish sheds; however, even though we're faced with a lot of challenges logistically as well as in the infrastructure, we actually believe that there's an X-factor here, and that is that the federal government can actually come to the table and assist our fishers with some substantial programs that are available to all First Nations, and we intend to take advantage of those.

There are several existing components in revenue opportunities for funding, financing. They exist through the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, otherwise known as INAC. They exist through DFO—Fisheries and Oceans, and they exist through a group called SPI. I love this name, but it stands for Strategic Partnerships Initiative.

We feel that we don't want Freshwater to go away. They don't have to go away. That's a bit of a bogeyman scenario. They're not going anywhere. They're still going to be there. Wonderful; let's keep them there; we need options.

Our fishers want options. They want better prices, higher standards of living, better equipment, greater returns. Right now they may not be getting it, but we don't know what we don't know. We need to get out there, and a lot of that is incumbent on us to do that. We can't expect government to come to the rescue in every situation. We have some work to do.

I myself will be talking to no less than 10 different buyer groups over the coming months, some in Chicago, some in New York, some in other parts of Minnesota. We have incredible opportunities to sell our fish and we also have the opportunity to sell to Freshwater. But, if you want to talk about unfair trade practices, let's talk about a three- to five-year contract that Freshwater has put out there that's locking fishers in.

How is that a fair business tactic? We think that the market should be open in all senses of the word, which means that if you're a buyer, you shouldn't be disadvantaged by an incumbent in the market who is using its position right now in monopoly to lock down the market for three to five years.

If you want to get in and play the game, duke it out one-on-one, one year at a time. That's fair. Otherwise, you're stacking the deck. That's an unfair market practice. In fact, it may even be legally challengeable. But, nonetheless, the options will be there.

We intend to work with the federal government. I myself visited a beautiful community called Membertou in Sydney, Nova Scotia. That community is a wonderful example of what you can do with the appropriate investments from the federal government. There's a program called AICFI in Atlantic Canada, a program called PICFI in Pacific Canada, a program soon to be known as NICFI in northern shores of Northwest Territories. That is the wonderful opportunity I'm talking about.

The federal government in the Atlantic invested over \$60 million over seven years in the Atlantic Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative, ICFI. In the Pacific side, it's PICFI. Why not a MICFI, the Manitoba integrated commercial fisheries initiative? It's possibly going to happen.

We have talked to the federal government, to DFO; we have talked to SPI, we have talked to INAC, they all attended a strategic planning session that we had in August. They are, literally, yesterday, the Director General's Investment Committee, the DGIC, all of the director generals in Ottawa, the federal government, met to discuss the Manitoba opportunity. I don't think anyone in this room knows that. We need to understand what's happening in the federal government level. We are not helpless. We don't have to worry about Manitoba bailing us out.

The federal government opportunity for Aboriginal fishers is substantial, and instead of just

looking at the standard programs, they're prepared to look at a wide-scale program to invest in infrastructure for First Nations across Manitoba. That means substantial opportunity for everybody, not just SERDC, but for every First Nation. And the infrastructure that would be built will be substantial.

So we feel that we need to embrace this, go after it, and actually put that infrastructure and funding in place over a period of, say, three to five years, and actually build the infrastructure and go after our buyers. Our buyers are eager to purchase our fish. Not all of them will work out, we know that. We're prepared to go from one to another to another 'til we find out and test the market to know what's going to be workable. But we don't want to go back to just Freshwater.

If I were to look at Freshwater's annual report, and if you've ever run a company before and you go, I would suggest that the Manitoba government is not killing Freshwater. Freshwater—

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Mackay. Mr. Mackay, I just want to suggest that you refer to page numbers of reports you've handed out, but you may not hold up any signs.

Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Mackay: In this annual report there's a significant amount of data that one would infer that Freshwater itself has its challenges. These are wonderful people that work at Freshwater, but they have an incredibly difficult job. With 30 per cent staff turnover, other issues with profitability, they have gross profit challenges year over years, retained earnings challenges, debt challenges, there's a lot, labour is a huge issue. There's a lot of things that go on in running that company. It's very difficult to run. There's a lot of challenges right now that are not yielding the type of revenue opportunities that are possible and we can do better by going to the open market but still having Freshwater kept, made available to all of us. It's not going away. We don't want it to go away.

If you looked at the Auditor General's report recently, substantial issues with Freshwater's operations, and recently they were—

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Mackay. Your time for presentation has expired. We are going to move on to questioning at this point.

Are there questions from the committee members?

Mr. Derek Johnson (Interlake): Can you explain that annual report a little bit more, please.

* (19:40)

Mr. Mackay: This is the 2016 annual report. I made notations on it as I went through it. There was a \$2.4-million writedown as a result of bad equipment purchase for some mincing equipment for whitefish. That equipment never got used. It was completely—a big loss. They had to sell the equipment and rebuy new equipment. There's been 30 per cent staff turnover in the two years. Average return to the fishers is about 45 per cent; it used to be higher in the 50 to 55 even 60 per cent range, that's declining. Gross profits as a percentage of sales at 17.6 per cent, that's down from 21.5 per cent in 2015. So the trend is going the wrong way. Their labour and the cost of operations is going the wrong way, it's skyrocketing. Much of their revenues actually came from the US dollar exchange. That's more or less what rescued them last year.

As I contend, Freshwater, it's not the Manitoba government that's hurting Freshwater, Freshwater is hurting Freshwater. If left to its own devices, it will potentially trip on itself to the point where it will not be available, and I and the members of our communities do not want that. We are not here to bury Freshwater. We want them there as an option, but, if something isn't done, they're in trouble. They're going to go away on their own.

Mr. Gerrard: I think I'd like one more—

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Johnson, on a follow-up.

Mr. Johnson: Was there a bonus for the board like there was in previous years up to a quarter of a million dollars for the board even though the fishermen didn't receive much for a final payment?

Mr. Mackay: The final payments I've got here. I believe they were at 1.5 million—or sorry—3 million, 2015-2016 they were \$3 million. That was the final payment.

If you work it out to how many fishers there are that's roughly \$1,700 a fisher, but the fishers that receive it are for the quota fish. You know, the ones that are higher priced. I don't know anything about the board. I do know that marketing and marketing costs are substantial. I have no idea what were the bonuses for the board, however.

Mr. Gerrard: You've got in this material some ideas about branding and about eco-certification. I just give you an opportunity to talk about that.

Mr. Mackay: Fresh, cold water, live caught, indigenously harvested, family caught, fair trade, man, those are marketing incredible labels that we can take to the worldwide market and we will be embraced. However, as you pointed out, Dr. Gerrard, eco-certification will be an important step. It's not going to be easy. It's challenging. It's going to be time consuming and it's done on a lake-by-lake basis. Lake Winnipeg itself, it's going to be a tough eco-certification because it's so big with so many communities, some indigenous, some non-indigenous, harmonizing that eco-certification will be tough. But it doesn't mean we can't do it.

If we can cross that hurdle with the Province's assistance, we'll be open for business for the world. And when we can sell our two to three times higher omega-3s than salmon versus the rest of the world. We've got markets in Asia. We've got markets in the US and in Europe. We can do much better, no question we can. And every fisher in this room, when they realize that the prices can go up, they won't care who they're selling to any more. They're going to go to that best—that highest bidder, that highest buyer—then they may not survive.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. Seeing no further questions, you may return to the audience.

I will now call upon Donald Salkeld, private citizen. Donald Salkeld?

Mr. Salkeld, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Donald Salkeld (Private Citizen): I do.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Salkeld: First of all, thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. I hope I'm not the last one up here because I don't want to be accused of saving the best for last. And I'm one of those phantom buyers that's building a processing plant in Manitoba, in particular Gimli, and also a subsidiary facility in Teulon, Manitoba.

I got into the fish business a few years ago, and I think those that know me know what I've done. I was appointed president and CEO of the Freshwater marketing corporation in December of 2014. I spent the year of 2015 visiting the communities, some of the communities that have presented here this evening, and I soon learned the hardships that they were facing. And I listened to them, and I took a

great passion to trying to improve the fishing lives of these communities.

Some of the things that have been said here tonight are, perhaps, maybe misunderstood or maybe not clear enough. One of the things I want to clear up is that Freshwater uses third-party transportation to haul all of their fish to their facility at Plessis Road. They don't own any transportation; they rely on third party. Private industry will rely on third party the same way. That's not going to change. There's a fear out there of change, and the fear that has been driven out there is driven by people at Freshwater Fish going to these communities and telling these people that life is going to be hard on them after the Bill 23 passes.

Bill 23 is not to dismantle the fishing industry in Manitoba; it's to save it. It's to save this industry. All you've got to do is go to these communities and see the age of these fishers. Somebody told me the average age is 63; it's probably closer to 73. And, when I started going around to these communities, I was astonished at the age of the fishers.

Sustainability of the fish industry in Manitoba is not the fish in the lake; it's the fishers. If this train stayed on the same track for another 10 years, the fishing industry in Manitoba would be all but gone. So Bill 23 is going to give opportunity to these communities. It's going to give opportunity to private industry to come in and make improvements.

Private industry doesn't rely on government subsidies. They don't rely on the Bank of Canada bank account. They have to answer to their bankers, and they have to answer to their shareholders. And in order to do that, they have to sustain their ability to be in business. To sustain their ability to be in business, they need a supply of fish. In order to get a supply of fish, they have to take care of the fishers—not going to be mandated to—by the fishers to sell their fish to a processor; they're going to go out and earn the respect of the fishers, and they're going to earn that respect by treating these fishers with respect and dignity and pay them the market price.

What really upsets me is the letter that I just passed out. When you read that letter, it's a tantamount to a threat. That's exactly what it is. That's the highest executive at Freshwater and the board of directors threatening these fishers to sign a contract or they're going to lose their final payment—to sign a contract or they won't have a home to sell their fish—sign a contract or come to the door and get paid 25 per cent on the market price. Who in the

heck do they think they are, the Government of Canada, going to citizens and threatening them and telling them they're going to get paid 25 per cent less if they don't do business with them for 100 per cent of what they catch?

* (19:50)

This is what the problem is out there, is the fear of change. And I've heard the representations here tonight. I've heard it from Matheson Island; I've heard it from the other indigenous communities. And it's just a fear. It's a fear, and that fear has been instilled into these people by Freshwater Fish. And they will learn, these communities, that when private industry starts to develop and we find markets and better markets for their product and we start using the by-products, the return will be much better to the fishers.

In 1969, when Freshwater was invented, it was a good idea. In fact, when I started working there, I kind of thought it was a good idea, 'til I saw how hungry that monster was. That monster is—has an appetite of \$120,000 a day, seven days a week, 365 days of the year. It created that appetite because it got complacent, and when it got complacent, it didn't have accountability, and when you don't have accountability, it just goes out of control, much like a lot of Crown corporations in the country. It's not the first one that this has happened to.

Bill 23 is going to save the fishing industry. That's what it's going to do, and that monster over there, if it keeps the appetite it is, it's not going to be around. It's that simple. It just can't sustain—and I was there and I saw what was going on inside that monster. I saw that and I witnessed it and I tried to fix it, but they don't want to change it and the same people are there. In fact, I fired some people; they brought them back. Same people are there, so—I saw them on the standing committee in Ottawa, standing there saying they're going to make changes. They've—those people that were standing there at the standing committee been there 15 years. They were through the 2005 audit, they were there in the 2010 audit, and they're there at this final audit, and they have the gall to stand up in front of the standing committee in Ottawa and say they're going to make changes. Why didn't they make changes before today?

