



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Justice

Chairperson
Mr. Logan Oxenham
Constituency of Kirkfield Park



Vol. LXXIX No. 2 - 6 p.m., Thursday, April 24, 2025

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Third Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASAGWARA, Uzoma, Hon.	Union Station	NDP
BALCAEN, Wayne	Brandon West	PC
BEREZA, Jeff	Portage la Prairie	PC
BLASHKO, Tyler	Lagimodière	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian, Hon.	Keewatinook	NDP
BYRAM, Jodie	Agassiz	PC
CABLE, Renée, Hon.	Southdale	NDP
CHEN, Jennifer	Fort Richmond	NDP
COMPTON, Carla	Tuxedo	NDP
COOK, Kathleen	Roblin	PC
CORBETT, Shannon	Transcona	NDP
CROSS, Billie	Seine River	NDP
DELA CRUZ, Jelynn	Radisson	NDP
DEVGAN, JD	McPhillips	NDP
EWASKO, Wayne	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni, Hon.	St. Johns	NDP
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
HIEBERT, Carrie	Morden-Winkler	PC
JOHNSON, Derek	Interlake-Gimli	PC
KENNEDY, Nellie, Hon.	Assiniboia	NDP
KHAN, Obby	Fort Whyte	PC
KINEW, Wab, Hon.	Fort Rouge	NDP
KING, Trevor	Lakeside	PC
KOSTYSHYN, Ron, Hon.	Dauphin	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom, Hon.	Flin Flon	NDP
LOISELLE, Robert	St. Boniface	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya, Hon.	Notre Dame	NDP
MOROZ, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	NDP
MOSES, Jamie, Hon.	St. Vital	NDP
MOYES, Mike, Hon.	Riel	NDP
NARTH, Konrad	La Vérendrye	PC
NAYLOR, Lisa, Hon.	Wolseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
OXENHAM, Logan	Kirkfield Park	NDP
PANKRATZ, David	Waverley	NDP
PERCHOTTE, Richard	Selkirk	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REDHEAD, Eric	Thompson	NDP
SALA, Adrien, Hon.	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu, Hon.	The Maples	NDP
SCHMIDT, Tracy, Hon.	Rossmere	NDP
SCHOTT, Rachelle	Kildonan-River East	NDP
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SIMARD, Glen, Hon.	Brandon East	NDP
SMITH, Bernadette, Hon.	Point Douglas	NDP
STONE, Lauren	Midland	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	Ind.
WHARTON, Jeff	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt, Hon.	Concordia	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
<i>Vacant</i>	Spruce Woods	

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE**

Thursday, April 24, 2025

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

**CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Logan Oxenham
(Kirkfield Park)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Tyler Blashko
(Lagimodière)**

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the committee present:

Hon. Min. Wiebe

*Messrs. Balcaen, Blashko, King, Oxenham,
MLA Redhead*

APPEARING:

*Ron Schuler, MLA for Springfield-Ritchot
Josh Guenter, MLA for Borderland
Hon. Nahanni Fontaine, MLA for St. Johns
Hon. Uzoma Asagwara, MLA for Union Station
Kelvin Goertzen, MLA for Steinbach
Lauren Stone, MLA for Midland
Hon. Lisa Naylor, MLA for Wolseley*

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

*Bill 9–The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis
Control Amendment Act (2)*

*Keith Horn, Retail Cannabis Council of Manitoba
Sharon Clark, Big Buds Cannabis Sales*

*Bill 32–The Residential Tenancies Amendment
Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities)*

*David Grant, private citizen
Sel Burrows, Point Powerline*

Bill 43–The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

*Desirée Pappel, L'Association des éducatrices et
éducateurs franco-manitobains
Derek deVries, Park City Gospel Church
Christine Ronceray, private citizen
Nick Klassen, private citizen
Michael Sullivant, Pembina Valley Baptist Church
Joshua Shetter, private citizen
Naomi Letkemann, private citizen
Monica Wiebe, private citizen
Candace Sabel, private citizen*

*Tara Sheppard-Luangkhot, Organization for Peace,
Equity and Nonviolence*

Jennifer Friesen, private citizen

David Grant, private citizen

Karen Sharma, Manitoba Human Rights Commission

Don Woodstock, private citizen

Kathy Harris, private citizen

Caleb Clay, private citizen

Helina Zegeye, Sunshine House

Barbara Bendera, private citizen

*Gina McKay, Canadian Union of Public Employees–
Manitoba*

Kristine Barr, private citizen

Charlie Eau, Trans Manitoba

Michaela Chotka, private citizen

Fae Johnstone, Queer Momentum

Parker Morran, private citizen

Jen Seguin, private citizen

Rachamim Enoch Coad, private citizen

Kai Solomon, private citizen

Michael Shaw, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Bill 43–The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

Jeff Burnard, private citizen

Annika Baer, private citizen

David Krahn, private citizen

Gary Driedger, private citizen

Darryl Harder, private citizen

Scott Ryman, private citizen

Dawson Krahn, private citizen

Cornelio Dyck, private citizen

Caitlin Wall, private citizen

Brayden Friesen, private citizen

Mike McFarlane, private citizen

Jorden Wall, private citizen

John Krahn, private citizen

Emily Baker, private citizen

Vincent Elias, private citizen

Steven McGillivray, private citizen

Geoff Bergen, private citizen

Braden Wall, private citizen

Dylan Young, private citizen

Raymond Garand, private citizen

Rosalie Feener, private citizen

Chas van Dyck, private citizen

Jonathan Van Dyck, private citizen

Joanne van Dyck, private citizen
Leon Laidlaw, private citizen
Raven Hebert-Lee, private citizen
Lynne Granke, private citizen
Megan Wray, private citizen
Erik Thomson, University of Manitoba Faculty Association
Sarah Schira, private citizen
Breanne Wall, private citizen
Fraser Young, private citizen
Doug Derksen, private citizen
Katie Derksen, private citizen
Miriam Robern, private citizen
Brooke Reed, private citizen
Kelly Hughes, private citizen
Darlene Blatz, private citizen
Sandra Schira, private citizen
Lucy Delgado, private citizen
Amanda Morris, private citizen
Sara Tarrant, Parents and Relatives Allied with Transgender Individuals of Manitoba
Owen Toews, private citizen
Maddi Reed, private citizen
Robert Martens, private citizen
Anny Chen, private citizen
Morgan Schroeder, private citizen
Emèt Eviatar, private citizen
Hillary Siemens, private citizen
Katie Leitch, private citizen
Tara Forshaw, private citizen
Leah Krahn, private citizen
Leo Cortens, private citizen
Kaitlyn Duthie-Kannikkatt, private citizen
Joel Siemens, private citizen
Heather Krahn, private citizen
Jonathan Janzen, private citizen
George Krahn, private citizen
Sierra Krahn, private citizen
Stokely Lindo, private citizen
Chris Scott, Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 1505
Jason Hodson, private citizen
Robert Lentowich, private citizen
Victoria Hornblower, private citizen
Sarah Borbridge, private citizen
Joe Curnow, private citizen
Melanie Janzen, private citizen
Ellen Bees, private citizen
Jeff Patteson, private citizen
Kathleen Wilson, private citizen
Jennifer Watt, private citizen
Karlie Higgins, private citizen
Fenton Litwiller, private citizen
Raelene Hall, private citizen

Mary Peladeau, private citizen
Kathy Bergen, private citizen
Shannon Moore, private citizen
Lani Zastre, private citizen
Joan Kirouac, private citizen
Natalie Wiebe, private citizen
Aimee Rice, private citizen
Cale Gushulak, private citizen
David Camfield, private citizen
Shannon March, private citizen
Elizabeth Matte, private citizen
Cathy Pleskach, private citizen
Timothy Giesbrecht, private citizen
Wayne Serebrin, private citizen
Greg McFarland, private citizen
Gretchen Derige Cortens, private citizen
Cherie Schellenberg, private citizen
Debbie Whyte, private citizen
Sara Patteson, private citizen
Sarah Leeson-Klym, private citizen
Noah Schulz, private citizen
Garry Schellenberg, private citizen
Marley Pauls, private citizen
Shane Thevenot, private citizen
Marianne Shaibu, private citizen
Joan Armstrong, private citizen
Cameron Griffiths, private citizen
Grace Carey, private citizen
Emmanuella Shaibu, private citizen
Elis Wautier, private citizen
Jacklyn de Visser, private citizen
Zacharie Montreuil, private citizen
Anna Levin, private citizen
Helene Bernardin, private citizen
Caleb Mcneish, private citizen
Louis Richard, private citizen
Jacqueline Rados, private citizen
Orvie Dingwall, private citizen
Leyla Shahsavar, private citizen
Alexis Miller, private citizen
Mary Richard, private citizen
Laurie McDougall, private citizen
Sharon Vandenbosch, private citizen
Kyle Ross, Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union
Andrew Single, private citizen
Sherise Fleury, private citizen
Cortney Pachet, private citizen
Carla Gervais, private citizen
Nicole Trottier, private citizen
Robyn Dyck, private citizen
Jo Turner, private citizen
Jennifer Nembhard, private citizen

Shauna Neault-Pawlychyn, private citizen
Rosalie Madden, private citizen
Vicenza Enns, private citizen
Lindsay Kane, private citizen
Mark Derksen, private citizen
Elena Anciro, private citizen
Isabelle Costanzo, private citizen
Roan Regan, private citizen
Amanda Mondaca, private citizen
Carolynn Derksen, private citizen
Gail Matheson, private citizen
Gilbert Vielfaure, private citizen
Victor Mondaca, Nahuen Consultation
Hunter Reynolds, private citizen
Alexandra Altunbash, private citizen
Kaitlyn Mitchell, private citizen
Élyse LeBlanc, private citizen
Stacy Cardigan Smith, private citizen
Ashley Walklett, private citizen
Luca Gheorghica, Poverty Awareness & Community Action
Barbara Cowan, private citizen
Jill Carr, private citizen
Miranda Hutlet, private citizen
Ruth Baines, private citizen
Lorraine Bisson, private citizen
Jennifer Hancharyk, private citizen
Jacques Lavack, private citizen
Michael Van Damme, private citizen
Harv Enns, private citizen
Natalie Mark, private citizen
Jean-Paul Hutlet, private citizen
Erin Bergen, private citizen
Dorothy Giesbrecht, private citizen
Lise Lavack, private citizen
Reginald Giesbrecht, private citizen
Kay Maskiw-Connelly, private citizen
Jen Gieg, private citizen
Angela De Koninck, private citizen
Donald De Koninck, private citizen
Ivy Fraser, private citizen
Kathleen McCandless, private citizen
Alexander Gregovski, private citizen
John Lamont, private citizen
Denis Robert, private citizen
Jane Gattinger, private citizen
Erika Couto, private citizen
Brittany Priest, private citizen
Jennifer Demare, private citizen
Gillian Moore, private citizen
Kyle Coffey, private citizen
George Gervais, private citizen
Danielle Chammartin, private citizen

Sara O'Leary, private citizen
Tim Killoran, private citizen
Derek Pena, private citizen
Chantel Gueret, private citizen
Erik Bonnefoy, private citizen
Christine Musick, private citizen
Kimberly Manaigre, private citizen
Gareth Priest, private citizen
Daniel Malo, private citizen
Chantal Schriemer, private citizen
Helene Tymchen, private citizen
Meaghan Madden, private citizen
Sabrina Gil, private citizen
Sandra Hernandez, private citizen
Anna Weier, private citizen
Lisa Lavack, private citizen
Rafael Gil, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bills 9 – The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2)

Bill 13 – The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025

Bill 32 – The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities)

Bill 35 – The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act

Bill 36 – The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Bill 43 – The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Katerina Tefft): Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Justice please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Eric Redhead (Thompson): I nominate MLA Oxenham.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Oxenham has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Oxenham, will you please take the Chair.

The Chairperson: Our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

MLA Redhead: I nominate MLA Blashko.

The Chairperson: MLA Blashko has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Blashko is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 9, The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act; Bill 13, The Minor Amendments and Corrections Act, 2025; Bill 32, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities); Bill 35, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act; Bill 36, The Drivers and Vehicles Amendment and Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act.

I would like to inform all attendants that a second meeting of the Standing Committee on Justice to consider these bills has been announced for Wednesday, April 30, 2025, at 9 a.m. in room 254.

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

Lastly, I would like to inform all members of the public in the gallery of the rules of decorum for standing committees. Please note that any participation from the gallery is not allowed. Examples of specific actions that are not allowed include clapping, cheering or interrupting presentations. Taking photos or videos of the meeting is also not allowed. And, please, set your phones to mute.

I thank everyone in advance for their co-operation.

A number of written submissions on Bill 43 have been received and provided to committee members on the MLA portal.

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

Also, due to the volume of written submissions that we are receiving, is there leave of the committee for all future written submissions to Bill 43 to be included in Hansard until consideration of the bill at committee is complete, with the understanding that they will be frequently uploaded to the MLA portal for committee members to view? *[Agreed]*

Prior to proceeding with the public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in a committee. 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. Questions shall not exceed 45 seconds in length, with no time limit for answers.

Questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first, the minister sponsoring the bill or another member of the caucus; second, a member of the official opposition; and third, an independent member. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters list.

The proceedings of our meeting—*[interjection]*

I would ask members of the gallery to please limit their interactions with the committee.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. *[interjection]* Thank you. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for Hansard to turn on the mics.

I will note for members that we have on our presenters list for Bill 43 three presenters who reside outside the province of Manitoba who wish to present virtually. In accordance with our rule 91(2)(b), except by unanimous consent of the committee or written permission of the House leaders, only the first two members of the public to register to present to a bill who reside outside the province of Manitoba may present virtually to a standing committee considering legislation.

Therefore, I ask if there is leave for the additional virtual out-of-province presenter to present to the committee. *[Agreed]*

On the topic of determining the order of public presentations, I will also note that we have out-of-town presenters in attendance, marked with an asterisk on the list. We also have a presenter who wishes to give their presentation in French, marked with a double asterisk on the list.

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

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I propose that we hear French presentations first to accommodate our translator, followed by all presenters to Bill 9 through 36 numerically, followed by out-of-town presenters to Bill 43 who are here in person, followed by all other presenters in order of registration.

The Chairperson: It has been proposed that we hear French presentations first to accommodate our translator, followed by all presenters to Bill 9 through 36, followed by out-of-town presenters to Bill 43 who are here in person, followed by all other presenters in order of registration. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

* (18:10)

I will now—Minister Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: I—just asking leave of the committee if there's a willingness of the committee to allow for an opening statement before presenters. I know, generally, as part of our process, opening statements happen before the bill is debated or is considered clause by clause.

What I'm wondering is if there's leave of the committee that we could do our opening statements now. I know there's a lot of presenters here. Might give us an opportunity to, you know, address the concerns that some folks have. Also, to encourage a healthy debate here this evening.

So I'm asking for leave of the committee.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I heard a no. Leave has been denied.

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

Bill 43—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act

The Chairperson: Okay, I will now call on Mrs. Desirée Pappel.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Desirée Pappel (L'Association des éducatrices et éducateurs franco-manitobains): Bonsoir.

Je m'appelle Désirée Pappel, et j'enseigne depuis 2008 dans la Division scolaire franco-manitobaine. Je suis également la présidente de l'Association des éducatrices et éducateurs franco-manitobains.

Je vous adresse la parole parce que je me soucie de la sécurité de mes élèves, et je pense que la loi

modifiant le Code pour les droits de la personne pour inclure la protection de l'expression de genre est une étape importante pour la sécurité de tous les élèves.

Dans un monde où les savoirs et le savoir-faire sont tissés de mésinformation et de désinformation, où la diversité de valeurs et de croyances embrouille parfois ce qui est dans le meilleur intérêt de nos élèves les plus à risque, où le malaise de l'un prend parfois le dessus sur ce qui est une question de santé, de sécurité ou de survie pour un autre, il est nécessaire de rendre explicites, précises et visibles des lois en soutien à toute personne de la diversité de genre pour : (1) renforcer les savoirs et savoir-faire de nos communautés face aux enjeux 2ELGBTQIA+ et de la diversité de genre; (2) valider et soutenir les bonnes pratiques que certains membres des communautés actualisent déjà et rehausser celles de ceux qui cherchent à améliorer les leurs; (3) éliminer l'incertitude et les inquiétudes dans les actions en soutien à la diversité de genre, ainsi que dans les réactions face aux propos haineux, nous permettant d'avancer de façon solidaire dans toutes nos communautés.

Ce changement à la loi s'aligne avec le rapport de recherche, Des nôtres : Expériences vécues en milieu minoritaire, familial et communautaire par les jeunes 2ELGBTQ vivant en situation linguistique minoritaire dans la province du Manitoba, publié au printemps 2024 par le Collectif LGBTQ, l'Université de Saint-Boniface en collaboration avec le Conseil jeunesse provincial.

Ce rapport présente des données probantes récentes d'expériences vécues par notre jeunesse du Manitoba d'expression française et propose de créer des politiques reliées à l'inclusion de la diversité de genre. Selon ce même rapport, 39,2 pour cent des répondants ont été victimes de discrimination fondée sur leur identité de genre en milieu scolaire.

Une loi renouvelée avec des précisions à l'égard de l'expression du genre contribuerait à améliorer ces statistiques et favoriserait l'ouverture et l'empathie aux autres. De plus, face à l'adversité et l'animosité croissantes ciblées vers ce groupe dans le monde actuel, nous en sortons plus forts si nous avançons d'un front commun.

L'AÉFM donc vers—vient donc, pardon, vers vous pour son appui à la loi renouvelée qui protège et soutient un de nos groupes les plus vulnérables. Le danger d'attendre pour faire un tel changement donne le message qu'au Manitoba, c'est discrétionnaire, ou ce n'est pas une préoccupation de respecter l'expression de genre de tous. Ceci peut être nuisible au bien-être

et à la sécurité des membres de cette communauté, y inclut les élèves de nos écoles.

Nous savons que les membres de l'AEFM se préoccupent beaucoup de leurs élèves et veulent faire la bonne chose. Ils ont cependant besoin de votre leadership, d'un appui formel du système pour se sentir confiants dans leurs initiatives en soutien aux élèves de la diversité de genre.

Concrétiser la loi pour protéger l'expression du genre affirme le soutien du gouvernement sans équivoque aux membres de la communauté de la diversité de genre.

Avançons d'un front commun vers un Manitoba plus inclusif pour tous.

Translation

Good evening.

My name is Désirée Pappel, and I have been teaching in the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine since 2008. I am also the president of the Association des éducatrices et éducateurs franco-manitobains.

The reason I am standing before you this evening is because I care about the safety of my students, and I believe that amending The Human Rights Code to include the protection of gender expression is an important step in ensuring the safety of all students.

In a world where knowledge and know-how are interwoven with misinformation and disinformation, where diversity of values and beliefs sometimes confuses what is in the best interest of our most at-risk students, where one person's discomfort sometimes takes precedence over what is a matter of health, safety or survival for another, it is necessary to make explicit, precise and visible laws in support of all gender-diverse people in order to: (1) strengthen the knowledge and know-how of our communities with regard to 2SLGBTQIA+ and gender diversity issues; (2) validate and support the good practices that some community members are already implementing, and enhance those of those who are seeking to improve theirs; (3) eliminate uncertainty and concern about actions supporting gender diversity, as well as in reactions to hate speech, so that we can move forward in solidarity in all our communities.

This amendment is in line with the research report, Des nôtres: Expériences vécues en milieu minoritaire, familial et communautaire par les jeunes 2ELGBTQ vivant en situation linguistique minoritaire dans la province du Manitoba published in the spring of 2024 by the Collectif LGBTQ, in collaboration with the

University of St. Boniface and the Conseil jeunesse provincial.

This report presents recent evidence of the experiences of French-speaking youth in Manitoba and proposes the establishment of policies related to the inclusion of gender diversity. According to the same report, 39.2 per cent of respondents have experienced discrimination in schools based on their gender identity.

Renewed legislation with more specific provisions on gender expression would help to improve these statistics and encourage openness and empathy towards others. Furthermore, in the face of the growing adversity and animosity targeted at this group in today's world, we will emerge stronger if we advance with a united front.

The AEFM is therefore coming to you to offer its support for a renewed legislation that protects and supports one of our most vulnerable groups. The danger of waiting to make such a change sends the message that in Manitoba, respecting gender expression is discretionary, or not a concern. This can be detrimental to the well-being and safety of the members of this community, including the students in our schools.

We know that AEFM members care deeply about their students and want to do the right thing. However, they need your leadership and formal support from the system to feel confident in their initiatives to support gender-diverse students.

Enacting legislation to protect gender expression affirms the government's unequivocal support for members of the gender-diverse community.

Let's move forward together towards a more inclusive Manitoba for all.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you, Mme Pappel, for your presentation this evening.

I appreciate your perspective as a teacher, someone who, as you said, represents these good practices, which are already happening, but is so concerned with protecting the most vulnerable. And in this case, of course, it's our children. So I just want to thank you for your presentation and thank you for representing your views here this evening.

The Chairperson: Are there any other questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Thank you to our presenter for attending tonight and bringing your views forward. Much appreciated.

The Chairperson: Would you like to respond, Mrs. Pappel? Thank you for your time.

That concludes the list of presenters requesting translation services.

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

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

We will proceed with the remaining presenters on the list.

Bill 9—The Liquor, Gaming and Cannabis Control Amendment Act (2)

The Chairperson: I will now call on Keith Horn, on Bill 9. Please proceed with your presentation.

Keith Horn (Retail Cannabis Council of Manitoba): Good afternoon, Chairperson, and members of the committee. My name is Keith Horn. I'm speaking today on behalf of the Retail Cannabis Council of Manitoba.

I am also Manitoban, a cannabis retailer and a parent who, like many of you, believe that cannabis should only be accessible to adults over 19 years of age.

The RCCMB appreciates the opportunity to appear before you today, and want to begin by expressing our strong support for this bill. This legislation takes an important step toward aligning cannabis policy with what we all want, to keep cannabis from the hands of the youth while supporting safe, responsible access for adults.

We commend the government for being responsible to our constant changing industry and for recognizing the importance of where and how cannabis is sold. This is especially true in communities with existing restricted-access cannabis retail licences.

In communities over 5,000 people where licensed cannabis stores already operate, limiting controlled access licences helps to ensure that cannabis is sold in settings that are purpose-built for security, education and age verification. As retailers, we work hard to uphold these standards. Our stores are designed with controlled entry, trained staff and clear protocols that put safety and compliance at the forefront of every transaction.

While we support the bill, we want to highlight a meaningful gap that the government may want to take another look at. We acknowledge that this proposed bill is cleaning up regulation that was implemented by the previous government. As this industry continues to evolve, we want to get this right this time, so to adequately address controlled access throughout the entire province.

* (18:20)

The RCCMB represents several independent retailers based in small rural communities with populations that are 5,000 people, and we would like to put forward feedback on their behalf.

The proposed legislation will allow controlled access licences in communities with—communities with populations under 5,000 where restricted access licences already provide access, like in Beausejour. Beausejour has a population of approximately 3,300 people, and this small community is being served well by two restricted access cannabis stores already.

However, under the current framework, a gas station or convenience store in the same town can still be eligible for controlled access licence. We believe this may intentionally leave these rural communities subject to the same risk this legislation proposes to close, and while we support providing access to legal cannabis products in rural and northern communities, most communities are very well served by restricted access licences.

To better reflect the goal of protecting young people, we suggest the legislation consider not only population size but also whether restricted access licences already exist in a community regardless of its size. This small amendment would ensure that cannabis continues to be sold in settings that fully support education, compliance and youth protection in both urban and rural Manitoba. It would also ensure access to legal, Health Canada-tested cannabis products through controlled access in communities where a restricted access model may not be viable.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank the committee for being responsive to small businesses in this emerging industry. As a small-business owner, I can tell you this legislation represents an important commitment to the health and safety of our communities as well as an understanding of the challenges small businesses face in a rapidly evolving market. Your leadership helps ensure that independent retailers can thrive while still prioritizing the well-being of our communities.

In closing, we wish to thank you again for your leadership and thoughtful approach to this issue. We believe this bill is a strong step forward, and with these refinements it can serve as a model for balanced community-focused cannabis policy. We're grateful to be part of this conversation that shapes our industry and look forward to working alongside you to ensure the cannabis industry in Manitoba is safe, responsible and viable for businesses big and small.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Horn, thank you very much for your presentation. I appreciate the perspective of the industry and appreciate that you're coming to this from a perspective of complying and ensuring that this—the safety, especially of young people, is paramount.

I also appreciate your comments around the nuance in different communities. I think part of that challenge is tried to be—capture in the bill. I do think that we'd be happy to chat with you further and just understand better some of the specific concerns you have, and if there's a way that we can work together, we're happy to do that.

Thank you for presenting here this evening.

Mr. Trevor King (Lakeside): Thank you, Mr. Horn, for your comments. I appreciate your comments for support of the bill, and I would hope, yes, the minister would work with you on some of those other concerns with the rural-urban impact.

I'm just curious. In your view, does the exclusion of controlled-access licences in urban areas appear to be based on evidence of greater public safety risk, or does it seem more like an arbitrary distinction?
[interjection]

The Chairperson: I'm sorry, Mr. Horn, I have to recognize you first before we can—Mr. Horn.

K. Horn: Oh, I'm sorry. You see the stores, convenience stores, opening up that sell cannabis in many different areas. It was designed, I believe, for northern communities where it wasn't as viable to open up a huge store. But they've been loopholed that they could open up here in Winnipeg and other bigger communities.

So now you have convenience stores where children are allowed. While they're buying a Slurpee,

someone can be selling the cannabis. Now, I don't think that was what the intention of this bill was.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. King: Mr. Horn, I'm just curious what your thoughts are if some of the established cannabis businesses were to start to fade away and no longer exist and we're down to a few of them, with this licensing it wouldn't allow other small businesses to open up; it would be more of a monopoly, I would say.

So what are your thoughts on that: if smaller retailers, smaller businesses weren't able to open up shop?

K. Horn: Well, unfortunately, there are some established businesses right now that are failing and are closing up. But right now, I think in the queue, there is 25 new stores to be opened. There is 239, I believe, open right now. And there was more opening all the time than are closing.

So I think right now there is a quite sufficient amount of cannabis stores being opened. And I guess if that ever was to happen where it's becoming a monopoly, I guess that at that time the government would look at changing things.

But for the future and the way it is now, there is plenty of stores being opened all the time.

The Chairperson: Any further questions? Okay.

Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Sharon Clark from Big Buds Cannabis Sales. Please proceed with your presentation.

Sharon Clark (Big Buds Cannabis Sales): Good afternoon, Chairperson and esteemed committee members. My name is Sharon Clark, and I'm here representing Big Buds Cannabis Sales.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and wish to express our support for this bill and our appreciation for the steps the government have taken thus far.

As a Manitoban, a parent and a grandparent, I share your belief that cannabis should be accessible only to adults aged 19 and over. I have spoken with my friends, families and neighbours regarding the sale of cannabis in front of minors, and the response was the same from everyone: We do not want our children or grandchildren to learn about cannabis by witnessing a sales transaction where they are—when they are a minor. Cannabis use is a conversation that parents will have with the child when they reach an appropriate age.

Transcona, the community I live in, has a convenience store with a controlled access licence. And

during a visit with my grandson, there were three other youth in the store that day, as well. And they were all excitedly picking out their candy; you know, they were in there for the afternoon, just—don't know what they were doing, but they were happy buying stuff. And while they were standing in line with their chips and their Twizzlers, they witnessed a conversation between the clerk and the cannabis customer.

This conversation covered the difference between indica, sativa and hybrid flower, the advantages and disadvantages to each, how truck drivers smoke sativa to stay awake after long days on the road—because this gentleman happened to be a truck driver, and he was talking about he and his friends and how they use sativa—and the differences between numerous brands. This conversation went on for about 15 minutes, which is definitely a normal dialogue when customers come into our age-restricted stores where youth aren't permitted; we have conversations like that all the time, and they—you know 15, 20 minutes; not a big deal.

But these three youth, between the ages of eight and 12, got a real cannabis education that day. And as—also, there was a couple of products I didn't even know about, and I manage a cannabis store. And I was like: Oh, I'm going to order that in and order that in. So I learned some things, too.

So this legislation amendment is a significant step toward aligning cannabis policy with our industry's collective goal, and that is to protect youth while ensuring safe and responsible access for adults. We commend the government for acknowledging the importance of regulating the sale of cannabis, particularly in communities with existing age-restricted cannabis stores.

In oversaturated urban communities with more than 5,000 residents, where licensed cannabis stores are readily established, limiting controlled access licences makes perfect sense. While we wholeheartedly support the bill, I wish to highlight a critical gap that warrants further examination.

I'm in regular communication with independent retailers serving small communities of under 5,000 people. The planned legislation currently allows for controlled access licences to open in communities of under 5,000 people where age-restricted stores are already successfully serving them. We believe this could unintentionally undermine the original intent behind controlled access licence policy, which was to service underserved communities with no access to legal cannabis within a 30-mile drive—or, a 30-minute drive. Pardon me.

To more accurately align with the original intent of the licensing policy of protecting youth and vulnerable populations, we recommend that the legislation take into account more than population size and determine whether or not the community is already successfully being served by cannabis stores and, if so, uphold the goal of protecting youth and vulnerable populations by prohibiting the opening of additional cannabis stores in these communities.

* (18:30)

This framework helps to protect vulnerable populations, particularly youth and recovering addicts by ensuring that cannabis is not sold in venues where these transactions are witnessed by those that this law was originally—holy heck, what happened—that by ensuring that cannabis is not sold in venues where these transactions are witnessed by those this law was currently designed to protect.

By ensuring that cannabis is primarily sold in age-restricted licensed establishments, the province can maintain the integrity of its cannabis retail system and avoid the potential for unsafe or inappropriate sales environments where youth or recovering addicts are unwillingly exposed to the sale of cannabis.

We value your leadership and your thoughtful consideration on this issue. Your governance is crucial to ensuring that the cannabis industry in Manitoba thrives while still prioritizing the well-being of our communities. We believe this bill represents considerable progress, and with these adjustments, it can serve as a model for thoughtfully crafted community-centred approach to cannabis policy in Canada.

