

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**

Thursday, September 5, 2013

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Melanie Wight (Burrows)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Ms. Allan, Hon. Messrs. Bjornson, Swan

*Ms. Braun, Mr. Briese, Ms. Crothers,
Mr. Friesen, Mrs. Rowat, Mr. Wiebe, Ms. Wight,
Mr. Wishart*

Substitutions:

Mr. Smook for Mrs. Rowat

Mr. Helwer for Mr. Smook at 7:22 p.m.

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Mr. Adam McAllister, private citizen

*Mr. Reg Klassen, Manitoba Association of
School Superintendents*

Ms. Tamar Thiessen, private citizen

Mr. Edward Penner, private citizen

Ms. Rebecca Sawatzky, private citizen

*Ms. Alison Johnston, Brandon Teachers'
Association; Ms. Debra Arpin, CUPE Local
737; and Mr. Mark Sefton, Brandon School
Division*

Mr. Bryan Schroeder, Christian Heritage School

Mr. Tim McAllister, private citizen

Ms. Sarah Dyck, private citizen

Ms. June Derksen, private citizen

*Mr. Darrel Guenther, Crestview Fellowship
Church*

Ms. Jasmine Harder, private citizen

*Ms. Michelle Gawronsky, Manitoba Government
and General Employees' Union*

Mr. Michael Sitko, private citizen

Mr. Nicholas Semenowich, private citizen

Ms. Amanda Friesen, private citizen

Mr. Rodolf Friesen, private citizen

Mr. Glenn Loewen, private citizen

Mr. Gord Utz, private citizen

Mr. Jason Monkman, private citizen

Mr. Dave Sauer, Winnipeg Labour Council

Ms. Francie Humby, private citizen

Mr. Bruce Martin, Calvary Temple

Ms. Margaret Jablonski, private citizen

Mr. Bill Rempel, private citizen

Ms. Darcey Bayne, Springs Christian Academy

Ms. Myla Krauskops, Austin Christian Academy

Mr. Bradley Warkentin, Trinity Baptist Church

*Mr. Ron Koleba, Winnipeg Evangelical Free
Church*

Mr. Phil Najda, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

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

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

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

Ms. Deanne Crothers (St. James): I nominate Ms. Wight.

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

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

This meeting has been called to consider Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools). As per agreement of the House dated June 20th, tonight we will hear from 28 of the presenters registered to speak on Bill 18, and you have the list of those presenters before you.

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

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I suggest we do hear from the out-of-town presenters first.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that the agreement of the committee? *[Agreed]*

I would also like to remind members of the committee that, in accordance with the agreement mentioned before, the committee may also decide to leave to—sorry—may also, by leave, decide to hear from presenters in addition to those scheduled for tonight's meeting.

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 would 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 18, if a presenter is not in attendance 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.

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

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

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Yes, Mr. Chair, I'm looking at my list, and I notice that the No. 10 speaker is Alison Johnston from—president of the Brandon Teachers' Society, and I'm just curious if that individual is from out of town because she's not marked on the list as out of town.

Mr. Chairperson: If I can suggest that the staff check with Ms. Johnston, and if there's any other individuals who are from out of town who have not been indicated as such on the list, please just speak

with our Chamber staff. They will assist you with having your names prioritized.

And we do have one individual, Mr. Reg Klassen, president, MASS, who has indicated that he is from out of town, so I'd like to inform the committee to mark your sheets as such.

Committee Substitution

Mr. Chairperson: I would also like to make the following membership substitutions effective immediately for this standing committee: Mr. Smook for Ms. Rowat.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: I will now call on Adam McAllister, private citizen. Mr. McAllister, please come to the podium. Do you have any written materials for the committee?

Mr. Adam McAllister (Private Citizen): No.

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

Mr. Adam McAllister: Okay, well, my name is Adam McAllister. I am 18 years old and I graduated from the Steinbach Regional Secondary school in 2012. I am very thankful for this chance I have been given to speak on Bill 18 before our elected officials and everyone else present tonight.

I believe that it is good when groups are formed that bring like-minded people together. When students realize that there are others who support them in their struggles, they don't have to walk in fear. I also can say, alongside every person in this room, that bullying is always wrong. The behaviour of one individual or group harassing another should never be tolerated. With what we know about Bill 18, we can easily see that its aim is to eliminate bullying in every Manitoba school that receives public funding. For this I thank our provincial government.

One thing I didn't say when I introduced myself is that I was the valedictorian of my graduating class at SRSS. Throughout my time in high school, I discovered that I didn't want to stand by when someone was being bullied. I made it my aim to love every single person I met by treating them as a significant person and giving them my full attention. I gave up the chance to have best friends because my goal was to be friends with everyone. That is why my classmates chose me to be the valedictorian. On top of that, I joined student groups that had values

which I shared. It was often hard to be friends with people who were bullied and show them their value when others tried to destroy it, yet I feel some things I did made a difference. I always had the full support of teachers and my principals when I tried to make a positive change in my school.

Every teacher in my school wanted so badly for bullying to end. My principal encouraged groups to be formed that would have a positive impact on the school culture. One such group that I was a part of was the morning devotions program which met every morning before classes to start—before classes started to encourage students. Though my school wasn't a Christian school, the administration chose to support this program because of the good things it was doing and how it helped create a safe and inclusive learning environment in the school. If this group began to make my school an unsafe place in any way, the administration would notice and they would make sure that the school wasn't allowed to operate. They care so deeply about all the students that they make sure the right groups are allowed to be in the school.

Bill 18 contains many passages that undoubtedly help makes schools a safer place. However, it also has passages that remove a school administration's ability to monitor which groups are in the school and ensure that they are helping to create a safe and inclusive learning environment.

One of the roles of teachers and principals is to be in charge of activity that goes on in their school and to stop any behaviour that is harmful to students. With Bill 18, if someone wants to make a gay-straight alliance, for example, or any other group, the school administration isn't allowed to determine if that group will help improve the school or if it will be negative for the school. The students are placed in charge, not just to run the group, but even to override the decision that wouldn't allow the group to be created for a good reason for the school.

Bill 18 also doesn't mention other groups like religious groups, the group I was a part of which helped the school. But I actually appreciated that the administration of the school had the authority to say, is this group helpful to the school or is it not? But the bill doesn't even mention those groups. It just says—it mentions specifically the gay-straight alliance, which I actually don't think is bad in essence, but the schools need to be able to determine if that group is going to help the school or if it's not.

* (18:10)

And why can't faith-based schools be allowed—yes, like, Bill 18 also—oh, yes, why can't faith-based schools allow only student groups to be formed that would help make the school a safer place as determined by them? A group such as a gay-straight alliance may only cause division and fear in a religious school because the basis of that group might be found to divide the students who have chosen to enrol in religious instruction. This group may or may not go against the very instruction they are receiving.

I would like to suggest to the members of this committee that the bill be revised to allow administrations to determine which groups are formed in schools to ensure that they are creating a safe and inclusive environment, not to single out certain groups and to say these groups have to be allowed in a school based on what the students want, not allowing the administration to help make the school a safer place. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks very much, Mr. McAllister, for your presentation tonight.

We'll now move on to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Adam, thank you very much for your presentation. I'm going to tell the MLA for Steinbach that you were the valedictorian at your school and that he better be careful because you might be running for politics someday. Thank you so much for your presentation. And thank you, you've obviously done a lot of work reading Bill 18 and put a lot of thought into your presentation. And all the best with your future, I think it's going to be a bright one.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Thank you, Adam, for coming and presenting to us this evening. In a former career, I was a teacher and, actually, I did my teaching practicum at SRSS, so I know your school very well. It's a lovely community and it's a great school. I appreciate what you had to say to us this evening, especially when you said that a school administration should have autonomy, they should have authority to determine what kind of groups will actually make for a safe and inclusive environment.

I just wanted to ask you a quick question. What do you think about the fact that schools weren't consulted in terms of—like, in terms of the coming up with bill, that there wasn't a wide and comprehensive consultation of schools in terms of arriving at this

legislation? Do you think that's something that should have taken place?

Mr. Adam McAllister: Yes, I think it should have and I think, like, any group—for example, the MTS is a group of—a teacher society, the union there, and they should actually talk to their teachers, I think, and see, yes, which ones support the bill, so they can have that knowledge, and ask every teacher which ones don't support the bill, so then they can kind of stand as one and actually know where they stand instead of just the top person there. And I also think that, like, for the group I was involved in, it was cool because we talked to the principal and he had to allow the group and he did allow it because it helped the school. But I think, like, with Bill 18, there—they wouldn't have to talk to the principal, they would just say, you want to make this group—and there's a bill about it, so you have to be able to do it, and the principal, it doesn't really matter what they think about that.

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

I will now call on Reg Klassen, president, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents.

Mr. Klassen, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee? Okay, I'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those.

And you may proceed with your presentation when you're ready.

Mr. Reg Klassen (Manitoba Association of School Superintendents): Okay. Should be 20. We tried to count them twice, so.

On behalf of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, I'd like to thank you for the time that you've given to so many people, including ourselves, our association, for a chance to speak to Bill 18. As the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, we believe the public school is the only societal institution where children from diverse backgrounds gather for a common purpose: to become educated. The challenge for educators is to define what we believe about education in a manner that encompasses the values of a democratic society, respects the inherent uniqueness of the individual student and, at the same time, provides equity of opportunity and ensures achievement for all.

Along with the many purposes of public education, as educators we have a responsibility to assist children to view themselves as capable of

contributing to the public good and preparing them to do so; to encourage in children a balance of intellectual and social development, social consciousness and preparation for life; to educate each child in a manner consistent with justice, fairness and equity; to empower each child with the knowledge and skills to live a positive, fulfilling life in a manner consistent with acceptance of others and respect for democratic values in a diverse society; and to assist children to develop an optimistic view of the future and a confident awareness of their potential to be an active participant in that future.

To achieve these purposes, we must provide safe, caring and welcoming learning environments for all children, engage all students in learning to their individual capacities, respect and nurture the co-responsibility with parents and guardians for the education of their children, listen to and build relationships with the community and engage with the community to build awareness and understanding of the purposes and value of public education and engage the community in opportunities to develop and support education for the public good.

As we have previously indicated in correspondence with Minister Allan, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents strongly endorses Bill 18. The proposed legislation further supports the work that is being undertaken in schools throughout our province to provide all students with safe, caring and inclusive learning environments.

In many of our schools there are student activities and organizations that promote gender equity, antiracism, awareness and understanding of people who are disabled by barriers and awareness and understanding of and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

As an association, we have expressed concern that the proposed wording of Bill 18, section 41(1.8), places the responsibility on pupils to establish and lead activities that promote human diversity such as gay-straight alliances. Students involved in organizations such as gay-straight alliances are often some of the most vulnerable and may not be prepared to initiate such an undertaking. It is our hope that the legislation will recognize the rights of both students and staff to initiate and lead appropriate initiatives that will make our schools even safer, more caring and inclusive for all.

And just before I read the final concluding paragraph, I will share with you a little anecdotal story.

I heard students present on a gay-straight alliance group that they had in their school. They went to their guidance counsellor, who went to their principal, who went to the superintendent to ask if they could start one and the answer was, of course, throughout the system. And so these students began. They put up posters. The posters were torn down. They quietly put the posters back up and after a while the posters weren't torn down anymore. As to when the meeting was, it was very open about what they were doing. And when these students presented they had a certain wow factor as to what happened in their school. It was students from all walks of life; there wasn't a whole lot of conversation about their gender orientation or their sexual orientation, but more conversation about getting to know each other. And what happened is the kids on the periphery, the kids that are left out that don't have the large circle of friends that aren't sure about themselves began talking to each other in such a manner that suddenly they had belonged to a community which they hadn't belonged to before. I believe that's what this bill intends.

In conclusion, I would like to restate that the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents strongly supports the intent of Bill 18. Together with the provincial government and our education partners, we are committed to providing the very best for the students in our care.

Thank you again for listening.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Klassen, for your presentation this evening.

Now, I'll turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Reg, for your presentation.

I, as the Minister of Education, value tremendously the partnership that we have with your association. You are the leaders in our province in so many different ways. You are creating civil society because of so much of the work that you do, and I appreciate it so much and I know officials in my department do as well.

I would also like to say thank you to your new staff officer who is working with you, Ken Klassen, from Steinbach. I know Ken has been a support to us as well, and we appreciate the opportunity to have you here this evening to make your presentation and, of course, we always look forward to working with you in the future to make our schools better places for young people.

* (18:20)

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thanks, Reg, for coming, and I do appreciate also the work of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents. And we welcome you here this evening. And thank you for the presentation that you have given and the considerable thought that I know that you and your organization have given to this subject.

I know that you stated in your presentation that there's considerable work under way, throughout the province, in schools to provide all students with a safe and inclusive learning environment. I wonder, do you have a concern as an organization at all, about the fact that this bill is silent, unlike the Manitoba Code of Human Rights, when it comes to protections to other groups, including things like ethnicity, creed and religion, and social disadvantage. Do you have a concern that you have about the fact that this bill does not go in that direction?

Mr. Klassen: No, I do not think that we have a concern about that. I think those things are fairly well enshrined in other legislation and in the way that we believe that we need to live our lives. So I think that that's well looked after there. I think what this attests to is it takes care of creating some space and opportunity for those people that are, as I said before, on the periphery and don't have a place to go in order to have their voices heard, as easily as some others might.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: One more question is: Have you heard from—

Floor Comment: Is my time up?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: It might be—that might be signalling—that might be a signal. I'll talk louder.

Have you heard from any of your schools or superintendents that say that they don't think that this bill will give them concrete tools to be able to do the work of making safe and inclusive schools?

Mr. Klassen: I think that—I would disagree with you—the way you've worded your question, quite frankly, because the concrete tools for working with safe schools are already there. I think this helps solidify some of those things.

As superintendents, we've been handing in safe-school plans for quite a few years now, and there has been a lot of work done around ensuring that our schools are safe places for kids. But one of the things that I think that most educators adhere to

is that whenever there is an unfair act by any child towards another, it's addressed immediately. And I think that we need to make sure that when we hear about those things, then we need to address them immediately. And I think school divisions and teachers and principals do that on a regular basis. The challenge is always to finding out about it because kids don't always share. What this provides is an avenue for some kids to share when they might not have another way of doing it, because of a community that welcomes them.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thanks for your time. I apologize for the distraction.

Ms. Allan: The funny thing is, it was the former minister of Education's vehicle.

Mr. Chairperson: Before proceeding to the next presenter, I'd like to inform the committee that Alison Johnston has, indeed, indicated that she is from out of town and would like to be considered as such.

And also that a new list with 30 presenters has now been distributed to the committee.

I will now call on Tamar Thiessen, private citizen.

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

Ms. Tamar Thiessen (Private Citizen): Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll ask the staff to help you distribute that. And you may proceed with your presentation, then, when you're ready.

Ms. Thiessen: Good evening. My name is Tamar Thiessen. I am from Blumenort, Manitoba.

What bothers me about Bill 18, I do not want to take religion out of our schools. I am concerned that our kids won't be able to read their Bible in school and/or pray.

Shouldn't Manitoba parents be able to choose between (1) public schools with GSAs where Bible reading and prayer is allowed, and (2) faith-based independent schools without GSAs, where Bible reading is taught and prayer is encouraged? Yes, I think we should have the right to choose. But Bill 18 does not give us that right because it says that all Manitoba schools, including faith-based independent schools who'll receive even partial government

funding, must allow gay-straight alliance student organization to promote its activities, if a student requests one.

Why can't there be an exception for faith-based independent schools to say no thanks to people who request GSAs, provided that the school have appropriate alternative antibullying plans in place? I wish there would be an exception.

If we, as Christians, have to accept students who believe that gay sex is moral, then LGBTQ students should be—should have to accept our beliefs as well. It's unfair that it's suddenly in with the new and completely out with the old. If gay-straight alliance student organizations are awarded protection under the law, then Christian Bible-based student organizations should also be awarded equal protection in our province. Alternatively, if all Manitoba schools are not forced to accommodate Christian Bible-based student organizations, then all Manitoba schools should not be forced to accommodate gay-straight alliance student organizations. The law should treat all groups equally. The law should not offer special protection to one group and not the other group. Therefore, two options would be acceptable: either one saying that all schools must have gay-straight groups and all schools must have Christian groups, or saying that no schools can have gay-straight groups and no schools can have Christian groups.

In closing, I feel a new antibullying bill should be introduced that provides appropriate consequences for bullies and educate safety and support for all students without trampling all over freedom of religion rights. And if we do this, Manitoba will be a much safer and more tolerant province. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Order. Order. I'd like to remind members of the public who are observing the committee tonight, please do not disturb the committee proceedings by applauding or commenting of any kind from the audience. Thank you very much for your co-operation tonight.

I just want to say thank you very much, Mrs. Thiessen, and now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Tamar. Have I—am I saying your name right? Tamar?

Ms. Thiessen: Yes, Tamar.

Ms. Allan: It's a beautiful name. Thank you very much. I'll give you a quiet applause for your presentation, and I want to thank you very much. I know it can be very intimidating to come into this room and make this kind of a presentation in front of so many people, but I want to thank you so much. Obviously, you put a lot of work into your presentation and you've made some comments that are your comments, that are your personal comments and your personal reflections, and I want to thank you so much for being here this evening and coming in from Blumenort to make your presentation. It's much appreciated.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I also want to thank you, Tamar, for coming this evening and making your voice heard and bringing your opinion and your thoughts and your beliefs to this committee hearing.

I just wanted to ask you what you think about the bill's threshold for determining what bullying is. It says that bullying can be an act that if you had your feelings hurt or if you've had your self-esteem damaged, any of that could amount to bullying. I'm just asking you to comment on that, what you think of that part of the bill.

Ms. Thiessen: I think getting your feelings hurt once, I don't think is exactly bullying. I think bullying is if it happens twice or more. I think sometimes bullying might—the first time, might just be a misunderstanding.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you once again, Ms. Thiessen, for your presentation tonight.

I'll now call on Edward Penner, private citizen.

Good evening, Mr. Penner. Do you have a written materials for the committee this evening? I'll ask the staff to help you distribute those. And you may proceed then when—with your presentation when you are ready.

*(18:30)

Mr. Edward Penner (Private Citizen): Good evening. My name is Ed Penner, and I'm not going to comment on this because it's too long. And somebody wrote it for me, and it says on there, just a truck driver. That maybe should read truck driver, not just. But anyway, that was years ago.

I have only one concern and that is that the bill is—if somebody thinks it's hidden, it's not. It's very

obvious that this bill's intentions are quite clear, and that is to do away with the freedom of every other group except gay-straight alliance, and that's something that—I'm not surprised.

I would like to ask the minister: Why would she not be willing to support—seeing that we have this government who's always very supportive of minorities, then why not support the minority of the Christians who we claim to be? And, if everybody claims to be a Christian, well, that's great, then support the majority.

But I think there's not a hidden agenda, there's a clear agenda and the future will tell that. Although you will run into difficulties, you might win, but at the end you will lose.

So—but, whatever. I realize I'm not that gifted in saying exactly what I'd like to say. I would be able to say that better when I'm not in public.

But I know what we used to do with bullies and that's not 'acsolid' anymore. But at one time, if there was a bully, that was only short-lived because we dealt with them immediately and that was the end of it. I didn't like bullies. I don't think you do, but you're making a long procession out of it to get something else in and jab on the side. That will come your way. Thank you.

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

Now, we'll turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Ed, thank you very much for your presentation, and I want you to know that my father was a truck driver. I was born and raised in MacGregor—and he ran Allen's Transfer—and so was my brother. So I have a high regard, obviously, for truck drivers, and I want to thank you so much for your presentation this evening and for your comments in regards to Bill 18.

Thank you for being here.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Ed, for coming this evening and making your opinion known here at this committee.

I wanted to ask you what you thought of Bill 18 in regard to the absence of any condition that would require parents to be contacted when it has been deemed to be the case that bullying has taken place. What do you think of that?

Mr. Penner: I would think that has to do with the fact of—that that would put too much power into the

parents' and the teachers' hands. It is easier to take it all away and then we can do as we will.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Penner, thank you for coming down and presenting to us today, and I just wanted to ask about one thing.

Bill 18 contains a provision that in preparing its respect for human diversity policy a school board must have due regard for the principles of the Human Rights Code, and that Human Rights Code contains protections against discrimination for a whole range of things, which includes religion or creed or religious belief, religious association or religious activity. So this bill will specifically require divisions and schools in setting their policies to make sure their policies have respect for that as well.

Does that make any difference to you in terms of what you've told us tonight?

Mr. Penner: Thank you, Mr. Swan, for the question, gives me an opportunity.

But I believe it's Professor Short, if he has his way, then that will change. He will—he says that you—he would—that it would be against the human rights for anybody to believe that they should have the right to institute Christianity or anything like that. You—that's what his long term—it's in here, you can read it, and that's how I answer your question.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, once again, thank you so much for your time tonight.

I'll now call on Rebecca Sawatzky, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Sawatzky. Do you have written materials for the committee tonight?

Ms. Rebecca Sawatzky (Private Citizen): I do.

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

Ms. Sawatzky: Hi, I'm Rebecca Sawatzky. I'm from Otterburne, Manitoba.

Bill 18 states in section 41(1.8) all pupils are to be accepted equally. Charter of Rights and Freedoms was brought into effect so that we may have our freedom to believe what we want. Bill 18's goal is to create a common ground that we establish a respect for human diversity, have respect for everybody, whether they are Christian or non-Christian.

We as Christians are being pushed around and pushed down because we stand firm in our belief, yet

we're not accepted; yet we are to accept all people no matter what they believe. We want the same treatment as everyone else, to be accepted and respected.

Where's Canada's freedom they claim to give? If we have freedom, then why have faith-based schools been forced to change? That is not freedom. If Canada is known for freedom and equality, Christians deserve the same treatment as every other group of people in Canada. God is an important part of our lives—not for everybody, but for a lot of people in Canada. And the national anthem states, God keep our land glorious and free. And if you look at our neighbour country to the US, they've pushed God out. They have a lot of school shootings and a lot of other things happening, and then people go and ask, where is God? Is that really where we want Canada to go? Because when I look at our country, that's what I see. Faith-based schools being forced to change our beliefs or standards are discrimination against our faith. And that's equality?

We all want to be respected, so please don't force us to change if you don't want to be forced to change. Let us live our lives with the right to have faith-based schools. Let us teach our children about God. If they can be taught about God, that will make a big difference in the life of our children and the lives that they come in contact with. They could be touched by the love of God. So, please, don't ask us to change if others don't want to change. We all want respect, so respect us as Christians. Don't just push us around, just—as you respect everybody else. No—not everyone wants their children to be taught about God, and that is fine. That is everybody's personal opinion. But there are plenty who do. So meet all of our needs.

I don't see how forcing faith-based schools to change will change bullying. It will cause nothing to change. Children will still bully, whether it is faith-based school or not. Bullying comes from the homes that children come out of and how did the—and how the child is raised, whether they are Christian or non-Christian. The school has nothing to do with it.

We live in a country that lives by their name of being known for freedom. Then live out that name. Let faith-based schools continue their way of teaching and all other groups of people attend other schools. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Sawatzky, very much for your presentation this evening.

