

Second Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Human Resources

Chairperson
Mr. Matt Wiebe
Constituency of Concordia

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

Tuesday, September 10, 2013

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mses. Allan, Irvin-Ross, Melnick

Mses. Blady, Crothers, Mrs. Driedger, Messrs. Goertzen, Helwer, Saran, Schuler, Wiebe

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Ms. Lisa Shaw, private citizen

Ms. Manon Monchamp, private citizen

Ms. Doraine Wachniak, private citizen

Ms. Carla Coroy, private citizen

Ms. Natalie Deuck, private citizen

Ms. Sarah Leanne Tonn, private citizen

Ms. Vanessa Wollmann, private citizen

Ms. Linda Fehr, private citizen

Ms. Taija Jarvis, private citizen

Ms. Carmelle Friesen, private citizen

Ms. Desiree Loeppky, private citizen

Mr. David Grienke, private citizen

Ms. Heidi Grienke, private citizen

Mr. Joseph Luke Wiebe, private citizen

Ms. Tina Blatz, private citizen

Mr. Carlos Sosa, private citizen

Ms. Heidi Friesen, private citizen

Mr. Travis Friesen, private citizen

Mr. Dale Loewen, private citizen

Mr. Bradley Tyler-West, Sexuality Education Resource Centre of Manitoba

Ms. Jenni Doerksen, private citizen

Ms. Beverly Braun, private citizen

Mr. Charles Kehler, private citizen

Ms. Denise Taylor, private citizen

Mr. Alfred Unrau and Ms. Josephine Unrau, private citizens (by leave)

Mr. Trevor LcClair, private citizen

Ms. Marianne Curtis, private citizen

Mr. Chris Elias, private citizen

Mr. Dirk Baker, private citizen

Mr. Carlin Thiessen, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Anna Reimer, private citizen

Joy Kulachok, private citizen

Trevor Brandt and Kristie Brandt, private citizens

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 18–The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Human Resources please come to order.

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

Hon. Kerri Irvin-Ross (Minister of Housing and Community Development): I'd like to nominate Ms. Blady.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Blady has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

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

This meeting has been called to consider Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools). I would like to inform members of the committee that in accordance with the agreement of the House dated June 20th, the committee may, by leave, decide to hear from presenters in addition to those 30 scheduled for tonight's meeting. Since there appears to be more than 30 presenters on the list before you, what is the will of the committee?

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): Well, certainly, we'll hear from the 35 scheduled. If there are additional ones who are interested in presenting, I think we can determine that as you present them, Mr. Chair.

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

We do actually have already a walk-in registration, Dirk Baker. Does the committee agree to include the name on the list? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Goertzen: Can you identify if Mr. Baker is presenting as a private citizen or organization?

Mr. Chairperson: Dirk Baker is a private citizen.

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

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): We have been, for the last several nights, and it was originally the MLA for Steinbach's suggestion, that we just go ahead and do it numerically because they have been informed by the committee about when they were going to speak. So it seems to have worked, and, if members are fine with that, that would be great.

Mr. Goertzen: My history is that the MLA for Steinbach brings forward very good ideas, so I'll agree with that.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement of the committee to consider the list in numerical order? *[Agreed]*

The following written submissions on Bill 18 have been received and distributed to committee members: Anna Reimer, private citizen; Joy Kulachok, private citizen; Trevor and Kristie Brandt, private citizens.

Does the committee agree to have these documents appear in the Hansard transcript of the meeting? *[Agreed]*

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

For the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written materials, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with photocopying, please speak with our staff.

As well, I'd like to inform presenters that, 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.

Also, in accordance with the rules agreed in the House for the meetings hearing from presenters on Bill 20—sorry, Bill 18, if a presenter is not in

attendance with their—when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list of tonight's presenters. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time tonight, they will be dropped to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

With regards to the process for speaking in committee, I would like to advise members of the public that 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 their name. This will be a signal for our Hansard recorder to turn the mics on or off.

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

I will now call on Lisa Shaw, private citizen. Good evening, Ms. Shaw. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Lisa Shaw (Private Citizen): Yes I do, Sir.

Mr. Chairperson: I'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those, and you may proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Ms. Shaw: Good evening, Minister Allan, members of the committee, ladies and gentlemen, and my sister Linda, who came with me today. My name is Lisa Shaw and I'm here in support of Bill 18. I think it's contentious solely because of the gay-straight alliance clause, and that's what I'm going to talk about tonight.

In case it's not obvious, I'm 49 years old—no, actually, I'm a gay woman. And I'm communications manager for Telpay. I've had a great upbringing, wonderful family, charmed career, and I'm pretty happy, healthy and adjusted and a contributing citizen. I'm also religious, or, as I like to call it, spiritual, and a teen leader at my church. Yes, a lesbian can teach Sunday school, except we call it Funday school. Community's really important to me, and I give back. I'm on the speaker's bureau for the United Way and the Canadian Mental Health Association.

I'm a gay woman who's out and proud in every aspect of my life, but I wasn't always comfortable being gay. In fact, I was ashamed. I was scared, and that's why I came to speak here tonight, because I'm going to tell you about is when I was growing up in school.

As a youngster, I always felt different, as a tomboy, always being daddy playing house, loving motorcycles and liking women too. Throughout my junior and high school years, I started feeling like I was the only person in the world, ladies and gentlemen, who felt this way. I didn't even know what the heck gay meant. It wasn't a term I was familiar with, but I thought something was wrong with me. I couldn't talk to anybody.

So, instead, I tried even harder with boys. I'm not proud of this, but at a very young age I was promiscuous. I thought that if I slept with boys, somehow I would be better. I'd be cured, or, as I see it, I tried to sleep myself straight. Talk about low self-esteem, no respect for myself, and I'm lucky I didn't get STDs or pregnant, and it certainly did not make me straight, even though I tried.

Thinking back, through this painful and confusing time, I could have used a gay-straight alliance to avoid the humiliation, to not go through it alone, to feel safe. I was fortunate with the love and support of my family, friends, I could come out and be my authentic self, and I've been out for about 30 years.

What about those kids who are in my spot—gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered—who are struggling right now? Are they feeling ashamed, lonely and not safe? Sadly, there's lots of stats about suicide. Quote: Teen suicide is the second leading cause of death among youth in Canada. LGBTQ kids are four times, ladies and gentlemen, four times higher at risk. Our schools need to be safe for them.

Bullying: Nobody should be bullied. I think we all agree on that. I've actually read Bill 18; it's not that big to read. And who wouldn't agree, you know, on this page, that we're promoting activities that promote gender equity so we don't women bash? We're promoting anti-racism so we don't bash somebody because of their skin. We're 'proting'—promoting the awareness of people with—of disabilities, so we're not going to beat somebody up in their—they're in a wheelchair. And I'd also add mental illness.

* (18:10)

We all agree on those top three, right? It's black and white. Why, I ask, why can't we offer protection to the fourth category, sexual orientation? Why? We're all in agreement with the top three, but we won't go the top—the fourth one.

In February, when Bill 18 came out, I was first of all sad and then hurt. I can't believe, in this day and age, when I think there's progress, I read such hateful and hurtful things. So instead of joining the diatribe, I decided to start a dialogue by talking to some very religious folks. I had two men, two women, to learn first-hand their concerns. I talked to retired Mennonite missionaries. I talked to my friend, a born-again Baptist, and I talked to a Catholic schoolteacher. I called it Gay, God and Bill 18. I found it fascinating and I learned a lot, but I made sure we had some ground rules. And these, I think, are good ground rules for everybody. We all believe in God, but we just do it differently. Respect: As long as your God doesn't hurt anyone else, we're good. It's okay to talk, but you've got to listen. And, finally, it's okay to agree to disagree before things escalate. And with those ground rules, it was amazing.

Based on my experiences, these are the concerns about Bill 18: It's all about gay-straight alliances. I will boldly say they're based in fear, myth and downright misinformation. For the sake of time, I have a top-four list. Number 1, gay-straight alliances are being shoved down our throats. Not really: Gay-straight alliances are student initiated. The student asks for it. So it's bottom up, not top down.

Number 2, being gay is a choice, and gay-straight alliance—GCAs will promote an unhealthy lifestyle. Hmm, imagine that. So I reversed it, and asked my very born-again Baptist friend, when did you choose to be straight? *[interjection]* Glad you're looking. My born-again Baptist responded, in a very stern voice, I've always loved women, and that's just how it is. It's not choice; I was born this way. I said, me too. And then he said, Lisa, I never thought about it that way. Thank you for that. Ladies and gentlemen, you're born gay. It's not a choice. The only choice you have is to be true to yourself.

Number 3, GSAs are going to recruit kids to be gay. On a winter afternoon on a Saturday, I drove out to Steinbach to visit two retired Mennonite missionaries—lovely. They invited me into their home; over coffee and dainties we talked. And recruiting was their major concern. So I listened. And when they were finished, I reversed it and said, do you think somebody could recruit you to kiss the opposite sex? With scrunched up noses and a very awkward silence, they finally said no. Of course the answer is no. For me, I'm pretty sure that if anybody

was going to recruit me to be straight, it would have been my very straight family. Like, they're all straight. We were all born the same way, and I think if anybody would have influenced me to be straight, it would have been my family. And I'm pretty sure my sister breathed on me over the years, too. Seriously, GSAs will not make kids gay, just like my school years sleeping with boys didn't make me straight either.

And the fourth one, GSA threatens religious freedoms. It's the same arguments used in the pro-choice debate, gay marriages and now Bill 18. As a person who goes to church, I'm really strong in my convictions, and nothing's going to threaten what I believe in. I have my beliefs, I have my interpretation of the Bible too, but this is not the forum to discuss theology. One person's beliefs is not another person's law. For those religious folks who want to quote Leviticus, conjure up fire and brimstone or tell me I'm a sinner, I'd be happy to drive out to your town, go across the street, meet you in a coffee shop, and let's have a dialogue on God and gay. But for now, I'm just going to say that Jesus loves me too, and that can't be so bad.

So I'm going to wrap up by saying I support, strongly, Bill 18. Bill 18 will make sure no child will ever be bullied, period. No LGBTQ kid should ever think about suicide, period. GSAs are opposed by a small minority, in my opinion, but it's supported by the majority of Manitobans and Canadians. GSAs are a contentious issue, but it's so worth the fight. To reiterate, Bill 18 and GSAs will ensure that our schools are safe for all, and it's going to save lives, ladies and gentlemen.

I want to end with a beautiful verse from the Bible—I read the Bible—read to me by my Catholic teacher friend. Quote: Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you. See, I've written your name in the palms of my hands.

That's from Isaiah 49:15,16. In other words, as she eloquently showed me with her hands, my very Catholic teacher friend told me God has room in His hands for all of us. Why, I ask you, would we leave anybody out?

Thank you for listening.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Shaw, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Lisa, thank you very much for your presentation. This is a very unique presentation that we have heard and it is a presentation from the heart. And you are very fortunate that you had a family that supported you when you were trying to figure out what your sexual orientation was, and, for some kids, they don't have a supportive family and school is where they need to find support.

Thank you for your presentation, and all the best. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Lisa, thank you for your presentation and for coming. Thank you, Linda, as well, for being here this evening.

You mention in your presentation that with Bill 18 no child will ever be bullied. I wish that that were the case. I suspect we're still going to have many kids bullied regardless of what the law is. I don't know that legislation—any legislation—will ever stop kids from being bullied.

One of the concerning things that I've had over the course of these hearings is a number of people coming forward, not actually talking about GSAs—the majority of people that I've heard at the presentations I've been at have had more concerns about the fact they don't believe that Bill 18 would have prevented them from being bullied for a body image, language, ethnicity, religion, any other of the other reasons that people are bullied, and their concern has been they don't think the bill would have protected them. They weren't focused on the GSA side. They just don't think that they would have been protected by the bill.

So we're trying to find different ideas that would make a difference. While I don't think any bill will stop bullying from happening completely, we are trying to find different things that can actually improve bullying for kids who are being bullied for those reasons. Do you have any ideas or suggestions for us on that?

Ms. Shaw: Mr. Goertzen, I don't think you could do enough. Put—you should line up the walls with as much legislation as you can to protect kids in bullying. It's kind of like saying this life jacket may or may not work; don't wear it because we don't know if it's going to float or not. But why wouldn't you do everything to prevent bullying?

And, again, it goes back to your—there's a whole bunch of other things with bullying that I don't think I have time to talk about, but I—if I were in your position, if one kid is contemplating suicide—one

kid—you can save one life, sir, with this bill, isn't that worth it?

Mr. Goertzen: Right. And—but you were saying that no kid will ever be bullied with Bill 18, and then you're saying there should be other legislation—*[interjection]* Okay, and it's my hope too. So what are the other ideas for legislation that you might have to protect those—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Shaw.

Ms. Shaw: I'm happy with this one. I think it's a great start. And, again, if you look at the bill, I'm going to stay pretty firm that you read all of it, it's all good stuff. I mean, Manitoba's not alone in adopting stuff like this. It's kind of a—you know, there's a shift here. And I think, again, Mr. Goertzen, one bill isn't going to hurt, but without this bill, more kids will be hurt.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks for your presentation. We're going to continue to look for lots of ideas. We want to protect all kids, and I think you do too, and I appreciate that. I think we have commonality. We want all kids protected. I appreciate that.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks once again for your presentation this evening.

We'll now call Manon Monchamp, private citizen. Ms. Monchamp, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Manon Monchamp (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. You may proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Monchamp: Okay, thank you. Okay. I think that this bill, the way that it's set up, it puts the financial burden of the solution to bullying on children.

I think that the emphasis on the different groups in a bullying bill is incorrect, that it should be split in two, that the groups and the diversity—support of diversity in the schools is a very important subject, and it should receive its own bill and have more detail and more information for people to—so they understand that it's a good thing.

* (18:20)

But let's get back to the bullying part. In my opinion, there's nothing in this bill that really addresses bullying. I was bullied as a kid, and belonging to a group really does nothing. In my

opinion, this—that—I believe that there are some really concrete things that can be done in order to help kids who are bullied take the initiative and protect themselves. They're being held responsible to stop bullying by joining these groups and basically use peer pressure, but you haven't given a kid who's been targeted by an entire school the ability to tell someone. Like you say, well, they can tell the teacher or they can tell the principal. In a school environment, it doesn't work that way. It's very frightening to be dealing with people in authority when you are a young child or even in high school because everyone will know.

And, also, another problem is that with cyberbullying, bullying has changed. It's no longer restricted to a schoolyard. It's no longer restricted to just the principal and his particular school. It's multiple schools, it's—people are pulling their kids out of school, and they're home-schooling them and it's following them home. So—and the fact is, is that electronic communication is evolving so quickly that adults can't keep up but kids can. They're always on the cutting edge, they're always 10 steps ahead. So, in this bill, it's all, if an adult sees something, he has to report it. Half the fun of bullying is getting away with it. And because you can communicate via Facebook, Twitter, emails, they share knowledge and it becomes a huge game that adults cannot catch up with.

So, in my opinion, there's three things you can do. Number 1, I really believe that you should set up a tip line like BC has set up, and that it should include a website, and on this website, not only should it include information about bullying and what you can do, but it should include a journal so that people can keep track of the bullying, the dates, the times. And this way, it should be confidential, and if bullying occurs they can take that information to someone in charge, and it's admissible in court. The police can use it. It's something concrete. Most kids don't realize that. Most of the time, when authorities get involved it's all hearsay, and with hearsay you cannot do anything.

Okay, so that is No. 1, is set up the tip line, and then No. 2 is set up—before you really create this bill, you need the research. There are thousands and thousands of people who have been bullied. They've survived it. They're now adults. They have an adult perspective on a childhood problem, and yet no one is asking these people for their opinions, for their points of view. They aren't asking the bullies who are now adults for their opinions and their point of view.

This is the information you need to create an effective plan, to create an effective plan that can be implemented that actually makes a difference.

And No. 3, I think that you should create an independent body just for bullying. In this bill, basically, it's the responsibility of the principals and the instructors to keep track of bullying and deal with it. They have full-time jobs. They don't have the time to keep track of the new forms of bullying or keep track of co-ordinating a bullying that's occurring amongst multiple schools. And what about those kids who are being home-schooled and they're being targeted anyway? They have no one to go to because they don't have a principal. Bullying is changing so rapidly. It's no longer a school problem; it's a societal problem and it's going to get worse as communication technology evolves.

Okay so that's—wait. So set up the research website; No. 2, set up the tip line. Oh, and it needs to include new forms of technology, for example, it has to have messaging. Most kids message, and if they take a picture they can just message it in to people, and that's concrete proof. Wait—No. 2, and then No. 3 was a centralized group in order to keep track of bullying and help deal with it on a provincial scale. Okay, and that's it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Monchamp, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Very nice verbal presentation. Very nicely done. I just want to let you know that we are working with all of our school divisions in the province of Manitoba to do a Tell Them From Me survey with all students from grades 4 to 12. It's a confidential survey that is done online with students by an organization called the Learning Bar, and that is going to provide information and it's going to be information directly with students that is going to be provided to the leadership in the schools, and it's kind of a little bit like what you were talking about, so we can get confidential information from students so we know what the culture and the environment is in the school. We've seen what's happened as well in British Columbia and their tip line, and we're looking into that as well.

Thank you so much for your presentation. We appreciate you for being here. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Monchamp.

Ms. Monchamp: —question really quickly? Oh, thank you.

My problem with that is that I was bullied, okay, but when you're being bullied, you have a certain perspective because you feel completely powerless and you really don't know the bigger picture because you are a child. What if your act says—just basically allowing people who've gone through the process to give their input as an adult, then you will come up with some really good suggestions from an adult point of view. And that information isn't being accessed at all. It's as if people think that the moment you're out of school, if you were bullied, you get instant amnesia and it all just disappears. But, actually, if you talk to some of the people who were bullied—and I'm sure you've seen a lot of them—bullying actually affects adults and it is—they remember what happened and they really want to help fix the problem.

And, unfortunately, I find that this bill just—it re-establishes a 20th century system on a 21st century problem. It's basically the same hierarchical system where you've got the students and the teachers and the principal, and it is very structured. And things have changed, and bullying has changed. Okay.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks for your presentation. I really appreciate the fact you brought forward suggestions, and we've been hearing from a lot of people who've been bullied. We've heard from some people who said they were bullies. And so we have been learning some of that, but you're right: We need a better system to get information about what's happening in Manitoba in terms of bullying.

And the suggestions are great, because 97 per cent of the presenters who say they've been bullied are saying that this bill wouldn't have helped them, and that's a problem for an antibullying bill. You can't have an antibullying bill where the majority of kids being bullied say this doesn't help them. So I really appreciate your suggestions, and we'll follow up on those.

Floor Comment: Can I say something?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, Ms. Monchamp.

Ms. Monchamp: Yes, I really feel that you're trying to address a problem and you don't even know what the problem is, simply because you need to do the research first. But—that's it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your time this evening.

I'll now call on Doraine Wachniak, private citizen. Ms. Wachniak, do you have materials for distribution?

Ms. Doraine Wachniak (Private Citizen): Well, I did have 20, but one of them is mine, so I have 19.

Mr. Chairperson: Nineteen, I think that will work. If we can—if our staff can help you distribute that. And you may start with your presentation when you're ready.

Ms. Wachniak: Good evening, and thanks to all of you for your endless time here in listening to the citizens of Manitoba talk about Bill 18.

And it's not on my presentation, but because I've heard it from the last two, let me say that my experience with Leslie [*phonetic*], and I remember his name—my survival skills were my seven brothers and sisters, because I knew that if I walked with one of them to school, I would be safe. So I don't think your bill would have helped me at that time. I just knew it was called survival for myself. And I know his last name very much. I vividly remember his face, and I don't want to announce his last name. I don't know if he lives in the province, but this was many, many years ago.

So my presentation is brief and to the point. I think that Bill 18 is seriously flawed, and I have no disregard or disrespect for those people who have worked hard on it.

Good legislation respects the constitutional rights of Canadians, and Bill 18, in my mind, does not. Bill 18 does not respect that parents have the primary authority over the education of their children.

* (18:30)

Bill 18's language will, without question, allow it to govern out of fear and intimidation. Victims of bullying would agree that fear and intimidation are classic elements of being a bully.

Bill 18's definition of bullying trivializes true acts of bullying. Bill 18 is a mirror image of Egale's recommendations from their very—from their document called Every Class in Every School—I'm sure you've maybe all seen it—Egale's Final Report on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools. There is evidence that Bill 18 was born out of recommendations from a single lobby group rather than a well-intentioned diverse collection of Manitoba citizens.

Bill 18, while its title would suggest that it is intending to be an inclusive piece of legislation, is actually exclusive. It is clear that this minister, and with all due respect to you, Ms. Allan, by your own admission, you're not interested in making any amendments to Bill 18. It was fairly clear at our MAPC organization meeting this year that you were determined to pass this bill while you were Minister of Education.

With this in mind, I present the following suggestions to the next Minister of Education, whoever that may be: No. 1, to repeal Bill 18 and to develop a respecting-difference legislation with input from a diverse, well-intentioned and compassionate collection of Manitoba citizens, two of which I heard before me already today. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Wachniak. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for your presentation. [*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, just a reminder to presenters. I do need to say your name before you speak in order for us to capture it on our Hansard. So I just—I apologize. I'm a little slow on getting the name out. So I apologize. Did you want me to recognize you to put something on the record?

Ms. Wachniak: No, that's fine.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Thank you very much for coming, Doraine, and we appreciate your presentation and brief as well.

I have two questions, and the first one is, MAPC made a presentation in which they said that MAPC was, in general, in agreement with Bill 18. Was that actually something that came out of an annual general meeting that the Manitoba association of parent-school councils was in favour of Bill 18? There seems to be some confusion on that. Could you clarify that?

Ms. Wachniak: I believe that when the Bill 18 inclusive schools document from MAPC came to the AGM, it was defeated handily by the parents.

Mr. Schuler: And that does certainly bring a little bit of confusion to the committee. I mean, we like to understand where individuals are at because that

certainly helps with our deliberations and that certainly causes some concern for us.

I'd like to move on to my second question. And one of the things that Bill 18 deals with is hurt feelings, and as someone who's involved with parent councils, parent-student councils, whether that's with coaching or whether it's with anything, if you bench a player because they haven't performed, I guess that would also qualify as hurt feelings. We've heard a lot about that. Could you—and I take it you've studied Bill 18—could you reflect a little bit about that clause on hurt feelings? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Wachniak.

Ms. Wachniak: Oh, sorry, I apologize.

I guess I'm going to go to Mother and Father's Day, and I think of Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, this year, and one school withdrawing from celebrations of Mother and Father's Day, and it was with the intention of not having students have hurt feelings about it. And I guess that is a concern, and I also, in addition to that, I can't imagine educators. What I envision is Manitoba becoming the bullying capital of Canada based on the definition in this bill—in this bill. That's what I see, and it's unfortunate because I think that this bill actually does expand the definition of bullying to include anything that could be, in my mind, deemed as certainly disrespectful, most definitely rude, most definitely unkind. And those should not be confused with serious bullies in our school; they are very different.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks once again for your time this evening.

We'll now call on Doug Hamm, private citizen. Doug Hamm, private citizen? Okay, seeing as Mr. Hamm is not—does not appear to be here, his name will be dropped to the bottom of the list and called a second time later this evening.

We'll now call on Carla Coroy, private citizen. Good evening, Ms. Coroy. Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Carla Coroy (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll ask the staff to help you distribute those. And if you can help me with the pronunciation of your last name. Do I have that pronunciation correct?

Ms. Coroy: Carla Coroy.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good. You may proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Coroy: All right. It was back-to-school season. Moms were shopping for math sets and pencil crayons, erasers and loose-leaf, and so many kids got brand new erasers and pencils each year.

But not every kid arrived at school with new supplies. Some years I did and some years I didn't. The years I didn't I hid my stubby crayons and pencils in my pencil case in my desk and tried to hide as I walked to the crank pencil sharpener on the wall, hoping desperately that my lead wouldn't break or that it would be so far stuck into the hole that I wouldn't be able to get it out.

But that was the easy part. You see, I was blessed to be the first born, the oldest child, so I got new jeans. Almost every year through elementary school I got a pair of new jeans, and this was my privilege. This was the blessed part of being the oldest. My brother didn't get new jeans, at least not for many years. He didn't get the blessing of new jeans. What he got, being the second child, was that he got boy jeans. It meant that I had to wear boy jeans when they were new, and he got to wear the old jeans, but they were at least boy jeans.

It made a lot of sense from a financial point of view, and I give my parents all the credit for doing a good job. It was very practical and it did give each child something special. There is nothing wrong with how my parents dressed me. It even made a lot of sense to my pragmatic young mind. But the kids on the playground just didn't get it. The girls teased me in the gym change rooms: look at her, she has to wear boy pants. One day during class, when the teacher stepped out of the room for a minute, a girl offered to teach me how to dress like a real girl. The class erupted in laughter. The comments hurt, and although I held the tears back until I got off the bus that afternoon, I spent the time between then and supertime in my room crying. My parents couldn't afford to get me and my brother new jeans.

As if not wearing girl jeans wasn't enough, I was one of the chosen few who had severe acne, not just on my face but also on my back and chest and even my arms and shoulders. It was awful. Even now I look back at my school pictures and feel the pain that acne brought.

Our school offered a swimming field trip in grade 3. Everyone looked forward to it, but it was the only highlight I had dreamed of, because as a

heavy-set, not athletic kid who bombed every gym class and was picked last for every sport team, the one thing I could do well was swim. I loved the water. But having been teased and made fun of for not only my boy jeans but also being fat—even though now, looking back, I realize I just didn't fit the skinny mould—I was looking forward to finally getting in the water and letting the mean kids know that I could do something and do it well. I was a strong swimmer and I would let the world know.

In the change rooms at the pool at the University of Manitoba, some girls got a glimpse of the acne on my back. They started whispering and teasing and making fun of me, and although I hated it, inside I knew that if I could just show them that I was a great swimmer, maybe they'd stop teasing me. So, with my head held high, I left them behind and went to swim. They followed me.

I had just gotten in the water when the group of girls dared one girl to tell the lifeguard that I had a disease. She did, and every other girl in the group who had dared her began to laugh and chuckle. I began to swim away, but the lifeguard called me back. She turned me around to look at my back where my acne was glaring red. Some of them were cysts, actually, and after muttering something about not knowing if it was infected, she told me I was not allowed in the water because it might be infectious. Mortified, I headed to the change rooms where I sat clothed for the remainder of the field trip.

I never had my chance to show them how I could swim. The bullies won. I wasn't protected. The bullies were there in my school even 35 years ago—thank you.

* (18:40)

I am strongly against bullying. I hate bullying, and bullying is one of the defining factors for many kids and how they choose to live when they grow up. And it shouldn't be that way. This is why I think schools should be a safe place, a place where bullies are stopped, a place where kids are kept safe, and I believe that the idea of having a bill about bullying is a very, very good idea. I just don't think Bill 18 is that bill.

If it had been put in place in the '70s, it would have not protected me. There is nothing in the bill to define bullying. When does teasing become hurt feelings? When does it end? When does it start? There's nothing in the bill that would have dissuaded the bullies from bullying and there's nothing in the

bill that would give me, as a bullied child, the courage to speak up without fear of reprisal. You all know what happens in the back of the bus. The teachers aren't watching.