We appreciate being a part of this dialogue that influences our industry and look forward to collaborating with you in the future to ensure the cannabis industry in Manitoba remains safe, responsible and viable for businesses of all sizes.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you very much, Ms. Clark. I appreciate your perspective, especially as a grandmother with kids who are, you know, roughly the same age as my children, so this kind of, really, I think, focuses, for me, on what we're trying to accomplish here.

Really, this is about, you know, a balanced approach. I think you've understood the intent of the bill with

regards to underserved markets, but we take your comments about other markets where the number, or the threshold maybe isn't the issue.

I appreciate your perspective and your presentation, and happy to continue the dialogue with you.

The Chairperson: Ms. Clark, would you like to respond?

S. Clark: No, thank you.

Mr. King: And thank you, Mrs. Clark, for taking the time out to come to committee and share your thoughts and your views on this bill and I can—and I do appreciate hearing your views and I certainly would hope that the minister will work with you on some of your concerns, as well.

So, again, thank you so much for taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

The Chairperson: Would you like to respond?

S. Clark: Just thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Any further questions?

Seeing none, I will now call on Shannon Sala from the Essential Cannabis Company Ltd. Okay, I'm going to call one more time for Shannon Sala from the Essential Cannabis Company Ltd. *[interjection]* Zoom; okay. Thank you.

All right. Since we do not have Shannon Sala on Zoom, she will be dropped to the bottom of the list and we will go back to her later.

Bill 32—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Measures to Address Unlawful Activities)

The Chairperson: Okay, now we're moving to Bill 32.

I will now call on David Grant, private citizen. Mr. David Grant, private citizen. All right, since he's not here, his name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on Mr. Sel—*[interjection]*—oh, okay; I will once again ask for David Grant to come present.

Floor Comment: Hello. My name is David Grant. I seemed to luck out—

The Chairperson: Mr. Grant, I need to acknowledge you first. I need to acknowledge you first, before you begin speaking. Thank you.

Okay. Go ahead, Mr. Grant, with your presentation.

David Grant (Private Citizen): The luck of the draw has me speaking down there and then running here to speak. And luckily I made it, and thank you.

We're dealing with the—Bill 32. Thank you.

When I read this initially, I was thinking, this is a good thing and—so I support it entirely. My concern was that if a neighbour wants to do something vindictive, they would report something and the authorities would consider that a eviction-worthy offence, when there was nothing going on. And I was talking to Mr. Burrows on the way—in the line, and we're pretty sure that this is only going to be applied to the most extreme cases.

So I'm unreservedly in favour of it. And thank you.

And as I say, I think there's always going to be somebody pretending to snitch just to get mad at the person—their neighbour. But, hopefully, that won't be happening, and I support you in your efforts, and the minister.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you very much, Mr. Grant. Great to see you again and nice to see you participating in our democratic process once again. And I also appreciate—always appreciate your community perspective or your perspective of, sort of, the average person in a neighbourhood. And I take your concerns very seriously.

Just to let you know, you know, these investigations are undertaken by our PSIU, our investigators—the investigative unit in the province—and these are some really top-notch folks. I take your concerns, but I know that they are very judicious in how they use their authorities. And, of course, everything is done through the act, and we're make sure that everything is done by the books.

But I appreciate your perspective, and thanks for being here this evening.

The Chairperson: Mr. Grant, would you like to reply?

D. Grant: Yes, and while I was initially concerned that someone would make up a case and call it in, the system is checking out these places. And, as Mr. Burrows said, when you've got 50 people coming

through in an afternoon, that's not a normal family situation.

So, thank you, again.

The Chairperson: Any further questions?

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): Thank you, Mr. Grant, and I've had the pleasure of hearing you talk at many committees. And I just also want to reassure you from a law enforcement perspective that oftentimes people make frivolous complaints or 'vaxitious'-vexatious complaints because of whatever reasons, for a number of reasons.

But I will echo what the minister said, is that the people in the investigation unit from the Province are trained professionals; they have great skills and dedication, and they would ensure that this wasn't done vexatiously.

Thank you.

D. Grant: Initially, when I read the bill, I thought it was going to be: somebody calls in a complaint that's like a bylaw complaint and then the City acts on it. But in this case, the information—the data—will be provided by law enforcement. So the grumpy neighbour is not involved in the matter.

So thank you for explaining that.

The Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Grant.

Any further questions? Okay.

Thank you, again, for your presentation.

I will now call on Mr. Sel Burrows from Point Powerline. Please proceed with your presentation.

Sel Burrows (Point Powerline): Hello, everyone. And I do want to say a special hello to members of the opposition who were in government, and I was able to work well with them.

And I do want to say, starting off, that while I support this bill, it's much too weak.

We have 600 people dying in Manitoba every year from overdoses. I'm a strong supporter of the safe consumption sites and harm reduction, but other systems have to do their part as well.

And I start off my notes by saying the Residential Tenancies Branch is the drug dealer's best friend. And I'm going to come back to my evidence on that in a moment.

* (18:40)

But when I started being involved, when I moved back to Point Douglas some 20 years ago, we identified 32 drug dealers. And Gord Mackintosh, when he was minister of Justice, introduced The Safer Community and Neighbourhoods Act, and we were the first community to really endorse it. And we based our work on Jane Jacobs' concept of eyes on the street.

And I want to make special mention to a few individuals: Sandy and Terry Dzedzora. Sandy is an inner city Métis elder who is now head of the North Point Douglas Seniors Association. Terry is from Peguis and was a teacher. JP—John Paul—the raging bull of Austin Street, who took on the drug dealers nose to nose. Very, very brave man.

And the neighbours—what happened is we got to the point where the neighbours just wouldn't accept having drug dealers, other than what you'll know about from Project Matriarch, because she owned all the houses. And over time, with the support of a wonderful chief of police, Keith McCaskill, and really, really effective safer communities act—Dave Cameron was running it in the day—and we'd get an eviction within a month.

And people who haven't lived in the inner city may not understand that a group of people, many who feel powerless, when it takes months and months when they put a concern in and nothing happens, they lose faith. And right now, I have to tell you, in the inner city, many, many people have lost faith in whether government will serve them or not.

And so I'm going to ask you to take a look not just at the act, but the implementation of the act. This is The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. It was first passed in 2002. It's been changed a few times, but, you know, I read through it; it hasn't much changed. But it's not used anymore.

Now, all eviction of drug dealers falls under the Residential Tenancies Branch. And I just want to tell you, I just came from a hearing today where a leading Indigenous woman, a volunteer in our community, was just evicted after she was beaten badly by her partner in a residential place, and the landlord has provided another home for the man who beat her. And this woman is now going to have to find another place to live after Residential Tenancies Branch, based on very narrow interpretations of the act. That has nothing to do with the drug dealers, but I use that as an example because it happened to me today and I'm very concerned for her.

One of the things we found is that the term—I'll use the term the bad guys, the people dealing—they learn very quickly what they can get away with and what they can't. And when civil society, which includes government, is firm—and we're not talking about jail time in this case, because we're looking at things that can happen fast, have implications very quickly—then the people who do the negative stuff learn very quickly what they can get away with and they stop doing it.

Quite literally, we went from 32 very public drug dealers—not counting Project Matriarch—down to two. But something happened along the way, and we're not sure whether it was at the tail end of the previous NDP government or the beginning of the Conservative government, but the SCAN, the safer communities act staff, PSIU staff—ceased to have the right to slap that five-day eviction notice on—after they had videotaped, by the way, and got evidence.

We ran into a situation—this would be about two years ago—where one of the people on the street had a video camera, and he tracked 70 to 100 customers a day to a drug dealer two doors from an elementary school. It took us seven months to get them evicted—seven months.

Meanwhile, that camera picked up a stolen car ring, and somebody took their life in their hand to go out and get the VIN number so we could go out and get proof. One day later, four police cars and two big tow trucks showed up, seized four cars and arrested two people. The drug dealing continued for another three months.

What I'm asking of you is not only to take a look; one of the weaknesses of this is that the SCAN staff have to turn their evidence over to a landlord. Many of our small inner-city landlords are scared. They're intimidated by the dealers, and they won't come forward.

We need to re-empower the SCAN staff when they get the evidence; when they've done the video-taping that there's 25 or more customers a day, that they will have the power to go to the Court of King's Bench under an emergency power which the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe) could get them to turn it around in one day, and they can slap that five-day eviction order, bang.

And I'll let you know that when a neighbour phones me and says hey, there's a dealer down the street, da, da, da, da, da, and by the way, you know, my 12-year-old kid came back and they offered him a freebie. It's important for you to understand that as

600 drug users die, those dealers need to recruit new customers. This is a very dark retail business.

And so one piece of the solution, one small piece of the solution is then to empower the people who live in the inner city to protect their streets. And we can't use the police all the time.

By the way, many of you may know that at one point I was assistant director of Adult Corrections, so I know a little bit about that side. Keith McCaskill proudly gave me a Winnipeg Police Service hat, and Nahanni and I sat on a police board at one time, trying to deal with some of these issues.

But it's not enough just to change a few words in the act. You must ensure that this is enforced. And I will promise you that six months from now, if we haven't seen any change, I'll be back, and it probably won't be a hearing like this. The minister and the critic for the Conservatives will hear from me. And we need to stop the free flow of drugs in the inner city.

I just want to mention one other thing. I sent a text to James Teitsma, who was the minister responsible for Residential Tenancies Branch under the previous government. James and I had each other's phone numbers on speed-dial as he tried to get a speedier eviction through the Residential Tenancies Branch. And he was unable to get his bureaucracy to move faster. And you guys can talk to James about that problem.

So this is not an easy thing. If the Residential Tenancies Branch refuses the evidence of the PSIU, you will know you have a problem, and you'll have a problem with me. I'm sorry; I'm here as a friend. I want you to succeed. But if the community cannot depend on the public safety investigative branch, the safer communities act, to remove the drug dealers from their streets very quickly, they will lose faith and we will be half a step back, and the other work that is being done by other branches will have more difficulty.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Burrows, Sel, we do consider you a friend, and as you know, our door is always open. I know you have plenty of conversations with our folks trying to get this right.

As you said, an act, SCAN, developed by the NDP but continued to be implemented by governments of all stripes, and certainly we're looking at

strengthening it. What I like about your approach is it's always enabling the community to take control and to be—you know, have influence in their own destiny.

And if—you know that this is being now implemented in other places. My colleague, the member from Notre Dame, I think is taking your model and transplanting it.

What I will just say is, is that, you know, this—I think there's a lot about education that needs to take place. I think you're right about that. We've had our folks out in different communities spreading the word and getting some of this information out. Let's continue to dialogue; I want to make sure that we get this right. But I always appreciate your perspective, and you've done so much for this city. So we appreciate you taking the time here tonight.

And go, Jets, go.

* (18:50)

S. Burrows: The—since you asked me a question, you know, or comment, on my thing, I do want to mention Project Matriarch.

I was very proud of some citizens who lived on—first on Lorne street, and I was very proud of a award the CBC gave me when the owner—the principal person of Project Matriarch—as we were organizing the eviction of the dealers living at 110, 112 Lorne street, which used to be part of that—her empire.

She drove up and started swearing at me, and CBC stuck a camera in her face and taped her. And CBC presented me with a disk with Sandra Guiboche saying, F off, Sel Burrows, 32 times in three minutes. So to me, that was one of the greatest rewards.

The reason that we got them off Lorne street first was there were four really strong community members who provided strong evidence to result in the eviction. And in one case—and one of our rules was if there was guns involved, we would work with the police. Otherwise, we wanted to have a non-criminal justice system solution.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Any further—Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: Well, thank you very much for your presentation, and certainly know that you're very supportive of your community and the city of Winnipeg—provincially as well. So I thank you for that.

Wondering if you can expand a little bit on the timelines that you saw in some of the cases and what

you would suggest to help those timelines. Is it more staffing? Is it better communication?

S. Burrows: You know, when Dave Cameron was running SCAN—it's going a ways back—and then the next two guys; I can't remember their names. It's—it hummed. We were getting one-, two-month eviction.

Quite honestly, in Point Douglas, we got very specialized. And when it got to two months, we started working strictly with the landlord. And by this time, the community knew that if you set up drug dealing, you were going to get evicted fairly quickly.

So our first rule was we phone the owner of the property. And one of my favourite stories is that one of the owners was the vice-president of a Manitoba 500 company—a company with over 500 employees. And I phoned him up; I tracked his number down and talked to him about it. And he said: Well, look; I just bought that house as an investment. The project managers manage it. What should I do?

And I said: Well, you go and tell him that they're evicted or if they—or they've got three days to stop dealing. Period.

Anyway, the wonderful Indigenous woman leader in our community who had called me phoned me about five days later and said: Hey, Sel, some guy in a suit showed up across the street, you know. And the customers were coming and he was slamming the door on them. And he just shut down, just like that.

So one of the things I'm suggesting to people is we need to find the most efficient way to counter the efficiency of the negative business of drug sales. And, by the way, I've spoken to three rural mayors about things we learned, and all three have lobbied the government to hire more police. They've shown no interest whatsoever in the power of the community, utilizing eyes—the concept of eyes in the street. And if you're talking to any of those mayors, let them know I'm open—my phone number's on a thousand fridge magnets in Point Douglas—which, by the way, I've never had a crank call. So you're welcome to give my phone number to any mayor who wants to look at other things.

And I want to also recommend—

The Chairperson: The time for questions has expired, Mr. Burrows.

Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: Just wondering if we could ask for leave of the committee to allow Mr. Burrows to finish his thought.

The Chairperson: Do we have leave for Mr. Burrows to finish his thought? *[Agreed]*

S. Burrows: Rural mayors, and particularly rural mayors that have Indigenous communities close by—James has a wonderful, wonderful non-criminal justice style working with people who are dealing and suchlike, and he's set up a company now. When they evacuated people from the North, the Red Cross hired his company. The RCMP in Pukatawagan wrote the band council, saying since James Favel's group had been there, calls for service to the RCMP had been reduced by 50 per cent. So that was things being dealt with outside the criminal justice system.

Sorry. I do go on. I know.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Any further questions? Okay.

The time for questions has expired anyways.

Bill 43—The Human Rights Code Amendment Act *(Continued)*

The Chairperson: We are now going to move on to Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, and as previously agreed, we will begin in person out-of-town presentations.

I will now call on Kevin Rebeck from Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Kevin Rebeck?

All right. Mr. Rebeck is not here at the moment, so we will move to Mr. Derek deVries from Park City Gospel Church. Please proceed with your presentation.

Derek deVries (Park City Gospel Church): Well, thank you, honourable Minister, committee. And we have just finished celebrating Holy Week, or Easter, in the Christian tradition, and one of the things that the Christian church says and has said for centuries at Easter time is, He has risen; and then the response is that He has risen, indeed.

Well, I believe that that's not just a religious claim; that's a historical fact. And there are implications for the fact that Christ has risen. Christ claimed that—claimed, before He died, that his death would be an atonement for the sins of all people. Him being raised from the dead vindicated that claim, that He was not dying simply for His sins, for He had none. He was dying for those who were his enemies.

The other implication is that Jesus reigns. It also means that Jesus knows what sin is. It vindicated His claim that he made to Pilate that He was truth. But, most importantly for this committee, it demonstrated that He knows what compassion is. Christians are to follow Him, knowing that He tells us what is compassionate, what is true.

This law forbids Christians from following Christ's example. It requires speech He would not permit. It requires silence when He would call us to speak. It requires actions which Christ would not call compassionate.

In the Scriptures, which are the historical record of Christ's life, Christ declared that compassion involves disagreeing with someone. We see this in Christ's example in the Scripture. He confronted those who believed that their religious deeds would gain them heaven. He confronted those who believed their moral deeds would gain them heaven. He confronted the religious leaders who thought that they would have a place in heaven above them—above people like prostitutes and tax collectors.

Christ confronted those who are in sin. He did it compassionately. He disagreed with them. Christ commands us in Scripture that compassion involves disagreeing with someone. I think you will agree with me that you see this in the real world as well.

When a young person tells you that she should die, that her life is not worth living or valuable, compassion requires that you disagree with her. When a young man tells you, one whom you love, tells you that he is unloved, compassion requires you to disagree with that young man. When a girl tells you that her only worth is in sexual attention from men, compassion requires that you disagree with her.

When a boy tells you that he believes that self-harm, cutting or burning himself is how he should address his inner turmoil, compassion requires that you disagree with him. When a middle school girl tells you that what would give her the most freedom would be to drop out of school and live on the streets, compassion requires that you disagree with her.

The Scriptures and the Christian tradition declares that God has two books: He has Scripture; He also has Creation, the world in which we live. And in every case those two things agree. The fruition, the telos of gender affirmation is gender-affirming surgery. Studies done by the National Institute for Health under the Biden administration indicate that the rate of suicide

for those who undergo what is called gender-affirmation surgery is 12.2 times higher than those who do not.

* (19:00)

While other studies have suggested that affirmative medical intervention reduces risk, i.e., that the studies—the risk, though high, is lower than what would otherwise be the case, subsequent studies reviewing this work, even by those who were doing the initial study, show that there is actually no evidence to support this and that the methodology on which those studies stood was questionable, even in the estimation of the authors.

Regardless of where one lands in analyzing this data, it is entirely clear that those who oppose the affirmation-as-treatment for gender dysphoria are not without support, and they are not, on their face, wrong. It stands to reason that a person could come to this conclusion without hate and be conscience-bound to resist gender affirmation in response to gender dysphoria.

Such citizens should be able to show compassion without threat of the government. The government's efforts impose a harsh penalty on a person whose conscience is so bound, who disagrees with the government, not on whether such a person is owed compassion and respect, but what compassion looks like in such cases.

Biblical Christianity has, for centuries, been a cure for culturally blinded problems, and it would not be rightly claimed that those who are Christians, or call themselves Christians, have committed no injustices or even have never advocated for such injustices. That is not the case, sadly.

However, it is also true that the same could be said of other demographic groups, including atheists and Hindus and Muslims. Historically, these problems were not eliminated in the public eye by those who rejected the ultimate authority of Christ and His word, but, in fact, were eliminated by those who embraced the ultimate authority of Christ and His word.

A few examples from history bear repeating. William Wilberforce eliminated race-based, transatlantic slave trade. He argued, successfully, that such a practice failed to submit to Christ and His word.

Well, it should not be claimed that Christians alone resisted Nazism in Germany, nor that all those who identified as Christians resisted Nazism. Those Christians who did resist it were those who held a high view of the authority of Christ in scripture. Dietrich Bonhoeffer was such an example. It should also be

noted, in a similar vein, that Martin Luther King Jr. opposed forced segregation on biblical grounds, on the authority of Christ, the risen Christ.

While I grant that you may not agree that we are in a similar situation today with this matter, what you are doing is to preclude, to silence and penalize, a voice which has historically been used to lift people out of oppression and correct social suffering and injustice. This is, though—because, though Christians are often wrong—I am often wrong—the principal foundation of Christianity is that Christ is Lord and that His word is the reforming principle. If we reject the thought that Christ is Lord or even penalize it in this case, we have no other conclusion to come to than that the majority is Lord. And if there is no God, the powerful will see a job opening and not fear a higher authority to which they will have to give an account.

St. Peter, an apostle of the Lord Jesus who was crucified upside down for the cause of Christ, said the following in a letter written shortly before he was martyred: For this is the will of God, that by doing good, you should put to silence the ignorant and foolish—ignorance of foolish people. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honour everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

He says that we are to live as free people, which freedom is undergirded by the fear of the Lord. He says honour everyone, and by this he means as Christ would call you to, what he would say is honour. He says to love the brotherhood. He also says fear God—not any god, but the one who actually created the world and the one who has compassion so great that He died for sinners and arose from the dead. Peter also tells Christians to honour the emperor and—or, in this case, the provincial government, because we do not have an emperor.

Committee members, to threaten your citizens into doing what they believe is not compassionate is not a good strategy for reducing pain and sorrow. You are, perhaps unintentionally, training people not to do what is right by their consciences, but to do what they know would be uncompassionate and harmful. I urge that you do not threaten your citizens who fear Christ and who are called by Him to honour you. Even when no one is looking, they do so out of love and fear of the Lord.

Committee members, you, too, will face Christ one day. You will stand before Him to account for

your actions, including this one, which is against both His—both of His words, His world and His scriptures. For the good of Manitobans in general, I ask that you reconsider. For the good of Manitobians [*phonetic*] who—Manitobans who suffer from gender dysphoria and for the good of Manitobans who love those people and who are conscience-bound by Christ to show Christian compassion to them.

I urge you not to pass this bill and, further, to repeal similar legislation. Christ is not so unfair as though He would not notice and reward you for doing so. How compassionate was Christ? Why do Christians honour and love and obey His instructions? For compassion. And the reason is that He took our punishment. Such was His compassion. No one in this room, including myself, has been crucified and damned for anyone's sin against God. So Christ alone—

The Chairperson: The presenter's time has expired.

Do members of the committee have any questions for the presenter?

Hon. Matt Wiebe (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you, Mr. deVries, for your presentation here today.

I just wanted to ensure that yourself and members of the audience are clear. The ability or the right to disagree with somebody is not at issue here. That's certainly a right, as you expressed here today, to share your thoughts freely.

What I think this bill is about—what this bill is about—is about respect and protection against discrimination. That is what the heart of this bill is.

And so we appreciate you being here, sharing your thoughts freely. Many members of the committee might disagree with you, but you certainly were able to present them, and we really want to make sure that we're protecting the rights of all people, especially the most vulnerable in our society, with this bill.

Thank you very much.

D. deVries: Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield-Ritchot): Well, thank you very much, Pastor deVries, for your presentation, and it's amazing how quickly 10 minutes goes by.

And I do have a question for you and that is, are you concerned with what it might take to get a person investigated by the Human Rights Commission under this legislation?

D. deVries: I would be, yes.

The Chairperson: Any further questions?

Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Mrs. Christine Ronceray [*phonetic*], private citizen.

Christine Ronceray (Private Citizen): Yes. Ladies and gentlemen, members of the committee, fellow Manitobans, thank you for the opportunity to speak on an issue that strikes at the very heart of our democracy, the protection of our most fundamental freedoms: the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion.

Today, I rise not to attack anyone but to express serious concerns about Bill 43, a bill that while claiming to protect may, in fact, do the opposite.

Yes, we must treat all people with dignity. Yes, we must stand against real discrimination. But Bill 43 does not do that. It crosses the line between protection and enforcement, between respect and coercion, between kindness and control. Under this bill, people could face legal consequences not for being cruel or harassing, but simply for refusing to use simple, certain pronouns or for speaking in line with their conscience or their faith or certain biological facts.

Let me be cleared. Compelled speech cannot be mistaken for kindness, and no one in a free society should be forced to say what they do not believe or, worse, be forced to tell a lie. These so-called gender norms being enforced by Bill 43 are not settled facts. They are government-defined ideologies, not backed by universal scientific evidence or philosophical conscience—or consensus, sorry. Yet the bill treats them as unquestionable truths. And if you question these so-called truths, even respectfully, you could be punished.

* (19:10)

This raises an urgent concern, not just for the people of faith, but for all professionals, for educators, for counsellors, and yes, for even health-care providers. Imagine a doctor. A biological female identifies as male and insists she cannot have ovarian cancer. Would a doctor, under this bill, be expected to affirm that, even if it risks a misdiagnosis? Would they be forced to lie just to comply?

This is not compassion. This is dangerous. Health care must be rooted in biology and in reality, not ideology. Doctors, like all professions, need the freedom to speak truthfully, to treat accurately, to care honestly. Lives depend on it.

And what about our courts? In a courtroom, witnesses are sworn to tell the truth, but if someone under

oath refuses to affirm a gender identity they do not believe is true, could that now be considered as discrimination? Let's call it what it is. Excuse me. Let's call it what it is. If the law requires people to say things they believe are false in a court of law, that's not inclusion, that's perjury. Our justice system cannot operate on an ideological compliance. It must stand on truth, even uncomfortable truth, especially there, in a courtroom.

This is the Standing Committee on Justice. Bill 43 puts everyday people in impossible positions; a pastor preaching scripture, a teacher explaining biology, a parent talking to their child. Any of them could be accused of discrimination. Not for hate, but for honesty.

That is not what the society—sorry, that is not the society we want. If we are forcibly unable to stand on truth and integrity, how can we teach truth and integrity to the next generation? We are not asking for the right to insult or demean; we are asking to maintain the right to speak freely, to believe differently, to live with integrity.

True inclusion means we can disagree without being punished. True pluralism means we make room for different world views, even the ones that challenge popular opinion. If we pass this bill as it stands, we will not be protecting human rights; we will be eroding the very freedoms that allow those rights to exist.

Let us find a better path, one that protects against genuine harm but still protects the freedom to speak, the freedom to worship, the freedom to tell the truth. Because when people are punished for speaking truthfully, when professionals are silenced for doing their job, when the law demands affirmation instead of honesty, we lose more than freedom; we lose reality.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Do the members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, honourable Chair, and thank you, Mrs. Ronceray, if I'm saying your name right. Thank you very much for your time.

And, again, just to be clear, this bill in no way polices thought or beliefs or even the ability to, as you're doing here tonight, express your opinions or your feelings or thoughts on an issue.

To be clear for everyone here in the committee, this really is about protecting against discrimination based on gender expression, which, you know, might cause someone to lose their job or to be denied an apartment or denied services at a public health facility, as you mention.

There's a number of issues that we want to protect those folks who are expressing their gender in a way that's different, maybe, than you are or people that you know, but we are offering them that respect and dignity with—through this bill.

So I appreciate you being here, I appreciate the conversation and I appreciate you sharing your thoughts here tonight.

Thank you.

C. Ronceray: Yes, about that. When bills come onto the floor, that's up to interpretation. The laws don't actually get made on this room floor, I—from my understanding of how bills work, but I think that they go to the next layer of government—I don't know much about it; I'm just a farmer.

But when bills get done and when—goes to law, that interpretation kind of changes depending on the situation in the room. So it could be—I don't know, for lack of a better word—a slippery slope, could it not?

Mr. Schuler: Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Ronceray, for your very passionate presentation.

And I do also have a question for you. Are you concerned with what it might take to get a person investigated by the Human Rights Commission? *[interjection]*

The Chairperson: Mrs. Ronceray.

C. Ronceray: Oh, sorry about that.

Yes, absolutely. My—I mean, how far does it go?

I understand that the bill is going after—trying to make sure that we instill respect. And, I mean, what does that respect look like? We see it for gender identity, we see it—where—how far does it go? Like, when we're using language and names, if we choose—from my understanding of the bill, if we choose to use pronouns or we choose not to use that person's pronouns, we can use the person's name, correct? We can use their formal name—that—the name that they give you.

Well, we've seen it on the floor; that doesn't mean, just because you use their first name, that that shows respect in any way, right? I believe Wab Kinew, the other day, used Wally Daudrich's name as Wallay *[phonetic]*, but that doesn't instill respect, does it? It was pretty funny, though, wasn't it? So is it humour when people don't use pronouns or their first name properly or with respect? So where—how far does it go?

So I really appreciate the question. I don't know; I'm not the decision-maker. How far does it go?

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions—oh.

Mr. Wiebe: Oh, no; I was just saying thank you.

The Chairperson: I will now call on Mr. Nick Klassen, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Nick Klassen (Private Citizen): Well, I've tried to—I will try to shorten my talk a little bit for the sake of your time. Thank you for spending your time on a playoff night, and I'd rather be watching the Jets right now, but I feel it's an important thing to speak about.

I am a husband and a father; I have three kids. My oldest is 21; he's got his second-level firefighter. And my daughter just started nurses training, and she's working her way through that. And I've got a son in grade 9 in public school.

And so we've brought our kids up with respect and honour and taught them to love their neighbour and be a contributing member of society. And I want to speak this evening to you to consider that there are very well-educated and compassionate reasons that people may choose not to comply with a person's chosen gender identity.

A study on the National Institutes of Health website assessed mortality rates in transsexual subjects receiving long-term cross-sex hormones. This was a cohort study with a median follow-up of 18 and a half years, so it was quite a lengthy study at a university gender clinic. Methods, mortality data and the standardized mortality rate were compared to the general population in 966 male-to-female transsexuals. Follow-up was at least one year.

* (19:20)

Male-to-female transsexuals received treatment with different high-dose estrogen regimens and cyproterone acetate. The study goes on with the results, and it said this: that in male-to-female—in the male-to-female group, total mortality was 51 per cent higher than in the general population mainly from increased mortality rates due to suicide, acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, cardiovascular disease, drug abuse and unknown cause.

I looked up the statistics on increased mortality from smoking, and that was a 70 per cent increased risk of mortality. And in this case, this study showed that male-to-female transitioning had a 51 per cent increase in mortality. So we do many things to discourage people from smoking and yet gender ideology is promoted, even in our elementary schools.

I want to quote another study from the journal of clinical endocrinology. It was called the Continuation of Gender-affirming Hormones Among Transgender Adolescents and Adults. Of the almost 1,000 people studied, they found that the four-year continuation rate was 70.1 per cent. This study revealed that around 30 per cent—or 300 people in this case—changed their mind. Each of those 300 people was affected deeply by their decisions, many of them with irreparable damage that they will have to live with for the rest of their lives.

Who will tell their story?

I would like to share a story on—written by a mother and their journey, and I've edited it for brevity.

My daughter is now 21 years old and a detransitioner. Here is our story: D. suffered from anxiety from a young age. ADHD, inattentive type, first diagnosed in grade 2, generalized and social anxiety that got progressively worse through elementary school.

By middle school, she lacked the executive functioning skills to manage all her schoolwork. Her anxiety has become more severe and were accompanied by somatic symptoms: chronic stomach aches, nausea, headaches. Depression started to set in.

By grade 8, she wanted to die, wished she had never been born. In late 2016, D. told us out of the blue that she was transgender male. We again sought help. D.'s GP referred her to the CAMH gender clinic and she was placed on their waiting list.