But what I'm going to do is I'm going to be one of those five processes and maybe one of 10, and I'm committed to build a processing plant in Manitoba here. I'm committed to treat these fishers with respect and I'm committed to finding a decent market and

being partners with these fishers. That's what I—that's my goal. I don't speak on behalf of the other buyers, but that's my goal. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter? Mr. Lagimodiere. No? Oh, Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: We heard here tonight that FFMC is in disarray, and it was also stated in the Auditor General report. Can you maybe explain to us here of some of the changes you tried to make at FFMC, like some of the bonuses and final payments and stuff after you got in? So maybe, just a brief explanation of before and the changes that you tried to make to make it better for fishers.

Mr. Salkeld: When I arrived at Freshwater Fish, I was quite shocked at what was going on inside that corporation, and the senior management, when I was introduced to them—I don't even want to repeat here what their attitude and culture was towards the fishers, but it was pretty bad. I tried to bring a sense of culture to that corporation that wanted to be in partnership with the fishers and some of the changes that I made there were improving the processing on the floor, the storage and the cold storage.

It's—I guess if I had a few hours I could tell you some pretty good stories, but what was going on behind my back at Freshwater Fish was the resistance to change, and I know the Auditor General or what—they say the exchange rate helped them, and it did, but the changes that I put in place that took effect in the year that I left and the year after, was going to return about \$8 million to the bottom line. That's what they're surviving on today.

But I understand that they've made the changes to go back, and this business of buying equipment—somebody just said \$2.4 million is what they're alleging, and they threw it out; it's—those are false stories. They're false, and it's a shame that they're doing that, but they're doing it at the cost of the fishers. So those changes are impossible to make, and the changes that I tried to make are all gone back to the way they were before I was there.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you for your—bringing your perspective. It adds to the diversity of what we've heard here tonight.

I want to go back to the part of your presentation where you said that the—and I don't want to be

putting words in your mouth, but what I heard you say, and correct me if I'm wrong, is that the reason for the concerns that we've heard tonight is primarily just fear of—that has been instilled in people, in indigenous people, in communities by FFMC. Now, I'm not indigenous and I'm not a fisher, but what I have heard tonight from many presenters is a little bit broader than that. I have heard that conversations haven't even happened with fishers in communities, never mind a proper duty-to-consult approach, you know, a respectful approach, of government-to-community, government-to-government dialogue. So I'm wondering if you have heard those stories as well tonight as I believe that I have.

Mr. Salkeld: Well, I don't want to speak on behalf of the government of Manitoba and what they did or did not do. I can speak of behalf of what I've done and I know some of my colleagues that—who also are looking at investing in processing plants. I have travelled to quite a few communities in Manitoba since the announcement. And I've made it clear of my intentions of what I'm going to do. The one thing that's really holding up private industry and meeting with the communities is the royal assent of Bill 23. Investors from outside of Manitoba are reluctant to make a move until royal assent of Bill 23. But I can assure you that when Bill 23 receives royal assent, things will start happening pretty quickly. But on my behalf, I've travelled extensively to communities. I haven't been to Matheson Island, haven't been to Norway House—the two representatives that were here tonight—but I've been to a lot of other communities. And I've shared my thoughts with them and where I want to go in the future, and I've listened to their hardships, so I think I've done as much as I can in the time that's been provided since the announcement.

Madam Chairperson: Our time for questioning has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation.

It has come to my attention that we have one out-of-town presenter for Bill 27. So we shall hear from Mr. Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Is there will of the committee to finish off Bill 23 presenters and then move on to Bill 27?
[Agreed]

Thank you.

I will now call on Darren Gibson, private citizen. Okay, Mr. Gibson?

Okay, Mr. Gibson's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on Paul McKie, Unifor. Mr. McKie?

Mr. Paul McKie (Unifor): It's McKie. Sure, you got Nevakshonoff right.

* (20:00)

Madam Chairperson: Do you have any written materials for the—distribution to the committee?

Mr. McKie: I do not.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. McKie: Thank you.

I present to this committee this evening on behalf of Unifor, which opposes the amendments in this bill which eliminates the single desk of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation and creates uncertainty in this natural resource industry.

Unifor feels the changes being made are for ideological reasons and not sound business reasons that support our fishers and the economy of Manitoba. Indeed, we fear that by eliminating the single desk of freshwater fish, this bill will send money out of province—or, more likely, out of the country. We also predict job loss for the workers at Freshwater Fish as well as threatening the livelihood of our fishers, the vast majority of whom are indigenous Manitobans.

Unifor is Canada's largest private sector union, with 315,000 members nationwide and 12,000 strong in Manitoba. We also have members in public sector areas, such as Freshwater Fish. We have 250 fishery workers at Freshwater Fish represented by Unifor Local 561. These are good jobs. Our scale—skilled trades workers make in excess of \$38 an hour. Workers on the line earn anywhere from \$13 to \$20 an hour. Workers spend these wages—well in excess of our provincial minimum wage of \$11.15—in the community, at Manitoba businesses. This economic activity is threatened by Bill 23.

Freshwater Fish purchases and processes fish from 1,200-plus Manitoba fishers, many of them in remote northern locations. Hundreds more fishers from Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories also send their fish through Freshwater Fish. Fish such as pickerel, sauger, perch, mullet, northern pike and carp go through this facility. Freshwater Fish generates tens of millions of dollars of economic

activity annually. I'm told that fishers in northwest Ontario will soon be sending their catch through the Winnipeg facility.

Let's address the elephant in the room. And several previous speakers have spoken about this. Freshwater Fish has been badly mismanaged by successive federal Liberal and Conservative governments, including horrible examples of cronyism and patronage appointments. This doesn't mean Freshwater Fish itself is a bad idea that should be 'disenced' with.

As citizens, when we are dissatisfied or even angry with our government, we don't throw our entire system of parliamentary democracy out the window. Instead, we toss out the individuals or the party that ran the government. So, too, with Freshwater. There—with reforms and better oversight by the federal government, we can make this a better organization for Manitoba fishers. Freshwater Fish still works to help those fishers.

The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been consulting with fishers—we've heard that earlier this evening—about the relationship with Freshwater Fish. Many of our fishers have made it absolutely clear they wish to retain the corporation, but changes must be made within it, including greater representation by indigenous people.

Let's not forget why Freshwater Fish was started in 1969. It was to serve fishers. It was to address problems that fishers had. The single-desk approach in Canadian agriculture is not uncommon, and it stays around because it works. Those who are against the single desk are invariably connected in some way to multinational agribusinesses, because it is they who gain by opening up the market, not the fishers.

We don't deny there's a vocal minority of producers who want an end to the single desk. Unifor respects that view, but sees there is a greater advantage to the majority of fishers by maintaining Freshwater Fish as a single desk. Our First Nations support Freshwater Fish. Some have stated as much as 95 per cent of fishers want to remain with the status quote.

I note that the Manitoba government decision to pull out of Freshwater Fish was not done in any consultation with the federal government. It was simply announced on the election campaign of 2016. There are also no fancy websites where Manitoba fishers could give their view on the future of the fishery and vote via a web poll. So why this bill? The

reason can be found in the language this government uses in describing it—the bill. When the honourable minister introduced Bill 23, she used the words marketing freedom for Manitoba fishers is here. I suppose those words could mean the freedom to process your fish and sell where you like—if you have the money and are big enough and if there are alternative processors. But it also could mean the freedom to be taken advantage of by multinational agribusiness, the freedom to figure out how to get your fish from the North to the processor, the freedom to be a small player and yet try to negotiate with international companies.

To date, we have seen no sign of any real processors on the horizon—certainly, none of any size. This has been true in Saskatchewan, which pulled out in 2012, and as we've heard earlier, still processed the majority of their fish through FFMC.

One of the huge advantages that Freshwater Fish gives is the 49 delivery points across the province where fish are purchased and graded there. This is a tremendous advantage to our northern fishers.

Invariably, when governments privatize, it doesn't turn out quite like planned. Mr. Rebeck has already made mention of the Canadian Wheat Board and what's happened with that. Many studies exist on the privatization of government-run liquor stores, for example, in other jurisdictions. What begins as a free market quickly turns into oligopoly, often owned by out-of-province or foreign investors or companies.

In Alberta, privatization occurred in liquor stores more than two decades ago. More than one third of those stores now are controlled by large chains. One smaller operator recently said the big fish are eating up the little fish. So, whether it's a fish-eat-fish world or a dog-eat-dog world, Unifor is concerned that whatever slim advantages there may be to a minority of producers, the advantages of keeping Freshwater Fish as a single-desk marketer for the majority of Manitoba fishers and workers is greater.

Bill 23 is not a plan for the future. We respectfully ask that the government withdraw this legislation and support our fishers and our fisheries' workers. We also ask that you consult with all the stakeholders, not simply the ones that have the government's ear. It's time for a plan for all of our fishers and our fisheries.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. McKie, for taking the time to bring your view, and I want to commend you for the very good analysis that you've provided all members of the committee, and commend you further because you didn't just talk about the specific issue before the committee tonight; you put it in a really important context of what has happened in the past when public assets, the public goods, such as a Crown corporation, are privatized, and some of the negative impacts, the history, that we could all learn from.

As a representative of Unifor, I'd be particularly interested, as I alluded earlier in my questions to Mr. Rebeck, if you could share with the committee any information or feedback you may have from the workers at the plant in Transcona here in our community. How are they holding up? Has anyone from the government contacted them with any information about what this legislation is actually going to mean for their families, their paycheques and their jobs in the community?

Mr. McKie: There has been no consultation with the workers, with the local. In fact, our national rep who has—is assigned to that unit has had to keep the workers up to date on what is going on. There is a great deal of uncertainty in the plant. These jobs range from year-round, full-time jobs to full-time, seasonal jobs of five to six months, and then the most vulnerable workers are the part-time, seasonal workers that tend to work on weekends. The more vulnerable workers are obviously concerned that they will have no work at all.

We—because there has been no consultation, because there is no overall plan, we don't know what the impact of it is. We've heard as much as—as many as half the workers could be in jeopardy of losing their jobs. And as I mentioned, these are good-paying jobs, people who live in the community and spend their money in the community.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, maybe you could share with us—I'm presuming that the people who are in leadership positions at the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation are communicating to the people who work there and telling them about what's—what their plans are and what their expectations are.

Mr. McKie: I spoke with some of the union leaders at the plant just a few days ago, and they are aware of some things. There are some discussions going on.

They're aware that contracts are being—so, in anticipation, this is—it's not a surprise that this bill came forward. The government promised it, as I said, on the election trail. They mentioned it very early on in their mandate. So Freshwater Fish has been preparing it by going out and selling contracts.

*(20:10)

The workers inside are aware of some of that, but I could tell you, the majority of the workers on the shop floor, it's just a feeling of uncertainty as to what's going to happen if this bill goes forward.

Mr. Altemeyer: Just to follow up on your previous answer so that the committee has a full understanding of the potential threat this legislation poses to workers right now, you gave a very nice breakdown of the different schedules of workers. If half of the jobs—or, up to half could be eliminated by this move, roughly, you know, how many people are we talking about? How many workers altogether would be potentially laid off, lose their jobs as a result of this government's decision?

Mr. McKie: Initial numbers we've heard it could be as many as 100.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. McKie. On the issue in the legislation of only ensuring that FFMC has a licence for one year to operate after the bill presumably passes, would you think it would be better to ensure a competitive environment if a licence was assured for FFMC?