I don't like how it is worded. I believe the bill is not inclusive enough or perhaps it is too exclusive. Bill 18 explicitly protects one group, but what about kids like me, who are poor, who can't wear the in thing, who have awful complexions and visible defects? What about kids who are not athletic, or fat? What about my son who is autistic? I am in—100 per cent in favour of bullying legislation that protects everyone, not just one or two groups of people. I am 100 per cent in favour of antibullying legislation that clearly defines what bullying is. I'm 100 per cent in favour of antibullying legislation that gives bullies predetermined consequences for their crimes. I'm 100 per cent in favour of antibullying legislation that is not restricted by a moral or religious affiliation. Everyone should be protected. That's why I think Bill 18 is a very bad idea, and I do not support it at all. Bill 18 would be weak, ineffectual, perhaps even more damaging to kids like me in today's public school classrooms than it was decades ago.

I would like to ask that the wording of Bill 18 be changed to include a short, clear and concise definition of bullying, that the bill would be worded to include all groups, peoples and interests without naming any specific group, people or interest. I would like to ask that the wording of Bill 18 includes actions listed that can be taken to protect a victim and give consequences to the bully.

I believe that all religions, Christian, Mormon, Jew, Muslim, atheist and every other tribe and nation be given the same protection regardless of their beliefs or moral codes. I would like to think that in today's world, if I were still 9 years old, and if I was still wearing my brother's new jeans for him to grow into and my unathletic, chubby body was covered with blistering acne, that I could go to school and feel safe. I would like to think that we've come a lot further than we have.

And I really hope and pray that wisdom reigns on those who make these decisions about amending Bill 18 so that we don't lose the progress we've made, because as Bill 18 stands today, that is not the case.

Please, for the sake of the short, chubby, poor, pimple-faced kid in today's schools, please change Bill 18. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Coroy, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Carla, thank you very much for sharing your very personal story. Bill 18, in this committee room over the last 10 days, we have heard a lot of stories and a lot of people have been comfortable. They felt they were in a safe place that they could talk about it and that they could tell us their personal reflections on Bill 18. We appreciate you being here this evening. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks, Carla, I could tell how hard that was for you. I really appreciate it. You know, you've echoed, although you probably put it as well, if not better, than many about how this bill wouldn't have protected and wouldn't have protected 97 per cent of the other people we've been hearing from who've been bullied for all the different reasons that kids get bullied.

One of the great fears I have about this bill, because it's being promoted as an antibullying bill, is that it will actually give false hope to a lot of kids out there who will hear there's an antibullying bill and think, boy, now I'm safe. We've actually heard that from a previous presenter. Do you think that that's a concern, that it could give false hope to those who probably need real hope not false hope?
[interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Coroy.

Ms. Coroy: Oh, sorry. Absolutely, I think it is—there's no—there's nothing in the bill—in the bill that explains to the person being bullied where and how they can go for help and what that help is going to look like, and it also doesn't give them an advocate within the school or within their classroom. And let's face it, we can't have people in every place, and the people who are bullied realize where those unsafe places are, and it's often not in the classroom when the teacher's there. It's when they're not there. And so I can't see how this can effectively be put into place and give the bullied kids the feeling of being safe.

Mr. Schuler: Carla, most members of this committee wouldn't know that before your mom and dad were your parents, they were actually my parents, and they were my stepmom and dad when tragedy hit our family and they took a lot of us kids in and took care of us while things were sorted out. And it troubles me that I wasn't there for you and that we weren't there to protect you. And I was hoping that we'd have legislation that would have protected

you. And I'm troubled, Carla, that this bill wouldn't have protected me and it wouldn't have protected you. And that troubles me, but I love you lots and great to see you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks once again for your time this evening.

I'll now call on Natalie Deuck, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Deuck, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Natalie Deuck (Private Citizen): I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Deuck: Okay. Thank you very much, committee members, for allowing me this opportunity to speak regarding some of my thoughts on Bill 18.

I'm glad that bullying is being formally addressed as it pertains to Manitoba schools. I'm 46, and as far back as my kindergarten days, I can recall various instances of children being picked on, including myself, either at school or on the way to or from school. Rather than being able to enjoy the learning experience and being able to go to school, many times I was just plain scared that someone would decide to beat me up one day. I was jumped on and picked on and just harassed many times. I was a good student, so I was picked on for being teacher's pet. I was a bit on the quiet side, and so I wasn't going to really do anything to stick up for myself. And so some children liked to pick on me because of it.

Early on, my parents taught me sticks and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me, and that helped me out a little bit. I said that to a few kids and it seemed to stop a little bit. They told my—my parents told me to ignore a lot of the things. So I was one of the fortunate ones who was never beat up or tormented. I'm very thankful for that. But there are many who were, and this trend still continues to this day. Some children feel so desperate that they feel the only means to escape the bullying is death, and a lot of people just feel that they have nowhere to turn to. And I believe that having decisive legislation in place will be a step towards reducing the amount of bullying that goes on amongst the children in Manitoba.

I strongly feel that Bill 18 only scratches the surface of the bullying issue in Manitoba. The three things that first struck me about it when I first read it

were that it seemed to define bullying in vague terms. The second was that it singled out several special-interest groups, yet did not have data to back up why these groups should be granted special recognition. The groups that were recognized there were not the ones that I had personally experienced, and so there were some that were missed.

The proposed bill is worded: support the establishment of activities and organizations to promote the recognition of gender equity, antiracism, those who are disabled by barriers, and those sexual orientations and gender identities. To me, that didn't quite make sense. Maybe for older grades it did, but what about the elementary kids? That's not an issue for a lot of them.

The third thing is that it didn't seem to prescribe consequences or counselling for those doing the bullying. And I strongly feel that consequences are a big deterrent for a lot of people, and I also feel that the people doing the bullying—behind the faces of those bullies—are kids who are hurting too. And I think that that needs to be addressed as well.

I believe that in order to best represent the children being bullied, that Manitoba needs to clearly define the bullying so that the burden of proof does not fall upon the victimized party and also so that innocent parties are not unjustly accused. I realize that this is especially complicated since it would primarily involve minors, but it does need to be fairly addressed somehow.

I believe that bullying is unacceptable, period. No special-interest groups need to be singled out. I was extremely disappointed that this proposed bill seems to focus so much on gender and gender biases without the proof that I would've liked to see backing it up. And it really made me wonder what the true purpose of this antibullying bill is about. I just thought it might be a way to pass something in just sort of under the rug.

*(18:50)

I also strongly believe that specific consequences and/or counselling need to be given for those doing the bullying. After all, other negative behaviours in society have specific disciplinary measures taken, such as assault or harassment, which basically bullying is to a large degree, speeding and drunk driving, just for a few examples. But this bill seems to ignore that. We can define bullying all we want and support the bullied, but if we do not have consequences for bullying, there are huge

ramifications both now and in the future. Children who are being victimized need to have somewhere to turn to to get the abuse to stop. They need advocates who have the power and authority to be able to clearly recognize bullying and to have laws backing them up 100 per cent. I feel that children need a government that is willing to stand up for their rights, even if they do not fall within the realms of a special interest group. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Deuck, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for being here this evening and for your comments in regards to Bill 18. And once again, thank you for being here.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you for your comments on the bill. You know, you mentioned the issue of the loose definition, and that's been a repeated theme that we've heard from many presenters over the last several nights, and they—you mentioned the concern about maybe false allegations because the burden of proof will fall too heavily on the person who the allegation is levelled against.

The other issue of concern that I have is that, you know, in law we often say that when a definition means everything it ultimately means nothing because it's unenforceable. And I've heard from a lot of schoolteachers, at the early stages, where they say, in grade 1, grade 2, that kids at that age, with this kind of a loose definition, the teachers have told me that by the end of the month every one of the kids will have been a bully and every one will have been a victim because of the whole hurt feelings issue and how hard that is to define. And the teacher said to me, I'm just going to ignore it because I don't know what to do with it. I mean, is that a concern, too, that the definition is so broad that it's going to actually mean nothing, and not only the—could there be concerns about false allegations, but it'll be just—it won't be enforced at all?

Ms. Deuck: Yes, I believe it needs to be defined more clearly. You could be chasing down a whole bunch of people that are just being silly or just being kids. Kids are just mean. You can't be chasing down on these. But I think teachers are in a position, other people in the school are in a position, to be able to identify bullying is going on, and if a student can go to them, and to be able to discern which really is bullying. The instances that Carla mentioned are some of them. And those are the issues that we really

need to follow up on, you know, the bigger picture issues, because you can't do it. I had a close relative that was a rapist, convicted rapist, was under mandatory supervision. He fell through the cracks. He lived with my family and he fell through the cracks. And he ended up becoming a mass murderer. And so, you know, it's—these things happen. You have to go after the people that have really shown certain tendencies. That's my experience, so—

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks once again for your time.

Now I'll call on Carlin Thiessen, private citizen. Carlin Thiessen, private citizen. Well, Carlin Thiessen's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Sarah Leanne Tonn, private citizen. Sarah Leanne Tonn.

Good evening, Ms. Tonn. Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee? Okay, we'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those.

Ms. Sarah Leanne Tonn (Private Citizen): Would I be allowed to sit?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes. We'll have the staff arrange that, as well. Just give them a moment to arrange the mic so that we can record your presentation properly. And you may proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Tonn: I have quite a lengthy one, so I will try to get through it quickly. I'd like to read first Psalm 111:7-10, His works are done with truth and justice. / All His guiding principles are trustworthy. / They last forever and ever. / They are carried out with truth and decency. / He has set salvation—He has sent salvation to His people. / He has ordered that His promise should continue forever. / His holy name is holy—His name is holy and terrifying—I believe that means to be respected—The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. / Good sense is shown by everyone who follows God's guiding principles. / His praise continues forever.

To Nancy Allan and Bill 18 special committee: My name is Leanne Tonn. Thank you for the opportunity to express my concerns with Bill 18. I value our freedom of speech and beliefs in Canada. I am pleased that Bill 18 has raised as much passion as it has; it shows that we care for our families and our freedoms. I am a grandmother, and as a grandma I wish to address some concerns I have with Bill 18. I am not a writer or public speaker, so I will request

you hear the entire presentation for 'clarifica'—for clarity.

First, I have listened to various presentations. Last Saturday I had the privilege of being here for seven and a half hours and perceived that we all agree that an antibullying bill is needed. I have specified the—people with homosexual lifestyles, although this applies to anyone with—that has been bullied, many people living with homosexual lifestyles have experienced being bullied. All bullying is wrong. Nobody should be bullied.

Children are neither NDP, Liberal nor Conservative. They don't care who is in governmental power. They just want to be children, worry free. The decisions made by those in power to go ahead with Bill 18 as is would affect many children negatively, including those whom they are seeking to protect.

Many individuals have already spoken about the need for definitions, the faith-based concerns and partiality to cover certain groups and to exclude the faith-based people, the infringing upon private schools. Those are very real concerns.

Bill 18 is not about governmental parties; it's about saving lives. Bill 18 appears to be drafted with good intentions. However, as many people have already expressed, it is lacking some definition and it is incomplete in its form and is not all-inclusive, that it infringes upon faith-based schools. Many people have come forward with their concerns. How sad if the concerns were not met. All these 300-plus people bringing great presentations with lots of time gone into research, it would be sad to pass a bill just for the sake of hurrying it along.

My husband often fixes things. It has saved us much money, energy and time. It would save lots of heartache and confusion if this bill would meet the needs of all Manitobans. Too often we scrap the old. I would like to suggest to build upon a fair-for-all antibullying bill without removing freedoms our forefathers worked so hard for. There is something to be said for protecting our heritage. I do not believe that taking away freedom of speech or beliefs will eradicate bullying.

I like to simplify things. With all due respect, Nancy Allan and the Bill 18 special committee, to properly hear us, please put aside anything that would distract you, as—such as moving forward with this agenda, the hard work already put into this bill, thoughts like, what will people think if there is a

mind change, in order to really listen. There is evidently a huge concern around portions of this bill.

In my experience that there—it is my experience that there is safety in being open to the counsel of many wise, honest people, not those who simply agree with us. You have heard many presentations. There are genuine concerns to pay attention to here. Antibullying is important to everyone clear across the board.

I believe that Bill 18 is infringing upon our freedom of belief and speech. Freedom of speech and beliefs allow for expressions of various opposing reviews, even discussing them passionately without any put-downs or intimidation, to remain kind and respectful. No two people are alike. When we are forced into one certain belief, that is not freedom. When two people agree on everything, it shows that one person isn't thinking or perhaps that one person is afraid to have or express a belief or opinion. That is what I see happening with Bill 18.

*(19:00)

I grew up in a large Mennonite family near Hecla Island. Both of my parents had disabilities. Our home was busy, yet peaceful and loving. In school I was safe also. I went to school in an old one-room schoolhouse. My parents did not entertain negativity or dislike or dishonour toward others. We had heard about the town school not being accepting of the Mennonite students, but I was not strong enough for what lay ahead of me when we were transferred to the public school in town. I was quite shocked and traumatized. I was ostracized almost daily, chased down with verbal demeaning words. They spit behind me wherever I walked, following me into town as I tried to escape them, almost daily, by groups of two to four kids. They mocked me, that I walked funny. Truth is, I walked no different than they: two legs, one foot at the base of each leg, step one foot forward, one after the other, over and over. I was picked up and thrown into other kids. They weren't exactly people I wanted to hang out with, but I was loved at home and in my neighbourhood.

Although I am fully healed, I would just want to make it clear that people of faith have feelings, too, no different than others. This bill has serious concerns as I noted on Saturday—as I heard on Saturday. You assured us and made some comforting promises. Would you document those assurances for faith-based people and for private schools? I am not in agreement with secular school system to press

their beliefs upon a private school. To me, that seems bizarre.

May I share a story, an example story? Say I apply and get accepted into a Catholic school. I come to school fully aware of their beliefs, but I choose the school anyway and then find myself offended by their crucifixes and the way they do the cross symbol. The first question you would wonder is, is this the right school for me. But let's say I still choose their particular school anyway. Should I not then be respectful of them and be considerate of their beliefs since I am in their school? If I made a huge to-do over my offence, you would say, jeepers, why don't you go to a different school or maybe you would consider me a troublemaker. Okay, let's say they offer a course that I needed and couldn't get elsewhere. I would need to be upfront with them and discuss the—with the school whether or not the school would be able to accommodate me as much as possible.

May this—maybe this illustration is a bit simple, but the point I'm making is that I do not understand how a secular education system could be expecting a peace-loving private school to post what is against their teaching. I wouldn't force students from a secular school to attend biweekly Bible study with me against their wishes and then tell them what to believe. Yet that is what the faith—what the faith groups feel is being done to them, ramming one's belief system down their throat. I would offer or invite for these people to attend my study but there would be freedom to decline. If I don't agree with the school's teaching, I would not attend their school.

There's much more I wonder about. The top-down approach—I would like to see all students have the same safety for bullying as anyone else. As you heard about my home school, the town school experience, I agree that the students in gay lifestyle should never be bullied or mistreated either but I don't agree to single them out.

Another concern is the gay-straight alliance in schools. I never hear from the straight alliance. I am extremely concerned of legalized imbalance of power, just like the gay-straight posters that have been posted at SR, prematurely, before the dust on this concern has settled. I believe that there should be a trustworthy form of monitoring, but it should not come from one—from any one-sided force or from gay or straight. I'm seeing that this could cause worse bullying from any disgruntled party. Clubs or

alliances cause me great concern. It should be an all-inclusive support group for all students.

I wonder about whether Bill 18 is more about gay-straight under the front of being antibullying. If it is gay rights we are talking about, then we need to call it what it is—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute remaining.

Ms. Tonn: —not antibullying. If it is—thank you—if it is antibullying or for gay individuals, then we should call it that. We should have an antibullying for all people, for people with disabilities, for single moms, for faith-based people, for unemployed people and for the multitude of others. What's wrong for one, is wrong for another.

I am also concerned for gay-straight alliances which is also a form of labelling people. I don't like to see one group preferred above another. Someone will take offence and it will be cause for trouble. We are all people.

I do not agree with anyone getting bullied. I have seen students pick up—pick on one child. I have seen a teen walking home from school in tears. My heart goes out to the broken-hearted. I weep with him, instantly, even at the thought of mistreatment. We need to get back to the basics. Minister of Education Nancy Allan, school boards and teachers need to involve parents more before making antibullying bills or anything involving their children, including curriculum—

Mr. Chairperson: I'm so sorry to interrupt, Ms. Tonn, but your time has expired for presentation.

Ms. Allan: We—thank you so much for your presentation. We have a process here where we could put the rest of your presentation into Hansard, and we would—and it can be done by unanimous consent of the committee, and I saw Mr. Goertzen with his hand up and I'm sure that's what he was going to suggest as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee to include the rest of the presentation in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

Especially on topics where there is so much passion. Parents need to work more with the Teachers. And Teachers with the parents. I believe that in many cases, parents need to be more involved with their children as well.

Bullying to me is not normal disagreements, normal varieties of opinions and beliefs. Hurt feelings could

be exaggerated, especially by a sensitive person or a child prone to drama. I want to add some of my thoughts on 'hurt feelings'.

Nancy Allen and Bill 18 Special Committee: My request is for you to accept the things brought to your attention and return to the drawing board, together with other government leaders for the sakes of all Manitoba children . . . and teachers. So that others may follow Manitoba's NDP example. You have patiently listened to much opposition over the past few days. Thank you. I choose to trust that you are 'really hearing' the concerns for which we are here.

I have heard numerous presentations of people of faith have great concerns and believing that their schools would not be a safe haven for them to teach their faith freely. I share their concerns for our Grandchildren in the even in the public school. I am also concerned what all changes that have been made to the public school curriculum. One lady stands to me as she spoke about allowing children to be children (I agreed with her points). I believe she was referring to other curriculum however certain content in the Booklet called Growing up OK came to my attention. (Much of what I read seemed positive for the Grade 4 level). Erection, ejaculation and masturbation are not topics suitable for Grade 4 in my opinion, and should be taught at home. Also gender discussions. I'm concerned that even if parents opted their child out of that part of the class, other students would fill them in ruining parental privileges to teach as they choose. Also all the transgender topics should be done preferably by the parent or one on one with a counselor if there was an apparent need. I'm from the old school where these were open topics for discussion at home when our children were ready. To me, the schools ruin any parental wisdom and readiness for each individual child according as they see fit. While lots of the changes are probably positive, some are not acceptable especially when taught in a combined class with young boys and girls.

I have so much more on my mind to share . . . Thank you for listening carefully.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for your presentation. Thank you for being here Saturday as well to listen to the presentations. You've obviously put together a very thorough presentation, and thank you for your views on Bill 18.

Mr. Goertzen: Sarah, thank you for coming. It takes a lot of courage to come to a committee like this and I appreciate that. And, you know, you spoke about wanting a bill that will protect all kids, and I appreciate that and I think that's where your heart is at.

I also want to, as a—you being a grandmother, you've done a great service, I think, to your grandkids by showing them that when you believe in something, you stand up for it and you speak it.

I don't think I've used all of my time for questions. If there's anything that you feel you want to add on the record, you have a couple of minutes that I'm certainly willing to cede my time as you respond to my question.

Ms. Tonn: I'm not sure where I was at. I—my concern with bullying, with the term, is I would like to see a definition, similar as what I've heard before this evening, is we need to—just a disagreement. I'll give an example, and this might be a bit of a comical example, but, well, actually, this is one that's about hurt feelings. My grandkids, they wanted a Slurpee and I had said no, and so they said I had hurt their feelings. And so I said to them my feelings are hurt because I can't provide it; I don't have any money.

So I'm not sure exactly what else there would be left to say. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks once again for your time this evening.

Now call on Vanessa Wollmann, private citizen. Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Vanessa Wollmann (Private Citizen): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those. And could you help me with the pronunciation of your last name?

Ms. Wollmann: Wollmann.

Mr. Chairperson: Wollmann, all right. You may proceed whenever you're ready. Thanks for the correction.

Ms. Wollmann: Good evening. My name is Vanessa Wollmann, and I wanted to thank you, first of all, for listening and providing an opportunity for me to speak about this bill. It certainly is a Canadian privilege to voice opinions in decisions that are being made, which simply is not heard of around the world, in many parts of the world. So thank you for making this available.

Others and I speak tonight represent many people who could not voice their opinions concerning Bill 18. Many of those people are Christians and followers of Jesus Christ, like myself. And our concerns are legitimate, as seen in the number of presenters for this bill, should certainly raise concerned—concerns. I know that there are many who support the bill as well, but there are also many who oppose and—as it is written, and I kindly and respectfully ask that it would be amended to be—to please both sides of the spectrum.

I would like to say that I've been both a victim and a culprit of bullying. I have been made fun of for my physical appearance, and I've also bullied students who were socially awkward, had mental disabilities and weren't part of the cool crowd. Bullying concerns me because it causes harm to everyone, and there's a phrase that I used to say: sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt, as mentioned earlier today. What a lie. Words cut and hurt deeply to the heart. They have caused pain down the road in my life that I would never have expected and resulted in personal insecurities and failures.

But I can now thankfully say I'm healed of those wounds through the power of Jesus Christ, but I can also say that I'm no longer a bully. My heart and life has been changed, and I'm really, sincerely sorry for people who have been abused by others through words.

* (19:10)

I will now share some of my viewpoints concerning the bill. I am not yet married, but one of my goals is to be married and raise a large family. I see independent schools as a potential for me because they reflect my religious beliefs. A Christian school would appeal to me because I hold a Biblical world view and that would be taught within the school. Paying money to be able to put my children into an independent school that teaches a Biblical world view is a freedom that we've enjoyed in this country for a very long time.

This brings up my first concern with the bill. I feel that my religious freedom is being threatened. I feel my religious freedom in this country is not being protected by those who have been put in power to do so. Problems will arise if a student wishes to promote something that is contrary to religious belief within the school organization. The school would be forced to promote agendas that are simply not a conviction found in the Bible.

I realize that Nancy Allan and others wish to provide safe in-school environment for all students, and I agree with her on this. Referring back to my personal experience as being a victim of a bully, I don't think in any way or in any circumstances bullying is okay. But to force an independent fill-in-the-blank school to promote something that is contrary to their beliefs is bullying as well. Parents are putting their children into private schools for religious reasons. I also feel that promoting specific groups over another isn't including all groups of children being bullied. One group is held exclusively over another. This defeats Ms. Allan's purpose for the bill and the committee to provide a safe learning environment for all students.

Is this—is the government choosing to represent the entire population or just specific groups? I'm not confident that this bill—that the leaders are supporting every minority group in a multicultural nation. A quote from the bill says: A respect for human diversity policies must accommodate peoples who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that (a) promote (1) gender equality, gender—(2)—excuse me, (3) anti-racism; (5) awareness of understanding of and respect people of sexual orientation and gender identities, and then the use of gay-straight alliance, et cetera

This means that a student will have power over the teacher, and I do not believe this is correct. There will be students who wish to promote agendas that are not in line with the core foundations of the school, and it goes to show that they have greater priority over other types of bullying, such as appearance or religion. I believe independent schools should be able to determine what group, type of groups could be established within their educational programs.

The second issue I have with the bill is that there's no clear consequences for the bullying. I have a cousin who's affected by bullying because of weight. Nowhere in this bill does my little cousin get protection. There would be no consequences for bullies, and he's not classified in this bill as one being bullied or being a victim. If there is an incident, how will teachers, principals, authorities in the school be empowered to provide consequences for bullies? Teachers need to be empowered to enforce a clear 'consequences'—conscience is for bullying.

How does this bill help my little cousin who is being bullied in school because of appearance? How would this bill have protected me when I was in

middle school? How will the teachers be empowered to give consequences?

Something that really bothers me is an article that I read in the Free Press on July 13th with the title, School trouble not in books. Some of the quotes from the article read: She doesn't know how often schools went to lockdowns, even lockdowns that were not practice drills, nor does she know how often schools are evacuated and why. And Allan has no idea the attendance rates among students living in foster group homes.

In order to help students and to provide safe environments for all students, awareness of what's going on in the school system is necessary. For an example, outside of the school system, we can't help those caught in sex trafficking if people are not aware of it. If school safety really is a concern for us, what about this article?

My third problem is the definition of bullying. It isn't specific enough because the definition is so broad it will be hard to pinpoint someone who is truly a victim of bullying. I've included here North Dakota's definition of bullying, and it's quite lengthy, so I'm not going to include that in the presentation.

The problem with the current definition is that it is too broad and would be hard to pinpoint someone who has actually encountered severe forms of bullying. To be honest, with the current definition of the bill, I could accidentally bully someone without having the intention to do so. For instance, let's say I could have a secret problem of wetting my pants, having a loose bladder. Someone could make an indirect comment that didn't mean to hurt my feelings, but does, so now I can claim to be—or someone can tell me that I'm a bully and it was complete unintentional or innocent.

In this definition someone who is truly a victim of bullying would be classified the same one as someone who has been hurt unintentionally by another. The definition in the dictionary found it for bullying is a person who uses strength or power to harm or intimidate those who are weaker, one habitually cruel to others who are weaker.

My fourth and final issue with the bill is that it seems to miss the point of protecting from all groups of bullying such as appearance, nationality, race—oh, sorry, nationality, religion, weight, which are the primary reasons for bullying. This bill, I believe, has potential to create more bullying. If I was in school currently and hold a Christian world view, I may be

bullied because I think particular lifestyles are sinful. It can be anywhere from an unmarried heterosexual couple living together or to a homosexual couple. Either way, I believe it's sin and will not lead someone into the kingdom of God. Let's just admit it, if a Christian school does not want to promote a club for sexual orientation or 'gray'-straight alliance, will they be bullied by the government to conform to its wishes?

This summarizes my main points for being in opposition with the bill. I conclude with asking you to amend the bill so that it can protect religious freedom, protect all groups of children being bullied, have consequences and provide more straight-to-the-point definition of bullying. In conclusion, it is my fear that those who are teaching and preaching tolerance are not very tolerant of those who oppose popular culture. I do know through 'experiential' experience Jesus Christ has offered me a way to become a better person, being able to become a divine nature of God and no longer being a bully. I believe the truest hope to victims and 'bullies alike'—and bullies alike is finding the saving work of Jesus Christ and through the Cross of Calvary. Repentance of sin and allowing Jesus Christ to be truly the Lord of one's life is truly the hope for all mankind. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Wollmann, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for your presentation and for your thoughts and comments that you've put together for us this evening on Bill 18. And we appreciate you being here this evening. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Vanessa, thanks for your presentation, well thought out, well put together. I know you put a lot of thought into it. You know, you touched on a lot of the issues that many people have raised, your concern about the definition, concern that it doesn't protect the vast majority of kids being bullied, including, you know, yourself in your experience, or your cousin, I believe it was.

You know, one of the things you mentioned is that you hope someday to have a family and to be married, and I've talked to a few other presenters about your age and asked them this question about whether this bill and the concern about freedom that you talked about earlier on would cause them to be

more likely to home-school. And a number of them said they would be, and that surprised me. And a lot of them said that that wouldn't be their first choice, but they feel that they might be looking at that now as a result of some of the things happening. Can you comment on that, or would that be your thought process, or is it a little too early to say?

Ms. Wollmann: No, actually, while presenting, or while preparing for this presentation, that was definitely going through my mind, that I would, if my religious freedom was not being protected by the school, I would certainly put my children into home-schooling because I feel that there I have the freedom to teach my children what I believe is a Biblical world view. And I have the resources to do that. So, yes, I would—that was certainly something that did go through my mind, absolutely.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I want to thank you for your presentation and the thought that you put into it. I want to make sure that the committee knows that Bill 18 is about protecting all children. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, now seeing no further questions, thanks once again for your time.