Then I found another doctor who seemed to be well known and respected in his treatment of gender-dysphoric and questioning youth. D. had her first appointment with this doctor in early 2017. At the same time, we contacted Youth Services for family support and guidance. CTYS had a therapist who could see us. We were advised to accept and affirm.

I even remember the first phone call. My D. had just told me she was trans and I was still referring to her by female pronouns, and I was sternly corrected by the intake co-ordinator.

We did what the experts told us. My husband and I didn't care what gender our child was; we just wanted a child that was at peace with themselves and who wanted to live. We switched to using male pronouns and a new name of D.'s choosing.

D. was put on cross-sex hormones in 2017. By early 2018, D. was approved for a government-funded double mastectomy based on a one-sentence letter from

the doctor who had by then met her maybe four to five times, and never for more than 10 minutes at a time.

After the surgery, D.'s depression became more and more severe. By late 2019, D. was able to start talking to me about her significant self-doubts that she had said had been there all along. By early 2020, she had realized she was not trans and that she wanted to detransition.

D. is angry and upset that she had access to hormones and surgery that easily. She is thankful that we were with her and supportive through the entire journey, but wishes she had been able to access more balanced views on the issue and treatment of gender dysphoria, especially rapid onset, and particularly for a child who had a history of mental health challenges.

As the mom of a child who has suffered for years, I feel we have been massively let down by the health-care system in Canada. We are lucky D. is still alive. Many are not so lucky. The mental health-care system is severely inefficient and completely broken.

Further studies have shown that upwards of 80 per cent of children with gender dysphoria will resolve their feelings by adulthood if left alone. I would suggest that the best thing we can do, especially for youngsters, is to leave them alone.

If we continue down this road to make gender expression a human right, we will start to force everyone—judges, law enforcement, first responders, teachers, and parents to go along with an ever increasing list of genders, which I believe will create disorder, depression, disease and even death. Not my words; backed by peer-reviewed science.

Now I realize that it is an unenviable position to try to balance the freedom of conscience and belief with that of protections demanded by the LGBTQ+ lobby. I believe that existing harassment laws already exist for all Manitobans. Many communities of faith consider LGBTQ+ to be an offensive and sinful lifestyle. And yet they have no safe space for an entire month in our province. I believe that the existing laws are adequate to live together respectfully.

The Chairperson: Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: I do.

Mr. Klassen, thank you for your time here this evening.

Again, just to clarify the intent of the bill. What we've been talking about gender identity is already

protected in the Human Rights Code. In fact, in this province we've protected that since 2012.

When we're talking about gender expression, we're talking about bringing us in line with other provinces like Alberta, Saskatchewan, in fact most provinces across the country, and it's actually just getting us back on track to correctly, I guess, identifying or capturing some of the nuance that you're talking about here this evening.

You know, I think, again, respectfully, we can disagree but I appreciate your opportunity—the opportunity to hear you and to have you here at the committee to lend your voice.

Thank you.

N. Klassen: Yes. I—one of the things that I've noticed, especially probably the faith community, or many of those who have a differing opinion on this matter from maybe many of you, is that there is seemingly no protection from harassment to be called things like a bigot, a transphobe, a homophobe, racist, among other things.

And so I'm wondering if there's maybe—that you're swinging too far in one direction on the basis of, you know, compassionate means or ends that you're wanting to follow. But it starts to get too far to the point where I've seen that there seems to be no recourse for the harassment that the LGBTQ, those that are passionately on that side, are free to give those who disagree. And so it seems a little lopsided there.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you very much, Mr. Klassen, for being here this evening and for your presentation. I have a question for you, and that is, are you concerned with what it might take to get a person investigated by the Human Rights Commission?

N. Klassen: Yes, I'd love to have some clarification on that question because, if I understand it correctly, you're asking that it might be made quite a lot easier to have somebody investigated by the Human Rights Commission. Is that right? That I'd be concerned it will just make it very easy for somebody who just really dislikes Christians or someone of a different perspective that they are enabled to cause all kinds of lawfare against somebody with a differing opinion. And I am concerned about that.

* (19:30)

Mr. Wayne Balcaen (Brandon West): More of a comment to the presenter.

I believe the Justice Minister stated that this is bringing us in align with Alberta and Saskatchewan. And I just wanted to note that gender expression is not embedded in the Human Rights Code for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Wiebe: I appreciate the clarification. The member opposite is right. Saskatchewan is the only province outside of Manitoba that doesn't currently have this, so every other province.

And just to be clear, I think this is helpful for the discussion. Religion is specifically protected under The Human Rights Code: religious belief, religious association, religious activity. We protect those who have specific religious beliefs against discrimination and what this bill does is expand that to others to ensure that we have the same protections for them.

N. Klassen: And hopefully as well as expression. And I don't actually quite know because I've never done it, but if I were to speak the Scripture, you know, on a Winnipeg street corner—you know, at my own peril—but to do that, is that—that is not against the law, because even if I read something that says that, you know, it's, let's say, a sinful thing to have a certain, you know, actions or whatever, that's totally fine.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Mrs. Erika Krahn, private citizen. Erika Krahn, private citizen.

Now we will move to Michael Sullivant, Pembina Valley Baptist Church.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Michael Sullivant (Pembina Valley Baptist Church): Dear honourable Minister and committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to give my presentation on behalf of Pembina Valley Baptist Church and me, personally.

As I represent and care for the 650-plus people who attend our services and for my wife Brenda, our eight children, their spouses, along with our 37 grandchildren, I am concerned about Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act.

As I state my reasons, I want to state at the beginning that you should vote no regarding the amendment. I would like to present three reasons and subsequent explanations: no on religious grounds, no on freedom of speech issues and no on social grounds.

First, no on religious grounds. There are several belief systems in the world such as the Christian and Muslim faith for the most part, which hold to the same

tenets of gender identity that a man is one who is born with male body parts, and a woman is one who is born with female body parts.

As one who holds the Bible as the very word of God, we see in creation that on the sixth day of creation, God created man in His own image. Genesis 1:27 says: So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

As Christians who believe and who trust Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, we hold that the Bible is our guidebook expressing our hope of eternal life and also giving us instructions on the day-to-day living out of our lives here on Earth.

As He answered and said unto them in Matthew 19:4, Jesus said, have you not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female?

Out of the over 600 laws mentioned in the Scriptures, Jesus boiled them down to two: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. Mark 12:30 and 31.

We follow our great God who states in John 3:16: For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

As a church and pastor, we are involved in missions around the world that does not discriminate regarding gender identity or expression. We care for all peoples. However, we hold to the truth that there are only two genders, male and female. They are chosen by God, and biology reflects our stated belief in the scriptures. We encourage you to vote no on religious grounds.

Secondly, no on freedom of speech issues. As a Canadian by choice and not by birth, I have appreciated the right of freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience. I have been privileged to be here for 37 years and pastor a church with over 15 different nationalities and backgrounds. By altering the stated wording in section 9(2)(g) which now reads gender identity to gender expression, this now, however small, opens the door to compelled speech, of which I believe every Canadian should be concerned.

As one of your colleagues has stated, this bill weaponizes transgender people so that everyone will have to affirm their world view and ideology regardless of their own conscience and beliefs. For example, if you refuse to call a transgender man, a biological woman, a man, a human rights complaint could be lodged under The Human Rights Code, and you would have to defend yourself before the Human Rights Commission if the process got to that point.

When it comes to the Human Rights Commissions, the process is the punishment. A Manitoban could be accused of deliberately misgendering someone, a human rights complaint lodged and the defendant would have to spend thousands of dollars and considerable time defending themselves, not to mention the negative media coverage and the consequences of having your name dragged through the mud. We encourage you to vote no on Bill 43 based on freedom of speech issues. The code is quite clear enough as stated.

Thirdly, no on social grounds. The issues of gender identity and expression are in the forefront of the news these days. However, just because people are sensitive in discussing an issue or feel strongly one way or the other does not mean that we should be changing or altering such a provincial governing document like The Human Rights Code. This is such a fluid topic in which even the transgender community finds disagreement within their own classification.

Statistics Canada 2021 census states, 0.33 per cent of Canadians identify as transgender. That further broken down with 0.19 per cent identity as transgender, ages 15 and older, and 0.14 per cent nonbinary.

Liz Stillwaggon Swan, Ph.D., writes in Psychology Today Canada, March 12, 2025, How many genders are there, really? Subtitle states: Here's why the gender number question is unanswerable.

She writes the following: What the transgender movement has made clear is that while someone is born female, they might feel male, feel that they were born in the wrong body, and likewise for males who might feel more female and resent their male body. Or a person might feel like, identify with, neither sex, and thus become transgender as in beyond or above gender just as one's academic research might be trans-disciplinary because it spans economics, public health and sociology while not fitting neatly into any one of those disciplines. The research is trans, beyond disciplinary boundaries in this case.

She goes on to write: I don't know whether there are 72 genders, and I don't know how one would even go

about trying to prove or disprove such a claim. There may be more or there may be fewer; it really doesn't matter.

Dr. Jay Richards, Ph.D., writes in The Heritage Foundation, on April 18, 2025, these key takeaways: Gender ideology is a source of the belief that children can be born in the wrong body; (2) one can't really define gender ideology without invoking some of the terms it has already inserted into our language, terms that also cry out for definition; (3) the plain truth, gender ideology does not accommodate the reality of sex, the reproductive strategy of mammals including human beings.

* (19:40)

This article further states that this issue is too confusing to make hard and fast statements. As such, why get on the bandwagon to potentially open the proverbial can of worms of defining gender expression, when even within the trans community itself, there is no concrete parameter established for identification?

Alexander Hall writes an article entitled: UK Prime Minister Backtracks on Trans Women Are Women Claim After Court Rules They Legally Aren't. A woman is an adult female, and the court has made that absolutely clear, Starmer said. In the historic decision, the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom unanimously ruled last Wednesday that the legal definition of a woman is based on biological sex. As a result, biological males who identify as women can be excluded from some single-sex spaces and groups under the country's equality act.

I include these articles' quotes to add credence to the fact that this is such a fluid issue that countries made assumptions and drew lines of demarcation which are now out of date and cause so much social discontent. The Human Rights Code of Manitoba on this point should not be altered or changed from gender identity to gender expression.

Medicinenet.com states they have identified 72 genders. The idea is to make everyone feel comfortable in their own skin, irrespective of what gender they were assigned at birth. Since the beginning of time, there has only been two genders: male and female. The real and present concern is that a person can knowingly—or, even worse, unknowingly—misgender an individual and a complaint can be filed against them.

With such fluidity regarding this issue, someone may identify themselves one way and a short time later, identify as another. I would encourage those voting on

Bill 43 to vote a resounding no based on religious grounds, freedom of speech issues and social grounds.

Thank you, honourable members of this committee, for hearing my reasoning and my sincerely held beliefs.

The Chairperson: Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Sullivan, for your presentation.

You quoted one of our colleagues in your presentation; I hadn't heard that quote before.

I'm wondering if you could repeat the quote, and I'm—could you identify who said—who stated that quote that you quoted in the presentation?

M. Sullivan: I did not seek his permission to give his name. I did at an earlier time, so I didn't want to give that now because I didn't clear that with him. So I quoted him in an anonymous fashion. Should I go ahead and read it? Okay. I'm looking for the exact place where I have that listed.

The Chairperson: Mr. Sullivan, would you like to move on to the next question, perhaps?

M. Sullivan: Excuse me?

The Chairperson: Would you like to move on to the next question, perhaps?

M. Sullivan: Sure, that'd be good, and I'll keep looking and hopefully I can answer at the same time. Sorry.

Mr. Josh Guenter (Borderland): Thank you, Pastor Sullivan, for coming out and making a presentation and being part of the democratic process in the people's House.

I would just note, the minister knows—has been here longer than I have and knows that every word that is spoken is recorded in Hansard, so I'm sure and possibly his staff looking at Hansard—will have staff looking at Hansard at some point in time for the quote. So I dispute the fact that it's necessary to repeat it, but I want to thank you again for taking the time to come out.

As a pastor, you know, are you concerned about the implications of this bill, given that many pastors live stream and their services are broadcast abroad and deal with—

The Chairperson: Time for questions has expired.

Any further questions?

M. Sullivan: We are on the radio. We do live stream our services, and so some of the interpretation of this I'm concerned would be rather subjective. Not necessarily the intent of the committee, or those who would pass this, but what—how it might be interpreted later on, to where it could be weaponized, and then we could find ourselves, as I stated in the letter, we could find ourselves in the process of having to defend what we have said.

And I did find the quote. The quote is, he says: This bill weaponizes transgender people so that everyone will have to affirm their world view and ideology regardless of their own conscience and beliefs.

For example, if you refuse to call a transgender man, a biological woman, a man, a human rights complaint could be lodged under The Human Rights Code and you would have to defend yourself before the Human Rights Commission if the process got to that point. When it comes to the human rights commissions, the process is the punishment. A Manitoban could be accused of deliberately misgendering someone, a human rights complaint lodged, and the defendant would have to spend thousands of dollars and considerable time defending themselves, not to mention the negative media coverage and the consequences of having your name dragged through the mud. That's the quote.

Hon. Nahanni Fontaine (Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity): I appreciate that in your quote, the MLA, one of our colleagues, was more concerned about getting dragged through the media if they intentionally misgendered somebody. And I appreciate that the quote clearly highlights that the individual is more care—cares more about money than actually the humanity of people. That's what your quote is actually saying.

Can you clarify that quote; was that in the House? Was that a personal conversation with yourself? I know you don't want to share the name. I suspect we already know who it is. But was that, like, a personal conversation between you and the member?

M. Sullivan: That was a personal—in written form, as well, and that we informed our whole congregation in regards to that. Yes, so—yes.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions? Thank you.

All right. Next up on the list is Fae Johnstone, who is on Zoom, so we will keep their place on the presenters list.

We're going to move down to Mr. Joshua Shetter, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Joshua Shetter (Private Citizen): Thank you, honourable members of the committee. My name is Joshua Shetter. I am pastor of Redeeming Grace Bible Church in Morden, Manitoba, and I am here because Bill 43 is a bad idea.

I understand the desire to protect people and discourage discrimination, but this bill does not protect people and actually furthers discrimination.

How so? Well first, this bill legislates a certain morality. My contention is not that laws should not legislate morality, as laws by their very nature are moral. They naturally place shoulds and should nots on the population. For instance, laws against theft say that people should not steal and that they should make money only by honest means.

No, my contention is that this law places an unreasonable and unnatural moral imperative that is based not on objective truth, but on the changing whims of the cultural moment. Let us not fool ourselves into thinking that this bill is merely a measure that supports a neutral, secular public square for all citizens. It is not. It is not only propounding a certain religious and ideological view of man, but it is criminalizing those views which stand in opposition. In other words, it is a should not, as in, you should not hold this view.

You are asking those who believe in the biblical view of man and woman to keep their view to themselves, while encouraging the communication of the view that gender is merely a private choice. In fact, this bill does not ask those who disagree to keep their mouth shut, but it compels them. This is the very definition of discrimination.

* (19:50)

This is essentially a blasphemy law. The government has sacred things it wishes to protect, and this law criminalizes blasphemy against the dogma of gender identity or expression. What if the government was compelling people to respond with, He is risen indeed, when someone says, He is risen? You blink at this, but the government proposes to do the same thing with their religious dogma of preferred pronouns.

Secondly, this bill does not actually protect people. This is clear in two ways. First, we all know that one's sex cannot be changed. Science, natural revelation and the Bible all agree on this. This being the case, it is not helpful to protect someone's view that they can become

another sex. If we incentivize gender confusion through laws like this, we are harming those individuals rather than reaching out to them with the truth and lovingly helping them accept the sex and body God has given them.

This bill, in other words, would incentivize all that comes along with gender confusion, like depression, suicide, anger, bitterness, violence. Let the statistics show that this is true and that we've heard quoted.

As an analogy, think of the child that is afraid of monsters under his bed. What should the parent do? Should she sit in the dark with her son and empathize with his pain, telling him, I hear you and I know it is scary to have monsters under your bed. I validate your feelings and I feel them with you. No. She should turn on the light and show him the truth that there are, in fact, no monsters under his bed. He has no reason to be afraid or to have these feelings. There is no threat.

So we should not sit in the dark with these confused, lost individuals but turn on the light and show them the hope that comes with the truth. Ultimately, that truth is found in Jesus Christ and his dying for our sin, being buried and being raised on the third day. We should point them to hope and the truth, not the empty promises of a lie.

Second, gender expression can itself be hateful. Imagine if a white person identified as Black, put on blackface, dressed in a way he thought was Black, went into a Black organization and spoke and acted according to how he thought they act.

Would the—those present appreciate this expression as his personal identity? Would they not be rightly offended at his actions? What does he know about being Black? Does he really think that being Black is just the colour of his skin, his clothes and certain speech and mannerisms? So how is it different for a man to dress like up a woman and act according to all that he thinks women should be? Would not the women present be rightly offended? How could he know what being a woman is or how women think? Our culture puts so much emphasis on lived experience, but in this case, the lived experiences of women is simply brushed aside as irrelevant.

This bill would force women to refer to transgender women as she, effectively saying that being a woman is merely the outward expression and has no root in the soul or consciousness of a person. Are we prepared to do this? Are we prepared to codify into law the view that manhood and womanhood are merely a matter of clothing and mannerisms?

Finally, let me advocate a better way. I agree that we should discourage hate and encourage love, but we must have an objective standard for love that is not tied to the changing cultural whims. Rooting our understanding of love in the prevailing winds of the current cultural moment is to make the same mistakes that were made in places like Nazi Germany or the American South with slavery and then Jim Crow laws and in all of the continent of North America with how the Indigenous population was treated.

We must plant a flag in objective truth and define love according to the one who invented love and define hate by what He hates. This is the only true God as He is revealed in the Bible. This God says that love rejoices in the truth, 1 Corinthians 13. And in 1 John 4:10, He says, through John, in this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins or the satisfaction or payment for our sins.

You might think, well, we can't use biblical truth to inform or shape our governance because that is Christian nationalism. Well, hear me. It is not a question of whether government will be influenced or shaped by religion but a matter of which religion. As I have pointed out, laws are by nature moral.

And so the question is, on what will the government base its morality? There is no better foundation on which to build a sound moral system than on the God who made us and has revealed His character and His will to us in His holy word and in the person and work of His son, Jesus Christ.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you very much, Mr. Setter [*phonetic*] for your—sorry, Mr. Shetter, for your presentation here this evening.

I—the part that I took from your presentation is your support for discouraging hate and embracing love, and having that as the centre point for all the work that we do. I think that is essentially what we're getting at with this bill, a respect for all, for everyone in this province.

And so I appreciate your perspective and thank you for presenting here this evening.

J. Shetter: Let me just say, I agree, but as you said earlier, we disagree on how to go about that and the definition of love; what is indeed true love. It must be tethered to truth, is my contention.

Hon. Uzoma Asagwara (Minister of Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care): Thank you for your presentation and for your remarks. I just—

The Chairperson: Oh—my apologies. Mr. Balcaen.

Mr. Balcaen: Sorry, it was—

The Chairperson: Oh—Mr. Goertzen.

Mr. Kelvin Goertzen (Steinbach): I think that there is time. I'll defer to my colleague; I can speak after.

MLA Asagwara: I just want to thank you for your presentation, and I want to reinforce something the minister has said many times about this legislation protecting folks. It just does—this legislation protects folks like yourself. The ability for you to come here today and express values and beliefs, some of which, when you're referencing Black communities and Black folks, I find deeply offensive and very harmful, extremely problematic and not rooted in reality or the lived experiences of Black people. However, that is your right to come here and express that.

And so I sincerely hope that moving forward that you very—you remain open to learning about the lived experiences of those that you have assumptions about that perhaps, you know, would change with more education and more relationships and perhaps also when it—as it pertains to Black communities as well.

J. Shetter: Just for my edification, would you mind pointing out the part that you found this so I know it and understand?

MLA Asagwara: Yes, certainly. I appreciate the opportunity to do so.

I think that it's, you know, pretty concerning whenever you try to conflate the experiences of Black peoples with experiences that are distinctly different. And there are lots of folks, a lot of educators in all kinds of spheres, who you can reference or go to, to learn why that would be a concern.

You know, I'm speaking here because we have the opportunity to have this exchange in a really respectful way, and I want to ensure that you maybe park that and take it away and use this moment as an opportunity to learn and perhaps speak differently moving forward.

J. Shetter: Yes, I appreciate that. I would like to find true statements which I could agree with and understand, you know what I mean, rather than just kind of a—you need to learn more. Okay, well, I'd like to know what to learn. You know what I mean? Like, what—where specifically? That's all I'm saying.

Mr. Goertzen: A previous presenter who is in the same profession indicated that, in some ways, the process can sometimes be the punishment.

At times, the Manitoba Human Rights Commission has had a backlog of 600 cases, sometimes stretching for two to three years.

What would be the personal or professional outcome—or impact of having an allegation that couldn't be tested made public for two to three years?

J. Shetter: Yes, I did read the code, and I didn't study it at length.

But as is often the case—and I come from a different context. I've been in Canada for seven years, so I know more the American context. As is often the case, the matter is decided by either public opinion or just the very fact that you have been accused. And so, that's something like the word lawfare, or something like that where it's before there is an adjudicated process, judgment is made in the public opinion, and so I think that's pretty dangerous and can—and I'm concerned that could harm people's lives just by having an accusation.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Mrs. Naomi Letkemann, private citizen. Mrs. Naomi Letkemann.

Please proceed with your presentation.

* (20:00)

Naomi Letkemann (Private Citizen): Thank you for having me.

It is such an honour to be able to speak in front of all of you. This is the beauty of being in Canada, of participating in the democratic process. And it is for that reason I am speaking.

I have to—and the reason that I'm speaking today—there are many reasons—but I signed up yesterday. And this morning, as I was sitting across from my children, I looked at them with this in the back of my mind, and I thought: This is why I'm speaking today. I'm speaking not just for myself, but I'm speaking because the things I do and say or the things I don't do and say will impact the world that they inherit.

And so with that on the back of my mind, what I'm really here for today is to ask for clarification. Because I think terms are really important. And so how do I support or not support this bill if I don't understand it?

Now, I did leave a message with your office, Mr. Wiebe, and I've also contacted my local MLA. My local MLA did not have any answers for me, so I'm hoping that tonight I will be able to get some answers in order to see if this is something that will leave the legacy I want for my children.

So I have a couple of questions. How will this committee and how will this bill define gender? What does expression mean? Can you give me an example of why—but just a really concrete example of why this amendment is needed? Can you give me an example of someone going against the amendment and what would happen to them? And just in some really practical terms, as a woman, I wonder how this might affect my day-to-day life.

In high school, I chose to be in the all-girls gym class at Sisler High School, Mrs. Penner [*phonetic*]. And I did that because that's where I felt comfortable. I felt uncomfortable around boys, and maybe for a variety of reasons, but that was a choice I was given as a teenager.

How will this affect my daughter's choice to be in an all-girls environment? How will it affect my choice to have medical procedures from women doctors? How will it affect who administers a Pap test or a mammogram to me? When going into other public settings, how will it affect my ability to say yes or no to whoever is performing a service?

So I come here not with answers but with lots of questions, because if we don't know some of these answers, I don't know that I can make a real decision as to whether or not this is something that will be good for me, for my children and for those others that I love.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

We will now move on to questions.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, Ms. Letkemann. I appreciate you've got lots of questions.

The purpose of the committee, of course, is for us to ask you questions, but I want to make sure you get your questions answered. I did have a chance to talk to your MLA today, and so we'd be happy to follow up, even just directly after your presentation, with some of the answers and more fulsome in the future.

What I will say is this is not in any way about taking any rights away from your daughter. This is, in fact, about protecting everybody, adding more rights

to many Manitobans and ensuring that they're not discriminated against based on their gender expression.

So I appreciate that you—I appreciate that you're keeping your kids and your daughter at the centre, at the focus, of your activism, and I think that's what we all need to do, so I appreciate you presenting here this evening.

The Chairperson: Mrs. Letkemann, would you like to respond?

N. Letkemann: Yes. I guess there's a lot of terms in there that—you said discrimination. What does that mean? Like, I think it's important to define the words we throw around, because these would have impacts on us.

So can I give you a concrete example? If I walked into my doctor's office, would I be able to say to someone, I would like a woman to perform this test on me? Would I be able to know if that woman was a man who identifies as a woman?

The Chairperson: Mr. Goertzen. *[interjection]*

Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Apologize, Chair, I just answered—I think what we'd be happy to—not everybody, I, you know, understands the law or is able to read bills in the same way, so we're happy to walk through all the details.

And, in fact, there are lots of resources to be able to help you understand how the Human Rights Commission and The Human Rights Code is interpreted in Manitoba.

The Chairperson: Mrs. Letkemann, would you like to reply?

N. Letkemann: I came here today, so it's on record that I've asked the questions because this will impact how people interpret this amendment.

Mr. Goertzen: Ms. Letkemann, thank you for your presentation. In fact, I think your questions are valid because this is a developing area of law.

The minister has, in the past, referred that this is similar to amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Code and recently, just about a year ago, there was an \$18,000 fine levied against somebody for misgendering an individual. And there are probably other circumstances as well, as there often are, in cases. But that clearly showed that there can be significant financial consequences, not otherwise, for misgendering, and the court in that situation, or the Human Rights Commission, indicated that the law would continue to develop and there could be further consequences.

So I think you're right to ask for further clarity and to see where things are going, and I thank you for expressing that concern this evening.

The Chairperson: Mrs. Letkemann, would you like to reply?

N. Letkemann: Yes, I guess one of my concerns is the ambiguity around gender, the ambiguity around what it means to be a woman and the ambiguity about my right to say no.

And I need those clarified before I can support this bill.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation. Mrs. Letkemann, thank you.

Next up we have Mandalyn Unger, who is on Zoom; however, we will be moving on. We will keep their place on the presenters list.

We also had Mx. Ruby Warren scheduled to present, but they are not able to be here, so we will drop down to Monica Wiebe, private citizen.

Monica Wiebe.

An Honourable Member: On a point of order. To the Chair, nobody can hear you.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Mr. Schuler, on a point of order.

Mr. Schuler: We can't hear you. Like, can we ask people to speak into their microphones? Like, I can't even hear the Chair. *[interjection]*

As soon as the member for St. Johns (MLA Fontaine) is finishing with their heckling, I would like to say that individuals in the audience cannot hear most members; you have to speak into the microphone. We can't—I can't even hear you. Could we please project into the microphone, just like the minister for—member for St. Johns projects all her heckling, seems to be quite well. I think this is a legitimate question.

The Chairperson: Minister of Justice, on a point of order.

Mr. Wiebe: Same point of order. I think this sounds like an audio-visual issue that maybe the staff can help with.

I'm not sure why the member has to bring this in a way that implies in some way that the Chair's not doing their job as part of this committee. We're happy to address any issues with audio-visual issues for the crowd. That's the work of all of these staff here in this

room. So let's get that solved, but don't—let's not make this personal and certainly not imply that the Chair's not doing a good job.

I'm not sure why the member would bring this forward in this way. If there's any issues, please, let's make sure that everybody can hear because that's what the purpose of these committees are for. We're happy to be here all night to discuss these important issues and to hear from people, but we have to do it in a way that everyone can hear, so let's make that happen.

The Chairperson: All right. This is not a point of order. However, we will work with the staff to improve the sound quality and, yes, not a point of order.

* * *

* (20:10)

An Honourable Member: On a point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Minister Wiebe, on another point of order.

Mr. Wiebe: Just on a separate point of order, because we are having these issues with the audio, I'm wondering if maybe it's going to be a long night, can we just suggest maybe a 10-minute recess? We can try to sort out the audio issues and then we can reconvene the committee and continue on for the rest of the evening.

The Chairperson: This is not a point of order; however, is there leave from the committee to take a 10-minute recess?

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Chairperson: I hear a no. Leave has been denied.

* * *

The Chairperson: We will now move down to the next presenter, Monica Wiebe, private citizen.

Order. Order.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Monica Wiebe (Private Citizen): Matthew 22, verse 36, quote: One of them put a question, Master, which is the greatest commandment of the law? Jesus said: You must love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it. You must love your neighbour as yourself.

On these two commandments, hang the whole law and the prophets also. To all honourable members and minister of this standing committee of Justice, I wish to express my concerns regarding the proposed Bill 43, The Human Rights Code amendment, which intends to add the clause gender expression.

As it comes with concerns of potential violation to all Manitobans related to freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. As per the Bible quote from the book of Matthew in my opening, my Catholic faith teaches me that it is my moral obligation to treat all people with compassion, respect and love all the time. I understand that the intent of this revision to The Human Rights Code is to denounce discrimination. I agree that all people should be treated equally.

The doctrine of my Catholic faith also teaches me, as stated in the catechism of the Catholic Church, which is based on sacred scripture, tradition, magisterium, as well as spiritual heritage, paragraph 23(32), quote: Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person in the unity of his body and soul. Unquote.

And paragraph 23(33) states, quote: Everyone, man and woman, should acknowledge and accept his sexual identity, physical, moral and spiritual difference and complementarity are oriented towards the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life. The harmony of the couple and of society depend, in part, on the way in which the complementarity, needs and mutual support between the sexes are lived out. Unquote.

And paragraph 23(34) states, quote: In creating men, male and female, God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity and man is a person, man and woman equally so, since both were created in the image and likeness of the personal God.

On another note, the guide to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as found on the—was found on—as found on the Government of Canada website states, quote: The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms sets out those rights and freedoms that Canadians believe are necessary in a free and democratic society. Unquote.

The Charter further states, quote: Whereas Canada is founded upon principles that recognize the supremacy of God and the rule of law. Unquote.

And that, quote: Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: freedom of conscience and religion; freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of

communication; freedom of peaceful assembly; and freedom of association. Unquote.

To tie this all together, based on my Catholic beliefs, I cannot endorse the principles behind this legislation, as I cannot conform to this gender ideology, for it goes against my religious beliefs, as I have explained.

Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms is meant to protect our freedoms of speech, association and religion and conscience. This amendment would therefore specifically go against my religious rights and freedoms and other freedoms as laid out in the Canadian Charter. Yes, we must treat each other with compassion, respect and love; that is the second most important commandment from Jesus.

Again, going back to my quote from Matthew at the beginning of this presentation, the first, most important commandment is to love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment; to show love to our Lord is to know him, to love in him, to serve him by his commandments and his teachings, as was described in quotes from the catechism of the Catholic Church.

I hope that in this presentation it is understood that I believe that the human rights outlined in the province and the country are for all people, not just some, but that the ideology 'betrine'—behind the principles for the amendment goes against my religious beliefs, for which I cannot compromise.

And will it be then that I must one day choose between state and God? I pray that the members of this Legislature will vote for the truth.

Thank you for listening to my presentation.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Monica Wiebe. Great last name.

Just wanted to thank you for your presentation here today. I appreciated you starting by saying everyone is deserving of compassion and respect at all times, and I think that really speaks to the heart of what this legislation seeks to accomplish. So I appreciate your presentation and your participation in the democratic process here tonight.

The Chairperson: Ms. Wiebe?

Any further questions?

Mr. Schuler: First of all, thank you very much for your presentation, for being here this evening. And I do have a question for you and that is, are you concerned with what it might take to get a person investigated by the Human Rights Commission?

M. Wiebe: Yes, I absolutely am. I am afraid of the slippery slope that was mentioned before. I'm afraid of people losing their jobs because they don't—not—because they don't conform to the gender ideology, and because also in a world where there is thought crimes. People are getting arrested for thought crimes in parts of the world. Yes, I am concerned.

Mrs. Lauren Stone (Midland): Thank you, Mrs. Wiebe, for attending tonight and making your presentation.

You mentioned in your previous answer about a slippery slope. Can you just expand on your concerns as to what that means from your perspective?

M. Wiebe: So as you mentioned earlier, the Charter, and as I pointed out too, protects our freedom of religion, but—so does that mean, then, that I can follow my religious faith and not follow the gender ideology principles and with—for example, pronouns, and not have to worry about what I say?

And not that I would say anything that would ever be meant to be disrespectful to someone, but it would be based on my beliefs. Would that mean that I would be—come up for charges?

And then so—and how—what do you have to do to end up being charged with something? Like, what exactly would all the offences be? Is there a list? If you say this or if you do that, or you do this.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

* (20:20)

I will now call on Judy Walker, private citizen. Judy Walker is online and she will keep her position on the list.

However, we will move down the line to the next presenter who is in person, Mr. Yan [*phonetic*] Bettner, private citizen—or Jon Bettner.

Okay, so we will now move on to Candace Sabel, private citizen. Candace Sabel.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Candace Sabel (Private Citizen): Thank you, your honour and the committee.

I wasn't going to speak to this until I did a little bit of research, and if any of you have ever seen me before, I guess I could tell you that I'm always against anything to do with the United Nations, and I know that the transgender movement is totally United Nations influence, back in 2015. And that's what drove me to this, because I'm offended to be called cis, and when I learned that it was created in 2015, I knew it had to be part of that United Nations agenda, so bam, here I am.

I'm offended by it, but I let it slough off because I'm part of the greatest generation—born in the '70s, grew up '70s and '80s—so you shake it off. And that's what I think transgender people should be doing is shake it off. I can see some of these extreme cases, yes, but it's—I think it's gotten very, very far out of hand. So I'll go on with my speech now.

So today I asked Google: What is compelled speech in Canada? And Google said: Where individuals are forced to express opinions or participate in activities they disagree with is a contentious issue, protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms; specifically, section 2(b) of the Charter guarantees freedom of expression, which includes the right to saying nothing or not to express certain things.

The Supreme Court of Canada has generally interpreted this right broadly, recognizing that forcing someone to express a particular message can infringe on their freedom of expression.

And then here's the more detailed look. Compelled speech occurs when the government or another entity forces someone to express a particular message, opinion or belief, even if they disagree with it. This could include requiring businesses to display specific messages, like those related to political policies or environmental concerns. It can also involve mandates for individuals to participate in activities that violate their conscience, such as reciting oaths or using specific pronouns.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly section 2(b) on freedom of expression, provides a legal basis for protecting against compelled speech. The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized that compelled speech can infringe on freedom of expression. However, the court also acknowledges that freedom of expression is not absolute and may be subject to reasonable limitations under section 1 of the Charter. Compelled speech remains a subject of debate and controversy, particularly in relation to the use of pronoun usage.

Examples of compelled speech cases and why they're disturbing: we can easily think of cases where

it is revolting. Henry VIII's attempt to get Thomas More to recognize him as the head of the Church of England and Thomas More's execution for failure to obey is one notorious example.

In 2018, our own federal government compelled businesses and non-profits seeking funding for Canada Summer Jobs program fill out forms to attest their own personal support for abortion rights first. Abortion up to any gestation period is available, I will add, so I just found out. Imagine how many were compelled to lie to get that funding.

Reading through other court cases across Canada, it's not always easy to make sense of the varying outcomes. How exactly are the courts, let alone elected officials, distinguishing speech—or, excuse me—between speech compulsions that are objectionable and those that are not?

And I hope I say this man's name right: Leonid Sirota. He is a scholar of public law and is currently an associate professor at the Reading law school in the UK. His article, *Conscience, Integrity and the Trouble with Compelled Speech*, was published October 27, 2021, and it resonated with me personally.

Here are some excerpts from the article: Conscience and integrity are inherently subjective. Moral beliefs are personal. They are not to be dictated by state authorities. What a person considers to be compatible with following his or her 'conscientus'—sorry, my mouth is dry—beliefs cannot be decided by others. Although there may exist widespread agreement on such matters, it remains the case that the right and the responsibility to judge belongs to each of us individually. It follows that it does not matter whether others, including authorities, think that a person's beliefs about right or wrong are misguided. Actions can be constrained to protect the rights of those whom they affect, but constraint must not serve to impose a belief that a state believes to be right, virtuous or beneficial.

Sorry, I'm dry.

Compelled speech is mainly objectionable when the compulsion interferes with the freedom of conscience or the integrity of those whom it targets. It might make them proclaim as true something they believe to be morally objectionable. For example, values favoured by the government which they do not share, as in the Canada Summer Jobs case. Making it—making a factual statement one does not personally believe to be true amounts to lying. We must not give in to the temptation to force people to say what we

believe—[interjection] merci—to be the right thing. It 'rayly'—it rarely works nearly as well as one imagines.

Again, think about Henry VIII. It encourages one's opponents when they come to power, as they will, to resort to the same brutal tactics.

I will personally add, Henry's daughter Mary, a.k.a. Bloody Mary, burned alive hundreds at the stake for heresy. Despite her efforts to compel her subjects to follow Catholicism, she failed. Her reign was forever marked by religious conflict and political instability. But, more importantly, it is simply wrong to coerce people into trampling over their conscience and speaking as if they are others' instruments rather than men and women capable of their own thought, judgment and speech.

A free society recoils from visiting such indignity on its members. It is time we remembered this. We must not give in to the temptation to force people to say what we believe to be the right thing.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: I just wanted to thank you, Candace, for your presentation here this evening.

Mr. Schuler: Thank you to the presenter and thank you for staying and taking the time and effort to make a presentation.

I do have a question for you, and that is: Are you concerned with what it might take to get a person investigated by the Human Rights Commission? [interjection]

The Chairperson: Ms. Sabel.

Sorry, you have to be recognized before you can speak, so go ahead, Ms. Sabel.

C. Sabel: Absolutely.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Okay. Now we will move down to Dr. Tara Sheppard-Luangkhot, Organization for Peace, Equity and Nonviolence.

* (20:30)

Please proceed with your presentation.

Tara Sheppard-Luangkhot (Organization for Peace, Equity and Nonviolence): Good evening, esteemed Chairman and esteemed committee.

I'm so thankful for the democratic process tonight. Little bit about me. I'm also a parent of a very cis-gender and very heterosexual child. As a trans queer person, I assure you, he is very heterosexual and cisgender and I love him just the way he is.

I'm also a therapist. I've been a therapist for 30 years, and I'm also the director and founder of the Organization for Peace, Equity and Nonviolence. I have an office here in Winnipeg and serve Manitobans here, but I'm privileged to live and work in the Bible belt, in the southeast area and serve all Manitobans of all faiths, all genders, all orientations, including many trans and queer youth and their parents, and I support them to have a space—safe space.

I think it's been very interesting. As a social scientist with a Ph.D., I've heard a lot of cherry-picking of science tonight. I urge you, when you're thinking about voting on this human rights amendment, you actually use your policy analysts who are trained in research to do proper meta analyses of the literature, which will come up with a conclusion, since scientific consensus that the reason trans people are at the risk of suicide is not gender affirmation surgeries. It's transphobia and systemic oppression and oppression in what we're seeing down in the south in United States, when a person's human rights aren't respected in the workplace and someone is fired from the military, like the trans man who was fired from the military. He then hung himself and wrapped himself in a trans flag. It was transphobia that killed him, not being transgender.

So regarding section 9(2), it aims to—I support this amendment; I urge you all to support this amendment regardless of your faith, beliefs and background. And I am actually a person of faith. I go to church and I have a pastor who says to me—he calls me Dr. T.—Dr. T., Jesus was the original human rights activist. Jesus loves you just as you are, and I encourage you, all the trans queer people sitting here tonight, if you are people of faith, I assure you—and I have a close relationship with God—Jesus loves you just as you are. He loves all the opposition here, all the people who are protesting transgender, what they call ideology, but he loves me too and every single person in this room.

So regarding 9(2), I absolutely support because scientifically, gender is really important to incorporate into not just law and human rights amendment, but to actual scientific progress. And so if you actually have your policy 'anyst' do a proper meta analysis, you'll

see that if we want to have good science in Manitoba and good innovation, we need to analyze with both sex and with gender.

As a mental health practitioner of 30 years, as I've said, I've researched the impact of hate and systemic violence on oppressed identities. And this amendment, I assure you, will affirm and protect the human rights of men, women, boys, girls, trans people, gender expansive people; and we all deserve that protection, which is what's been said here already.

I respect your faith system. I work with people of all faiths, and you can think and disagree with me and my clients and my friends and my loved ones all you want, but we cross the line into systemic discrimination, which I have experienced living and working near Steinbach.

When you cross the line into discrimination, you violate my human rights, and it's been asked many times tonight: Do you worry about what it would take to get you invested by the Human Rights Commission? Here's a simple solution: don't violate people's human rights; you will never be investigated by the Human Rights Commission.

I also love that Minister Fontaine is here tonight. I follow you on Facebook and I'm a huge fan. One of the reasons that you're one of my heroes is because you stand up for the rights of Indigenous women and are huge advocate for MMIWG2S+.

I think that the human rights amendment also aligns with the calls for justice; the security of safety of two-spirit and trans people who also are in Indigenous is essential to Manitoba law. I also want to say that, for me, when I see trans queer people, adults and youth, who have families that support them, who gender them properly, it does not cause psychological distress. Instead, it improves their psychological health.

Minister Agwasara [*phonetic*], I'm also big fan of you. I know how hard you're working to protect and fix our health-care system. It causes undue stress on trans and queer people when they're constantly misgendered, they're constantly systemically discriminated against when they're trying to express themselves, and that puts extra burden on the health system. It also places burden on our economic systems. We want to thrive as Manitobans, have a great economy.

For people who are experiencing discrimination and misgendering, it's difficult to work. So if we want a thriving Manitoba economy, a thriving health system that isn't unduly taxed—I am someone that just had their trans symbol ripped down off my Steinbach

office store. A trans-woman client saw that and it caused her huge emotional distress. So I assure you that is not love or compassion when we deny people's gender and call it gender ideology.

As someone who was raised very conservative Christian, I assure you that I understand your fear. You're afraid of change. I used to be a transphobe. I used to be a racist. But I worked very, very hard to be an open—open my mind, get education and realize that I have nothing to be afraid of. So I am a person of faith who urges you to open your minds and that you can love Jesus, who I actually believe would love every single trans-queer person in the room. You could love us the way we're asking you too, including with how you treat us through law.

Finally, I want to say that there's so many benefits to passing this amendment. And we're—we are all thinking about the Jets tonight, many of us, right? And so there are all these Jets playing this game, and there are different ethnicities, there are different faiths on this team. There are atheists, there are different orientations on this team. There are some that are pretty upset they're not getting equal playing time, but they're finding a way to respect each other and work towards a win.

I hope we win the Stanley Cup. It is a win to Manitobans to have full and equitable human rights law in Manitoba, and just as I want us to win the Stanley Cup, I want to win at human rights and be a leader. As Prime Minister Carney says: Be a leader. And not cave into the element and actual ideology of fascism that's affecting many people in this room.

Thank you very much for letting me speak.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Doctor.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Dr. T., if I can call you that, thank you so much. What an incredible presentation.

Your words are inspirational and you just so clearly defined, I think, the issue before us, but specifically your advocacy and the work that you do and your understanding of it, I think really adds a lot to the committee here this evening.

I also just wanted to just recognize the fact that you have identified not just your own personal experiences with discrimination, but, again, the work that you do on behalf of others, so I want to lift you

up for that work and just thank you for being here and informing this committee here tonight.

T. Sheppard-Luangkhot: You're welcome. Go, Jets, go.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you very much, Doctor, for your presentation tonight. It's greatly appreciated to hear your stories and stuff.

I'm wondering if you could comment on the fact that—and I'll use personal example: I know I have accidentally or mistakenly misgendered the Minister of Health, and certainly was not intentional. And if something like that happens to you, is it a violation of your rights—or I'm just wondering how you educate people on that?

T. Sheppard-Luangkhot: Again, I should have mentioned that OPEN works towards diverting of rehabilitating people who are engaged in hate and violent extremism, and as well it helps communities and victims of hate and extremism along with other forms of group violence like gangs.

So I think it's really important to be kind and patient with people when they're trying to learn pronouns. And again, it doesn't mean you have to agree with gender identity. It doesn't mean you have to even like that person. However, it's about respect, right. And so, just like I wouldn't want to misgender you, and if I had made a mistake and misgendered you and you corrected me, I would immediately correct it and I would apologize.

So if you did that to me, I would remind you of my pronoun and I would hope that you would actually integrate that information out of respect for me, along with respect for my human rights.

MLA Asagwara: Doctor, it's really good to see you here. Thank you for your presentation; it was really informative. It's wonderful to know about the work that you're doing. And I want to thank you for your generosity, sharing your personal experiences and also sharing about your relationship with God, with Jesus and your faith.

I do think that it's a really important and generous personal narrative that you offer us here today. I think that so often, sometimes people can create some sort of a hierarchy with their relationship with their faith, and I think you've made really clear today that there's—it's important that we ensure that people have the space to be who they are and know that they are loved. And that that love should be used as a way to protect people, lift people up and affirm people, and it betters our communities across the board.

* (20:40)

So I just want to say thank you. Very generous presentation, really wonderful—

The Chairperson: The minister's time has expired.

T. Sheppard-Luangkhot: Yes, I think that law and love should go hand in hand.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you, Doctor, for your presentation this evening.

Just a question about the comment you made about the Human Rights Commission, and that folks shouldn't obviously violate people's rights if they don't want to be investigated from your perspective.

What obligation does the Human Rights Commission have, though? My understanding is they have an obligation to investigate every complaint that's brought before them, and sometimes they're seen to be vexatious. Sometimes that takes two to three years, but you were suggesting that not every complaint should be investigated.

There's no choice. They have to investigate every complaint. So are you suggesting that there are no vexatious complaints?

T. Sheppard-Luangkhot: MLA Goertzen, you're my MLA. Actually, what I correctly said was if you don't want to be investigated, then don't violate people's human rights. So of course the Human Rights Commission should investigate every complaint. But if I'm making sure that I'm not racist and I'm not discriminating you or you based on being Christian, I'm making sure that I will never be investigated by the Human Rights Commission.

If you don't discriminate me for my gender identity and my expression, you will never be investigated by the Human Rights Commission. So I'm afraid you misinterpreted what I said.

Mr. Goertzen: Yes, I think there is an obligation to—for the Human Rights Commission to investigate every complaint, and some of them are seen to be without basis. Almost none of them, or most of them, don't have to do with identity, but for clarity there is an obligation for the Human Rights Commission to investigate every complaint. And some are rightfully—

The Chairperson: The time for questions have expired.

Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call upon Mrs. Jennifer Friesen.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Jennifer Friesen (Private Citizen): Good evening, honourable Speaker, fellow members of the Legislature and Manitobans. I'd actually like to express how happy I am to be here tonight. I think this is an incredible process and I find it really crazy that I had no idea that we could do this until a week ago. So thank you for that. It gives me faith that our democracy is actually still very alive, and I wish more Manitobans knew about this, although your evenings would get very long. It's very dry in here and very hot, so thank you for your patience with tonight.

I'd like to begin by establishing that if a Bill 43 was simply about respect, as has been repeatedly stated by Mr. Matt Wiebe, there would be no necessity to amend The Human Rights Code. So I think there lies a confusion with many people who came here tonight because of the insistence on a change when it will change nothing.

The existing protections for all people, I believe, would suffice. If, however, there were more oppressive pressures, such as, for example, a teacher, like myself, facing a human rights violation and lawsuit for—on the grounds of religious 'freeson'—sorry, freedom, a refusal to call a biological male student she, this amendment is an extremely grave matter.

I will speak to these concerns in the following presentation.

Sorry—very dry.

So I speak here today, not just as a representative but as a Christian, as a parent and as a grandchild of a man who immigrated from Communist Hungary to Canada in search of freedom.

Bill 43, which proposes to amend The Human Rights Code to include gender expression as a protected category may sound like a step toward inclusion, but for many families like mine, is a step away from freedom, from truth and from safety.

Let us consider our right to freedom of conscience. As a Christian I oppose Bill 43 on the grounds that both my faith and biological truth insist that there are only two genders, male and female. To call a man a woman—sorry—to call a woman a man and be forced to use male pronouns, or to call a man a woman, or to call a woman a man, and be forced—whatever; you know what I'm saying—is a violation of my freedom of expression. Any government directive that forces me to use language against my conscience is compelled speech. Section 2(b) of the Charter protects me from such government overreach.

And let us consider the collateral damage. As a mother, I must emphasize that Bill 43's collateral damage will be the rights, the safety and the opportunities of biological women. My daughters, like many young girls today, already feel unsafe using bathrooms and changing spaces where biological males identifying as females are allowed access.

We have watched in alarm as those in position of authority, specifically in the US—I will say I did not have very much time to write this speech tonight; I do not know if this would apply to Canada—but specifically in the US, the authorities have covered up assaults and rape by biological males identifying as females and using women's spaces. Those in authority have been more afraid to cause offence than to expose the damage caused by their own gender policies.

Today, biological males compete and win in female sports due to their biological differences in height and muscle mass, which are not, in fact, erased by hormone therapy. Vulnerable women, such as those in prisons and in shelters, are now faced with the threat of male violence, and, again in the US, rape, in these once-protected spaces. Bill 43 does not consider these threats.

I'd like to look at the bigger picture; I'm a big picture thinker and I like to imagine where things can possibly go. My grandfather fled communism in 1957, escaping a system that repressed religion, punished dissent and dictated thought. He believed that Canada was a country where liberty and common sense prevailed, and I want to believe that, too.

Growing up under communist rule taught my grandfather to follow politics very closely. He understood the cause and effect between legislation and everyday life. I grew up listening to him critique Canada's budding socialist policies, upset that Canada was changing. What he saw were fractures in our democracy, and he worried that those in power were laying a foundation for Canada to become the monster he had fled.

Growing up in the '80s and '90s, I dismissed his remarks. I would tut-tut my grandfather for imagining monsters lurking where I could see none. I lived in a free country, I saw no evidence of any threat. I knew that, regardless of my sex, that I'm female; or my status, that I grew up very poor, with hard work and determination, I could have a good life.

And I felt safe because I knew that our laws protected me. But our laws are changing. That is why you see this crowd tonight. Today, I see that my grandfather's concerns were valid. The seeds of socialism sown in the '60s and '70s are bearing fruit. Bill 43 does

not create space for discussion, dissent or compromise. Instead, it threatens individuals and institutions with legal penalties for expressing sincerely held beliefs. Indeed, we have witnessed this silencing and social fear, even among our Conservative MLAs, as none have stood to discuss this bill.

We must ask: Where is the line between protecting against discrimination and forcing ideological conformity? After living under communism for 18 years, my grandfather stole a five-ton army truck and used it to pull down a statue of Stalin and drag it to the streets—through the streets—until the arms and legs came off. It was an act of desperation. His final act of civil disobedience and protest of Soviet oppression.

Remember big picture. I worry that we are on the path towards something we promised ourselves we would never repeat: a system where governments decide what is acceptable to believe and to say, and where dissent is punished. That is the monster my grandfather risked everything to escape. I fear we are forgetting the lessons he and so many others paid dearly to teach us.

I oppose Bill 43 as it threatens freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and freedom of expression, the bedrock values of a free and democratic society. I oppose Bill 43 as it risks prioritizing gender expression over sex-based rights, undermining protections for biological women in critical areas. I oppose Bill 43 because those who do not know the past are condemned to repeat it. And I wonder what statues the next generation will be forced to tear down as they fight for their freedoms, safety, and the very democracy that makes this our Canada.

* (20:50)

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Just a simple thank you, Mrs. Friesen, for your time here this evening, for your participation. As you said, there's a unique process in Manitoba, and the fact that you have chosen to engage in it, it really does mean a lot, so thank you for your presentation and for being here this evening.

J. Friesen: Thank you for your respectful demeanour.

I would like to mention also that I'm aware that Mrs. Letkemann's questions were not answered immediately, as promised, but rather that she was given

an email address. And I would again like to reiterate her question: If a woman walks into a doctor's office and requests a female doctor for a Pap smear or anything else, and a biological male shows up, is she allowed to request a female doctor, a biological female doctor, without repercussion from a bill such as what—or the unamendment, such as what you're proposing this evening?

I know you're not obligated to answer those questions, but I think it's a fair question. I also think my question as a teacher is a fair question: If my freedom of religion dictates, my conscience dictates, that I do not call a man a woman or a—by a pronoun that would indicate such, then what? What are the consequences? That's what the questions are here tonight.

We all agree, respect. We all agree, love. We all agree all of those things, but when there's a punishment attached to—you guys like to talk about your truth. I hate that word, but when there's a punishment attached to your free—your religion, we want to understand the bill in its full clarity and the full implications and the full possibilities. Because we do worry that these things can be weaponized, as many things can.

Mr. Schuler: I—thank you very much, Mrs. Friesen, for your presentation and for coming forward. You gave us a very interesting family history and brought it into what's happening today.

My question to you is: Are you concerned with what it might take to get a person investigated by the Human Rights Commission, as this bill is vague at what could cause the Human Rights Commission to investigate someone?

J. Friesen: Oh, sorry. I've been thinking about this all week, actually, and under the grounds of discrimination, I'm trying to figure out how people would avoid worrying about the ambiguity of the bill.

And I'll give you an example: in Superstore, I'm pretty sure there is an individual who would identify as transgender or perhaps they are questioning, or I don't really understand because I don't know them personally. I would never avoid going through the line. I'm now wondering what constitutes an offence. Should I avoid going through the line to avoid—like, causing an offence?

If these things are not clear, division will breed out of this bill in a different way than you've seen before. There will be avoidance. There will be—I would call it, like, a quiet discrimination that hasn't been seen before, just because we don't understand the ambiguity.

And, again, I would argue that, as a Christian, I'm called to call individuals as God has created them. You are now putting someone's human rights above my freedom of religion, but likely I would still get fired or investigated.

And recently I had a conversation with someone in—he works actually for the government, I believe, here, under Education. And he told me that—and this was under different circumstances—but he told me that the human rights investigation is so arduous that any school division that would ever endure that would do anything in their power, absolutely anything, to avoid that ever again. And that's a school division. I don't think it would be very different for an individual.

Mr. Schuler: Are you aware that because this legislation is vague—so, it doesn't define what the complaint could be. But are you aware that the Human Rights Commission must investigate? It's not a may or shall; it's a must investigate. And this legislation does not define what it is that the complaint has to be.

J. Friesen: Yes, I am aware of that. I have considered filing a human rights complaint in the past. I avoided it because I did not want the group to suffer as I knew that they would, and I tried to find a different way to resolve the issue.

I believe it can be weaponized. I believe that sometimes in the moment, in the heat of anger, in the heat of frustration and even personal experience that have very little to do with the individual in front of you, the ambiguity of the law could turn this into something—

The Chairperson: The time for questions has expired.

Thank you for your presentation.

Next, we will move down to Chyrel Young, private citizen. Chyrel? Sorry, my—Cheryl [*phonetic*] Young, private citizen.

Okay. So we've finished with the out-of-town presenters. We are now going to move to local presenters.

We are going to start with David Grant, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation.

David Grant (Private Citizen): The—Bill 43 is proposing wording changes for the act, and I'm aware; I've followed the progress and I've tried to get acts changed for many years. This doesn't happen very often. We have many acts and they may last many years before they get changed. So I'm bringing up some ideas here.

I always try to avoid conflict. I try to use the utmost in respect. And I find, in meetings, a title of a person works very nicely, as in Chair and minister. And that's my preferred one—and first names. When we're out in the hall, first names work great too.

So it's—and that's not something that I've developed since this bill or anything else. I just find it's a pleasant way of dealing with people.

And—so that's—and as I say, I try to avoid conflict with people no matter what's going on, I'm just that kind of person. So I will leave the discussion of these conflict-inducing words and move on to my main purpose for being here tonight.

I see that the human rights act is in need of a few other little tweaks—some wording changes. It's been mentioned tonight that we have sometimes 300 complaints in the queue. And in practice, the folks in the human rights department—commission are not doing what we expect them to do in cases.

I believe that the act is not doing what it was intended to do. The bill ignores the fact that valid rights complaints can be summarily dismissed, and we've heard from other people saying, oh, no, we can't do that. But I've got people who've submitted complaints, and that's what happened to them. And the only one I ever filed was put on a shelf for two or three years, at which point the world moved on. The whole point—thing was moot.

So I'm reminded that in Ontario, there are enforcement organizations—public protection laws—that impose limits. So in Ontario, this organization requires that a report be issued within 120 days of the thing coming in. And I think that's something that is possible if there were enough people, and we could reduce the number of complaints, but it would be an ideal thing, because that's handling it when it's still a significant topic.

And—so anyway, that's what I'm suggesting, is that by the time this change gets to third reading, we could have a few words and I could send the Ontario—an excerpt of the Ontario rules to the minister for his perusal.

But that's basically where I'm going with the thing and that you—the thing is not what we expect it to be—you know, the idea of huge delays. It'd be nice if things happened more quickly. We can't suddenly invent people, and that's a constraint. But that's what I'm suggesting, is that you impose a time limit on the handling, and the handling, if the complaint is just like 30 other complaints that day, they could compose a

letter—the person could compose a letter describing the outcome. And yes, you have a very valid thing, and no, we're not going to proceed any further with it.

* (21:00)

But, anyway, that's just basically—and I think it affects everybody in making other presentations, is making sure the thing is effective and that it does its job in a timely manner.

And I'll leave it to that. And thank you very much for the time, and it's nice seeing friends here again, so thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Grant, for your presentation. Once again, I look forward to further correspondence from you.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you, Mr. Grant. I appreciate your being here tonight and your views.

You bring up some interesting points about timeliness and everything as it involves human rights but, you know, that's something that's faced in the court system, in the human rights and any of these tribunals.

Is there a way that we can respect individuals' rights to make a complaint, yet still ensure that they're heard without dismissal?

D. Grant: I can, Chair?

The Chairperson: Mr. Grant, go ahead.

D. Grant: Thank you. Yes—forgot the rules.

Yes, and that's why I'm suggesting that the mechanism that was used in Ontario in this other group—not human rights, but another disciplinary group—and then that might require the human rights folks to have streamlined procedures. You know, when something comes in that I couldn't rent the apartment because of this, if you get 50 of those in a year, they might have a form letter explaining what the actions are.

So I would hope that the HR folks would develop a streamlined procedure for handling the common complaints, so that's what I would hope, anyway.

MLA Asagwara: I just want to thank you for showing up and always very thoughtfully participating in the democratic process.

And I want to acknowledge something that you said, that—you referenced that there are many easy ways to be respectful and to be thoughtful with how you engage with other folks who you may not know at all, and that titles are a good example of that.

In the Legislature, folks can choose to be referred to as MLA and then their surname; that was a change brought in in 2019 that many MLAs have adopted. I will say that, being a minister, it's not a bad thing having Minister as a neutral way to be identified in my role with that title.

But I want to thank you for acknowledging that there are ways that we can very respectfully and thoughtfully engage with people each and every day, in the halls, as you referenced, or wherever it is.

So I just want to thank you for showing up and for your remarks today.

D. Grant: Thank you, and that's the point I was trying to make is when I saw you in the parking lot weeks ago, Minister worked great. And on the other hand, when the minister speaks to me, of course, first names work if you remember and I think first names, when you're outside of the room—outside of the committee room, if you know them and so on.

But—and that avoids the whole he stuff, because in general, I would say that if you—I don't want to go too far on down this road—but if you don't know what the person's preferred pronoun is, a first name is always appropriate. And that's what I think—and I'd rather people call me by my first name rather than him.

So anyway, thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you again for your presentation. Thank you.

Okay. I will now call on Ms. Karen Sharma, Manitoba Human Rights Commission.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Karen Sharma (Manitoba Human Rights Commission): Thank you to ministers and members of the Legislative Assembly for this opportunity to speak to Bill 43.

My name is Karen Sharma, my pronouns are she/her and I'm the executive director at the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. And I'm very pleased, on behalf of the commission, to be here to put some words on the record about this important bill.

Before I do that, I want to dispel perhaps some myths about the code, the complaint process and answer some questions that have repeatedly arisen here tonight.

First of all, the jurisdiction of the code is prescribed in the act, so if you look, the code applies to employment, housing, publicly available services, contracts. It doesn't apply to what happens between private individuals. It does not apply what happens within religious institutions, so I hope that gives some satisfaction to folks about where the code applies.