We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Rebecca, thank you very much for your presentation this evening. We appreciate you taking the time to come here to reflect on Bill 18 and provide us with your comments. Thank you, again.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Rebecca, thank you for coming this evening and making your opinions and your thoughts and your beliefs known. Did you say you're from Arborg?

Floor Comment: Otterburne.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Oh, from Otterburne. Thank you very much for coming. I know that community.

Rebecca, do you think that if the bill is implemented as it's written now, will it actually be effective in your community, in your schools, at stamping out bullying?

Ms. Sawatzky: I don't really think so. No, I don't. Because what is written—yes, okay, everybody wants to be accepted, but why are they pushing aside Christianity? They're just bringing in the gay-straight alliance. Everybody else is being forced aside, so why does that change—it doesn't change anything. Then the Christians will get bullied and the gays will be accepted. So what does that change? Bullying is still happening. I really don't think it will change anything.

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

Now call on Alison Johnston, president of the Brandon Teachers' Association.

Ms. Johnston, do you have written materials for the committee?

Ms. Alison Johnston (The Brandon Teachers' Association): I do, Chair. But, before I begin, I'll ask your indulgence. In filling out the application to come in here today, it was my intent to represent one of three groups from the Brandon School Division, and I thought I had made that clear, and I'm asking your indulgence. We've come a long way to speak and I'm asking that you allow all three of us to speak at the same time?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee to allow three presenters? *[Agreed]*

Floor Comment: Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: I'd like to ask the presenters that will be presenting with you to have their names—write their names for use in Hansard and maybe just

speak their names into the microphone before they start speaking so that we have that as well on Hansard, as well, okay?

* (18:40)

Ms. Johnston: My name is Alison Johnston, and I'm president of the Brandon Teachers' Association.

Ms. Debra Arpin (CUPE Local 737): Good evening, my name is Debra Arpin, and I am president of CUPE Local 737, the support staff of the Brandon School Division.

Together, we represent the unionized employee groups of the Brandon School Division. We are pleased to make this presentation that supports Bill 18. Often, CUPE members are referred to as support staff. This is a good description of the role that my membership play in the Brandon School Division. They provide support for students in the classroom, hallway, office, the library, on the school bus and many other areas. It is the human support that students need in order to be successful and productive.

In our view, Bill 18 will provide the legislative support through law that will enshrine safer, more inclusive schools for all of our students. The pop duo, Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, currently have a song on the radio entitled same lung—sorry, Same Love. The lyrics have a strong message, and I would like to quote some of them to you: I can't change / Even if I wanted to / I can't change / Even if I tried / 'Til the day that makes my uncles be united by law / When the kids are walking around the hallway plagued by pain in their heart / A world so hateful some would rather die than be who they are / A certificate on paper isn't going to solve all, but it's a—I'll change the word—darn good start.

The CUPE members believe this bill is needed and it's a great place to start.

Ms. Johnston: This summer I had the opportunity to attend an equity and social justice seminar sponsored by the Manitoba Teachers' Society. At this seminar, many equity issues were addressed. A representative from Egale Canada led one of the sessions. Egale Canada is an advocacy organization that advances equality for Canadian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and their families.

In the session, each participant was given a star. And on each of the points they filled in things such as family, friends, school, hopes and dreams for the future. Each of these is important support that all of

us need as we negotiate our way through life. A circle was formed and the moderator described what life would be like if it was determined that we were different and a support was taken away. Imagine what a star would look like if one or more of the supports were torn off from our individual support system. Participants were confronted with exactly that feeling. It was an extremely powerful moment for me and brought clearly into focus what dilemmas LGBTQ students face as they deal with their sexuality and gender identity issues. In the debriefing following the exercise, a general consensus was that people wanted to do whatever they could to retrieve their points and put their stars back together.

Public education is an entrenched right for all citizens of Manitoba. For the members of the Brandon Teachers' Association, each student has the right to be a star shining brightly in the sky. In order to do that, a star requires all of its points. In our view, the passing of Bill 18 by the Manitoba Legislature will ensure that the public school point of every student's star will never be torn from its rightful place. Bill 18 will assist our students to achieve their potential free from discrimination. We are pleased to support this legislation.

Mr. Mark Sefton (Brandon School Division): And my name is Mark Sefton. I am the chair of the Board of Trustees, Brandon School Division, so I guess we could say that I'm representing the employer.

We believe—the board—we believe that student safety and security is paramount, absolutely paramount, when considering the factors that affect student engagement and learning. I think it's safe to say that every person in this room wants a school environment that facilitates and optimizes learning. We all want students to be able to take maximum advantage of the learning opportunities they may experience. For years, Brandon School Division has been working to improve student safety and security. We've implemented many policies geared at providing the optimum environment to engage students actively in their own learning. Over the past three years, we've consulted with many student groups, seeking their input on improvements that we could implement to improve their learning experience. One of the most common recommendations arising from those consultations was that we continue to work to minimize bullying.

When students feel safe, they feel that they belong. They come—become more engaged in their school and in their learning. Their understanding and

achievement improves. We believe that the provisions of Bill 18 enhance that safety and belonging for our students.

On March 25th of this year, the board of trustees of Brandon School Division passed the following motion: that the Brandon School Division supports the intent of Bill 18, including the provision that would allow students to establish and lead organizations that use the term gay-straight alliance. I want to stress that this motion was approved unanimously. There was no dissenting opinion expressed during the debate, and in the approximately 154 days since we approved that motion, I have not had a single person from the community express to me their disagreement or dissatisfaction with our decision—not one.

Over the years, we've had students establish and lead many activities and organizations within our school division that promote gender equity, anti-racism and respect for others. There have been a multitude of antibullying rallies and presentations. The students have done a fabulous job of organizing those events.

In each of our high schools, students have also requested and organized gay-straight alliances at one time or another over the past decade. The students involved have indicated that these organizations provided a greater sense of community for them within our schools. They have reported that they feel more safe and more valued.

Students need our leadership. As adults, we talk about equality of human rights but we sometimes don't walk our talk. We find convenient exceptions to treating all others with the dignity and respect that they deserve as human beings. Students notice this. They do not appreciate our—adults'—lack of commitment. They find it disingenuous and a little scary sometimes. We need to make a clear statement and back it up with action.

The board of trustees of Brandon School Division believes that Bill 18 is one part of making that statement and taking action. To evade this responsibility would be to deny students the maximum opportunity to optimize their learning environment. Students also need to see that adults in the province can set aside their differences and pull together on behalf of youth—our future. Everyone in this room wants our youth to have the best possible learning experience in the province's classrooms. We believe that Bill 18 takes a giant step in that direction, and we encourage you to approve this very

important legislation. We believe that our students are worth it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Sefton, for your presentation, Ms. Arpin—sorry—and Ms. Johnston.

Now to move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Mark, for your presentation and thank you for your leadership at the Brandon School Division. And, of course, I always enjoy my visits and my discussions with the Brandon School Board trustees and senior administration. And, actually, I was just talking to Andrew today about my next visit, so I look forward to seeing you shortly.

Floor Comment: Shortly.

Ms. Allan: Well, maybe not real short, but soon.

And Alison and Deb, thank you for your presentations this evening. It's obvious that you have students at the centre of your deliberations and at the centre of your work. So thank you to you for all three of you presenting and for coming in from Brandon to make these presentations. We appreciate it immensely.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I want to thank all three of you for coming in this evening and presenting, Alison, Deb, Mark.

I know the Brandon School Division. As a matter of fact, not too long ago, I had a chance to have a tour and a walk-through of your Neelin off-campus site in the downtown area, and you're doing some fascinating work there with some tremendous success, right in the heart of the downtown, giving opportunities to students who just haven't succeeded for whatever reason in the normal, conventional setting. And to be doing it, as you are, unilaterally and funding it locally, it's seeing tremendous success, and I've just been excited to actually visit with some of the graduates of that program and seen the great places they've gone on to.

* (18:50)

Mark, I had a quick question for you. I noticed, at the start of your presentation, you said you believed that student safety and security is paramount, and I wondered if you had a concern as a school division or a board of trustees when it came to the fact that Bill 18 does not actually mandate any kind of action that would require reporting to police in instances when acts of bullying would be deemed

to be of a criminal nature. Can you comment on that for me?

Mr. Sefton: No, actually, I don't have big concerns about that because those kinds of procedures are already in place in our schools. With all the other policies we have regarding situations in schools, it doesn't specifically say that police must be called in this instance. So the same would apply with the implementation of Bill 18, in my opinion.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, once again, thank you so much for your time tonight.

We'll now call on Bryan Schroeder, principal, Christian Heritage.

Mr. Schroeder, welcome. Do you have written materials for the committee this evening?

Mr. Bryan Schroeder (Christian Heritage School): I do.

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

Mr. Schroeder: Dear special committee, my name is Bryan Schroeder and I'm the principal at Christian Heritage School in Brandon.

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Creator and that He loves everyone. As a Christian, I am called to love people and show the love of Christ to all people. I believe perfect love drives out fear and that fear is a curse and destroys. We do not want to act out of fear. I think fear is one motivator of the creation of this bill, not love. It must be amended.

I work at a funded, independent school. Parents choose to pay tuition costs so that their children can be educated according to the Biblical perspectives, truths and principles that are highly valued in our school constitution and community. We are not perfect, but just like every other human being we have been created by a loving God who passionately wants us to know Him, and He made it possible through His Son, Jesus Christ.

I'm here to oppose Bill 18 on behalf of our school board as it is currently written not out of fear, anger or hate, but out of love. I love children. They are wonderful. I believe God created people and desires to draw all people into a saving relationship with his Son, Jesus Christ. I believe in a God who offers true life, true hope and true grace. I hate bullying. People can be mean. Children need to be trained in good character, love, respect, honour and

truth. Students who act like bullies need to be corrected in their behaviour with discipline and love. Victims need to be shown compassion, be educated and be trained in various ways as well.

Bill 18 is poorly written and poorly attempts to deal with bullying in our schools, but we need to go back to the drawing board. We need to try again. No student should be bullied for any reason. Disciplinary action should be taken when students act as bullies, but that's the hard part to understand. The vagueness of the definition of bullying in Bill 18 leaves administrators acknowledging all acts of unkindness as bullying or even unintentional acts as bullying, which then would need to be documented, reported to parents, followed up with disciplinary actions. This would all be done with significant interpretational and application challenges due to the current definition of bullying in the bill.

The term bullying used to be associated with evil and malicious behaviour, but it's now been trivialized with everyday talk and interactions. It's lost its edge. What is bullying? I see it as repetitive, intentional, targeted behaviour that intimidates, scares or hurts someone one way or another. There's too much guessing with the definition presented currently in the bill.

Bill 18 currently specifically protects certain groups of students. This doesn't make any sense to me. Students who are bullied for gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities are going to be specifically protected by law? What about religious beliefs? What about social class? What about body image, languages spoken?

I'm sure you're aware the Toronto District School Board completed a 99-page study in 2006 which they titled A System Overview Study that covered extensive aspects of 105,000 Toronto students' experiences at school. One topic was bullying and they discovered that the reasons why students were bullied were broken down into the following frequency percentages: body image, 38 per cent; grades, 17 per cent; cultural background, 11 per cent; language, 7 per cent; gender and sexual orientation, 5 per cent combined; and religion, 5 per cent. Just as many students were bullied for religious reasons as gender and sexual orientation and many others for much more common reasons. Yet for specific protection for students for those reasons are not included in this bill.

I truly love the children at my school. Love comes from a pure heart, a good conscience and

sincere faith. As a Christian, I believe God loves all people, whatever choices they make. The Bible teaches that everyone is in need of a saviour because of the sinful nature people are born with. Redemption is found in Jesus Christ.

I am not concerned with the lifestyle choices of individual people because I will love them anyways. I may not agree with their lifestyle choice, but it's their individual choice. That person makes the choice to live a certain way, just like each of us makes choices every day.

However, Bill 18 is currently written to give much authority—legal authority—to a specific group of people making personal lifestyle choices, which falls under the name of human diversity such that they can now influence others by establishing and leading activities and organizations at schools that promote the awareness and understanding of and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, meanwhile apparently having due regard for the principles of the Human Rights Code. This is completely backwards.

Our school has a theological perspective of a God-ordained design for heterosexual marriage and sexual relationship between one man and one woman. This is one reason why parents choose to send their children to be educated according to such a personal and significant Biblical value. However, if the government decides to incorporate and authorize a much more liberal perspective and world view on sex and sexuality that take—that makes the decision—that takes the decision-making authority and power away from the schools and parents, where is their freedom of religion?

I understand many students of various races, nationalities, languages, backgrounds, social classes and more, make their own lifestyle choices as they grow older and sexuality is included in that realm of decision making. They need to continue to be educated, mentored and trained in character, wisdom, love and faith in order to make wise choices.

Parents have the right and freedom to educate and influence their children according to their religious values and associations, thereby creating some parameters and understanding of what they believe to be good and bad choices, right and wrong choices.

If the school system is under a law that determines what is a right and wrong perspective towards sexual orientation and gender identity and

even goes as far as allowing students to lead organizations in school where they can educate other students according to their own personal preferences and understandings of sexual orientation lifestyle, the freedom of religion and right to educate would then be stripped from parents and schools, particularly independent schools.

The goal here does not be—does not appear to be one that is about antibullying; it is clearly one which is focused on providing powerful influence to integrate a world view on all sexual orientations and gender identities under the guise of promoting a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils. That is backwards thinking, and I pray, Minister Allan, and each of you respectively see that.

By standing behind this bill, I believe you are setting a new lower standard for the respect of citizens' constitutional rights to religious and associational freedoms and thereby violating those rights and freedoms in the process.

I believe you are enforcing select belief systems and world views looking to create a homogeneous school system rather than upholding and encouraging unique cultural and religious upbringings chosen by parents for their children. You'll be limiting the capacity of religious schools to teach and administer their schools in a manner 'consistent' with their religious beliefs and would seriously infringe on the parents' freedom to educate their children according to the tenets of their faith.

I believe are—you are disregarding the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 2(d). I believe you are lacking clarity by stating that a school board must have due regard for the principles of the Human Rights Code. Does that mean that religious families who want to exercise their rights to freedom of conscience religion, expression and association by teaching their children from their faith-inspired perspective will gain or lose support in our school system?

I believe you are creating a second class of students because only some groups of students would have special status. This will cause more exclusion not inclusion. I believe in the creation of antibullying clubs or programs where all bullying, including bullying towards LGBTQ students, is combated.

The Canadian Red Cross stand-up-to-bullies plan provides prevention and intervention strategies which focus on fixing bullying behaviour, not on the

traits of lifestyle choices of victims. I believe such resources and approaches to the bullying in our schools would respect the rights and freedoms of parents and independent schools, and focus on the student's behaviour and not the lifestyle choices or personal preferences of the victims.

I will continue to educate my staff, students and parents about bullying so that we can significantly decrease such malicious behaviour.

Thank you for this opportunity to present publicly and hopefully be heard with the goal of Bill 18 being amended for the future. Please revisit this bill and rewrite it so that it can truly address the bullying issues in today's schools.

May the Lord give you wisdom, insight and love as you seek to make the best decisions possible for all people in this province.

Thank you.

* (19:00)

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Bryan, thank you very much for this presentation. It is very obvious that you have put a lot of work into this presentation and it is very thorough. Thank you for coming from Brandon to make the presentation on behalf of your school, and all the best in the school year ahead of you, and thank you, once again, for your remarks.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I also want to thank you, Bryan, for coming this evening. You've given us a very thoughtful and comprehensive prepared viewpoint, and we thank you for it. Thanks for making the time in coming here from your community.

I just wanted to ask you—I'm also aware of that Toronto's district school board study and of their findings, and I guess I would ask you this. If it was left to you, how would you take Bill 18 and create the conditions in which you believe all students would be protected, even those with physiologically distinguishing features, people from different cultural backgrounds or language, and all of those things? How would you create that equity?

Mr. Schroeder: Thank you. I believe a proactive approach based on school policies and action taken by the administrators with a well-informed and trained staff. I believe that addresses it. I believe if

you specifically protect a group of students by law it's going to cause greater issues in the future.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: One last question. Do you have an antibullying club in your school?

Mr. Schroeder: Sorry—thank you.

We don't have an antibullying club in the school, but we do train the staff. We do train the students. We inform parents. We provide resources, but we don't specifically have a club.

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

I'll now call on Tim McAllister, private citizen. Mr. McAllister, do you have written material for the distribution of the committee?

Mr. Tim McAllister (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. We'll allow you to proceed, then, when you're ready.

Mr. Tim McAllister: Hello everyone. I want to thank you for this opportunity to speak and present to everyone here.

I just want to say that I am against bullying in all forms for all people. I believe that the greatest commandment in the Scripture is to love God and to love my neighbour as myself. All people are my neighbours and I continually am trying to love all people regardless of differences of belief or lifestyle.

Bill 18 specifically gives protection from bullying to four things: gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities. I'm happy to agree with you guys that all children should be protected and no child should ever be bullied for any of these things. The problem is, however, that religious beliefs are explicitly left out, and, Minister Allan, you've so far refused to amend the bill in any way.

I want to refer to the 2006 study that the previous presenter just mentioned by the Toronto school board, and they're the biggest school board in Canada. They did a survey and, yes, I'll just go over the stats again. And they found that the biggest reason for bullying was body image at 38 per cent; following by grades at 17 per cent; cultural background at 11 per cent; followed by language at 7 per cent; then gender and sexual orientation at 5 per cent combined; and then religion at 5 per cent as well. So you can see that people were bullied for religious reasons just as much as gender and sexual orientation, and that's a study done by the largest school board in Canada.

When this fact is combined with the weak definition given to the act of bullying, the results could be devastating for children of faith and schools of faith. The definition of bullying in Bill 18 includes hurt feelings. Bill 13, a similar bill that is now law in Ontario, defines bullying much more appropriately as aggressive and repeated behaviour. As a result of these two things, (1) religious beliefs are not specifically protected, and (2) bullying is defined so loosely as to include hurt feelings, there's the real possibility that children could be accused of bullying merely for talking about their religious beliefs or for engaging in a religious activity at school.

And, you know, just my personal belief as a Christian, you know, I've got a lot of issues. I sin and I've got a lot of problems, and I'm working on that to try to improve my life. I pray to God and I ask for forgiveness for—from those things, the sins that I commit, and, you know, I would have no desire to promote, you know, my sin behaviour. I don't want to engage in, you know, enriching that behaviour.

I'll tell you guys right now, you know, in the past and still currently, sometimes I just am prone to lying and obscuring truth, and I'm striving to live a more wholesome life and a life without sin, recognizing that I will still likely fail in the future, but I look to God to help me live a life continually growing in character and to be more like Him. And if I'm endeavouring to live my life like this, would I want to have around me or create or promote a group that would celebrate lying and the concealing of truth? Absolutely not.

I don't want to glorify sin and I wouldn't expect a faith-based organization to glorify an act that they would also disagree with. This is the dilemma that faith-based schools have with this bill. The requirement to promote all sexual orientations and use the name gay-straight alliance for a student group encourages lifestyles that are not honouring to God. Just as I would not expect a school of faith to promote lying and permit groups that uplift lying to exist, I would not expect a school of faith to be able to obey Bill 18 as it is currently written and still stay true to their organization's code of moral standards.

I believe that protecting children from bullying and religious freedom are both important Canadian values. I believe that if the teachers and principals and parents of our province are empowered to creatively tackle bullying in our schools, that there are many solutions to be found on this issue which don't need to infringe on the freedom of religion in

the public and faith-based schools of our province, whether Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu or any other faith.

I do not support Bill 18 the way it is currently worded. Please revise it to contain more specific and stronger antibullying protection and to exempt faith-based independent schools from anything that goes contrary to their faith principles. Thank you.

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

Ms. Allan: Tim, thank you so much for your presentation this evening. It was obviously one that you put a lot of thought into and those were your personal reflections, and we really appreciate your comments this evening. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Tim, for coming. It was a very honest and sincere presentation and we thank you for make-taking the time to make it this evening.

You made reference to Ontario's legislation. I've also read that legislation; I have some questions like your own. I wondered if you would just comment on us. Ontario's legislation offers stronger—a stronger definition of what constitutes bullying. I just wanted to ask you, in your mind, what's wrong with the idea of bullying being defined as maybe even having taken place only one time and constituting damage to your self-esteem or you suffered hurt feelings? What's wrong with that?

Mr. Tim McAllister: In my mind, I just see that as an administrative nightmare. How are teachers that are already trying to take control and teach and nurture a classroom of 25 and principals that are looking at—over hundreds of students, how are they going to add to their plate every report of hurt feelings? That just seems logistically impossible. Just from a, you know, pragmatic view, how are we going to enforce this bill? And then I would just ask the question, why do we want to create a bill that we're going to be doomed to failure enforcing it when it actually gets passed?

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

Now call on Sarah Dyck, private citizen.

Evening, Ms. Dyck. Do you have written materials for distribution? We'll ask the staff to help you distribute those, and you may proceed when you're ready.

* (19:10)

Ms. Sarah Dyck (Private Citizen): Hello. My name is Sarah Dyck. I'm a Manitoban not too far out of the public school system—I graduated in 2006—and I'm concerned with Bill 18 as written. I'm also a graduate from the University of Winnipeg, 2012, having maintained excellent marks and rapport with my professors and fellow students. I am intelligent, able to think and reason, and I have some authority in the public education system, not a ton, but some. I was bold in classes, willing to be a dissenting voice, and yet I was able to make friends of many different backgrounds. And I'm a Christian living out a relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is, in part, going to reiterate what my brother Tim said, but this is why I am concerned about Bill 18: first of all, I am against all bullying in all forms of all people. Bullying is never acceptable for any reason. I believe that the greatest commandment in Scripture is to love God and to love your neighbour as yourself. All human beings are our neighbours and we are called to love all people regardless of differences in belief or lifestyle.

My issue with Bill 18 has nothing to do with being in favour of bullying, but rather with the wording of the bill which protects certain groups of children over others. Bill 18 specifically gives protection from bullying to four categories of children: gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities. I am happy to agree that all children should be protected and no child should ever be bullied for any of these reasons. The problem is, however, that religious beliefs are explicitly left out, as well as many of the other reasons why children are bullied. And Education Minister Nancy Allan has so far refused any amendments of the bill. When this fact is combined with a weak definition of—given to the act of bullying, the results could be devastating for children of faith and schools of faith.

The definition of bullying in Bill 18 includes hurt feelings. Bill 13, a similar bill that is now in law in Ontario, defines bullying much more appropriately as aggressive and repeated behaviour. As a result of these two things, that religious beliefs are not specifically protected and that bullying is defined so loosely as to include hurt feelings, there is the real possibility that children could be accused of bullying merely for talking about their religious beliefs or for engaging in religious activity at school.

Lastly, I believe that religious freedom and protecting children from bullying are both important

Canadian values. I believe that if the teachers and principals and parents of our province are empowered to creatively tackle bullying in our schools, that there are many solutions to be found on this issue which don't need to infringe on the freedom of religion in the public and faith-based schools of our province, whether Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu or whatever world view you hold.

Essentially what I am trying to say is that Bill 18 is both too broad and too narrow in its scope of protection. First of all—and to go dive in a little bit more to these two things, it is too broad in its definition of bullying. If bullying can be defined as behaviour that (a) is intended to cause or should be known to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property, or (b) is intended to create or should be known to create a negative school environment for another person, then one simple act of disagreeing can be misconstrued as an act of bullying.