We'll now call on Linda Fehr, private citizen. Good evening, Ms. Fehr.

Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Linda Fehr (Private Citizen): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll ask the staff to help you distribute those. And you may proceed whenever you're ready with your presentation.

Ms. Fehr: Okay. My name is Linda Fehr. I'm representing myself as a private citizen.

Honourable committee members, first of all, I would like to affirm the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government for taking the issue of bullying seriously. In light of the increasing suicide rates, depression among children and teens and increasing school violence in North America over the last couple of decades, it's clearly important to examine and address the issue of bullying. No student for any reason should ever be bullied or feel unsafe in school, and I agree that there should be appropriate legislation to protect children and address both concerns and consequences of bullying.

However, I do not support Bill 18 as it is currently written because it—I wrote infringes, but actually, I feel it violates upon freedom of religion, exclusively promotes protection for one group of

students over many others and is found weak and incomplete when compared to other North American antibullying legislation.

* (19:20)

Primarily, I do not support Bill 18 as it is currently written because, in the case of Christian and other faith-based independent schools, it takes away our constitutional freedom of religion as quoted in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And I quote: Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of thought, belief, expression and opinion. End quote. This includes the freedom to practise and teach the Biblical Christian world view which states that any sexual act outside of a monogamous heterosexual marriage is immoral. Many people would call this belief hateful, intolerant and anti-inclusive. To many, me just voicing this belief is considered bullying, and, sadly, it is true that there are faith extremists who express hateful speech and action against people who identify within the lesbian-gay-bisexual-two-spirited-questioning community. For that I have to say, I am ashamed, and I wish to extend a sincere apology to anyone present here—Lisa, as you mentioned yourself and anyone else who's ever been discriminated against, harassed or bullied in any way for their sexual orientation.

While the Bible does teach against sexual sin, it also teaches that we should love others. So, although this does not mean that we have to agree with or condone Biblically immoral behaviour, it does mean that we need to respect and treat all human beings with dignity. With that being said, please understand that the majority of faith-based people concerned with Bill 18 do not hate LGBTQ-oriented people. We simply desire to stand by our convictions against such practices, which again includes all sexual acts outside of a heterosexual, monogamous marriage.

And we desire to reserve our right to freedom of conscience and religion. I do not have any tolerance for anyone who bullies or incites any kind of hate or disrespect towards an LGB—LGBTQ-oriented person, especially children. I believe that children of all ages, gender, sexual orientations and races should be respected and treated with dignity as all humans are entitled to. However, as a citizen, I stand to defend my faith and faith-based independent schools from being forced to have gay-straight alliance clubs or any type of clubs that would promote concepts contradictory to their faith.

Parents pay money to send their kids to school, as many people have noted, and so they expect that a—certain beliefs will be upheld and taught when they pay for their children, particularly to go to a school that will teach them the same values they hold. Forcing such schools to have GSA clubs is in direct contradiction to their beliefs and, in a sense, is bullying those who hold the Biblical Christian world view; thus, Bill 18 violates the constitutional right of freedom of religion and belief.

Moreover, if the heart of Bill 18 is supposed to be the desire that all children have the right to feel safe and accepted in school, why does the bill promote this protection more exclusively for one group than for all groups of victims? As many have already noted, and not tonight but in the press and whatnot, the 2006 Toronto District School Board research reports surveyed 105,000 students in the Greater Toronto Area and revealed reasons for being bullied: gender and religion averaged 5 per cent of students who were bullied and came in fifth and sixth place respectively, while body image remained the dominant reason for being bullied averaging 33 per cent, followed by grades or marks, 15 per cent, and cultural background, 13 per cent.

For antibullying clubs to be all-inclusive, they should start by having an all-inclusive name that would make all targets and victims of bullying feel welcomed. With all of that being said, the Bill 18 uproar has drifted far from actually addressing bullying. Regardless of whatever opinions and beliefs one may have about the LGBTQ lifestyle, the bill is supposed to be about protecting all children and providing a safe and inclusive school atmosphere for everyone.

After reading MLA of Steinbach Kelvin Goertzen's speech at the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba on May 6th, 2013, I would agree that Manitoba's bill is weak in comparison to other bullying legislation across North America. I think Bill 18 needs to clearly communicate that bullying behaviour is quote, severe, persistent or pervasive to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment, end quote. This is a common phrase I've found throughout many American statutory definitions of bullying on the National School Boards Association website. It explains that there is a level of severity implied by the term bullying that surpasses hurt feelings. As you've already heard from many of this bill's opponents, the way Bill 18 is presently worded can accuse someone of bullying when they inadvertently

hurt someone's feelings. This present definition has the potential to elevate minor situations of hurt feelings, detracting attention from real bullying. This is another reason I think the bill needs to be amended, and I've—I won't read it, but I've included Hawaii state's definition which also defines cyberbullying, as I know Bill 18 does, and also harassment, and it gives many examples of harassment, just to kind of give a more concrete picture of what bullying actually is.

Furthermore, as Mr. Goertzen explained in his speech, an antibullying bill should include instructions for investigative procedures which would be a timeline to report, investigate and resolve complaints of discrimination, harassment, intimidation or bullying. As well, it should include parental notification and involvement whenever a report is made and outline consequences for bullying behaviour. Sometimes, aggressive bullying behaviour is actually classified as a criminal offence, and, in cases of such suspicion, it should be reported to law enforcement.

In summary, I do not feel—or I do not support Bill 18 as it is currently written because it undermines religious freedom, elevates protection for one group of victims over multiple groups of victims and is incomplete in comparison to other North American bullying legislation.

I ask that you would amend Bill 18 so that it does not interfere with the religious—with religious beliefs and so that it objectively interprets bullying behaviour.

That concludes my speech. Thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Fehr, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Can we ask leave of the committee to include all of the presentation in Hansard?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee to include the whole presentation in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

(Comparative to Bill 18, Hawaii State defines bullying as "any written, verbal, graphic, or physical act or acts that: (1) A student or group of students exhibits toward another student or group of students; (2) Cause mental or physical harm to the other student or group of students and (3) Are sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to create an

intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment.

"Bullying includes conduct that is based on a student's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, physical appearance and characteristic, or socio-economic status; or a student's association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics."

It goes on to define cyber-bullying and harassment as well:

"Cyberbullying' means an act or acts exhibited by one student or group of students to another student or group of students that: (1) Are conveyed by electronic transmission via the Internet, a cellphone, a personal digital assistant (PDA), or a wireless hand-held device; (2) Cause mental or physical harm to the student or group of students that receives the electronic transmission; and (3) Are sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment.

"Harassment' means harassing, bullying, including cyberbullying, annoying, or alarming a student or group of students by engaging in conduct that includes: (1) Striking, shoving, kicking, or otherwise touching a student or group of students in an offensive manner or subjecting that student or group of students to offensive physical contact; (2) Insulting, taunting, or challenging another student or group of students in a manner likely to provoke a violent response; (3) Making verbal or non-verbal expressions that cause another student or group of students to feel uncomfortable, pressured, threatened, or in danger because of reasons that include the student's or group's actual or perceived, threatened, or in danger because of reasons that include the student's or group's actual or perceived race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, religion, physical appearance and characteristic, and socio-economic status, or association therewith, that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment, or interferes with the education of a student or group of students, or otherwise adversely affects the educational opportunity of a student or group of students; (4) Name calling, making rude gestures, insulting, or teasing another student or group of students who, as a result, feels humiliated,

intimidated, threatened, or embarrassed; (5) Making a telephone call without the purpose of legitimate communication; (6) Making repeated communications anonymously, at extremely inconvenient hours, or in offensively coarse language on campus or other department of education premises, on department of education transportation, or during a department of education-sponsored activity or event on or off school property; (7) Causing fear as to prevent other students or groups of students from gaining legitimate access to or use of school buildings, facilities, services, or grounds such as restroom facilities; and (8) Physically harming, physically restraining, threatening, or stalking, or a combination of the foregoing")

Floor Comment: Can I just ask what that means?

Mr. Chairperson: Maybe I can explain. All of our—all of the proceedings of this evening are recorded and will be in what we call Hansard, which allows all of our discussion to be recorded and then read at a later time. What this will do is actually include the written—your written materials as well as what you actually said on the record. So it'll appear all together in Hansard. Okay?

Ms. Fehr: Okay, thank you.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for the presentation that you put together for us this evening, and thank you for taking the time to come to the Bill 18 committee hearing with your thoughts and reflections on Bill 18.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks, Linda, for your presentation, very well-researched, and thanks for the question on what putting something in Hansard actually means because some of us who've been around here, some might say, too long, but those around—been around here for a while, we sort of take these things for granted, so I'm glad that you asked.

You know, I just want to say I appreciate, you know, what you did at the beginning. And you apologized to anybody who has been bullied as a result of different things that you might not have been responsible for, but it showed your heart. And I think that's important, that you show a heart for people, that you show a heart for anyone who is being bullied, and that's what we're trying to do here. We're trying to find a bill that's going to protect all kids, and we just continue to hear from people who have been bullied who say this wouldn't have helped them, and I'm actually a believer that the best person

to judge whether or not a bill would protect somebody who is being bullied is actually the person who's being bullied, not actually government. I think people would know for themselves whether or not the bill would help them. So thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks again for your time.

Now call on Taija Jarvis, private citizen.

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

Ms. Taija Jarvis (Private Citizen): Well, I do, but it's handwritten, and even I can't read my notes, so I'm not going to photocopy them to you.

Mr. Chairperson: No problem at all. You may proceed whenever you're ready with your presentation.

Ms. Jarvis: My name is Taija-Rae Jarvis. I'm 26 years old, and last year I was employed with a term position in the Hanover School Division as an EA, and the school that I was at, Ms. Nancy Allan visited. You were at the Landmark school for our grand opening, so I know you've been there. *[interjection]* Yes, the greenhouse.

Last year, as an EA, I witnessed several cases of bullying on the schoolyard, so I have experience as both a student and an EA, someone with a little bit of authority in the school system. And I'm glad that something is finally being done about the bullying. However, reading—after reading the bill and doing some research, and based on my own experience, like I said, as both a student and an EA, I believe that Bill 18, as written, will be an ineffective way to deal with bullying.

* (19:30)

I have two main concerns with Bill 18 as written. The first concern is that the wording is vague when it comes to the actual definition of bullying, but the wording is actually really strong when it comes to what will be expected of all schools, including faith-based schools, and I believe that strong wording will infringe upon our freedom of rights as religious citizens.

Bullying is a very hot topic right now. Last year, as an EA, I attended assemblies on bucket filling, which is telling kids about the importance of being kind to everyone and the dangers of bullying, and listened to class lectures on the importance of being

kind to everyone. And then the recess bell would ring and I would go out for my supervision, and it never failed, students would come up to me, Miss Jarvis, so and so called me a chocolate bar, in reference to their brown skin. Or I would witness the German kid being bullied simply because he was from Germany and had a different accent. And then one time a girl was called a slut because it got—like, it got out that she had a crush on someone. And so, yes, bullying kids can be really cruel.

Rewind to when I was in school. In grade 9 our graduating class was around 70 people. We were really small in Mitchell, Manitoba—well, yes, Manitoba—never mind. There were only two classes and we were all a really tight class. We knew each other really, really well. And two boys in our class—there was one who was openly gay, had a sleepover one night with a jock in our class, and it got out that they experimented sexually with each other. The wrong person found out, and within two days, both boys were pulled from school because the bullying was so bad. And one boy eventually did return to school, the openly gay student—he's still gay. He eventually did return to school, but the jock, whose reputation was ruined because this got out, never returned to school. So he didn't come back and he never finished his high school education because the bullying was so bad in school.

Another time, when my brother was in grade 3, he was relentlessly bullied and mocked by his peers because he was brown. The bullying was so bad that my mother pulled him, too, from school and home-schooled him from—remaining year, and he did return.

Both of these groups, both the gay one and my brother, who is of colour, would be protected under the bill, which is a good thing, but I do fear that, well, there are some students who are not.

I, too, was a bully in school, and the people that I picked on specifically were Christians. I wasn't always a Christian, and I made fun of their outdated beliefs, and, truth be told, Christians were easy targets because I noticed that they never retaliated back. I remember one time I approached a well-known Christian girl and accused her of judging me. In truth, she had never said or done anything to me; I just felt threatened by her and so I attacked her. Then the next day she approached me and apologized to me and said that she didn't want to give off the feeling of judging me, and I thought she was crazy because she actually never did anything to

me and I was just looking for a way to attack her and bully her.

I think all students deserve to be protected. I think, in addition to protecting all students, I think the bill should also better address how teachers can deal with a bully. How is it that you can have assemblies and class lectures on bullying and then 15 minutes later you have to deal with it on the schoolyard?

I think it's because bullying is actually an issue of the heart. Hurt people hurt people. In school, yes, I was a bully, but my home life was broken. I was—at home I was being sexually abused by a male figure in my life, and that damage at home was showing up in my actions to others at school.

Bullying is unacceptable no matter what, but maybe more attention should actually be given to the bully to find out if there are any issues going on at home. Even seeing the kids who are bullying at school, you know from some of these kids that are coming from broken homes that there is a lot more going on behind the scenes than just an issue of making fun of someone because they're brown. Some of these kids have been in 12 foster homes by the time they're 5, so being an EA you see a lot of the brokenness in students, and a lot of that brokenness comes out in the schoolyard.

I don't think all issues of bullying are black and white. When a child is a bully at school, perhaps the child is being hurt at home, whether mentally, physically, sexually or any other sign of abuse.

I am thankful and I am proud to be a Canadian. Every Remembrance Day when I stand in that moment of silence to remember those who died so that I can have the freedom to believe what I want, I always tear up. Or when I sing O Canada, I belt out the words God keep our land glorious and free. I mean it from the bottom of my heart.

I am glad that I live in a country where I can live out my beliefs. I do not have to fear being put to death because I read my Bible in public. I am also thankful that I live in a country where gay people are not killed because they are simply gay. And, sad to say, there are countries around the world where both of these are true. You can be killed for being a Christian and you can be killed for being a gay. And I am thankful that I live in a country that is not like that at all. And I'm thankful that I live in a country where I can come speak to a committee like this and

my opinion can be heard because in places around the world you can't do that, either.

So this is where my issue, my second issue with Bill 18 comes in. I do believe that it takes away our freedom to believe that we want to believe. Independent faith-based schools have the right to believe what they want, and that includes the right to believe that any sexual outside marriage is sin. Independent faith-based schools should have the right to not accommodate clubs that are contrary to their beliefs, but I don't just say this because I'm coming from a Christian point of view. I also believe that there were an independent Muslim faith-based school, I do not think that I should be given right as a Christian to go in and form a Christian organization because they have their beliefs and they have the right to believe them.

Like I said, we in Canada have the right to believe what we want, and we are very thankful.

Thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Jarvis, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Just want to thank you very much, Ms. Jarvis, for your passion in your speech and your courage in the stories in which you shared with us. As Minister Allan has spoken, that this has really become a safe place for people to share their stories, and we want to thank you very much for your experience professionally but also personally, and for taking time tonight to present to us. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you very much. My colleague from St. Paul was saying that we're not allowed to clap here at the table, but if we could, we would have been clapping for you. It took a lot of—

An Honourable Member: Clapping and cheering in our hearts for you.

Mr. Goertzen: —in our hearts for you—a lot of bravery for you to do that. And speaking for somebody on the front lines of education, we appreciated that. Wish I had talked to you a year ago, you know, that—about that filling of the bucket, because my son, who was 6 at the time, came home and he asked for a Slurpee. I told him no, and he looked at me and he said, Dad, you're emptying my bucket. And—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Jarvis. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Goertzen.

Mr. Goertzen: —bucket before, that would have helped.

You know, I want to say, it took a lot of courage, and not just to be here, not just to present, to talk about your very personal experience, but also to talk about the fact that you were a bully, and about it being for religious reasons, and that's often excluded and not talked about. We've seen surveys in Seven Oaks, also the Toronto one that's often cited, that that's a very common reason for being bullied, is for issues of religion, so you brought a lot of insight to us today and reasons why this bill isn't what it should be and what kids need it to be. And I want to thank you so much for being here.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks again for your time.

We'll now call on the next presenter, Carmelle Friesen, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Friesen. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Carmelle Friesen (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. You may proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Ms. Carmelle Friesen: My name is Carmelle Friesen, and I'm here to talk about some of the issues that I see arising from Bill 18 as proposed, although, at this point, I'm not sure that I could tell you anything new. You've probably heard it all.

I'm here also to talk about my work relationship with legislation. You see, I have a professional background in labour relations. I've been part of many 'negotia'—I've been a part of negotiating many collective agreements with my previous employer. Collective bargaining, as you are aware, is where two parties come together to draft wording that will benefit the workplace, and although the intention of coming together and drafting a workable collective bargaining agreement can be difficult, at the end of the day, both parties are successful in coming to agreement or they strike.

What you do not get to hear about is the different ways that a collective bargaining agreement

gets interpreted after the parties have signed the documents and gone home. Wording that was drafted to be harmonious and work for the better of the employees now causes grief and strife among the management and the unions. Grievances are filed, investigations are completed, and outcomes are settled or sent to an arbitrator.

*(19:40)

How does this relate? Well, with the vague definition of the proposed bullying legislation, we're in for a lot of grief and strife. Vague definitions make it hard to enforce rules. These definitions so far have no consequences.

One of the big differences between a unionized workforce and Bill 18 and schools is that the workforce hires people to help with the grief and strike. Is the Province planning on adding this type of government-paid position to each and every school? Grievance handling is a full-time position with adults; I can't even imagine how much more full-time it would be with children.

I had the privilege of being part of a very first collective agreement and sat in on every conversation that happened with every single article. My memory is exceptional. This all happened 12 years ago and I still know those conversations based on the articles; I still can tell you who was sitting where and who was in attendance. About a year after the initial negotiations and a couple of grievances later related to how managers were interpreting the collective agreement different from the union's interpretation, I remember saying to my manager, I know now why there might only be one Bible but there are so many different religions. We all have different interpretations.

Grievances in the work world may—cost money to resolve. You have lawyers. You have time off work. You have arbitrators. You have hurt feelings. Arbitrators can cost \$30,000 and upwards, depending on the length of time required to hear one case. The proposed wording is going to cause grievances among us because it's open for interpretation and it's too vague. We cannot allow for hurt feelings to be part of the definition. We also cannot afford to have hurt feelings at all in the definition. How are people going to be able to afford to defend themselves? What are the consequences? How do they wipe their slate clean? I guess, perhaps, my question is, what is the grievance process? Who's going to carry those costs? Investigations cost money. The enforcement of the rules costs money. Everything costs resources,

something our school system is already in short of supply.

You would be required to investigate. Who's going to investigate? Are these people trained in investigations? Where are the meetings going to be held? Space is already an issue in our schools. Who would be interviewed? How would you interview a grade 1 child without having them fear or feel singled out or putting words in their mouth?

Let me talk about what happened when new legislation was introduced—the new legislation involving bullying in the workplace was introduced in about 2011. What happened was employees who didn't like other employees started putting in bullying complaints or harassment complaints. These adults were trying to get fellow adults fired. They didn't like them. Somebody looked at me and laughed at me, I feel that I was being bullied. It took the employer and the union to band together and tell the employees that should there be another complaint that is unfounded, we would be pressing harassment charges because now they were wasting our time, our resources and our dollars. This was not the initial intention of the bullying legislation in the workplace.

I want to add that by trying to make people come together and remove silos, the reverse effect often happens; I've seen it. People start working in cliques instead of forming teams. You've probably already seen it amongst your own political parties. If, as adults, we can't get it right, how do we expect children to get it right?

What happens—oh, your proposed wording excludes lots of groups. A true antibullying bill wouldn't exclude anyone. What happens when a private school does not go with the GSA legislation? Do you cut their funding? Because according to workplace bullying, cut—a threat to cut funding is part of the bullying act.

Please understand that I think your intentions are good, but the consequences of good intentions can be disastrous. There's many programs that the government currently funds that I don't necessarily agree with.

I'd like to thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Friesen, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much, Ms. Friesen, for sharing your insight, and this is a new way that

we had a presentation tonight, with—including in it labour, so thank you very much. It was interesting how I was—I followed the workplace bullying act too, and interesting to see how that implementation has been working.

I want to assure you, though, that this Bill 18 is about protecting all children. Thank you very much.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks, Carmelle. That was very unique in terms of working in the whole labour relations aspect of it and all the different things that could come from that, and I think you're right. I think it would be very troubling and difficult to enforce from a teacher's perspective, from a school's perspective.

Do you have any ideas in terms of, you know, what would be the kind of things you'd like to see in a definition of bullying, or do you think legislation at all is sort of the right way to approach these things?

Ms. Carmelle Friesen: I think part of this is already covered in legislation under human rights. Is there any wording that I'd like to see in legislation? I think it needs to be defined better. I also think there's too much in one bill. There's different sections that need to be broken out into separate bills.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time this evening.

We'll now call on Desiree Loeppky, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Loeppky. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Desiree Loeppky (Private Citizen): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll ask the staff to help you distribute those, and you may proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Loeppky: Thanks for getting my last name right. You're one of the first, I think, ever.

Hello, committee. Thank you so much for this opportunity to present to you and for taking time to serve in Legislature. I know it's been a lot of long evenings, it's been hot, lots of people, hearing a lot of the similar things. And I just want to say I don't take it lightly that you serve us in this way. I'm so grateful to be in a country that I can come before you and do something like this. This is my first opportunity doing something like this, and I don't feel, like, super intimidated, and so I just thank you for making me feel safe here.

My name is Desiree Loeppky, and I'm speaking to you today about some concerns I have about Bill 18. I want to start by saying that I am against bullying in any and every single way, shape or form and I believe that all students should feel safe in school. I agree that children should not be living in fear or harassed for any reason at all.

I would like to respectfully say that I believe Bill 18 will not be effective in combating the issue of bullying in schools. The definition of bullying is weak and so vague as to include hurt feelings. If a student loves a sports team and another student happens to really dislike that team and says that his favourite team is better and he'll likely not say it in such a nice way because, let's be honest here, kids aren't usually worried about poise, filters or being politically correct. According to this bill, the first student could go home and say he was bullied, and what are teachers supposed to do? A possible example is that if a teacher asked a student to try a little bit harder, if the student gets offended, his or her feelings are hurt, according to Bill 18's definition, his teacher has just bullied him. I think there should be a clearer definition written, and it can protect teachers, as well.

I looked into some bullying laws around mostly in North America and I really liked what North Dakota had to say. They defined the conduct as something being so severe, pervasive or objectively offensive that it substantially interferes with the student's educational opportunities, or that it places the student in actual and reasonable fear of harm, that also places the student in actual and reasonable fear of damage to property or of the student.

I think that is an effective definition and, I think, pointing out also that it's repeated acts, singling somebody out, I think that's very important, intentional acts of harassment, not an insensitive, off-the-cuff remark that is made without thinking. People don't always think before they speak, including adults, and it's easy for people's feelings to be hurt all the time. But while I don't think it's a good idea for anyone to make those kinds of remarks, I don't believe a single offhanded comment warrants the charge of bullying. Bill 18 places hurtful but inadvertent comments on the same level as severe physical and verbal abuse. This confusion will make it very challenging for any school administrators or principals to use common sense and to ensure that any disciplinary measures that are taken are appropriate and effective. Some forms of student interaction are more negative. They are more

harmful and more damaging than others, and the law needs to reflect these differences.

The attempt to decrease bullying is admirable. Thank you for taking time to do this and even, I want to say, thank you to Ms. Allan for doing that. It's so admirable and I agree with you that it should be addressed, but not in a way that undermines parts of our freedoms and pushes beliefs on others. It seems Bill 18 is doing the very thing it seeks to prevent: bullying. Forcing faith-based, independent schools to have programs that go against their beliefs is bullying and it violates their freedom of religion. Parents are 'spicking' specific schools for their values that their children are taught. Do parents not have the right to choose what school their children attend based on their values rather than the state dictating?

And I say that with utmost respect. I'm not a parent, but I hope to one day be, and that is why I'm speaking up now.

* (19:50)

I was bullied in elementary school. Kids are cruel. There was a girl who, whenever she was in my class—grades 1, 3 and 6—to be precise, she made my life miserable. I often went home crying. She teased me, was mean, called me horrible names, some words, even now that I can't—as an adult, I have trouble—I won't even say that word because it just bothers me, it irks me, it makes me feel dirty and gross. She called me horrible names. She tried to manipulate me, told terrible things about me to other people that were not true, and she got them to join in. I even remember a group of them following me into the bathroom and laughing at me while I cried. That was the last straw.

When they left I told another student I couldn't be at school anymore, and I left for the rest of the afternoon. I went to see my dad. Luckily, he lived just across—or he worked right across the street. It even got so bad that my parents went to the teacher and the principal of the school. To their credit, they took action. Someone ended up coming in to speak to our class about bullying. The girl who bullied me, she was talked to. Her parents were involved and she was told to apologize. She called me on the phone to say sorry and mentioned it was because she had to. I didn't mind, right—I didn't mind. I just wanted it to be safe and I wanted it to be over.

There weren't too many problems after that. I received a few mean glares, mean looks, and lots of ignoring but, overall, after that, I was left alone. I have forgiven her and I've had a lot of healing and

wholeness made in my heart, and I want to give credit to God for that in my life. And I'm happy to report now that, as an adult, I still see this girl who bullied me. I still see her from time to time and we say hi, and we even have light conversation. As an adult, I doubt she would behave the way she did in sixth grade.

But kids aren't always kind. They're not thinking about those kinds of things. I am against bullying, and I believe in tolerance towards all people of all races, religions, size, and sexual orientation. But why can't independent, faith-based schools then have the same tolerance extended towards them as well?

I am a Christian and I believe in being inclusive and that no student should ever be bullied for any reason, including their sexual orientation. But far more children are bullied for body image, grades, the friends they have, the clothes they wear and their ethnicity over their sexual orientation.

Many who oppose Bill 18 as written are not opposed to students being allowed to create support groups for gay classmates, but for protecting a—but protecting a minority group but not extending that same protection to other students is unfair. Every single student should feel safe at school and should never be bullied for any reason ever. I feel this bill could be better written to serve and protect all students, rather than just a minority group. There are also many other minority groups that are not included in these clauses, and I think they deserve to be included as well.

The heart behind the bill of making schools safe and bully-free is good. I love it; that is fantastic. But with poorly written legislation containing unclear consequences and a vague definition, I do not believe it will fully accomplish its purpose. This bill could be rewritten to a higher Canadian standard at a provincial and/or federal level that includes the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Please rewrite Bill 18 to include a clear definition of bullying, its consequences, and open it up to include protection of all students, rather than one group without infringing on our national rights and freedoms.

Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak to you guys today. You have been elected by the people to represent them and that is a huge responsibility. Thank you—I thank you for not taking that responsibility lightly. I'll pray for God to give you wisdom to determine what to do with this issue

that is so close to the hearts of very many Manitobans.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation this evening, Ms. Loepky.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much, Ms. Loepky, for your passionate presentation, and I'm also very grateful that you had the support of your parents and the school and the courage to talk to them, and we hope that for every student in Manitoba schools. So thank you, again, for giving of your time and enlightening us.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks, Desiree, for your presentation and for re-emphasizing that you want all kids to be protected. And we keep hearing that over and over again from so many kids who've been bullied who are saying they're not included in this and they feel abandoned, and that's—that's not what we want from an antibullying bill. And I appreciate you emphasizing that.