Complaints can be dismissed without investigation. As a result of amendments to the code that came about in 2002, we can dismiss complaints where they are frivolous or vexatious, where they're not within the jurisdiction of the code and for a number of other reasons. So I hope that resolves that concern as well.

Most complaints that are brought to the commission are resolved via mediation, so they never make it to the investigative process because the focus of the code is not punitive in nature; it is remedial. So I hope that also 'dispils' the meth-myths about The Human Rights Code here today.

Okay. So many of you will likely know that the Manitoba Human Rights Commission is an independent agency of the government of Manitoba responsible for enforcing the rights and responsibilities in The Human Rights Code through the complaint process we've spoken of tonight and by promoting human rights through education, research and public advocacy.

It has long been recognized that our code, along with human rights legislation in every other province and territory has a 'causi'-quasi-constitutional status among all laws. Human rights statutes, which establish the right of all citizens to be treated on the basis of their personal merit and to be afforded opportunities without influence of prejudice or negative stereotype, have roots in the global movement that arose following the atrocities of the Second World War and the Holocaust.

At that time, our global community recognized that we needed laws that would entrench protection from discrimination. And Manitoba followed suit of many other countries and many of our provinces and jurisdictions here in Canada, first creating The Human Rights Act, and then later in 1987, replacing it with The Human Rights Code.

Discrimination—it's been asked, what does discrimination mean? You can look to the code, section 9; it's defined. It's defined in our code as treating a person adversely without reasonable cause on the basis of

personal characteristics that go to the root of who they are as a human being: things like their age, sex, ancestry, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, to mention a few.

Our code specifically lists, as of right now, 13 characteristics in section 9(2), and that's generally mirrored in all other legislation across most other provinces and territories. And it's about ensuring that folks that have been historically structurally disadvantaged, who've had less access to things like employment, publicly available services or housing, are provided an opportunity for equal access, for equal opportunity, regardless of any of those characteristics.

We're here tonight to speak to Bill 43, which would amend the list of characteristics that are set out in section 9 of the code to prohibit discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender expression.

The commission strongly supports Bill 43. This amendment will not only bring Manitoba in alignment with most other jurisdictions across Canada—you've heard that tonight—but that have already prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender expression. But it will also strengthen the necessary human rights protections for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at a time when their rights to equality are under considerable threat, both abroad and at home.

Securing the right to equality for structurally marginalized communities is not a linear path and can never be taken for granted. Whether it has been the attacks on gender-affirming health care, the calls to remove books or curricular content that acknowledge the existence of 2SLGBTQIA peoples from schools, protests against drag performers and other genderqueer entertainers, failure to provide or the altogether elimination of existing forms of gender-inclusive identification, attempts to legislate discriminatory definitions of gender based on erroneously binary conceptions of sex assigned at birth, and the list goes on.

We are witnessing a significant backlash against 2SLGBTQ+ communities across North America. This moment must serve as an important call to action for us to take all steps possible to secure and strengthen the right to equality for 2SLGBTQ+ communities and to help build a Manitoba as a place of safety and security for all.

The commission is mindful that the inclusion of gender expression as a protected characteristic under the code would help safeguard the rights of Manitobans who would be most vulnerable to transphobia and other forms of discrimination, harassment and hate.

* (21:10)

Gender expression has routinely been interpreted by human rights tribunals and commissions to refer to how a person publicly presents and communicates their gender; whereas gender identity, which has been protected in our code since 2012, which you've heard, refers to our deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender. Gender expression is about our behaviour. It's about our outward appearance, like our clothing, hair, makeup, body language, voice, name, pronouns, to name a few things.

Gender expression is often an external manifestation about how we feel about our gender internally. It can be expressed in cultural-specific ways and can change over time. And negative stereotypes and prejudicial beliefs in relation to gender expression is often what makes people more vulnerable to hate and discrimination and intolerance.

For this reason, the inclusion of gender expression in our code is vitally important to securing rights space protections for 2SLGBTQ+ communities to ensure that we're protecting folks against a—the rise of hate in our communities.

We're also mindful that employing an intersectional lens means that gender expression can have broader rights-based implications. It might strengthen existing protections for people who might just experience discrimination and harassment, based on the intersection of their gender expression and their religious belief, their ethnicity, their ancestry, their race, et cetera.

While we strongly support the passage of Bill 43, we wish to provide some security and assurance that even without this legislative amendment, the commission has been using our broad and 'propositive' interpretive approach to the code to ensure that we're currently protecting against this. So this isn't a significant change in terms of human rights protections in Manitoba.

Notwithstanding that, this amendment is significant because it makes this protection explicit and guaranteed within the context of Manitoba's law. So it cannot—the importance of it cannot be overstated.

I've heard tonight some concern expressed about the importance of this amendment; however, the timeliness and effective of our—effectiveness of our complaint system under the code which I assure you, on behalf of the commission, we take those concerns very seriously. Our team is also dissatisfied with the amount of time it's taking for complaints to be

processed in our system, and we desperately are looking for ways to improve the system and working hard to assure Manitobans of timeliness in the complaint process.

As we've directly raised with the Minister of Justice (Mr. Wiebe), to ensure that Manitobans have access to their rights under the code, we need to make sure that the commission is properly resourced. We must move our agency from being one of the lowest funded human rights commissions across Canada to one that's positioned to not only deliver on the statutory mandates set out in the code, but prepared to meet the challenges of this moment, wherein we're witnessing this significant rise in hate and division in Manitoba and beyond.

We require a robust, effective and timely human rights complaint system in our province and need the funding to do that.

I know you've heard many perspectives this evening about the impact of this bill, including from some who may have reservations about adding gender expression to the code. In preparation for this evening's committee hearing, I was reminded of the history of how our code came into being. It was 1987, during the 33rd sitting of this Legislature that then-minister of Justice and Attorney General Roland Penner tabled Bill 47, which was The Human Rights Code.

The biggest changes that were going to be made as part of that code were to strengthen protections around sexual harassment—very important at that time—and to add sexual orientation to the code. And if you are a history buff, you'll know that, as a result of the addition of—the proposed addition of sexual orientation to the code, the committee—I think it was on privileges and I can't remember the exact name of the committee at that time—met for six nights and heard from over 200 Manitobans, many of whom were—who were opposed to the addition of sexual orientation to the bill at that time.

I bring that up because although concerns were registered, human rights prevailed and on December 10, we proclaimed—1987—we proclaimed our code into law and we passed as Manitoba one of the most progressive and inclusive human rights statutes—

The Chairperson: The time for presentation has expired.

Mr. Wiebe: Can I just ask for leave of the committee to allow Ms. Sharma to finish her presentation?

The Chairperson: Is there leave for Ms. Sharma to complete her—their presentation? *[Agreed]*

K. Sharma: At that time, we passed a progressive and inclusive human rights statute that paved the way for years of important jurisprudence, furthering equality rights for Manitobans and contributing to meaningful change to our province, from auditory signals at every crosswalk that you go to, programs that help internationally qualified professionals, including physicians, get recognized in our province; protections against sexual harassment. We've done that work as a result of our Human Rights Code.

We know that many Manitobans experience discrimination and harassment on the basis of their gender expression. You've heard some of those stories tonight, and I'm certain you'll hear more. They highlight the indignity with which many Manitobans are treated and the barriers to equality that we collectively have not yet succeeded in eliminating.

Now, more than ever, it is critical that we build on our history, forged in 1987, and stand resolute in our commitment to protecting the rights of 2SLGBTQ people and ensuring an inclusive Manitoba where every person is treated with value, dignity and respect.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak, and I welcome questions.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I just wanted to thank you, Ms. Sharma, for shedding more light on exactly these kinds of common-sense protections that we're talking about here tonight. I certainly appreciate the chance to meet with you and to hear you here at committee to, again, give us more context.

The question I have for you—I would appreciate that you may not be able to answer in the kind of way that you might want to, but I'm going to ask it anyway. How exactly did we fall so far behind in Manitoba as compared to the rest of the country?

What happened, and maybe you could even just focus on the funding because you mentioned about resources. I mean, maybe just—can you give us a context of what the last number of years has looked like and how we can continue to work together?

K. Sharma: I've been at the commission for a decade now, and at that time we had a backlog of complaints. So certainly we were already dealing from a position of weakness.

In 2016-17, 25 per cent of our staffing positions were cut. We got some positions back in 2022-23, but we were really put in a position of vulnerability—sorry, 2017-2018, positions were cut; '22-23, we received some positions back, about three. But we were really operating from a position of weakness.

And so it's time, I think, to build back up the strength of our Human Rights Commission, particularly given the threats that we're facing in this moment. And certainly it's a resource issue. It was also about the legislative structure of our code and the complaints process. It's about the amendments we saw come out in 2022—were aimed at addressing some of those challenges.

So we've got some of those tools in place, but now we need to strengthen, yes.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you, Ms. Sharma, for the presentation and education here tonight.

I was listening intently and I want to make sure I heard right—is that you said, at this time you're already policing or monitoring the gender expression. Is that right?

K. Sharma: So we have an analogous grounds provision in our code that allows us to interpret and apply the protections in the code to characteristics that aren't specifically listed in section 9(2). That's found in section 9(1)(a) of the code.

So we do at times extend protection to grounds that you won't find specifically listed, based on jurisprudence that tells us that those characteristics ought to be afforded human rights protection.

So I can tell you that, yes, we do extend—we routinely kind of interpret and apply the code to meet—to extend to gender expression. Having said that, there is so much power in having code specifically enumerated. It means that when we are educating the public about what is particularly covered in the code, we can say it extends to both gender identity and gender expression. And that also means that we can be educating duty bearers that way.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you for that reply. So I'm intrigued because I didn't realize that you were already monitoring—*[interjection]*

The Chairperson: My apologies, Mr. Balcaen.

Minister Asagwara.

MLA Asagwara: Thank you so much, Ms. Sharma, for this really, really wonderful presentation. Super informative. And I just want to say thank you because

you and your presentation somehow, in 10 minutes, also managed to answer a number of questions that had been raised by folks who presented throughout the evening.

And I think, you know, there's no better person to provide that clarification and that information and education than you, right? And so I just really appreciate that you made the time to be here, that you provided such clear and concise information and answered those questions directly and I hope alleviated some of the anxieties or concerns that folks spoke about earlier. So thank you so much.

K. Sharma: Thank you.

* (21:20)

One of those anxieties that I heard was: What happens if I make an error or a mistake and didn't mean to misgender a person? And I think it's important to know that the cases that have gone to human rights tribunals and have been found to be discriminatory are cases of sort of malicious, repetitive misgendering and the use of the wrong pronouns, deadnaming individuals. So I think it's very important to make that clarification, and there are often greater facts surrounding those cases when they've gone to tribunals and been proven.

This isn't about the accidents that happen. The code is premised on the notion that discrimination is often rooted in ignorance and it's education that helps us change our ways. And so we don't want to be bringing people before tribunals for making accidents. That's not in the public's interest. It's for those cases where people really maliciously do not want to respect a person's identity, and that would go for any identity that's found within those section 9(2) protected characteristics.

Mr. Balcaen: I'm just wondering—we're down to five seconds—if there's leave for the presenter to answer one more question.

The Chairperson: Is there leave for the presenter to answer one more question?

An Honourable Member: No.

The Chairperson: I heard a no.

Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Mrs. Erika Krahn, private citizen. Mrs. Erika Krahn. Okay. She will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

The next presenter we have on the list is Mr. Don Woodstock, private citizen. Please proceed with your presentation.

Don Woodstock (Private Citizen): The human right lady that was here earlier, I am a little bit confused with something. And I'm here trying to find an answer to this situation myself. I have a business here and I go into people's homes for my business. And one of the things I find is I deal with all kind of people, no matter who they are. And so I'm very happy for Manitobans to have accepted me and my company, and so I'm grateful for them letting me into their homes, regardless of their sexual orientation or ideology.

However, she referred to herself as a—and she established her pronouns as them—whatever. But I hear none of you refer to her pronouns and call her—you call her Miss. Is that acceptable? So—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Chairperson: Minister Asagwara, on a point of order.

MLA Asagwara: I'm raising a point of order and asking, through the Chair, my understanding in terms of how committee functions is that presenters come to the podium, they present to the committee—that they're engaging with the committee, and that questions and answers are put forward from the committee to the presenter and back and forth. I don't know that there's precedence for, and I could be mistaken—I'm asking the Chair for clarification—for presenters to ask questions of former presenters.

So I'm just seeking clarification on the process and ensuring that we adhere to it here in committee.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your patience. For clarification, just to remind presenters, we shouldn't draw the gallery into the debates, same as the gallery isn't supposed to be—participate in the proceedings here.

Thank you.

* * *

D. Woodstock: See your point. Okay, so. But, forgive me, I was just trying to clarify because, for me, I don't want my business to be investigated, okay. I've been called names before in the public, as some of you know—cost me \$8,000 in legal fees, only to be told that the only thing I need to do is apologize, after spending \$8,000.

Now, I don't know the extent of where this will go, because a question was even asked by the honourable minister in terms of the clarification, and Mr. Minister, with all due respect, you still leave us with more questions than answers. You didn't give us clear-cut—when the two ladies came up and asked the question. If, you know, God forbid, that was my wife and somebody turns up in that room and somebody turns up in that room and says they identify as a woman, they ain't touching my wife, with all due respect, no matter what kind of law, no matter what kind of lawsuit I have to go through—and will probably get worse.

But here's my point. Earlier, the fellows stood up here and talked about the blackface and how he can, you know, describe—he was describing in his own words what he thinks that—if he was to dress as a blackface, what would happen. And the rebuttal came, but I shudder to think that, as another Black person in the room, I wasn't offended by anything that was said there. But that's the—exactly what the issue is here. We have two people who, one is offended and asks for the person not to continue along those lines, and another one, born Jamaican—I'm a man—was not offended in any way, shape or form by what was said.

So where is the line here? And I think you—Mr. Minister, with all due respect, this amendment—the Human Rights Commission, anybody has ever filed a human rights complaint—I've known people, six years, \$10,000, \$100,000 later, and they're still waiting. I—listen, this is a slippery slope, okay. And I believe it's a slope that we should not have entertained because, with all due respect, I hear in 1987, how aggressive our human rights body has been, which is good. I've seen it at work and I appreciated it. I appreciate the fact that I live in a country now that's human rights is of real significance. I get that.

However, I think we have a slippery slope where the NDP government and Mr. Minister and this law is trying to appease to a segment of the population to let them feel like you're doing something right for them. And I get that, because you have to do that; it's your constituency. But are you really doing that? Because now you may put them—in all due respect, you may now put a target on their backs. I know you have people who are going, wait a minute, why do I need to make sure that I call your pronouns and why do I need that? I always see you as John and you—me, Mary and life goes on.

Be careful. Be careful what we wish for in this. Because the same group of people that you're trying

to protect is going to come back one day and say, you have just made it worse for me because now everybody hates me. And then what do you do? You'll try to take it back then; I don't think so.

Here is another thought process. So I get up this morning and come here and I've been identified as Mr. Woodstock. Yes, I am. But what if I decided that I want to be identified as Wet Pussy? Do I then get you all to—

The Chairperson: Mr. Woodstock, we have to be mindful of our language. We need to be mindful of our language. Words matter in this room, so please be mindful going forward with your presentation of using appropriate language.

D. Woodstock: So my calling myself whatever name, I must come to you for permission to decide what pronouns I use or what do I identify as. Is that what you're telling me? Is that what you're saying? I'm asking the question. If I decide to call myself a cat, is that okay? But cat is okay with your language. What if I decide to call myself something else? I must first seek your permission. Is that what I'm hearing? I would like somebody to tell me, because if that's not what I'm hearing, then this does not belong in a conversation where we have people, 7-Elevens that are closed.

Businesses move out of this city because of crime, and here we are tonight when the Jets are playing. We are here talking about this. Really?

* (21:30)

I would rather us debate the conversation of how do we bring more business to this province? I'd rather debate the conversation of how do we keep criminals locked up in jail? I'd rather us debating the conversation about, how do we keep our citizens safe? Because with all due respect, you think you're protecting the LGBTQ community? You wait when the general public starts the backlash on you.

The last time I was here, my wife and I sang a song and told Greg Selinger he lied about the PST. Remember that song? Greg Selinger remembers it.

We may be small in numbers; a handful of us. But you know what we have learned over the years? Resilience. Relenting. Actions by even one can make a difference.

And I will remember all of you that voted for this. I'll remember all of you because a day will come when Don Woodstock, the same guy who take two years to get the City to change from garbage day to recycle

day—that was me; the same guy who went and lobbied the City to give us the big, blue bins in the back lane—that was me; the same guy who stood on the steps of the Leg., here with my wife and a handful of people, get all of Canada know—giving out recycle—reusable bags instead of plastic bags—that was me. Single person, with a handful of people.

You want to vote for this nonsense? Go for it. Go for it. But I am—my name is Don Woodstock and I identify—and I will ask the question again. I will be respectful to you guys, but I'm going to ask the question on social media now. If I choose to be identified as whatever, who in here can tell me that I shouldn't? Which one of you? I have that right, don't I? Yes, I do. And whatever I decide to call myself, I have that right. And you do not have the right to tell me I should call myself whatever and tell me about language. Are you kidding me?

Same language—same thing they tell us about COVID, and we see what happened. Now you are trying to run away from it.

Ladies and gentlemen, if you want to protect the vulnerable among us, here's what you do: the Human Rights Commission needs more people to advocate for more cases that we have already on the books; they can hardly keep up. Why don't you ask them? Increase their staff; increase their numbers. Give them the opportunity instead of taking two years.

Sel Burrows gave you an excellent idea: we can power community. That's what is needed, it's not some to hide behind some law and pretend like you—you know, you're protecting the vulnerable. Who are you kidding? You're not fooling me. But I wait and see where you guys all vote.

And, yes, I'm sorry, you don't speak for the Black community. Sorry.

The Chairperson: Presentation is over. Thank you for your time.

If—do members of the committee have questions for the presenter? Seeing—Minister Asagwara?

MLA Asagwara: Thank you so much, Mr. Woodcock [*phonetic*]-Woodstock—is it Woodstock?

Floor Comment: Woodstock.

MLA Asagwara: Thank you so much for your presentation. I apologize for mispronouncing your name; it was unintentional.

Floor Comment: Once I get the human rights involved, now?

MLA Asagwara: I mean, I think you have a better understanding, based on the presentations today and from the commissioner, about how that works.

But I want to say this again and I said it earlier: the beauty of this committee is the opportunity for people to come and express themselves, freely and openly. And I want to thank you for that.

I also want to acknowledge the beauty of our province is the diversity, even within communities that folks maybe don't understand are incredibly diverse, like the Black community. That community is not a monolith and it's a really wonderful thing to celebrate, here in Manitoba. And as a proud, lifelong Manitoban, I hope that we'll continue to do that as all our communities moving forward.

So thank you for your presentation today.

D. Woodstock: You're welcome. Just like the fella says, it is not possible for any of you inside here to twist your hair and say that you're a Jamaican or a Rasta man. It's not possible. There's not one of you in here that can do that.

And there's a reason why you can't do that. It's not because I'm discriminating against you; it's just right or wrong, good or bad. That's just life. I'm a Jamaican, I am a born Jamaican. I grew up around the Rastafarian culture and know what roots is.

You don't know what it is, and even if you twist your hair tomorrow morning, you'll never know what it is. You would never understand the power of working with grassroot people, because unless you been there, you don't know it.

If you have never climbed a coconut tree, you don't know what it is to climb it, and no matter what you pretend and think you do, you don't.

Mr. Balcaen: Mr. Woodstock, thank you very much for your presentation today, and I appreciate you exercising your democratic right to be here and to present to this committee.

D. Woodstock: Thank you. Thank you very much, and I understand it is a fine line you guys have to draw, and I get it. You're trying to protect the vulnerable among us, and I know it's one of those things that you got to balance.

Be careful, that in trying to think you're protecting the vulnerable, you make them targets. Okay? Because I have clients who are LGBTQ—I have—and believe me, people don't know this, but they welcome me in their

homes, okay? Even though they know I am a Christian, I have a wife, you know?

But we talk about everything, and I got to tell you the honest truth, guys, ladies and gentlemen, ministers, they don't like when you guys target—put targets on them. They don't like it. They want to be left alone, at least the clients I have.

They don't like this, I'm—and that's why I come and say, you know, I'm going to talk, and tell you guys that, hey, there are people out there who know and know that I respect them, they respect me, and we don't need a policy for that.

Help the human rights by making sure that when there is a complaint, they don't take three, four, five years. Give me the legislation for that. Give them more money and more staffing, yes. That's what they need, not this.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Before recognizing the next presenter, I would like to remind all presenters why we are here this evening. Manitoba is one of the only provinces where all members of the public can participate in legislative proceedings and express their opinions and thoughts to their elected officials.

I would ask all presenters to please treat members of this committee with respect as they take part in these proceedings.

Thank you.

Okay, I will now call on Ms. Kathy Harris, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Kathy Harris (Private Citizen): Thank you. I feel kind of small.

I am here as a mom, as a grandma, as a business owner and as a woman. Little by little, week by week, month by month, year by year, things are becoming very topsy-turvy, things that I am not used to.

So maybe there is some things that you have to get used to, but there are some things where you just—you know what? There's a line that you just can't cross anymore. You just—you got to say stop.

* (21:40)

Just right now, this evening, I walked out to use the restroom. The gentleman outside showed me where

the restroom is, and I go there and it's an all-gender washroom. So—

An Honourable Member: Just like at your house.

The Chairperson: Order.

K. Harris: You mean the house that I share my washroom with, with the people that I love? That is an all-gender washroom at my home, thank you.

Now, back to my presentation, I'd appreciate my time back, thank you so much. However, I don't feel comfortable doing that. I don't. I feel very uncomfortable doing that. And I feel very uncomfortable by your laughing. I feel very uncomfortable about that.

You like sharing a bathroom with a man? Do you?

The Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

So in the stall next to you, you have a man—

The Vice-Chairperson: Sorry, Ms. Harris. We welcome your presentation, but kind of interchange between members and presenters—there's a question period at the end where some of that can happen.

K. Harris: Respectfulness, is that correct?

The Vice-Chairperson: Part of the process, yes.

K. Harris: Wonderful. That would be appreciated from both sides.

The Vice-Chairperson: Ms. Harris, you can continue.

K. Harris: Thank you, thank you.

So I was at the human rights museum couple of years ago, which I won't go back again now, because I asked to use the restroom. I was shown an all-gender washroom. I said, I'm sorry, I can't do this.

But, sorry, back to my first example—so the young man showed me, after I said, no, I'm sorry, I don't want an all-gender bathroom, he says, oh, okay, well, you know, there's another one downstairs. I said, okay. So he leads me two flights down into the basement, okay? So now, on the same floor as everybody else could—can have a washroom, a woman can't have one. Okay.

Now, I go down to that washroom—not well used, it doesn't seem like it doesn't—doesn't seem like well used. Because both paper towel dispensers don't work, okay? So now, I come out and go like, hmm, seems like now women are, I guess, relegated to the basement now. Okay. Is that where we're going, okay?

Now, the human rights museum, I go there and, no, I don't want to use an all-gender washroom. I'm not going to share a washroom with a man, I'm sorry,

I'm not going to do it. So are my human rights—if there's men in the washroom, do I, you know, use the basket in somebody's office, or, you know, their wastebasket, or—what do I do? Like, what's my human rights?

So in all of this planning, and all of this change, please, please take into effect that women are still very much women. We're very much soft-spoken, we're very much—don't want to get in anybody's face, we don't want to. You know, you—sometimes, the guys can do it, but the girls, they just want to all get along, they just want to all, you know, be nice to each other.

And, you know what, justice and love are two separate, totally separate different things. You can't have both in the same context. Because love is a feeling. It's a feeling. Justice is black and white: you're a criminal, you're not a criminal. You get the electric chair, you don't get the electric chair. So it's very black and white. Love is a feeling. This doesn't belong in justice.

So we have to make sure, that when we're making all these rules, amendments, acts, that you have to use clarity as to what are you doing, and what is the result of what you do. For instance, transgender people were—all of a sudden, there was Pride parades. Think it was about 2016—2016 we have these Pride parades. Then all of a sudden there's transgender. Now transgender to me were people just all decorated all up, and they were entertaining and they're having fun, and everybody thought it was kind of cool.

Then all of a sudden transgender people are teaching our kids in the classroom. Come on. Come on. They're actors; they're people that help to entertain stuff. It—the—that kind of stuff is—gay people, lesbian people, that's great. Nobody's telling you how to live your life. But let's put things in perspective, please. There's—things are getting way out of hand. Things are—we don't even understand what the result of all of this is going to be. It's going to be terrible.

Closing down for COVID—look at what happened to the kids. It's—and what's happening to the kids today.

I've seen some transgender people who are all dressed up and they got all these clothes and these big wigs and all stuff, and—but their body parts are being exposed more so than they should be. And my kids, they're not going to be seeing it. So wait until they're 18 and everybody can do whatever they want.

So let's just—can you just wait. Take all of that out of that, get rid of the 'ucky' books that are—you know

what? There are no books that are in the library that I've ever grown up on that even just heterosexual people were doing the things in the books that are being told to a five-year-old and a six-year-old and a seven-year-old kid. So come on.

Can we just step back a moment and have a little bit of morals? You know, a little bit of—you know, I don't want to get all upset and swear and tell people, you know, where they can go. I just want some balance in it. Balance. It takes a long time to make change. We got to get used to this stuff. But the reason that Ms. Sharma said that the angerness has grown recently is because of all of this stuff being thrown at us.

The transgender, lesbian, gay community is a very small fraction of everybody else. So let's kind of ease things in here. It's going a little fast. And no one wishes harm upon other people. Nobody does. There's the few, but also, why does Ms. Sharma have so many cases? Why? Is it because our rules are 'ambiguous'? Sorry, 'ambuges'—my throat is dry.

An Honourable Member: Ambiguous.

K. Harris: Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Is that why? Is it because we're making our laws so that they're—take an example. A gay person rents an apartment, but decides not to pay the rent. So now the landlord says, pay your rent or you're out. Well, the gay person says, no, no. I'm gay; you can't treat me like this. I'm going to the human rights museum or—human rights.

And now Ms. Sharma has a case. Is that why she has so many cases that they are taking three to five years to litigate? This is what's wrong. Let's step back; put things in writing, black and white. She mentioned a couple of different—there's some definitions here, and then there's some definitions in a different clause—

The Vice-Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Harris. Your time for your presentation has expired.

Are there any questions from the committee?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, Ms. Harris, for your presentation. I think it's a learning process for many folks, so appreciate that you're trying to understand and learn some things.

* (21:50)

I also wanted to apologize for your experience with the facilities in the building—in the hundred-year-old building—and we want to make sure that you're comfortable. There are many facilities in the building, but, of course, you usually have to go downstairs to

access them and we want to make sure that you get the facilities that you need, so apologies for that.

The Vice-Chairperson: You're welcome to respond if you'd like, Ms. Harris.

K. Harris: I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Balcaen: Ms. Harris, thank you for your presentation tonight. And I know it's getting late in the evening, so I appreciate you being here and sharing your story and your concerns.

The Vice-Chairperson: You're welcome to respond if you'd like, Ms. Harris.

K. Harris: Thank you. I appreciate it.

Mr. Goertzen: You raised the issue of a backlog at the Human Rights Commission. I understand that the commissioner had giving some assurances or hopes that the backlog would be improved. I know those insurances were also given in 2023, when the explanation by the Human Rights Commission was because of COVID that there was four to six hundred backlogs and they were—we were told that the backlog would be eliminated by 2025, which is now, and it hasn't been eliminated.

So I think that those concerns about the backlog and how long it actually takes to get adjudication is a fair concern. Thank you for raising it.

The Vice-Chairperson: You're welcome to respond, Ms. Harris.

K. Harris: Thank you. And it would be nice if the government—well, actually, you know what, I'm not really too keen on the government as far as relying on everything that they say is true. However, a third party—someone get a research—someone—a third party who's definitely not part of the government—and analyze where are all these cases coming from? Where are they coming from? So that you can identify where in the law that there's ambiguity, okay. So people don't like to be harassed or stuff, it's—we just all want to get along. Truthfully, we just all want to get along. So if we could, you know, maybe find why they have so many cases.

The Vice-Chairperson: Thank you.

Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Next up, we have Mr. Caleb Clay.

Mr. Clay, you're welcome to start your presentation.

Caleb Clay (Private Citizen): Hi, everybody. Hello, committee. I'm very, very honoured to be here and to express my democratic rights with you all tonight. I was hoping to maybe be home a little sooner, but what needs doing needs doing.

So as stated, my name—my name—is Caleb Clay. I was born in Winnipeg. I was raised in Stonewall, Manitoba, for 18 years and I've lived in Winnipeg for the last 10 years.

There is many aspects to who I am. I have a bachelor's degree in music history. I have cats that I love very much. But maybe most importantly to me is that I am a transgender man. I use he/him pronouns. I take hormone replacement therapy to alter the biology of my body to align with the gender that I am.

When I was in middle school and high school in rural Manitoba, I was not allowed to express myself at home—

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Point of Order

The Vice-Chairperson: Sorry, a point of order from Minister Asagwara.

MLA Asagwara: Chair, I'm just—there's a ton of noise in the back of the room and I'm just cognizant that we really need to hear from our presenter and respect their time. They waited quite some time to present, so I just want to make sure that we can manage the noise level in the space so that we can hear them appropriately.

The Vice-Chairperson: It seems like the noise has dissipated, so we'll continue—[interjection] Sorry? Hold on?

Okay, so this is a point of order, which is a rarity, but we will give it a couple minutes for the noise to dissipate.

* * *

The Vice-Chairperson: You're welcome to restart if you'd like, once we're ready to restart, which I actually think we may be ready now. Would you like to restart or? [interjection] No? Okay.

C. Clay: When I was in middle and high school, I was not allowed to express myself at home, which delayed my gender realization significantly. But I had a number of friends in high school with similar situations for whom the school was a refuge.