Now, one bit—big disagreement that is—has been highlighted in this whole debate is one of world view. Independent faith-based schools that defend their right to teach their world view feel that this bill is inhibiting that right. For example, the word sin seems to be offensive to many people. Some could even say this word creates a negative environment for them or harms their self-esteem. However, this word is a word of a certain world view, namely Abrahamic faiths, does not equate to either hate speech or bullying.

As a Christian who is passionate about the Bible, a book of faith that was written over thousands of years, saying that something is sin has never made my God or Christians or Jews or Muslims, for that matter, bullies. I sin, but I certainly do not hate myself. In the same way that a parent teaches his son or daughter that a hot stove should not be touched, God has provided guidelines for us to live by. Most of these form the foundation of many public laws—for example, against murder, stealing, et cetera—but some of which are more of the matter of the heart, for example, pride. First Peter 5, verse 5(b) says, clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

In no way do I think that all of God's laws should be legislated by a provincial or federal government, so don't hear me wrong there; I do not want that at all. But what we, as Christians, do ask is

that we remain free to practise and teach the faith that our forefathers have been practising for the past 2,000 years. God is love, as it says in First John 1, verse 8. His son Jesus died so that we can have life, and life includes following his commandments. A lot of this is highlighted in First John, if any of you are desiring to look further.

The Bible is mostly addressed to Christians, not to nonbelievers. Those who share the Christian world view can agree that sin is a common thread throughout the Bible, and those who do not base their lives on it should take no offence to what it says. If a Jewish person feels that eating certain foods is sin, I take no offence as I do not hold that world view. Christian morality is based on this book, the Bible, and I ask the committee: What are your morals based on? You have the freedom to disagree with me and do what you like, but please, also give me the freedom to disagree with you and do not take me as a bully when I do.

As written, this broad definition of bullying suggests that a mere disagreement can be the cause of hurt feelings and, therefore, punishable by the school administrators. The foundations of our legal system are in the freedom that we have to state our opinions and disagree with each other in order to find the best solutions for all. Are we really going to take this freedom away from our children, thus crippling them as they enter adulthood?

Secondly, this bill is too narrow in its scope of student protection. As already was said before, it is very important for the named groups to be protected under government legislation, and they are. It's awesome. Under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms as well as the human rights act, singling out a few minority groups both makes them stick out more, therefore, potentially more susceptible to becoming targets of bullying, but it also serves to exclude other groups that feel like a bullied minority, for example, students who practise a certain religion, not just Christianity, any religion, or who come from different socio-economic backgrounds. Those are just two examples; there are many, many more.

It's—just for a personal slant on things, when I was in high school I was frequently questioned, interrogated and mocked for what I believe. I would not have considered it bullying then, those—that wasn't even in my scope of imagination. But according to this bill it definitely would be. I was fairly adept at sticking up for myself; however, there were definitely times that I was pressured to do

things contrary to my beliefs in order to try to fit in. There was a decent Christian presence in the school I attended, including an interschool Christian fellowship group, ICF, that was available to me. Yet this did nothing to stop the mocking from happening. Although the support was there, the bullying continued.

In university, bullying took different forms and was more like intellectual intimidation, fear to write or say what I really thought or believed rather than the outright mockery that I experienced in high school, yet it prevailed.

So my fear is that in the eagerness to protect a few, more will begin to fall into the categories of needing protection and more and more legislation will need to be created. I feel that this bill is a good start, yet amendments will serve to accomplish the goals it actually sets out to do. So, instead of naming a few groups, can we not say that protection should be for all and maybe even suggest, as was mentioned earlier, antibullying clubs rather than clubs for a specific group of people? And, instead of allowing a simple, unintended remark to give a student the label of bully, can we not give a more specific and intentional definition to the word, putting specific plans in place so the bully themselves can learn to accept everyone?

So this is a final note to Minister Nancy Allan and those others who drafted the bill. I really respect and admire the heart behind this bill. I really do, and I think that the goal of having a safe and inclusive school environment for all is so necessary. Yet, can you not see why the debates that have been raging since this bill was released, that this is, in fact, not able to accomplish the goal of making everyone feel safe and included? Perhaps we can work together to draft a legislation that can truly be a work of co-operation. Maybe this province can function like a true democracy and work together to become a province that is safe and inclusive for all, maybe. Thank you.

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

Ms. Allan: Well, Sarah, I respect and admire your heart that you put into this presentation. I think it was fantastic, and do I understand that Adam is your brother as well, the first speaker? Well, I just want you to know that you just edged him out as the new candidate in Steinbach. Sorry, Adam.

This was a terrific presentation. Thank you so much for being here, and it's obvious you put a lot of thought into this presentation—are a very articulate person. Thank you. Very thoughtful.

* (19:20)

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Sarah, I want to also thank you for coming this evening and sharing with us. You are someone who has been the target of bullying, and you have endured it and you have—you've survived and you've thrived and you learned to cope, and you've given us some very good things to think about this evening.

I also remark that you were the—you said your brother spoke earlier, and I thought that it was interesting you shared a number of similar themes. And in my family siblings squabbled, but I can see you've reached some level of understanding and agreement in your family.

I had a question for you because you made an interesting point. You talked about the fact that singling out a few minority groups can make them stick out more and can potentially make them more susceptible to acts of bullying because you've isolated them from the other groups. And I was thinking about—I've heard that comment before even from experts and I was thinking about the degree to which the clubhouse approach—if I can use that term—works against the goal of empathy and compassion and reaching out and fostering that kind of understanding.

I wonder if you would just comment on that approach, like, the clubhouse approach as opposed to more general antibullying clubs in schools.

Ms. Dyck: Yes, I would just say that naming those specific groups—gay-straight alliance, I actually haven't looked a lot into that specific group but even the name in itself, it presents a certain idea in children's minds, right? And people who grow up in whatever family, yes, okay, we need to accept people, but having that specific singled-out group named, I think, yes, will create that—almost a spotlight and, I don't know, just increase the amount of attention that's put on people.

Whereas, yes, say an antibullying club would be more inclusive for all, and it's just saying anybody who has been a victim in any way, shape or form, whether perceived or in reality, then would be welcome and able to feel welcome there.

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

Committee Substitution

Mr. Chairperson: Before calling the next presenter, I'd like to inform that committee of the following membership substitution: Mr. Helwer for Mr. Smook.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: I'll now call on June Derksen, private citizen.

Ms. Derksen, do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. June Derksen (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: You may proceed when ready then.

Ms. Derksen: Okay. Hello. My name is June Derksen, and I'm from a small French community in the southeast of the province.

First of all I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my heart in this matter of Bill 18. I'm here because I love my country, I love freedom and I love the right to choose and because I love people—all people—and because I am greatly saddened by what I have seen and heard since the whole bill has come out.

I was teased and belittled during my early school years about my ethnic background and about my religious beliefs, so I believe I have some understanding of how much damage can be done when someone is bullied. And I understand that it's a problem that needs to be addressed.

Having said that, I cannot see how Bill 18 as proposed addresses the issue of bullying in that it does not even give a clear definition of what bullying actually is, nor does it give any clear consequences—which makes sense, because I'm not sure how you can state clear consequences for unspecified acts of violation. In essence, it says you will be punished for breaking the rules but we aren't going to tell you what the rules are.

Rather than a quest for safety and equality of all children, it has given freedom, safety and rights specifically to a minority group of students and removing the same from the majority. The gay-lesbian groups have the right to say: Our way of life is acceptable and good and all should embrace it. But the heterosexual group does not have the right to

say: Our way of life is acceptable and good and all should embrace it.

From years past I have heard from friends that I have had in the gay community that they felt they had to stay quiet and hide their beliefs and be silent about their lifestyles, and it was wrong. But now it seems as though that same community is saying to the religious communities, you have to stay quiet and hide your beliefs and be silent about your lifestyle, and that's just as wrong.

My thought is how can this be moving forward in a positive way if we are re-enacting and perpetuating further dissension by taking the muzzle off one group and putting it back on another? The bill does not address the prevention of bullying at all, but rather seeks to define sexual orientation. The bill, as written, leaves the door wide open for false accusations, personal vendettas and for religious persecution—or you could call it religious bullying. It actually promotes bullying anyone whose views differ.

I do not share the same beliefs as the LGBTQ community, nor do I share many of the beliefs of the Jewish, Islamic or Hindu, Catholic communities, but I will stand for and agree to their right to hold to their beliefs and to teach those beliefs to their children because that's part of what makes our country great—the freedom to choose. I taught my children what I believe to be right and true. Don't all parents want to do that for their children? And when the children grow up, they then themselves can choose what they want to believe.

When private schooling became an option for my children, I gave them the choice of whether they wanted to go to a private, faith-based Christian school or continue in the public school system. One chose to switch immediately. The other—one chose public high school and the other changed his mind two years in and switched to the private, faith-based school. The reason I mention this is because it's about respecting individual rights and allowing choice and not punishing for differences of beliefs, personal values or opinions. Doing that usually only causes rebellion and anger, and I would think that the same principle would hold true for our country.

Since the proposed bill, I have seen peaceful communities turn on each other and draw lines of segregation where there weren't any before. They've hurled threats and accusations, name calling, divisions in families and longstanding friendships. Those for and against and even those on the same

side of the issue are angry at each other because some speak up and some stay silent, and all the while our children and our teenagers watch, listen and learn.

In a TV interview on Remembrance Day, Mr. Selinger allows parents to opt out to their children based on religious purposes. He states, and it's about freedom and freedom of religion and freedom to live in our society, which is what our veterans all fought for, and I agree with Mr. Selinger, freedom for all.

So far this bill has done nothing but cause more dissension and more separation between different groups rather than unifying. You cannot legislate belief systems and moral codes in a free, democratic society or it is no longer a democracy. Thank you.

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

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, June, for your presentation this evening. It's important that we hear your personal reflections on Bill 18, and how you feel it has affected the community that you live in and some of your surrounding communities. I know that this has been a very difficult topic and a very difficult discussion for many people, but I think it's an important dialogue that we have to have. So thank you so much for being here this evening and sharing your personal reflections on Bill 18.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, June, for coming. I really appreciate you having the courage to tell us about being bullied because of your ethnic background. I really appreciate you being able to tell the story about what this has done—this bill has done in the fabric of your community. That takes courage to say. Thank you for sharing it here tonight. I'm a little disappointed you didn't bring notes along because there was a lot you said that now I'm thinking about, and I'll have to go back and check the official record later on to reread what you said. There was some very thoughtful comments that you made.

I guess my comment to you was just this. Earlier in your presentation, you made the remark that you were concerned about the lack of clear consequences in the legislation for acts of bullying, and earlier this evening we had an individual stand up and said they shared no concern that there were not clear consequences spelled out in this legislation. Why would clear consequences make a difference for you

in this legislation if those things could be enshrined there?

Ms. Derksen: In order for there to be clear consequences set out, then I—the assumption is that there is then a clear definition of what bullying is. So I don't see how you can have the consequences without the crime, so to speak.

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

Now, call on Darrel Guenther, Crestview Fellowship Church. Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Darrel Guenther (Crestview Fellowship Church): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those, and do I have the pronunciation of your last name correctly?

Mr. Guenther: Guenther, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Guenther. Mr. Guenther, you may proceed when ready.

* (19:30)

Mr. Guenther: First off, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak here to the committee this evening. My name is Darrel Guenther and I'm the pastor at Crestview Fellowship Church here in Winnipeg. As I will read my presentation here this evening, remember the fact that I'm doing so personally, as well on behalf of the congregation that I represent. During my presenting here, if I use the singular I, please remember that there is a congregation that is of like mind. I have addressed this presentation with the board that I work under and have a mandate from the members to present on their behalf. We believe we are to speak up on issues that we believe in.

Speaking on behalf of a faith-based organization most likely raises some flags right away. There have been many things done throughout history under the flag of faith that have not been done in love. One thing that I believe we, as believers, are called to do, is to love. In fact, in Colossians 3, verse 12, it says, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. And then it says in verse 14, and over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

I want to apologize, if I may, for the times past when the Church has not done this. I believe we can have a—different opinions on matters and still remain

rational people dealing in love and respect. I want to state right off the bat that bullying is wrong. It is wrong in our schools as well as in all areas of society and in all forums. I believe we can all agree on this point.

I remember my junior high years were not all that pleasant. I was bullied, seeing I was almost as wide as I was tall. All people should be protected in a school system that falls on the administration to provide a safe learning environment for all students. This includes protection from bullying in regards to race, sex, religion, physical or mental condition and the brands of jeans that you wear.

As human beings we all bear the image of God, and for that reason alone, respect should be given to each individual. What I wish to address here today are some of the issues, aspects of Bill 18 that I feel are in need of further study or do not line up with our belief system.

We live in a wonderful country. This was discovered many years ago by the generations who came before us. I'm representing a Mennonite church, and one of the reasons that our forefathers came to Canada was to have both freedom of religion and education. I am proud of my heritage of faith and I believe that from the Mennonite settlers on, we, as group, have done many great things for this province, as well as the communities we live in.

There are aspects of Bill 18 that I believe need revision. I've read Kelvin Goertzen's notes speaking on the subject of Bill 18 to the Legislative Assembly on May 6th. I've not done the research, but from Mr. Goertzen's remarks, it would appear that a more thorough bill be drafted.

I would like to see in the bill a component of reporting of bullying, the investigation protocol as well as the consequences or the punishment of those who bully. I understand there's been very little consultation with parent advisory groups or the general public in the drafting of this bill. I would really encourage this to happen.

The main area of concern is subsection 41(1.8)(b) that says, use the name gay-straight alliance or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a 'posable'-positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils. With this component in the bill, it is my belief that this will promote the teaching of sexual relationships that are outside the conservative Biblical view on sexual relationships. If this enters

private schools in Manitoba, many of which hold to a conservative theology of sex, then Bill 18 will violate those schools' freedom of religion.

If Bill 18 is implemented as written, I believe it violates Canada's promise to immigrant settlers in the 1870s of perpetual freedom of religion and the right to educate their young according to their faith. I understand that letters to our Education Minister from leaders of the Manitoba Catholic, Sikh, Jewish, and Muslim communities share similar concerns about our religious freedoms.

While we all agree that bullying in our schools needs to be reduced as much as possible, many faith-based organizations, ours included, are convinced that Bill 18 aims to promote the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer lifestyle as normal, rather than ensuring safety at school. We believe that sex is beautifully designed and should be enjoyed only by married, heterosexual husband and wife. Bill 18 aims to teach that this Biblical view of sex is false. Herein, most likely, is the main point of dispute.

Bill 18 requires all public and private schools to accommodate gay-straight alliance if one student requests such. When a school accommodates a student organization, it officially approves of that organization's goals and activities. It would provide space for meeting and most likely a faculty or staff supervisor. That being said, it implies that the school with a gay-straight alliance endorses a very liberal view of sex.

I would like to argue that faith-based schools need to have their faith, their beliefs protected, including a conservative view of sex. Accommodating a gay-straight alliance violates this faith-based view of sex, and, therefore, it violates our freedom of religion.

As this would get introduced into the classroom, students would be subjected to issues that may not be age- or time-appropriate and disrespects their parents' rights and duties to provide their children with sex education they deem appropriate.

If Bill 18 is implemented, many Manitoba public school students, teachers and taxpayers who honestly hold to a conservative view of sex would be in conflict. Bill 18 has most likely already increased bullying directed at these students and teachers who believe in conservative theology of sex and has created a less-than-safe learning environment for them. Some of Manitoba's best public school

teachers and administrators dare not challenge the establishment on Bill 18. They are really caught in a tight spot. Bill 18 may bully some of Manitoba's best teachers out of employment.

I would like really to encourage this committee and our provincial government to rework Bill 18 with public input to provide a method of reporting of bullying, the investigation protocol of incidents, consequences for offenders and protection against bullying pursued in a way that does not violate the freedom of religion. It is, in my view, that this be done now prior to passing the bill so that this matter would be worked out with love and respect and not in litigation. Thank you.

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

Ms. Allan: Thank you, Pastor Guenther, for your presentation this evening on behalf of your congregation. I appreciate you taking the time to be here this evening and to provide us with your reflections on Bill 18.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Pastor Guenther, for joining us this evening, for coming and delivering this message on behalf of your board and on behalf of your congregation.

In your last paragraph, you identify a number of shortcomings that you see with the bill, and you talk about the absence of a reporting mechanism and an investigation protocol of incidents. I think that's all very noteworthy. It's some of the concerns that we've raised as well in the Legislature in this session.

I just wanted you to know, because you had indicated that you, yourself were bullied, but for different reasons, and previous speakers this evening indicated that according to some studies the vast majority of bullying incidents has to do with physiologically distinguishing characteristics and things. So how do you get there in our schools? How do you actually provide that broad-based and inclusive protection of all students regardless of what distinguishes them?

Mr. Guenther: Well, in the school system there's educators, and I think that's where it starts right from the ground up. People with differences are different, but it's okay to be different, and I think the whole education system should concentrate on that and really focus on that and to teach people that differences do exist and they exist in each one of us. Some are more hidden than others, and yet it's okay

to be different because we are all uniquely created. And so I think it's an education process.

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

Now I'll call on Jasmine Harder, private citizen.

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

Ms. Jasmine Harder (Private Citizen): I do not, sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you know, no problem at all. You may proceed when ready.

Ms. Harder: Okay. I want to begin by saying thank you to Ms. Allan and all the members of the committee for this opportunity to present my thoughts on Bill 18.

My name is Jasmine Harder. I'm from Steinbach, Manitoba. I'm a 22-year-old mom. I have two young children who will be of the school age in the next few years.

Like most of us, I have had experiences with being bullied. I've never been physically bullied, but I have been verbally and emotionally bullied. I've also been at fault for bullying. Haven't we all?

* (19:40)

When I was in school, bullying rarely had anything to do with sexual orientation. Bullies would pick on people because of their looks, mostly, and sometimes their religion, wealth or personality. I was bullied in elementary school. A boy on my bus would verbally bully me, and I would go home feeling very defeated. In grade 7, again, I was bullied. A girl in my school told embarrassing rumours about me that were untrue. I'm sure there are more times that I have been bullied that I can't remember, but the problem is that I didn't reach out for help. I didn't tell anyone that I was being bullied. I also remember bullying others. I remember, in elementary and middle school, my friends and I would laugh at others and exclude them when we would hang out. It is never okay to bully someone for any reason.

We are imperfect people living in an imperfect world, and no bill is going to magically solve all our problems. We have so many rules, but do they perfectly stop or fix everything? They do not. Laws and rules are great when used properly, but we can't expect them to solve all of our problems perfectly. I am thankful for laws and rules, but at that point—at

what point is the government stepping over the parental line? Parents need to step up and start knowing what's going on in their kids' lives. Kids need parents to model how to love others that are different and think different than themselves. Parents need to build more relationships with their children and actually listen so their kids will tell them what's going on in their lives. There are other ways to help bullying besides a bill, and I think working with families and their communication is a better solution—also working with the bullies to improve their actions and working with the victims being bullied. I do think there should be consequences at school for bullies, but parents should be notified first.

Bill 18 is not the solution to bullying. It has too many flaws that would most likely breed hatred and more bullying among groups. Some of the problems with Bill 18 are as follows. Bill 18's definition of bullying is far too vague. Hurt feelings happen to everyone, and everyone has hurt someone's feelings. Where is the line drawn as to what gets punishment and what doesn't, as well as the type of punishment given? Bill 18 lacks consequences for bullies and help for the victim being bullied. Bill 18 should require schools to notify the bully's parents and the victim's parents.

I believe that Bill 18 should not force faith-based, independent schools to allow activities and organizations to form that would be in contradiction with their religious beliefs. I would like to encourage a change for the word must, and in its place, put may, for independent schools.

Thank you for your time, and God bless you.

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

We'll now move on to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you so much, Jasmine, for your presentation, and thank you. Many people have shared their personal stories over the last few evenings with us about being bullied, and I know that you shared yours with us this evening, and I thank you for that. And it certainly doesn't make anybody happy when these kinds of situations occur. I did like the fact, though, that one of the things that you talked about in your presentation is how important it is for people to reach out for help, and I wish more people would do that. Once again, thank you so much for being with us this evening and thank you so much for your presentation.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Jasmine, thanks for coming tonight and thanks for sharing your story. You shared about being the victim of bullying and about being the subject of untrue information that's being distributed. I can only imagine how troubling that is, and for you to come and share your story is meaningful to all of us here around the table this evening.

I know that you made a point of noting in your remarks this evening that the bill stops short of requiring schools to notify parents of when bullying had taken place, either in the case that a child was the perpetrator of bullying or was the victim of bullying. Why do you think that is an important feature for a piece of legislation of this kind?

Ms. Harder: To have the parents involved, is what you're saying?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Yes, that's right, to have parents involved and communicated with by school authorities, teachers and administrators.

Ms. Harder: Because I think that is where the root of it is. I think it's with parents and I think parents are not doing their job nowadays. I think they are allowing schools and allowing churches and allowing everyone else to run their kids' lives and teach them, and that's not their responsibility. It's the parents' responsibility.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: So just one other question then: So what does it suggest to you that this legislation doesn't contain such a provision? What does it suggest to you?

Ms. Harder: What do I suggest in its place—sorry?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I'm just saying, what does it suggest to you that the bill then doesn't contain what you see as an important feature of connecting parents to the school? Why would the legislation appear in that way, because it's a question I've wondered myself.

Ms. Harder: I guess that's just how I've read it and that's how I understand it. And it just doesn't seem like they go to the parents first. It seems like the government, in a whole, wants to take our kids and fill them with the world, is what they want to do.

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

Now I'll call on Michelle Gawronsky, president, MGEU.

Ms. Gawronsky, do you have a written materials for distribution?

Ms. Michelle Gawronsky (Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: I'll ask the staff to help you distribute those.

Can I just first double-check that I have the pronunciation of your name correctly?

Ms. Gawronsky: Gawronsky.

Mr. Chairperson: Gawronsky. Thank you very much.

And I'm just going to ask if you have somebody that you'd like to have at the podium with you, you do need to ask leave of committee to do that if you'd like do that.

Ms. Gawronsky: I apologize for that. She's not speaking. I'm speaking, but she was just going stand with me on it. Is—do I have permission?

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Is there leave of the committee to allow the presenter to have somebody at the podium? *[Agreed]*

Thank you very much. You may proceed when you're ready.

Ms. Gawronsky: Thank you very, very much for your indulgence.

Good evening, and my name is Michelle Gawronsky and I am the president of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union. I'm here today with Chantal Thérout, an MGEU member and the gay, lesbian, bi, transgender and two-spirited representative on our Equality & Human Rights Committee. I'll be speaking on the entire committee's behalf, and I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity.

When I asked the committee members for their input into my remarks tonight, one shared her own story. She said she was bullied for 11 years—or pretty much her entire public school life—despite appealing to teachers for help. She said, and I quote: As a teenager, I wondered whether anyone would notice if I wasn't alive anymore. If I died today, would anyone care?

Today she credits the love of a parent for saving her from becoming another tragic statistic. Today she has become an activist on our committee to speak up for those like her who have found themselves excluded and bullied for simply being themselves.

At the MGEU we don't represent the teachers and we don't represent students, for that matter. But we do represent close to 40,000 working Manitobans and we know bullying is a major issue in our workplaces as well as our schools.