You also brought up a point about teachers and the possibility of teachers getting caught into a weak definition. I appreciate that. We haven't heard that from as many presenters. We've certainly heard that privately from some teachers. They're not really encouraged to speak up, but we had the opportunity to hear from them.

Do you think if, under this—because it's such a weak definition—that there should be a specific clause that identifies what is not bullying? So, for example, so that teachers would know that doing their job and what they're expected to do in the schools, that that would not be defined as bullying for protection for them.

Ms. Loepky: I think the clearer you can make it, the better. If there are clear parameters set, you know what you can and you cannot do, and teachers definitely need to be protected. So I think, I mean, it's most important to say, like—like define what bullying is, but I think also to say, like, for teachers, maybe there should be a clause for teachers in there saying, this is what you're protected from, this is what you're okay to do. I'm not a teacher. I've thought about going into it. *[interjection]* I should. Thank you. And I just think that teachers need the protection as well.

So as far as what should not be written—should be written to say what is not bullying, that's

definitely not a bad idea. That's something highly to—I'd say, to consider.

Mr. Goertzen: And I will consider it and might act on your suggestion. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further question, thanks again for your time.

Now call on our next presenter, David Grienke, private citizen. Mr. Grienke, do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. David Grienke (Private Citizen): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: And do I have the pronunciation of your last name correct?

Mr. Grienke: Grienke, yes. Grienke.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed whenever you are ready.

Mr. Grienke: Okay. Good evening, honourable members of the Legislative Assembly. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak tonight and share my story and concerns. My wife and I have two children, a daughter who is 7 and in grade 2 and a son who just started preschool yesterday. I want to quickly outline what I'm going to speak about tonight. I'm going to cover my personal experience with bullying and then a few concerns I have with this bill.

So it all started when I was 2 years old; I nearly froze to death as a kid. It left me with permanent damage to my fingers and toes. They're—I have big knuckles, stubby and short fingers, and, in fact, one finger does not work correctly; it's seized straight. So it was a clear difference from most other kids. I was also pretty small for my grade. I was that kid that hit puberty in grade 10 and finished in grade 11, so I was always little for my age. I was also a farm kid from a rural background. Looking back now, I was the perfect storm of conditions that attracted unwanted attention. There were many instances in my growing up where I was physically bullied in the halls, where I was called ugly, where I was humiliated in front of my peers as some kid would make fun of my fingers, where because I was a farm kid I was mocked and called names.

I do not know if 15 or 25 years ago there was language in the legislation that would guide teachers in dealing with bullies, but I can tell you from personal experience that it was not effective. I do not remember understanding what a bully is or even the word bully or what to do if I am bullied, and, in fact,

I never felt comfortable reaching out to my peers or teachers.

I do not know if this continues as an issue, as, in fact, to your knowledge, you are not tracking any statistics regarding bullying. My first concern is, how, then, will you know whether this amendment is helping anything? Where's the start? Would it not be more logical to review, amend and create legislation out of a need or documented trend? I work as a safety professional and I use statistics, reports and numbers as well as assessments from multiple viewpoints to decide where I need to focus my attention and efforts and what they look like. How, then, is this amendment helping kids if you do not know information about who is getting bullied and why?

You have probably heard many, many people refer to the 2006 Toronto District School Board research report and the various reasons for students being bullied. That is exactly how to address this problem. Kids are being bullied for body image, grades, cultural background, followed by gender and religion. This amendment should focus on body image and grades, then, that would lead, if this was Toronto.

Now, we need something for Manitoba, which leads to my second concern, the fact your amendment promotes a few select groups over others. Where does your legislation cover kids who are overweight, who come from rural areas or other cultures, who have different beliefs? Stats Canada in 2006 showed only 2 per cent of the Canadian population over age 18 and up identified as being gay. If that trends towards younger children, you are excluding 98 per cent of the kids to promote and support the 2 per cent.

And I just want to interrupt, I'm opposed to all bullying, and I have relatives that are gay and I love them dearly, so it is something that's close to my heart, so I don't want that to come off as the basis for this.

* (20:00)

I feel the bill should be all-inclusive or state no groups at all. I've conducted harassment training with over a hundred individuals in the last year as part of my job in orientations, and a comprehensive list of groups is already found in Manitoba regulation 217/2006, part 1, section 1.1, clause 1. It's the definition and it reads as follows: objectionable conduct—and this is referring to harassment—is based

on race, creed, religion, colour, sex, sexual orientation, gender-determined characteristics, marital status, family status, source of income, political belief, political association, political activity, disability, physical size or weight, age, nationality, ancestry or place of origin. It's a very long list that I've read many times and I read it to every employee so they know where they cannot make jokes, make fun of others and to have respectful speech. You will notice here it does not say anything about the Bombers or the Roughriders, so we are still allowed to make fun of them at my workplace.

An Honourable Member: Of the Roughriders fans.

Mr. Grienke: Yes.

Please speak to the worth of all groups in your amendment or leave it up to The Human Rights Code to protect, but do not allow your amendment to appear as if you are favouring a select group.

My third concern is an issue I have with the idea that students can form their own groups and that the school needs to support and promote them. It does not make sense to allow kids who are (1) are hurt and broken from abuse to lead and form a group. We've heard many instances of people that were terribly broken through terrible abuse, may not be mature enough to use their group for—to not use their group for retaliation or ill purpose and whose interests would contradict those of another group. Go back to my story. I was a hurt kid who was physically attacked by other kids, verbally abused and made fun of. I greatly disliked, even hated these children and teenagers who did this to me. If I would have had a group of like-minded hurt kids with me, I may have gone to a dark place of revenge and retaliation.

Would it be not more effective to form one group that all bullied kids are welcome to and put in charge of this group a few empathetic teachers to lead and nurture and support these kids? This seems to me a better use of resources and a better use of the staff you are paying to educate these children. The idea of an ABC club, or antibullying club, seems more effective. Also, there's the fact that this legislation will require all publicly funded schools to follow this legislation. For example, a faith-based school would contradict its stated values by promoting a club such as a GSA. An alternative to this, the just-mentioned ABC group, would not contradict their values and be a more effective way of protecting these kids.

Finally, I wonder if this elected government will listen to the outpouring of debate and concern from the people of Manitoba regarding this bill. Will the wording of this bill be changed? In the recent election, the NDP had 46 per cent of the popular vote and the Conservatives had 43 per cent of the popular vote, with the Liberals carrying the rest. I think it would be important that it would be a collaborative effort on a very important bill, that affects the non-voting population exclusively, that it be a collaborative effort. Former Provencher MP Vic Toews recently stated that if the provincial legislative-legislator-Legislature does not amend Bill 18 to address concerns of faith-based organizations, schools and communities, the only remedy may be an application to the courts to decide if the legislation is compliant with Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If this ends in courts, it will cost taxpayers a lot of money, make the bill ineffective and will not help any children at all.

If this government truly cares about all kids, it should track and find out data on bullying. It should remove the promotion of certain other-of certain groups of others and the potential violation of religious freedoms. I agree 100 per cent that all bullying is bad. And there may be other issues on this, and I'm sure they've been addressed in the hundreds before me, and I hope this government will amend Bill 18 to address them. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Grienke, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much, Mr. Grienke. I'm a farm girl from Saskatchewan, so you can read into that whatever you like. I just wanted to thank you very much for your presentation, sharing your personal story with us and enlightening us, and as well as your beliefs and your reflections on Bill 18. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: I don't think the minister declared she was a Roughrider fan, though, so we're okay still, although the pen's green, so maybe.

David, thanks for your presentation. Appreciate you mentioning 'pecifically' about statistics and the need to have data. I think that's a good point. Heard a lot about the Toronto survey, and I'm assuming that's because there's not much else out there in Manitoba to cite. I think there's been a couple smaller school surveys, but very little in terms of provincial-wide data, so I take that point to heart. And that's certainly

something I think I'll be suggesting in terms of amendments, in term-getting real data so that we can act on things in the future from the perspective of data.

I want to ask you the question, though, because you brought forward your own personal experience on being bullied. Do you think if Bill 18 had been around at that time that your bullying would have stopped as a result of Bill 18?

Mr. Grienke: I don't think so, and, in fact, reviewing the existing public school act, it seems like, legislatively, everything is there. However, we have a problem of enforcement, education and teachers and principals actually following what the legislation says right now. I think that's more the critical issue that's going to help kids, is doing what we already have on writing, not making more legislation.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks again for your time.

Now call on Heidi Grienke, private citizen.

Good evening, Mrs. Grienke. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Heidi Grienke (Private Citizen): I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you may proceed whenever you're ready, with your presentation.

Ms. Grienke: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Although I count it an honour and a privilege to stand before you today and share my opinions with you, I have to be honest; I would rather be getting a root canal. This is one of the scariest things I have done, but because I want my kids to stand up for their values and their beliefs, I will, today, stand up for mine.

I am no great debater. I am no great orator, but I can share with you my own experience with being bullied as a child. I have struggled with my weight since puberty. Got to love puberty. It's a tough struggle. Even when people around you are supportive and kind, and my family was always a soft place to land, but kids at school were really cruel. I was called names. I was picked on. One of my worst memories is the boy, who I just thought was dreamy, he drew this unflattering picture of me, and then he showed it to all the kids in the class, and then they all laughed and laughed; it was a very funny joke. And I was even attacked physically by other students, all because I was a bit overweight.

Now, ever since Bill 18 has come into the news, I've been thinking, what would have helped me in school all those years ago? And I know one thing that would not have helped me. And that would have been a club made for just all the chubby kids. I already felt like I stood out because I was overweight. Now, if you had said, you know what? You should make a club, and all the other chubby kids can join you and you can talk about being chubby and how that sucks. That would've made me feel even more like an outcast.

A much better option, in my opinion, would be a club, like, where any child can come who is feeling bullied for whatever reason, like the ABC clubs. I think this type of club would attract many kids who otherwise feel they don't belong, because in the end that's really what any child wants. They want to feel accepted, they want to feel loved, and they want to feel like they have a place to belong.

And that's all I have for you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Grienke, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for being here this evening, and thank you very much for having the courage to tell your personal story. We appreciate you being here and, you know, I just think you're beautiful and thank you for being here.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks, Heidi, for being here tonight. I know David's proud of you and your kids are going to be proud of you, and maybe you had a bit of time, you can go do something that's more fun than a root canal, but not quite as fun as this, I suppose.

You know, I just want to say thank you for sharing your story, and I keep hearing from so many people who are reliving really difficult times, and makes these hearings really emotional. But it really reinforces the fact that we need something that's going to protect all kids. Having 97 per cent of kids not protected doesn't make sense in an antibullying bill. You've really helped reinforce that and have given us, I think, a lot of courage to continue to push for a bill that's going to protect all kids, not just a few. Thanks very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time.

Now call on Joseph Luke Wiebe, private citizen.

Good evening, Mr. Wiebe. Do you have written materials for distribution? We'll ask the staff to help you distribute those. And you may begin your presentation whenever you're ready.

* (20:10)

Mr. Joseph Luke Wiebe (Private Citizen): All right, thank you.

Good evening. I would first like to thank each and every individual of the Standing Committee for their time and energy spent ensuring Manitobans have a chance to be heard with regard to Bill 18. Thank you for the many hours you've spent preparing for these public hearings. I want to personally thank you for the time you've taken away from your families, as well as I have, and loved ones to hear the voice of Manitobans concerning the bill. I thank all the other presenters, as well, that have also taken the time and have had the courage to come speak about their convictions on Bill 18.

I took in a lot of information on this bill in the past months. Hearing many other opinions, both for and against, have led me to one commonality, if that's even a word. Bullying is wrong and it must be addressed in our school systems. I watched many kids get bullied growing up, many of whom I still regret to this day that I didn't stand up for. Watching them get punched in the back, shoulders, stomach and even in the face, and many other things multiple times every week, hair lit on fire, hair cut, all these things. What did they tell their parents or did they even have the courage to talk about it at home?

You see, the real problems start at home. It's at the home of the ones who bully where these issues start. Until we, as a nation, start promoting healthy family lifestyles and beliefs, we will not stop these bullies. You may think you're doing a good thing here with this bill and I commend you for trying, and I'm sure that you think you are, but consider this: We can't do this without attacking the root.

What do I mean by this? I want to give you a different illustration because I know I can't possibly use the words tonight to say what others have said in a different way. If I just try and say it the way they do, it'll just come out the same and I wanted to give you an illustration.

So take, for example, the weeds in the farmers' fields. They pose a problem to the quality and quantity of the food that can be produced. It doesn't matter how much sunlight, rain, and heat units the field experiences at and/or in the exact times they

need. If there isn't weed control, the potential of the crop will be greatly affected. The farmer must assess the situation, figure out a plan of action for weed control and figure not only what the weeds are but what will kill them—and I should say, stop them, would be a better word. We want to stop bullying.

The world evolves but some things never change. These weeds change. They become immune to certain chemicals, thus needing consistent research as David Grienke alluded to there, the research to create new pesticides that will attack the weeds and keep them from overtaking the crop for that growing season. The thing is there is no one product that can kill all the weeds and/or bullying, keep them from ever coming back. There will always be bullying. The fact that the farmer will always need to monitor this process and the government and/or families and/or teachers need to monitor this process, will always have to do that. That will never change.

It is a simple idea that there is always a need to acknowledge this problem, and that needs to be addressed right in the homes of every Canadian. I see that the government is proposing a bill that is actually infringing, and I feel—infringing on our freedom of religion and beliefs and, to be honest, I'm pretty disappointed that this could even go this far without more planning, accountability and public awareness before even coming close to part of our government.

We need to be aware of bullying and its poison, where it comes from, and how to stop it, control it. How to do this is, I believe, beyond the comprehension of any one of us individuals. None of us has a quick one-line answer, but I stand here today, a person that is not afraid to speak his opinion, and a person that, until this bill was written, had not much interest at all in politics. That has changed.

I'd like to close by asking each and every person here today to examine their own lives, why they live in Canada, and what they love about Canada and what they can do to make a difference in their own circles of influence. This is my hope for all the elected officials that help make our government what it is today, and I feel a very good government, a very good country to live in, and I feel very blessed for that. And I thank you all for—for that part you play in that.

While you examine the seriousness of this bill, keep in mind that a record 350–15, sorry, plus people are publicly speaking against it. This is a number that surpasses any and all such public hearings in past for

any particular subject. This should be reason enough to go back to the basics and rewrite this bill. The people that have spoken against this bill aren't the less educated, either. I personally know other professionals that have spoken—doctors, professors, retired school teachers, any and all different people—all members of the public that many people look up to for advice and as role models.

Please find within your duty to Manitoba and to our nation to ensure that you're taking every precautionary measure to write a bill such as Bill 18 with the proper wording, motive and consequences and/or actions against it that it should have to even be considered as part of our legislation.

I thank you for your time and appreciate the opportunity to speak to this matter.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Wiebe, for your presentation and for your comments and your reflections on Bill 18. We have had—we will have by the time this committee hearing is done, close to 300 presentations, and we have had people speaking in favour of Bill 18 so I just wanted to kind of correct the record in regards to everybody speaking against it.

Once again, thank you very much for being here. We appreciate your comments about Bill 18.

Mr. Goertzen: Joseph, thanks for taking the time and for joining the vast majority of people who've come and spoken against this bill. Appreciate you doing that. I—you know, you mention about you observing bullying when you were in school and I can tell you're emotional about—maybe had a little bit of guilt, about not being, standing up to that and, you know, I think a lot of people could—we've heard that from a lot of people, express the same sort of thing. It takes a lot of bravery to say that.

Madam Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

One of the things that have been bandied about is—as we try to make a bill that 97 per cent of the kids who are being bullied feel it doesn't address their needs, trying to make it stronger.

There's been talk about anonymous reporting of bullying so where individual schools, perhaps, or divisions would have places on their websites where students could report, anonymously, instances of

bullying because there's fear of reprisal, fear often of peer pressure, not to report things. Do you think that something like that could be helpful in a bill like this?

Mr. Wiebe: Absolutely, I think that would be wonderful. The kids that I didn't stand up for and sometimes did, certain ones, but there were many. I often in—10 years later, actually, to this day, still, when I see some of these people, I've asked for forgiveness and they've forgiven me for this but I can still not go back and help them in that time. And I feel like, if kids had a way to be able to do that, in exactly the way you just mentioned there, would be a wonderful way for them to do that without feeling singled out. Thank you.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Wiebe.

With that, we will now go to Tina Blatz. Do you have any written materials for the committee, Mrs. Blatz?

Ms. Tina Blatz (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Okay, well, the pages will help you—staff will help you distribute them, if you'd like to proceed.

Ms. Blatz: Good evening, Honourable Ms. Allan, members of the committee, my name is Tina and I want to just add a piece to what a lot of other people have said. And so I'll do the best I can.

Thank you for this opportunity where citizens can present their views and concerns and trust that they will be taken into consideration in the process of making a law that will affect us all. In regards to Bill 18, I have heard a lot of presentations on the first hearing night, September 4th, with different points. I can't recite them all so my presentation is an addition to most of them who are against Bill 18.

I am asking for freedom of beliefs to continue and for the bill to be rewritten that it is a well-being for each person in Manitoba. So, this is what I want to add tonight. Number 1, Canada has a higher authority that we are responsible to and for. Number 2, I want to encourage you to keep the authority that God has given you. Number 3, the hearts of kids is what needs to be considered due to bullying and for many other issues that we have in our lives.

We, as people in Canada, and leadership of Canada, have a higher authority that we are responsible to. Depending on the leadership of the

country, that is where the country goes. On our own, we will make wrong decisions because our feelings and personal insights, which are limited and affected by the fall of man in the beginning, according to the Bible, can and will influence us. We need God much more than we realize. All good comes from the Creator and sustainer of life so what I want to say with this point is, our country has been blessed, prospered and peaceful and favoured by many people for many years. I believe it is because God has been our authority and we have sought His way at how to govern Canada. God made people and gave healthy life-giving guidelines on how we need to live in order to have peace in our hearts which result in peaceful families, peaceful kids and a peaceful country, producing morally upright citizens. We do not need to decide what is right or wrong, it has been done. What I mean, it has—it's written in the Bible. What we do need to do is check whether our thoughts, plans and guidelines match up with God's and if they do, we are on the right track with the most wanted and needed outcome for our country. We are called to love on all people like God has loved on us. We are to love the person but not the wrong acts they are choosing to participate in. Therefore, we need to respect the Creator's laws as he says we are to live on this earth and not change them for our liking due to our beliefs, that if it feels good now, it must be right, because the results will be destruction. Truth can be trusted, not feelings. They can mislead us.

*(20:20)

For the longest time, Canada has held God's guidelines high, but we are drifting from them—away from them. This greatly disturbs me and many, many people in Manitoba. But even more is that God sees it and will not honour it when we make unmoral laws that are not good for our country. He loves us too much to let us go too wrong—and the wrong way too far. He will provide ways to bring us back, and it is very often through hardships. Do we want to make good choices now or wait for discipline to come our way? In the end, we will all surrender. So I strongly urge, let's remember our higher authority and then choose wisely today, letting God's guidelines be our country's guidelines because we are under His authority, no matter what we think. God has promised rewards and always keeps His promises.

I am here to strongly encourage the committee to keep the authority that has been given to you as a committee by God. Use it for His purpose and in the right way. Remember God's guidelines. Implement

them and keep them. Focus on what you were given authority over and leave what belongs to others alone. Some feel that our schools do not feel safe in regards to the teachings our children are to receive because of the government's directions. We must love all people and tolerate diversity but not be forced to teach a moral view or belief that we do not agree with or have it imposed on our children in our schools.

Children are not mature enough to tell their parents how to parent and what rewards and consequences to enforce, neither are students mature enough to say what goes and does not go into the classrooms or in the government. Kids need responsible, trustworthy parents, and citizens need responsible, trustworthy leadership over the country. God gave children parents to love them and train them, and the government was given to a nation to oversee the larger affairs of a country, not to tell us parents how—what we can teach and what we cannot teach. God has told us already what needs to be taught and how. We need to be reminded and encouraged to continue in these ways. We don't want our children to believe things God said are wrong as though they are now right. This will mess them up in their minds, hearts and lives. Also, on Judgment Day, it will not pass as truth or be exempt. We cannot fool God, but we can fool ourselves.

I believe life really starts after death—or after we die. My husband and I, along with many people in Manitoba, want our children to know truth, live by the truth, and to live a life of peace in their hearts and end up in heaven after death, the place we were meant to be forever. In this world, we can get away with wrong beliefs which hurt us in the long run, but on that day, truth will be truth and that will be it.

So I'm asking the committee to redo Bill 18 for religious freedom, which will affect a wide range of people in all businesses, schools, social life and, as well, the whole for the country. You, as committee, are responsible to God for the choices you choose for our province. We will all be blessed with a more peaceful way of living in the right way or head for bad consequences in our schools, families and as a country based on what you decide in regards to this bill. Let's do it right from God's perspective and for our good.

The hearts of kids and as—adults is where the real issues can be held with bullying, not just through Bill 18. People all over the world have hurts and it comes out in different ways. My children have been

bullied in school, and oh, the pain it caused. One of our children switched schools, where bullying is dealt with through consequences. He now loves school and is making good choices. The other one we home-schooled for a while and now goes to the same school our oldest son does and hopes she will do well.

Hurt people hurt people. How do we help children who have been hurt? We most often hurt others the way we have been hurt. The law helps from the outside and caring for their heart of pain changes them from the inside out. When the inside is changed, the bullying actions will stop. People who bullied need consequences and alongside someone who will help them on their journey of forgiving others, themselves—forgiving themselves and healing. They need to be heard, loved and hear the truth. Forgiving is a hard thing, but if we bring God into it, it is possible. God can and does heal hearts, speaks truth and restores people.

This goes for all hardship in our lives, addictions, workaholics, all sexual activities out of marriages and many, many more. Why do people do these activities? I believe that they believe that maybe these activities will help them meet the 'unmeet' need that they have in their lives. We all have unmet needs that must be met, so people try one thing or the other. Some die, never finding it. Others humble themselves and come to the point—realize that they need God; it's God who can heal them and restore them. God is the missing piece to our puzzle.

All in all, to effectively deal with bullying, the heart also needs to be considered. This is why God sent Jesus to save us. We are all in need of saving, whether we realize it or not. There is hope for the bully issues and all the others too.

In closing, I can, to some extent, imagine and I acknowledge the very challenging task of legislating what is right—good and right for all concerned because, as you say, Ms. Allan, there are many voices out there. I truly appreciate the often difficult endeavour in weighing the options to come to a right conclusion for all Manitobans. I want to confess that I have not prayed for our government as God calls Christians to. I have failed in asking God to grow me in this area. Because leadership is a great responsibility, it comes with great consequences and great blessings.

In regards to Bill 18, I would also like to repeat words spoken by Mr. Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, May 6, 2013, as follows:

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

Thank you.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Blatz. Now, questions from the committee.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much—much, Mrs. Blatz, for being here this evening and for your very personal comments about Bill 18. We appreciate the fact that you have taken the time to come here this evening, and thank you again.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Blatz, any response? Thank you, Minister Allan, for the question.

Mr. Goertzen, you have a question as well?

Mr. Goertzen: Tina, thank you for being here tonight. Have you ever spoken at a legislative committee before?

Ms. Blatz: Never. *[interjection]*

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Goertzen.

Mr. Goertzen: —lot of you—see, I get mixed up with that too. You probably *[interjection]* I'm a rookie.

You probably join a lot of other people who've done this for the first time. You did really well. You spoke with your convictions and your passion. We appreciate that. And I also want to make a point. You mentioned how consequences are important. They're absent from this bill. Other people have mentioned that. But you also added something else that a few others have mentioned, but maybe not as many, that there also has to be something to help the bully and for somebody to come alongside to help with restoration and to help heal the heart because, as you say, hurt people often hurt people.

So, thank you very much for your presentation. Appreciate that.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Blatz—any further questions from the committee? With that, thank you very much, Ms. Blatz, for your presentation.

I would like to now call up Carlos Sosa.

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

Mr. Carlos Sosa (Private Citizen): No.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Sosa: Good evening, members of the Legislative Assembly, members of the public.

This evening I speak to you as a person with a disability and in support of this very important piece of legislation. Bill 18 is a good move to help deal with the issue of bullying in our schools and to promote an environment that is safe and accepting of all students.

There are some members of the public who think this bill is just about allowing gay-straight alliances in our schools, but, in fact, there's a lot more to this very important piece of legislation. I'd also like to point out that I do support students who do want to start groups in the schools, who want to talk about issues of diversity and respect for others. These such groups do exist in universities and colleges. So what we're talking about already happens in post-secondary institutions.

This very important piece of legislation puts a spotlight on bullying within the school system and promotes diversity. As a person with a disability, I can remember being bullied as a student because I was different. What I do remember about the experience was that when I complained or brought it up to administration, that, in most cases, nothing was done to deal with the bullying and the harassment that was directed to me—towards me.

* (20:30)

I can recall teachers and principals telling me just to deal with it, in most cases. I can remember the comments that were said to me were very derogatory and very sexist in nature. I was at the point where I was almost ready to break down and even considered switching schools. I can even remember people, even with teachers' presence, having paper balls thrown at me. I wish legislation such as this existed when I went to school. If legislation such as this existed, I believe that a lot of the bullying and harassment that I endured would not have happened because there would have been avenues to deal with the issue. It is time—I can also recall that many students with disabilities at the school that I went to were also bullied and teased and harassed because they were different.

It is time that, as a society and as elected officials, that we all stand in strong opposition to bullying and harassment. It is also time that we start accepting people for who they are, regardless of their sexual orientation, race, income, faith or ability, just to name a few.

I call on you to support this very important piece of legislation that will have a positive impact on all who are vulnerable, especially students. I call on you to support this legislation strongly as a way of sending the strong message, that bullying and harassment is completely unacceptable.

Thank you for allowing me to speak this evening, and I do hope that there will be a day when we will not have to talk about students being bullied and harassed, all because they were different, but instead we can talk about how we are accepting of people, regardless of their abilities, sexual orientation, income—again, just to name a few. And I do thank you for the opportunity to allow me to share my points of view to this committee, and I do welcome your questions.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Sosa, and we will now move to questions from the committee.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Sosa, for being here this evening and providing us with your personal reflections on Bill 18, and thank you, as well, for talking about safe and inclusive schools, and all the best in your post-secondary education. Thank you for being here.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Sosa? Anything? Okay, with that there's another question from Mr. Schuler.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much, Carlos, for taking the time to come out today and spending some time at committee. We've had this referred to a lot of different things, one of them was a root canal, and sitting here hour after hour is tough, and we appreciate that you stuck it out. And everybody's presentation is important to the committee and it's important that everybody have the right to have their say and put on the record. So thanks for staying and making your presentation.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Sosa.

I would now like to call Heidi Friesen. Heidi Friesen?

Mrs. Friesen, do you have any written materials for the committee?

Ms. Heidi Friesen (Private Citizen): No, sorry.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: No? That's okay. That's fine. Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Heidi Friesen: Hi. I just want to thank—say thank you to everybody who's presented and I want to say thank you to everybody here who's listening on the committee. And I do apologize because I'm really not a public speaker, okay.