In their unsupportive home environments, they couldn't truly be themselves, but when they were at school, teachers and guidance counsellors and their

friends would use their preferred name and pronouns. And I am one hundred percent certain that those friends would not be here today if they had not had a safe space to go, and if they had not been acknowledged in such a way.

For me, it wasn't until 2021 when I finally came out as a transgender man, that I fully realized that impact; I always supported my friends, but I didn't know what it felt like.

And to any cisgender people with us in tonight in the committee, I hope that you understand that understanding our experience intellectually is not the same as living it, and that it takes an incredible amount of resilience to sit through three hours, nearly, of attacks against who I am and immutable facts about my life, my identity and my biology.

Having that validated, my identity, by the people around you can have an insane amount of impact on a person's life. Once I picked my new name and pronouns, I felt the true freedom of being myself, and that's what we're here to talk about: freedom.

Remaining closeted at work and school at that point became much more difficult for me, because I knew what that freedom felt like in my social life. In 2022, I was employed by a company whose owners had overtly stated conservative values. I feared that asserting my name and pronouns, cutting my hair, dressing in a more masculine fashion, would result in discrimination from them.

And so, I could not afford the possibility of being fired, or having my shifts cut down because of those things, so I remained closeted at work and it was incredibly painful. It takes a tremendous mental toll. Since leaving that line of work, I have been free to be myself. I have an employer who I do not fear discrimination from.

I was able to go through my legal name change and to have the biological reality of my body be blessedly changed by hormone replacement therapy, and I hope to have surgeries in the future to continue that change. Since then, I have been lighter. I smile and laugh more, I'm happier. I am myself and the people who love me have noticed that change within me.

The proposed changed to bill C-43 is exciting to me. It represents an important step towards progress and the change that we need to see, to make the world a better place for those who come after us. This change would mean freedom for trans people to be themselves in all facets of life, and not having to

compartmentalize and separate their identity at work from that at home or among friends.

I am reminded of a quote from Ivan E. Coyote, a transgender Canadian writer and performer, whose work I deeply, deeply admire, from their book that was written with Rae Spoon. It's called *Gender Failure*. It's a very good read, it's incredibly insightful, it taught me a lot about trans people when I was a closeted high schooler.

The quote follows: The truth is, every time I'm misgendered a tiny little sliver of me disappears. A tiny little sliver of me is reminded that I do not fit. I remember that the truth of me is invisible, and a tiny little sliver of me disappears. Just a sliver, razored from the surface of my very thick skin most days, but other times right from my soul. Sometimes felt so deep, and other days simply shrugged off, but still, all those slivers add up to something, and it is much harder to pretend around.

Every time somebody calls me Caleb, and uses he/him to refer to me, one of those slivers is repaired, or it's replaced by love that I didn't feel for a very long time. After 26 years of being forced into a gender that did not fit, it takes a lot of time to repair those slivers.

I have only been out for a short amount of time, but my self is growing back. My heart is growing back; my spirit is growing back. My support of the amendment to bill C-43 comes from my own experience, and my sincere hope that kids like me will not have to face what I face.

Opponents of this bill have made their stance clear. The desire to misgender trans people, to deny the facts of their identity and biology, amounts to little more than spiteful bullying. Their desire to limit people's self-expression, to deny bodily autonomy does not represent the values I understand Manitobans to have.

All the trans people and our allies are asking for is protection of our freedom, the ability to determine how we ought to live and to not be subjugated by bigoted ideology we did not ask for and do not subscribe to.

The Vice-Chairperson: Thank you so much for that presentation.

Are there questions from the committee?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Clay, for your presentation this evening.

* (22:00)

Incredibly heartfelt—I'm sorry you had to endure the process this evening, but I will say that it does matter that you stuck it out and that you were able to find the strength to come and share your personal experience, be able to share with the committee.

I also just wanted to just thank you for, I think, so succinctly laying out why this is important. You know, this matters. This matters to folks like you, matters to so many people who don't have the same kind of strength and voice that you do, but for you to be able to come here to support this, I think it matters a lot. So just wanted to thank you for the presentation, for sticking it out.

The Vice-Chairperson: You're welcome to respond, Mr. Caleb.

C. Clay: Thank you very much.

Mr. Balcaen: Caleb, thank you for attending tonight, and as I've said to all the presenters, I appreciate hearing your views, as I've heard from other people that have presented tonight. So again, thank you for using your democratic right to bring your presentation forward tonight.

The Vice-Chairperson: Mr. Clay, you're welcome to respond.

C. Clay: You are most welcome.

Hon. Lisa Naylor (Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure): Yes, I just wanted to say, Caleb, thank you for your presentation tonight. You were very—sorry, I'm very dry—you were really able to share the impact of what it means to you to be able to live your truth as a transgender person.

And we know that while it's not always applied as it should be, that gender identity has been protected for quite some time under The Human Rights Code. Do you want to say anything more about how the inclusion of gender expression will enhance The Human Rights Code, either for yourself or for other groups that you know?

C. Clay: I do not believe that employers should have the right to dictate how you dress when it is in a professional manner befitting of your employment position. I do not believe that landlords should be able to discriminate against certain types of people that they may find undesirable to be living in their spaces when they are providing a service. I believe that these rights are very important, and I don't think that I should have to wear a dress to get an apartment. I don't think that would be appropriate. My hair is short, my voice is low, I am a man.

The Vice-Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you for your presentation.

Next up, we have Mx. Helina Zegeye.

Before you get started, could you give me a pronunciation for your last name?

Helina Zegeye (Sunshine House): Helina.

The Vice-Chairperson: Sorry? Oh, Mx. Helina Zegeye.

H. Zegeye: Helina Zegeye.

The Vice-Chairperson: Sorry?

H. Zegeye: Helina Zegeye.

The Vice-Chairperson: Zegeye. Okay, thank you.

You can start, Mx. Zegeye.

H. Zegeye: Thank you all so much here for providing an avenue for folks in community to express how they would feel affected by this policy change. My name is Helina, and I use they/them pronouns. I am affiliated with Sunshine House, and I'm here in support of bill 4—C43.

To open up, I'd like to say that I don't know how many genders there are in the world because I haven't met everybody yet, but I do know that the separation of church and state is a cornerstone of the democratic process that I am thankful for.

Sunshine House, through love, serves to meet the gaps experienced by queer community members in services that draw people in because they've been disregarded or underserved in other places where they were seeking private or public services or advocacy.

Working at Sunshine House, it is a queer-led and -serving organization. It is a unique place to work, and so much of the privilege that I get to experience as a queer person working at an organization that respects and identifies with who I am in an inclusive workspace really brings the best out of myself and my peers and my colleagues. It also allows us to serve community who's coming to us, regardless of where coming from or how they identify, in a way that is informed.

As a non-binary Manitoban, I believe that respect is an act of love, and we here in friendly Manitoba are known for our community care. I've been living in this province and in this city for over 20 years. I've gone to school, university, and I now work in Manitoba.

When I was in university and in high school I was very involved in my extracurriculars. In high school I was a UNESCO student board member, I was a

student council representative, and, personally, for me, I was, unfortunately, told that by expressing the discrimination I felt I was facing by other students and by labelling that as bullying that I was actually not adhering to the school code. And so if I was to continue calling the other student homophobic for the actions that I was perceiving as such, then I would be suspended or expelled and I was not able to actually bring in an advocate from my family because at the time I was not out to my family.

And so that is just a simple and personal example of how these types of things that affected me outside of my personal and professional experiences.

I am proud to see that Manitoba is going to be providing another example of what community inclusion looks like across Canada. For me, I believe that respect and access to public spaces and services increases engagement, like school attendance and access to health-care services.

We know that people are rational and they go to where they feel respected. Because bill C-43 improves safety for all people, because gender expression engages with our creativity, our curiosity and our exploration of natural selves. That is why all Manitobans should be able to express their gender freely regardless of whether or not they identify as gender queer, nonbinary, or cis.

It is our—it is not our place to judge others and to—but it is our place to provide public spaces and services that allow people to thrive from a person-centered approach that includes equitable access to services regardless of the pronouns or expression of self.

Community members accessing our organization services rely on our staff to recognize and affirm that their gender expression is valid in a world that seeks to deny their existence. This is an honour that we carry with love and care because denying their truth erodes trust in our ability to keep their best interests at heart and turn—and, in turn, limiting our effectiveness to foresee and prevent harm that might be coming towards them in the future.

Bill C-43 challenges us to imagine a collective social experience that affirms and accepts all Manitobans. This bill would lead to queer community members knowing that not only is their present existence protected, but also that their future in Manitoba will be full of possibilities.

The expansion of language, especially gendered language within society, is a precedent that we all share. I would like to acknowledge that cis women

and men have benefited from the inclusive language that allows little girls to imagine themselves as doctors and little boys to imagine themselves as teachers and nurses.

The language being discussed today in bill C-43 for amending expansion on this heritage—builds on this heritage of expanding expression in our shared lexicon. And this also includes the possibility for everyone to build in a respectful and shared value.

The Human Rights Code change puts Manitoba in line with the Canadian human rights of charter and freedom. This is not a bad thing. This is also going to be able to be a show of support for all people and creating that positives—for multiple communities across all demographics.

When we respect and model and encourage this type of behaviour it allows for all people to feel included, regardless of their background.

Why should Manitoba base its actions on the perceptions of other provinces? We are a unique province and is home to innovators and leaders resolving different challenges. Anecdotally we are seeing queer and trans health-care workers transferring to Manitoba because of these social pressures outside of the province, and Manitoba has now and wants to continue expanding on these protections.

Manitoba health care benefits from the influx of all health-care workers, including queer professionals, and instead of losing talent to Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver, this will keep talent at home and bring in new vibrant caring professionals.

The bill only seeks, from my understanding, to recognize that discrimination based on gender expression can and does limit the quality of life and social equity. Therefore, it is looking to only affect things that I understand to be public sector services or regulated, like employment, housing and health.

As a Black, queer, disabled immigrant and now citizen, I am proud to live in a country that recognizes my humanity and further to protect all people, regardless of ability, colour and orientation or religion.

I could not live my truth in the place that I was born and I would still be seeking safety if I was there. These state protections against discrimination are a point of pride for Manitobans, because recognizing human rights protections is never a misuse of the democratic process, and if I shouldn't be discriminated against for these public sector services as a Black person, as a disabled person, then it stands to reason

that I should not be discriminated based on my gender expression.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chairperson: Thank you for that presentation. I see a question from the Minister of Justice.

Mr. Wiebe: Mx. Zegeye, I really appreciate your presentation here tonight. Again, that personal experience, then coupled with the advocacy that you do every single day. Sunshine House is amazing. It is one of the most amazing places I've ever visited. And so I just want to thank you for the work you do to lift others up.

But I wanted to just highlight your quote here: where members of the queer community, knowing that their existence is protected but that their future is also full of opportunity—I probably got the exact wording wrong—but, just—I could not have said it any better.

* (22:10)

Giving that confidence to everyone in this province is so vital, so thank you for your support here this evening.

The Vice-Chairperson: You are welcome to respond if you'd like, Mx. Zegeye.

H. Zegeye: Thank you so much.

I think that we're an exciting time in human history and I think that the future holds a lot of possibility. There's a lot of choices ahead of all of us collectively, to decide what that future will hold. But I have faith and hope that we will choose a path that is just for all people.

Mr. Goertzen: Thank you for participating tonight. I know it's a long night and lots of emotional presentations, and in this unique process, I think most folks have demonstrated an articulate and a passionate position and you certainly are among those.

So thank you for your articulate and passionate presentation.

The Vice-Chairperson: You are welcome to respond, Mx. Zegeye.

H. Zegeye: Thank you so much.

The Vice-Chairperson: Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your presentation.

Next up we have Ms. Barbara Bendera. Ms. Bendera, you are welcome to start when you're ready.

Barbara Bendera (Private Citizen): Thank you.

I thank you, to the Chairperson, the Standing Committee and the Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Matt Wiebe, for giving me the opportunity to voice my views, facts and questions.

I'm here because I've been researching Bill 43, this topic that includes the difference between gender identity and gender expression, in order to better understand how adding gender expression to the Manitoba Human Rights Code would benefit and protect all Manitobans—I emphasize all.

The last Canadian census of population was in May 2021 and indicated that approximately 0.33 per cent of the population 15 years and older identified as transgender or non-binary. That is only one third of 1 per cent. Therefore, 99.66 per cent of the Canadian population identify as either male or female in the last census. Forty per cent of transgender and non-binary people live in Ontario. I looked at a June 22 publication from Business Council of Alberta which states that this may explain why the legislation there is—started in Ontario and may be different in each province and in Manitoba.

In my research, and some sources that I researched including quite a bit—include Medscape reference, WebMD, Medical News Today, Wikipedia, Donat [*phonetic*], Psychology Today, Egale Canada. And I looked even at a bit of the Ontario information.

I learned that gender identity may be the same or different from their birth-assigned sex. Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender—personal sense, meaning it is a person's feelings at the time. I then researched: Are feelings facts?

In Psychology Today it is stated that it is not wise to—it is wise to remember that as important as the emotions are, feelings are not facts. This is important to know because, in the last Canadian census, 99.66 per cent of the population stated that gender identity—they stated it on facts, at birth, physically visible as male or female.

But 0.33 per cent of the population base their gender on feelings, which encompass at least 20 gender terms and definitions if you look at the list in Egale Canada. And somebody mentioned here before, I think there was 82 or something. And probably rising.

This led me to consider the meaning of gender expression that is being put forward as an addition to Manitoba Human Rights Code subsection 9(2)(g): gender identity. Gender expression is how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender.

This can include behaviour, and outward appearance such as dress, hair, makeup, body language and voice. I felt we had to look at what does this mean for the majority of the population, who, like me, may be confused on how to address a very small population under gender expression.

Following are a few definition examples I researched from a variety of sources on why this may be confusing and difficult to do. One: non-binary or transgender means outside the male and female umbrella. Two: genderfluid or genderqueer. This gender identity is not fixed; it can change over time or from day to day. It states that it is a form of gender identity or gender expression, rather than a sexual orientation, which is from WebMD.

Gender neutral: not related to or restricted by specific gender, particularly male or female. They aim to avoid distinguishing roles or opportunities based on sex or gender. They use gender-neutral pronouns: they, may—theirs, are the most common.

However, there are neopronouns as well. This requires more research. Pangender: a non-binary person outside of male and female umbrella, whose gender identity encompasses multiple genders, which may be experienced simultaneously or on a fluid, fluctuating manner.

Therefore, I felt it was important to bring awareness to Manitobans, as it took me time to research and try to understand gender identity versus gender expression, and consider why Bill 43, to amend the Manitoba Human Rights Code, is being considered. As it relates so—it raises so many questions that need to be understood by all affected before it becomes law.

In my research, I found the Manitoba Human Rights Commission fact sheet titled Discrimination is prohibited by The Human Rights Code. In this fact sheet, under what are the protected grounds under the code, one of the bullets is gender-determined characteristics, which is in 9(2)(f), sex, in the Manitoba Human Rights Code. Today's meeting is also to add gender expression.

A search on gender-determined characteristics stated that this refers to traits, roles, behaviours, expressions that are traditionally associated with or attributed to a particular gender. Please note: this is

very similar to gender expression, which includes behaviour and outward appearance.

It looks as though, by definition, that gender expression has been covered. Can you please explain why another two words, gender expression, are necessary? Again, I am somewhat puzzled as to the reason that gender expression is being put forward to be added to the Manitoba Human Rights Code subsection 9(2) when 19(2)(a), on harassment in the code, states: a course of abusive and unwelcome conduct or comment undertaken or made on the basis of any characteristic referred to in subsection 9(2).

And subsection 9(2) includes 13 items from A to M, of which three are—F is sex, including sex-determined characteristics or circumstances. G: gender identity, and H: sexual orientation. Rather confusing.

I ask, as a Manitoban interested in learning—and I notice tonight, a lot of them are interested in learning and very confused—I was, as I'm doing the research. Is the addition of gender expression really necessary because of 19(2)(a) pointing to 9(2)? All of the above—F, G and H—this seems to be protection.

* (22:20)

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is also protection. Under equality rights, it prohibits discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Many of the heterosexual male and female Canadian population have experienced harassment themselves in school years and beyond. Some have been called names because of colour, facial features, clothes, et cetera. We all had to learn to deal with it, talk to each other, sometimes with the help of parents, teachers, pastors and friends.

Understanding grew from this process of modelling positive communication. Saying sorry and forgiveness; this is life. Oh yes, and by the way some of them after become friends.

Education versus legislation has worked for the majority of the population. If a group, any group, truly wants acceptance as it is—it is accomplished by building understanding through building relationships. More legislation like this that confuses many, many people will not bring people together. It divides and causes more questions and confusion because one cannot—

The Vice-Chairperson: Thanks, Ms. Bendera. The time for your presentation has expired.

Sorry, we got to move on to questions, if there are any.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Bendera. And I appreciate that you have talked a lot about learning, and I think for many folks, that's what this is about. It's about being educated and understanding a little bit better the perspective of other Manitobans.

The fact that you've put so much effort into the research is very encouraging. It shows to me that you are willing to learn and to help understand or help yourself understand more the experience of other Manitobans. And what I hear from you is that you do want to protect those folks, so that's encouraging as well.

So, thank you for your presentation here today.

The Vice-Chairperson: You're welcome to respond if you'd like, Ms. Bendera.

B. Bendera: Yes, the understanding goes two ways. From the 99.66 per cent and from the 0.33 per cent. That's the only way it works.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you very much for your presentation tonight. As I said, I appreciate all of the presentations and the voices that are coming forward.

Just wondering, you didn't have a chance to finish your presentation and I'm just wondering if you would like to finish. There's about three and a half minutes left.

B. Bendera: Thank you.

All I had at the end, and I'll repeat this sentence: More legislation like this that confuses many, many people will not bring people together. It divides and causes more questions and confusion because one cannot legislate love and understanding.

I conclude with: What kind of Manitoba do we want?

Thank you.

The Vice-Chairperson: Thank you.

Seeing no further questions, we appreciate the presentation.

Next up, we have Mrs. Gina McKay. I don't see Gina here.

Mrs. Gina McKay?

We're going to double-check to see if she's online. She is online. Okay.

Okay, so Mrs. McKay, you are welcome to start.

Gina McKay (Canadian Union of Public Employees—Manitoba): Okay. I take it that everyone can hear me okay. Thanks for the opportunity here.

So good—good evening. Not good afternoon, sorry.

Good evening, honourable Chair, honourable Minister Wiebe and honourable ministers in the room, although I can just see you—just small there on the screen. I have appreciated hearing from you tonight and I wanted to thank all the honourable committee members, as well as the speakers here to support this important amendment.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to present on Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act.

My name is Gina McKay. I'm the president of CUPE Manitoba, representing 38,000 workers in Manitoba. I am also the equity vice-president for 2SLGBTQI+ workers for the Canadian Labour Congress, representing three million workers in Canada, and the general vice-president for CUPE in Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

I'm also a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ community and my career at SERC, Sexuality Education Resource Centre, has given me on-the-ground experience serving Manitobans from diverse gender expressions and identities, as well as training workers who serve across our public services in Manitoba.

I am here speaking to in support of Bill 43 and am particularly concerned about the rise of the incredibly harmful rhetoric across Canada, including in Manitoba, that seeks to divide our communities, divide our workplaces and divide our experiences as both service users as well as service providers.

According to—sorry, it was a long night—Statistics Canada, 1.3-million Canadians identify as being part of the 2SLGBTQI+ community. Stats Canada also found that 77 per cent of sexually and gender-diverse youth have been targets of bullying in the previous year. Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community are also more likely to earn lower incomes, experience discrimination on the job and interview process, and continue to encounter barriers in finding and advancing in employment.

And as a union, we work very hard to ensure that those who face discrimination in the workplace receive the supports that they need. Rather than alienating, othering or driving wedges, it is our goal to ensure that all workers—indeed, all Manitobans—are treated with respect and dignity.

Unfortunately, though, there are some in Manitoba who do not take the time to understand their neighbours and fellow co-workers, and who make efforts to devalue and hurt fellow Manitobans. There are some who would speak out against legislation intended to protect Manitobans from discrimination as we are seeing here tonight. There are even some who truly believe that trans and gender-diverse Manitobans deserve less than themselves, and in the past few months, while in the gallery, I have heard some of these harmful voices come from the Legislature building by the opposition, shared in front of full galleries of community members, youth and elders.

Bill 43 will enshrine legally the necessary human rights and gender non-conforming Manitobans so that they can live their lives at work and in the community without fear of hate or discrimination. And most importantly, a place for recourse if they are targeted by hate wherever they work or live.

The Chairperson in the Chair

Enhancing The Human Rights Code will also provide protections to ensure the health and safety of every worker in Manitoba is upheld, and adding gender expression creates a more inclusive code to ensure someone is not discriminated in every workplace in Manitoba, not just unionized workplaces that have been building in gender expression into protected grounds, language and collective agreements for years.

CUPE Manitoba strongly supports Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, and we commend the NDP government leaders in this room their willingness to address this gap in The Human Rights Code and taking action to close those gaps and to take Manitoba off the list of the last three provinces in Canada who have not amended their Human Rights Code to include gender expression.

It is time to lead with integrity, as we see the government doing here, and to ensure that Manitoba's workplaces, unionized and non-unionized, are inclusive spaces for all. And also, importantly, Manitoba's workplaces, unions and workers are proud of strengthening legislation. It should never be about curbing protections based on a fear or need for investigating a worker, as we have heard earlier in the question periods. Creating safer and more inclusive environments for workers and communities should never rely heavily on one's own judgment of how another expresses themselves. But rather, we should be looking for ways to ensure the rights and freedoms of all are included in The Human Rights Code, not just some humans, as described earlier tonight.

So I'd like to thank you for your time and the opportunity to address the standing committee this evening via Zoom. I am reassured that our legislation and human rights protections in Manitoba far outweigh the rise of hate that is being presented in opposition.

* (22:30)

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mrs. McKay, for your presentation here this evening. It's very much appreciated. I appreciate that you laid out how high the stakes are, in your case specifically, in the context of working folks, and your advocacy over the years has been absolutely stellar in that regard. So I appreciate that.

And also, I noted that it echoed some of the language used by Ms. Sharma, as well, about the, sort of, the moment we're in. And so I just wanted to thank you and appreciate you taking the time to put on the record about, you know, concerning things you've heard even in this own—this Legislature, and how we need to fight back against this, and supporting this kind of legislation makes a big difference.

So thank you, Ms. McKay.

G. McKay: Yes, thank you so much for that, Minister.

I know what—it really hits true to the heart, right, when we know that we come out—it was, you know, times where you have elders and community members, especially coming to the House, the people's House, and then feeling very attacked. And so when we see that in the House, the people's House, we know that we need to strengthen legislation to protect Manitobans.

And that's just one example. You know, workers need to be able to come to work in ways where they can be their true, authentic selves. And that's what we can be proud of. We have collective agreements that can help protect and advance those rights and protections, of course, but where we need to look at is not being the third last, right, out of—across from coast to coast to coast, but to move Manitoba into a place where we are leaders. We are leaders right now; we're moving forward in great ways, but we need to bring protections and not pick and choose our human rights here.

So thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you very much for the presentation tonight. And again, I appreciate the views of all of the people that are presenting tonight.

I'm just wondering, you cited some of The Human Rights Code, but are not a lot of these inequities already codified under the labour code, whether it be the Manitoba labour code or the Canadian Labour Code and labour standards?

G. McKay: Now, specific to—while we're talking specifically about the, you know, The Human Rights Code where we are lacking that legislation, absolutely.

Collective agreements can move forward in ways and protect language, but not every workplace in Manitoba is unionized. And although those are great jobs and great protections and language and pensions that we want to see Manitobans succeed, not every place is unionized, so we need to look at ways where we can advance the legislation to ensure that all Manitobans are protected.

You know, we do have a charter of human rights, a federal code. We have protections there, but where Manitoba is lacking is in—including gender expression in that Human Rights Code. It was mentioned earlier about Saskatchewan, as well as the Northwest Territories. We see places where the code can be advanced.

Labour codes, absolutely. You know, we have protections for workers; we work hard to ensure that we have fair and equitable workplaces. But what we're talking about here specifically is legislation around moving that forward, so it's not just protecting those who have it in their contracts, but it's for protecting every worker in Manitoba. Whether they work at Tim Hortons or they work as a public servant, we should have the same protections, rights and grounds for protection. So, really, we want to make sure that that's happening.

So, you know, we do have labour code, as you know—as all of us know here. We have rights and protections, but they don't go far enough, and that's what we're here talking about tonight.

Mr. Balcaen: Yes, just as a follow-up. You mentioned collective agreements and, you know, the workplaces that aren't necessarily unionized, and I respect that you're coming from a unionized environment. I've worked in 'unionized' environments my whole life and understand the processes. But, just for clarity, those that aren't unionized, I believe, are also protected by the labour code and whether it be the Manitoba labour code or the Canadian Labour Code.

So I just wanted to make sure that that was put out there for all people that are watching tonight.

G. McKay: Sure, I think just a final remark: we can look to the labour codes, and I think it would be great to identify them if the labour codes do include protections for gender expression, because they do need to have them. Both need to have them, right, and we know that we have labour codes; we have federal and provincial codes, absolutely. And do those codes include human rights protections for both gender identity and gender expression?

I would argue that The Human Rights Code is the place to protect the—that language, and so we don't have that. So that's what we're here talking tonight, so I think it's important to look at that legislation as well, but we will recognize that Manitoba is still one of the provinces that does not include gender expression. And so when there is that lack, that's where we look for the amendment to strengthen and enhance the labour code—or, The Human Rights Code.

So it's looking to enhance it in that way, and then, thus, it would impact the workplace, absolutely.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you again for your presentation.

I will now on Ms. Kristine Barr, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Kristine Barr (Private Citizen): You may note I'm wearing my Jets jersey tonight, but they're losing 3-0, so I'm not missing much. So I'm not too sad that I'm still here tonight.

Thank you for providing a space to state my support for Bill 43. My name is Kristine Barr, I use she/her pronouns and I'm the human rights representative for CUPE so I work with Gina McKay as the president here in Manitoba. I've also served as a lawyer, both within the union and in private practice, and I'm a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

CUPE represents approximately 38,000 members in Manitoba, municipalities, health care, child care, social services, education, Manitoba Hydro and more. And as our—as the province's largest union, it is our legal and our moral responsibility to defend and protect workers on the job and to speak out, like I am this evening. And this includes ensuring a safe, non-discriminatory environment for all, inclusive of workers from different gender expressions.

As a union, I've been part of negotiating language in many workplace contracts that protect workers from

harassment, from intimidation and from discrimination based on gender and gender expression specifically, because we've had that lifted-listed within our collective agreements. And many workplaces understand that their work force includes workers from diverse gender identities and expressions, and we're seeing more and more workplaces provide education in that area.

And this legislation that you've proposed for us, that we're speaking to tonight, will ensure that those workers are protected further by Manitoba's Human Rights Code and enable both unions and employers to better address incidents of discrimination. It will also encourage workplaces to ensure that safeguards are in place for workers who may need additional supports in the workplace.

At CUPE's last convention in 2024, our delegates unanimously passed a resolution to lobby the Manitoba government to amend the Manitoba Human Rights Code to include gender expression among protected characteristics. And that was important because gender expression is a human right and should be a protected ground, especially with the rise in anti-2SLGBTQI+-targeted hate.

Manitoba, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories are the only provinces left in Canada that need to amend their human rights code to include gender expression, even though gender expression is a protected ground in the Canadian charter of human rights. And we've heard how it's been an analogous ground, but it's really important to have that explicit recognition so people know that they count when it comes to their human rights.

Gender expression is how a person publicly presents their gender; this can include behaviour and outward appearance, such as dress, hair, makeup, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender. So Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, means that Manitoba workers will be 'protected' when they go to work, when they perform their duties and when they contribute to the workplace community, without fear of discrimination.

And the reality is that workers across Manitoba come from diverse backgrounds, and unfortunately, still face discrimination in the workplace, in the community and even at home. So our union, CUPE, deals with discrimination grievances based on gender, gender identity and gender expression on a regular basis.

* (22:40)

And it's not a matter of ideology, as we've been hearing about tonight from some of the presenters—as some have been claiming—but is a matter of reality and of human decency, and that's what this comes down to: that we need to explicitly require a safe and welcoming community for all Manitobans.

So CUPE stands with all workers, and we have a particular responsibility to ensure Manitoba workers have the right to go to work without facing discrimination and harassment.

It is really dry in here.

Now, CUPE human rights activists have been talking about The Human Rights Code and how we can make it better in Manitoba, in addition to the resolution that passed at the last convention. And there are other enumerated grounds that you could be looking at as you're opening up The Human Rights Code, and I would be remiss if I didn't mention a couple of them that you might want to take into consideration, that you will find in other jurisdictions across Canada.

So, for example, citizenship isn't listed explicitly within our Human Rights Code. Indigenous origin, protecting members of a union—because they have a membership in a union—and perhaps something specific about cyberbullying and online harassment, which is growing more and more all the time.

So I really do want to applaud this government for raising this matter, taking direct action to ensure that all Manitobans are afforded a safe working environment, free from gender-based discrimination.

Manitoba must remain a leader in human rights, and this amendment that's before you today will help. And for this reason, on behalf of the 38,000 Manitoba workers that CUPE represents, we fully support Bill 43, and I welcome any questions that you might have.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Great to see you, Kristine. Thank you so much for the work that you do.

You know, just reflecting on your years of advocacy and just working in the trenches, like, supporting folks as they're navigating these things, I feel like—I hope you feel like some of that is paying off here today with this step forward.

As you said, more to do, and I appreciate you continuing to push us and make sure that we're listening to the work that you're doing, but I just wanted to thank you for the years of work that you've done and look forward to continuing to work with you on important initiatives like this.

K. Barr: Yes, thank you very much, and I have been an advocate within the 2SLGBT community for years—served as a school trustee for 16 years, fighting for safer schools for all kids, and was certainly before you—in 2012 when we were adding gender identity to The Human Rights Code.