We all have to make a living. We all have to go to school. We must go to work or go to school in an environment not necessarily of our own choosing, but go we must. And that means each and every one of us deserves to be treated fairly no matter what our race, gender, sexual orientation—fair treatment to be viewed as a valuable human being, not matter who you are. It's not too much to ask; it's not too much to expect, yet unfortunately this kind of fairness must be hard won. We must plan for it, fight for it and believe in it, even in 2013. This is where unions and legislation like Bill 18 have a role to play, and that's why we're here. We support Bill 18.

Over three decades, the MGEU's Equality & Human Rights Committee has been actively promoting social inclusion in the workplace and in our communities. The UN department of economic and social development has declared that social inclusion follow—fosters stable and safe societies that are, quote, based on respect for the dignity of each individual, diversity, 'plurism', tolerance, non-discrimination, non-violence, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and the participation of all people including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

We are lucky enough to live and work in a province that is not terribly far from this ideal. Our children are lucky enough to take many of these things for granted, but our societal institutions, our governments, our schools, our social agencies, our places of worship, our unions, must never take them for granted. A socially inclusive society is a process that our leaders must build step by step, always moving forward and never really stopping.

* (19:50)

Today we know for a fact that a student whose sexual orientation or gender identity deviates from the norm is far more likely to be bullied by their peers in school. We know this social exclusion can have dire consequences for that student: a sense of entrapment, low self-worth, depression and, ultimately, the suicides that have become too common on the nightly news. We know these things, so what is to be done?

I'm here today to support this government's effort to take that next step. The creation of gay-straight alliances in our schools is a small thing that could have a big impact. At the very least, it will allow us to continue our journey towards being a truly socially inclusive province. At the very least, it will send a message to bullied kids, like our committee member once was, who are waiting for the adults in their life to take the lead and set the example. I applaud our leaders' stand and their decision to not just acknowledge the problem, but to act.

And on a personal note—and I wrote this as I was here tonight—my grandfather was a minister and he lived his life, raised his children, who raised their children, and I have raised my children and have full confidence that my children are now raising their children with love and acceptance of everyone. And I realized tonight how fortunate I was to be raised in love and not judgment. Bill 18 needs to be passed, please.

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

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Michelle, for your presentation this evening, and thank you, Chantal so much for being with us this evening and for the work that you are doing as a representative in equality in human rights committee, and the work that you are doing to build a more inclusive society is very, very important. Thank you for the comments that you have made in your presentation this evening. We appreciate them. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Michelle, thank you for coming, and, Chantal, thank you for standing here tonight in solidarity and in expressing your viewpoint on this issue.

I did want to just make mention of one thing. I know that you shared about, you know, Chantal's story, and at one point you mention that she was bullied for years, the entire public school life, despite appealing to teachers for help, and it brought me back to the question I asked of the previous presenter. And I thought about the fact that this bill doesn't contain a necessity for schools to be in contact with parents and families when bullying acts are deemed to have occurred. Do you feel like such a condition or provision would strengthen the bill? I don't know if it could've made a difference in this case, but do you feel like it could strengthen the bill

to make sure that that strong communication is taking place between school and home?

Ms. Gawronsky: I believe that there are rules and regulations in—within the school systems now that when they see anything going on they have an obligation to contact parents already. So the bill is definitely here to stop bullying, and it's a responsibility, then, that the schools will definitely make open that they can have alliance clubs within.

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

Now call on Michael Sitko, private citizen. Mr. Sitko, do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Michael Sitko (Private Citizen): No, Sir, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: You may proceed when ready.

Mr. Sitko: Honourable Minister and members of the subcommittee, for thousands of years, education has been around, teaching and training one generation to the next in the necessary skills required to function with the workforces of the day. There have been two very distinct and clear boundaries that have existed within education and family.

Madam Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

Schooling was about reading, writing and arithmetic. Values, morals, religion, cultural etiquette were and always have been the responsibility of the family to teach and to train their children in. Today those lines are becoming more and more blurred. As parents abdicate their responsibility to chase after the almighty dollar, more and more of the responsibility for social, moral, ethical and cultural training is being foisted upon our school systems. This is not right. In doing so, the quality of education is becoming more and more diminished in our nation's schools with more and more being expected of our teachers and school systems that is not their responsibility nor their rightful place to be doing. It is neither the responsibility nor the place of our government or education system to teach and train our children on issues outside the arena of reading, writing and arithmetic. Social, moral, ethical and cultural training are the responsibility of each family and community and culture group.

One of the things that Canadians are known for is for our cultural diversity and not being a group of people who are a melting-pot type of society. It is not the place nor the right of government or the education system which they represent to dictate to

the people what types of culture, social, moral or ethical beliefs should be held by the children of our families. This is the right and responsibility of each individual family.

Have we not learned anything from the atrocities and the horrors of those who suffered not so many years ago from the residential schools where entire generations were taken away from loving homes and families, stripped of their cultural—of their culture and re-educated in the ways which one group of people in society felt was correct and right? We need only to look to the damage caused by the foolishness of those decisions to see that education has a very clear and defined role: to educate on things that we all hold in common and agree on, such as reading, writing and arithmetic.

When the government steps in and decides to begin to make decisions that begin to strip our youngest Canadians of their most basic rights, the right to social, moral, ethical and religious training according to their cultural background and beliefs, assuming the responsibility to re-educate our children to state-run and sponsored belief, we run the risk of losing the most valuable asset that we possess as Canadians, and that's the distinctions of who each of us is as a people group. That's what makes Canada great.

When the government steps in and decides to take away what it means to be Canadian from the Canadian people, it's time for the people to step in and take away the government's responsibility to govern. The government carries a responsibility to protect Canadians and the Canadian way of life and not promote and champion the way of life of one group of Canadians over others which this—elements of this bill clearly does. We have seen what happened when we have done this in the past. We need only look to our First Nations brothers and sisters to see the damage that has been done to them as a society for which we are all still paying both physically and emotionally.

It's time for parents to get back to parenting, the schools to get back to educating and each to strive towards excellence in their respective roles. One of the beautiful things about Canada is that we are a multicultural society, a society that represents many different nationalities, faiths and cultures. Our diversity is one of the greatest strengths we have of being Canadian. Let's get back to the basics that we can all agree on—reading, writing and arithmetic—and leave the parenting to parents. Let's see to it that

Canada, that we all know and love, and the beauty of her multicultural heritage is preserved for many generations to come. It's time for the government to get out of Canadian families and to focus on its purest intention which is to govern the framework and structure of Canadian society allowing all cultures, faiths and societies to enjoy the freedom of being a Canadian.

I want to read to you an excerpt from the Winnipeg Free Press from earlier this year. The article was on the bullying bill, Bill 18; specifically, section 1.2(1) defines bullying as behaviour that "is intended to cause, or should be known to cause, fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property." This definition is so encompassing that if students—if a student inadvertently hurt another student's feelings with a single offhanded quip, they could be charged with bullying.

Compare this with North Dakota's law that describes bullying as conduct which is so severe, pervasive or objectively offensive that it substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or benefits and places a student in actual reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property.

North Dakota's definition makes it clear that bullying is harassment and not offhanded comments. By contrast, Manitoba's Bill 18 places hurtful but inadvertent comments on the same level as severe physical and verbal abuse. This confusion makes it more difficult for school administrators to use common sense and to ensure that any disciplinary measures are appropriate and effective. Some forms of student interaction are more damaging than others, and the law must reflect these differences.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

The other problem with this bill is that it threatens religious freedom. Specifically, Bill 18 requires all schools, including independent faith-based schools, to facilitate student groups that may undermine the school's religious values, those values which are protected and enshrined in our Constitution.

* (20:00)

In its enthusiasm to stamp out bullying, the Manitoba government appears prepared to run roughshod over the right of private religious schools to uphold their faith. I want to also point out, on

May 5th of 2012, there was an article in the CTV News that was covered of a Christian student suspended multiple times from their school for wearing a T-shirt that simply said nothing more than life is wasted without Jesus.

This type of bullying is already occurring, as is the type of bullying that's being subjected to by the lesbian and gay community. Yes, they are being bullied. So are all the other students. So is everyone else. This happens on a regular basis and happens to all of us, quite frankly.

Creating legislation that protects one group of people over another is just morally wrong. It's absolutely absurd, and to think that we could stand here tonight and the other nights that we've been here and the nights that you will continue to be here and listen to members of your provincial community coming in here who are not part of a union or part of a Manitoba teachers society or part of one of these other groups which are all interconnected together, and hearing all of the community members who are speaking against the way this bill is written and then listening to highly educated intelligent people in official positions in our province who, when are confronted with the very real and obvious issues that are presented with this bill, for them to say, well, I can't see any problem with it. I mean, it's very obvious that there's an agenda.

It concerns me that the minister has publicly made comments on the news that despite what transpires at these committee hearings, that she intends to continue to pass this legislation unamended. It concerns me that men like Ben Levin, who was just charged with a—counts of child pornography—and the like have been intimately involved in the development of curriculum within this province, as well as Ontario's province, specifically in the areas of the LGBT. It concerns me that this bill is so obviously an agenda bill. It continues to amaze me that so many learned people from official positions in the MTS, Ministry of Education, superintendents and CUPE members seem to miss the obvious common sense observations made by many of us average citizens. One can only assume that they are intentionally ignoring the issues that exist within this bill.

One last question: What other bill would receive this much opposition, and it not be obviously seen by members of this Legislature as political suicide if it was to continue to be pursued if it was not such an, obviously, an agenda being pushed through?

There is nothing covered up that will not be exposed, nothing secret that will not be made known. Therefore, what you have said in darkness, will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in private rooms, will be shouted from the housetops.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Swan: Yes, Mr. Sitko, thanks for coming down and presenting to us tonight. Of course, Manitoba is one of the few places where every citizen has the right to come down and speak to a committee of MLAs about their views, and I want to thank you for doing that very thing.

Mr. Reg Helwer (Brandon West): Thank you, Mr. Sitko, for coming this evening, and strong opinions, obviously. But the family is the core of your belief, for what I've given to understand. And you talked about celebrating diversity of individuals and cultures and I think that's a very important message.

It's my understanding you have a background in law enforcement, and should—most of those individuals, you'd have something to deal with or have dealt with in that area would have come through our education system. And should this bill had been in place when they came through there, what effect would it have had? They're not the most polite people in the law enforcement system, would it improve their behaviour?

Mr. Sitko: No, I don't believe it would have improved their behaviour. All in all, kids are kids, and they're a product of the environment within which they're raised. I think there's a place that we have as a community which includes our teachers, but also our families and our religious institutions and different areas of government where all of us have a part to play in helping to raise a child, and it all makes a difference.

But, on the topic of being a police officer, I can also speak to the fact that legislation that is written like this, which highlights and protects and gives specific protections to one group of people over others, is also the type of legislation which is most often abused by people who choose to abuse the system. For example, when we had the—or still have the zero tolerance domestic violence policy within Manitoba, repeatedly, myself and other police officers were frustrated by the fact of individuals within the system who used that zero tolerance

policy to be able to bully and to be able to use it as teeth against people who were actually innocent and simply were victims of the legislation as it was written. And this legislation will do exactly that, as it's written currently.

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

We'll now call on Nicholas Semenowich, private citizen.

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

Mr. Nicholas Semenowich (Private Citizen): Unfortunately, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, and do I have the pronunciation of your name correct?

Mr. Semenowich: Semenowich.

Mr. Chairperson: Semenowich.

Mr. Semenowich: Yes, it's Ukrainian, so it's a little hard to pronounce correctly.

Mr. Chairperson: I appreciate the correction and I'll try and get that right.

And proceed with your presentation when ready.

Mr. Semenowich: All right. Well, there's—I—well, I really appreciate the opportunity for us to even come and speak, addressing this bill.

There's two things—or two facets of what I'd like to talk about tonight, one being having a wrong approach to stopping bullying, and the second one would be the agenda of embracing homosexuality, which would be ruining the sanctity of marriage by doing so.

By way just of analogy here, I just have a little story to tell, sort of. A group of men were once in a warehouse playing poker. As they were playing—it was a very good game—one man said, oh, I can smell smoke, and looked behind him and there was smoke coming out from the door of the warehouse. This man said, yes, yes, the place is on fire, but let's just finish this hand. He said, no, let's get out of here. His friend said, no, at least let us finish this hand. I've got a key to get out. It's in my pocket. We can get out the back door. The guy said, okay, let's finish this hand but be quick about it. So precious seconds go by and the flames begin to leap under the door and up to the windows and the guy says, hurry up, hurry up. Their friend says, okay. Look, I got the key in my pocket. Here it is on the table. He puts it down on the table.

He says, let's finish this hand. More precious seconds go by. The flames begin to come out the windows. Suddenly, the man says, let's get out of here. He grabs the key, runs to the door, puts it in and turns around and says, it's the wrong key.

This is all just to say that I believe you're looking at things from the wrong direction. I believe you're trying to enforce rules to create obedience. It will not work. There's a great example of this throughout Scripture when God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments. His rule was do this or die. And this is the same thing that is being created by this bill. You're only putting a Band-Aid on a problem that needs surgery.

Imagine a man that walks in here tonight that has sores all over his body and has pus and blood coming out and he just looks terrible, he 'smerrs'—he smells terrible. But you think you have a right solution. You think, what we'll do is we'll just put some new clothes on him, spray him down with some cologne, and he'll look good. And for a little bit of time, he does. He does look good. Before—or not before long, his sores begin to cover those brand new clothes that you put on him and he starts to stink again. The problem is that he needs to be cured from the inside out, not the outside in. You cannot just mask a problem.

And from the Biblical perspective, this is what happens when you're reborn—born again. You have a heart change. And this is only possible—it's only possible for there to be no bullying if the heart truly is changed. That's the only way it's possible for others to love their neighbours as themselves. And maybe this is something that you haven't examined in your own lives. This is a truth that you've ignored because your hearts have not been transformed by the grace of God through the gospel.

So, by creating this bill, this set of rules which are not based off of God's standards, it leaves all forms of bullying—I'll put bullying in quotations because it's sin—up to the individual. There's no set of right and wrong based off this. As long as there's a group of people that says this is wrong, then it's okay; this is wrong. We can get a bunch of people together and say, well, it's wrong to murder—it's wrong to murder. It's wrong to say something harsh to somebody. Therefore, it's wrong to do that. But where does it end?

You can apply that in all situations, and if you take it to its logical end where you just have a majority rule, then what—you can look at what Hitler

did and say that he was right. You can look at that and say that's right because he had majority rule. He was trying to protect his nation from a lesser people. And that is completely wrong.

* (20:10)

The bill that you are trying to pass is subjective. It's not based off an objective standard—that being God and His Word. And this is why you must return to your God-given authority—your position of authority—God has given you this authority—and rule rightly and justly.

We can look at this even by looking at then Ten Commandments. This is the moral compass for all mankind. And when you forsake that, the nation will fall.

The first commandment is you shall love the—our there's—you shall have no other gods before me.

Second is you shall not make for yourself a graven image—an image of God which suits yourself so that you can say, well, whatever I'm doing is right and God's okay with it. It's not, if you're doing something which He is offended by.

Third commandment, you shall not blaspheme the Lord's name.

Fourth is you shall keep the Sabbath.

Fifth, you shall honour your father and mother.

Sixth, you shall not murder.

Seventh, you shall not commit adultery—which Jesus said, if you look with lust you commit adultery in your heart.

And again with the sixth, if you hate somebody you commit murder in your heart.

The eighth is you shall not steal.

The ninth, you shall not lie.

And the tenth is you shall not covet.

With all this being said, there is a set standard of right and wrong and we cannot just start to blur lines to bring everybody under the umbrella of unity. There is going to be definite—or definite separation between people. And it's only by the grace of God through the Gospel transforming lives, where you can have equality.

It's commonly said within the Christian realm that at the foot of the Cross the ground is level. There is no better or worse. There is no, well, I'm higher up

here and you're down here—it's level at the foot of the Cross. And this even ties in with the pushing of the homosexuality. God instituted marriage and what is right and what is wrong. In the beginning, God made them male and female. And this picture of marriage represents not only the sanctity of what He has made but it also represents Christ and the Church.

And when you start defiling it by saying that it's okay for a man to live with a man and marry a man and have these relationships, or a woman with a woman, you're defiling God's perfect image of what is presented in the Gospel of Christ in the Church. It's an abominable thing to God.

And I fear for all people who have not turned from their sins and forsaken them and turned to Christ by faith. Why? Because you will give to an account for every single thing you do. Every single lie you've told—just as the last gentleman said, everything in darkness will be revealed. Everything you've said in silence, in the quiet rooms of your home or everywhere, it will be revealed. It will have made manifest on the day when you have to give an account to God for everything that you've said and done.

And this is a fearful thing for you in authority, because you are setting the standard for this province. You have to be aligning yourself with God to be given proper representation of who you are in this life. And this directly affects your eternity, what you will do in eternity. There's two spots: you will either—by the grace of God—have repented of your sins and trusted in Christ and be going to Heaven for all eternity, or you will continue to live in them, pushing your agenda on other people, and they will end up in hell. This is the truth of the matter, whether you want to believe it or not. And it's not a scare tactic either. This is the truth.

And there's all sorts of sins which people will try and bring upon you. They'll say you're a liar. They'll bully you. It's all sin. Well, look, that guy has short hair, that's not cool, and they're going to beat him up for it. You cannot cure this without changing the heart.

So my only hope today is that you wouldn't be deceived into thinking that your ways are right. Scripture says that the heart is deceitfully wicked. You must turn to God's standard, His Word, because if you continue to set up your own, continue to rebel against God, you will face grave consequences. We do have freedom of conscience, freedom of religion, and that's fine and dandy, but God is the ultimate

authority. He has created us. He has ownership rights over us.

Mr. Chairperson: One minute. You have one minute remaining.

Mr. Semenowich: One minute? Oh, I just thought you were saying something else, sorry.

But just carefully examine your motives in this. Do not make a hasty decision which will affect not only this generation but those generations' generations, those children's children, which will also affect their eternity, as well. Being so nearsighted, you lose sight of eternity and the great stake that's at hand. You have only one choice in this life, one lifetime to get yourself right with God. So examine the Word of God and make your decisions rightly based off what He says. Thank you.

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

And we'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Nicholas, thank you very much for your presentation tonight. It's obvious you've put a lot of thought into it, and we appreciate you being here this evening. We're fortunate to have a democratic process here in our province where we have this opportunity to hear some thoughtful presentations, and yours was one of them. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Nicholas, for coming tonight, for availing yourself of this opportunity to come to committee to make known your views and to give us lots to think about.

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

We'll now call Amanda Friesen, private citizen.

Ms. Friesen, do you have written materials for the committee this evening?

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

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

Ms. Friesen: Thanks for this opportunity to present to you. I am a young mother of five lovely children, and we are very worried about our children's future, which is very important to us. We strongly encourage you to amend the Bill 18 to include the faith-based rights to continue to teach their faith in their schools—as for the groups creating alliances, to have the title to include all stereotypes and not to single out any one group.

We need to protect our children, and they spend so much of their time in the school. I fear what they'll be learning. Schools should be teaching to love everybody in their school. Schools should be teaching to love everybody in their school and around them. In our children's preschool, they had said—whenever they would say, like, oh, she's my best friend, they always told them, everybody is our best friend. And I always encourage the children to keep that. Not only to love everybody in their school, but mainly the reason we send them to school is so that they can learn the ABCs so they can read and understand, to do their math so that they can work and calculate and to learn about history, how we got this far and a whole lot less about sexual interactions, especially if it's against our religion. At the end of the school day, when our children come home and they have time to play, hopefully, they will broaden their knowledge and they'll explore on what they've learned and experiment with it. But I fear when they come home, when they learn about such things at a very young age, about oral and anal and certain things about sex, at such a young age, what they'll do when they come home.

Faith-based schools teach against such actions, and I really hope that they can keep their freedom to do so. I hope that our country is—I fear what our country is coming to by taking God out of our schools, every step a little bit more. God is our best example of love. I'm not wise, but I truly do love everybody. I do not know how to change this Bill 18 to make it perfect. But by giving a specific group such rights, which would be seen as ungodly, and therefore make it a movement to push God out further into—in our schools. To implement more Christlike teachings of love, I would see this as a more lovely way to approach it.

* (20:20)

There have been so many people here that have given their insight and they are very wise insights. I thank them all for bringing that forth. They can sure speak a lot better than I can. I hope God will bless them and I hope God will bless you guys too.

I just want to read a verse that is very strong to my heart, it's Luke, chapter 18 and 16—verse 16. Jesus called unto him and said, suffer little children to come to Me, forbid them not; for such is the Kingdom of God.

Thank you.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Sorry. Amanda, there are Kleenexes right beside you. Please take one.

I want to tell you, Amanda, that you've spoken very well this evening because you've spoken from your heart, and that's what's important. I also want to tell you, Amanda, that if your children go to a faith-based school you do not have to worry that your children are not going to be able to be taught the 'tenets' of your faith.

I can guarantee you, as the Minister of Education, that Bill 18 has nothing to do with children in faith-based independent schools, the schools that my department funds. It has absolutely nothing to do with your children not being taught the 'tenets' of their faith. So, if you are worried about that, I don't want you to worry about that. Okay? We have a respectful partnership with our private, independent schools that we fund and nothing is going to change that.

Thank you, Amanda, for being here this evening.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Amanda, thank you for coming and for sharing from the heart. You said you're a mother of five, so that means you're very busy and you took the time to come here tonight. With five small children, that tells us something about your commitment to speaking your part, to saying your part, because it's easy to say nothing and to complain at home, but you've shown a lot of courage to come here tonight and to make a priority of this, and we thank you as members of this committee for doing that.

And you give us some important reminders today about the necessity in all of this to make sure that all groups are accommodated. And we heard that theme earlier this evening, as well, and your presentation gave us a reminder of that important message, and I thank you for that and I know the committee members do as well.

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

Now I'll call on Rodolf Friesen, private citizen.

Good evening, Mr. Friesen. Do you have any written materials for distribution this evening?

Mr. Rodolf Friesen (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

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

Mr. Rodolf Friesen: I'm pleased to be here tonight. I am a little bit nervous, as my wife was. That was my wife, and I have to applaud her. She did a really good job of presenting. I am typically not a speaker to speak in front of any congregation, never mind in front of legislation.

I grew up in Kleefeld, Manitoba. I went to New Hope Christian School. It's a private school. Our—things that we were taught in school about—and bullying was very much put into perspective there. We always had teachers outside with us, that they saw us do things to other children that were—in terms of bullying—they would step in and they would deal with it, and if we wouldn't listen it would be brought to the parents' attention.

Having said that, this starts at home. Bullying doesn't start in school. Bullying starts at home. The parents of all children need to watch their children.

Now, I'm the proud father of five and I have a wonderful wife who does a really good job at home. Sometimes when I come home, she says, I don't know if I can handle this. Well, I say, well, God'll give you the courage. I—sometimes I come home and I'm so tired from work—and I have back problems—and some days I'm so tired I just want to lay down. When I walk in that door, my children would come running to greet me. It tells me I'm doing something right.

Ms. Allan, before, you said that that child or children will not sleep. There's too much excitement here.

An Honourable Member: Did you get her to sleep?