So my husband and I live in Winnipeg with our two children, aged 3 and 5 years, so as a parent I'm very concerned about bullying in our schools. Bullying is always wrong, and like most kids, I had the misfortune of being bullied as a child and I know the stress that it can place upon children. And it's amazing how the things that we were bullied for as kids, they stick with us as adults, you know. Because I was a kid where they put two other kids on the other end of the teeter-totter and they made fun of me and called me fatty and made fun of how I ran. Guess what? I still—I look in the mirror and I think I'm fat, but I'm not, but I think I am. And it's because of what the bullying that I experienced as a child, and it's—I mean, it's unfortunate, and I just really wish for all children to have that protection. So I think that this bill is very important that we have protection for our children.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

And I certainly hope that our schools will be required to notify parents if our children are involved in any bullying as either a victim or an aggressor. Because I know if it's my kids, I best definitely want to have a talk with them if they are being an aggressor to other children, and I want to make sure that that doesn't happen, so—I'd love to be—I'd love for all children to be protected against bullies so our children can focus on learning, as this is why we send our children to school, is so that they can learn.

Unfortunately, I do see some flaws in Bill 18 that need to be amended so this can do—bill can do as it is intended, to protect our kids from bullying.

Number 1, the definition of bullying is way too broad. It seems to me that a kid could be considered a bully for not inviting another kid to their party, causing hurt feelings. So Wikipedia had a good one, so I just thought I'd throw that out there: the use of force or coercion to abuse, intimidate or to aggressively impose a certain type of domination

over others. The behaviour is often repeated. One essential prerequisite is an imbalance of social and physical power.

Secondly, instead of fighting for the rights of all children, this bill promotes certain groups of children over others. If this bill is to protect all children, why would a club be called, you know, LGBTQ alliance? Why would the club not be called all-students alliance, so that the name would encompass all students?

Third, how can a bill to improve bullying be mandated before data is collected to determine the amount, severity and type of bullying that is occurring in our schools? How do we know what issues we need to address to reduce bullying if we have no data? Also, if we have no data, how can we prove the 'effectiveness' of the bill in reducing bullying? As a science student, it was of utmost importance to have a baseline, have a controlled group, have a random test group in order to determine if the treatment was effective. At the very least, we should be looking at studies done elsewhere.

And not to beat a dead horse, everybody's talked about the 2006 Toronto District School Board report, so I don't think I need to go over that again. And, in my own experiences, I was bullied because of the way I ran and my weight. So we know that it does happen for lots of reasons. So I do just question why the bill doesn't address, you know, the biggest top reasons for bullying based on that survey, although I would really prefer that we just get our own Manitoba survey so that, you know, we can really make sure that when the—a bill is in place that it is actually having the effect that we want it to have.

Number 3, Bill 18 violates religious freedom. Section 41(1.8) clearly states that schools must promote a human diversity policy that clearly violates the values and moral stand of many faith-based schools. We have chosen to send our children to private faith-based schools, so our children will have the added benefit of religious instruction in their school.

And, before I continue with that, what might be surprising to some people is that having different views on issues does not equate a bully. Yes, we do view homosexuality as a sin; however, we believe we are all sinners in need of a saviour and that those who believe are called to a different moral standard—so yes, but I'm a sinner, too. We all have sin, and, as far as we believe, and we all need a saviour, and

I need to live by a different moral standard because of my beliefs. That doesn't mean that somebody else needs to live by my moral standard. I certainly don't believe that, because if they don't believe what I believe, why should they have to live by my moral standard, right?

We do not think that anyone is without sin except for God Himself. The other wonderful things that our beliefs teach is us to love our neighbours as ourselves and to treat others how we would like to be treated. I've had the opportunity and the pleasure in my workplace of meeting people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered. Actually, they've all been really wonderful people. And it's actually been a really pleasant experience. And, yes, we have—I have a different viewpoint than they do, and—but you know what, we got along great. And it's just because, you know what, we realize that we all need to love each other for who they are and not to try to judge other people or to push their—our beliefs or values upon other people, so.

What my beliefs have also taught me is to treat those people with the same love and respect I wish to be treated. Furthermore, the Bible also tells me that every person matters to God. God loves lesbian, gays, bisexuals, transgendered and queer people as much as He loves me. And I just wanted to make that clear because unfortunately, and I do apologize if there's anybody here who has been abused by people because of their sexuality by—quote, unquote—people who call themselves, you know, Christians, it's wrong. And you know what, obviously, they're not showing a true heart for God if they've been persecuting you. And I am very sorry.

But the other thing is that Bill 18 requires religious schools to encourage and to teach viewpoints that are contrary to the moral standard we are called to because of our beliefs. And yet our beliefs do teach love and respect for all people. School is to teach our children about reading, math and science. School was never intended to be the place kids learn about sex. It is our duty as parents to educate our kids about sex. As a child, our school gave parents the opportunity to opt out of sex ed. My parents chose to opt out and rather instruct me at home. It seemed to work really well. I just don't understand why we can't have that option nowadays.

To me, Bill 18, I really think that it could be a wonderful antibullying law, but right now it just feels like a clear case of bullying by our governments to teach our children topics that are against our

religious beliefs. Bullying is wrong, whether it be by governments or students. So, if our government is actually concerned about bullying, they should stop bullying faith-based schools and they should amend Bill 18 to protect all children. Thank you very much for listening.

* (20:40)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Friesen, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much for your heartfelt presentation and your reflections on Bill 18. I appreciate them, and I just want you to know that any parent in our education system, if they so choose to opt out of sex-education on behalf of their student—on behalf of their child, can do that.

Floor Comment: May I comment, though.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Friesen.

Ms. Heidi Friesen: With the new curriculum that they're wanting to introduce with the—like the Egale curriculum. Am I correct in that there will be, you know, kind of sex-ed brought into every course, or am I incorrect in that?

Ms. Allan: There is no such curriculum.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much for staying as long as you have, and you mentioned, first of all, that you weren't very good at public speaking and then you proceeded to do this great job at public speaking. So you actually call yourself short, actually. You did a really good job.

And one of the things that I've noticed—and I've sat on quite a bit of committee—and that is individuals coming forward in some respects, horrified by some of the stories of abuse that have taken place. It's shocking for myself. But you mention that you were bullied and a lot of people have come forward and they were bullied for different reasons. Do you believe, here and now, that the legislation in front of you would have protected you when you were in school and you were being bullied for the reasons that were given? Would you be protected by this bill?

Ms. Heidi Friesen: Well, Bill 18 didn't cover the fat kids or the kids that ran funny, so I guess not. But, really, I mean, like I think other people have mentioned, I think it's really, it's a hard issue and I think that, you know what, our bullies probably need just as much counsel and love from the teachers

as the victims because, you know, oftentimes kids who are bullies—there's a reason behind it. I don't think that kids are born bullies. I think it's, you know, the upbringing, you know, poor experiences that they've had in their lives growing up.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time this evening.

We'll now call on Travis Friesen, private citizen.

Good evening, Mr. Friesen, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Travis Friesen (Private Citizen): I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you may proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Mr. Friesen: I'd like to thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak and express my concerns on the issues with the bill. My wife just spoke before me. We both stand together on the issues with this bill. I do agree that bullying needs to be addressed, and I do appreciate the ideas behind the bill and how you are trying to protect our children. As I need to know if my children are involved in bullying, whether they've been bullied or whether they are bullying somebody else because I believe that it's wrong in any shape or form to anybody.

There's more to bullying than just pure legislation. The root of the bullying truly lies in the heart.

I was born with a cleft lip and palate. I know what it was like to be bullied, like many people that have shared here today and previously. I got bullied a lot when I was a kid, and it was a lot. My teacher saw it and addressed it, though. One kid, in particular, was really mean to me, and she saw through his heart, and she really worked through him and through me and we actually became best friends throughout school. This did not take legislation.

I believe that there are many flaws within this bill that need to be addressed before it could be passed to cover all kids and include everybody. This bill focuses specifically, promotes one group above all others. This does not seem all-inclusive to me. This will leave many groups behind. As you have heard from the Toronto report stated many times, the biggest reason for bullying was body image. Well, then, why are we not focusing on that particular group? If we want this bill to be all inclusive, we can't single anybody out or promote one particular group above any others. This defies logic and its own

wording within the bill. We all know how our children—or if one kid is singled out, the other kid wants what they can't have, and if one kid gets special attention, the others get jealous. So this jealousy, then, could lead to other bullying in other forms and kind of defeating its purpose.

I don't believe in this province that we have any real stats on bullying at this point. Well, how can we form legislation properly if we don't even have the proper data to back up that legislation? As well, I don't even have any real way of tracking an account system for the bullying. If we don't have that system in place, how will we know if this legislation has even made an impact, or do we just want to spend more tax dollars for something that we don't even know will work how it is intended to work? We need to be accountable and we need to be able to track it reasonably and properly.

Lastly, in—major issue in this bill violates my religious freedoms. I know that you've heard this before, but this is a major problem. We are talking about taking away freedoms from other people. This does not sound like the Canada that we want to live in. In my faith, I'm taught to love and respect all people despite if they do stuff that I do not agree with. In my life, be it personal or professional, I have dealt with all different groups or people. You can ask any one of them, and not one of them will tell you that I have treated them any differently or bullied them in any way because I don't agree with them. People can choose what they believe is right and for them; that is not for me to judge and I don't.

At the same time, I believe some things in my faith are immoral, and I'm held to a different standard in my faith than someone who does not believe in what I believe. I do not impose my beliefs on someone who does not believe what I believe. Therefore, I send my children to a faith-based school because I want them to be raised in an environment that I believe is how they should live and to a certain moral standard according to my faith.

My question is how can we logically look at this bill and force faith-based schools to adopt and promote something that goes against their beliefs? Now the government is telling me what I can and can't believe. This flies in the face of our charters of rights and freedoms. Once this box is opened, it doesn't get shut.

So, then, what is the next step? Making it illegal for me to have certain moral convictions? This is not—this is now completely blurring the lines of

church and state. This is bullying in reverse. Now the government is telling me to believe certain things that I don't believe are right according to my faith. And if I don't comply with that, what is the government going to do to me?

Doesn't sound like the free country we all think we live in if this bill is to pass as it is and if it is not amended. I understand the idea behind this bill and legislation and it can help bullying. But the way the bill is drafted is too broad and it can be interpreted too widely, does not take into account everybody—and it is supposed to—and should not target one group or limit the rights of others.

I thank you for allowing me to speak today.

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

We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Friesen, for being here this evening to present, and thank you for sharing your positive experience, actually, in school when you were bullied. And thank you also for your reflections on Bill 18. Thank you.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you, Travis, for coming and spending an evening with us. And, I mean, this is a really touchy topic, and we've heard that throughout a lot of evenings and Saturdays where people come forward and they pour their heart out, and you've heard some of that today.

If there is something that you would recommend specifically that you would suggest in changing the legislation that you think would make it stronger or better that would have, perhaps, impacted individuals like yourself who were being bullied, can you give this committee some of those suggestions? Share with us a little bit what you think could potentially be changed to make this a stronger piece of legislation.

Mr. Friesen: I think it's a very complex, very difficult issue. It's not—it blurs the lines all over the place with, you know, we don't want to infringe on certain people's rights and freedoms and yet we want to include any and everybody, and it's very difficult to include everybody. And at the heart of it, and like I said, the big thing is it's a heart issue.

* (20:50)

In regards to the legislation, a specific thing, you know, I don't know off the top of my head. And I'll be honest, it's a very difficult issue to try and

encompass everybody and kudos to you guys for trying to figure it out. Yes, it's not easy.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much, Mr. Friesen, for your presentation. And I do want to clarify for the committee as well as for yourself and other members of the public, that Bill 18 does protect everyone, that that is one of the basic premises with it and that Bill 18 requires the schools to accommodate all students and to support them if they are interested in developing any groups.

Mr. Goertzen: You might not know, but The Human Rights Code delineates several items for protection and some of them appear in the bill and some of them don't. For whatever reason, this bill doesn't include religion protection, creed, it doesn't include social disadvantage, doesn't include ethnicity. For whatever reason, the government decided to list some of those, but leave out others. Would you support—I know I'd prefer a bill that included everybody, but don't you think it'd be—make sense if you're going to have part of The Human Rights Code, to at least have all of it and including religion, creed and other issues?

Mr. Friesen: I would agree completely.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time.

Now call on the next presenter, Dale Loewen, private citizen.

Evening, Mr. Loewen. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Dale Loewen (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you may proceed whenever you're—

Mr. Loewen: In fact, this is proof that mine'll be probably the worst presentation of the evening. You can take a look at this.

You know, I've been struggling what should I say today, and so, frankly, I'm going to share from my heart and, but to be honest, I've been incredibly impressed with the detail that people have presented with here today. It's been good. And they've done some thorough presentations.

I do want to say maybe you guys wondering who I am. I'm—I—sometimes tell people I'm gee—I'm like Jesus. I'm a carpenter and I'm a preacher, and so I don't make money preaching, trust me, so I won't charge, and I—but I also want to tell you guys some personal stuff that I've been through personally.

And you guys will see that my head is shaved. And I used to—people used to ask me, so why'd you shave your head? You know what I tell them, kind of as a joke? Because I believe in the superiority of the white race.

Now what do you think of that? My heart was dark. It's the honest truth, and I can—I stand here before you as a man that was easily, easily susceptible to bullying. I had the hatred in my heart. I know—I understand the mentality of a bully. I had that hatred in my heart. My wife is sitting right there. We've been married 23 years, yet in the early stages of our marriage, I cursed at her, I hit her, I was a bully. I understand that. I understand the darkness that takes place when people do it. It comes out of fear. It comes out of pride. It comes out of tremendous insecurity. And one of the things that I was called when I was young before I started powerlifting to get out of this being-bullied rut was I was called shorty as a kid. And that weighed on me. That weighed on me. As I grew up, I decided I'd get into weightlifting. I decided I'd be so tough nobody would ever bully me again.

And so I understand that. I also want to say this. And this might startle some of you, and that is that some of the worst bullying I've seen is at the University of Winnipeg. I was a student at the University of Winnipeg, believe it or not. I took education. I was going to become a schoolteacher. I was teaching in some of the schools. And I'll share some of the bullying that took place because I believe, in context of how you guys have defined bullying, I would like to know how that bill would apply to what I went through.

I remember being in phys. ed. class in university and the phys. ed. teacher used me as an object lesson. I was good at some sports, but this particular sport I was not gifted at. And he used me as an object lesson. It was volleyball, and he threw a ball at me and I was supposed to shag balls, and I couldn't. I didn't do a good job shagging the balls. And finally he said, well, obviously, Dale Loewen doesn't know what he's doing. And the whole class laughed. Well, that kills you on the inside. Sure, I look tough, I understand that. But it kills you, it eats you up on the inside.

I remember taking philosophy, and one—in the freshman year, and I was good at writing philosophy and I could regurgitate the teacher's thoughts well. I could get into 'existen'—all these kinds of things. I knew how to write well. And the teacher really

liked me and I remember he met me at the end of the year and the beginning of the next year, and he said, Dale, I'd like you see in my philosophy class again because you do well, or something like that. And I'd gotten an A in his class.

I still remember the first paper I wrote in the second class, or in the first class of the second year. I wrote a paper on educational philosophy. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, I dissected these guys. And at the end of the paper—at the end of the paper—I wrote some of my own personal views that I had already come to believe in, some of my Judeo-Christian views. And I just incorporated them in mildly as I could—mildly as I could. And I thought this is a good paper. And I still remember going to his office and collecting my paper, thinking I'd get an A. You know what he did? He didn't even look at me. He said, Dale, what kind of 'fundamentalistic' diatribe did you launch into here anyhow? He gave me a C-. I walked out of there thinking, I will never succeed in this guy's class, never.

I remember another thing that happened at the U of W—and by the way, I have good views of the U of W, please understand. I'd go back there again if I had to finish off my—but I remember one particular evening, some church groups had gotten together, and they had rented the university gym to get this guy to come speak. It was completely a private thing as far as I knew. I was there just as an observer. And I still remember this guy was—this guy never got onto the stage. You know why he never got onto the stage? He was bullied off. There were hundreds of people there, maybe even thousands—the gay and sex—the gay and homosexual community at the university at that time, and I'm not saying this to stigmatize them at all, they literally pushed him off the stage. They yelled and they screamed. They didn't allow him to say one word, not one word. I look back to that evening thinking to myself, that was bullying. Why didn't he at least have the right to say what he wanted to say? Why didn't he have the right to say what people had hired him to say they wanted him to say? Be that as it may, that was bullying.

That's something—to be very honest, I'm with everybody else. I stand completely against bullying. I've worked with prisoners; I've worked with people that have raped, that have killed, even wrote a guy that was on death row in Texas for killing a 9-year-old girl with a iron after he had raped her, and I can tell you, my insides just absolutely churn when I think of that. They do. But I want to say

something—I've said all of this to say something. And really, honestly, what I'm doing is I'm really honestly appealing to paradigms that motivate bills.

I'm not talking directly to this bill; you guys know that. You understand that I'm talking about a paradigm, and maybe in a futuristic sense, some of you will think what I'm going to say, and that is this: that if we take—and I want to just say this very carefully, very slowly—if we take away any ultimate standard of truth and if we jeopardize it and if we threaten it, on what basis should somebody stop bullying? If we take away ultimate standard of truth—now, I'll get into—I think I've got a few minutes—existential philosopher Immanuel Kant once said this. He says, you take away judgment, you've got no justice. And if you've got no justice, you've got no meaning. And if you've got no meaning, you've got nothing.

And I want to say this. If we don't ultimately have an ultimate standard that we can appeal to honestly, then on what basis do we call anything good? What basis do we call anything evil? I'm saying all this to say this, that I believe intrinsic within this bill, whether you guys intended this or not—I understand. Some people say you guys have a hidden agenda, you guys have a hidden agenda. I don't know if you have a hidden agenda. I suspect that you genuinely want the educational environment to be good and positive. But I can honestly say this, that if I read this bill, there's no protection of religious freedoms. I understand that.

But I also want to say I also think 10 years down the road, 20 years down the road, if we take away a faith-based school, their right to declare what is truth, honestly what is truth, then on what basis do we espouse there to be truth? On my opinion? That becomes relative. That's just becomes—it becomes the tyranny of the tolerant at that point. I may espouse high—I may espouse tolerance but it's still the—it is my definition of tolerance.

And so I simply want to stand up here and simply say this, that I would encourage you to reconsider, first of all, how you have defined bullying because according to your definition, all the illustrations I gave you, it wouldn't have dealt with those. All the bullying I perpetrated on others, it wouldn't have dealt with it. I couldn't have cared less.

Number 2: I also want you to consider very carefully—you may not think—you might think that you're giving religious-based schools freedom to do

what they want, but I can tell you this. I'm not a lawyer, but I know that everything is based on precedent setting, and I've thought to myself, if a lawyer reads this document, he's going to be licking his chops. Because based on this document, what trumps religious freedom is somebody else's freedom. And if you take away religious freedom, ultimately you take away what these—what simply undergirds ultimate truth.

And I stand up here before you as somebody that no longer bullies. I love—I will literally die—I want the love that God has for me to flow through me to somebody, whether it's Nancy Allan—I know you and me would not agree with our paradigms. We wouldn't agree with how we understand Scripture, et cetera. But I want the love that God has for me to flow through me, so I'd be willing to die for you. That's the love I now have in my heart, and that's the love I want kids to understand. And I know that if they don't have an ultimate standard of truth, if they don't have divine revelation that I personally got from the sacred Scriptures, what do they have? There's forgiveness. I've sometimes asked people, if you can offer me a paradigm that can deal with everything from forgiveness to love to hope to freedom, if you can offer me something better than what Jesus did on the Cross, I'll give you all the money I have. Nobody has ever taken me up on that offer. And so I just simply want to challenge you. Rethink how this bill is stated. Rethink how this bill is stated.

* (21:00)

And I also want to ask one more question before I sit down, and that is this, is that: What will you do—what will you do—in light of all these presentations? These presentations have overwhelmingly been critical of this bill. Graciously, graciously, I know you guys are doing—in some ways you're doing the best in light of the revelation you're walking in. I understand that. And I also understand that you probably are looking at me as a complete freak and fool. But I'm just asking you: What are you going to do in light of the overwhelming presentation that has been critical and has asked and has almost pled with you to reconsider how you write up this bill and what it ultimately represents and what it's ultimately going to lead to?

You may not think it will lead to the abrogation of faith in schools and privatization, but I believe it will. I'm not going to shut up for what I believe in, but I can tell you this: I'll keep loving people and

I'll keep presenting what I consider to be ultimate truth, even though it stands in the way and it flies in the face of many people's reason. I just know this, that Jesus, He's cleansed me; He's washed me. I now stand as a man in front of you that I can honestly say I love each and every one of you, and I would never bully any one of you because I've changed and because I appeal to an ultimate standard that has invigorated me to love and to love and to love, but still represent truth.

Thank you very much for listening to my polemic. You've been gracious. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Loewen, for your presentation this evening. We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you, Mr. Loewen, for your presentation this evening. I appreciate the comments that you have made, and I just want you to know that we believe that Bill 18 is an opportunity for us to provide tools to educators, to provide positive school environments for all of our students, because if we have students that are in a school where there was a positive school environment, then they can learn, and if they can learn, they can reach their full potential.

Thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Goertzen: Dale, thanks very much for your presentation. I appreciated, you know, your discussion about consequences, unintended or real. Often we talk about when we're talking about legislation, the unintended consequence to legislation, and every bill has, to some extent, unintended consequences. I wouldn't assume they're all intended, but there's lots of consequences we don't foresee. So I appreciate you reminding us about that.

I want to answer the question you raised. You may not have raised it directly to us, but I want to let you know that we've taken lots of notes over the last several days. We're going to bring forward some amendments. A couple of new ones came up as a result of presentations tonight, so we'll certainly take what we've heard over the last number of days and try to bring forward legislation that, you know, all Manitobans can not only agree on, but that will protect all kids, because we keep hearing from kids who are saying they aren't going to be protected, and that's not—not what we want.

So thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: See no further questions, thanks for your time.

Now call on Bradley Tyler-West, Sexuality Education Resource Centre of Manitoba.

Good evening, Mr. Tyler-West. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Bradley Tyler-West (Sexuality Education Resource Centre of Manitoba): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, I'll ask the committee staff to help you distribute that. You may proceed whenever you are ready.

Mr. Tyler-West: And the articles aren't my presentation; they're supporting documents, so—my name is Bradley Tyler-West, and my official title is sexuality education facilitator at the Sexual Education Resource Centre here for the province of Manitoba from the Brandon office. So I'm speaking from the constituency of what some people call rural, but in Brandon they would probably disagree with you.

I also work within the Rainbow Resource Centre, which some people incorrectly call the gay and lesbian resource centre. I have been working in education for over 17 years as a facilitator, educator, and advocate. I have consulted with school boards, with administrators, with policies' advisers in this province and across other provinces when it comes to GSA, safe school environments.

I also, previously to this, was a certified human resource professional where I specialized in safe workplace environments and helped develop policies in both the corporate and non-public sectors.

I'm also a father. My daughter grew up here in Winnipeg. She went into Winnipeg School Division No. 1 and is presently studying education at the University of Winnipeg as a future teacher. I am also married to an educator, who has worked in the Seven Oaks School Division for 21 years and is an administrator.

So I feel that I can come to this issue from a number of different lenses, and, hopefully, this evening my presentation I will provide a little bit more of insight to some of the issues that have been raised because, as my grandmother used to say, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. And, unfortunately, with due respect to a lot of the presentations I have heard over the last few days,

there has been a lot of little knowledge put forward around the nature of what this bill intended.

I am here today on behalf of SERC and, all of the staff in our two offices and our board of directors to give absolute support to Bill 18 and to thank the Province for their leadership in bringing forward this legislation.

I also want to thank all the individuals who have spoken to this because it shows the passion that Manitobans have not only for safer schools but also for their communities.

Bill 18 is what I see, next step in a long journey that is to make schools safer, and it's going to make them safer for all of us and not just some of us. We are mandated to do so regionally and nationally. We have made international commitments as well. Canada is the signature to the United Nations declaration of the children rights, and the universal declaration of children's rights states that children have the right to access the full range of their human rights in educational settings. All children, not some, but all. So not just the popular kids or the strong kids or the pretty kids, not just the kids who have advocacy and agency to push back, not just the kids with the thick skin, but all kids. Not just those who have parents or care-providers or family to rally around them and prop them up when bad things happen, but all kids. Not just the gifted ones, but all.

As concerned and active citizens in Canada, we have developed many programs such as Safe Schools Manitoba, the UNESCO's schools network and others that develop the concepts of leadership, acceptance, global citizenship and respect for all. Many people talk about going back to the basics in education; however, we cannot go back to those basics because the world in which those basics were created no longer exists. Education in the public system is designed to promote many aspects of public leadership and global citizenry. We have many examples here in the city of Winnipeg and in the province where people have, at divisional levels, taken leadership before the government did: Seven Oaks School Division, Louis Riel School Division, the Evergreen School Division, and also in some of the rural areas such as the Prairie Mountain region where they have looked to develop safe school policy so that all stories are valued and visible, not just some stories.

Our institutions of higher learning have also jumped onto this bandwagon: the universities of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Red River College,

Assiniboine Community College and many others have ongoing programs, supports in both faculty and student programming that address the idea of safety and respect for all of us. There's a solid understanding by educators between the difference of teasing and bullying, and this, unfortunately, has been brought forward in a lot in presentations around the vagueness of the wording in the legislative bill. This is done specifically so that the divisions can respond to their own definitions of bullying which many have done and continue to do so. In fact, many teachers I know have a complete solid understanding of what bullying does look like and what is the difference between teasing and bullying, what is the difference between something that would require action under this legislation or what would require what we call in education a teachable moment which can just be a conversation at the side about what the—how that was appropriate or inappropriate.

I've also worked with many schools and consulted with schools both in the public and faith-based system. I've worked with Christian schools, Jewish schools, and Muslim schools, that they have responded to legislation in Ontario in creating GSAs in their spaces. Here in the city of Winnipeg, Gray Academy, the Jewish private school, has a GSA, despite the fact that in the Jewish community not all Jews agree around the decision of accepting and incorporating homosexuality. I am a person of faith, I am Jewish and I can tell you that when—saying, we have a saying in our community, one Jew to three opinions, right? It's to say that not all Jews agree, but we've been able to create a process where we can agree to disagree, where we can discuss why we have different points of view. That actually strengthens our faith; it doesn't weaken it.

We have always known that bullying exists. This legislation is not going to stop bullying 100 per cent. No legislation or policy does because they are enacted by people and people often fail. But what it does is it creates an expectation and a standard for people to respond when that bullying does occur.

Unfortunately, historically, people and educators and administrators have been reluctant to address bullying that is either promoted by somebody's sexual orientation or their perceived orientation. People are still harassed and humiliated and attacked in our school systems based on the fact that people think they are gay or lesbian or bisexual or trans or they're too sissy or they're too fem. There are still people in this country who are murdered based on

that. And some people say, well, why aren't we addressing everybody. Well, there aren't too many people I know of personally who have been assaulted and kicked to death on a sidewalk because they were a liar, but I have had two of my friends murdered in this country in exactly the same way. And, while they were being stomped to death, a person was calling them a faggot, a sicko, a pervert and a puffer.

* (21:10)

So please do not insult me by trying to say that there is an equality in our society around different types of sin or different types of perspectives. Research has shown that this is not the case, and Dr. Catherine Taylor and Dr. Tracey Peter will be presenting that research to you, so I'm not going to go over that. But I have included in your information some other research that you can look to.