Mr. McKie: Absolutely. I keep hearing from those in favour of this bill that FFMC will be allowed to compete freely with any privates that come in. Well, how can you compete freely when you don't know—how can you make any plans to move forward when you don't know if you're actually going to have a licence to operate?

I think the least this government could do is to just publicly say that the FFMC will be granted a licence into the future so that the organization itself can make plans and that the workers themselves have a little more certainty.

Madam Chairperson: The time for questioning has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call on Marianne Hladun, Public Service Alliance of Canada.

Ms. Hladun, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Marianne Hladun (Public Service Alliance of Canada): Yes, I do.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Hladun: Thank you, and thank you for the opportunity to present. My full presentation is in the paper but, having listened to the speakers, I'm going off script, which is, you know, everyone's nightmare, but I'm going off script a little bit.

So my name is Marianne Hladun and I'm here on behalf of Public Service Alliance of Canada members living and working in Manitoba. We have about 8,000 members in Manitoba and we have a small number that work at Freshwater Fish Marketing Corp. as the engineers that keep the processing plant operating.

So we're extremely concerned about the government's decision to introduce Bill 23 and the decision to withdraw from the participation agreement under Freshwater Fish Marketing Act.

We believe that Freshwater should remain a monopoly single desk for the economic security and stability of Manitoba fishers.

I won't go through all of the background as to what they—you know, the production, how long they've been there; you've heard that.

The previous speaker talked about market freedom, and this has—this is an ideological approach that talks about small operators are going to be cut out and wages will be depressed.

So let's look at the Wheat Board, and this is where I'm going off script, because as I'm listening to this, I'm seeing a consistent approach to the Wheat Board and I'm listening to my dad. My grandfather fought for the Canadian Wheat Board. When he started farming, when he immigrated to this country, he operated a grain farm with no Canadian Wheat Board. He fought for it. He worked for it. My dad benefited from it. My brother benefited from it.

When the Wheat Board was dismantled, all of the promises that were made that there would be no difference, the only ones that have profited from that are the multinational corporations. The small family farms are gone. They cannot survive on a farming income.

I grew up on six quarters of land. That supported our entire family. That's not possible anymore. So I don't—I didn't grow up in a fishing community, but

the comparisons—this is why I'm, like, compelled to tell you this as I'm sitting in the back listening to this.

When I listen to the fishers from the North, from the indigenous community saying this has to stay, we need this, we don't have the capacity for marketing. Who's going to profit from this? And this is an extreme concern to us.

Back to the Wheat Board. Some of you may have seen me out there talking about the Port of Churchill. We represent the workers at the Port of Churchill. They relied on the Wheat Board for the community. Generations of residents in Churchill worked at that port. When the Wheat Board was dismantled by the Conservative government, when the subsidies stopped and the multinational American corporation that we all know of right now decided that they weren't going to support it anymore, who's suffering? They're sitting there, yes, their profit margin is down. The community is suffering. I am seeing the same thing happening to our indigenous communities. I am listening to the fishers that were here saying this is what it means for generations of fishers, past and future.

And this is what concerns me, when this ideology that we cannot have a monopoly, that it's not good for anyone. Well, that's not true. That's absolutely not true. It's—a monopoly works the small fishers. It works for small farmers. It works in all the other agriculture sectors. It works. But the large corporations don't get the profit margins that they want—not what they need, what they want. And so—see, this is what happens when you go off-script.

You know, we don't know what's going to happen, so we're looking ahead and saying, okay, well, everything will be fine. We'll pass the bill. And then we'll start talking to fishers? And then we'll start consultation with First Nations? That's—I'm sorry, but that's a red flag. How can you introduce legislation, how can you introduce something as fundamental as eliminating a single-desk marketing system and say, well, we'll talk to you after and figure out how to make it work? If that's not the cart before the horse, I'm not sure what is.

We don't know what's going to happen with NAFTA. We don't know what's going to happen with the Trump administration. We don't know what's going to happen with Brexit. We don't know what's going to happen with trade agreements across the world. And so, for us to say now, oh, well, all of those markets are going to be open and it's going to

be a good thing for our fishers—well, forgive me, but I don't quite believe that.

At the end of the day, yes, FMSC–FMMC will remain open. They said that about the Wheat Board. Tell that to a farmer that can't get their grain or has to pay extra to ship their grain to Vancouver because Churchill is being held hostage by an American corporation—which the federal and provincial government are doing nothing about, by the way. So forgive me if I have no trust at this point.

If there's problems within the corporation, then somebody better darn well deal with it. If there's patronage, if there's issues that are being identified in the Auditor General's report, then someone needs to deal with that. You do not throw out a corporation, you do not privatize, you do not get rid of this whole thing because someone is not running it properly. There's got to be accountability. As politicians—as you are politicians, as I'm a politician in my union—if we're not accountable, well, we don't get re-elected. So someone needs to deal with the fact within the corporation that if that is happening, someone needs to do something, because they're not accountable to fishers. They forgot who they're representing, and it's time that somebody reminded them of that.

So, at the end of the day—I could go on and you can read the rest of my presentation for the other official words I'm supposed to say, but you know, I'm here tonight primarily, of course, representing PSAC members that work there. That's my job. I represent those members. That's their employment. They contribute to this community. This affects their families. And they provide a valuable service to the corporation in the processing plant.

* (20:20)

I am so concerned when I hear the other presenters tonight. That—while I was sure when I walked in here that it was not a good idea, I am now absolutely committed that it is not a good idea. When I hear that indigenous communities have not been consulted, when fishers have not been consulted, that concerns me. And I urge the government to abandon Bill 23 or, at the very least, put this on hold and do some true consultation. Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you very much for your impassioned and impromptu presentation. It's a smart move, actually. You can have a written submission, which is part of the official record, and then benefit as well from your wisdom here tonight.

How many employees of your local are at the plant here in Winnipeg?

Ms. Hladun: We have currently—we have six members. To me, whether it's six or 600, we still represent them.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation and your concerns over the situation.

Let me ask the same question that I asked earlier on. Have your members told you that—whether the leadership—union leadership, but the leadership of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation have communicated effectively what their plan is for the plant with this legislation?

Ms. Hladun: There has been minimal discussion. We are currently entering to bargaining. Our collective agreement is up. We've served notice to bargain. That, of course, lends some complications to the process, but it's just the absolute uncertainty until this—we know how this plays out. You know, I suspect, as with any situation, any workplace in this situation, you start to eye other opportunities because if you're not sure you're going to be there, you take those opportunities when they come forward. But consultation with the corporation has been minimal at best.

Mr. Selinger: Do you have recommendations on how the FFMC can improve its delivery of service and its governance model. Do you have any, given your experience?

Ms. Hladun: Well, as a federal government employee of 30 years, I will tell you this, if Canadian Food Inspection—they turned down the fish inspector job, just saying.

If you really want to know how a corporation needs to work and how a department needs to work, you need to talk to the people on the floor. You need to go down as many levels as you can and ask people what's working. You need to do true consultation in a format where people are free to be able to give their criticism, give suggestions and, ultimately, at the end of the day, if that means removing the top level of management and putting someone in who has a mandate, then that's what needs to happen because until that happens nothing will change.

Mr. Altemeyer: Really appreciate it as well the comparison you brought to the table tonight with your own family's history, no less, of the Canadian Wheat Board. I think that's—and you also mentioned that, you know, you've been impacted, as I have, by the presentations that we've heard here tonight.

Now, I believe, unless there's someone else from the audience who leaps up to also present, you might be our last presenter, so I'll give you a chance to give us a final word based on what you've heard tonight, the content which says, hey, there's a problem at FFMC, the presentations from indigenous leaders and communities and their supporters, that they were not consulted, that they have not been treated appropriately in this process, the concerns from labour. I'd invite you put yourself in the minister's shoes. You've heard this—you've heard these arguments. What do you think the best decision would be for Manitoba here tonight, for the government to make on this topic?

Ms. Hladun: Why, thank you. You know, at the end of the day, I think the message that the thing that needs to resonate is that there's real people behind these decisions. Every time a government makes a decision, every time you introduce something, and I don't know what the impetus was to make it a campaign promise, to bring it forward in the grand scheme of everything that is critical to our province and to the residents of Manitoba, how this made it up to the priority list, but I think you have to honour the voices that you've heard here tonight, and I would urge—I will say I, you know, it would have been—it's disappointing to see that there isn't questions from the government side.

So I hope you've have been listening and not just hearing, but there's a real opportunity here, not to say that it can't be done better, there needs to be consultation and it needs to be done in a way where everyone's voice is heard, and not putting it forward because—for whatever reason, I'm not going make a presumption on why that happened—but there's real people impacted here. We have northern communities that will be impacted. We have indigenous communities that will be impacted. This will affect generations to come.

And so I would ask you to please postpone this, if you must, if you won't take it off the table, but you need to listen to the voices you have and you need to expand and hear more of those.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questions has expired.

I will now call on Darrell Rankin, who has registered for this bill, Communist Party of Canada–Manitoba.

Mr. Rankin, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Darrell Rankin (Communist Party of Canada–Manitoba): No, I don't. It's verbal.

Madam Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Rankin: The Communist Party—well, we're a working-class party dedicated to establishing socialism in Canada. If you're familiar with the people's history of this country, you other political parties here have borrowed many planks in our platform, including medicare, unemployment insurance, anti-fascism, the legal recognition of trade unions and so on. You still haven't borrowed our socialist plank, but we're not going to wait for that.

Now, we are opposed to this bill as a hardship on workers. We're opposed to ending the single-desk marketing of the fisheries in Manitoba. If passed, this bill will be an enormous blow to better paying jobs in northern Manitoba and to self-employed fishers. This is a reactionary and anti-democratic law. This is a bad law. There is no democracy, no vote, no referendum, and this is in, of course, in sharp contrast to the Wheat Board, where there was a referendum, and so on.

Anyhow, if you want to improve the operations of any kind of organization like the Freshwater marketing board, well, let's give power to the fishers and have them vote and elect the board.

In the pages of the Grassroots News, I've read numerous articles that many indigenous communities will be especially hard hit. To me this is a racist bill. It will add to the oppression of indigenous nations in Manitoba. We oppose the bill, not just because of the racism and national oppression, but because of firm grounds on—of political economy, the laws of which affect all nations.

I'm not going to argue the technical or legal aspects of this bill, but the key reason this is a bad law is that only a handful of large fishing interests will benefit. The vast majority of people in the industry will be impoverished and unemployed. Co-ops will experience centrifugal forces. It will push them apart. Quotas will shift to the bigger companies as smaller fishers fail. This is a reactionary law.

Now, what will happen, we'll see a rapid centralization and concentration of investment in vessels and processing plants, of course. There'll be a 'rast' of—rapid loss of jobs. There'll be an adjustment of quotas accordingly. We know that the technology of fishing globally has vastly changed in the last 30 or 40 years, there's—that's why we have overfishing.

* (20:30)

How important is this? You know, within the last few days, there's been a report about how many jobs in northern Manitoba are in jeopardy. About 6,000 jobs in 2006 were in the primary processing industries such as mining, oil and gas extraction, forestry and fisheries, about 1,600 in fisheries, about 4,600 in mining and oil and gas, and 800 in fish—in forestry. This is an enormous portion of your jobs the—in primary industry in northern Manitoba, and about one-third of these are largely self-employed fishers.

You know, socialists are often accused of wanting to eliminate businesses. This bill will do that without any help from our party whatsoever.

The system actually works like this, with its laws of development of concentration and centralization of capital. The big get bigger; the small get eaten up.

Really, what matters is the ability of trade unions and working people of all backgrounds, self-employed or not, to work together and establish a better society.