Mr. Rodolf Friesen: Yes, she is sleeping. I came back inside here and I was going to put her down, and she started moving. So I carried her back outside in the car seat, and she felt secure again for the very reason—she knows dad picked her up and walked her back outside. She fell back asleep.

She was secure with the thought that dad has got this. I am not secure with the 'legis'—with this Bill 18 that is coming up that you have this. I don't think Bill 18 will fix our bullying problem. I know a lot of people that were bullied in school, and I know I personally wasn't bullied in school, but if this Bill 18 goes as far as to say hurt feelings, I've had my feelings hurt many times. Does that mean this certain person needs to be punished for it? I personally don't

think so. It is what I think about it. I now do construction. I run a crew for a different man, and sometimes the workers come up and they have things to say like, you know, I didn't appreciate that. And I could say, well, you know, I really don't care because this is what we need to do. I have to do that, okay?

You—as legislation, you have to step up and make rules for—in school for our children to be safer. We understand that. We don't believe Bill 18 is pushing towards making our students safer. It is more of a—I believe it's more of a sexuality law than anything. I would hope and I would pray that you would find the courage to read in Genesis 18. If you know the Bible, you know of Abraham and you know of his nephew, Lot. And the two, in one big pasture together, could not live together. Their men squabbled. So Abraham says to Lot, you can have that or you can have this; I'll move or you'll move. And Lot says, I'll take Sodom and Gomorrah area. I'll move over there.

Years later, two angels came to—or two men, which we believe were angels—came to Abraham and says, we have come to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham was horrified. He says, but, God, what if there's 50 good people there? God says, if there's 50 good people there, I will not destroy that city. He went right down to 15 and even to 10, and finally these men walked. They went and they got Lot and his wife and his daughters out. And they told them, don't look back; God is destroying the city. And the city was living in sin of gay and lesbians. It is described in Genesis 18.

And do we want to be part of that? Do we want to be punished by God like that? We will all be held accountable for our actions when God comes again. We will not be able to say, well, what I did was right. God will tell you, I told you in My Word, gays and lesbians is wrong.

When our children decide to go for gays and lesbians, it is—it really means something's wrong at home. And I really hope that we will all think of the end days when God will come again and He will hold us all accountable for the decisions we made. We as parents, like, I am accountable for that little girl back there for what she's going to grow up to be. It's my responsibility to teach her right from wrong. Please don't take that from us. That is all.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Rodolf, for being here this evening. We appreciate your comments, and thank you so much to—for both of you for being here this evening and making your presentations and sharing your perspectives on Bill 18.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Rodolf, for coming tonight and for sharing your opinion, your beliefs. You did a very good job tonight.

You know, you said there's points in time at which your family, you and your wife, feel like, with five children, it's—you're at the end of the rope, and I only have three and some days it feels that way, so I know what a huge responsibility parenthood is. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Friesen.

Mr. Rodolf Friesen: Sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: No, please proceed.

Mr. Rodolf Friesen: We feel really blessed with our five children, and God is really teaching us morals to life. I am sorry for interrupting.

* (20:30)

Mr. Cameron Friesen: And I noticed that this evening you made a point that we've heard other times this evening during the presentations. You brought to our attention that in the school you attended, you said that bullying and that kind of behaviour starts at home, and in instances where there was bullying, the parents were communicated with. The school made a contact there. And, of course, you understand that this legislation doesn't contain a provision for parents to be contacted if bullying is deemed to have occurred. How successful do you think this legislation could be if it's not changed or amended and it goes forward without a condition that would require parents to be contacted by schools? Do you think it will be successful?

Mr. Rodolf Friesen: I cannot say that it will be; I cannot say that it won't be. I would say there's a very big doubt in my mind that that will work. I think parents need to be contacted. I think teachers need to have the right to contact the parents.

Our children go to Mitchell Elementary School the last two years. They are now—this year we are starting to send them to the school where I went to, New Hope Christian School. It's a private school. They're going to be going there, and there the

teachers are asked to communicate with their parents.

And I believe—in the public school system, too—the teachers our children have had have been just very, very nice. Our children come home excited and they're excited to go back to school because they love their teachers. Their teachers do things, take time for them, teach them things that they really need to know. At the same time, when things happen in school related to school things, like how our children are doing, when we have a teacher–teach–parent–teacher interview, it is exciting to see the teacher excited to teach these children. But I believe these teachers need to have the right to contact their parents and talk to them about their children.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Just one further question. What led to your decision as a family to make the change and to send your children to a private school at this point in time?

Mr. Rodolf Friesen: What led to that? Like I just finished saying, the school the children are in right now, in the lower grades, we are not worried about any misleading so far, okay?

As we understand Bill 18, further on, there are things in Bill 18 that we wouldn't want our children to know about just yet. Okay? We believe that those are things parents need to bring to the children's attention as they grow older and what it's all about so they will know where it is right and where it is wrong.

What led to our decision to go is very simply because of the fact, as they get older, this communication that teachers have with the children now, we don't see that as they grow older into the older classes. This specifically said, my wife's cousin's children are teenagers and are over 18 already. We have seen a lot of things that they do in school that is not talked about and there's not—the teachers don't communicate. It seems like the teachers don't communicate. The students that really try hard, they get communicated with and they get pushed to go on, but those that kind of hold back, they are kind of just, well, whatever—as long as you pass. And we don't want that.

As our children are growing older, if we put them in private school now, they will have those—I know how the private school was when I went there, and the parents run the school. And I know most of the parents that are sending there now, and we know all our point—we all want to point our children in the

same direction. And we know that, as they grow older in the school, their morals are all the same. They will all be pointing in one direction and they're kept under control right to the last day of school.

Mr. Swan: Well, Mr. Friesen, thank you for coming down today. And, as a father, I appreciate you always want the best for your children. The other Mr. Friesen, the one who's an MLA, has suggested to a couple of parents tonight that The Public Schools Act doesn't contain any obligation for a school to call parents. If you knew that The Public Schools Act said that if the principal believes that a pupil of the school has been harmed as a result of the unacceptable conduct, the principal must, as soon as reasonably possible, notify the pupil's parent or guardian, does that satisfy some of the concerns that this Mr. Friesen was trying to raise?

Mr. Chairperson: We've just got about 30 seconds left, Mr. Friesen.

Mr. Rodolf Friesen: I would say no. I'd say the teacher themselves sometimes has a better vision on what's going on in their child's mind than their principal does with the teacher relating it.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, seeing no further questions, thank you so much, Mr. Friesen, once again, for your time this evening. Thank you.

I'll now call on Glenn Loewen, private citizen. Mr. Loewen, do you have written material for distribution?

Mr. Glenn Loewen (Private Citizen): No, just for myself.

Mr. Chairperson: Please feel free to proceed when you're ready then.

Mr. Loewen: My name's Glenn Loewen. I'm—I live in Portage la Prairie. I see our MLA is sitting right there. Thank you for being here.

I'm a graduate from Brandon University. I used to be a school teacher. I taught junior high school. That's why I've got the grey hair. I taught, what I say, hormonally challenged for the last who knows how long. I'm now a pastor, believe it or not, of Portage Evangelical Church, and you and I had supper together about half a year ago, Mr. Faurschou.

I want to—on behalf of the church, I want to apologize for two things: No. 1, I as a pastor have not prayed for you like I should have, and I preach the Word but First Timothy 2 says, first of all, pray for those in authority, and I haven't done that like I

should have and I ask for your forgiveness for that. Personally, I want to ask for your forgiveness. Secondly, I want to apologize on behalf of the church that we've been a very anemic bunch. God Jesus has called us to be the yeast, the salt of the earth and we've been a powerless bunch sort of married to this Babylonian system, and I repent. I'm deeply humbled.

I go around the world. I'm actually called to go to Burma next month, Myanmar, and I'm going to visit the persecuted Christians down there, and my topic, the topic I've been given, actually, to go down there is how to live the Christian faith in an environment of hostility. Well, what do I know about that? And I've been to China. There's up to close to 200 million persecuted Christians living underground there. I've been to Vietnam. I'm going to Myanmar, and I know that I'm going to address them, and I'm going to tell them in a very prayerful way, I'm going to tell them about our country, that the atmosphere is turning more and more hostile to Judeo-Christian values. Part of that is my fault though. I'm not just going to sit here and point my fingers because part of that is me. I've got blood on my own hands. Have I been praying? Have I been pressing in?

It's interesting, when this bill was being raised, I added a few of my own sentences to the dialogue that was going on in the Free Press, and I have—I received such incredible bullying. I haven't had bullying like that probably since I was a kid. A guy wrote back to me. He was very angry at me and he wrote back four emails. In his last—and I wouldn't write back. I just didn't want to. And his last email to me was this: Sir, ma'am, whoever you are, get with the flow or get out of the way. And I don't intend to do either. I don't intend to get with the flow and I don't intend to get out of the way because of my allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Now, actually, I didn't want to be here and I have a close relationship with God, not that I'm—I'm just saved by grace, but I was talking to God about this. I was saying, Lord, if you want me, you know, I'll come but I don't really want to. Next morning, I'm in the Scriptures in Mathew 16, verse 15, and Jesus says to his disciples, who do men say that I am? And the disciples say, well, some say you're Jeremiah. Some say you're John the Baptist and others say you're Elijah. And so I thought to myself, no, hold it a second. Jesus is being compared to these three guys. What do these three guys have in common? Well, they were all loners and they all spoke to the government. Okay, Lord, if you want me to speak to

the government, I'll come and speak to the government. So that was my green light just to come here.

More and more there is, as one who discerns in my heart, spiritual forces, there is certainly a hostility toward Christianity, orthodox Judeo-Christianity at its bare-bones historical level. When you trace the fire of Christianity from the Apostles through the last 2,000 years and you see the values that many of them were burned at the stake—well, I walk in the trail of blood. Thousands, millions have been martyred for their faith, and I don't intend to have an easy life myself, but I will walk in love, but I will—but I'm committed to walking in truth, and I will hold people around me to truth even if it costs me my life. And it's the truth of Jesus Christ. He gave everything for me. I want to give everything for him.

I remember a dialogue I had with a guy in Vietnam who'd been in jail for three years simply because of his love for Jesus, and I asked him through an interpreter, were you ever tempted to give up your commitment to Jesus? He says, never. Jesus shed his blood for me. I'm willing to shed my blood for Jesus. And I want that same kind of fire.

* (20:40)

Now, what does that have to do with Bill 18? Here's the problem that I see in Bill 18. As part of the Christian community, we are bound by the grace of God to a life of freedom, which is a life of incredible, powerful redemption, and that redemption propels us into a life of values that God has placed upon us. And when Bill 18, the way I've read it, is that the same—for example, the GSA rights are imposed on the private schools, which means that private school communities can no longer have these environments which are—which align themselves with the heartbeat of God, and that's what concerns me as a pastor.

And I've—I'm committed. I will preach in love. I will give—I've had many people coming through my office, people struggling with pornography. I've dealt with lesbianism. I had my own porn addiction growing—there's tons—bestiality. I've dealt with all kinds. But the powerful redemption of Jesus Christ is incredible, and that is what I speak. And that—I just want you guys to understand that within the Christian communities the private schools, this is what they hold to. They hold to a redemption that is so strong, that takes a person like Glenn Loewen or Adolf Hitler—I don't care who—but can literally propel them into the grace of God to walk into the life of sacred marriage, one man and one woman.

And so this is why we stand as Christians like Martin Luther 500 years ago. Here we stand on the Scripture. We can do no other. We can't, and so we just beg you—because we see what's happening to our country. It's interesting, when you study—when you look at the development of law, the more—the—a culture or a civilization will turn its back on Judeo-Christian values, the more laws have to be implemented. We've got hundreds, thousands. And if we would've kept our hearts tied right closely to God the Father as expressed in the Bible, we could live on love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and one law. We could do it. But because we turn our back on that laws—this isn't—Bill 18 isn't going to solve the problem. We're going to have to come up with way more laws.

And western civilization is in deep trouble and, again, I'm pointing part of the finger at me. I will go to bat, I will plead with the Lord to bring back a revival of historic proportions that will change the heart, like we saw in Wales in 1904, when a 13-year-old boy by the name of Evan Roberts pressed in for 13 years, and, boom, the Spirit of God broke through. Hundred thousand people were saved. In fact, back in that culture they had to retrain the donkeys that were literally hauling the loads from the mines because they were—they no longer responded to the commands because they were used to the curses. And the language, the—literally, the moral landscape was cleaned up because there was a spiritual breakthrough called a historical revival.

And that is what I'm pleading for for this country. Bill 18 runs contrary to God's intent. And I'm impassioned by Jesus. I love you as a group of people. I will pray for you. But I plead with you, this is our cry from the Christian community to hold ourself in allegiance to truth as expressed in the sacred Scriptures and as walked out by our fathers in the past. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Loewen, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Pastor Loewen, for your presentation this evening, and we appreciate you taking the time to come from Portage la Prairie. Next time you're driving through MacGregor, give a wave to my home town.

Floor Comment: I actually did my student teaching in MacGregor.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Loewen.

Mr. Loewen: Oh, sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: No problem.

Ms. Allan: So, thank you once again for being here. We appreciate you taking the time to come and make a presentation this evening.

Mr. Ian Wishart (Portage la Prairie): Well, thank you very much, Mr. Loewen, for coming in and expressing your views on this, and I certainly appreciate them. I don't think you need to worry about the values you represent being lost when there are people like yourself that are prepared to come forward and speak on their behalf. So I congratulate you for coming in and I appreciate your coming this evening.

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

Now call on Gord Utz, private citizen. Mr. Utz, do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Gord Utz (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

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

Mr. Utz: Wrong. Utz.

Mr. Chairperson: Utz. I apologize. Please proceed whenever you're ready.

Mr. Utz: Thank you very much. I actually just came tonight to hear and to listen to the format that was going on. So all the stuff I studied's sitting at home. However, there's been some excellent presentations, actually, both sides. I think these young ladies were up here also.

And I think, just as starting out, can I ask, are you the folks that vote on this or is there actually more when you vote on Bill 18?

An Honourable Member: There's more.

An Honourable Member: There's much more.

Mr. Utz: There's more, okay, and they'll hear most of this stuff, I presume?

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Gord. If you don't mind, I'll respond to that question.

There are 57 MLAs in the Legislature, and all of the MLAs are available to speak—to vote on the legislation. So this is a committee that is here listening to the presentations that are made over the 10 days or so. But every presentation that is made this evening is recorded in Hansard so that even if

members aren't here MLAs can look online, read those presentations online. So everyone's comments this evening are available to everyone, as well as the media and the general public.

Mr. Chairperson: Just as a note, Mr. Utz, if you do have any further questions or need feedback from the committee, perhaps you could leave those to the end and we can include that as part of the question-and-answer period at the end.

Please continue with the presentation, Mr. Utz.

Mr. Utz: Certainly, thank you very much.

Just as a Canadian citizen, and happy to be a Canadian citizen—three generations at least, I don't even know, it could be further back—but very happy to be a Canadian and growing up in the freedoms, and one of the freedoms—and we heard several people talking about their religious freedoms and it's something that I've just lately come to enjoy, having lived a life very much on my own.

So kind of in the flavour of what I've heard here and how much more educated people have come up here and related how they felt towards this bill coming in, part of what I found a little distressing as I read over it—and read several times and just wanted to get a feel for it—and you're introducing more or stronger legislation to deal with things as in with the gimmicks we now have, cyberbullying, so on.

And you guys have a tough job. I cannot see a tougher job than trying to satisfy the realm of what you're doing. And the enormity of it is—I'm glad it's on your shoulders, okay, your responsibility, thank you, it's not mine. Me just coming up here was hard because I see that also.

It's—so I sit and I read this thing and I go, how would I change it, what questions do I ask? And so—my material's sitting at home, but I think one of the questions I ask is, where is it when the government teaches my children and my grandchildren moral truth? That was one question I wrote down, okay.

Within Bill 18, as I saw it and as I read it, twice, I believe it said, the promotion of, and it was this agenda. So if I'm misunderstanding something in there, that kind of raised red flags with me, all right? Also, just some of the things which also were mentioned, just in agendas and how they come into being, and Mr. Levin was mentioned. We've all read that. This is very starkly in the news. This should be a warning to us. When we're legislating, where is it coming from? And why is it being pushed? Is it

really, truly in the interests of what we're looking to support, which is the antibullying?

We heard a very impassioned thing. I probably—I don't even know if I really want to tell this. I've told maybe two or three people in my lifetime about this, so I don't really know if I want to share this publicly and openly. In about grade 1 or 2, in the small town called Chetwynd in northern BC, a neighbour boy a couple years older, in the basement of our home, introduced me to sexual activities. Now, at that time I didn't even really know right or wrong is anything, but something bothered me deeply. And I never ever told my parents. They've both passed away. They've never heard this, okay.

From the point from there, as I came up within this public school system, which I felt adequately trained me for a life that I now live, there was always something within me that I wondered if I wasn't gay from what transpired as this young person. Now, as I grew older and as my parents taught me the birds and the bees, as you say, you know, at that certain age they bring a book and then they sat me down and they talked to me and I started to understand, I still had these thoughts, well, what about that?

Something happened as I grew up more as an adult, and I discovered very young—fairly young that women were very attracted—or girls at that time. And at an early age, I lost my virginity and sought the company of young ladies, against what my parents taught me, as they taught me from—you've heard people talk about God and about the Word; they taught me that as I grew up. My father was a pastor. I deserted all of that as I grew up and I deliberately allowed myself to fall into this, seeking to fulfill something within me that I thought, growing up, that maybe I was gay, and so I filled a vacuum, kind of going the opposite way.

* (20:50)

Do you see something wrong in there? Anything at all? There was something wrong inside me that I knew, even back then, there was wrong with what I was doing, not quite understanding, because we're all made in the image of God. We're given a conscience. It's part of Him that lets us know right from wrong. We can push it away; we can bury it. And I pushed it away for 30 years. It wasn't until four years ago where I realized I'm an alcoholic, my wife and family are all over this map, and I just cried out and I says, God, help me. What's going on? If You're real, would you reveal yourself to me?

I didn't know a plea like that would even be answered because I didn't even know quite who I—I had memories of knowing about God as a child, but for 30 years, basically, I lived as a selfish human being.

God revealed one thing to me. He says, Gord, I gave you a wife and I gave you three children, and right now they are not going to Heaven because they don't believe in Me and they don't believe in My Son and they don't come under the forgiveness that My Son offers.

This is getting very preachy, guys. And this is just what happened to me that changed a lot of my thinking. I would've never spoken to you before because I really didn't care. So, I'm speaking here because I care now. There is something happened inside my heart that switched, and it's not about gay and lesbian. It's not about murder or lying or theft; it's about sin, not coming under the authority of God who created us, designed us, each one, so uniquely. Male and female, He created us. We can choose if we want to follow this or we want to follow that, but ultimately we will come under God's judgment.

As some of the speakers were speaking earlier, I saw a few people laughing or something like that. Here's the ironic thing. If I fall in with the agenda of this world and I die, then nothing is wrong. However, if God is true and I don't follow Him and I come under His judgment at the end of my life, suddenly I have a big problem. So God knows this, and He knows that we have a problem within ourselves which say which we're wrong, something's wrong, something's broken. So He sent His Son—He loved us very much—God himself, His Son, came to this earth, lived for 33 years approximately—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute.

Mr. Utz: —and He died. Didn't die in one minute, but I'll take the one minute, thank you.

But what He did for there is show an aspect of love that I don't understand. You see, He did it while I hated Him. Because if I don't honour Him and I don't obey Him and I don't love Him, what is it? So He died for me while I was in my sin.

Now, having said that, you say, go back to Bill 18. This is because of my change in thought and change in my heart now I care what you guys teach to my children, okay? Please don't teach them that it's all right to follow the desires of your heart. Teach them to respect others—yes—to respect each other, to love one another—yes. Please don't teach them that

it's okay to be bisexual. And let me say that when I was young, if I had've followed that agenda and felt within myself, yes, I am, and I followed that, I wouldn't have a—grandchildren that I'd be worried about you guys speaking to.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Utz, I'm so sorry to interrupt, but time has expired for this portion of the presentation.

Mr. Utz: Thank you for listening.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, and we'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Gord, thank you very, very much, for being here this evening. You have shared a very, very personal story and your 'pers'—and a very personal journey that you have taken throughout life, and I appreciate you being here this evening and the comments that you have made this evening. Thank you for sharing.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for coming this evening, Gord, and I know—appreciate you sharing your story with us. I know you've endeavoured and very successfully changed your life and it's making a difference for many others. And the story you have shared with us this evening I think has had an impact on us and, as such, you have changed our lives. So I certainly appreciate you coming this evening.

Mr. Utz: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions—sorry, did you have a rebuttal?

Mr. Utz: As my friend said, we will be praying for you, and that's not just a saying. We will be.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Utz, again, for your presentation.

Now call on Jason Monkman, private citizen.

Mr. Monkman, do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Jason Monkman (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: You may proceed when ready.

Mr. Monkman: Okay. I just thank the council for being able to speak. I thank our democracy here in Manitoba for being able to have a say in these things. I just—as Gord doesn't have anything written, I don't have anything written. So I'm just going to speak a few things that I think that you should just think about.

There's a lot of Christian views. I am a Christian. I don't know how many of you are, or if these are some of your beliefs or not. But some of those beliefs are just universal beliefs. Truth is one of them. I would like you to search yourselves and just make sure that you are seeking truth in this, that everything that is coming out is truth for our kids.

I am a father of five as well. I have taken my kids out of the school system because of things that are coming—not directly in the Manitoba system at this time. There are some bullying issues that we've had, so I do support you. I do not—I guess, like Gord said, you guys have the hardest job. I'm glad I'm not in your shoes. But I do have a hard job as a parent. I believe that my job is part of the problem. When I'm at home, the kids are not in school—I have a 2-year-old, a 5-year-old and 1-year-old—they fight. They bully each other already. So, naturally, when I send them to school, I am sure they will bully somebody else if I don't teach them before they're 5 years old. So I have to teach them truth.

I want you guys to implement truth into the system. I want you guys to help the teachers with their jobs. They're overrun with kids that are not being parented. Their jobs are harder and harder and harder, and they can't keep up. The teachers that I've spoken to have said, this is how it goes, we can't do anything about it. And I said, I fully disagree with that. So I've taken my kids out of school. I've since read about Mr. Levin's comments, the bills passed there in Ontario, and it's scary. It's very scary as a parent because there is no truth in that. There is no truth in teaching my 5-year-old kid how to have sex in different formations in different things. There is no truth in that.

So I just—I would just wish that you would go through this and make sure that it is about bullying and that if all of these things are helpful to bullying, that you do include parents because that's where it starts. And there's a lot of parents that are not being parented, and those kids are also into the school system. So it's not going to be solved by just calling the parents because half of the parents don't care. There needs to be other things as well, I think, like the teachers talking to the parents, counselling with the kids, with the parents, with the school, other things. Stop it before it gets going. That's my job as a parent. Stop it before the kid gets to school. Stop my 5-year-old before they get into school and they start doing this to other people.

So I just thank you for listening to my comments. Again, if you guys are not Christians, I ask you to go home and—or if you are—read your Bibles, ask God if this is really what He wants. This is a great country, a great democracy, and we want to keep it that way. We don't want it to come to division, all kinds of divisions in our culture.

So I think that's all I have to say.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Monkman, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now turn to questions.

* (21:00)

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Jason, for your comments.