Another area that I'd like to address is that people have talked about how could GSAs possibly help, that it'll actually make the situation worse. Well, research actually shows that that is not the case. Research actually shows that school environments that do have GSAs in them see a marked reduction in bullying that is based on a variety of different things but is also around using inappropriate terms to describe an individual. And, when I say inappropriate terms, I'm talking about the term, that's so gay; faggot; leso; dyke; bulldog; slut; whore. All of these words are the language of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. They are the language of sexism. And these words can be heard in both our private schools and in our public schools.

And some people might say, well, you know what? Bullying is just a part of childhood, toughen up. And we've heard many, many cases here where people can—have come forward with really impassionate stories about how they were bullied and how that stayed with them. No, I'm no different. I went through the Catholic school system in the country that I was born and raised in, which is Australia, in case you didn't guess at the accent. And, in that Catholic school system, I was constantly teased and humiliated and harassed. I was kicked. I was punched. I was spat on. I was urinated on. I was held down and verbally and physically assaulted on a daily basis. And not once in my seven years in those schools did any of the teachers, the priest or the nuns take any action whenever they heard or saw any of this type of action.

So let us not have this idea that our faith-based schools are bastions of safety. But we have seen in

Ontario and in Toronto recently, and not just on reports from 2006, but reports done in 2012 and reports from the 2013, about how these programs have actually been able to meet the needs of the faith community while addressing the safety of their students.

Mr. Chairperson: One minute remaining.

Mr. Tyler-West: Dozens of students have talked to me since Bill 18 became part of the process, and I have talked to probably over a hundred students in rural areas, asking them what their opinion is, and not one of those students have said they disagree with Bill 18. All of them have said they support it. All of them have said they wanted it. All of them said, please, do what you can to push this through. I asked them, well, what do your parents think? And a lot of them chuckled and said, oh, my parents totally disagree, but they don't go to school; I do.

Now I want you—leave you with that. Our school system is not designed for our parents and they are not designed for us as adults. They are designed for our children. And I hand over the bill to you and ask, well, what will you do to make the learning environment safer for all of the students and not just some of them? Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Tyler-West, thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate the comments that you have made about Bill 18. We have been criticized here—by the opposition over and over again for a lack of data and research into bullying. And you mention Dr. Catherine Taylor, who is renowned in Canada in regard to her research. And I just want the opposition to know that she will be here tomorrow night making a presentation. And so we're very pleased that she is going to take time out of her busy schedule to make that presentation, and I hope the opposition will be here to hear that presentation.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, thank you very much, Bradley, for your presentation. Appreciate the fact that you were here.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Thank you, Mr. Tyler-West, for coming here from the city of Brandon, and it is, indeed, not a rural area and represents a different view from the rural areas around it. You are, indeed, a powerful presenter.

Minister of labour and child and family services has said that there are flaws in this bill, and I think it

behooves us as legislators to fix those flaws before it is released upon the public. Would you care to comment on that?

Mr. Tyler-West: There is one flaw I see in the bill. And the one flaw I see in the bill is that right now it puts the onus on students to request a GSA. I would like that removed and have that the onus be shared by both staff and students, and the reason for this is that: I have talked with many staff in rural communities who have had students who have come to them, who have begged, who have pleaded for that staff member to request a GSA. And the staff 'mender' turns to them and says: I can't; policy dictates it has to be you. You have to bring it forward. If you do, I will support you. I will be there. I will back you up a hundred per cent. And that student says, there is no way I'm going to put my name to this. I'm already being teased enough because my uncle is gay, or my grandmother is trans, or my best friend is gay, or I am questioning, or I'm just supportive of people. I can't put this on. Putting the onus on students to require safety in their schools is—flies in the face of all of the legislative requirements. So that, to me, is one of the major flaws in this legislation.

The secondary flaw that I do see in this legislation is that it does create confusion around faith-based schools, and so I think there could be some clarity. And we can look to the Ontario system, where Catholic schools flourish with a very different funding agreement than they do have here, on how they are able to successfully have GSAs in their schools while also explain the doctrinal differences. And look to other faith-based schools that have done that as well, such as Gray Academy, and there are Muslim schools in British Columbia that have done the same as well. And some of those communities have far more traditional points of view around faith and what families look like than even some Christian perspectives that we've heard come forward.

Mr. Goertzen: I appreciate you raising the issue of the Catholic schools in Ontario and their school group policy. It's one of the things I've had good discussions with the Catholic schools in Ontario. They've suggested it here; it's been rejected so far, but I appreciate you bringing that forward because I think actually that's something that could be helpful. I think that's a good suggestion. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for—oh, I'm sorry. Ms. Blady.

Ms. Sharon Blady (Kirkfield Park): I just want to thank you and your husband Manny [*phonetic*] for being here and I want to thank you for the years that you have both dedicated to creating safe environments in educating our kids. I know that they are—I can't imagine two more wonderful, passionate people that I would want to have around my children to make sure that they are safe and protected and well educated. So thank you for your lifetime of dedication to both of you and for being here tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks very much for your time this evening.

We'll now call on our next presenter, Jenni Doerksen, private citizen. Evening, Ms. Doerksen. Do you have written material for distribution?

Ms. Jenni Doerksen (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll ask the staff to help you get that out, and you may start your presentation when you're ready.

Ms. Doerksen: Okay. Am I really doing this?

Hi. I don't know really what to say, and I'm certainly no politician, but I am a concerned mother and wife about the way Bill 18 is written. I am a concerned—I am concerned that some parties will be protected, but I will be pushed aside. I think this does not just go into schools; I think this will go further than schools. I'm not concerned about gays or lesbians making their groups in schools. But I don't think that we can have propaganda or papers put up in schools that encourage that, not in faith-based schools—that's what I'm talking about. But will I, my children, my family and my faith group be protected in a different school? Let me make this clear, please. I'm not against a group or the individuals themselves. I'm just not supporting their deeds, their lifestyle or their actions. While you love your child, do you agree with their actions or drunk driving or tickets, speed limits? They do different than what you wish they would do, but yet you still love them.

I'm concerned that this bill has not really an honest goal of protecting but only for personal or political gain. I'm afraid that if you, the NDP, can reject another party's bill, which is written similar to yours, broad, undefined, but yet defend your own to the core, is contradicting. I am concerned that there is no effort made to consider the alternative legislation proposed by Mr. Goertzen. I am concerned that there is no goal of presenting really all Manitobans.

I believe that everybody has been a bully at some level at some time in their life, and I think that having a guideline and rules against it should exist. And Manitoba already has one: an antibullying legislation in The Public Schools Act. Should we implement it maybe? Bullying is taught and/or disciplined primarily at home. Not to bully—or the importance of not bully—not to bully can be shown at home. I believe that a caring, peaceful, respectful, healthy, accepting and loving home will bring kids—bring up kids just like that. I believe that if I don't respect and care and love my husband, our kids will do the same. They will not respect me.

* (21:20)

Kids do what parents do, not necessarily what they say. Kids live by examples, not books. If I'm happy, they're happy. When I shout, they shout right back. When I'm unsettled, uneasy, and cry, they feel insecure and act up or are sad with me. We are their biggest inspiration. We have to stand up. If we, their parents, who are their—everything they know, if we don't know what to do and feel uncertain, they shatter. They break apart. Their world collapses. Our kids are attention-seekers. If they won't get it in a positive way, which should be taught at home, they look for it in a negative.

We have a lot of parents who are uncertain and insecure about what they should do with their kids. They know that they need to have boundaries and rules but have no power or strength or knowledge of how to implement them. We could provide a program for mothers, dads, or both, to go and get help. We could offer a confidential place where they can go and simply just to get advice on how to deal with their problems. We could teach them on how to manage those stressed-out situations. We could do it faith-based for every faith living in Winnipeg. We could do it for free, and we should.

We could fill our parents with confidence and knowledge and wisdom. They could know how to deal with our bullies at home. They could be confident about raising confident children. They could be honestly proud to the core of whom their children have become, and they should. I know that if such a program is managed and respected right, it will work. There are programs—some programs that offer help to exhausted parents. It's free but without any government help. I believe that investing money into programs like this that help our young families will be a higher payoff as investing it into building new crime.

And I'd like to say a quick prayer. This is not usually something that I do in public, but I feel that too.

To the one who reigns forever, He will. He is a friend of mine and He's always by my side.

God, I thank You where You have brought me today. I thank You for the government that You said was necessary to lead the countries. I particularly thank You for the Manitoban and Canadian government.

I am here now to ask You for Your knowledge and wisdom on how to settle this bill. I ask You to speak to those who are putting this together. May You reign over them with wisdom on how to proceed. May You encourage when they run empty. I pray for unity, peace and respect in this building. Help them not to become haters of each other but to consider each other's opinions. Jesus, You were the one most bullied when you walked the Earth. It's still like that 2,013 years later. But, You, out of all of us, know how it feels to be bullied by millions of people every day. You are the one person who can help us deal with this—with bullies today. So, please, have Your may—Your way among us. Do with us as You please and help us find a solution for this tender issue. May we all have a voice that is heard.

And as for me, please help me to show unending kindness and caring love. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Doerksen, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for your prayer and thank you very much for your comments in your presentation. I thank you for talking about how important families are and how young people need to be raised in a caring and loving environment, and for your suggestion in regards to providing programs and services to help parents.

We have a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet here in Manitoba. We were the first government in Canada to have a Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, and it focuses on early intervention for young children. And we have a network of parent resource centres. We've looked at programs. We've invested in our young people because we know how important that is. Thank you for your presentation and for being here. Yes, just—yes, thank you very much for your presentation, for being here, and it wasn't that bad, was it?

Ms. Doerksen: I don't know if I misunderstood, but I am hoping for a program for parents, not for children. Well—that would affect children, but what I'm talking about is parents who have to work full time, who had kids before they were ready to have kids, who are single moms and dads. They are exhausted, and I know if I am exhausted and stressed, I don't react out of love, and that's exactly how my kids—we have a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old. They do that the same day; they don't wait. They respond to me the way I respond. I have to show love and care to them every day and that's why if I run empty, if I don't know what to do, if I'm exhausted, then I run out of options and I just go and yell. That doesn't solve the problem.

So, if we have revenue or support for people who learn—where they have a chance to learn how to deal with this even when they're exhausted, that they get confident in their parenting, then that would solve a lot of it, I think.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks very much. You did a great job. I know this is probably difficult for you. I appreciate you mentioning the bill, the other bill we had before the Legislature on antibullying. It's modelled after what happened in Nova Scotia and the serious case out there and a lot of comments about it, in particular, that it applies to all kids. And it doesn't matter why you're getting bullied; that bill would give you protection if you—you know, particularly in serious cases of bullying. So I appreciate you mentioning that.

I also want to thank you for mentioning the issue of how school groups operate within private schools. A previous presenter, Mr. Bradley Tyler-West, mentioned the Ontario experience, and there they have specific provisions to ensure that school groups don't contradict or counteract the faith of the Catholic schools. And I suspect something similar here would give some comfort to private schools, although I know it has been rejected by the government so far. So, hopefully, they'll take your suggestion and the suggestion of the previous presenter as well. Thanks very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time.

We'll now call on Beverly Braun, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Braun. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Beverly Braun (Private Citizen): Yes, I have.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll just ask the staff to help you hand those out, and you can start with your presentation, whenever you're ready.

Ms. Braun: Thanks very much for this opportunity to speak, as a private citizen. I am against bullying of any child for any reason. I feel very sad when I hear the stories here tonight. But I am also against Bill 18, certainly the way it is written. While some might think it will protect against bullying, I believe that by its very nature it will encourage a different type of bullying. If it passes, as a teacher—I'm a teacher—I may very well be bullied into promoting a lifestyle or lifestyles that I feel are morally wrong. In short, Bill 18, I believe, will violate our religious freedom. I believe it is clearly written in the Bible, the infallible Word of God, that anything outside of traditional marriage between one man and one woman is wrong. If I am told as a teacher that I must teach and promote material that goes against my beliefs, then, in a sense, I will be bullied out of my job, because I will refuse. I would happily teach material, any material, that teaches love and acceptance of all people, but I would not teach material that states it is perfectly fine and normal to have two dads or two moms who are married to each other. I imagine there are many great teachers out there who share my views and who might also refuse to teach then, and that would be a huge loss.

Incidentally, in my eight years of teaching, never once did I discuss my own sexuality with my students. To do so would be totally unprofessional and inappropriate. So why would I discuss and promote anyone else's sexual orientation?

* (21:30)

As a mother of three school-age children, I am also very concerned about what they will be taught if Bill 18 passes. My husband and I strongly feel that we are the ones to decide how and when we will teach them about sexuality. This is not up to the public schools to decide.

I can't imagine how confused our kids would be to hear one thing from us and the opposite from the school. Anything beyond teaching the biological aspect of human sexuality is not the business of the school. This year we have decided to home-school our son for various reasons. Our girls are still in public school. If Bill 18 passes and more of the LGBTQ agenda is brought into the schools, we will not hesitate to home-school them either. This year seven families took their kids out of the public school in our town, 12 students in total. And I'm sure

this number will only grow in the near future if Bill 18 passes the way it is written.

Finally, I would like to say that I am not a hate monger or a homophobe. My God teaches us to love. He loves everyone and commands us, His followers, to love everyone in the whole world. I also strongly believe that we are to stand against things that are wrong, and Bill 18 will promote things that are morally wrong and will compromise the religious freedom that we enjoy in this awesome democratic country. That is why I say no to Bill 18. Thanks a lot.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mrs. Braun, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I just wanted to thank you very much for coming in and spending your evening here and sharing your opinion about Bill 18. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I want to echo that. I want to thank you for being here, particularly as a teacher on the front lines. It's—we know a lot of teachers who were discouraged from coming to speak in opposition of the bill, and I appreciate, you know, hearing your front-line perspective. I want to assure you that your opposition to the bill doesn't make you homophobic. There are many people who've spoken about being bullied themselves who oppose the bill because they don't think it would've protected them. They're not homophobic. There'll be some, when this bill comes to vote, who will try to label those who don't support it as homophobic, but there are—we know—we know that we need to find something that protects all kids and that's the motivation. And I know you brought that as well.

I want to ask you to expand a little further on situation of home-schooling because I continue to hear this now about how more people are looking at home-schooling for reasons of Bill 18 or other reasons. Can you talk a little bit more about that in terms of what you're hearing people say about that issue?

Ms. Braun: Yes, well, we believe, like as I stated, that we want to have that control as parents. We're moms who are home-schooling; dads, too, in some cases. And to know that we have the control over what we are teaching our kids, and we feel that Bill 18 would possibly infringe on it the way it is stated that—you know, I hate use such a strong word as forced, but that is how some of us feel: that we may be forced to teach our children things that we

don't agree to. So we can control that environment when we home-school. We believe that God is the centre of everything, so He should also be the centre of our children's education.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time.

Now I'll call on Elizabeth Dyck, private citizen. Elizabeth Dyck, private citizen? Elizabeth Dyck's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Charles Kehler, private citizen. Do you have written materials for the committee this evening? We'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those, Mr. Kehler, and you may begin your presentation whenever you're ready.

Mr. Charles Kehler (Private Citizen): I haven't been this nervous in 11 years when I graduated from agriculture diploma.

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Over the past week and a half you have listened to many people talk about the reasons to be for or against the amendment to the safe schools act that make up Bill 18. This evening I shall give you my reasons on why I think these amendments may do more harm than good for children currently in our schools.

As with many others who have spoken in these meeting sessions, I, too, was bullied in school. I was one of the shortest guys in my class. I had no ability—little to no ability in sports. I was chubby and in—starting in grade 2, I had to wear thick, out-sized glasses. I had been beaten numerous times throughout those years. One such bully started tormenting me shortly after moving to our school. When I had enough, I reacted. In turn, he decided to put me in my place by slamming my head against the rack that covers the thermostat in the gymnasium. Cornering me in the locker room later on, he kicked me in the groin just before the end of the school day.

When I went into high school, I thought that things would change, that I might have a chance to fit in— bigger school, many more people. I was very hopeful. However, I was still cast out. After a time, I did find a group of people that I could associate with, and I have developed friendships that have endured over the last 15 to 20 years.

In high school I also had a small period of time where I was the offender. I knew one female acquaintance who wasn't very popular and who was also known for very—being very clingy. I took pleasure in intimidating her as a way to keep her

distance—from her because of her being clingy to me. I enjoyed seeing her reaction as I felt that I had some power over her. Thankfully, eventually, I realized I was wrong. I apologized to her. We slowly developed a friendship, and that friendship continues to this day.

In short, over the years, I have been the victim and offender in bullying situations. I have also witnessed situations involving classmates and friends.

Now I'll get to why I think this bill may be more detrimental than use—helpful. First, the definition: The current wording of the safe schools act, there is no separate singled-out definition of bullying. However, throughout the act, bullying and cyberbullying is described as being repeated actions with malicious intent, which I've seen the proof at—of. You are replacing this with a set of—set definition so vague that a kid who is walking past a conversation in which something is said that he or she finds offensive and hurtful could claim to be bullied. Or perhaps some kids are talking, and one says something out of turn which hurts the other child's feelings. That child could be accused of bullying the offended, regardless why they said it. Another example that I don't have written down is when I was in grade school, I decided to have a birthday party where I only have a set number of people invited. I decided to not invite one friend who I hadn't talked to in a while in exchange for someone I'd never invited before. That one friend got offended, talked to his uncle, who happened to be a teacher in the school. He talked to me. I was guilty into doing that. I felt kind of bad when my friend that I was going to invite moved that year.

Anyways, the definition, the way it stands, could also be used by bullies to attack victims, especially those who, after repeated attacks, verbally or physically, get fed up and try to defend him- or herself. Bullying usually takes place when no person of authority is watching, and the victim is, more often than not, coerced into silence. When the point comes that the victim has had enough, he or she will usually counterattack in a very reactive manner and, quite often, without intending to, out in public and with a large audience. The bully, then, has all the evidence to claim that it was, in fact, him or her that has been the victim, and the real victim is made out to be the bully. Quite often another reason that a bully gets away with their attacks is because that said person usually has someone in authority, whether it'd be a forceful teacher or—whether it'd be a forceful

parent, a teacher or even a counsellor, who is thoroughly convinced that the bully can do no wrong and will stick up for this person no matter what.

The next issue I have is the same one that has caused so much dispute over the entire time that this bill has been debated and challenged: the mandated GSE—or GSA, or similar club, at the single request of a student. By having the government legislate the requirement, it is, in essence, usurping the authority of the school administration to make these decisions. I realize that people think this is required to ensure that school cannot discriminate. However, this also has the effect of cancelling out the accountability that these groups should have toward the school administration that is being told they must allow, support and promote said groups. Nowhere in this bill does it say that these groups, when established, are accountable to the schools. There is no referral to school policy concerning the conduct of the student-led groups. Unless the bill is admitted to grant that authority, the GSA, or similar group, covered under this bill is only accountable to the government that granted them the right of establishment. Without government oversight or declaration that the groups are accountable to the school administration, the students that are part of these groups will have been given more authority over that group than the school administration. Young people do not have the maturity that comes with age and experience to handle this authority without accountability.

* (21:40)

For my final point, I want to talk about how many of those that are 'vehemently' for or oppose this bill have shown a poor example to our children when trying to curb what has become a bullying 'epidemic'. As an example, a local business put out a satirical sign early on in the day—debate that greatly offended some of the support of Bill 18. The reaction of those offended? Boycotting, which I can understand. Don't like what they say; don't go there to eat. But, with that, came harassing calls, complaints to the media, written attacks to the restaurant's Facebook page. Are these not examples of bullying and cyberbullying?

And there are also more examples of this. Full-grown adults harassing adults and businesses because their view is opposed, even to the point of threatening jobs. Are these not bullying methods used to silence someone who disagreed with the bully's view? On the other side, for those who are

opposed, on the Facebook groups, there are—there have been people who have in support who have been kicked off the groups just because someone in administration doesn't like their view. And control over the groups over stuff that's discussed makes sense as long as everything is respectable and, if someone goes out of line, in some ways, it does make sense to remove that person from said group.

Our kids will emulate the adults. Is this how we want our kids to act?

In conclusion, while the idea of antibullying legislation in our schools is a good one, the way that Bill 18 is currently written will not combat bullying in schools effectively. Perhaps we, as society, need to look instead at why bullying is such an issue. Perhaps we've gotten away from teaching our kids to respect each other, to hold each other accountable for their actions, to act and present themselves in a respectful manner.

Thank you, once again, for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Kehler, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much, Mr. Kehler, for your presentation. You were able to speak very clearly and direct and, obviously, you were—didn't seem nervous at all. So you did a really good job.

Floor Comment: I'm shaking.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Are you? Can't see it, so thank you again for your presentation.

Mr. Goertzen: Good job. I know you've stayed late tonight, and you probably get up earlier than most of us do, I think, given—[interjection] Five o'clock in the morning? Given your occupation.

I do want to ask you, and I think I probably got it from the last sentence of your report, but just to be more specific, you mentioned both being bullied as a young person, and then also I think you 'called' it being an offender, as a young person.

Do you think Bill 18, had it been around at the time and passed, the time that you were both the victim and the bully, that it would have prevented either of those from happening?

Mr. Kehler: I think that Bill 18, with the definition that it has there, will be a very useful tool for a manipulator. There are many times, 'especially' when you have backing from someone in authority, whether it's a parent or teacher, where you can have

your victim silenced, scared silly, where they won't—they already know that if they say anything that they will not speak. But the same manipulator will—is more than happy to scream to—at the top of their lungs that they've been bullied if the—if their victim will finally try and counterattack. With this, this will give them a more definite tool where they can actually further attack.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time this evening.

Now call on Julie Funk, private citizen. Julie Funk, private citizen. Julie Funk's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Denise Taylor, private citizen. Evening, Ms. Taylor. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Denise Taylor (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll ask the staff to help you pass those out and you may proceed when you're ready.

Ms. Taylor: Try and make this short and sweet.

Thank you for this opportunity to express my concerns with Bill 18. I oppose bullying in all forms and I am concerned that Bill 18 is likely to expose the children to more bullying than they've already experienced or have little to no effect on the real bullies.

Bill 18, as stated, as—has not stated specific consequences for bullying. The schools are already in charge of punishments for bad behaviour, for example, skipping classes, acting out in class, inappropriate dress. If the schools can't handle the bullies now, as it seems is the case, then why not use this bill to lay out, in black and white, specific consequences? If the school is unable to handle the bullying, then the police should be involved and let it be dealt with, instead of sweeping it under the rug or ignored.

Why does this bill name any specific group that is being bullied? Do the LGBT victims of bullying deserve more protection than, say, someone like me who was teased unmercifully, which is now referred to as being bullied, because I didn't physically develop well past high school. Or the girl who was extremely shy and got teased unmercifully because she went swimming in a pool and had too much chlorine and it turned her blond hair green. Or how about the person—or how about the present time, my step-daughter who got bullied because of her body

shape. Amanda Todd, who was the straw that broke the camel's back in terms of the public shouting that something needed to be done in regards to addressing the bullying problems, was not a part of the LGBT community, at least as far as the media has let on.

So how is the bill going to address those people? What about the quiet, nameless, faceless victims? I fail to see how using this bill to force all schools to promote and support GSAs, a specific group, when it was originally supposed to protect all victims of bullying. If the GSA is a group that can help, then make it optional. Forcing any school to support and promote a specific group is not addressing the problem of bullies. Address bullies and their victims.

Currently, as a person who was bullied, myself, I feel that Bill 18, as written, is victimizing the non-LGBT victims of bullying by blatantly ignoring them, by making this bill about furthering the LGBT cause. You can put in place specific punishments that are a consequence for bad behaviour. By addressing the problem of bullying and taking the LGBT cause out of the mix, you can make a difference and make it so all children are safe in school.

There has to be a way to amend the bill that will encompass all victims of bullying without centering any one group specifically. If the main goal of Bill 18 is to make school safe for all victims of bullying, then you need to make it so that it encompasses all victims of bullying. Currently, this bill has already caused lines to be drawn. For those of us who do not support the bill as written, we are told that we are against the LGBT community, which is not the case at all. I believe that all people have the right to not be bullied for any reason. I don't believe that drawing a line and saying you're either with us or against us is a way to solve anything.

Again, thank you for hearing my concerns about Bill 18.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Taylor, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: Thank you very much, Ms. Taylor, for your presentation and your honesty in sharing your beliefs about Bill 18. I just want to make sure that all individuals that are here know that Bill 18 is about protecting all children and does also respect the Manitoba Human Rights Code, so it is inclusive of everyone. Thank you again for presenting.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, Denise, for presenting. I appreciate you mentioning how it should be protective of all kids. And I'm one of those people who believes that people who are bullied actually know themselves whether or not things would help. I don't pretend to know what everybody else's life experience is when, literally, hundreds of people come and tell me that this bill wouldn't help them. I don't sit there and say they're wrong; I believe them, and I look for changes. So you've helped me with some of that. I also want you to know that when you say that you want protection for LGBTQ kids, that you mean that, I know that you mean that. And it doesn't mean that you're opposed to the community. I know you mean that too. Anybody that will say that to you is just somebody who has nothing else of value to add. So I appreciate you saying that and coming forward and bringing forward a strong presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time this evening.

Now call on Brittany Needham, private citizen. Brittany Needham, private citizen. Brittany Needham's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

We'll now call on Alfred Unrau, private citizen. Mr. Unrau, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Alfred Unrau (Private Citizen): I do, but I also have a request. We combined our speeches, so I would like my wife and I to present together just to speed things up, seeing as we hold the same beliefs anyway.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee to consider both—*[interjection]*

Order, order. Is there leave of the committee to consider Alfred Unrau, presenter No. 30, and Josephine Unrau, No. 31, at the same time? *[Agreed]*

Please proceed whenever you're ready, and thanks.

* (21:50)

Mr. Unrau: Well, I like to start, first of all, by saying thank you for allowing this opportunity and just thank you for everyone who presented today. It takes some courage to come up here, and I appreciate that, seeing as it's a little nerve-racking being up here. After that I'll begin.

Good evening, our names are Al and Josie Unrau. Today we are speaking briefly, personally as the parents of three young children who attend a non-government funded, private, faith-based school.

Ms. Josephine Unrau (Private Citizen): We believe that bullying is a very serious issue, and we appreciate that our Province is concerned, and with that concern, attempting to make all school environments safe for our children. However, we are uneasy with certain language of this bill.

Mr. Unrau: We would like to bring attention to two points in particular, the first being the loose definition of bullying and the phrase "hurt feelings."

As children, my wife and I have both experienced bullying for different reasons. Growing up in different communities and schools and coming from different cultural backgrounds, our experiences were very different. For example, I was born in South America. When my family moved to southern Manitoba, I was bullied for lack of English language and just being different. There was times when all I could do was run from the bullies, and it's not in here, but even teachers would call me up and, basically, present me in front of the class as not being fluent in English. So I understand the need for the bill. Eventually these issues were resolved, as I learned the language fluently, and bullies and other students got to know me as a friend and fellow peer.

This is something I did not have support in, as I never shared my experiences with my parents or other teachers. It wasn't right, but it was just how things were at the time. We were appreciative that today there is awareness being raised in the area of bullying and steps being taken in order to reduce bullying.

Being the father of three children, we have dealt with them bullying as well. This is a topic that is close to home for many people, we are sure, but it's very important to note that the differences for bullying are vast. In my case, one component was that I did not know the English language fluently. In my son's case, it was no reason at all other than the boy just wanted to humiliate him because he thought it was funny. He dealt—we dealt with this situation with the teacher, and it was resolved immediately. The boys are friends to this day.

Ms. Unrau: We would like to point out that just like children are unique or individual, so are our communities and our schools. Each child will have

different struggles, hardships and triumphs, and so on with each school and each community.