Thank you.

Mr. Balcaen: I appreciate the opportunity, hearing your view from CUPE and your membership, and thank you for presenting.

K. Barr: Thank you very much.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you so much for your presentation.

I will now call on Mx. Charlie Eau from Trans Manitoba. Please proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Charlie Eau (Trans Manitoba): Thank you so much—thank you so much for having me.

My name is Charlie Eau and I am the executive director of Trans Manitoba. Trans Manitoba is a non-profit organization that started seven years ago as a grassroots organization to advocate for gender equity, specifically within the health-care system in Manitoba through the human rights complaint system. And since then, we have grown into an organization that does education, advocacy, and outreach to support the trans community in Manitoba.

So I am here to represent the work that we do at Trans Manitoba, and talk about what we do and how that relates to making this amendment to the human rights act. I am also a non-binary person myself. I am a parent of a non-binary kid—I have three kids. My education background is in women and gender studies, and I am a founding member and the current executive director of Trans Manitoba.

I am a lot of things. I am not a farmer; I am not a preacher; but I am a subject matter expert and an expert in my own lived experience. I am here because my work is to advocate for human rights. The very question of why we need this protection, especially after so much explication, demonstrates the very need for this change.

At Trans Manitoba, we advocate for the human rights of transgender folks and people of all genders in Manitoba. And what that means is we're looking for equal access to education, employment, access to the medical system, that is equitable to our cisgender counterparts.

We also advocate for autonomy for trans people to be the decision makers for our own lives, and for that reason I'm very grateful that we are here and we are listening to trans voices tonight as part of this decision-making process.

Trans Manitoba, the work that we do, illuminates every single day the need for gender expression to be a protected characteristic. We hear from people on a daily, weekly basis about their access to public spaces, their access to employment, about folks' access to housing, being explicitly—folks experiencing explicit barriers based on, not their gender identity, but their gender expression. So not who they feel they are intrinsically, but simply what we look like and how we express ourselves.

Trans people already experience highest—high rates of unemployment, of employment discrimination, of housing discrimination, and it's largely based on other folks' perceptions of who we are and how we're read through our gender expression.

When we talk about gender expression, I just want to talk a little bit more about the definition of that and what it means for me. My gender expression is not my gender identity. My gender expression is not who I am. My gender identity is part of who I am and part of my intrinsic experience in life, but my gender expression is—it's how we do gender. Gender expression is about what you see, what you hear and how we are interpreted by others.

And I think that that last part is the really important part, because I can't control what you call me or what pronouns you use for me. All I can do is ask that you use the name and pronouns that I ask. And I can't control how I'm interpreted. I can't control whether you believe that long hair makes me more feminine or masculine, or I can't control how you read my voice, or how you interpret those things. But what you see and hear in front of you is my gender expression.

And gender expression is—like I said, it's a lot about how we're interpreted by others. An example of this is, since becoming more visibly masculine, I now routinely have doors shut in my face in public places—physical doors, not metaphorical doors. Example of walking into a 7-Eleven a few days ago, and there

were three men walking in the door in front of me, and the first young man started to open the door, stopped, looked me up and down, and then decided to proceed through the door instead of holding it for me.

And this was followed by a whole exchange and interaction between me and the other men that were walking through this door as they all three looked at me, looked me up and down, and decided whether or not they were simply going to hold the door for me based on my gender expression.

Another example of how gender expression plays out in everyday life, and a reason why gender expression might be protected, is an example of one of my kids who is cisgender. Yes, we do have cisgender, heterosexual children, as queers. And one day, one of my little boys wore nail polish to elementary school and was horribly ridiculed by his classmates for being too feminine and was told that only girls wear nail polish.

If this had been an employment situation, this would be a protected trait for my child, who would not be allowed to continue to experience discrimination if it were a professional setting. In this case, the principal of the school painted his nails the next day and visited every single classroom to speak out against this gender-based violence that my son experienced, and that's a positive outcome for someone fighting for gender expression, and nobody should be bullied because of the sound of their voice, or because they're wearing nail polish, or because somebody thinks that something is for boys or for girls. It's just not a solid basis for hurting somebody, for being mean and cruel unnecessarily.

* (22:50)

Other examples from my personal life: I've been told by a complete stranger that I'm a disgrace to society while simply standing in my front yard gardening; I have been turned down for jobs because of the optics of what it looks like to have someone who looks like me running a store and running in a working in a public-facing role using they/them pronouns.

I was born in Manitoba and have spent all my adult life here, but I grew up in the southern United States in a world which I could never be myself. I grew up under Don't Say Gay. Before it needed to be formalized into law, Don't Say Gay was a very real threat to a young person's safety. We couldn't imagine that there were other queer people or other adults in the world. I didn't meet another queer adult until I was

in high school. I didn't really even know that there were other people like me until I was nearly an adult because of the crushing of gender expression in my childhood, and not just directed toward me but on such a high level socially that there was just no queer visibility.

I have so much left to say and just only, like, a minute left. So I want to say we have the opportunity in Manitoba to catch up with the rest of the country, who already acknowledges gender expression under their human rights acts.

And this is a really important step in decolonization and reconciliation as well, because we have firsthand documents recording the way that settlers came here and used their religious ideology to divide and disempower people and to eradicate the power that women and two-spirited people and non-binary folks held in society. And it is our obligation as lawmakers, settlers, human rights activists and members of the queer community to participate in breaking down the harms that have been caused through that very specific act of disempowering gender diverse people through colonization.

Thank you all for making it safe for me to be myself here today. Thank you for considering my human rights and those of my children and my community. Thank you for upholding my human rights in the face of bullies who have risen today to stand up for hatred, hurt and harm.

We have always been here and we will continue to thrive in the face of the rising tide of hatred. Burning books about us won't make us go away. We are here; we always have been.

And I look forward to hearing that this bill passes and continues to uphold our human rights.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Mx. Eau, that was such a great presentation. Your own personal strength, but then also that you're able to lend that strength to others as an advocate for the trans community is incredible. It really is, to me.

The one thing I picked up in your presentation—I just wanted to highlight the story you told about the principal who was—who showed himself to be an ally to your son and to others. And I think that just

perfectly encapsulates, I think, where most Manitobans are at.

There's a lot of allies out there; there's also a lot of really loud voices who take up a lot of space and who have a bigoted voice.

Anyway, I think that—I hope that you see that you have a lot of allies here around the table and that we're going to continue to fight for you and work with you.

So thank you again for your advocacy.

C. Eau: Thank you.

Mr. Balcaen: Mx. Eau, thank you very much for the presentation tonight. Again, we're hearing from many Manitobans tonight, and I believe outside of Manitoba, so appreciate you bringing your thoughts and views forward.

C. Eau: Thank you so much for having me tonight.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you so much again for your presentation.

I will now call on Mx. Michaela Chotka, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Michaela Chotka (Private Citizen): Like to thank the honourable ministers gathered here today, allowing us a forum to speak.

And I'll especially like to thank Minister Wiebe for bringing forth such an important bill, one that's dear to my heart and obviously, given that we're one of the last provinces without it, long overdue.

I originally prepared some notes—more like chicken-scratch bullet points—but after listening to everyone speaking tonight, I feel that it's more important to speak freely and from the heart, maybe make it a little personal because this is personal.

To start, though, I'd like to address a couple myths. One, trans people have been here since essentially the beginning of time. Begin with the two-spirit people of the Indigenous communities that were colonized and had the gender binary of only male and female forced upon them through the colonization process, had their culture stripped away from them in residential schools.

And we have seen a resurgence of two-spirit identities within the Indigenous communities and, in turn, a growing acceptability and visibility of gender-diverse individuals, period, thanks to the leadership of these individuals who originally may have had those identities taken away. Gender diversities existed

around the world for, essentially, forever. And it's only really in modern eras that it's been demonized the way it has.

Also, the less than 1 per cent: queer and trans individuals often are afraid to represent in census or identify, you know, outwardly or socially simply for fear of discrimination, for fear of a backlash. So, you know, I assure you that gender diverse individuals are—there's far more of us than you may actually expect or believe.

And I believe as we move forward, especially within issues like this in a province like Manitoba which is such an affirming province today which, according to recent surveys, within a country that is the friendliest and safest for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in the world, I am so proud to be here and part of that. I'm so proud to see representation from the trans community right in front of me in these positions to make this change.

I grew up in central Manitoba in a very strictly right-wing town. Religious. I was bullied relentlessly. I had a higher pitched voice. When other boys would go out and play sports, I'd stay behind when possible and perhaps play with dolls or set up dollhouses. I was the boy invited to girls' parties when 'nother' others would.

I didn't understand at the time what was different about me, why this world I was growing up in was so cruel to me. I had no representation in that time and place in that era. We're talking '80s, early '90s. There was no examples of positive queer individuals. Not to be seen. You were shamed. I knew they were out there, but God forbid, they would not identify or speak up or risk being outed or out.

So, I created a persona, a mask, a life essentially that allowed me to be, quote, unquote, normal. Because I felt to have the things I wanted in life, to have any sort of semblance of happiness, I could not explore who I was. I didn't even understand what was wrong with me because, again, no positive examples, no education. I was shamed by authority both from the church and in the school for trying to express myself to be who I was.

I can't say it was easy, but I survived it. And eventually, this life that I chose, you know, to pursue and live, like all things, especially if you're not true, ended. It blew up in my face. And I had to face myself and slowly but surely, starting six years ago, I first came out as queer and began that process.

A few years later, I went speaking to therapists and my doctor and things like that, talking about this dark cloud, this depression, this struggle I've always had in life, never truly being happy, always feeling that some ominous evil presence was behind me, that I wasn't right, just nothing felt right. I was not happy. At the age of 15, I was found unresponsive due to a suicide attempt that would have been successful had they not found me as quick as they did.

* (23:00)

But I survived all this, and being able to face myself and take the steps in a new and largely affirming community, in my new life, saved my life. And like a lot of trans people, when you first face that diagnosis that the root of your problems is gender dysphoria, I'd like to tell any of the naysayers, though, that that is not an easy diagnosis to take, especially as someone that has lived terrified and running from it their entire life.

So I resisted at first. No, no, no, I'm just gay; it's okay; we'll get by. But eventually I had to look in the mirror and start taking maybe a couple steps, well, maybe I'll try this and see how it feels.

And as I continue to take these steps, I continue to find myself; I continue to find happiness. I found community. I found myself, and I remember mourning the past self, realizing that I had not been living authentically and that I felt compelled to be visible because I believe that we must be visible to set example, those positive examples of queerness I see before me now and I see all around me that I didn't have. So I must be out, I must be visible and I must fight back.

This isn't supposed to be a sad story; it's not. It's one now of joy and happiness. I have found my community. I am embraced by the majority of my family. I have a new chosen family. I work at an employer that is affirming and supports in every way possible. I have a loving partner, and, yes, I'm also a parent. And I'm doing—well, we are doing our damndest to make sure that that child is brought up with the right values, with the right, you know, mindset to know that everyone is deserving of respect.

It hasn't been easy. I can tell you now, that dark cloud that I always fought my entire life, that I don't know why it was there, as I took the steps, as I showed to you today, that cloud is gone. I am happy. Those that chose not to support me in my life choices, they've fallen by the wayside, but they were part of what was dragging me down. And while, in some cases, these were people I loved—I miss and I mourn them—well, I

don't mourn them; I mourn more the fact that they can't find it in their hearts to accept.

Since I've been out and the fact that, you know, at one time I was kind of known in the community, at least music community and that, you know, I have been targeted; people have said this: my son is in danger being around people like me. Just very vile, disgusting things I would never level at my worst enemy. But I know it's from a lack of just not understanding. They do not have the information, the education required.

To kind of summarize, you know, wonders, I heard a lot of people, like, in opposition of this bill stating that, well, it appears we have gender expression covered under this legislation, under this charter and all that. Well, if we already have it covered, what is your problem with writing it down finally? I mean, really, like, tell me why, why not? And at the end of the day, if you don't want to use pronouns, don't. Address us by name or just don't at all. That's okay. You have a right to turn and walk the other way.

Just when I see bigotedness, I see hatred, I see those that wish to oppress or trample me down, I simply walk away from them, and in some cases on the public sphere, I will stand up to them. And at the end of the day, I'm not here to tell people how to think, not how to live, but my gaining rights. Trans people gaining rights takes nothing away from anyone else, not at all. It just allows us to live authentically as we were meant to be.

So recognize—I remember clearly my doctor when I first—I got the diagnosis. I said, I'm sorry, doctor, it's weird to talk about. He's like, no, it's not weird. This is a legitimate medical condition. Like, no, no, I know; it's just weird to talk about, sorry. But it was just—to have the affirmation from a simple family physician meant a lot.

So to close, I'd just like, again, thank you for your time. My name is Michaela Patricia Rose Chotka, she/her, transgender individual.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes. Wow. Michaela, I think your choice to throw away the notes and speak from the heart was the right one, because that was so inspiring, and it really was a joyous story; it was a happy story and a happy experience that you've shared with all of us.

And I love that you are now so keen on making sure that everybody can have that kind of experience that you've had.

So, once again, just thanks for your time, for your patience here tonight. And what a—yes, what a great story. So thanks for sharing.

M. Chotka: I wish it came off as eloquent as perhaps it was in my head leading up to this.

Thank you so much.

Mr. Balcaen: Michaela, thank you very much for your presentation tonight. We're hearing from many, many Manitobans, and I appreciate your perspective that you've brought forward tonight.

M. Chotka: I appreciate just the ability to be here.

MLA Asagwara: I just want to say thank you so much for presentation and for sharing so much of your personal journey with us.

And, you know, what you say here today is being formally documented. You know, it becomes part of the historical record of this Assembly, and I think it's really, really important that folks will be able to look back and reflect and hear your story and your experience.

And I just want to say thank you for being the example that you didn't have growing up. Thank you for being that example for so many people who need it and for allowing that example to live on through the record of this Legislature.

M. Chotka: Thank you, Minister Asagwara. And just—and thank you, minister Oxenham, both, you know. I consider both of you, you know, personal—not just heroes, but elders, mentors, as well as two-spirit elder Gayle Pruden, who would probably actually strangle me for calling her elder, when it's kokum [*grandmother*]. I am sorry, Gayle, if you hear this—kokum [*grandmother*].

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you so much for your presentation.

I will now call on Mx. Fae Johnstone, who is joining us from Zoom.

Please proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Fae Johnstone (Queer Momentum): Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

Honourable ministers and members of committee, thank you for providing this space and listening to the

voices of trans and gender-diverse folks as part of this conversation, and for the opportunity to participate in our democratic process.

My name is Fae Johnstone. I use she and they pronouns. And I'm joining from unceded, un-surrendered Algonquin Anishinabe territory, formally known as Ottawa.

I am not a Manitoban, but I did live in Shilo for two years when I was young, when my dad was posted there through his work with the Canadian Armed Forces. I've also had the honour to visit your province on numerous occasions and work actively with many organizations across the province.

In my day job, I serve as the executive director of the Society of Queer Momentum. We are a national 2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy organization, and as part of our work, we monitor human rights and human rights legislation related to queer and trans communities. In this era, that unfortunately means that we are very busy, and busier than we would like to be. Given what's at stake and given the subject of tonight's conversation, I felt it was important to show up and support the folks on the ground as best I could.

Before I get too far into things, I want to the applaud the bravery and strength of my transgender and queer siblings and their families in the room today. Some of the remarks today were undoubtedly painful to hear. I want to thank you for your courage and to make sure that you know that you are not alone, neither in that room nor in your province. There are folks from coast to coast to coast who believe in the more free, equal and socially just future that you deserve and that I know you are fighting for.

The introduction of this amendment, and I hope its passage in the near future, is a historic moment. The extension of more fulsome human rights protections to include a historically marginalized community and a community that has, in fact, been subjected to decades of discrimination, including by governments at the provincial and federal level, by institutions, by organizations and individuals.

This legislation is history in the making, and I invite you to consider that many generations of trans and gender-'diversal' Manitobans looking—will look back on this moment with gratitude for the decisions that I hope will be made in the near future and the passage of this amendment.

I am, of course, joining today to speak in favour of the amendment, because in Canada, we believe in human rights and that those human rights should

protect everyone. I do not speak as a Manitoban, but I do speak as a citizen of Canada and as a transgender woman myself.

* (23:10)

In my work across this country, I hear countless stories from transgender people and particularly transgender young folks; stories of adversity and discrimination, stories that I believe would break your heart, of people being bullied, facing violence and hate that no person on this land or anywhere in this world deserves.

I urge you in your decisions to remember the impact of those decisions on vulnerable people, and that young people in your province are looking to you for leadership. Across this country, hate targeting queer and trans people, and especially transgender young folks, is on the rise, making life harder and denying hope to a community that simply wants freedom, human rights, and bluntly, to be left alone.

In this era of polarization and division, Canadians are looking for leaders who will speak up for freedom, equality and human rights. That is why I urge the passage of this amendment, and I would emphasize three reasons to do so.

First, because it would bring Manitoba into alignment with sister legislation across Canada. Second, because it would send a message to transgender Manitobans, particularly those young folks who have enough bullies as is, that they are welcome, that they deserve dignity and that they deserve human rights. Finally, it would strengthen our collective human rights framework, helping advance a province and a country where everyone lives free from discrimination.

In the late 2010s, I had the dubious honour of being one of many citizens across Canada who advocated for the passage of Bill C-16 on the federal level. This legislation added gender identity and gender expression to the Canadian Human Rights Act.

During the committee meetings to move that legislation forward, most of which I attended, there were numerous witnesses who made unfounded claims of the risk or danger of the proposed amendment. We have heard many of those same unfounded claims repeated during tonight's committee meeting. I would go so far as to say that some who have testified in opposition are not just speaking to the opposition—or to opposition to the legislation, but to the freedom and existence of transgender people.

This bill has nothing to do with health care, and it would in no way limit freedom of expression, nor does it criminalize conversations. We live in a democracy, and freedom of expression is core to that. It does not restrict expressions of faith. Such claims are ludicrous, unfounded and demonstrate a fundamental misunderstanding of human rights legislation.

When some of those witnesses on the federal level testified in the Senate, they were not laughed out of the room, but there were comments from senators who had been lawyers in previous lives, outlining in detail the inaccuracy of claims made.

I would also clarify that gender expression is something that includes everyone, that all of us have. And so there are situations where this legislation would actually strengthen and protect kids, such as those that Charlie referred to: the kid who wears nail polish and does not deserve to face discrimination at school because of that.

Underneath a lot of this rhetoric is an insidious agenda, an agenda pushed by people who do not want you to view transgender folks as people, but as problems or a threat. We are not a problem; we are your neighbours, and we are human beings.

Prior to giving credence to unfounded claims, I would encourage members of the committee to review the submission of the Canadian Bar Association to the Senate of Canada—excuse me—which strongly supported the passage of the bill and debunked many of these unfounded arguments. I would be pleased to submit this brief to the committee. I am also pleased to share that in now almost 10 years since the passage of federal human rights legislation, the world has not fallen apart. The world has not ended, speech has not been compelled and freedom has not been restricted.

All that has changed because of C-16, and because of provincial equivalents, is that human rights protections have been extended to include a vulnerable minority that they never should have admitted in the first place. I am joining you from Ontario, where we have had identical legislation since 2012. None of the claims made by those opposed to this legislation have come true in my province. Human rights legislation for a marginalized community has only led to greater freedom and stronger protections for all.

I would also note that the overwhelming majority of women-serving and feminist organizations across Canada, including YWCA, Oxfam and countless others, both locally, provincially, and nationally, support these kinds of amendments. This is also supported by

human rights groups and civil liberty organizations, and while we've heard some faith leaders tonight speak in opposition to the legislation, many faith communities, faith traditions and congregations across the country support, love and welcome transgender people, and believe we deserve human rights protection.

I urge you to pass this amendment because transgender Manitobans need their government, and their Human Rights Code, to support them, to accept them and to protect them. Beyond this bill, I urge you to take further measures. My community is scared. I am tired of waking up with messages of young folks and families who fear for their safety and their future. I am tired of looking at governments in Alberta and Saskatchewan that are doing the opposite—that are restricting freedom, that are putting politicians in family doctor's offices, making it harder for kids to be themselves at school. I am tired of hearing from parents who are scared to put their kid on the bus to school. That is not something we should inflict or invoke on any parent, any family or any young person.

My community is scared for our safety, for our freedom and our future. Hate is rising, and again, I would reiterate that we need leaders who will boldly defend freedom, speak up for human rights and build a more inclusive Canada. I urge you to explore opportunities to support families of transgender youth, to ensure that everyone gets access to the health care they need and to create spaces for further education and dialogue. Because there are those who want to turn us against our neighbours and who have poisoned this political environment. They'll even allege that we, as trans people, don't want to have these conversations.

I spend my days surrounded by an incredible mosaic of trans, queer and gender-diverse people, and we always want to talk through our differences, to have dialogue because dialogue is core to a healthy democracy.

I ask you now to look around you, at the transgender folks and families who came here tonight to speak up for their human rights, who came in and sat through some testimonies that have been hard to hear, and some language that is not appropriate in a Legislature, and I would urge you to remember that, yes, we might look different than you're used to, but we are your neighbours, we are your co-workers. We have contributed to Canadian society and to our economy. We might look different, our lives might be different, but difference is not a threat.

Transgender people simply want freedom and human rights. We deserve protection from discrim-

ination, just like everyone else. And for so long, we have told people: you can change the world, that you deserve to be yourself. In this era of rising hate, we are being called to stand by that promise, to make sure that the next generation of trans young people do not have to go through what my generation did, nor what generations before had.

I have seen the scars left by a society that taught us to hate ourselves. I have seen the wounds inflicted by a world that can't allow us to be ourselves, and I dream of a better future, a better Canada, for all people, all families and all communities.

With that, I want to say thank you for the opportunity, thank you to the minister for introducing this legislation and for continuing Canada's journey to be a more free and equal country for all Canadians.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière): Hi, Fae. Thanks so much for being with us today all the way from Ontario. We appreciate your perspective.

So, apparently, the sky did not fall in Ontario when human rights legislation was extended for gender expression. I'm curious about, like, the positive impacts on your community in Ontario. How did it manifest kind of on the ground?

F. Johnstone: There's the component of adding this legislation to make sure it's codified, but a lot of it is in the broader message that it sends, the message to trans people that, indeed, we deserve to live free from discrimination.

But also the process that it cues. You know, in the federal space, that was a lot of why we put work into adding gender expression and gender identity to The Human Rights Code and to the Criminal Code with regard to hate speech and hate-motivated acts. And what that did was a cue to process, to amend policy, to amend documents and to make sure that we were taking these rights on paper and bringing them into people's real lives.

It allows for further education, and it allows us, when we do face that discrimination, that adversity, that injustice, to have recourse through our legal system through our courts, to ensure that we are protected, that our freedom is protected and that we are able to participate fully in society.

I would argue always that it is insufficient; rights on paper do not translate into the kind of country that we want and that we deserve. But they are core to the process, and they move the needle forward to create that better Canada.

Mr. Balcaen: Thank you, Fae, for the presentation tonight. And I note that here it's almost 20 after 11 p.m., and it's obviously tomorrow in Ontario, so thank you for your presentation, staying up until late tonight to bring your thoughts here tonight.

F. Johnstone: My community has a long legacy of staying up and fighting the good fight for our rights, and I am honoured to continue it.

The Chairperson: All right, seeing no further questions, thank you very much again for your presentation.

I will now call on Mx. Parker Morran, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation when you're ready.

Parker Morran (Private Citizen): Hi, my name is Parker. I'm gender fluid and I use they/them pronouns.

* (23:20)

Everyone has a gender expression, so I'd like to ask everyone here today: How did you present your gender, and how would you feel if someone told you that wasn't permitted?

This bill doesn't force people to change their beliefs or to say certain things. Religion is protected, and yet I am not being forced to believe what they believe. If that was the case I would still be going to church. But, like a friend of mine said to me yesterday, I do need to respect them and their beliefs, and I ask the same of them. We only want to be treated the same way.

Those who vote against this amendment or want you to vote against it want to keep the freedom that they have right now in Manitoba to discriminate against others based on their gender expression. They came here today to tell you that they do not want to have to put in the work to respect someone who is different from them.

These people are our neighbours, our school boards, our bosses, our landlords, our families. We are also your neighbours. We are your co-workers. We are your family members. The price of their freedom of speech is our pain. Someone earlier asked you not to pass this for the good of those who suffer gender dysphoria. Who are they to speak for us? Let me speak for myself.

Though I now live in Winnipeg, I grew up in Kleefeld in a small town outside of Steinbach. Most of my family still live and vote in the Steinbach area. My identical twin sibling works at the pool in Steinbach. That means they are a public servant for the City of Steinbach. If they were here today, they could tell you how complicated it was just to be able to use their pronouns in their email signature.

When I tell someone in the queer community here where I'm from, they say, I'm sorry. They say that because even they know that growing up queer and trans in Steinbach often means being isolated and excluded from your family and community. It means not feeling safe to access health care because the health-care staff are your neighbours, your parents' friends or people who go to your church. It means not knowing which workplaces will be safe and which will not—and which ones will not be because of the management or people you work with.

Professionally, I am a social worker. I currently work at the Trans Health Clinic here in Winnipeg. When I came out as transgender, I was working for the provincial government as a CFS worker in Steinbach. There was nobody to advocate for me but myself. There was no policy or training for my co-workers about how to treat a trans or gender-fluid person normally, never mind with respect.

When my supervisor said that adjusting to my name change would be easier than adjusting to my pronouns because it was more normal, everyone laughed. Similarly, I saw that there was no protection for gender diversity or trans and gender diverse youth in care. Foster parents can refuse to use a child's name or pronouns and force them to wear clothes that don't match their gender identity because it goes against their religion.

Shelters don't have safe spaces for youth whose gender expression does not align with others. I know a lot of them here in Winnipeg are doing their best now to work on that. Youth in care face higher rates of suicide, homelessness, amongst other struggles. Trans youth, even more so. When gender diverse and trans youth do not feel safe and protected where they live, they look for a way out.

This bill can provide more protection for vulnerable trans and gender diverse youth to be respected for who they are when under the care of the Province, amongst other things.

As I said before, I now work at the Trans Health Clinic. I meet young people who face bullying or

rejection just for being different. They avoid going to school because they don't want to be treated badly by their peers, teachers, or school staff. They avoid going to the bathroom all day or using gendered change rooms because they don't want to be harassed or told they're in the wrong one. Denying gender-inclusive policies does not protect the children. It chases them away.

I also see first-hand that when people feel safe to be themselves, they're more likely to thrive. Many people in this room have and will share what that means for them. For myself as well, being free in my workplace and in other aspects of my life to express myself freely has been life changing. I hope this bill will ensure that there is more safety for gender diverse people to be themselves.

Those opposed believe they are being silenced. We are asked to be given a voice. This bill will help people who are constantly denied dignity and equality because of the way they look or want to be addressed.

I hope you chose to—choose to vote yes to this bill and align Manitoba with the rest of Canada rather than hold us back and keep us closer to what is going on down south, which only empowers hate.

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, Parker, thank you so much for your presentation.

I'm just absolutely floored by some of the challenges that you faced, but also others that you know. And I know that that can be really challenging to navigate. You know, this legislation is a small piece of the puzzle in terms of helping to make some of those things right, but I think you also identified some real challenges going forward, and just want you to know that our government is committed to continuing to support the trans community and making sure everybody is protected, and, really, that's what this bill is all about.

So just wanted to thank you for your presentation.

P. Morran: Thank you.

Mr. Balcaen: Parker, thank you for your presentation tonight. I know it's getting late in the evening, but I do appreciate hearing from everybody who's bringing perspectives forward tonight, so thank you for staying the course and being here until this hour.

P. Morran: Yes, thanks.

The Chairperson: All right, seeing no further questions, thank you again for your presentation.

I will now call on Mx. Jen Seguin, private citizen. Please proceed with your presentation.

Jen Seguin (Private Citizen): Good evening. First, I just want to thank everyone who's still here and who's giving me the opportunity to participate in this democratic process.

I searched my heart, I put it on paper; it's best for me for this process and hopefully for you too. So here we go.

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to share. My name is Jen Seguin and I identify as non-binary and my pronouns are she/they. I'm honoured to share this space with two-spirit, trans and other gender-diverse folks and allies, of course, with important messages and, of course, the dignitaries who are here to listen.

This evening I'm offering part of my story in good faith and with hope that it may inspire action to support—in support of Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act. I'll be echoing much of what others have said in some ways, but I'm going to tell a little story.

So my family story begins as French-Canadian settlers on my late paternal side and third generation Ukrainian settlers on my maternal side. My mom actually grew up in Lac du Bonnet and was raised on a farm by my Ukrainian ancestors and my late grandfather.

Truth be told, I was not born in Manitoba, but go, Jets, go, right? And some of us do move the other way.

So I was born in Treaty 8 territory, in a small mining and forestry town called Chetwynd, BC. Eventually we relocated to the interior of BC where my dad worked as a mines inspector for provincial government. I grew up on the unceded traditional territory of Tkemlúps te Secwépemc First Nation and a place also known as Kamloops.

How did I end up here in Manitoba, you might ask. Well, with your patience, I'll get there. As a child I was very hyperactive and I had the privilege to enjoy various sports. I became known as the curly haired girl in bumblebee soccer. While some saw me as a girl, at the age—at age seven, I already was coming to understand myself as different from my peers, but I didn't know yet the words to tell my story, only an intuitive

known of—intuited knowing of my spirit. My gender expression was the first piece that did not align with gender norms and expectations in the world around me.

I had a deep passion for ninja turtles, not Barbies, and I was very active, which in the '80s and '90s was simply not expected for a girl. I found wearing skirts and dresses interfered with my ability to move freely and I often worried about accidentally exposing myself or wrecking my clothing. My struggles with clothing and hairstyle became early experiences of dissonance and feeling misunderstood by others.