You know, some people think politicians have a tough job; some people think teachers have a tough job, but the toughest job I ever had was a parent. And I think a lot of people feel the same way as you do in regards to raising children. It is a tough job and it lasts a long time. So, thank you very much for your comments in regards to the legislation and thank you for being here this evening.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Jason, thank you for coming this evening. Thanks for sharing a bit of your story and for making your comments to us this evening.

I have to say, I'm always disappointed to hear of parents who remove their kids from the public system because they lack a degree of confidence that the system gives them the high confidence that they need for their children, and so I listened with interest and concern as you spoke.

Thanks for sharing your views this evening. We wish you well. Thanks for coming.

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

I'll now call on Dave Sauer, president, Winnipeg Labour Council.

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

Mr. Dave Sauer (Winnipeg Labour Council): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: I ask the Chamber staff to assist you to distribute that. You may begin your presentation whenever you're ready.

Mr. Sauer: Thank you very much to the committee for hearing from the Winnipeg Labour Council today. I do want to just outline a few things before I get into the professional side of what I do for a living.

I want to say that, you know, I heard a lot of people talk about Christian faith and so forth, and I actually am the son of two ministers. My mother is the bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Manitoba, here, for the Manitoba/Northwestern Ontario Synod. My father is a minister who has a congregation on the corner of Cambridge and Corydon, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, so—and I want to let it be known that they would be very proud that I'm here today speaking in favour of this bill. So this is not, you know, only Christians that are opposed to this.

But I'm also here as a professional and I do have to take that into account, but I thought I would lay some of the groundwork because I heard some disturbing accusations about what the labour movement is and how we have some sort of agenda that we're trying to pursue. I would simply remind you that if you had Monday off, which was Labour Day, you want our agenda to continue to push forward because it seems to have some good repercussions for society.

The Winnipeg Labour Council is proud to have this opportunity to present its views regarding Bill 18. The Winnipeg Labour Council's an organization that represents 47,000 workers in Winnipeg from 76 affiliated union locals. We've been in existence since 1894, and we have a very long history of civic engagement.

We believe in standing up for the community and protecting the most vulnerable. The labour movement is one of the most integrated institutions in Canadian society and has membership from every sex, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, political and religious belief. We firmly believe in human rights.

There is a great deal of interest in Bill 18 amongst our membership and even more interest in seeing that it becomes law. We support the government's proposed Bill 18 as it stands. Bullying is wrong. No one student should ever feel threatened in a place of learning. Students should have every right to band together for protection and support. After all, banding together is a system that has functioned enormously—with enormous success

within the labour movement regardless of the workplace. The same should apply for students wishing to form groups regardless of the learning institution. We, as a society, should be doing everything within our power to protect children. Bullying has life-long impacts on children and some of which becomes so overbearing that they take their own lives.

Bullies in school become bullies in the workplace. The labour movement has worked and continues to work at ending workplace harassment. It's prime—it is a primary role of unions in their workplaces to build respectful work environments. Workers who are harassed by management or co-workers often feel isolated, humiliated and helpless. Thousands of working hours are lost every year to workplace harassment. Workers who are harassed miss work more, with more frequency, due to stress and illness or worse, simply out of fear of what will come the next working day. In extreme cases, workers have to access Workers Compensation benefits, as their psychological injuries have become too much to bear. This is an enormous impact on the lives of workers, our workplaces and our economy.

If we continue to tolerate bullies in educational institutions, these bullies will continue to view their actions as acceptable behaviour and unleash it upon our workplaces. Why not make every effort to stop bullying before it starts? Harassment should never become acceptable behaviour.

Homophobia and heterosexism are wrong. They seek to dehumanize individuals solely on the basis of their sexual orientation. Homophobia is still very prevalent in Canadian society. I actually don't—if many of you can recall, 15 years ago, homosexuals and gays and lesbian community members used to be beaten on Assiniboine street, not too far from this building. So let's just remember how recent that was in Canadian society and in our history.

Canada has a proud history of developing human rights, and Bill 18 is an incredibly important step in ensuring future generations of students are not subjected to harassment and bullying. The Winnipeg Labour Council fully supports the provincial government's approach to this matter. We fully support ending bullying and harassment in our schools. We fully support safe and inclusive schools and we support Bill 18.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Sauer, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Dave, thank you so much for being here this evening on behalf of the Winnipeg Labour Council. I know that you have a labour council that is very active and I know that you have a lot of meetings and you have a lot of discussions, and I know that if you're here tonight presenting on behalf of the labour council there has been a lot of discussion about your presentation and about this legislation. Thank you to you and to all of your members. You have been fighting for many years for workplace safety and health legislation so that we can have a more civil society, and also thank you for fighting for an inclusive society. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Well, thank you, Dave, for coming and presenting to us this evening. I wanted to ask you if you actually surveyed your membership with respect to the legislation and Bill 18, and if you conducted a survey of your group, then could you share with us what the results were of that survey?

Mr. Sauer: Sure, yes. No, we didn't actually do a survey on this. I'm an elected representative, just like everyone else here is an elected representative, and other organizations, even churches, I know, have elected committees, and so on and so forth, and they're tasked with carrying out the wishes of the council.

Now, as I said, we are a defender of human rights and human rights issues, and I outlined a very long list of different groups that we represent in society. And, by and large, the membership that I have talked to and I've had any engagement with has been fully supportive of this piece of legislation. I'm not sure I can go on an issue-by-issue basis and survey 47,000 workers for a direct response, just as I'm sure a lot of people here cannot go out and survey, you know, what their constituents a hundred per cent are viewing too. And I'm also a little concerned that you're singling out labour organizations with that question when I'm not sure if you've asked any of the ministers here today if a hundred per cent of their churches, or if they've done surveys in their membership and so on and so forth. So, I mean, if we're elected to be our representatives, then we're elected to sort of follow that line within what we've been elected to do within our mandate.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Well, Dave, you seem a little defensive on that question, but it really was just a question—[*interjection*]-but I'll hang on—

Mr. Chairperson: Order. Order. Order, please. I'm just going to ask the committee to come to order. If you want to speak, I do need to recognize you. So I'm just going to ask everybody to indicate that they'd wish to speak, I will say their name, and then we can proceed in an orderly manner. I believe I had—Mr. Friesen?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, yes, I was in the middle of a comment.

So my second question to you was, then, well, a little bit related to the first, but across Canada we've had a lot of discussion about anonymous reporting of bullying. And there have been some conversations at even a high level among Canadian leaders, premiers and then ministers, as to what happens when bullying is reported. And I wondered if you actually supported the idea of the anonymous reporting of bullying, because, of course, if it's disclosed publicly, there is a concern that it could lead to reprisals. It could lead to a worsening of the situation. And I wondered if you could comment for us what you thought of the idea and if there is merit in actually providing a framework in which anonymous reporting of bullying could go forward—[*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Sauer.

Mr. Sauer: Sorry—within workplaces or within schools?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I was thinking with respect to Bill 18 and within schools. [*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Sauer.

Mr. Sauer: Sorry about this. You're wondering what my perspective would be, if I think that it's okay for students to anonymously report bullying to an administrator? I just wonder if that is in effect.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: That's correct. [*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Sauer.

Mr. Sauer: I should just get this [*inaudible*]

So then I would say, is that not already in effect, though, too, that students can anonymously go to a teacher and say this is their concern that I'm having and so on and so forth? I was under an understanding that that already did exist in most school divisions in this province, not all.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I was just wondering if you had thought it might be a provision that would be worthy of it containing within the framework of this legislation.

Mr. Sauer: I mean, I think that I have to trust the administrators as is with what they do have at their disposal and current role.

* (21:10)

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Chair, through you to the presenter, I think one of the reasons we didn't ask some of the church organizations if they surveyed their membership is because they offered up how they had this good discussion in their churches, and if that wasn't offered, then that might have been the time to ask that. So I don't think we need to get into a finger pointing here about he said, she said. We're here to listen to everybody respectfully and to hear from people what they have to say.

Mr. Chairperson: We just have about 30 seconds left here.

Mr. Sauer: I'm just wondering if that has not been offered up. I mean, I told—I think at the start of my presentation I outlined the fact that there was a genuine interest amongst our membership for this and that they had an interest in seeing it pushed through. So I think that should have been a sufficient enough sort of response in the first place.

Mr. Chairperson: Our time for questions is expired. Thank you very much, Mr. Sauer, for your time this evening.

We'll now move to Francie Humby, private citizen. Ms. Humby, do you have written material for distribution? Just ask the staff to help you distribute that, and please proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Francie Humby (Private Citizen): Good evening, Standing Committee on Human Resources.

I—having taught school, young children in the public school system here in Winnipeg for 38 years, and having three children and five grandchildren of my own, I well know how very hurtful and very wrong bullying is, and I absolutely believe that no one should ever be bullied.

So my concerns with Bill 18 are not related to its intent to decrease or eliminate bullying in the schools but rather with the way it proposes to go about accomplishing that goal. I have three concerns with the methods suggested in the section entitled Student activities and organizations. First of all, I notice that from the list of protected differences, three important differences are missed: differences in physical appearance, differences in academic achievement and differences in religious beliefs. And all three of these are often underlying factors in incidents of

bullying. (2) I agree with Rob Nash in his experience-based conclusion that was reported by the Winnipeg Free Press on March the 1st, 2013, that establishing groups that name and highlight the differences among us is more likely to increase bullying than decrease it. And thirdly, Christian schools and the parents who send their children to Christian schools believe that school-aged children and youth should not be sexually active, so it makes no sense for a Christian school to have any group that focuses on sexuality. In fact, to do so, the Christian school would have to go against its religious values and beliefs.

For these three reasons I would really ask the committee to consider removing or at least revising extensively the section entitled "Student activities and organizations." Now, I know not very useful for me to stand up here and express concerns about the methods that the bill suggests for getting rid of bullying without offering alternatives, so I have six suggestions. First of all, schools have in writing a definition of bullying that is clear and specific and that distinguishes it from conflict, (2) schools should establish and record in writing the procedures that they're going to follow when and if incidents of bullying occur, (3) students should be aware of exactly what bullying is and how the school is going to handle incidents of bullying. Fourth—and this is even more important—from kindergarten to grade 12, students should be taught that even though we're very different from each other, everyone is valuable and everyone is entitled to respect. And, along the same lines and crucial also, from kindergarten to grade 12, students should be explicitly, in age-appropriate ways, taught how to be kind and empathetic to others.

And, finally, kindness and empathy shouldn't just be taught and expected, but it should be modelled and reviewed and noticed and focused on and honoured and reinforced consistently on an ongoing basis. The goal would be to have every student believe that he or she can be, wants to be and indeed is a kind, empathetic person in a community of kind, empathetic people.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Humby, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Francie, thank you so much for your presentation. I really appreciate it and I really

appreciate the six suggestions that you made in your presentation. They're very, very thoughtful and very meaningful. And I think you're right, I think they would make a difference in creating a safer and caring learning environment.

And I cannot believe you memorized that presentation. That was phenomenal. I'm going to give you an A+; they're not on the report cards anymore but I'm going to give you one.

Thank you, Francie.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Francie, I want to thank you for coming tonight and sharing with us your views on this subject.

And I have to say to you, you think like a legislator because you've taken this issue and you've unpacked it and you've given it thought. And then you've come back, not just with a series of complaints, but you've come back with a list of amendments.

And I think that was—what was even more surprising to me the fact that you were able to list your six amendments so well, is the fact that I think you just got the minister's acknowledgement that your amendments should actually be adopted. I'm going to have to go back and check the record because I think she just agreed with you, that the definition of bullying should, you know, be established and the procedures which should be there to deal with bullying.

So I think you've been able to gain something that other presenters have not been able to gain.

Anyways, I do want to mention to you that in our own conversations with third-party groups and individuals across this province and beyond, and looking at other pieces of legislation across Canada and throughout North America, we've sensed some of the same things that you've put on the record tonight. And we have taken to heart the things that you've said. Continue to advocate for your point of view; you're a powerful advocate.

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

We'll now call on Pastor Bruce Martin, Calvary Temple.

Do have written materials for the committee this evening, Pastor Martin?

Mr. Bruce Martin (Calvary Temple): I do. I have 10 that I brought and 10 you made and they're of different sizes. You have more paper than I had.

Mr. Chairperson: Please feel free to start your presentation when you're ready.

Mr. Martin: I'm a local pastor here in Winnipeg. My name is Bruce Martin and I would like to thank you for taking time for so many submissions on such an important issue. Be assured that neither myself nor the two to three thousand people that I represent at Calvary Temple in Winnipeg take this privilege that you've given us for granted. It is deeply appreciated.

I would like to first of all say that a comprehensive legislation on bullying is certainly an appropriate response to a very real problem. I happen to agree with some who have already made submissions that a response to bullying needs to be far more comprehensive in its protection of all children in varying aspects of bullying.

I hope I can bring a helpful submission to you this evening. I think I have a good understanding of the unique challenge you face when trying to create a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to including the faith-based schools which operate in our province. Yes, I am speaking of Christian schools, but also other faith-based schools as well.

As I see it, from my years of experience as a Christian school operator in Ontario years ago, and a parent of four who attended Christian schools here in Manitoba, there is certainly a need to understand the basis from which these schools operate.

*(21:20)

The expectation of private and Christian school parents and administrators is quite straightforward. They are basically saying show us the educational requirements, we want to co-operate and be part of a school system which ultimately prepares young adults for life and post-secondary education. There has always been room in our educational system for Protestant, Catholic and other faith groups to cover the basics of the provincial curriculum and include a comprehensive faith-based world view. As a pastor, I thought my unique contribution tonight could be the sharing of the Biblical basis for our objection to the gay-straight alliance response as a 'pri'—as the primary solution to bullying.

Now, in the public school system, and I want you to hear me as I say this, it may good to have the

gay-straight alliance as one of many responses to the issue of bullying. However, in the private school area, it would seem to me to be an inadequate and an inappropriate response. People choose Christian schools because of their Judeo-Christian values, not in spite of them. In our Christian school in Brampton, Ontario, we had many Hindu families choose our school because of our statement of faith, which would include a traditional response to human sexuality. I thought I could be helpful by providing a Biblical list of behaviours we deem inappropriate as described in the manufacturers handbook—and, by the way, all of these Biblical references in your notes are in the New Testament and they're in—put in modern-day language. Here's the list of negative behaviours as listed in the New Testament of the Bible followed by a list of positive virtues, and the list is the Biblical list: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, anger, selfish ambition, dissension, arrogance, envy, murder, idolatry, sorcery, drunkenness, wild parties, cheating, adultery, homosexuality, greed, stealing and lying. In the Biblical view, one behaviour is not worse than the other; they are all on the list. And the positive attitudes: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

I assure you that we are not homophobic. We certainly do not hate anyone. We simply have a Biblical world view which lays out Judeo-Christian values on sexuality which would not encourage us to condone a 14-year-old heterosexual experimenting sexually and handing out common—condoms to teenagers or the use of drugs and alcohol in a Christian school environment. We're not trying to force our view on the greater public; we are simply asking for the privilege of teaching our values as a part of a balanced education.

Possibly, this illustration will help to communicate what I'm trying to say. Imagine the reaction if legislation were passed in Manitoba mandating the use of public school facilities for after-school Bible clubs—or an organization such as Youth for Christ. The reaction would be something to behold. The truth is it is not the place of legislation to entrench one world view against another. Rather, the purpose of legislation is to protect the freedom to pursue one's world view, and putting the name of an organization in the actual legislation seems, for me, to be out of place.

I ask you to please set up a comprehensive legislation which addresses all forms of bullying and

protects all children equally. I believe other presenters have made you aware of such legislation which already exists; the one in North Dakota has been mentioned, and Minnesota and Ontario and others in other jurisdictions.

I hope that something I've said has been helpful, and thank you for allowing me to express my view.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Martin, for your presentation this evening.

I'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Pastor Martin, thank you so much for being here this evening and thank you for your presentation. You've obviously put a lot of thought into it and we appreciate that, and we appreciate you being here this evening. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Well, thank you, Pastor Martin, for coming this evening and speaking to us.

I'm going to ask you a question that the previous presenter had indicated we were perhaps unfairly not asking of others who is—who are presenting this evening. And I wanted to ask you, in the context of preparing for this evening and coming here, if you consulted with others before coming to present to us what you laid out before us this evening.

Mr. Martin: I took the time to take at least between 10 and 15 minutes on a Sunday morning to speak to the congregation in all three services that we have and talk about the issue and our perspective on it. And then people were able to respond to me and encourage me to—and I am here representing a lot of other people who have concerns as well.

And I hope that my presentation has been respectful of people who do not agree with us, but I hope that it's made some sense in how to improve the legislation so that it can actually do what I believe people want it to do.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Pastor Martin. And I would believe that, absolutely, your presentation has been respectful. And I think that you reminded us of some important things, including what reasonable accommodation looks like when it comes to a bill like this.

So I thank you for the notes you've left us, and I thank you for the time you've spent with us.

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

We'll now call on Margaret Jablonski, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Jablonski. Do you have written materials for distribution? Just ask the staff to help you distribute that. And do I have the pronunciation of your last name correct? If you could correct me.

Ms. Margaret Jablonski (Private Citizen): It's Jablonski, but it's all good.

Mr. Chairperson: Jablonski. I appreciate the correction, and you may proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Jablonski: I thank you for this opportunity. I'd like to just sort of reiterate some things that people said tonight.

I don't think that Bill 18 is about bullying but more to do with this biased government's attempt to promote a homosexual agenda and impose it on all people. I think that's my bottom-line view. If you don't—if you throw my paper away, I've lost 10 bucks, whatever.

Ban Bill 18 forcing schools to accommodate gay-straight groups to deal with bullying, and worse is the all-encompassing proposal imposing homosexuality in all school curriculum. The proposal is unique to Canada for a good reason. It is a biased demand by the NDP to exclusively protect the politically correct rights of the select, chosen few, homosexual minority. It is an affront to democracy, as it discriminates and undermines majority parental rights.

The education system has been turned upside down to 'exclu'—I'm sorry, I'm getting new glasses—to exclusively accommodate minority rights at the expense of the majority where no common sense of justice, reasonable accommodation or balance of rights between groups exists.

Bill 18 is unnecessary. A neutral, general policy of bullying already exists which can be built upon, providing safety and, importantly, ensuring the protection of other group rights and their opportunities. Inclusiveness does not imply the imposition of one group's rights on all others.

A clear distinction is required between tolerance of this lifestyle as opposed to an outright demand for acceptance. And imposition of this lifestyle itself, driven by this biased NDP government policy of inclusiveness, imposing homosexuality on all is an

outrageous dictatorship, social engineering or brainwashing of the public to accept homosexuality.

The government has undermined the majority of parental rights, overstepping its mandate to protect the public interests with an abuse of power and a breach of public trust.

The education has a responsibility to the public to provide choice and an ethical moral compass in public policy, not spiritual and moral bankruptcy. Forcing homosexuality on all groups is discrimination, infringing on the rights and beliefs of faith groups and others in both private and public schools. Many find this lifestyle morally wrong and deeply offensive due to faith beliefs, not hate.

Inclusion means the acceptance of all people with some form of mutual respect, with equal and often separate opportunities, not the imposition of one lifestyle choice on all.

* (21:30)

Parents have rights and freedoms and equality when they're able to determine curriculum or direct taxes to schools of choice. Provide Christian parents with the same choice and conditions for students to participate in prayer with those given by the proposals to include homosexuality and eliminate double standards in public schools. These conditions already exist for Aboriginal exercises, whose exercises are protected, built into the curriculum, with designated schools exempt from annual partitions, unreasonable accommodation with room provided and no questions asked. Christians want the same conditions for their opportunities and rights as those given to Aboriginals, not their exclusion. Christians have been uniquely targeted by some 'seculists' and treated as second class. To each their own requires separate opportunities to teach their own whether it be for cultural, language or religious reasons.

Promoting homosexuality implicitly or explicitly with gay-straight alliance groups to cast at impressionable children in their formative years should not occur without informed parental consent. No guarantee can be made the proposal will not encourage homosexual activity by students since the debate on the causes of homosexuality rages on. The proposal is an in-your-face aggressive demand for acceptance, morality, normalcy, and perhaps even popularity for the—I can never say this—proselytization and imposition of the homosexual high-risk lifestyle on the community at large.

The separation of church and state does not imply the dangerous ability of the power to the government to now separate the people from their beliefs or faith itself or the absence of religious opportunities in the public schools. The NDP, at the altar of secularism, is dictating morality to the public. Many find the imposition of homosexuality, in no uncertain terms, an act of emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual child abuse.

God's laws are eternal. You—override man's authority and laws where no amount of legal blessings, time or passing of generations will legitimize the homosexual lifestyle.

For many, the legalization of homosexual marriages has simply given new meaning to the term, the law is an ass. The protection of homosexual rights and tolerance of this lifestyle crosses the line when it seeks to impose its lifestyle on all and it infringes on parental rights and collective community rights to determine curriculum of choice based on beliefs and shaping provincial curriculum.

Spiritual and moral warfare has been waged in school, attacking the minds, hearts and souls of children where parental control of the curriculum has been 'usurped' and undermined. Inclusion means the acceptance of all people with some form of mutual respect and tolerance, not the imposition of homosexual lifestyle choices on all. The danger exists of the slippery slope of embracing an endless smorgasbord of alternative sexual lifestyle choices for the future.

Stereotyping, labelling groups as homophobic who oppose this lifestyle is politically correct propaganda that manipulates through fear and guilt to complain—to obtain compliance to its agenda. Claiming any objection to promoting the homosexual lifestyle represents hate or bullying to the individual or a group itself as opposed to hating the lifestyle choice itself. It seeks to make Christians apologize for their beliefs themselves and forfeit their rights, values and opportunities in order not to offend homosexuals. This deception confuses and stifles honest dialogue and the search for some common ground and solutions, further dividing and 'aliating' groups. Christphobic, anyone?

One can both love thy neighbour as thyself and object both to bullying and to the homosexual lifestyle on moral grounds. Is this homophobia? For public health reasons alone, the promotion of a homosexual lifestyle should ring alarm bells, as it

is a grave high-risk group for AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases.

Context in this debate must also acknowledge that Christian opportunities—prayer, Bible readings, the Cross, carols, concert and Christmas tree—have been banned in public schools since 1993. A social taboo is being placed on spirituality. Closet-Christians have been created, rights forfeits—forfeited, with Christian cleansing to make room for the homosexual community coming out now to impose their choices on all. Politically correct and legalistic rules to reinstate prayer have promoted intolerance to Christianity and has served a purpose of its own through defeats of and forfeiting of both Christian individual and collective rights and opportunities that themselves where 'seculism' reigns supreme. The rules to reinstate prayer in Winnipeg follow the letter of the law protecting the rights of the minority, guaranteed through ownership of the classroom—and I'm referring back to 20 years ago when this all took place.

Rights not—so okay, so then it happens that the minority's rights were protected over everybody else's rights during religious exercises—and they, in fact, were guaranteed ownership of the classroom during the exercises, overriding all other individual or collective rights and this led to unreasonable accommodation of groups and discrimination in reverse to the majority Christians.

Rights not coupled with responsibility can be a guarantee to abuse other group rights. The rules to reinstate prayer presented a damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't proposition for parents on their knees trying to consider a prayer.