Pro tree—free trade, free enterprise governments like this one are very good at establishing, or actually declaring various rights, but establishing them is a far different matter, and that includes the right to a job.

For these reasons, I believe this government should be a one-term government. Certainly, it has a choice to withdraw the bill or to be defeated.

Working people, to my opinion, are less and less ready to be robbed peacefully as they have been in recent years. The protests are certain to grow. Yesterday, it was the security guards, today was bus drivers, tomorrow it will be the students. I even saw a protest of fishers—I can't remember how many years ago—four or five years ago, a good number of them, protesting for their jobs.

Our party stands for the unity of working people, whether they are wage earners or farmers or fishers of all nations. Working people of all countries unite—

that's a slogan from 1848. One day working people will be united and governments such as this will be history.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Altemeyer: Thanks very much for taking the time to come down and register. It turns out the previous speaker doesn't have the last word. But one of the themes, I would say, of tonight has been this government's rather heavy-handed approach to trying to implement its will with this bill without talking to workers and the indigenous communities involved.

I wondered if you had anything further to add to that theme that we've heard tonight already.

Mr. Rankin: I believe it's consistent with past practices towards working people in this country, towards oppressed nations in this country. There's a history of violence against working people, against oppressed nations in this country. There's a history of a lack of democracy for working people and oppressed nations in this country.

If oppressed nations and working people work together, they will create a better society. And this is a very heavy-handed, reactionary government as far as I'm concerned, not just as regards fisheries, but tuition fees, wage freezes, cuts to health care and so on. It's a very reactionary government.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

Bill 27—The Elections Amendment Act

Madam Chairperson: We will now move on to presenters for Bill 27. We will begin with out-of-town presenters, and we have one registered: Mr. Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Mr. Rebeck, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Kevin Rebeck (Manitoba Federation of Labour): I do.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Rebeck: The Manitoba Federation of Labour is Manitoba's central labour body representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers,

and we oppose this government's plan to make our democracy less accessible by making it harder for a number of marginalized Manitobans to vote in provincial elections.

In effect, this bill will make it harder to vote for Manitoba citizens who do not appear on the voters lists and who already face a number of barriers to obtaining government-issued identification. A fair and equitable voting process is a hallmark of viable democracies. Unfortunately—[interjection]

Madam Chairperson: Order. Order.

Excuse me, I'm just going to ask those who are going to have a conversation to please leave the room so that we can facilitate the presenter and the members can hear him properly. Thank you very much.

Please continue, Mr. Rebeck.

Mr. Rebeck: Thank you.

Unfortunately, all this bill would do is make democracy harder to access for some of the most vulnerable in our province. Currently in Manitoba, voters can confirm their identity by showing either one piece of photo ID or two pieces without photos, like a Manitoba Health card, status Indian card, or mail addressed to their current address, and if neither piece of ID has a home address, they can then sign a declaration as to where they live. This bill would continue a number of these practices, but only if an individual appears on the voters list. It is woefully silent on how people who are left off the voters list will be able to vote if they're unable to produce the required identification. For instance, while this bill would continue to allow for individuals without the necessary documentation to be vouched for by another resident of the same electoral division who has the required identification, that's only if they appear on the voters list to begin with. We know that a variety of factors, like lack of stable housing and transient living situations, would potentially leave people off a voters list.

Access to ID is a substantial problem for many Manitobans, and it's overwhelmingly impacts people who live in property, the working poor, the elderly, those living with disabilities and those without a fixed address, including young people, students and those experiencing homelessness. An inability to afford the associated costs and transient living situations are two main factors that impact the ability to obtain ID for many, and as we're all too aware in this province, because of the experiences of the

'60s scoop, many indigenous people face challenges in obtaining birth certificates, which makes it harder to get ID. Movement between First Nation reserves and other communities can also make it harder to access ID with a current fixed address.

All Manitobans have the right to vote. Making it harder for some to vote is undemocratic, plain and simple. A recent report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba details how lack of ID represents a critical barrier, preventing low-income Manitobans from accessing government services they're entitled to, further marginalizing low-income Manitobans and deepening poverty. There's a need for this government to work on developing solutions to get appropriate ID into hands of the Manitobans who face barriers to obtaining it. This government decided to scrap plans for an all-in-one MPI personal ID card, which would have helped to address some of these barriers by providing government-issued photo ID and a health card in one card. So, at the same time as it's making harder for those who face barriers to obtaining proper ID to vote, this government's also cancelled a tangible solution to help address some of these challenges.

Underlying documents required to obtain ID, like a birth certificate, cost money. That represents a significant expense for low-income Manitobans. Evidence from the United States demonstrates that these types of voter suppression laws reduce voter turnout. A 2014 Government Accountability Office study found that strict photo ID laws reduce turnout by 2 to 3 percentage points.

Bill 27 is a solution in search of a problem. The Chief Electoral Officer of Manitoba has stated that voter fraud is not a concern in our province, clearly demonstrating the current system works well to protect the legitimacy of Manitoban elections. It represents another step towards making democracy less accessible to marginalized Manitobans.

This bill follows on the heels of The Election Financing Amendment Act, which enables the wealthy to have more influence on our democracy by raising donation limits on contributions to political parties by 66 per cent, from three to five thousand dollars. The limit will rise by the rate of inflation each year. At a time when other provinces like British Columbia are taking big money out of politics, this government's the only one making it easier for those with wealth to have a greater influence on our democracy. I think it's safe to say that most Manitobans don't have \$5,000 laying

around under the mattress to donate to political parties. Raising the limit only serves wealthy donors who can now give even more to political parties and receive even greater tax benefits as a result.

* (20:40)

We urge this government to rethink this bill, consult widely with—to ensure Manitobans who already face a number of socio-economic barriers are not disenfranchised simply because they don't have the required ID. We also recommend that this government revisit the plan to develop an all-in-one MPI personal ID card to provide Manitobans with greater convenience and access to photo ID and to help break down barriers for low-income and marginalized Manitobans.

Everyone deserves to play a part in our democratic process, and one of the most fundamental ways to do this is by voting. We know that young, low-income and indigenous Manitobans are more likely to face challenges in obtaining ID. Making it harder for them to exercise their right to vote by putting further restrictions on them will only serve to make it even more difficult for them to participate in our democracy.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I just want to thank you, Mr. Rebeck, for being here tonight and for presenting to this bill, as well as the other bill as well. I know you're passionate about these issues, and I want to thank you for sharing your views tonight.

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): Miigwech, Mr. Rebeck, for coming and spending all evening with us. I really do appreciate your intervention into what are particularly egregious bills that are kind of before the House right now.

So, you know, it's interesting that you note in your presentation that the Chief Electoral Officer says that voter fraud isn't an issue. So how do you make sense of when we hear the Minister of Justice say that we've got a voter fraud problem in Manitoba when we've got two different opinions? Like, how do you make sense of that in respect of, in particular, this bill?

Mr. Rebeck: Yes, it doesn't make sense to me. It's clear this bill will have some consequences. I don't know if they're the intended consequences government is thinking that they're solving, but we've heard from the electoral officer there isn't a problem here that needs solving. In fact, the problem that needs solving is finding a way to create greater access and means for people to vote and to make our democratic process more inclusive, not less, which is the impact of this bill.

Ms. Fontaine: So, in respect of—and I have to agree with you, that I think that one of the responsibilities that we have, certainly in—as legislatures, but certainly also just as Manitobans and Canadians, is to actually ensure a more robust process for people to be able to participate in democracy, right. And so what would be some of your suggestions in that regard, save for whatever this bill is attempting to do?

Mr. Rebeck: Yes, we do need to find ways to make it even more accessible. I think one of those ways is to create that all-in-one ID card that allows people to have another means to. We need to find ways to invest further to grow that voters list and to grow access at the polls on voting day, too, and find ways to engage more people to participate in our process.

It's a sad statement that the voter turnout is what it is already, and we can't have bills like this that reduce it even further. We need to actually do the opposite and find ways to engage more people and encourage and support their participation in our democratic process.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): We're moving to a permanent voters list as part of this context, and it has been claimed that a permanent voters list will increase the participation rate of people in elections.

You, however, make the point that we're in a very strange situation here where all of your rights to register to vote hinge on you being on a voters list in the first place. Do you think a targeted enumeration team would help solve that problem by going to hard-to-reach communities where people don't have access to easy, affordable ID could be enumerated following the procedures that you've identified in your brief of showing ID, vouching, et cetera? Do you think that would be a helpful tool, to build a permanent voters list which is truly inclusive of all people who reside in Manitoba?

Mr. Rebeck: Making those sort of targeted approaches would certainly help the process but they

shouldn't be the only way. People should still find a way that they can get on that voters list if they've been missed, and there will be people that are missed. Our experience has shown that. Studies in other countries have shown that, that people get missed still the same. But investing and making sure that those hard-to-reach communities are canvassed and canvassed more than once, because there's a lot of transience and change that happens there, is a critical step that could help make this work. But it shouldn't be the only way by which people get on the voters list.

Mr. Selinger: Yes, if there's no other—if anybody else has a first question—

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I defer.

Mr. Selinger: Right now my understanding is, is we may lose all door-to-door enumeration in favour of only the permanent voters list. You said that should be—an enumeration, a targeted enumeration will help. Do you have other suggestions, other than the one you put in here, which is the permanent ID card, that might help more people get signed up and be on a permanent voters list?

Mr. Rebeck: I think there needs to be regular enumeration opportunities for people to register. There needs to be other access points that people can find their way onto that list. There needs to be communications to let people know how they find the paths to do that. A permanent voters list is not going to cut it. There needs to be means to get on that list and there needs to be means for people who are missed to still find a way to be included and that they don't then miss their opportunity to participate in our democratic process.

Madam Chairperson: The time for questioning has expired, so we are going to move on to our next presenter. Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call upon Mr. James Beddome, Green Party of Manitoba. Mr. Beddome? Okay, Mr. Beddome will move to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on Mr. Darrell Rankin, Communist Party of Canada—Manitoba. Okay, Mr. Rankin will be moved to the bottom of the list.

I will now move on to Mr. Malcolm Bird, private citizen.

Mr. Bird, do you have any written materials to distribute to the committee?

Mr. Malcolm Bird (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Bird: Hi, committee. Thank you very much for agreeing to hear from me. My name's Malcolm Bird, I'm an associate professor in the department of political science at the University of Winnipeg, and, while I teach political science, I'm not an expert on electoral systems. I'm—my fascination is with Crown corporations and their relationships to the government, and the last set of presentations were very interesting.

I've had a chance to look at Bill 27, here, and I actually think its proposed changes are actually quite reasonable and I think it will actually facilitate efforts by groups to outreach marginal groups, particularly younger voters and indigenous voters, two groups which are historically—do not participate in elections as much as they should. I think this is—really kind of is a bit of a common sense approach in my view.

My sort of three key points: I think making a permanent voters list is a very good idea. I see it as sort of a kind of a pseudo-public-good that will help, like I said, help provide groups who are seeking to—groups that are seeking to target people who have traditionally not voted. I also—it seems to me that a permanent voters list takes advantage of sort of certain synergies amongst different organizations that are performing the same tasks, and my reading of the bill also sort of shows that it—this bill further empowers the Chief Electoral Officer and gives her adequate means to reach out to marginal groups in order to get them registered to vote.