Our second concern with the bill—with the language in the bill is obvious—the obvious omission on religious and faith-based groups. We should not single out any certain groups, but rather include all groups. We need to be sensitive to all children: their ages, their levels of maturity, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, sexual orientations and race.

We suggest something like the antibullying club, which is kind of redundant; we've heard it here a lot this evening. It would be far more beneficial to students and, as it would be all-inclusive, rather than omitting certain students, like it currently does by not including religious or faith-based groups, it would be great to have a unified, all-inclusive ABC that any student could find support in, regardless of where they're coming from or what they're dealing with. Maybe the ABC could not only offer support, but suggestions and solutions to how to deal with or combat the bullying, which we do not see being addressed in this current bill.

Mr. Unrau: While we understand that not everyone will agree with our suggestions and we respect what others believe and are suggesting, we feel it is important to make our voices heard in this matter. Perhaps there is room for consideration to be inclusive to other beliefs as well. Perhaps you, too, could show some tolerance for our values and our faith. Perhaps you could extend some grace by revisiting the language of Bill 18 as it is currently written, and perhaps including—suggestions and solutions to the challenges many children face for various reasons on a daily basis could be included.

The other thing I wanted to say, it's come up a lot with the wording of the bill: Why do we need to specifically call out a group, why do we need to name a group? Bullying is bullying for everyone. Why do you need to name anyone? With naming people, all you are doing is singling some people out and excluding other people. You could just call it bullying with a definition that's fairly clear in the Charter of Rights. It kind of resolves some of those issues.

Ms. Unrau: We thank you for your time and your consideration.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. and Mrs. Unrau, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Irvin-Ross: I just want to thank you very much for the first combined presentation. It was very well done. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts and your opinions about Bill 18. Thank you for coming tonight.

Mr. Goertzen: Al and Josie, that was a nice tag-team effort. I appreciate you doing that and also staying for as long as you did.

Al, you mentioned specifically the issue of language, and I think you said you were bullied as a result of some language barriers. And I appreciate you mentioning that, because I know in the community I represent, the area I represent, lots of new Canadians coming, and that's an issue I hear a lot about, and a lot of issues around kids being bullied because they don't have an handle of the English language as well as we do. And I've also heard that from new Canadians in Winnipeg. Lots of concern about that, and I appreciate you raising that because it's something I think hasn't gotten enough attention, and I agree, we need to have something that protects those kids too. And I've had some new Canadians in my office who were in tears when they looked at this bill because they said, it's not going to help us.

And we can't have that. We need something that's going to protect all kids and protect teachers as well. So thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time this evening.

I'll now call on Trevor LeClair, private citizen.

Evening, Mr. LeClair. Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Trevor LeClair (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. We'll ask the staff to help you distribute those. You may begin whenever you're ready.

Mr. LeClair: I'm so pumped that I'm one of the last few, and there's less people in here right now. And I'm sorry I have to subject you to this, but you have to hear my opinion.

A great concern of mine is that this process that we are all taking part in will not be carried out with integrity. My understanding of what is being done here today, the formation of this committee and the hearing of the concerns of citizens regarding the proposed Bill 18, should be done with the intentions

of hearing how those citizens foresee these policies affecting their lives.

The members who form this committee ought to be open to challenges regarding the bill. My understanding is that the members then take those challenges to their respective parties. Opposition members use this information to continue to challenge the governing party and hold them accountable, and the governing party takes the necessary steps to make any amendments to the proposed bill, providing the best law, bringing the most protection possible for all Manitobans.

I have two questions that come to mind regarding Bill 18. When we as a community decided to push to have religious instruction removed from our schools and, with it, all references to God, we were told it was because religion was not inclusive, that religion was divisive. Schools should be neutral grounds where a child's mind could be free to study regardless of cultural or religious affiliation.

So, as a general rule, we removed religious instruction from the curriculum and, in certain cases, have provided the means for communities to have programming should there be enough demand. But, in order for this programming to take place, there must first be demand; then the groups need to provide the evidence of how much demand; then students along with parents have to opt in. This process is labour intensive. The expectation is that, should a student and parents want support, they are free to search for it outside the school system. But Bill 18 is different somehow; it removes the neutrality that we worked so hard to provide and value in our schools.

What I'm proposing is the idea of not using the school system to support this demographic, just like we do not allow the school system to support any one demographic ideally. Expecting supports to come from outside the schools, it's my understanding that there are institutions in place for that support the same way churches, mosques and temples of all sorts are available to other members of society.

Why is this apparent double standard not being considered before looking at—looking to thrust a policy that does not consider the belief systems of a large segment of society?

I do not have a degree in economics, but I am well read on the subject. According to Adam Smith, the role of government in a capitalist economy is to provide laws to protect property rights, civil rights,

and promote competition. Adam Smith said that it is paramount that a government consider not just how a law should work, provided every citizen submit to it with proper motivations, but also consider how that same law might be used in nefarious ways. It seems to me Bill 18 may protect some members of society, but I am concerned how will—we'll protect all members of society.

As the faith-based organizations continue to hold to their values, how will the government protect these citizens whom they represent from bullying in the future? Bill 18 fails to meet these requirements.

My hopes in coming here today are that, at some point, these two questions will be answered. And if the answers fail to answer—sorry. And if the answers fail to answer these two questions sufficiently, then amendments to the bill, to Bill 18, need to be made.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks very much, Mr. LeClair, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

* (22:00)

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Mr. LeClair.

Actually, the Chair of the committee tonight, Mr. Wiebe, thinks that he went to school with you. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. LeClair.

Mr. LeClair: We grew up together, in sorts, yes.

Ms. Allan: I just wanted to mention that, because he was pretty sure, actually, that he had gone to school and had met you.

Thank you very much, actually, Mr. LeClair, for your presentation tonight. And thank you so much for being here this evening to present your concerns and your opinions about Bill 18.

I don't have a degree in economics either, but I do care about safe and inclusive learning environments for all of our students so that they can reach their full potential. And I really appreciate the comments that you have made tonight in regards to Bill 18. Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks very much, Trevor.

I do have a degree in economics, and I haven't heard the philosophies of Adam Smith related in this way, so that's a—appreciate it; it takes me back a bit.

I appreciated you, you know, raising the issue about what this process will do, and I think that's an important thing for all of us as committee members. This is a unique process to have public presentations on bills. It doesn't happen anywhere else in Canada. And so that's valuable, but it doesn't have the same kind of value if we're not truly listening and then taking those ideas that are coming from the vast majority of presenters.

So I really appreciate you reminding us of that, that this process isn't simply valuable because people can come and speak; it only has value if people are listening. So thanks very much for that, and I take that to heart. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time. Good seeing you again, Trevor.

Now I'll call on Mark Loewen, private citizen. Mark Loewen, private citizen? Mark Loewen's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Now I'll call on Marianne Curtis, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Curtis. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Marianne Curtis (Private Citizen): I believe she has it.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. We'll just have the staff distribute those. You may begin whenever you're ready.

Ms. Curtis: Good evening. Thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Marianne Curtis. For the past 16 years I've been the head writer of the Dawson Trail Dispatch, so I am a reporter and I have never stood in front of you guys like this before. So—and I don't find it intimidating, which is actually surprising, maybe because the room is half empty—or three quarters. But I'm also the author of a best-selling novel—or best-selling memoir called *Finding Gloria*. Kelvin, this one is for you.

I'm going to read a little bit from the back. I didn't realize how poignant this was to what I was saying, and you'll understand as I get into what I have to say, why it is poignant. But the back of my book reads as this: Imagine growing up hearing you are nothing. Imagine believing you are predestined to be useless and worthless. Imagine believing you are unlovable and two mothers despised you enough to either toss you aside or abuse you. With honest openness, *Finding Gloria* chronicles the author's

desperate attempts to rise out of the ashes into her light-bulb moment as she discovers everything she grew up believing about herself is based on lies. Armed with forgiveness, she discovers she cannot run from her past, but she can change her future. And that is why I'm standing before you here today.

When I sat down to write this book, I did so with the purpose to find out why I was having issues with certain parts of my life. I'd been married and divorced three times. I'd raised four children, mostly as a single mom, for 12 years. I have gone through hell and back. But I couldn't understand the big picture. But, once I opened up my heart and allowed it to speak through my pen, I was finally able to come to grips with my past and it became a significant milestone in my personal healing process. With forgiveness, I truly did find my freedom.

As a result, much to my surprise, I was even nominated for a woman of distinction award this past spring by people who have read my story. This was an honour that I felt I did not deserve and yet it also gives testament to how far I've come.

I stand before you today as a survivor. It is important to me to stand here before you and say that I was bullied. I was bullied to the extreme and I survived. This went on for six years while I attended school in Steinbach at three different Hanover School Division schools. I was punched. I was hit. I had my hair cut off. I had my clothes stripped off of me, torn. I was stripped naked in grade 6 in gym because the girls didn't like that I had to wear dresses all the time. They made fun of me because I was skinny and bruised. What they hadn't realized is that my mother had beaten me a couple of days earlier and my body was covered with welts. I was bullied in grade 8 off a high-diving board and almost drowned. There were boys that got sadistic pleasure out of punching me on a daily basis until I cried. They'd steal my meagre lunch and stomp and spit on it and, once, it was even traded with dog feces. I was deliberately pushed down the stairs in Steinbach Junior High just because they could do it and there was no one around to see. I was locked in a closet, so I would miss the school bus. I was pushed into traffic. I had school projects, text books, homework, library books destroyed by classmates because they could get away with it.

In grade 5, my teachers put me in the back of the class with a wall around my desk and they believed that this would keep things—kids from throwing things at me and destruct—they said I was the

problem because kids were always antagonizing me. So they put me in a little box, but it made things worse.

I went to school daily in constant terror. I could not tell my teachers or principals, because when I did they'd—they either did not believe me, didn't want to deal with it or my parents were called in, which made things even worse.

What no one knew at the time, because I couldn't talk about it, was that at home things were far worse. My adoptive mother—yes, I was adopted—suffered from a mental illness. And while she did not drink or do drugs, she had a vicious temper and she knew how to use a rubber hose and a leather strap. When I went home, I was beaten, starved, locked in the basement or out of the house. There was no escape from the abuse at school or at home.

I was picked on because I was ugly, I was Ukrainian, I had 'braids', I was adopted, I was Catholic, I wore dresses, I was stupid, I was not related to anybody in Steinbach, I did not go to any of the local churches. We were poor. We were farmers. I wore glasses. I didn't have boobs. I didn't have friends. The teachers hated me. The school's students hated me. I heard it all and every day, trust me, it was excruciating to go to school. Yet, believe it or not, I still got up every morning and looked forward to it because it got me out of home, totally different story.

Did I mention that most of my tormentors were God-fearing Christians from God-fearing families?

In grade 10 I was raped at the Steinbach Regional high school. Yes, I was raped in the school, second floor bathroom. I was suspended from school. When I got back—I got a week suspension, the boy stayed in school—the bullying got even worse. Now I had people throwing money at me in the hall. I was a cheap whore. Yes, they called me terrible names. I had every—I became a moving target for every pre-pubescent pervert in the school until finally a grade 12 boy was caught in the act of sexually assaulting me in the SRSS library, and I was deemed the problem and immediately expelled while my attacker got on to graduate. This is how the school dealt with the problem. I was never offered for help—offered help, counselling or even an opportunity to explain what happened to me. Unfortunately, once I got home after getting expelled, the abuse got worse and I eventually did have to run away because I feared for my life. I was afraid my mother would kill me and no one would (a) know, or care.

I ended up in foster care, and for the first time in my life people started to listen to me and gave me the help and protection. This was 30 years ago.

Needless to say, when I heard Bill 18 was coming down the pipe, I was elated. Finally, someone was going to do something to protect kids like me, kids who had been beaten to mental submission to the point that it ruined their lives and stripped them of all hope. It breaks my heart when I hear kids killing themselves because they have not been heard or they're being bullied into suicide, girls killing themselves because they're being taken advantage of or raped, social media bullying, kids who believe it's easier to die than tell their parents that they are homosexual, kids who do not feel—who should not feel that their death is only the recourse that they can get out of these situations. They should be protected not ostracized; this is what I'd hope Bill 18 would achieve.

Unfortunately, what is done in the—done in recent months has caused more conflict. Over the past few months, I've been disgusted by the attitudes coming out of various communities. Because of the simple inclusion of the gay-straight alliance in the bill, bigots young and old have been surfacing to suggest, as some have, that allowing the gay and straight alliance to have a group within schools would lead to pedophilia and bestiality is downright ludicrous. And, yes, that is people—what people are thinking are going to happen.

It is my opinion that bullying needs to be addressed. Bull—Bill 18 is a great way to start, but it should all be inclusive or not at all. While I understand the importance of stressing that gray-straight alliance be included, and I do understand, excluding other groups of equal importance gives the appearance of pushing certain agendas and not addressing bullying as a whole. I'd like to think that it's not the Province's intent when writing this bill and that this is just an oversight that can still be fixed—hint, hint. Might I suggest that the Province rewrite the bill to include all groups or no specific groups at all.

*(22:10)

Addressing bullying is very important. Protecting our children is even more important. If school divisions are not able to handle the certain situations, then someone does have to step in and help them do it. Look at what happened to me. No one ever told me that I could press charges. No one offered me counselling. No one even wanted to talk

about what happened. I was considered a threat to the student population, deemed promiscuous and tossed aside. No one ever acknowledged that I was raped until I published my book. Then, people started coming forward and going, hey, I remember that happening and I'm really sorry that I didn't step forward and say something. But guess what? The damage was already done.

I had a reputation I didn't earn. I had no self-esteem and, to be frank, I saw no value in myself. Maybe if a teacher had said, I believe in you, or, can we talk about what happened, my life would've been very different. Remember, I said I've been thrice divorced.

Maybe if there were protocols in place to deal with situations like this I would not have lost about 20 years of my life and hated myself because the system failed me. But at the same time, I'm very grateful for that loss. It has given me the courage to find the healing that I personally needed and the ability to find my voice. I stand here because of my bullies—bullies. I have proved to them, but most of all I've proved to myself, that I am someone and that I matter and they cannot win.

So on behalf of myself and every other person who has been bullied, don't let them win. Take time to write a proper all-inclusive bill that includes ramifications and workable solutions. Our children want and need this protection. Invite them to the table. Listen to them. Kids that are living through this or have lived through this can provide the best insight.

This is your province to—opportunity as a Province, Manitoba, to be a leader, and I beg you, be one. Make this bill a solution and not part of the problem. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Curtis, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Marianne, I can tell you that this presentation is heartbreaking—*[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, I just need to recognize you to have you on the record.

Ms. Curtis: My apologies for interrupting there. But, yes, this is the first time, even though I have been to numerous book signings and stuff, that I have stood in front of people that I feel have control, that can do something, and said my story. And that means a lot. And even though I am the

second last presenter, I am glad that I am here and I appreciate this time.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you, and we're glad you're here, too, and we are glad that you are here to tell your story and to provide us with your comments. What happened to you in school is absolutely unacceptable. Absolutely no one should go through what you went through when you were in school. It's very clear that you didn't have a safe place at home, and schools must be a safe place for all our students regardless of who they are, regardless of their circumstances; everyone must be respected. And I just find your presentation absolutely heartbreaking and I find—and this has been a safe place for people to come and talk about their personal experiences. And your personal experience is absolutely—I mean, I can't even relate to it. I'm sorry, it's just you—and there is absolutely no question, you call yourself a survivor and you are one.

I want you to know that we have done a lot of work in our schools to make them safer places. We believe that this legislation will provide a safer place for young people, and I want you to know that the Hanover School Division supports Bill 18. They've been very public about that. In light of the resistance in the community to support Bill 18, they support Bill 18. And, at the end of the day, all we can hope for is that what happened to you never happens to anyone in our schools again.

So thank you for being here and telling your story.

Mr. Goertzen: Wow. Marianne, I want to tell you I'm proud of you, and I really am. And I—we've had a little, some discussions on—by email and Facebook, and I know how difficult this was for you and I didn't know if you'd be able to come. And so I'm really, really proud of you that you have. I'm looking forward to reading your book.

I understand—I also understand that Rehtaeh Parsons' father, I think, reached out to you. And, you know, what they've done in Nova Scotia for their—with their legislation is probably something that might have helped a little bit in your situation, with protection orders. They've done a really good job of taking you seriously in Nova Scotia. We've got a similar bill before the Legislature, and I hope that that's something that will be looked at by the government.

But, ultimately, I want to thank you for showing us the reason why we can't just blindly say yes to this bill without looking for changes. I think that that was probably what many in government were hoping for, but you give us that voice that maybe we don't have as much—we don't have the—we don't have all the answers. But when we hear a story like you, you know, it emboldens me to know that we're doing the right things to try to make this bill stronger. And people can, you know, call us names and do all sorts of things, but it doesn't matter, because I'll remember your story and that'll be—give me a lot of encouragement to do the right thing. For we can't change what happened to you, but maybe we can change what might happen to other kids, and we can only do that with a stronger bill.

So thank you so much. It took a lot of courage, and you've got great things ahead of you. I know you'll be able to tell your story and other stories—not just this story but other stories, too, so I want to just thank you so much. And I'm really looking forward to reading your book.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time.

I'll now call on Chris Elias, private citizen. Evening, Mr. Elias. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Chris Elias (Private Citizen): Right here.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, we'll get the staff to help you with those, and you may proceed when you're ready.

Mr. Elias: Guess they say last but not least, but after Marianne's presentation, I feel kind of insignificant compared to that, so thank you for sharing. It was very touching.

And thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Chris Elias. I'm a graduate from the University of Manitoba and I'm a professional in the agriculture industry.

I want to start by saying that I really appreciate the effort that is being made to deal with the increasing problem of bullying in our schools. Every child absolutely deserves a safe and caring environment. I also want to say that I am a Christian and believe that everybody should love and respect another person as themselves and that everybody deserves love and respect regardless of your gender, body image, religion, culture, sexual orientation, et cetera.

I'm a father of two boys who are almost 3 and almost 1, and though they aren't in school, I stand here on behalf of my wife and myself as concerned citizens for the kids who are in school and for the direction it appears our school system is heading.

I've included several questions throughout my presentation, mainly to stimulate thought. I'm not expecting immediate answers.

At this stage in the presentations you may be feeling like you've heard it all, and you probably have. Many of what I have in my presentation is repetitive from what you've already heard, but my intention is to state my case and concerns and to possibly offer a few suggestions. I'm not here to tell you what you don't already know, but please don't let that stop you from having an open mind.

So my first issue with Bill 18 is that the proposed antibullying legislation does not seem to address the major problems that have been shown to be associated with bullying. In the 2006 survey that you've heard conducted in the Toronto District School Board, it was shown that the major causes of bullying were body image at 38 per cent; school grades at 17 per cent; cultural background at 11 per cent; language, 7 per cent; gender, 6 per cent; religion, 5 per cent; and income at 5 per cent. Yet Bill 18 really only specifies protection for gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities. I agree that all of these are very important and am in no way trying to say that these categories don't deserve protection; they absolutely need it. But if the major reasons for bullying in 105,000 students in Toronto are mostly different than these, why aren't the major categories of bullying included in this legislation—or, I should say, specified in this legislation. What's going to protect this groups not included in Bill 18? Does our government consider some groups more important than others? I hope not. To be truly effective, Bill 18 should specify protection for all groups, not just a select few.

My second concern stems from the vague definition of bullying. It's been said by Minister Allan on numerous occasions that every student should feel safe and protected and that all we want is a safe and caring learning environment for all students, and I totally agree with this. But I fail to see how mine or any kids will feel totally safe when they don't actually know what is and what is not acceptable. Any child could be accused of bullying or saying something with no intention of harm and yet hurt somebody else's feelings. I believe

Minister Swan gave a great example of this broad definition in his reference to the Banjo Bowl as he was critiquing Dr. Gerrard's proposed antibullying legislation. Who's going to determine when somebody's a bully? Kids argue, they get into fights as a natural process of growing up and figuring things out, but it's not always bullying; sometimes it is but not always. Under the wording of this current bill, any sort of hurt feelings could be accused of bullying when this is not the case. Without a clear and precise definition as to what actually classifies bullying, I don't see any safety here. Kids need to know their—what their boundaries are, even if they may not like them, because it helps establish security. I think most parents would agree.

* (22:20)

And, third, I disagree with the fact that faith-based schools will be forced to support GSA groups that form within the campuses even if these groups are contrary to what the school supports and teaches. Could forcing somebody to support something contrary to their beliefs not be classified as bullying? To be clear, I'm 100 per cent in favour of accepting and respecting LGBT individuals, but that does not mean we need to support their actions or choices. There is a big difference. I've known several gay individuals during my life and they are all great people, but I don't support all of their choices and they don't necessarily support all of mine. But we have the right to choose.

Under this legislation faith-based schools will lose the right to choose whether or not they support certain actions or choices. Yes, for Christians this is a moral issue because of what the Bible says, but that is part of our religious freedom. Accepting LGBT individuals but not supporting the actions or choices could be comparable to disagreeing with certain behaviours and choices your child may make as he or she gets older. But while we may not agree with what they do, you will likely still love and respect them as human beings.

Parents should and need to have the opportunity and responsibility to raise their children as they see right. As much as I try to respect my authorities, I think it is up to parents to determine or at least have the option to determine. Unfortunately, some parents don't care what is morally best to teach their children.

Here's one suggestion, and I don't even know if it's a possibility, but since parents still contribute a significant portion of money out of their own pockets

to these faith-based schools, could one solution be to allow the board of directors or parents themselves to vote on whether or not they want to support certain groups? I'm not sure of all the logistics of something like this, but it's an idea. And I'm not an advocate for faith-based schools, it's just something that I feel may be applicable.

We are independent and capable people to raise and to teach our children the morals and values that we feel are most important. It is our privilege and responsibility to do so. If you start removing freedoms from faith-based schools now, where does it end? This could become a very slippery slope.

In conclusion, I want to draw attention to our national anthem. The Canadian anthem uses the word free two times to describe this wonderful country that we live in. We are able to call this a free country because of people risking and losing their lives while fighting wars against tyranny, terrorism, assimilation, and the list could go on. We actually stop to remember and honour these men and women each November 11th.

Religious freedom is not something to be taken lightly. None of our freedoms are, which is why we have the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Does it not seem insensitive for this government to pass legislation that starts to take this away and undermine what our predecessors worked so hard to establish? Surely, there must be a better way, a true way to provide a safe and caring learning environment for all students while maintaining our religious freedoms. Why not figure it out?

I thank you for your time and your efforts to deal with bullying, and I hope and pray that you will look for a solution that truly benefits and protects all groups of students. May God keep our land glorious and free. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Elias, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Elias, for your presentation this evening and for your thoughts and suggestions about Bill 18. We appreciate you being here and appreciate you waiting until the—this late hour to make your presentation. Thank you very much.

Mr. Schuler: First of all, Chris, thank you for waiting until the bitter end. You mentioned you've got—almost the bitter end, there's one left—you have a couple of little children at home who had probably

would of loved to have seen dad yet put them to bed. But you know what? Someday they'll google your name, and the Hansard, which is an official record which is—you can actually google it in some respects—it'll be there and they'll be able to read what you had to say.

Yes, you had a difficult task. You had a presenter ahead of you who, you know, had a very poignant message, and so was yours. And, actually, you know what? Yours is so well written, all the questions that I would like to ask, you've actually answered them. Thank you very much and have a great evening.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time.

We'll now call on Dirk Baker, private citizen. Good evening, Mr. Baker. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Dirk Baker (Private Citizen): I do, but they're not decipherable for you.

Mr. Chairperson: That's no problem, please proceed whenever you are ready with your presentation.

Mr. Baker: Sorry, well, thanks for the presentation. Yes, I've been here a while, not as long as I feared, but I'm doing well.

Bill 18 is—they say it's supposed to be about antibullying, and under the human rights—but there's no real antibullying in it for the individuals who have been—sorry. There is no real support in it for those who have been bullied. And, yes, I have been bullied. And when I brought it to teachers, I brought it to instructors, no, I'm shut up. I'm told, go home.

Finally, I am left to my own devices on how to treat them. This means I found ways to actually insult them using their languages. You'll excuse the term for this, but I found ways to use in their language to insult them, to make them feel worse than anything they could imagine, using their own words against them, in a manner of speaking. I also learned some basic, ancient self-defence courses, and I didn't quite become a ninja, but you can compare me to one. I increased my reaction rate and, as a result, attacking me became a danger.

Could this have been avoided by this bill? No. They were still attacking—they were still after me. The amount of insults that they did to me, well, you don't want to know about them. Like I said, I've never been given any support on how to deal with it.

So the only ways I deal with them today is how I guessed on how to deal with them. The tee—the—it probably is not the best way.

When I'm walking on Portage Avenue, there's a teenager behind me and another teenager comes up to him and starts pounding on him. According to the way I've been doing, I take the teenager who's been pounding on him, I throw him back about half a—about a hundred yards. I turn to confront him, at the same time yelling at the guy who's being picked on to get out of there. And it took over 15 minutes before anybody else on the street would help or break up the thing.

Then there's the co-workers who bully and blackmail other workers. Yes, I really do need to know how to deal with them. I've lost so many jobs because of them. One of them, he did earn his broken cheekbone. I have been confront—well, on St. Matthews, in the evening, I was confronted by a heavier native. The heavier native came up to me, he blocked my path and he asked me something. What he asked me, I have no idea. I asked him if he could repeat it. He starts this long list and gets to drugs. Okay, they're drugs. I'm sorry, I don't have any. He steps back as if to let me go. He punches me in the back.

These are normal situations that I encounter. This is yesterday, a week before and a few others. Why they do it, some of them fear that I'm a little smarter at them, some of them fear that I am from a various religion that they don't like and many of them I never did figure.

The biggest bullying I often get nowadays is these guys who come up and suggest that you're going to do this because I'm your boss because I'm so much more powerful than you. Let's see, about the year '95, I learned a way to counteract these guys. I can show them how strong that they're not. Being shown how strong you're not when you're trying to say you're more powerful, really is hurting.

At the same time, when he comes to me—sorry. When he comes to me and asks me for something and I say I don't know what it is, he gets offended by that. According to Bill 18, because I asked him to repeat what he said, I'm bullying. Because I left—because I actually stayed with him to find out what he was talking about and then I—he punched me in the back and I did not react the way he expected me to react, I was bullying him, because I could actually handle being punched in the back. Although when

I got home, I found out he had a knife and my back was soaked with blood.

Then there's the disruptive children. I've done lots of customer service, and I will, if there's a father or if there's—parents with disruptive children, I will actually separate the children from the parents, let the children relax and get the yelling and screaming adults to think of something else. These are not considered proper ways to deal with bullying, I understand, but these are the best ways I've found.

* (22:30)

I have lost jobs because of this. One of my worst managers, he was a real asshole bully. He came in and, basically, he ruined all the processes of the job. My job included folding bags, packing liners, receiving, shipping and I was basically in charge of the entire inventory. He messed up on an order. He refused to accept the fact that he messed up on it even though several people had shown him, and he was yelling at everybody to do it his way or the highway. We finished the order, finally, his way. It ruined the next order because those bags did not exist. They could not be cut down. He wanted to ruin the entire inventory to compensate for him. There is one order sitting there; take it apart, put it in new bags and we have everything settled. No, it's got to be his way: That order stays there; we are making new bags for this one and ruining the entire inventory. This continued until he got to his famous line: take it or the highway. I had put up with him for six months as being a bully like this. I took the highway, right there. And, yes, I did have the potential of getting another job at the time, so I wasn't too worried about it.