This 'infirmative' action program has gone bad with a backlash where ill feelings between groups were created where none previously, basically, existed and more harm than good is promoted where many of the minority did not ask, nor indeed benefit from the new rules as the petition numbers required to re—to instate other religious exercises were prohibitive

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Jablonski, I'm so sorry to interrupt. Time has—

Ms. Jablonski: I get it. I'm going on and on and I appreciate your time tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: We—the rules of the committee state that we have 10 minutes for presentation. We do have some time as well for question and answer.

Floor Comment: I thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you very much.

We'll turn now to questions.

Mr. Swan: Well, thank you, Ms. Jablonski, for coming down and staying through a long evening and using your right to present to our committee. And it does take courage to stand before the committee of MLAs and tell us what you think. So I do appreciate you coming here tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Minister Bjornson, on a point of order.

Hon. Peter Bjornson (Minister of Entrepreneurship, Training and Trade): No, not on a point of order. I was—well, perhaps if it's a point of order to ask the committee to consider having the presentation as printed in—recorded in Hansard.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we can have the remainder of your presentation included in Hansard as if you had presented it here this evening.

Is there leave of the committee to allow that to occur? [Agreed]

Garden Grove School in Winnipeg School division in 1993 was a test case for affirmative action and an example of both preaching to the converted Christian and a polish light bulb joke at it's finest. The rules asked 501 students to leave the room for 6 minority students during religious exercises to protect minority rights. Worse the outcome was the 6 did not in the end enjoy ownership of the room as most were opting out of "Oh Canada" Oh, oh... many asked if they should opt out of Canada itself and not just the anthem. Two classes of Christians were created, one in the classroom, indignant to the rules and one in the hallway. Divide and conquer and the birth of hallway spirituality. Prayer police by the school board then ensured no room but the hallway was allowed for religious exercises as the 30 second Lord's prayer now took ten minutes playing musical chairs. The message was sent "don't ask for prayer, you'll pay for it, with the repeated associated the worth of payer and it's inconvenience to all. Five elementary schools in a area could see at least one dedicated to addressing Christian rights and their opportunities built into the curriculum. System wide the rules encouraged the defeat of Christian opportunities in public schools with a steady exodus to private schools by those who could afford it, where their rights are sold out. The sole purpose of the biased Human Right commission has exclusively

protected the politically correct rights of the minority excluding majority rights and should have no role in determining education policy bullying the Christian majority in compliance to secularism.

How convenient, of the government to first promote a freedom from religion position undermining Christian values, beliefs and rights with a ban on opportunities promoting Christian intolerance. Now secularist rights rule supreme with a social taboo placed on spirituality followed by the imposition of a homosexual agenda in all curricula. This is the ultimate in hypocrisy and a parent's worst nightmare. Insult has been added to injury elevating sexual choices and rights over Christian spiritual rights. Spiritual, moral warfare has been waged. Any sense of neutrality given by secularism to all groups has now been crossed as homosexual rights outweigh and override all other group rights.

An elitist two-tier education system is promoted by banning Christian opportunities with unreasonable accommodation between groups with rules that defeat the opportunity itself. Whether intended or unintended the consequences of affirmative action are the same. The vested financial interests of private schools have been promoted and protected with a monopoly on God and religious exercises. The interests of the public have been sold out with the complications of private school political and legal arrangements. Parents face a huge financial burden when exercising religious choice being penalized with both private fees and public taxes. One has God and rights protected if one can afford it representing another gap between the rich and the poor. Have mercy on the poor. A parade of Ministers have not addressed this issue where the sheer numbers of Christians, some 70% of the population should at least command the same attention which is afforded to the 8% homosexual minority. Today, perhaps a handful of schools in Winnipeg school division have petitioned to reinstate Christian exercises where Christians are a majority. Ask why? All political parties are silent with a deplorable lack of defending Christian rights and their opportunities. Four elementary schools in a local are could see at least one school designated for Christian exercises built into the curriculum. The separation of church and state does not imply the absence of religious opportunities in public school. Other provinces have provided innovative solutions with charter schools and religious opportunities built into the curriculum respecting the rights of various groups with no annual petition required reducing an exodus to

private schools. Provide excellence in public education through innovation such as charter schools and new opportunities for all groups in the community equally, individually and collectively not just for the select chosen politically correct few. Provide the freedom of ability to direct taxes to schools of choice, respecting parental rights and stimulating healthy competition in a system complacent to community needs. Imposing a homosexual agenda can also do more harm than good, backfiring by further dividing groups creating ill feelings which did not previously exist. Our differences can require separate and equal opportunities. In all fairness, the homosexual community, some 8% of the population, if considered a "true" minority group, and not just a powerful sexual political movement, should also build their own private schools just as religious groups are required to, if they wish to promote, proselytize and impose their lifestyle choices on not only their own "converted" members, but more importantly on all others in society at large.

Vulnerable, impressionable children in their formative years demand our immediate and future protection. Have mercy on all children not sympathy for the devil whose deception and manipulation of truth with labels seeks compliance to a homosexual agenda. Diversity and multiculturalism must first recognize it's country's history, heritage and mosaic and only then can it have an eye to protect equal and separate opportunities for all. Christianity is an integral part of Canadian identity woven into this great country's institutions and identity where the ultimate sacrifice has been paid protecting freedom of religion, guaranteed in the Charter of Rights. Resolution of group demands is not the imposition of one group's rights on all. Mutual respect should be promoted allowing parties to agree to disagree with equal, fair and separate opportunities providing choice not preferential treatment. Reasonable fair balance in accommodation of individual and collective rights requires rights are coupled with responsibility to ensuring rights are not a guarantee to abuse other group rights. Government must assume responsibility to ensuring rights are not a guarantee to abuse other group rights. Government must assume responsibility and leadership for a balanced education public policy that protects the interests of all the public not just the rights of the select few homosexual or secularist. Deferring to the courts with lengthy legal challenges to protect rights is irresponsible government God speed and keep our land glorious and free with social justice for all.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I just want to thank you, as well, for coming to present this evening. It was obvious you had carefully prepared your notes and we're happy to accommodate you by having your remarks in Hansard as if you had presented them yourself.

So thank you for coming and thank you for presenting.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, once again, thanks for your time this evening. *[interjection]* Thank you.

I'll now call on Bill Rempel, private citizen.

Evening, Mr. Rempel. Do you have written material for distribution?

Mr. Bill Rempel (Private Citizen): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: I'll ask the staff to assist you in getting that out to us.

You may proceed, Mr. Rempel, whenever you're ready.

Mr. Rempel: Honourable Minister of Education (Ms. Allan), members of the Legislative Assembly and guests, I've—count it a privilege to take some of your time to express my views and I'll try and be as brief as I can. But when I heard of the bill and read what it was all about, I could not remain silent. I just have to speak up.

* (21:40)

As a—speaking as a private citizen born in Canada, I would like to address some of my concerns with regard to Bill 18. I have been paying school taxes in Winnipeg for 62 years, the last 45 years without having any children in the school system. I currently pay about \$219.35 a month, school taxes, so I hope that you will be kind enough to allow me to share my concerns.

First of all, I am totally against bullying of any kind, including bullying in the school environment. Bullying can be defined as any action, verbal, physical, electronic or any other means deliberately intended to hurt, demean, intimidate, whether physically, emotionally or financially or any other way. This, briefly, is what bullying means to me, and this definition can be applied to every situation I can think of, including sexual orientation. It is therefore not necessary to single out any identifiable group for special consideration, since it covers everyone. Mr. Sid Green, win—Manitoba lawyer, in a recent Winnipeg Free Press article, wisely pointed out that

our Criminal Code has all the legal provisions necessary to deal with bullying.

I am not here to judge anyone; however, I do question some of the policies of the Department of Education. In 2006, the Toronto District School Board surveyed 105,000 students to determine why students were being bullied. The results: 38 per cent, physical appearance; 17 per cent, grades or marks; 11 per cent, cultural background; and 6 per cent, gender—simply pointing out that other areas are even greater concerns as far as bullying is concerned. The University of Toronto, in their survey of cyberbullying in 2008, reported 17 per cent for physical appearance or race; 5 per cent for performance in school; 3 per cent, gender; 2 per cent, sexuality. Would you not think that all types of bullying require remedial action?

I'm particularly concerned with that part of the bill that threatens to withdraw funding for separate and faith-based schools who cannot conscientiously support the LGBT agenda to promote their aberrant lifestyle to normal, straight, innocent children who have no such inclinations. I understand that the current practice is to fund approximately 50 per cent of the tuition but none of the capital costs of children attending these schools—why not 100 per cent? What is the justification for this discrimination and persecution against faith-based schools? The parents of these children pay school taxes like everyone else, and, I suspect, on average, pay more than parents of children who attend secular schools.

Why do we pale school—pay school taxes in the first place? Why are they extracted from homeowners by force under the penalty of losing their homes if not paid? Let's be honest, taxes are paid in trust for the purpose of educating our children. Our Department of Education is acting as though the trust money paid for education is a grant or a gift from the Department of Education. This is not a grant. It is an allocation of the taxpayers' own money. To withhold this money from whom it rightfully belongs is intimidation and the ultimate form of bullying. I believe the Department of Education is already in violation of their fiduciary duty. I can well visualize this as a basis for a class action, as well as a contravention of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Two years ago, my wife and I attended a convention in Ottawa, and in our free time we visited the Parliament Buildings, including the Peace Tower. Many of you, if not all, know that carved in stone

near the top of the Peace Tower are the words from Psalm 72:8: He shall have dominion also from sea to sea. This was a very appropriate motto for the Fathers of Confederation, indeed. When I went to school, our wall maps labelled—or were labelled "Dominion of Canada." Our Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms begins with this preamble: Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law. Why are we today teaching the opposite, even removing the word dominion from our records?

I grew up in a rural school setting where one teacher taught up to 45 students from grade 1 to grade 10. Teachers did a very good job of teaching the three Rs, plus history, geography, science and English. Years later, we had a school reunion. I met most of my classmates and some teachers. Everyone was doing well, and I did not hear of any in trouble with the law or on social assistance and never did the word bullying come up. It never was an issue in the school that I attended.

Allow me to speak the truth in love. Sometimes the truth hurts, but sometimes it is necessary to face the facts as they are. I mentioned the inscription on the Peace Tower and the preamble to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

For over 100 years Canada has been greatly blessed. My generation has lived in the most progressive era in history as it pertains to the quality of life and conveniences. Today, modern tractors—I have a farm background, yes—today, modern tractors with quiet air-conditioned cabs, a choice of entertainment, wireless communication and GPS-coupled guidance systems are the order of the day. Similar advances are experienced at almost every area of life. But, alas, what have we done with the most important part?

What made our country great as compared to most Third World countries with many more years of experience and opportunities? I believe it was because people of faith started schools, universities, hospitals, personal care homes and more, only to be taken over by the government. The early schools recognized the supremacy of God. Opening exercises included the singing of our national anthem, God save our gracious King, is when I went to school and the Lord's Prayer.

Over the last 50 years or so, our Department of Education, apparently intimidated by the politically correct movement of the secular humanist religion, has systematically and incrementally removed any

mention of God, even eliminating Christmas and the Bible from school activity. What has been the result of replacing Christian values with secular humanist? We have kicked out any respect for God from the schools and redefined words like tolerance, inclusiveness, rainbow, gay and pride. I visited an elementary school in west Winnipeg. A quick calculation showed that there was one staff or assistant for every seven students. Our policies have taught the last number of generations that humans evolved spontaneously and are, therefore, not accountable to any deity. If that were true, little wonder that a large segment of our population is devoid of any moral standards, resulting in fetal alcohol syndrome and other disorders so that teachers require numerous aides to control and restrain abnormally difficult children. By the way, a current report from Pembina Trails School Division indicates 12,777 enrolment and 1,803 paid staff. That's also one staff person for every students.

Mr. Chairperson: One minute remaining.

Mr. Rempel: Think about that.

The natural bent of children is not to do good, but rather the opposite. One of the words you hear out of the mouth of a typical 2-year-old is the word no. If a child is born with proclivity to steal; we call that kleptomania. We do not say, since they were born this way we must accept this as normal and acceptable. Bottom line: stealing, lying, cheating, et cetera are choices that people make. Likewise, the LGB lifestyle, undeniably, is a choice, a choice that is unnatural and is the cause of untold misery and suffering, including but not limited to the breakdown of marriage, broken homes, suffering and damaged children and a major contributor to the spread of HIV/AIDS. The United States government has reported in the news June 17th—commissioned the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, to research why homosexuals, defined as men having sex with men, continue to represent the overwhelming majority of the 50,000 new HIV cases reported annually—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Rempel, I am so sorry to interrupt, but your time has expired. Thank you very much for your presentation this evening.

Ms. Allan: I'm just wondering if the committee is willing, Mr. Rempel is put a lot of work into his presentation, and we could include the part that he didn't have the opportunity to give to us verbally in Hansard.

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

—in the US. I cannot imagine the enormous cost to our health care system from this preventable epidemic. In 2008 Canada reported 64,000 cases of HIV/AIDS. The numbers grew by 14% in 2011 to 71,300 cases. Further research indicates that the medication alone used to treat typical patients costs from \$15,000 to \$30,000 per year or an average of \$20,000. If these reported numbers are correct, the total bill for medication alone comes to \$1,426,000, or \$42.00 for every man woman and child in Canada. Would it not make good sense even from a monetary perspective to encourage chastity in our schools? Why are we then promoting this lifestyle as normal when we all know it is not? If it was, there would be no need to organize parades to convince the world that it is. Nature and conscience are your witness! A pure monogamous marriage relationship is not at risk for HIV/AIDS.

On June 13 I heard Kevin tell his story on TV how he became involved in this lifestyle. He was an adopted child and although his adoptive parents were very good to him, he felt rejected by his biological mother because she gave him up for adoption. He also felt rejected in high school at times. This led to looking for acceptance from the wrong crowd including drugs and homosexual activity. This did not give him peace and fulfilment. He readily admitted that he knew all along that what he was doing was wrong, but he rebelled against better knowledge. Yes he also said the bottom line for him was and he used the word "choice." Thankfully he realized his lifestyle was leading to disaster and decided to change. Kevin today by his own testimony is a free and happy man.

I am convinced that many choose this lifestyle because of real or perceived rejection. I know of a case where it resulted from disappointment in romance and it appears the person decided I will never allow myself to be rejected by a woman again!

Not all cases fall into this category. I believe some are mental health issues as well. We have counselling centers for a variety of additions. I know of one that provides free services to any and all in need and looking for help. LBGT addicts need help and encouragement to free them of this bondage. Recruiting more of our children to accept that lifestyle to make it appear "normal" is not the answer! Is this not what "gay -straight alliance" is all about? Why not a straight-gay alliance?

If we continue on the present course, Canada will surely fall into an immoral abyss and like many nations in the past will collapse by internal corruption. Witness the Roman empire and others. Yes the truth hurts and we don't like to hear it. Two thousand years ago they crucified a man who spoke the truth to the officials of the day.

I was in Arizona on June 12 and picked up The Arizona Republic. Page A2 caught my attention. In Russia the Kremlin voted 436-0 with one abstention "banning the propaganda of non traditional sexual relations". Remember, this country only a few years ago declared themselves officially atheistic and taught it in the schools much like Canada today. I am old enough to remember the ascension of Adolph Hitler in Nazi Germany during the thirties. I also remember their philosophy, "Tell a lie often enough and people will believe it to be true"

I appeal to the Minister of Education and all Members of the Legislature, wake up before it is too late! Stop sodomizing our innocent young children. Pay the funds you hold in trust to those to whom it rightfully belongs so that all children will be treated equally and fairly. Do not withhold the funding that rightfully belongs to them! One more thing, please don't take your advice from the likes of Mr. Ben Levin.

* (21:50)

Ms. Allan: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Rempel, for being here this evening and for presenting. I—there—I just wanted to tell you, Mr. Rempel, that on the 'fird'—first page of your bill, you mention there was a part in the bill that threatens to withdraw funding for—to faith-based schools.

You know, there—I just wanted to let you know, Mr. Rempel, that we have—we fund independent schools and we have a wonderful partnership with our independent schools, and there is nothing in the legislation, in Bill 18, that talks about withdrawing funding from them. We—so I just wanted to let you know that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Rempel, for your presentation. You've put a lot of work into your presentation, and we appreciate you being here this evening.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Rempel, for coming this evening, for sharing with us this presentation. And you've obviously put a lot of work into this and you put a lot of thought into this.

I took note of the definition of bullying you supplied, towards the beginning of your presentation. I wondered if you would comment to this committee on what you see in this legislation that—defining bullying as an act that could take place once, that could be defined as something where your feelings got hurt or where your self-esteem was damaged. Does that provide enough of a threshold for schools to have a practical way to deal with bullying, in your opinion?

Mr. Rempel: Well, I don't know. I haven't given that part of it too much thought, obviously, but I agree with many of the other presenters that the bill should be amended. I think we need something to protect everybody from bullying. I do—certainly do agree with that, but the problem that I have with the bill is that the appearance of it is to promote a lifestyle that is—I can't agree with.

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

I will now call on Principal Darcey Bayne, Springs Christian Academy.

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

Ms. Darcey Bayne (Springs Christian Academy): I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Bayne: First of all, thank you very much for taking time to listen to me this evening. I know the hour is growing late and it is a school night, so I am going to try to keep what I have to say brief.

My name is Darcey Bayne. I'm the principal at Springs Christian Academy. Springs Christian Academy is a faith-based-funded independent school with two campuses in Winnipeg established in 1989. Springs Christian Academy is a ministry of Springs Church with over 6,000 members from all areas of Winnipeg and the surrounding area.

We've approximately 550 students from pre-school to grade 12, representing about 350 families from all parts of Winnipeg and surrounding areas with a diverse student population representing a wide spectrum of cultures and backgrounds. We employ approximately 70 staff members, and we have award-winning teachers, including two who have received the Manitoba celebration of excellence in teaching award.

As a funded independent school, we are an important stakeholder in education, providing parents choice in their child's education. And we are a member of the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools.

We believe that there's common ground in Bill 18. We agree that all students deserve to be in a safe, respectful and caring learning environment, and we make every effort to ensure that our school has that type of environment. We agree with, and commit to, opposing bullying of any kind for all students, and we had antibullying curriculum implemented, starting in our early years. We agree with the intent of Bill 18 and have the same goal in mind, as we believe God created every person, and every person has value and a purpose. We love and support our students and we know that students have questions about their sexual identity, and we want to help students navigate these questions.

Madam Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

We also believe the media has caused undue division with headlines that state that faith-based schools are opposed to this legislation—antibullying legislation, and that's not the case.

However, with that being said, we do have some concerns with the wording in Bill 18. We are concerned with the vague definition of bullying. As taxpayers in any school, public or independent, a comment that could be made that would hurt someone's feelings, how would that be upheld in court? We've already heard tonight that places like North Dakota have clearer definitions of bullying, and it clearly defines bullying as harassment, not an off-handed comment. And at our school, we would gladly have an antibullying club.

Again, we are concerned with the ambiguous definition of bullying and that—how that may allow teachings from our own statement of faith to be perceived as bullying. We are concerned that we are not maintaining our independence to make choices in our school—for example, student clubs that align with our statement of faith. We are not a public school.

We are concerned that religious freedoms are not being upheld, and the Supreme Court of Canada has made it clear that there is no hierarchy to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This bill seems to contradict this legal position as it seems to demote religious freedoms. And almost every law lays out consequences for contravening the law: fines, minimum or maximum sentences—and there are none

listed and this should be of concern to all Manitoba citizens.

So to summarize, we agree with the intent of Bill 18 and we believe that every child has a right to be safe and secure in a school setting. However, we do have some concerns—again, a broad definition of bullying, failure to specify consequences and infringing on rights and freedoms. Thank you very much.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you very much for presenting.

Now, do we have any questions?

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Darcey, for your presentation. Thank you as well for being a principal in a school. That is an amazing job and we have a great deal of respect for the principals that manage our schools in the province of Manitoba because you really are the true leader in your schools and create a climate in your school just because of your leadership, and we—I want to commend you for that. I want to thank you for your presentation. We will be working with the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools as we move forward with Bill 18, and we will make sure that we work with you and continue to have the dialogue that we've been having in regards to some of the concerns that you have raised tonight. Thank you very much, Darcey.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Darcey, for coming this evening and sharing with us on behalf of your school and on behalf of your—the students and the staff and the community that you represent. I was interested to hear you speak about the proactive approach that Springs has taken. I want to ask quickly for a clarification. The antibullying curriculum that you say you put in place in the early years, is that something that was developed in-house and put in place by the school?

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Sorry—Ms. Bayne.

Ms. Bayne: Yes, that's something that we pulled from a variety of resources to make it fit our own values and beliefs but to still uphold what we believe are the tenets of our faith, but then also just what good practices in education. And we actually have, like, a bullyproofing week, and so we do make some concerted efforts. And even though—like, and even today was our first official day of school, we had chapels with the students and we went over our

expectations and we talked about some of these things. So we're laying the groundwork right from day one of the school year that we want to be a school that loves God and loves other people, as well.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you for that answer. Just one more question for you. There have been concerns expressed by others as well about the extent to which consultation did or did not take place. And I have to wonder, based on your presentation, it sounds like there's ideas in place and there's structures in place. Do you feel like you would have had something to offer if you had had the opportunity to make a formal presentation to this minister in the construction of Bill 18? Do you think that you would have had something to offer this group that would have helped in the formation of this bill?

Ms. Bayne: Yes. I—just to keep it very simple, I didn't find out about Bill 18 until it was actually already in kind of its original draft state. Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools has kept us as independent schools very well abreast of what was going on, but we—I personally didn't feel like we had consultation from the very beginning.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no other questions, thank you very much again for coming down.

Ms. Bayne: Okay. Have a good evening.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: You too.

And next, Myla Krauskops, private citizen, and please feel free to correct your name for me. I'm sure I said that wrong.

* (22:00)

Ms. Myla Krauskops (Austin Christian Academy): You know, I should have my husband here because he's the German and I even butcher my own last name. It—in German, it translates as curly head, so if you would like to call me Mrs. Curly Head, I'm all right with that.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: We'll hand out your presentation and you just go ahead whenever you're ready.

Ms. Krauskops: I would just ask if I could make one correction. I'm actually presenting on behalf of Austin Christian Academy, the school that I teach and principal at.

Madam Vice-Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Krauskops: All right. I'm tired and hot and I think most of you are too, so I'd love to say forget it, and let's go home. But I'm pretty passionate about this, and I tried to write down some important things, so I'm going to read it anyway.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my concerns on the proposed Bill 18. My name is Myla Krauskops and I'm presenting to you on behalf of the Austin Christian Academy school community.

I am both an educator and a parent of school-aged children here in Manitoba. As an educator and a Christian, I'm passionately opposed to bullying of any kind, for all students and members of the province of Manitoba. Bullying is an attempt to put yourself above another, to belittle them for your own gain. This goes against the Golden Rule that was commonly referred to—that is commonly referenced in western society, and was given to us by Jesus Christ; you shall love your neighbour as yourself.

In my classroom and in my home, I strive to teach that there is no reason to try and diminish another person's values—value. I also recognize that my students, and my own children, do not always live by that directive and do need guidance. Thus, a government bill to clearly outline expectations for behaviour in schools may help to guide students towards right behaviour. However, in my experience, and in my survey of history, solutions that are presented from authority and placed upon others are not as truly effective as solutions that are spun at the grassroots level.