So the—I think the most important part of this bill is the creation of a permanent voters list. I think I can see why there's some sentiment attached to door-to-door enumeration, but I'm not sure that that's really a very effective and efficient way to increase the participation and the people on the voters list. Data shows that not that many people are added to the list. Creating a permanent voters list will ensure that majority of voters will be added when they—by virtue of having a driver's licence or a provincial health card, and it also takes advantage of the fact that there's a number of other agencies that are—that already are making lists, and this is obviously at the federal and the provincial level. So there's already some real synergies, and I think we can sort of reduce some duplications here and hopefully put

those resources to better use, targeting specific groups. That would be my view here.

* (20:50)

So, yes, I'm not sure that door-to-door enumeration of every voter is really, like I said, an effective use of resources. A lot of people, including myself, you know, reside at their residences for long periods of time, and I'm not sure that going and asking them every electoral cycle to be on the voters list is a good idea. I think you can kind of think of a permanent voters list as a bit of a pseudo-public good in that—like, sort of parks and streetlights, things that sort of have a collective value but are unable to be provided by markets. And so it's a really good thing for a government to provide.

It's my understanding that this permanent voters list will be available to political parties and to candidates and will be a really effective tool for them to better target voters who aren't on the list. Political parties are perhaps probably the best vehicle for targeting marginal voters. If we look at the very impressive results that they had in Winnipeg Centre in the last federal election really increasing voter participation was—it was very impressive, and I know that permanent lists would be an excellent resource for political parties and candidates, as I'm sure you guys would know.

But it really seems to me that the key figure in this bill is—and the key person and organization is the Chief Electoral Officer and her efforts to target marginal communities, and when you read the bill she's actually quite—she's given substantial powers, quite an extensive capacities in section 66, to, you know, to conduct home visits, distribute information, a whole host of communications—means with targeted groups, and I think she's really the important and her institution there. They're really important.

And I've actually had an opportunity to meet Shipra Verma. I had lunch with her at an event 18 months ago, and she is a very, very competent woman. She is a—very well-educated, she's very sharp, she's very professional, and I have a lot of confidence in her and her organization to be able to target, like I said, marginal communities. So that gives me a lot of hope.

I guess with a bit outside of the scope of this bill and a bit outside of the scope of this committee, but I think the real question is ensuring that the government provides the Chief Electoral Officer with adequate resources to be able to conduct real

efforts to get young people and marginal groups on the list.

So I think that's the real question. Is the government going to provide the Chief Electoral Officer with enough resources to, whether it's, you know, advertising campaigns or people out knocking on doors, et cetera, et cetera? That's the real crux, in my view of this.

In terms of voter ID, you know, I—it seems to me that the requirements to vote are consistent with other jurisdictions, as well as the federal government. The same people that were ineligible to vote under the old legislation are also the same people who would be ineligible to vote under this piece of legislation, that is people who have no ID and are not on the voters list. The real change here is that Elections Manitoba require ID or someone to vouch for people who are on the voters list.

I personally think that that's a reasonable thing to request from voters, is that they provide identification, they'd be on the voters list, and—but I—like I said, the real important part here, in my view, is ensuring that the Chief Electoral Officer does—has the resources to go out and target those voters.

Voter turnout is a huge issue, democratic deficit. This is a major problem, and I actually think that these—this bill will actually help address that problem. But that, you know, really getting at the root of the democratic deficit will require, you know, more things that, like I said, are outside of the scope of this committee and this bill. Thank you

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mrs. Stefanson: I want to thank you, Mr. Bird, for being here tonight. I think you brought forward some very interesting and valid views, and I want to take—thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to be here this evening. *[interjection]*

Madam Chairperson: Mr. Bird, if you would repeat that.

Mr. Bird: Sorry. My pleasure, thank you.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech, Mr. Bird, for being here tonight.

So I'm curious. You seem to be saying in your presentation that you don't really feel that there's much of a conflict in respect of really the most

marginalized of the marginalized of Manitoba getting on that permanent voters list. I'm curious where you get that. Like, where does that come from in respect of your research background?

And, you know, you also noted that you feel the bill will actually help facilitate indigenous voters. So, as a First Nations woman, I'm curious about that. And how do you kind of navigate that opinion with the fact that there are many indigenous people who are transient and who have no fixed address, many indigenous folks who have no IDs? In fact, a lot of the work that I did before was actually helping indigenous women get ID, because it's such a difficult process often for people who are in the midst of crisis or trauma to navigate those systems to be able to get that ID, or they don't have money. I've often paid for different IDs that I've had to help out with. So I'm curious how you feel that, given those factors, this bill will help facilitate that?

Mr. Bird: Okay, yes, I'll start with your second question. Like I said, the real question in my view is ensuring that the Chief Electoral Officer is empowered with adequate resources to target those populations. That's my view. That's the real question here. And that's, like I said, that's kind of outside of, you know, how her—I'm not quite sure how those resources are allocated, but that's the real issue here. And I'm hoping that you can—the government will reallocate resources that would go to knocking on doors of permanent homeowners, for example, reallocate those resources to really trying to target, you know, marginal communities.

And I guess I just, you know, pointed out that—and a—I guess my other point is just that the permanent voters list is another tool that political parties can use, all political parties can use, to have more information.

So that—and what was your first, sorry, the first question was?

Ms. Fontaine: Well, now because you've said a couple things, I want to kind of just—so I know that you're saying that this permanent voters list will help political parties, but—which is, I suppose, a benefit, I guess—but we also have access to other means of voters lists, right?

The real—the meat and potatoes of this is actually seemingly trying to get more participation in democracy. So it's not really political parties that have a problem, or their membership, in participating in the democratic processes of Manitoba in respect of

voting. It is actually those individuals that, again, are the most marginalized of the marginalized, that are in the midst of crisis, that are dislocated, that are transient, that are homeless, that don't have—so I'm confused when you say that this bill will help facilitate indigenous people to be able to participate in our democratic processes.

Like, I'm not worried about the political parties. They've got resources, they've got all of that. They're good. We're all good. I'm worried, again, about the most marginalized of the marginalized. So explain to me—walk it down like, step by step, how you think that this is going to work for indigenous people.

Mr. Bird: Like I said, I don't think that the real issue here for aiding marginalized people in voting is providing the Chief Electoral Officer with the resources for her to do her job. That's the—and that's outside of, you know, the scope of this bill, the scope of this committee. That's the real question, is targeting real resources, real people, going out there, you know, looking under, you know, in the parks and finding the marginal of the marginal and ensuring that they're on the voters list. And that's her—that's in her arena.

And, as I said, I have met her and I've had lunch, and she's a very, very competent person that I have actually quite—all the confidence that she would, if provided adequate resources, would do that.

Madam Chairperson: The time for questioning has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call upon Ellen Mirl, *[phonetic]* private citizen.

Ms. Mirl, *[phonetic]* do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Ellen Smirl (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives—Manitoba): I do, yes. And maybe I can just make a correction. I told the—when I was coming in, name is misspelled. It's Ellen Smirl. And I'm actually here representing CCPA Manitoba.

Madam Chairperson: Ms. Smirl, could you please just spell your last name?

Ms. Smirl: Sure. It's S-m, as in Mary, i-r-l.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Smirl: It can be hard to say over the phone. People don't always get it.

Madam Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

* (21:00)

Ms. Smirl: Okay. Good evening. So I'm here today representing CCPA Manitoba to express my concerns about bill C-27—sorry, Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act.

So we have three major concerns about the proposed changes and how they might affect marginalized Manitobans: so, firstly, the creation of the permanent voter list; secondly, the elimination of province-wide door-to-door enumeration in favour of targeted registration; and, thirdly, the amendments to establishing identity in conjunction with the above amendments. So, really, what our concerns emerge out of is this conjunction of these issues, of these proposed amendments.

So, firstly, the change to create the permanent voter list, our concerns about it is that many low-income Manitobans don't possess computer, smart phone, access to Internet and in some cases don't even have a working phone, so this limits their ability to actually get on the voters list. Given the additional changes proposed regarding eliminating the enumeration and stricter ID requirements, which I'll speak to in a second, this change may have a negative impact on voter turnout for marginalized communities because it demands that individuals must be proactive to know if they're on the list to also get on the list.

We have data that shows that it takes all day to be poor. This places one more burden on low-income Manitobans to increase their access to social and democratic inclusion and participation.

So our second concern is the change to eliminate province-wide door-to-door enumeration. We're concerned about this because enumeration is an important way to register voters who remain traditionally marginalized, but also because it's an important tool to educate voters about election day, time, location and voting procedures, especially when language or cultural barriers might be present. By reducing government responsibility to register, educate and inform the public about voting, the burden of responsibility will once again be off-loaded to non-profit organizations who are often already overburdened and underfunded.

While Elections Manitoba stated that they will do targeted registration events in more mobilized and marginalized communities, the bill does not state the criteria for identifying these areas, leading to

concerns about who will determine this and how these areas will be selected.

Thirdly, the change to increase ID requirements. Currently, if you're on the registered voter list you do not have to produce ID on elections day to vote, okay. So this will be amended to everyone must produce ID to vote, regardless of whether or not you are on the list.

And maybe I can just speak to Mr. Selinger's earlier question to Mr. Newbeck [*phonetic*] when he asked if getting ID will mitigate some of that. Well, it won't. Well—I'm sorry, being on the voters list won't mitigate the fact that you don't have ID because even if you are on the voters list, even if targeted registration gets to you and you're on the voter list, you still have to produce ID to vote.

Secondly, currently, if voters do not have government-issued ID with their address on it they can produce two pieces of non-photo ID, one which must have their current address. Bill 27 would amend the provision on non-photo ID to read, quote: A person who is required to establish his or her identity under this act may do so by providing, under point (b), two documents authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer that contain the person's name, one of which must be the voter information card under section 76.1.

So our concern is that the wording of this makes us believe that you actually have—one of those two documents actually have to be the voter information card. I went back and forth with Elections Manitoba about this because they didn't know either. Finally, they came to the conclusion that, no, this actually means that the voter information card must be one of the documents that people can choose from to present on election day. However, we're really concerned that the wording of this makes it sound like one of the non-photo ID documents has to be a voter information card and if that were to be the case in the—in conjunction with reducing enumeration and the barriers to getting on the voters registration list, people show up on election day and they can't vote. That's a big problem.

So people who spoke before me spoke quite a bit about how low-income and marginalized Manitobans struggle to get ID. The study that Mr. Newbeck [*phonetic*] cited earlier was actually a study that I researched and authored. A lot of people who are low income in Manitoba struggle to get ID. For us, for a lot of people, you lose your ID it's a pain in the butt. You go to MPI, you pay the \$20, it's an hour

out of your day, but for people who are, you know, struggling with homelessness, struggling with precarious housing, some—\$30 can be a lot of money when all you—all you're getting is EIA in a month.

A Statistics Canada poll conducted in 2016 found that 172,000 Canadians who were eligible to vote did not do so because they believed they lacked the proper ID. There's been a lot of research in the States on this issue. Stricter voter ID regulation reduces turnout for racialized voters. So it doesn't impact the overall turnout amongst white, privileged groups, but it does—and a particularly extensive study found that during a primary election in states with stricter voter ID laws, the gap between white and Latino turnout was 13.2 points versus 4.9 in non-strict ID states. And these findings persist even when all other factors are taken into account, such as partisanship, demographic characteristics, election context and other state laws that encourage or discourage participation. I'm sorry, I'm trying to get through all this in the amount of time.

Since the Chief Electoral Officer has publicly stated that voter fraud is not a concern, we have questions about why this bill has been proposed. Minister 'Stevanson' acknowledged that the Fair Elections Act was, in fact, instructive in developing Bill 27, and that bill was widely criticized for impeding Canadians' democratic right to vote and has actually been—is in the process of being, some of the most problematic parts of it, being repealed under Bill C-33.