I recently did have another job. One of the guys who works there was a bully, and, like I—yes, he did deserve his broken cheekbone that he got out of it. Do I deserve to be charged for 'des'—giving him a broken cheekbone? Quite probably, yes. Was he going to bully? Yes. Did he deserve something out of it? Yes. What could be done about it? I have no idea. The main thing that's missing from this is the support for the individuals as to what can they do about it.

And the bill also is—seems there's a lot about the bill that's about racism and personal other biases. Fine, but antibullying doesn't care about racism or race, really, and it doesn't care about other biases; it cares on who can this person take power on. It's not a question of, am I white? Do I resemble a German dictator 15 years ago? Can I say—do I roll my Rs when I speak? Do I some—I use the term we

differently than most people in Canada. I'm sorry, it's important one. But it is a question of can this person here take power on this person, and that is not addressed by the bill.

One of the worst ones I actually encountered—this was a teenager. She may or may not have been present. I am sleeping at my parents' place, and I awaken to a lady who's screaming. She is—I follow—I get dressed. I follow her screaming. She is by the St. Vital shopping centre, about 20 minutes from my place, and three other girls are beating up on her. I confronted them. They said they weren't doing anything, even though I have seen them directly. I waited for them and they finally got to the point of saying, we can't do anything, that's the end of this, we're going home. But they were verb—physically abusing her, and this is—other items that I have seen often.

So if the main thing I want to say is that Bill 18, the major thing it has to do and—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute remaining.

Mr. Baker: Yes. The major thing Bill 18 has to do is actually provide means to support and help those who have been bullied.

I thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Baker, for your presentation this evening. We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Baker, for waiting all evening to make your presentation. We appreciate you being here. I know you showed up tonight and signed up. We appreciate you waiting. We appreciate your personal stories that you've expressed to us this evening and your comments about Bill 18, and, once again, thank you so much.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much, and, Dirk, you've been here since 6 o'clock. [*interjection*] Yes, five hours. And you know what? That's a lot of courage and that's a lot of conviction. We appreciate that you came forward and presented to committee. Every presentation is important to this committee, and appreciate that you took the opportunity, put some thoughts on the record, and it'll all be considered, and we'd like to wish you a great evening.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time this evening.

We'll now call those presenters who have been called once this evening: Doug Hamm, private citizen, Doug Hamm; Carlin Thiessen, private citizen; Elizabeth Dyck, private citizen—*[interjection]*

Oh, I'm so sorry. Carlin Thiessen, private citizen. I'm sorry, can you identify yourself? Your name is—

Mr. Carlin Thiessen (Private Citizen): My name's Carlin Thiessen.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, very good. Thank you, Mr. Thiessen. I apologize for moving past your name so quickly. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Thiessen: I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, well, I'll just ask the committee to help pass that out, and you may proceed when ready.

Mr. Thiessen: Well, I'd like to tell this committee that I drew the short straw and ended up being the last person, but as the list says, I simply didn't make my appointed No. 7 list.

I'd like to express my thanks to this committee for taking time to hear the Manitobans' perspectives on this very important issue in a spirit of goodwill and a respect for all. I am grateful for the freedoms ingrained in Canada's Constitution and for the laws of Manitoba which provide a forum for healthy and needed debate. I also want to applaud this government's goal of giving our children a safe and healthy environment in which to be educated. But I can say from personal experience, and you'll find that there are comments—I've been waiting a couple hours so I have written in a few other things that I would like to say, so not everything is in front of you in writing.

I would say that good intentions simply aren't good enough on their own. Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, said safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear. At another time he also said there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children.

Herbert Hoover, the 31st US President, was quoted as saying, children, our most valuable resource. I think we can all agree with that too. And the one true God, who has my personal allegiance,

says see that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven—and I'll skip ahead—in the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish. The Creator has these things to say. I can only pay witness to those statements and say we are clearly in the right place to be discussing proposed legislation that impacts the future of our children, children that He loves deeply and has left in our charge.

I posit this to this committee that this is not just another law. It is of utmost importance and it deserves our best because it involves our kids. It involves my kids. We would be wise to think this through several times and implement once. And I can just say, as I've listened to the stories, I'm a dad and my heart breaks when I hear these stories. I wouldn't want my kids to go through this. None of them deserved it, none of them are worthless or—they are all valuable and we do need to have a place where they can learn and grow.

Ladies and gentlemen, I also want to point out that I stand here not as one man, but as a representative of seven Manitobans, including my lovely wife Melissa; my 20-year-old son, Colin; my 17-year-old son, Bryce; my 16-year-old son, Devon; my 5-year-old daughter, Abigail; and my 3-year-old son, Elijah. I am here tonight because I have a vested interest in the final wording and implementation of this law.

I told my kids this morning that I wouldn't be home for supper, instead, I was going somewhere to stand up for them. I told them I was thankful for the freedoms we have in this country and in this province, and that I love them very much and I go to have that say in their future. So here we go.

There have been significant, relevant and accurate objections expressed against the proposed wording and definition of bullying in Bill 18. I will not go into great detail on any of them, but they deserve a brief repeating.

There are interpretation issues surrounding intended to cause or should be known to cause. Who will determine what a child ought to know? If one cannot reasonably say that all adults have the same understanding of those terms, how then can we say the kids will more consistently understand it? How will you get parents—and from an implementation standpoint, how will you get parents, teachers and administrators to agree on that interpretation if the law were put into place as it currently stands?

Number 2, there are also concerns over the term real or perceived power imbalance. This is a very subjective test that administrators will be left to attempt to implement in schools and then explain to parents as to how they implement it.

* (22:40)

Number 3, introducing previously undefined terms like negative school environment. As I understand it, the Manitoba government is effectively introducing a new term in its legislation. It has not been defined by jurisprudence and it hasn't been defined by a legislative body. That opens it up to interpretation which can take years for courts to sort out, and, again, school officials will have to figure that part out while we're trying to determine what it actually means.

There's also additional vagueness of the definition. Even one school official said, we feel that there's hardly a day that goes by where someone's feelings aren't hurt, and it would make it very difficult to discern between what's real bullying and what's unintentional feelings being hurt. It also fails to include or distinguish repeated behaviours from those that are offhand and/or unintentional. As a counter-example, Wikipedia, the all-knowing source on the Internet, says bullying is the use of force or coercion to abuse, intimidate or to aggressively impose a certain type of domination over others; the behaviour is often repeated and habitual. And of the other provinces and states that have upgraded their antibullying legislation, Manitoba seems to be the only one that does not include these distinctions.

Number 5, it also goes against the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Canada's Public Safety Minister Vic Toews recently said—and he is a constitutional law lawyer—that Bill 18's provisions involve an unconstitutional infringement upon the freedom of religion. He added that if the provincial legislator does not amend Bill 18 to address concerns of faith-based organizations, schools and communities, the only remedy may be an application to the courts to decide if the legislation is compliant with Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Any legislation enacted by our government must be specific enough to provide clarity in diverse and varied circumstances and of great enough depth that those dealing with this situation on a day-to-day basis can take swift action. The focus of any law should be confidence, clarity and action.

And I can tell you, just to digress here a little bit, my job has entailed breaking contracts apart from a business perspective, and we've developed contracts that have entailed buying tens of millions of dollars of product. And one of the things we always do—and it was alluded to and then Adam Smith references—we try to say, well, what would somebody that does not have good intentions, how would they use this law? And I think some of those things need to be looked at and considered.

I'd like to take a little different approach. There's a lot of other reasons. I've read a fair bit and it's not all in here, but I'd like to take a different approach and just express some of my personal thoughts and experiences from different perspectives.

My view as the offended, or as a victim: My early elementary years were spent in Thompson, Manitoba. My dad was a teacher as part of the Manitoba system for 25 years, so we spent six years there. I completed K through 6 in six years; halfway through my grade 2 year, it was deemed better for me to be in the grade 3 class. Although I did my best to fit in, I was noticeably separate from my classmates. Jokes and general teasing centred around my abilities to get good grades. When we moved to southern Manitoba in 1985, coinciding with the start of junior high, I can honestly say I didn't have to say goodbye to any friends.

Junior high was tougher. Although we had moved to a completely different school and the knowledge of my skipping a grade was not well known, I still got mocked for school coming easy. Throw in a growing pudginess in body shape and the target on me grew. I didn't fight back. Several boys were particularly inventive, creating names that weren't directly offensive but clearly had meanings that were intended to demean me and make me feel self-conscious. It worked. I went along with their repeated joking at my expense in hopes that I would fit in, that I could be a part of their group rather than on the outside looking in. At least I felt like I belonged, or so I reasoned.

High school was better and I can say that I started to develop some self-esteem before graduating, but it wasn't enough to counteract the low levels from which I had come. That low self-esteem was a contributor to my getting married for the wrong reasons, and the consequences of which I still bear today.

My view as a parent—I just realized it just has that sentence in there so I took the time to write out what I wanted to say there.

Mr. Chairperson: One minute remaining.

Mr. Thiessen: One minute. Okay, I will skip that part, then.

My view as an offender: At the risk of being politically incorrect, I think we must each take a good long look in the mirror before we condemn bullies. Which one of us can say that we have never felt malice, that we have never been angry and that we have never acted in a negative way to others?

My daughter is 5 years old and she just started kindergarten yesterday. My wife and I love our kids, and I cannot honestly tell you today that she will never in her 13-year career in the education system not make a poor choice, not hurt her fellow classmates or even a teacher with poor words or a behaviour that would be negative.

In conclusion, I would basically like to say that—oh, I only have a minute so—a quote has been attributed Thomas Jefferson which states there is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals. I think all of us in this room can agree that human beings are equal whether you believe in a creator or not. This belief is and should remain a fundamental principle of this country's and this province's laws.

Mr. Chairperson: I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Thiessen, but time for presentation has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: I'm wondering if there's leave of the committee so that Mr. Thiessen's presentation could be documented in Hansard, the whole presentation that you weren't be—weren't able to give verbally will then be in the Hansard.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee? [Agreed]

Also, if I'm truly being honest with you, I must tell you that I was a bully myself in my pre-teen years. Much of the hurt and angst I felt from my school experience came out against some of my cousins, in a distinctly separate environment. I have sought their forgiveness, and they have given it. And we have an excellent relationship now.

So what now? Which box will you put me in, and which label will you apply?

Can you see that we are all the offended and all the offenders? We are all victims, and we are all bullies (to a point).

Can you see that there needs to be clear wording? That a young child's offhand, innocent remarks are not construed as being the same as an abuse of authority? Something done repeatedly? That there needs to be discernment between the intentional and the unintentional?

We do not mess each other up by making mistakes; we mess each other up by holding onto the hurt, reacting in anger and pain, refusing to admit we were wrong, and not seeking to restore relationships. I will state for the record that there are clearly cases where the offended and the offender must be separated; that swift, severe and just consequences must be meted out for the protection of a true victim. But that is not the majority of cases, and we run the risk of generalizing behaviour and creating a generation that is ineffective in working out differences.

In conclusion, I'd like to highlight 2 thing. First. When I think of the impact of this law on our kids, my heart as a father is heavy. The proposed bill does more to separate and create division then build up and restore. Where is the teaching of restoration and reconciliation? How will we teach our kids that feelings do get hurt, that we are not perfect, that we must rub shoulders with other people and learn to forgive and restore relationships?

I, for one, do not want a future that encourages more separation and isolation. I want one where we are truly "big enough" as people to work out differences. If we have any hope of that kind of future for our children, we as adults must model that kind of behaviour and ensure that we intentionally promote it.

This bill, as it stands today, does not do that.

Second. A quote has been attributed to Thomas Jefferson which states, "There is nothing more unequal than the equal treatment of unequals." I think all in this room can agree that human beings are equal, whether you believe in a Creator or not. This belief is, and should remain, a fundamental principle of this country's, and this province's, laws.

But this saying can be applied to our topic today. While human beings are created equal, our behaviours and choices are not. Can one say that a person who smokes will have the same chance of developing lung cancer as someone who doesn't

smoke? Can I tell my children that they will be just as safe playing close to the street as they would in the backyard? If I stand next to a tree in the middle of a lightning storm, do I have the same likelihood of being struck by lightning as ensuring I am inside? Does a child playing on the counter next to a hot stove have the same chance of being burned as a child playing in the living room? If someone chooses a diet filled with high fat, high cholesterol, high sugar-content foods while avoiding exercise, could that person reasonably expect to live as long as someone who chooses healthy food and an active lifestyle? Should we expect the same physical outcomes? Would the medical community endorse those two different paths as equal? And should I tell my kids that?

Why then do we not talk about the consequences of the LBGTTQ lifestyle? Forget about morality for a moment. Simply consider the known and documented physical, mental, and health-related outcomes of such a lifestyle. How can we wish that on our children?

Our society's wanton callousness seems like pursuing an emotional leprosy—so that we are numb can no longer feel the pain of consequences while, in actuality, inflicting real damage on our souls.

Third. The proposed bill will put our children more at risk of bullying, not less. Consider for a moment in any group of people, which are the ones that understand how to manipulate, coerce, and 'one up' others for their own personal gain? This is not isolated to the environment our kids grow up in, it is also prevalent in the adult world. So, let's consider this legislation from a bully's perspective for a moment.

If Johnny wanted to exert his aggressive will on Billy, Johnny could do it by threatening Billy with the prospect of Billy being labeled as a bully. Billy is far more innocent, and does not want to engage in the escalation, knows that Johnny will only 'one up' him if he does, and so he gives in.

Again, I want to thank this panel for hearing my presentation. I hope you have heard the heart of one father in Manitoba, that you can acknowledge that there are real concerns about the wording of the proposed bill and its implementation in our education system. And that you can find the hubris to take a step back and get this bill right. For the sake of our children.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Thiessen. This is a very well-thought-out presentation and I appreciate the fact that you were able to be here this evening and make this presentation, and you've made some suggestions and some reflections about Bill 18 and we appreciate that. So thank you very much for being here this evening and for waiting until this late hour to make your presentation.

Mr. Goertzen: Thanks, Carlin, for being here this evening. You traded down from the seventh spot to the 36th spot or it's 37th spot. You know, if you do that in the NHL you usually get a good deal, but here you just got to listen to a lot of really strong presentations, and yours was one of them. I want to thank you for taking time away from your kids, as well. I know that's tough, and you've got a few more than I do, but it's just tough no matter how many you have.

Can you just talk—you didn't get to that part of your presentation, but I was sort of reading ahead and I liked what you said about, you know, the issues of ensuring—and this is on your first point—about that the bill might do more to separate than it does to bring people together. Can you just sort of talk a little bit about that?

Mr. Thiessen: I have had experience—and I didn't get to this part—but I've had experience dealing with something that is vaguely worded and how it gets implemented on the ground. I've been through a high-conflict divorce, and even though the laws of our province are well-intentioned, today, even though I've spent tens of thousands of dollars trying to reconcile with them, that has not happened. The best intentions on the—in reality could end up separating those kids because we generalize behaviour that is offhanded or a one-time deal with that, which is truly bullying. I can't say that any of my bullying experience in my lifetime comes even close to some of the stories that we heard tonight—not even close. To generalize and put them all in the same bucket is actually to trivialize some of those experiences. The way that it will create separation is that we are not encouraging our kids to take a hard look at those things which are part of a human experience, which is we do hurt each other. We do those things.

Where I'd like to see, and I think one of the previous presenters said, workable solutions and ramifications that include dealing with those situations so that kids don't end up—if Billy hurts

Suzy, that they can work it through. Like, in a situation where that's merited, that there is a workable solution to get that to happen, because that's really what we want to teach our kids. That's what I mean by things—it creates separation when it has too much generalization.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks again for your time.

I will now call on Elizabeth Dyck, private citizen. I will now call on—sorry, Elizabeth Dyck is not present. Her name will be dropped to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

I will now call on Julie Funk, private citizen. Julie Funk's name will now be dropped to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

Brittany Needham, private citizen. Brittany Needham's name will be dropped to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

* (22:50)

Mark Loewen, private citizen. Mark Loewen's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list of—global list of presenters.

That concludes our list of presenters for tonight. The hour being 10:50, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we rise, it'd be appreciated if members could leave behind the copies of the bill so they may be collected and reused at the next meeting.

Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10:50 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Thank you for the opportunity to state my personal opinion about Bill 18 as written. I approve of the governments attempt to help vulnerable humans. I agree that actions should be laid out in plain terms giving guidance in helping real school problems find lasting solutions. The topic is a real struggle, being faced unfortunately very regularly for many Manitoban students. How do I know? Though I am 31 now, I can remember too vividly the school years of my youth. If it was an issue then, it most certainly is a fact that it remains an issue today.

I was a bully. Rather than going into detail about the pain I caused certain peers (which for the record

I have sincerely apologized to the individuals in recent years for, since regret and remorse always accompanied me) I would like to attempt to shed some light on the other side of this entire issue which seems to be completely ignored, the individual referred to as "the bully". I am pained when I read the bill as written that nothing is being established to bring help and or recovery for the individual who is causing all the trouble in the first place.

The reason I bring this up is because I can tell you "why" I became a bully in my young years. I was born into a broken home, never met or knew my own Father. This directly affected me throughout my growing years but I was able to enjoy school and fit in at school as myself, until the time my school created a counseling group for us kids who came from such "broken" homes. It was at this time that I began to feel "unfortunate" and "different" in the sight of my peers because this counseling group was not optional. And I hated the attention shone on me for this difference that I couldn't help. The group caused a dividing line between me and friends and it affected my self-esteem to the point where my insecurity caused me to act as a bully towards other people I considered as unfortunate as I felt. I bullied because it made me feel like I wasn't the only one to be pitied, and taking my anger out on someone else helped me feel I had the power to be somebody and not nobody. I can tell you though that I hated being that evil person. I hated to be angry and I felt guilty about my actions even then.

I hope that the government will open their eyes to the reality that even bullies need special attention, they need intervention but maybe not uniquely through punishment and consequence. I believe there is great power and strength for all students in building unity within the school walls. Searching and discovering commonness and togetherness, promoting the care of everyone no matter what titles they carry. Diversity yes, but diversity within unity. I think that by giving attention and special status to gay-straight alliances may only in fact be enforcing the differences and cause distress in schools. For example what if an individual is gay but is trying to choose not be. Will the group punish him/her for "changing"? Will those who do not belong to the group accept him/her for who she now is trying to be? Will that individual feel like he/she belongs to any group anymore? This can be completely devastating for a young person. Will there now be a group for such individuals who want to become straight? If not, why not?

I believe every student ought to be protected and treated with respect, but this bill does pose a threat which will lead to more distress and disunity since it does not in fact protect every student. Can the government protect and promote the freedom of religion within schools while promoting an act that directly conflicts with the Faith? At what point will the belief of specific moral code be considered an act of bullying warranting punishment? The bill is a threat to the future of our students, and possibly beyond.

Here is a plea to consider this fact.

Thank you for taking the time to read and listen to this message.

Anna Reimer

* * *

To Whom it may Concern;

Let me introduce myself. I am a 58 year old retired widow living in an upscale neighbourhood in Winnipeg. I have been the target of bullying by teenagers, who reside in my area.

Starting in the summer of 2010, I found myself being stalked morning, noon and night by teenagers from a particular school in Winnipeg. I had never had any contact nor did I know any of these teenagers, having never had children or any contact with any schools in the area. They would park outside my home and wait until I left the house to follow me. They were trying to steal my pin numbers for my credit card, debit card and bank account numbers.

Whenever I left my home to go grocery shopping, purchase gas or go to the bank they went with me, even entering the various establishments along with me. I resorted to shopping, banking and doing any other transactions outside of my immediate vicinity. This did not put a stop to the problem, as they continued to follow me to the opposite end of town. The most disquieting place they showed up was my mother's personal care home. My vehicle was vandalized on several occasions. This was reported to Autopac.

To date, I have had to replace my bank debit card at least 5 times and also change my bank account 3 times. I have also cut up my credit card and reported the situation to bank security because they would follow me into the bank and stand directly behind me in line. I purchased an aluminum wallet; and an aluminum lined sleeve to protect my debit card when not in use.

In order to put a stop to the problem I contacted the vice principal of the high school these students attended. These privacy violations were happening during school hours; not just before and after school. During this time I had kept a notebook documenting the date, time and licence plates of the students involved. The notebook has disappeared from my home and little has been done to curtail the problem.

There are no laws which govern this type of behavior. Bill 18 would be start to acknowledge, define and open the dialogue about consequences needed to stamp out this behavior in all its forms. Hopefully, it will result in laws which the police and the school will be able to jointly use to address bullying behavior. Adult crimes are being committed by teenagers and there are no meaningful deterrents in place to protect any one from these privacy violations.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope my letter has given this committee a different perspective on the scope of bullying. I hope you never find yourself in my situation.

Yours sincerely,

Joy Kulachok

* * *

Hello to those whom are reading and/or reading this.

I first want to thank the current government of Manitoba and the opposition parties at trying to make a difference in the lives of people in Manitoba. This is a noble task that requires great diligence and determination on both sides of the government to be done right. Thank you for your extended stay in Parliament to work out some pressing issues. Since we are debating bill 18 right now this is where I want to focus the rest of my email.

I remember growing up being bullied as the word is slated to be defined. I know at times I went home crying after school and sometimes cried during school. Even outside of school I would get the weird looks from people. At least two things changed for me. One - I was able to get my issue corrected. The second thing was something taught to me at the same time and was understood fully later on. That I will share later as well.

My wife and I now have an awesome son who is just over 13 months old. We are trying to train him in life to not bully. This is not solely being done in a corrective sense when he is acting out towards others, but in training him on how to respond and

respect one another. He is super friendly and loves to wave at others which brings joy to those, young and old around him. He loves to smile, share and play and do those things we all expect young children to do. I would one day also love to see him stand up for those around him that are also being mistreated later in life as well. This was part my thought behind his middle name Justice. The word justice is synonymise with fairness which is what bill 18 is trying to do, and that I respect. I also believe to make a difference in the war of bullying it starts at home.

My son will most likely inherit the same issue as I had. I expect to do some quality parenting when he comes home in tears. I expect that he will get weird looks from peers and adults who see him as different at best. I am against bullying in all forms and believe that it is never acceptable. So I too will see that the issue gets corrected in due time. With any luck maybe by the time he is 18 years old it will be the soonest that it would happen. This will not stop or correct what will have happened by that point and the effects it will have on my little guy. Do I want to protect him? Absolutely! Will I be able to? Unfortunately no, he will be hurt from time to time.

I write to you as someone who has dealt with bullying, and as a parent who will be eventually sending my child into the school system. I like the fact that the government wants all children to be protected and feel safe - that is the noble goal. I also believe that the law as it is proposed will be incapable of doing what it has set out to do for everyone. I am asking for it to please be reviewed and at least these three things be changed. It should be made more inclusive to all types of potential bullying and more clearly defined what bullying is and how it is to be dealt with.

Clearly since the beginning of this bill the rights of faith groups of a variety of believers have been pitted against those with the rights of sexual orientation. Neither group is wanting to give up on those rights but one group has seen more acceptance at large with the general population. The Maria Yau and Janet O'Reilly 2006 student census for grade 7 - 12 shows that these two groups of, sexual orientation and religion are equal and very low on reasons to be bullied at 5% each. And yet these two groups are doing the most to have their case heard, today and in the last couple of months. I thank the government for taking time to listen to these concerns and ask that you'd consider each very carefully and give equal weight to both of these issues as well as the other concerns with why people are bullied. The protection

against religious bullying seems to be non-existent in the definition as it currently is proposed. The school systems have optional material showing that a certain inventors, musicians or famous persons were of a gay or lesbian persuasion. Why does that matter? Do these same text books mention what faith group that they belong to as well? Probably not. Why is the government seemingly pushing the sexual orientation issue with this material? That is one example of how it seems that the protection for one group is greater than the protection for the other. When I was in school, what mattered was who did what, and not their beliefs or their sexual orientation.

I also like Ontario's definition of bullying which is 'aggressive and repeated behaviour.' If the term 'hurt feelings' can be interpreted in Manitoba's definition, that's going to open up a can of worms that teachers, employers, lawyers, government and courts are going to have a hard time protecting the 'guilty' and defending the 'innocent'. Even any opposing player at a Winnipeg Jets game could get hurt feelings the way the crowd is bullying them. There seems to be a lack of clarity in the definition and the repercussions that will be needed to counter attack the bullies that are out there.

Again I would like to reiterate that the goal of the government is noble. The law as it stands is incapable of protecting people fully. Is there a hurt person in Ontario that still is being bullied? I would sure think so. The law by itself will not protect what has already been done. Tort law seeks repayment for what has happened. There are laws against stealing, speeding and murder. These things still occur. These laws do not protect the people from what has already happened. They seek to compensate a person for their hurts, which by very definition means that they have been hurt, that part was not stopped.

Having grown up in the community that I was raised in, I still get to see the people who bullied me. Do I cower or have scared feelings now? No. I see the hurts of these same people. One has died from a painful disease, some have dealt with cancer that shook their life up. All have grown up to be productive citizens that I can easily get along with and greet regularly. The second thing that I was taught and later understood more, that I mentioned earlier is forgiveness. No law has been able to impose people to forgive but it has offered me the greatest relief from any bully. It sounds like a passive word, it sounds like a "I give up" type of word but there is more strength in it than in any law. It deals with the effects of the hurt. Hurts happen.

Hurt people - hurt people. Forgiveness offers a way to deal with it for the offended and the offender.

There has got to be a different way to protect against bullying. It does start in the home and it does continue with the schools and the laws set to protect the young people. That is good. The government should also find a way to protect the rights and freedom of religion as well as those of a differing sexual orientation. This protection should be given in public and faith-based schools. Please find a way to protect children and the freedom of religion at the same time. Please do not let this bill pass without another look at it more in depth. This bill is heading in a good direction but needs more tweaking to make it an effective bill that all Manitobans can be proud of. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Trevor Brandt

Added note from Kristie:

I too was bullied and ostracized when I was in elementary/middle school/junior high. It was painful for me, and I remember many times going home in tears over how I had been treated. Looking at Bill 18 as it is written, not one of the reasons that I or any of the people in my school were bullied is acknowledged or protected. I have spoken to several people who were bullied, and asked what they were bullied for, as well as looking at the stats in the above mentioned survey, and the biggest reason that I have found to be the cause of bullying is to do with body image, yet from what I understand from Bill

18, that issue is not addressed at all. I got into a discussion with someone via social media in regards to this bill, and stated that I believe that Bill 18 as written could become a tool and weapon for LGTB students, that they can say "My feelings were hurt", and that what wasn't meant to be hurtful or bullying can be used to bully and hurt. The man that I was discussing the issue with said to me "We'll figure it out as we go." What I would like to ask him, and now address to you as the committee, is this: Would it make a lot of sense to pass a bill that hasn't properly laid out the definition of bullying, has singled out one group for protection without addressing the protection of the many other groups that face bullying, doesn't have any specific parameters in place for the consequence of bullying, and has no safeguards in place to prevent the bill from being used as a tool for bullying? Should we pass such a bill and then figure it out? Or would it be more efficient to address these issues first so that when an anti-bullying bill is passed (as well it should be) it will be effective. I believe that the end goal here of protecting students is good and right, and I am all for it, but I believe that Bill 18 as written will be ineffectual, and I urge you, the committee, not to pass this bill without considering these issues. Thank you for taking the time to read this, and for all your efforts to do the very best that you can as a part of our government in Manitoba.

Sincerely,

Kristie Brandt

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>