If the Ministry of Education aspires to reverse the desire in students and humanity overall, to elevate self over others, then, could we not have funding and support for local initiatives and student-led solutions, rather than government-mandated solutions? With this in mind, I would ask that Manitoba government retract Bill 18, and that we open up discussion across the province, and with all stakeholders—parents, educators and students—on how to model and to promote a love for our neighbour in our school system.

If the Department of Education does not consider this an option, then I would ask for you to consider the following changes to the current bill that is before Parliament.

Section 1.2(1) of this bill defines bullying very broadly. A piece of legislation that uses terms such as, should be known to cause, or, distress or other forms of harm, is very vague. This leaves room for

unintentional hurt caused by a student, a teacher or a staff to be interpreted as bullying.

The act of bullying is an act with intent to harm another person. Are we saying that harming someone's feelings unintentionally would require serious action from school administration?

When I raised this concern in writing with Deputy Minister Farthing, he assured me that it's clear from the definition that the bullying behaviour is not unintentional; it is deliberate, typically repetitive and causes harm. And with all due respect, I fail to see how this section of the bill is clear. Bullying is a deliberate—as a deliberate act is not clearly presented in the legislation, and that is precisely my concern.

I would ask that this definition of bullying have the terms, should be known to cause, and, should be known to create, removed. Focus should be directed to the deliberate attempt to demean another human being, and be laid out in specific and measurable terms.

Section 1.2(2)(a) includes the phrase, "real or perceived power imbalance," and this phrase is made subjective by the addition of perceived. A subjective term does not lead to a clear guide for evaluating a situation of bullying. A power imbalance can be perceived in innumerable situations within a school.

Is it a dangerous thing that a teacher has more education than a student, and therefore creates a power imbalance between themselves and the student? Are we saying that this imbalance could be grounds for allegations of bullying?

And again, Deputy Minister Farthing had addressed this concern in writing, and his response to me—that with regard to the imbalance between teacher and student, most people would accept this as an innate thing to the teacher-student relationship and, except in exceptional circumstances, would not constitute bullying. And this is hopefully true.

But the reality is that this bill includes a subjective and a vague definition of what a power imbalance is, and this means that some people may misinterpret the intention of the bill in the future. To define bullying clearly, we need to focus on the observable event: deliberate physical, social or emotional hurt directed towards another human being.

In Section 1.2(2)(c)(ii), the statement is made that bullying by electronic means should be dealt

with by the school. I agree that cyberbullying is a real problem and it needs to be dealt with seriously and immediately by whatever authorities are aware of the damage that's being done.

However, does the school's role include the policing of all use of electronic media and electronic communications during all hours of the day? Students do need to be taught to consider carefully what they write via electronic means, and choose their words carefully and with pure hearts.

But is the school to govern all use of electronic media? The family is the primary institution that our students are a part of, and it is the unit that teaches and models appropriate communication. As well, when required, the police and the justice system is in place to deal with extreme bullying presented by electronic means.

How will the school personnel manage an appropriate-use policy that prohibits the accessing, uploading, downloading, sharing or distribution of objectionable or negative information or materials outside of school hours?

I do recognize that the intention of the Ministry of Education—and I apologize, Mr. Farthing, this was in quotations and was from your letter—the intention is to give firmer ground to stand upon when addressing cyberbullying behaviour, and I am thankful for the help in our efforts to maintain a positive school environment. Again, it's the vague wording that allows for misinterpretation of the role of the school that has me concerned. The scope of this section should be limited to during school hours and on school premises, in my opinion.

Section 41(1.8) considers student activities and organizations that are taking place at this school. The creators of the legislation chose to list a number but not all groups covered in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in their statement on what clubs must be allowed to run within a school.

Section 15 of the Charter states that all Canadians are guaranteed equal treatment and to protect or to grant special privileges to a short list of Charter groups is to exclude other identifiable groups protected by the Charter.

The inherent problem with listing groups that deserve protection is this: someone is always going to be left out. Fundamentally and principally, every student should receive equal protection and equal opportunities in Manitoba's schools. There are many

minority groups who have been historically disadvantaged or marginalized.

The groups listed in this bill—both genders, racial minorities, those disabled by barriers, and people of all sexual orientations and gender identities—are not the only groups who have faced discrimination. My personal recommendation is to remove this clause entirely; it only serves to highlight some Charter groups while neglecting others. Are we not looking for all Manitoba students to be treated with respect and dignity?

If section 41(1.8) is not removed from the legislation, then I would ask the Minister of Education to consider to which school populations the bill be applied.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I am thankful for the great working relationship—and you have mentioned that already—that we do have with the Ministry of Education, and independent schools have enjoyed that for the last number of years.

The employees, parents and students of faith-based schools voluntarily join these confessional schools and understand the beliefs that those schools stand upon. This ability to choose adherence to conservative Christian values found in a faith-based school or to choose to attend a public, non-faith-based school means that no student needs to be schooled in an environment that does not meet their personal values.

My own personal faith has led me to choose to teach and school my children in an independent, faith-based school here in Manitoba. Faith is a sacred and a very personal matter. I believe that all children should receive education that respects and protects the family's faith and/or their cultural backgrounds.

In a letter of comfort of 1990, the Province of Manitoba acknowledged parental choice in educating their children and commitment to respecting the unique religious perspectives, cultural objectives and values of the face-faith-based school communities.

My desire would be that the Ministry of Education continue to recognize the religious and cultural perspectives of faith-based schools in the recommendations outlined in sections 42(1.8). Is it necessary to include independent schools in the legislation of activities and organizations contrary to a conservative theology of sex? The required GSAs found in this section of the bill will violate the

freedom of religion enjoyed by funded independent schools.

In conclusion, I would state that I support and I believe in safe and inclusive schools and the premise behind the legislation. I'd ask that the bill be revisited and a better plan that includes clearer language choices be created. I believe that it'll save the Province of Manitoba from court challenges based on unclear expectations of what is required by the bill, and this redrafted plan could also focus on promoting respect for all people in Manitoba.

If this is not an option, then I would ask that independent schools not be included in Bill 18 amendment to The Public Schools Act, (Safe and Inclusive Schools). And this does not mean that I will not promote and help develop better and clearer guidelines for the promotion of respect for all students at Austin Christian Academy, but that the school would be allowed to implement these policies in a manner that is respectful of our independence and the community of which we are a part.

Thank you all for your work on behalf of Manitoba's students, and I also thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation this evening, Ms. Krauskops.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Myla, for your well-thought-out presentation. I appreciate you taking the time to be here this evening and walk us through the concerns that you have from your perspective. Thank you again.

* (22:10)

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Myla, for coming in and presenting to us this evening. I've been following along with the notes you prepared, and you prepared very, very well. And I can tell that you put a lot of thought into this, this evening.

Myla, I just wanted to ask you a question pertaining to something you said earlier. And, obviously you've been making a powerful argument for reasonable accommodation. I followed along and I've heard that.

Earlier this evening we had an interesting exchange with the Minister of Education (Ms. Allan) who was trying to give personal assurances as the minister to one of our presenters that nothing would change, that there would be no threat to that

individual's values or beliefs. And you might've been present in the room when that exchange was taking place.

I just want to ask you as a principal, because you are a principal. Right?

Ms. Krauskops: I am.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: As a principal of a private school, does that give you a high degree of confidence, the minister's personal assurances, that nothing in this bill will negatively affect you? And I just ask for your response to that.

Ms. Krauskops: I believe that definitely is your desire. Do I believe this bill is drastically going to change the way my school operates and the religious freedoms we have? No, not drastically. Do I have some concern it may and it may become a greater concern over time? I do. I wouldn't be here if I didn't.

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

Ms. Krauskops: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now call on our next presenter, Bradley Warkentin, Trinity Baptist Church.

Mr. Warkentin, do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Bradley Warkentin (Trinity Baptist Church): No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed when ready, then.

Mr. Warkentin: Good evening. I am really tired, but I'm sure you are as well. And I was just thinking that my congregation has to sit through one message a week, and you guys have had to endure several tonight. So you're doing really good. You're really focused, and I hope I can make this brief and painless.

I represent Trinity Baptist Church, a hundred-year-old congregation just across the river, and I'm representing the leadership of our church at Trinity Baptist. We'd like to register our opposition to Bill 18 as it is currently written, and I'll just briefly outline our concerns.

Baptists were among the first congregations to call for the separation of church and state—I don't know if you know that—but central to our belief was the conviction that the state could not dictate the religious conscience of a man or woman, that in

order for faith to be truly authentic and free, a man or woman must be first free to examine the tenets of their faith; (2) to agree or disagree with the tenets of faith as set out by a particular religious group based upon their own understanding of the Scriptures; and (3) to be free to associate or not to associate with any religious group according to their own personal convictions. As to truly have religious freedom, it must remain voluntary in every way.

In our opinion, Bill 18, if adopted as currently written, represents an erosion of religious freedoms by forcing independent religious schools to promote activities and normalizing morality which go against their beliefs and the beliefs of the communities that they represent.

According to section 41(1.8), Bill 18 would require religious schools that receive public funds to promote and to accommodate groups that advocate the normalization of sexual behaviour that falls clearly outside the bounds of the moral codes of many of those organizations and the religious personal convictions of the people working in those schools. In our opinion, to force someone to promote anything that is in conflict with their religious convictions causes a crisis of conscience and is a misuse of power. Ironically, it is, itself, you could say, a form of bullying.

It's as though the government of Manitoba is saying to religious schools—I don't see here this explicitly but clearly nonetheless—if you want public funding, fine, just change what you believe about human sexuality. It may be hard to fathom in a pluralistic society such as Canada, in which people can choose a spiritual flavour to fit their lifestyle, but many people of faith believe that it's not their job to shape their beliefs to fit their tastes, but rather to grapple with how to shape their lives to a faith which they believe comes from God and who does not change but knows what's best for human society. And so it is our belief that mandating the promotion of morality that contradicts the teachings of a religious group puts the state in a position of a religious judge, and this is a breach of religious freedom. This is our first and our chief concern.

I just wanted to raise a second one, briefly. We fear that the real victims of Bill 18 are not religious schools, but those who don't seem to fit into the bill's definition of inclusivity. And I just wanted to name—namely, people of faith who experience confusion about sexuality, about their own sexuality and who, through their own careful study of Scripture and

personal conviction, come to believe that they must live out their sexuality in a way that is in harmony with their beliefs, even though it may be discordant with the message of popular culture. They may reject the term gay and may not feel altogether straight, but have come to embrace a faith identity that fits them just right. We are concerned that Bill 18 communicates to this group of students that they don't fit or have a valid identity and has the potential to lead to even reverse bullying.

In conclusion, we believe that there is a way to protect children from bullying while at the same time to protecting the religious freedoms of religious schools. This can be done by explicitly prohibiting the bullying of children at any time for any reason. Bullying is a hateful behaviour that should not be sanctioned by any institution, religious or secular. Therefore, a law which fights bullying should focus on identifying the behaviours of the bully and make them socially unacceptable. We affirm that a child should be able to attend any school without fear of alienation, coercion or threat. We believe that religious schools share the same and would only be too glad to be a part of a more robust process of consultation that would take their concerns into account regarding religious freedoms. We would strongly encourage this government to make religious schools a more integral part of the process of making laws that affect their work. I think that's all.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation this evening, Mr. Warkentin.

We'll now move to questions—Honourable Minister.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for your presentation tonight. We appreciate you being here. You've given us a couple of things to think about, and we appreciate your comments on Bill 18. Thank you very much, Bradley.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Bradley, thank you for coming. Thank you for staying as long as you did—showed a lot of tenacity. I don't think you moved off that chair for the last five hours, so you were bound and determined to stay and present, and we are glad that you did. We're glad for what you shared with us this evening. Because you don't have written notes, I am going to ask you for a clarification for something, because you said it and I want to get a little more information on it.

But I did sense, before I ask you for that, you did sense—I sensed from you a disappointment that the

consultation process wasn't more robust, didn't more effectively go to the groups and to the communities and the schools and—to these groups to ask for input. And I think our last speaker said as well it was something that they saw for the first time in its—when it was in a draft stage.

What I wanted to ask you about very briefly was, when you got to the end of your presentation, you talked about—I'm sorry, I'm going to badly paraphrase—but you talked about students who might not nicely fit into a definition where they would want to belong in a GSA perhaps, but you were starting to say something about that, and I missed your essential point. Do you know the part of your presentation I was talking about?

Mr. Warkentin: Yes. We—there are students of faith who wouldn't necessarily—who have confusion about their sexuality but, because of their faith, wouldn't fit in a gay-straight alliance group because they feel like they're—they don't fit gay, they don't fit straight. They're grappling with questions and, because of their sincere faith, are looking for somebody to walk with them who isn't affirming and saying, well, you just need to embrace being gay, and aren't saying, well, you just need to be straight, but somebody who can compassionately walk with them through that confusion. And so, we—you know—we feel like there needs to be some room for those who don't fit in that definition of inclusivity.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: A follow-up question: How do you create that room? [*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Warkentin.

* (22:20)

Mr. Warkentin: Oh, sorry—by not being so specific in what you name something. Naming something in a very specific way narrows the parameters to a point where it excludes certain people, and we believe that this excludes a very vulnerable and important part of our population.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions—oh, I'm sorry.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Warkentin, you mentioned that you represent the leadership of your church, and it sounds like a very interesting church from your presentation, but, obviously, I would think there's been discussion in the congregation or with people about Bill 18. Can you describe some of that discussion and how you would have come to your presentation tonight?

Mr. Warkentin: Well, we—I spoke on it on a Sunday morning, invited dialogue and we did have dialogue as a congregation. So, yes, some of this is in dialogue, but it's also working with Christians on the front lines of—in ministry with those who are struggling with sexual questions, and so I have some interaction with those who are on those front lines in our congregation and so a lot of the dialogue has evolved from a lot of open dialogue with those who are grappling with these very questions. So we're not looking at this from afar, but very close in.

Mr. Chairperson: Now, seeing no further questions, I'll thank you very much, again, for your time.

I'll now call on Ron Koleba, Winnipeg Evangelical Free Church. Do you have written materials for the—

Mr. Ron Koleba (Winnipeg Evangelical Free Church): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: For distribution, we'll ask the staff to help you distribute those, and if you could help me with the pronunciation of your name.

Mr. Koleba: Koleba's good.

Mr. Chairperson: I had it. Okay. Very good.

Mr. Koleba: Close enough.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Koleba, you may proceed, then, when ready.

Mr. Koleba: Thank you.

The current proposed bill regarding bullying is commendable in that it attempts to seek to provide a safe atmosphere in which learning can take place. What is unfortunate with Bill 18 is that it fails in securing its intent as it stands written. The reasons are as follows:

(1) The proposed definition of bullying is unclear and highly subjective. A reference to one's feelings or self-esteem as potential grounds for accusing another of bullying removes objectivity, a necessity, if a behaviour is to be identified, addressed and judged. The proverbial line in the sand is nonexistent, being different for each person and subject to change depending on one's mood or sensitivity. This in itself makes the definition unworkable.

(2) The proposed bill creates an educational atmosphere of uncertainty at best, fear at worst, not safety. Administrators, teachers and students alike would now approach each day not knowing where

the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour stands. Further, should a child's home consider a behaviour experienced by the child as unacceptable while the teacher has deemed it otherwise, who determines which is correct? The nebulous nature of the definition invites increased conflict rather than resolution.

(3) Teachers are required to dilute their profession. Over the past decades of listening to teachers, those at the forefront of public education, one principal lamented that teachers no longer are able to do that for which they were trained. Teachers have a heart to teach and enjoy teaching our children and youth, but our educational system now requires them to be counsellors, interventionists, behavioural specialists and now we have—add to it—the further highly sensitive matter of adjudicating whether a student's words, acts or comments carry with them the intent of hurting another. The burden placed on those who will be on the front line as enforcers of this proposed bill will increase their tension and decrease their satisfaction with their profession. I hear no teachers saying, give us increased responsibility in matters that are highly sensitive and are of a personal nature. Please consider the burden this proposed bill would place on our teachers.

(4) The proposed definition places our government in a no-win situation. Take, for example, one of the prime reasons for bullying, a person's looks, more specifically, let's say obesity. One child calls another fat, which would according to the proposed legislation be defined as bullying. But our government, using the expertise of the medical profession, has stated that our society has a weight problem. A public health nurse makes a presentation at school or a teacher presents the health curriculums stating the medical facts on obesity which hurts a student's feelings or affects their self-esteem. How does one discern which incident is bullying and which is informational? Is a person's self-esteem to be valued above a person's health and life expectancy? In such a case, who does our government support?

On the matter of defining bullying, our current and existing definition in the school act is clearer than that which is being proposed.

Further considerations other than the definition of bullying in the proposed bill: No. 1, the proposed bill is said to possibly be in violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Please consider the following.

As a matter of fiscal prudence, would it not be better for our government to make appropriate amendments, rather than spend taxpayers' monies in almost certain future legal challenges? We do know that recently the broadness of a proposed law in a similar case in Saskatchewan has been struck down by the courts. Is there a lesson to be learned and money to be saved?

Number 2, the highlighting of one specific group, the great—the gay—excuse me—straight alliances in the proposed bill has become a lightning rod. While this group has the right to be protected, it does not follow that it needs to be promoted. For example, one must ask whether a Jewish school should be required to teach Hinduism. Why should a Muslim school be required to make allowances for the gay-straight alliance? Should a gay-straight alliance school exist, would it be required to make allowances for Christianity?

If a person makes a personal choice to attend an institution knowing that for which it stands, then they ought to abide within the institution's parameters. A person who joins and then demands change to personally suit them is most certainly one whose motives must be held suspect. By analogy, if a person buys a ticket on a plane destined for Calgary, but once in flight demands by force that the plane change its destination to Toronto, such an act is considered to be a hijacking. One person is not allowed to commandeer an entire group. Such intentional acts allow the proposed bill to encourage discontent and disharmony. It states that one person can force a group of many, which is also made up of many one persons, to meet their demand. The strength of a society is not so much in granting of individual rights but in getting individuals of differing convictions to give up their rights to work together to make a better and stronger community. Should legislation not be aimed at promoting resolution rather than conflict, a safe environment rather than one that's set up for legal battles, personal animosity and damaging of relationships?

Society is not strengthened by forcing everyone to be accepting of what others do or that for which an individual or a particular group stands. Genuine tolerance allows for diversity without animosity unless, as a society, we are so fragile that we require the affirmation of those who think differently than do we. Such a strategy, in the end, in and of itself, ostracizes the person or group further.

Number 3, while our government is to be commended for dealing with bullying and cyberbullying, recent bullying law history shows legislation to be ineffective, costly and missing the heart of the problem. The problem, if we are insincere about dealing with it, lies much closer to home. One example only: we accept bullying and support it in its various forms as presented by our media under the label of entertainment. If we accept bullying in our movies and are humoured by it, then it is hypocritical to turn around and punish our children for imitating what we ourselves have allowed them to be fed.

Bullying does require a firm hand. Let's deal with its sources. May our government move to strengthen and invest in Manitobans by laying building blocks for the foundational institution, the family. This is the most influential educational group that a society has. Our work and investment would be better spent on tackling the problem and its sources and our rewards would be far more satisfying and less divisive. This would lead to a better and safer schools in Manitoba. Thank you and good night.

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

We'll now turn—move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Ron, thank you so much for your presentation this evening on behalf of your church and your parish, congregation. Thank you so much for being here. We appreciate the work that you've put into your presentation, and thank you for sticking it out until close to the end of the evening.

Mr. Koleba: Thanks.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Pastor Koleba, thank you for coming, and thank you for sitting so long to—waiting so patiently to make your presentation. We're glad that you did. We're glad for the notes that you've left us and the thoughts that you've left on the record this evening. I was struck by the comment you made when you said general—genuine tolerance allows for diversity without animosity. And I think that's something that will stay with me.

* (22:30)

You ended your presentation by talking about the family as the foundational institution of society. I've asked the question this evening—you've probably heard me ask it of other presenters—when I said, are you troubled by the fact that this bill does not contain

a provision that would require that the family is included in a meaningful way, that there's no dialogue that is required when an act of bullying takes place? Under this legislation, such a connection does not exist—[*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Order.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: And could I ask you to respond to that?

Mr. Koleba: The family is obviously the foundational institution for education as it is. Therefore, we would obviously support that the family would have that input and would also have some of that direction. With the school system, anything that removes the parent from their child creates a division within the family, which is the supporting—the basic supporting evidence for a child's self-esteem.

Mr. Swan: I know it's a few times that Mr. Friesen has put somewhat misleading information on the record. I'll ask you, Mr. Koleba, if you're somewhat comforted by the fact The Public Schools Act already provides that if the principal of the school believes that a pupil of the school has been harmed as a result of the unacceptable conduct, the principal must, as soon as reasonably possible, notify the pupil's parent or guardian.

Does that give you some comfort, sir ?

Mr. Koleba: If there is no objectivity in the law, if it cannot be identified and codified, then it's very difficult to know which behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable. It is subjective at that point, and that's why the definition, in my estimation, would require clarification. It is difficult to pin something down when it's not clearly stated.

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

We'll now call on the last presenter of the evening, Phil Najda, private citizen.

Mr. Najda, do you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Phil Najda (Private Citizen): I do, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Then we'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those.

And you may proceed then whenever you are ready.

Mr. Najda: Well, thank you all for staying and for giving me this opportunity just to voice my concerns for Bill 18.

I do agree that bullying is very serious. I went through bullying when I was in school. But Bill 18, as it is written, I feel is ineffective in reducing bullying because it is poorly defined and without proper measures to deal with those who bully.

The bullying, the definition of bullying, is so vague it includes hurt feelings, even unintentionally. This could be impossible to enforce, take attention away from real bullying and distract from school activities.

Bill 18 requires faith-based independent schools to accommodate and promote student groups that have values and beliefs in direct contrast to these schools. Faith-based schools should be allowed to determine on their own what activities are allowed within their schools. Parents choose independent, faith-based schools and pay tuition because they offer a certain environment and set of values. This bill, as it is written, erodes that by requiring these schools to promote groups that contradict this atmosphere.

This bill also specifically grants legal protection to certain groups while excluding others from this same protection.

I suggest that forcing public and faith-based independent schools to act against their beliefs and values is not the way to combat bullying.

This bill, I believe, is an infringement on the right of freedom of religion—which is constitutionally protected—because it requires faith-based independent schools to promote values that contradict their faith.

And I would just question how Bill 18 would promote a positive school environment in a faith-based, independent school when they would be forced to provide space and allow student groups whose beliefs are in direct contradiction to the teaching of many of these schools?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation this evening, Mr. Najda.

We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Phil, thank you so much for hanging in right 'til the end of the evening to make your presentation. We really do appreciate the fact that

you've put together a presentation for committee members this evening, and thank you so much.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Well, I thank you too. You hung in 'til the very end and by no means that makes you the least, and we thank you for the comments that you've made and the viewpoint that you have shared this evening. Thank you for coming.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you so much for your time this evening.

That concludes our list of presenters for tonight.

The hour being 10:34, what is the will of committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we rise, it'd be appreciated if members could leave behind copies of the bill so they may be collected and reused for next—for the next meeting.

Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10:34 p.m.

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