So it's really this combination of the elimination of province-wide door-to-door enumeration, barriers that reduce the ability of marginalized Manitobans to get themselves on the permanent voters list and stricter ID requirements that will mean that marginalized communities will experience greater 'barriers' to exist—to exercise their right to vote.

I think that it's important that—to think about what the most important aspect of democratic election is. And I think that that's participation. Reducing the ability of marginalized Manitobans to vote undermines the entire democratic system, because democracy only gains its legitimacy through elections if those elections represents the will of the people.

I would urge you to seriously consider the impact that these proposed amendments would have on the most marginalized Manitobans.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mrs. Stefanson: Thank you very much, Ms. Smirl, and thank you for being here tonight to present on behalf of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. I appreciate you bringing your views forward on behalf of your organization.

Ms. Smirl: Thank you.

Ms. Fontaine: Miigwech for being here this evening, and I really do appreciate what you bring to the table and what you've shared with everybody today.

So I have two questions. So, in respect of the impacts of this bill, and you just said it that, you know, real concerns about the most marginalized of Manitoba, what do you see, those impacts, and how do you see them actually affecting our democracy in Manitoba? So question one.

And, in respect of this bill, certainly, the members opposite are going to push it through. It's going to pass. That's why they're all here tonight. What amendments would you see that perhaps we could propose? And maybe members opposite would like to consider some amendments?

Ms. Smirl: So, to the first question about the impact, I think that people who are already marginalized and excluded from participating, those are the voices that we really need to listen to. On—you know, the CCPA works on these issues. That's what we do, right. There's a lot of good cases to be made for why we need to include the poor, the homeless, the precariously housed into this—into our society. It makes us a stronger society. There's also a really good business case, you know.

To your second question, I am not, you know, I don't work for Elections Manitoba. But I did actually work for Elections Manitoba in the last by-election. I thought it worked great, you know. I think that I would—like, a lot of changes—I think you have to ask the people who are working on the floor, right. If the Chief Electoral Officer says there's no concern about voter fraud, I would take his word. I'm not an elections expert and so I think that—I thought the process worked great and I was quite impressed by it, and I thought it was a great, actually, experience that everybody should do. But, yes, that's my thoughts.

Madam Chairperson: Seeing no—oh, Mr. Selinger.

Mr. Selinger: You would like to see a permanent, universal enumeration and a permanent voters list?

Ms. Smirl: No. And I'm not making particular recommendations about how this should work. Currently, door-to-door enumeration occurs. Theoretically, I don't see a problem with targeting particular communities to get them on the voters list. My concern is the intent behind the bill and who decides where those areas are. What about really, you know, really remote rural locations? Do we decide that it's not cost-effective to go up there and register people? I don't know. That's my concern.

* (21:10)

The way it stands right now, as it's universal, that decision doesn't have to be made by anybody, and there can't be any influence over it. While it may be a cost, I think that it's a cost that is well spent when it—if it encourages greater participation in the electoral process.

Mr. Altemeyer: I just wanted to add my thanks for bringing your perspective down here. I'm sorry I missed a good chunk of it. But the CCPA does laudable work, and just as an MLA who represents some very marginalized neighbourhoods where it is not uncommon for us to have a citizen walk into the office with a housing challenge, and this would be the third or fourth place that they have moved into and had to move out of in the span of a year, and it's exactly—you know, that's just one example of the type of vulnerable people that could be negatively impacted if they don't now meet the ID threshold that the government will force them to meet and is removing the opportunity for people to swear an oath and participate in our democracy.

So I couldn't agree more with your sentiments that we need to do everything we can if we're going to honestly believe that we represent the will of the people. All the people should have the ability to indicate their will, so thank you for being a part of that.

Madam Chairperson: Ms. Smirl? Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call upon Lisa Forbes, Winnipeg Indigenous Rock the Vote. [*interjection*]

Okay. Lisa Forbes will now be moved to the bottom of the list.

I will now call, for a second time, Darren Gibson, private citizen, for Bill 23. Darren Gibson will be removed from the list.

I'll now call on James Beddome for a second time. James Beddome will be removed from the list.

I'll call on Darrell Rankin for a second time. Darrell Rankin will be removed from the list.

And I will call on Lisa Forbes a second time. Lisa Forbes will now be removed from the list.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me. Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation?

Seeing none, that concludes public presentations.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bills?

Mr. Alan Lagimodiere (Selkirk): I'll do this. Bill 23, clause by clause.

Madam Chairperson: There is a--an agreement to consider Bill 23 first. *[Agreed]*

During consideration of a bill, the preamble, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Also, if there is agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses where members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose. Is this agreed? *[Agreed]*

Bill 23--The Fisheries Amendment Act *(Continued)*

Madam Chairperson: We will now proceed with Bill 23.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 23 have an opening statement?

Hon. Rochelle Squires (Minister of Sustainable Development): Yes.

Madam Chairperson: Okay.

Ms. Squires: So I appreciate the diversity of voices that were expressed here tonight, and we recognize that change and uncertainty is certainly a challenging--presents certain challenges, and the Province will be creating new processes and

regulations for a new marketing environment, processes and regulations that are not bound by past federal rules that essentially dictated that fishers had to sell their harvest to FFMC at the prices they set.

This will mean our--what this will mean for our fishers is the bill will essentially remove the monopoly that the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation has had for almost 50 years and provide flexible market choices for commercial fishers and value-added processors. Flexible market choices mean that new buyers, processors and sellers will have the same access to markets that FFMC has been able to restrict them from in the past. This will allow Manitoba fishers to sell their fish in other provinces and internationally, independent of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation. And by gaining access to new markets in Canada and abroad, fishers will see opportunities for rough fish that have previously been priced too low by FFMC. These fish frequently became wastefully discarded as bycatch instead of adding value to the fishers' incomes and supplying foods to market.

All in all, there will be more opportunities for fishers to sell and market their fish, and this will improve their incomes and their benefits for their families and their communities.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): I appreciate that the minister's opening statement was probably written out, if not entirely, then in large part, prior to hearing the submissions that we heard here tonight. But that opening statement does not in any way demonstrate that the minister or the government heard a single word of what was shared with us tonight. That's not very impressive. It's not respectful. And, as the government has been warned by multiple presenters tonight, it could be really, really unwise.

Setting aside, for the moment, the debate about whether FFMC has done a good job, whether it should be thrown out entirely or reformed, whether there are improvements that could be made, putting all that aside, the piece that this government has clearly missed from day one, and what it sounds like they continue to miss right up until now, is that the process that was used was crap. You cannot expect people to accept a decision made behind closed doors, without any consultations in advance, in an

era of reconciliation, in particular, when the vast majority of the people impacted by this are indigenous people and communities.

It is mind-blowing that the government is so incredibly tone deaf that they would ignore the comments that were shared at great expense and inconvenience by the people who travelled so far to bring us their knowledge and their wisdom to members of the committee directly. And if the government proceeds down this path, they will only have themselves to blame if it kind of blows up, and we're seeing this from this government over and over again. The—just look at my own constituency with the shuttering of the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre. Nobody could explain, nobody has explained, how that was possibly a good idea. No one believes that the government, on the one hand, wants more people to use urgent care, and so the first thing you do is you shut down the only urgent-care centre you have in the city. But that's what you said you were going to do, so you just plow ahead and you do it. And lo and behold, thousands of people are not going to get the care they deserve.

Thousands of people tonight have been represented in the voices that came to the table, just talking about process, Madam Minister. And I appreciate the minister is inheriting a file that was really messed up before she became minister. This is not a product of her creation, and all ministers, you know, be—end up being the representative of the government, whether they were there from the get-go or not, but there's so many flaws in what's been done, so much pain, so much worry about what's going to happen to communities that are already on the lower end of the income spectrum in Manitoba, already disadvantaged in lots of ways, and this government's just not going to listen any of that.

* (21:20)

And, again, all of this is setting aside the debate about the FFMC. I'm not a fisher, all right. I mean, I learned how to fish from my grandfather. I was from the shores of, your know, the eastern United States. That's where he was from. I got nothing on the wisdom that was brought to the table tonight. I'm not talking about the debate over the FFMC; I'm talking about the process. And you cannot, in this century, reasonably believe that this type of process is going to pass any sort of legal or political sniff test. It is really very concerning, so I would beg the government to do the right thing, whether it's tonight

or at a later date, put a pause on this, take it back and try to do this properly.

I really, honestly believe you're going to make a lot of people's lives worse if you proceed and you may not even get your wish. I mean, there was a presenter tonight who indicated in no uncertain terms that because of the flawed process that's been used, because of the lack of respect for constitutional duties to consult, this bill could be subject to a legal challenge the day that it is enacted, and then you've got a whole bunch of upset investors, the people who wanted—who you told were going to have an opportunity to build their new fish plants, and now, lo and behold, that's not going to happen. And you're going to have a whole bunch of upset indigenous people who are wondering why you're fighting them in court when they told you ahead of time that what you had done was inappropriate, and you're going to have a whole bunch of upset Manitobans wondering why you have to now spend thousands of dollars or millions of dollars on a court case that could have easily been avoided.

And, Minister, I say this directly to you, and I want to say it again: I acknowledge you didn't start this, all right. This has flaws that you've inherited and that's not fair, but you are now in a position to suggest that a different approach is what would be better for Manitobans. And I would just—if you didn't hear what they said tonight, maybe you just go back and read some of the presentations again when it's in Hansard and come back with a better approach for Manitobans. I think all of us would be better off as a result.

Thank you.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member.

Clauses 1 and 2 pass—pass; clauses 3 through 6—pass; clause 7—pass.

Shall clause 8 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Chairperson: I heard a no.

Ms. Squires: I have an amendment. I move

THAT Clause 8 of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the proposed clause 11(c.1):

(c.2) restricting or prohibiting the marketing of a specified part of a specified species of fish;

Motion presented.

Madam Chairperson: The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Is the committee ready—oh, Mr. Altemeyer.

Mr. Altemeyer: Perhaps the minister might wish to give us a quick explanation of the necessity of the amendment and what its impact will be.

Ms. Squires: By expanding the definition of fish to include fish parts such as roe.

Mr. Altemeyer: So this would, then, presumably be designed to capture not just whole fish that are caught, but, for instance, the potential marketability of fish parts, fish heads, that type of thing. Is that the purpose of this amendment?

Ms. Squires: This had previously not been the case and would otherwise leave a loophole by which fish parts could be sold without a licence, so the marketing of roe can influence fishing patterns with negative consequences for the sustainability of the fishery.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

Amendment—pass

Clause 8 as amended—pass; clause 9—pass.

Shall clauses 10 through 15 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Chairperson: I heard a no.

Ms. Squires: I have an amendment to clause 15.

Madam Chairperson: Clauses 10 through 14—pass.

Shall clause 15 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Chairperson: I heard a no.

Ms. Squires: So this amendment is—oh, sorry. I move

THAT Clause 15(1) of the Bill be struck out.

Motion presented.

Madam Chairperson: The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Altemeyer: Again, a rationale from the minister for the amendment?

Ms. Squires: We're proposing an amendment to the current wording of Bill 23 to remove the transitional provision that provides Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation a one-year period to obtain a fish dealer's licence. The department believes that this transitional period of one year is unnecessary for the FFMC and that they should be required to obtain a fish dealer's licence at the time that this law comes into effect.

Mr. Altemeyer: So the concern that was raised earlier this evening that the department may be looking for a way to kill FFMC's operations by law has some foundation to it, doesn't it?

Ms. Squires: This amendment simply levels the playing field between existing and new fish buyers and aligns the competition law principles.

Mr. Altemeyer: As I understand it—well, let me just ask the question. How long is Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation's licence currently scheduled to be in effect?

Ms. Squires: This amendment has—is levelling the playing field, and that they will have to obtain a fish dealer's licence at the time this law comes into effect.

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, so if I understand it correctly, the provision that the minister originally—or her government originally had in this law is being removed, and that would then mean that from the moment that this act is proclaimed, Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation no longer has a licence to deal in fish. Is that correct?

Ms. Squires: So they currently don't have a licence. The reason that this original provision was in there was if we were going to have brought this law into effect for July 1st, they would've had to—they would've had the one-year period, as it was the middle of the season. But now, they will be like any other dealer, and as of whenever this law comes into effect, they will have to obtain a licence.

Mr. Altemeyer: So you are claiming that the existing licence—well, let me back up. The minister just said that FFMC does not have a licence to market fish. How is it that they are operating if they don't have a licence?

* (21:30)

Ms. Squires: It's under federal jurisdiction. They have a federal agreement and they will simply now be brought into line with any other provincial buyer.

Mr. Altemeyer: How long is the federal licence that's currently on the books scheduled to last until?

Ms. Squires: The federal licence is in effect as long as the federal act applies.

Mr. Altemeyer: Taking it back to my original statement, then. If, when this act—is the minister saying that with this amendment, when this act becomes law, FFMC will have no licence, federal or provincial, authorizing it to continue operations?

Ms. Squires: So I'll explain it for the member. When they had a monopoly they did not have to apply for a licence; now they will have to apply for a licence to be able to buy and distribute fish in the province. This does not affect their capacity in other jurisdictions. So their federal licence is—this has no bearing on their federal licence.

Mr. Altemeyer: So the previous minister sent around an infamous letter, entitled Dear Fishers, in which she advised the fishers not to sign long-term contracts with FFMC because FFMC's licence was due to be renewed in a year. The minister is now, I think, saying that FFMC is not licensed. Now—and I'm—I think the minister has said they're both licensed and they're not licensed in the same answers this evening.

So can I just get a straight answer? Is the FFMC licensed right now and, if so, by whom?

Ms. Squires: So, again, the current scheme allows FFMC to operate without a licence. When this bill comes into effect, they have to apply for a licence like every other fish buyer in the province.

Mr. Altemeyer: So the moment this bill comes into law, is FFMC—which would be the only plant already up and running, the only organization already up and running—will they have to immediately cease operations until they are able to apply for this new licensing process, which I assume the minister and her department don't have ready to go yet?

Ms. Squires: So, for the members opposite—for clarity for members opposite, the fish season closes on October 31st. It will reopen when the lake freezes on—you know, in December. By then, the department will assure fishers that by the time this legislation comes into effect—and on the next clause we're going to deal with that—when this legislation comes into effect, the change is for the proposed initial date the

department would be ready to start licensing, and there is nothing that we—that would indicate that FFMC would not meet the requirements to get a licence. They will apply like every other fish buyer, and they will be licensed. Probably the first licence that will be issued will most likely be to them because they already have a lot of the infrastructure in place.

Mr. Altemeyer: So the minister is guaranteeing that in between the time when this bill potentially becomes law and when the fishing season would normally start, there will be enough time and a fair process for FFMC to get the licence that she is now referring to? That's her guarantee to FFMC and all the people who depend on it for their livelihoods?

Ms. Squires: Yes, I can guarantee that when this legislation comes into effect, FFMC will be able to apply—they will have applied for a licence, and they will be able to resume their activities as a buyer.

Mr. Altemeyer: And how much time are we realistically looking at? Let's say this bill is passed when this session wraps up, and the start of the next fishing season is, when, depending—dependant on lake freeze-up? Is—am I right? That's the window that the minister's looking at trying to jump through?

Ms. Squires: Usually, the next fishing season is mid-December, and we—if you—when we get to the next clause amendment, you will see that we are looking at a date—to change the date to December 1st.

Mr. Altemeyer: And what will the fees be attached to receiving said licence?

Ms. Squires: Subject to a Treasury Board submission that hasn't been approved as of yet.

Mr. Altemeyer: So we're making this change without any information available to FFMC, or any other potential developer, of what the cost will be to apply for a licence. Is that correct?

Ms. Squires: They will have that information in due time.

Mr. Altemeyer: What are the criteria going to be that the department will use to judge whether an operation receives a licence or not, and when are people who are interested in receiving said licence going to get that information?

Ms. Squires: We will be ensuring—we'll be collecting regular data that you could imagine one would collect when issuing a licence, such as name

of business and address of business, and just ensuring that there are no previous convictions under The Fisheries Act.

Mr. Altemeyer: Has—have those criteria been—like, who's going to have to approve those criteria? Is that going to have to be written out in regulation by Cabinet, and, if so, when is that scheduled to take place?

* (21:40)

Ms. Squires: The department is being—the department is finalizing the process right, you know, within the coming days, and it will all be in place by before—well before December 1st.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): I take it from the comments, Minister, that the application would be dealt with expeditiously. And, in your view, given the information you've received, there would be no reason not to offer the licence given that they have all the infrastructure in place. And, if we think about it in the opposite way, if they weren't given a licence in a timely fashion for the next fishing season, it would put at risk the livelihood of many of the fishermen out there right now who may not have an alternative ready to go.

Ms. Squires: I can confirm that we certainly do—we will have things that—up and put—it will be put in place so that there will be buyers on December 1st. Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation has got—there are no indications that they would not meet the criteria, which is as simple as I stated earlier. They will be granted a fish licence, as would other prospective buyers.

We are very excited about opening up the market for buyers. We've heard from other presenters tonight who have said that we are not only going to ensure that we have markets for all the bycatch in the lake as well as some of the top product coming out of the lake. That will expand income revenues for the fishers. There will also be—from a sustainable development perspective, I can't imagine anybody thinking that it is a good thing to be dumping, you know, hundreds of lbs of bycatch into our rivers and lakes and not even trying to market them. I can't imagine anybody thinking that it is a good thing to have bycatch—perfectly good whitefish—being dumped by a buyer because there's no market for it.

So I am excited to think about the opportunity for potential buyers to come into this—into our province and to help our fishers get good value for their fish and find additional markets for not just the

top fish—the walleye—but everything they catch, above and below.

Mr. Altemeyer: Is this proposed amendment from the minister going to be news to the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, or were they informed of this intention previously?

Ms. Squires: They haven't been informed as of yet.

Mr. Altemeyer: Why do you think this provision was put in here in the first place?

Ms. Squires: Because of the time of when—we had originally thought that this bill would pass July 1st. And, because of certain House delays, et cetera, we are now bringing this bill forward, and it will pass, presumably, once we proceed to that clause on—for December 1st start date.

The fact that we are looking at moving the timelines just precipitated this change.

Mr. Altemeyer: I don't agree with the minister's assessment on a number of instances. She—in her previous answer to my colleague from St. Boniface—he was merely looking to ascertain in good faith that this government will be living up to the commitments that the minister had already previously put on the record. And she decided to rehash her government's rationale for doing this in the first place, which in and of itself also completely ignores the fundamental issue which many presenters gave us tonight and which I have repeated as well. Namely, it doesn't matter what the content of the bill and the substance of the changes are if your process has not met the sniff test.

And now to have this change sprung on at the last possible moment, when the organization involved has not even been notified ahead of time, speaks volumes for how this government is conducting itself. Speaks volumes.

This is—this is not a very happy chapter. No further—

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT Clause 15(1) of the Bill be struck out.

Shall the amendment pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Chairperson: I heard a no.

Voice Vote

Madam Chairperson: All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Madam Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

The amendment is accordingly passed.

* * *

Madam Chairperson: Clause 15 as amended—pass.

Shall clause 16 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Chairperson: I hear a no.

Ms. Squires: I move

THAT Clause 16 of the Bill be amended by striking out "July 1, 2017" and substituting "December 1, 2017."

Motion presented.

Madam Chairperson: The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Altemeyer: Just to correct the record on the minister's previous statement that various, I believe she said the word House delays or House proceedings, had meant that this act did not come into effect on their original timeline: the reason why this act was delayed is because our caucus delayed it, and proudly so. This process has not been appropriate, and we only had the right to hold over five government bills. Of all the horrific legislation that has been brought forward, we could only hold over five, and I'm so proud of our caucus that we made this one of the five bills.

This legislation goes against the spirit of reconciliation. It goes against the spirit of proper consultation with the people affected. And, as I have said earlier, the government has had every opportunity to walk this back and do it properly and they are quite clearly bound and determined to ignore, yet again, the voices of Manitobans.

With that, I have no further comments on this amendment.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT Clause 16 of the Bill be amended by striking out "July 1, 2017" and substituting "December 1, 2017."

Amendment—pass; clause 16 as amended—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill as amended be reported.

* (21:50)

Committee Substitution

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. I would like to inform the committee that under our rule 85(2), the following membership substitution has been made for this committee effective immediately: Selinger for Lathlin.

Bill 27—The Elections Amendment Act
(Continued)

Madam Chairperson: Does the minister responsible for Bill 27 have an opening statement?

Hon. Heather Stefanson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I do, very briefly, Madam Chairperson.

I'm pleased to present Bill 27, The Elections Amendment Act, to this committee for consideration. Bill 27 modernizes our electoral system while protecting the fundamental integrity of the vote for all Manitobans. It does this by implementing two important reforms.

First, Bill 27 replaces outdated and costly door-to-door enumerations with a permanent voter registry—register. This common sense change has been recommended by the Chief Electoral Officer and studied extensively in Elections Manitoba's 2013 Permanent Voters List Study.

As I mentioned during second reading, the evidence shows that Elections BC, which used a permanent voter register for its 2013 general election, registered nearly 97 per cent of eligible voters. Most of those individuals were registered automatically using information from the federal voters list, vital statistics and the Insurance Corporation of BC. In comparison, here in Manitoba,

we registered just roughly 75 per cent of the voting-age population in the 2016 general election with door-to-door enumerations. A permanent voter register is clearly more efficient and effective than the current system. However, we recognize that there may be gaps in registering highly transient or marginalized Manitobans. That's why the Chief Electoral Officer will have the discretion to conduct targeted enumerations for those groups, ensuring that we register as many Manitobans as possible to vote.

The second reform we are making with this legislation will protect the integrity of our elections by making identification requirements clearer and more consistent for everyone. Under this legislation, Manitobans who are not on the voters list can vote by establishing their identity with either one piece of government photo ID or two other pieces of ID satisfactory to Elections Manitoba and establishing residence with a document supplied above or signing a declaration if the documents do not identify current residence.

Manitobans who are on the voters list can vote with the same identification. However, because they are on the voters list, they will have the additional option, if they don't have ID, to have someone vouch for their identity at the poll so they can vote.

These are common sense changes and there is nothing new about them. The identification requirements in this legislation are the same as those already used for advanced polls in Manitoba. They are also similar to identification requirements in federal elections, in municipal elections in Winnipeg and Brandon. We already had a good discussion about Bill 27 at second reading. But before we begin, I would like to correct some of what was put on the record by some of my colleagues.

The member for St. Johns said during second reading that the legislation requires unregistered voters without photo ID to present their photo registered-registration cards as ID. I'd like to make it clear that the legislation—that we will be making an amendment to this tonight. We heard from the presenter from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives today who indicated that there were some issues with respect to this. So we listened to Manitobans tonight, and we will be making a change with respect to that. We will also be making a couple of other changes as well, which I will explain later as we get to those amendments.

I'd like to thank everyone who was involved in preparing this legislation, especially Elections

Manitoba, for all their work in studying the permanent voter register. And I'd also like to thank all the presenters for being—for taking the time out of their busy schedules tonight to be here and express their views on Bill 27.

Thank you very much.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

Ms. Nahanni Fontaine (St. Johns): I just want to, first and foremost, thank all the presenters that came out tonight to share their views in respect of Bill 27.

I guess I've been pretty clear, and those of us on this side have been pretty clear, that this is a bill that does nothing but entrench that some Manitobans not vote and not participate in the democracy of Manitoba. It is voter suppression, and it is nothing short of voter suppression. And while we use certain language in respect of that there is, you know, voter fraud in Manitoba, I think we've heard it from a couple of presenters tonight as well that the Chief Electoral Officer never said that. So this bill is actually—has been constructed, actually, in pursuit of a problem that doesn't exist.

And I think it's clear that, you know, we—you know, the NDP believe that all Manitobans have the right to vote and to participate in our democratic process. And this bill makes that exponentially more difficult for Manitobans that are marginalized in respect of being transient or homeless or dealing with a variety of different issues, not the least not having ID and not having the means of getting ID of which is a key part of this legislation in being able to vote.

You know, the—I think it is particularly egregious to, you know, eliminate the door-to-door enumeration when, certainly, I think that there are the benefits, and we heard that from one of the presenters in respect of the, like, invaluable contribution to, you know, educating on the current vote that is taking place; you know, where—when is it, where do you go, any other questions that voters have. And there typically is a lot of questions in respect of voting. Not everybody does it. And I think that those folks that go out and they go door to door, they provide actually a very vital service in respect of our overall democracy to ensure that we have the best possible participation and voter turnout.

And so, you know, to get rid of that—and the minister just said that it's costly, and of course

members opposite, you know, they're always concerned with the bottom dollar or whatever it is, the bottom line, so much so—they're so obsessed with dollars, they're so obsessed with saving money on the backs of the poor or students. I mean, we've heard it all week. You know, if you were in Bill 30, you heard what they're doing in respect of the taxi—you know, small-business owners who have taxis. We're hearing it next door in respect of students. Like, they're so obsessed with money that it's okay that we take away the democracy of the people that need it the most and we actually make it harder for them to participate in our democratic process.

And so, you know, it does beg the question why. Why does this particular government, this PC government, this particular Premier (Mr. Pallister), want to make it more difficult for people to vote? Instead of, as I've said often, that, you know, taking our responsibility to, you know, levels in respect of seeing our responsibilities as a sacred responsibility, and we're so blessed to be here, and actually putting bills out that 'actury' create processes and more education and all of these pieces that lift up people to be able to participate in the democracy, they're doing—they're presenting a bill, and a bill is going to go through, to actually suppress that, suppress the most marginalized—not only, you know, transient or homeless or individuals that don't have IDs, but actually students, the elderly, persons with disabilities it's impacting on.

* (22:00)

So, you know, and then—and I think that it was said by one of the presenters that I thought was, you know, particularly salient here is that, you know, again, the members opposite are so obsessed with money that they cut the \$13-million plan for MPI's personal IDs that would have actually helped facilitate people to be able to participate in the democracy, but you cut that out and then we have this bill. So you marry the two together, and it certainly does create pretty regressive, suppressive opportunities for people to vote.

And I guess, you know, the other piece is that—and we've said it in the House but it bears to say it here is that, you know, this was, you know, something, you know, your cousins or your best friends, I don't know how you say it, but, you know, Stephen Harper with his Fair Elections Act tried to do the exact same thing and there was widespread condemnation and all kinds of analysis in respect of how that Fair Elections Act was voter suppression.

And yet, instead of actually learning from that and thinking, you know what, that didn't actually work out too good, no, you guys just adopt it and you put it in a provincial—into the provincial framework.

So, you know, I just want to say that on—you know, tonight, you know, we're going to, you know, pass all of these—this bill. It's going to go on to third reading and, you know, Derek Johnson from the Interlake and Rick Wowchuk from Swan River and Alan Lagimodiere for Selkirk and Greg Nesbitt from Riding Mountain and Rochelle Squires from Riel and Heather Stefanson from Charleswood are all voting tonight in support of voter suppression, and I don't—I'm not going to say the Chair because she's chairing, but you're all voting in support of voter suppression. You're all voting against, you know, those individuals in Manitoba that actually need more supports, not more restrictive or suppressive or oppressive—you guys are all voting tonight. Your names go down in history as individuals that are voting to make it more difficult for Manitobans, a certain segment of Manitobans, to be able to participate in our democratic process. So congratulations to everyone.

Miigwech.

Madam Chairperson: We thank the member.

Shall clause 1 and 2 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Madam Chairperson: Clauses 1 and 2—oh, I—okay, I'm going to put the question again.

Clauses 1 and 2—pass.

Shall clauses 3 and 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Madam Chairperson: I heard a no.

Mrs. Stefanson: I move,

THAT Clause 3 of the Bill be amended

(a) in the proposed clause 2(1)(b), by striking out everything after "the person's name"; and

(b) in the proposed subsection 2(3), by adding ", one of which must be the voter information card under section 76.1" at the end.

Madam Chairperson: It has been moved by the Honourable Mrs. Stefanson

THAT Clause 3 of the Bill be amended

(a) in the proposed clause 2(1)(b), by striking out everything after "the person's name"—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Chairperson: Dispense.

The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, I just wanted to clarify what this is, and this, of course, was brought up by—in one of the presentations tonight by Ms. Smirl from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and essentially what this does is clarifies the issue of the voter card, that it must be on the eligibility list of acceptable IDs. It does not have to be one of the pieces of ID used to be able to vote. So we just wanted to provide some clarification with that, and that's what this amendment does.

Mr. Greg Selinger (St. Boniface): To the minister: that—the amendment on 2(1)(b) was exactly what we were proposing—striking out one of which—and I just want to make sure that when we get to 2(3), you've got an amendment, one of which must be voter information card—*[interjection]*—no, say, of the types of documents. It's one of the—must set out the—one of the documents must be the voter card, but that document is not required in the identification process if somebody brings a couple of pieces of ID.

Is that what you're trying to say?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, that is correct.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: The question before the committee is as follows:

THAT Clause 3 of the Bill be amended

(a) in the proposed clause 2(1)(b), by striking out everything—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Chairperson: Dispense.

Amendment—pass.

Shall clause 3 as amended pass?

Mr. Selinger: I mean, I appreciate the amendment. We still object fundamentally to the notion that you have to have this additional ID when you go to the polls. I just want the record to be clear on that.

Madam Chairperson: Clause 3 as amended—pass; clause 4—pass; clauses 5 through 7—pass.

Shall clause 8 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Chairperson: I heard a no.

Mrs. Stefanson: I move

THAT Clause 8 of the Bill be amended by replacing the proposed subsection 28.1(4) with the following:

Proposal to Standing Committee

28.1(4) Before directing a modification to the voting process under this section, the chief electoral officer must submit a written proposal to the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs describing the proposed modification. The Standing Committee must begin considering the proposal within 60 days after it is submitted.

Approval of the Standing Committee

28.1(4.1) If the Standing Committee approves the proposal, with or without changes, the chief electoral officer may direct that the voting process be modified in accordance with the approval.

Modification does not apply for 90 days

28.1(4.2) A modification may not apply to an election called within 90 days after approval by the Standing Committee.

Madam Chairperson: It has been moved by the Honourable Mrs. Stefanson

THAT Clause 8 of the Bill—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Chairperson: Dispense.

The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: I'll just provide some clarification for what this—this section of the act will allow the Chief Electoral Officer, with the approval of the standing committee of Legislative Affairs, to make modifications to improve the voting process and achieve administrative efficiencies.

As currently worded, this section does not require the standing committee to consider proposed modifications within a specified time frame. This amendment requires the Chief Electoral Officer to submit proposed modifications directly to the

standing committee and requires the committee to begin considering them within 60 days.

The amendment will parallel section 32 of the existing act, which requires the standing committee to consider a report of the CEO within 60 days after receiving it if the report recommends amendments to the act.

Ms. Fontaine: Can you explain the rationale behind some of these amendments?

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes. It's just the one amendment which requires the 60 days. But this was requested by the Chief Electoral Officer, and this is something that we wanted to bring forward.

Mr. Selinger: So it—I mean, the upside of this amendment is you can't just receive a report from the Chief Electoral Officer and sit on it indefinitely. You've got to make a move and make a recommendation within 60 days.

Mrs. Stefanson: Yes, that's correct.

* (22:10)

Madam Chairperson: Amendment—pass; clause 8 as amended—pass; clauses 9 through 16—pass.

Shall clauses 17 through 20 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I heard a no.

Mrs. Stefanson: I move

THAT Clause—[interjection]

Madam Chairperson: Clauses 17 through 19—pass.

Shall clause 20 pass?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I heard a no.

Mrs. Stefanson: I move

THAT Clause 20 of the Bill be amended in the proposed subsection 63.8(1) by adding "beginning in 2019" after "in each year".

Motion presented.

Madam Chairperson: The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Mrs. Stefanson: Just for clarification here, once the new register of voters is established, this section of the act will require the Chief Electoral Officer to give registered parties a copy of the voters list taken from information on the register by February 15th

each year. MLAs will receive a voters' list for their own electoral division at the same time.

Because passage of this bill will not occur until late 2017, the Chief Electoral Officer won't be able to comply with this section until February 2019. The amendment, therefore, requires the voters' lists to be provided beginning in 2019 rather than 2018.

Ms. Fontaine: Just a rationale for the amendment.

Mrs. Stefanson: Because of the delay in the passage of this bill, we had to extend the time for the Chief Electoral Officer.

Madam Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Chairperson: Amendment—pass; clause 20 as amended—pass; clause 21—pass; clause 22—pass; clause 23—pass; clauses 24 and 25—pass; clauses 26 through 28—pass; clauses 29 through 31—pass; clauses 32 through 38—pass; clause 39—pass; clause 40—pass; clauses 41 through 45—pass; clauses 46 through 48—pass; clauses 49 through 51—pass; clauses 52 through 54—pass; clauses 55 through 58—pass; clauses 59 through 61—pass; clauses 62 through 64—pass.

Shall the enacting clause—oh, Mr. Selinger.

Mr. Selinger: We've passed this, but I'd like to ask leave to just briefly revisit clause 39(2)—115(2.2) just to ask the minister a question and make—and perhaps make a comment. It's on page 23.

Madam Chairperson: Is there leave to revert back to clause 39 for questions? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Selinger: Minister, when I read this clause, "A person must not vouch for more than one person at an election.", I wondered if that was unduly restrictive. Say you've got a couple of family members that were left off the list, they're both your children or your parents or whatever, and you're the only one on the list and they're not, and you can only get one on. I'm just wondering if that might be a little, a little too tight. I wondered if you wanted to think about that.

Mrs. Stefanson: Well, I think it's reasonable the way it is and it's—it certainly just allows for someone to vouch for someone who is on the voters list but has forgotten their ID at home, and so if it's a, for example, a, you know, a couple that are attending a

voter station and one doesn't have their ID, the other one can vouch for them. And so that was the purpose and the intent of this, and I think we're happy with the way it is.

Madam Chairperson: Enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill as amended be reported.

The hour being 10:17 p.m., what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

Madam Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10:17 p.m.

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