I didn't like girl clothing and I didn't feel comfortable dress—pardon me—dressing like a boy. At eight, my dear mother decided to get me a short haircut because I hated my long curls and people began to ask if I was a boy or a girl. Distinguishing who I was based on a gender binary felt like a chore and I resented the interference it had on my sense of personhood and freedom.

I just wanted to be me. I just wanted to exist without question or speculation. Finding peace of mind in my gender expression seemed impossible. It was incredibly rare to hear or know of anyone talking positively about being queer or gender diverse in the '90s. High school and early adulthood also came with challenges. While I was feeling good about who I was in an athletic context, I was still sitting on secrets.

In grade 8 I was sitting at my desk with my legs shoulder-width apart and perhaps in what some may consider a masculine posture. The kid in front of me noticed. He saw how relaxed I was, and he turned around and he asked, in a mockingly way: What are you, lesbian?

* (23:30)

I didn't know the answer, but I knew this term meant that he thought I was gay. My fight-flight-freeze response was fully activated, and I thought to myself, holy cow, he knows my secret. I responded in a moment by correcting my seating position and immediately denied my truth. This moment taught me how to be safer and that I could survive better if I masked who I was.

Situations like this only perpetuated fear and negativity and impacted my sense of belonging and my mental health. I grew up internalizing homophobia and transphobia and, for years, actively tried to suppress these parts of myself with no known safe place to process it all.

In the late '90s and 2000s—in Kamloops, at least—there was no Ellen DeGeneres, there was no RuPaul Drag Race, there was no gay-straight alliances, no SOGIE yet, and no one else I knew who was really out. They simply did not yet exist.

Throughout the rest of high school and my early 20s, I found safety within athletic clothing and adopted a jock identity. It was my safe place, and no one could attack me there.

All that to say, I knew that if I kept hiding who I was, who I am, I would not survive. I had to come out somehow. I tried discussing my emerging identity with family and friends, but it still did not feel safe enough to be fully open. It was hard to envision a future for life. In fact, I couldn't. I had no idea how I was going to find true belonging in this world.

Thankfully, a little later, in the early 2000s, same-sex marriage was legalized, the Ellen DeGeneres show emerged, along with various community-led programs for queer folks, gay-straight alliances and Pride events were becoming more accepted and acceptable. In some ways, my internal tension was moderated and I found courage in my mid-20s to explore my femininity more than I ever had before. And at the same time, landed a safe relationship with someone who identified as female and was also assigned female at birth. Through this relationship, I found queer accepting and belonging in a whole new way.

I found the courage to begin exploring my masculine side with the support of my wife who was from Winnipeg. Exploring masculinity initiated with trying on men's dress shirts, and what I found was that they fit my body way more comfortably. They allowed me to move freely, they did not accentuate parts of my body that women's clothing otherwise did in a way that made me feel intolerably uncomfortable.

When I moved to Manitoba in the fall of 2018, I chose to explore other kinds of hairstyles as which was followed by further gender identity exploration through creative arts. In 2019, being new to Winnipeg, my wife encouraged me to explore opportunities to make new friends and suggested that I try taking a drag course through Prairie Theatre Exchange facilitated by a well-known Treaty 1 drag artist. Taking this class absolutely terrified me, because it meant I would likely have to face parts of—that I feared for so long and masked for most of my adult life up until recent. It meant facing my internalized homophobia and transphobia that I absorbed when I was technically outed in grade 8.

To my surprise, as I endeavoured in this creative process and leaned into movements associated with masculine gender stereotypes. I found it not only to be fun, but it was freeing in a way that I could have never predicted. This experience healed me in ways that provided greater self-acceptance, love and confidence. My classmates cheered me on as I sold the creative illusion of being male, and after class, I was accepted for who I was out of drag. I wasn't questioned. My gender was not speculated. I was simply accepted for the human being that I am.

This experience allowed me to expand my gender expression to a place where I felt more comfortable and confident to incorporate both masculine and feminine looks outside of drag. In this place of openness and at a previous job, someone referred to me as they, and the pronoun did not upset me. In fact, it really resonated with me. Thus, emerged my non-binary gender identity. It just made sense.

It made the most sense to me when I think of how I see myself in the world and how I want to be seen in the world, while tying together how I have always known my soul to be since childhood.

It was not until I moved to Manitoba and had this gender-expressive experience where I realized looking back on my life that I had in fact experienced gender dysphoria. Thankfully, I followed my heart to Treaty 1 where I continue to live my life with the greatest authenticity that I have ever been afforded. I've not only discovered new aspects of my identity here, but I've discovered a loving community full of diverse people who care so much about one another's humanity that legislatures want to ensure its protection and capture the value of our beautiful, diverse province in law.

So why have I chosen to speak up tonight? Why am I backing bill 8? When I think back to how my ancestors left Ukraine for a better life; when I think back to the freedoms my maternal grandfather fought for in World War II; when I reflect on my life and the work that I do in health care supporting youth and families, I am reminded of what sets this province and country apart from others, and that is its value, fight for and maintenance of human rights.

While I recognize the complex and harmful realities connected to development of treaties, Manitoba has welcomed people of different walks of life for centuries, and continues to be a place of grassroots growth, unprecedented initiatives and a beacon of hope in our country and the world.

My gender identity has taken years, kilometers and a whole lot of courage and conscious choice to seek out love over fear. But as much as I have shared my story tonight, this is not about me. This is actually about the next generation of young people who have yet and are in the process of discovering who they are. When I think of my ancestors and those who have come before me, in addition to the work that I do with youth and families, one theme remains consistent: each generation seeks out better for the next.

When I think about what most want for their loved ones, it is the very basic sense of safety and the ability to thrive and live authentically, with meaning and connection.

Enacting Bill 43 is a concrete, tangible step in expanding our safety net to create an even more inclusive space for folks, while recognizing our inherent diversity and humanity. And regardless of political beliefs, isn't this what we all want? To belong, to feel safe, to love, be loved and live our best lives?

Please support Bill 43, and let's catch up to those other jurisdictions. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Wow. What an incredible story, and what an incredible telling of that story.

And what I guess I took from it most was, you know, how far we've come. And parts of your story reflected on that, how far we've come and how far, I think, we are today, but also setting the path forward that we need to continue to fight.

So, again, this legislation, I hope, gets us down that road further, and thank you for sharing and for being here.

J. Seguin: Thanks, Mr. Wiebe, and thank you everybody.

Mr. Goertzen: I don't know if being among the last presenters for tonight makes it harder or if it makes it easier. My—for me, it would probably make it harder having to wait until near the end, and probably make me more nervous.

That certainly didn't come across in your presentation. Thank you for sharing your very personal story in an articulate and a passionate way. It's been a long evening, but thanks for sticking it through.

J. Seguin: Thank you very much for your comments. I appreciate it.

MLA Asagwara: I just want to say thank you for such a stellar and honest and raw presentation. And if you could extend a thank you to your wife for getting you to Manitoba, another health-care worker in the province, we love it. So I just want to wish you all the best as you move forward on your journey.

Thank you.

J. Seguin: Thank you so much, Minister.

The Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you again for your presentation.

Now, I apologize for the next presenter name. I will try my best to pronounce it correctly. Mr. Rachamim Enoch Coad. Please proceed with your presentation.

Rachamim Enoch Coad (Private Citizen): Honourable members of the committee, shalom, hello and bonjour. My name is Rachamim Enoch Coad; my pronouns are he/him/il. I stand before you tonight not only as a health-care aide in long-term care, a civilian contractor with the Canadian Armed Forces, the diversity vice-president for persons with a disability for CUPE Manitoba, a member of the Jewish diaspora community here in Winnipeg, but also as someone whose life is deeply intertwined with the transgender and gender-diverse community.

My partner, a non-binary individual who underwent facial feminization surgery just three days ago; I am also a brother-in-law to a trans woman. Every day I witness the strength, resilience and inherent right of my loved ones and countless others to live authentically and express their gender identity freely.

This isn't merely a matter of personal support. It is a fundamental human right. As an observant Masorti Jew who visibly expresses my religious identity through Jewish garments such as the kippah and the tallit katan, I am afforded—the protection under our Human Rights Code. I find it unethical that the equally fundamental right to express someone's gender identity is not afforded the same explicit protection in Manitoba.

* (23:40)

As a strictly observant Jew, I urge this committee to not listen to presenters that make a religious claim against this bill, as one who urges their god, or uses their god as a justification to deny another person a human right, does not know their god, but uses and plays as their god.

In Judaism, which Christianity, Islam and even western laws are founded on, does not teach to deny

human rights, but to fight for other individuals, even when they are not people of Israel, or Jews. Jews have been at the forefront of many civil rights movements, and this is a human right that is affirmed by the united synagogue for conservative Judaism here in North America.

This bill has been passed by far more conservative provinces than ours, and as a religious person I do not fear another person having rights. Someone's right to express themselves does not diminish my own. If your fear is with someone else having and living freely will diminish you, you are not living what some may say a Christian life as Jesus teaches.

Judaism is over 4,000 years, and even we acknowledge that there are at least eight genders, including trans, intersex, non-binary, and many others. Manitoba once demonstrated leadership in human rights by adding sexual orientation as a protected ground in 1987, yet in 2025 we lag behind numerous other provinces.

Newfoundland and Labrador recognized the importance of protecting gender expression in 2010, followed by Ontario and Nova Scotia in 2012, Alberta in 2015, British Columbia in 2016 and finally the federal government in 2017, just to name a few.

Manitoba continued—or, Manitoba's continued inaction leaves a vulnerable segment of our population without explicit legal resources against discrimination and hate based on how they express their gender.

Passing this bill is not just about catching up, it's about re-affirming Manitoba's commitment to equality, and dignity for all its citizens. It's about actively choosing to be a leader once again, rather than remaining complicit in the face of prejudice.

I urge this committee, and the government, to not only champion the swift adoption of this vital bill, but also to commit to ongoing research into other potential additions to our Human Rights Code, ensuring that Manitoba becomes a truly inclusive and protective country for everyone.

I am proud to stand with many Manitobans on the right side of history, as a province that protects and fights for the equality of all, not the few.

Toda raba [*thank you*], thank you, merci and miigwech.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, Rachamim, thank you so much for being here this evening, for presenting here.

I really appreciate how you brought your faith tradition and your, you know, your beliefs as sort of the core to your presentation. As Minister Asagwara mentioned earlier with another presenter, I think that adds a really important dimension to the discussion here this evening.

I appreciate, too, that you obviously well researched. You know, you brought a thoughtful presentation here, so I want to thank you for taking the time, staying so late and for bringing this important perspective.

R. Enoch Coad: Thank you. Yes.

I wanted to talk about the Jewish perspective because often, which we heard at the beginning and throughout this entire thing, that a group of Christians like to radicalize their religion as a movement of why others can't have rights—can't have human rights, and Judaism is far more against that, which Christianity is based off of.

So I wanted to show the foundation of what their religion is based off of and that they are not following.

I also wrote this speech with my partner who is non-binary, that lives in Saskatchewan, who does not have this right and probably won't have for a while because of their very hateful government, so.

Mr. Balcaen: Again, I would like to thank you for the presentation and for bringing your perspective forward.

You know, it's certainly a different perspective than we've heard from others tonight, so I appreciate hearing what you had to say.

Thank you.

R. Enoch Coad: I wanted to make sure that a Jewish voice was spoken about this because it is taught to us. It is a mitzvah, which is a commandment that we are to fight for others, and life is more important than any religious affiliation or following laws because health care that is gender affirming saves lives, and that's, at the end of the day, the most important thing.

The Chairperson: Thank you.

Seeing no more questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

As a reminder to the committee, we will be rising at midnight unless there is leave of the committee to sit later.

I will now call on Kalen Taylor, private citizen. Kalen? Okay.

We will now move down to M-X—Mx. Kai Solomon, private citizen.

Please proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Kai Solomon (Private Citizen): Perfect, thank you. And thanks for staying this late and listening to our voices. I really appreciate that.

Again, my name is Kai Solomon. I use they/them pronouns and I'm an educational assistant in the St. James school division and I'm also a trans non-binary person.

So when I was younger, I distinctly remember the feeling inside my body and my mind when I wore dresses. I remember the sickness deep in my gut, the indescribable feelings of dread and the wrongness I felt when I was in one. There are pictures of me at weddings, Christmases, church functions, where my eyes are red and puffy from crying. I remember crying without knowing why, the words that weren't formed until I was 31.

My high school graduation, I wore a dress to appease everyone around me, the societal views of someone who was born female. And it still haunts me to this day. All the pictures of me, there's sadness and hollowness in my eyes, and I wish I had the word trans and gender dysphoria so that I could know why I wasn't a girl.

Today I'm here speaking as a trans person, but I'm also here as someone who works with high school students. As an out-and-proud queer person, this is important not just to me, but to them as well.

So gender expression is the most personal and authentic way that a person communicates who they are. To be clear, gender expression is a form of freedom of expression, a right enshrined in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ability to 'express' oneself freely to speak to right, to show your identity, that's all freedom.

This is more than just rights, though. It's dignity, it's mental health and it's safety. Whose decision is it to make to decide what I or anybody else should wear or act or be? Whose decision is it to tell me what my pronouns or my name is?

We get into statistics. Egale Canada statistics state that 74 per cent of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender expression.

Trans students were much more likely than sexual minority or non-LGBTQ students to have been physically harassed or assaulted because of their gender expression. When all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, more than 78 per cent of trans students indicated feeling unsafe some way at school.

I want you to take a moment to let that sink in: 74 per cent of transgender youth are being harassed and ridiculed for gender expression. Is that the Manitoba that we want to live in? Trans youth are seven times more likely to die by suicide than cisgender youth, youth that are dying because they can't be themselves.

'Reshurts'—research tells us that when trans and gender non-conforming people are supported, meaning addressed by their name, allowed to dress how they feel, when they're not shamed for who they are, the risk of suicide drops dramatically. This is why gender expression must be recognized and protected as a human right. It's not about freedom of style or identity; it's about the right to exist without fear. It's about dignity, equality and life itself.

In 2017, the federal government added gender identity and gender expression to the federal human rights legislation, bill 16. Now it's about time that Manitoba adds gender expression as its protected class.

Egale Canada also states, and I quote: It was and still is a subject of great deal of misinformation and confusion, as well as disinformation and fear-mongering. Some people falsely claim that it turned using the wrong pronouns for people into a criminal offence, raising concerns about forced speech or other limitations on freedom of speech.

* (23:50)

There are even claims that people could end up being sent to jail for refusing to use trans and non-binary people's correct names and pronouns, these claims that have absolutely no basis in reality. Human rights protections for trans people go back all the way to the '90s. Bill C-16 didn't create anything new. It just added new characteristics to existing legislation, just like sexual orientation was added to the Canadian Human Rights Act in 1996.

That doesn't mean that nothing has changed. Formally enshrining the right for trans, non-binary and gender-nonconforming people to live free of discrimination in federal law is much—is a much stronger form of protection, end quote. Protecting gender expression means protecting bodily autonomy, privacy

and freedom from discrimination as well, all core human rights. No one should be fired from their job, kicked out of their home or denied health care because of how they express their gender.

Let's not forget: Gender diversity has always existed, from Indigenous two-spirit people to hijras in south Asia. History is full of examples of cultures that honour more than just two genders. Suppressing gender expression is not only a violation of human rights; it's an erasure of culture and of humanity.

Trans and gender non-conforming people shouldn't have to live in fear just because their truth doesn't fit in someone else's box. My ability to be authentically myself saved me from an early death. Without it, without my freedom of gender expression, I wouldn't be standing here. Gender expression is not a trend, and it shouldn't be a political talking point, but it is. It is a lifeline for my community—a lifeline.

To those that think trans people are too much, I think, in all honesty, we are enough. And I leave you with this one sentiment: Is your opinion more important than someone's life?

Thank you.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, what a great presentation, Kai.

I think you've put the finger—your finger right on the pulse of this in the way that you characterized this as about dignity but also about safety. And that's real. These are real lives that are impacted, especially with your work with young people. I know that you see this and you know this, so I appreciate your perspective here and I appreciate you sticking it out, being here right to the end. And appreciate everything that you've brought to the committee this evening.

K. Solomon: Yes, I see trans youth every day. Let's just—let's face it. I see them every day. I see them in a lot of distress and a lot of fear with what's happening down south. So having people that are out and proud and speaking up for trans rights is amazing, so, thank you.

Mr. Balcaen: Kai, thank you for your presentation tonight. I know you're one of the last to present for tonight, and there's probably many more presenters as we move on to a new date following this, so thank you for being here tonight this late and bringing your views forward. It's much appreciated.

K. Solomon: I just want to thank you all for just actively listening. I really appreciate that. That's all we ask for, so thank you all.

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

Okay. There is enough time for one final presentation, Mr. Jace MacFarlane.

Is there leave to hear this final presentation? *[Agreed]*

All right. I will now call on Mr. Jace MacFarlane, private citizen. Mr. Jace MacFarlane?

Okay, we will now move to Mr. Michael Shaw.

Is there leave to sit just past midnight to hear Mr. Shaw's presentation? *[Agreed]*

Floor Comment: Thanks very much. I will try to come way under—

The Chairperson: Mr. Shaw.

Michael Shaw (Private Citizen): I'll finish before midnight.

Thanks very much, everyone, for spending the night here listening to all of these stories. I come down here and speak at committee fairly regularly. I was last here on the shutting down the gas tax, which was bad public policy but very popular; I understand that.

I'm very heartened by this bill. This side of the House is finally, I think, governing the way we elected them and wanted them to govern. You haven't moved on Research Manitoba funding; you haven't moved on health care for international students at the universities in Manitoba—which is in the minister's mandate letter, and that hasn't happened yet.

So it's very heartening for someone who was encouraged by the election of your government to see truly progressive language coming out. This is fundamental. It shouldn't be contentious. We've heard lots of contention tonight, but it shouldn't be contentious.

So I would like to encourage the government of the day to continue to move forward with the priorities, and this is a priority. There are other priorities that you have been neglecting. University fun—I—member of UMFA, the University of Manitoba Faculty Association. I've been teaching there for 32 years now, and the damage that was done over the last eight to 10 years at the University of Manitoba hasn't been repaired yet.

So it's heartening, but it's also urgently needed for this government to continue to move in a progressive way. Balancing the budget in the first term isn't progressive, but this legislation is progressive. So it is

heartening that it's taking place and that this is going to occur.

We've heard some truly beautiful stories tonight, and we've heard some really disturbing opinions tonight about wanting to take away the rights of individuals because of who they are. We see that just awfulness that is occurring south of us. And to be able to move forward a little bit in this direction—there's more work to be done. There's tons more work to be done in terms of protecting the rights of the gender-diverse here in Manitoba and being more of a beacon for the gender-diverse here in Manitoba, for the rest of Canada.

It wasn't until tonight that I knew that we were so far behind. When we're comparing ourselves in human rights on gender issues to Saskatchewan, that's not a good place to be. We should be more progressive than that. So I'm very heartened by this. And I'll stop, because my Apple says it's midnight.

So I'll stop there.

The Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Yes. Thanks for your support of this, Mr. Shaw. Appreciate your pushing us to continue to do good things. I think there's lots more good work that we're up to. But I do appreciate your presence here and your support of the bill here.

M. Shaw: Nothing to say to that. Thanks.

Mr. Balcaen: Mr. Shaw, thank you for your presentation. And I know, based on the time, this will be the final one for tonight. And I appreciate your views and also for—holding government to account is what we're here to do as well.

So thank you.

M. Shaw: To be clear there, when I talk about the damage done to the University of Manitoba, looking on that side of the room. All right.

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

Before we rise, I will remind everyone that we will continue to hear presenters at a following meeting of this committee on Wednesday, April 30, 2025, at 9 a.m. The next presenter on the list will be Ms. Sonja Stone.

The hour being past midnight, as previously agreed, committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 11:59 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 43

I am writing to voice my disapproval of Bill 43 and this governments efforts to label the deliberate misuse of someones pronouns as discrimination and/or a Human Rights infringement.

Any government that attempts to limit free speech, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience is reprehensible in a supposedly 'free society' and is not remotely representative of the will people and the committment of the masses who are determined to '...keep our land glorious and free'. I, for one, must '...stand on guard' for our freedoms.

Since when is anybody able to adjudicate motive? We live in a society where biological men or women dress up and present themselves in such manners as to trick people into thinking they're something they're not. I, like the majority of Canadians, believe in the scientific FACT that there are only 2 genders: Men and Women. To suggest otherwise is to go against science. Where does this end? With countless purported 'genders', who can stay up on them all?

The current NDP government seriously failed to 'read the room' on this bill, and is heading for a massive lack of support. The deluge of new genders and new 'preferred pronouns' will be just around the corner should this bill be passed, and mayhem will ensue. This government has no clue as to how much of their support base they've offended by this shameful attempt to infringe on our freedoms. If passed, I'll be happy to create my own exclusive gender (based on my own 'science'), and with that create my own ridiculous pronouns and will email the government weekly to ensure they've been made aware and so the government can be careful not to misgender or use pronouns I deem offensive. Refusal to refer to me by my preferred pronouns of 'The Right Hounourable' /'Premier Jef' will be forwarded for a Human Rights complaint. I would also refuse to accept the pronoun 'you', so the Manitoba Government best be scouring their communication templates and website so that you utilize my proper pronouns and don't 'offend me'. You get the picture...the implications and stupidity of Bill 43 is mind-numbing.

If you want to believe you're a cat—go right ahead. That's your right and nobody should deny you that freedom. Call yourself a cat. Act like a cat. Dress like a cat. Nobody cares. But if you're expecting me to join in and support such delusions by affirming you're a cat or referring to you as a cat, you're even more deluded

that appears on the surface. Because, clearly, you're not actually a cat.

Jeff Burnard

Re: Bill 43

Greetings and Salutations,

Bill 43 is an intrusion of the rights Canadians have to free speech and to disagree on matters in peaceful terms. In peaceful terms I am referring to not involving a possible complaint lodged to an authority structure outside of the initial exchange of words or circumstances.

A person can in all honesty mistakenly call someone something they wished not to be called and get in trouble with higher authorities. This undermines the right we have to free speech. Even if on purpose someone identifies another in terms they do not wished to be called, how are they to know what to call each and every individual? What if they decide to change who they identify to be during different times in their life and the previous expression they used to identify themselves under is not longer valid to them? How do people keep up with the demands of others in properly labeling them? People have the potential to get penalized by the law when no harm or foul play was being sought or intended. This is not what laws are designed for or should uphold. The implications of Bill 43 out weigh the assumed benefits of it being passed. Among other reasons I believe overall heavy consideration should be taken into account to stop further progression of this Bill and to reverse its progression in its entirety.

Thank you.

Annika Baer

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the

Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious convictions.

David Krahn

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious convictions.

Gary Driedger

Re: Bill 43

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Darryl Harder

Re: Bill 43

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Scott Ryman

Re: Bill 43

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Dawson Krahn

Re: Bill 43

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Cornelio Dyck

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the

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Caitlin Wall

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious convictions.

Brayden Friesen

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian with a strong commitment to my faith and the values of democratic freedom, I am writing to voice my opposition to the proposed legislation that seeks to include "gender expression" as a protected category under human rights law. While I support the need to protect all individuals from harassment and violence, I am worried that such actions may violate the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms—specifically, section 2(a) regarding freedom of conscience and religion, and section 2(b) concerning freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. There have been cases in recent years, like the

Oger v. Whatcott decision from the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal, where individuals have faced legal consequences not for promoting hate, but for expressing traditional views on gender in non-violent manners. I respectfully encourage you to ensure that any extension of human rights protections is carefully considered in relation to these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not legally compelled to endorse beliefs that may conflict with their religious convictions.

Mike McFarlane

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious convictions.

Jorden Wall

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John Krahn

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Sincerely,
Emily Baker

Re: Bill 43

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Vincent Elias

Re: Bill 43

The Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) is Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of more than 130,000 unionized workers from every sector and every region of the province in the public and private sectors, as well as the building trades.

We support this legislation as it will protect Manitoban workers from discrimination based on gender expression. Including gender expression as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code builds on the work of the previous NDP government in protecting gender identity in the Code in 2012.

Manitoba's Human Rights Code is a powerful tool that helps protect Manitobans against discrimination and the Human Rights Commission does an excellent job of promoting human rights principles and adjudicating situations where Manitobans have experienced discrimination. Workers often rely on the Human Rights Code and Commission to ensure their rights are protected in their workplaces.

This bill is especially important given the current attempts by far-right governments, both in Canada and in the United States, to discriminate against people based on their gender identity and gender expression. The Trump administration has openly discriminated against trans people since its first day in office, passing draconian orders to ban them from serving in government, the military, athletics and other areas.

Here in Canada, we have seen right wing governments in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta go after students for their preferred pronouns, gender expression, and even try to restrict students to changing rooms based on their assigned sex at birth.

The continued obsession and attacks on trans people, especially young people, by the right wing in this country makes life less safe for trans people. Right wing political parties continue to attack trans and gender-nonconforming people in election campaigns, a disgusting trend aimed at some of the most vulnerable in our society.

Unfortunately, Manitoba has not been immune from this. In the last provincial election campaign, the PC Party of Manitoba ran a vile dog whistle campaign aimed at young people who do not conform to that party's outdated view of gender norms. One of the PC leadership candidates was the poster boy for that campaign, raising serious concerns about his political priorities.

Given these rising threats to trans and gender-nonconforming people, we are glad to see the Government of Manitoba taking steps to protect their human rights here in our province. This bill will help in building a fairer and more equitable province.

Steven McGillivray

Re: Bill 43

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Given these rising threats to trans and gender-nonconforming people, we are glad to see the Government of Manitoba taking steps to protect their human rights here in our province. This bill will help in building a fairer and more equitable province.

I urge you to pass this bill without further delay.

Geoff Bergen

Re: Bill 43

Bill 43 undermines our civil liberties and holds potentially serious implications for Manitobans who stand on the truth that there are only two genders and that a man is a man and a woman is a woman.

This bill weaponizes transgender people so that everyone will have to affirm their worldview and ideology, regardless of their own conscience and beliefs.

This bill forces compelled speech, which runs contrary to our right to freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience.

A Manitoban could be accused of deliberately misgendering someone, a human rights complaint lodged, and the defendant would have to spend thousands of dollars and considerable time defending themselves, not to mention the negative media coverage and the consequences of having your name dragged through the mud.

Braden Wall

Re: Bill 43

I support this Bill because of the rising threats to transgender and gender diverse people in Canada. Right wing politicians at the provincial and federal level have built their platforms by using trans people as a scapegoat. In reality trans and gender diverse people are an extremely vulnerable population. I believe this Bill is a good step to help trans and gender diverse Manitobans.

Dylan Young

Re: Bill 43

I don't believe this bill is in the best interest of all Manitobians

Raymond Garand

Re: Bill 43

People can be whatever they want to be...they are free to pretend to be male or female. That's their prerogative. DNA doesn't lie. It's a fact. You will not change my heart or mind. I am a 63 year old grandmother. I will not be using pronouns. You want to impose legal sanctions on me because I don't agree with you? That's government overreach and one step closer to marxism. Government has no business dictating what we teach our children or dictating our freedom of speech. All such rhetoric should be removed from this Bill. Schools are for reading, writing, and arithmetic...government needs to stay in their lane.

Rosalie Feener

Re: Bill 43

I am very concerned about the discussion to not have gender expression protected in the MB human rights code.

As a parent to a non-binary person and father-in-law to a transgender woman, I am passionate about our province enshrining gender expression rights in our human rights code.

It is well documented that people who experience gender dysphoria have a significantly higher level of death by suicide, as well as high rates of mental illness related to their non-acceptance by their community. This is not alright!

My wife and I are also involved with a group at our church (St Ignatius) which is working towards building bridges between the Church and the LGBTQ2S+ community.

I thank you for taking the time to listen to my concerns.

Sincerely,

Chas van Dyck

Re: Bill 43

On June 19, 2017, the Governor General signed Bill C-16 into law, amending the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code. The amendments established the legal authority needed to counter discrimination based on gender identity and gender expression.

Removing the protection of gender expression is a blatant human rights violation that panders to the far right in Canada and would ultimately hurt an already vulnerable group of people.

We have already seen an increase in attacks against gender diverse people in the US and if Canada follows suit there will be children and adults both that are in danger.

Jonathan Van Dyck

Re: Bill 43

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission against amendments to the Human Rights code with regard to gender expression. I would be remiss if I didn't respond—you see we have an adult child who identifies as non-binary and a daughter-in-law who is a transgender woman. They both express themselves as the unique and beautiful people that they are. The Human Rights code needs to be inclusive of gender expression to ensure that all of our kids feel safe to express themselves as the unique and beautiful human beings that they are.

Joanne van Dyck

Re: Bill 43

I am an Assistant Professor in Sociology and Gender and Women's Studies at Brandon University. I received my Ph.D. in Sociology from Carleton University in 2023. My areas of research and teaching pertain to issues of trans human rights and trans legal issues. I have done extensive research and writing on trans rights issues, including the barriers that trans students experience during post-secondary education, the violence and discrimination that trans people experience while working in criminalized industries like sex work, and the challenges associated with implementing trans-inclusive prison policies. I am writing from the perspective as an expert in trans human rights and trans legal issues and as a member of the trans community in Manitoba.

I urge the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to move forward in the passing of Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act. Bill 43 will bring Manitoba's Human Rights Code in alignment with provincial and federal standards that include "gender expression" as a protected ground. This protection will help ensure that Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people are free of discrimination in all provincial public services, including the realm of healthcare, education, and prisons which are sites in which discrimination is known to occur.

Passing Bill 43 will send an important message that the discrimination against Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people is not tolerated in Manitoba. This is a timely amendment given the rise of transphobic discourses and efforts to revoke trans human rights protections that is occurring within Canada and which echoes the massive harms that is unfolding in the United States. Often, opponents of trans human rights overlook the reality in which Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people are vulnerable to violence and discrimination. The protection of any vulnerable group should always be prioritized within the law. Other times, opponents of trans human rights reproduce harmful stereotypes of trans people, and in particular trans women, in ways that delegitimize trans people's identities and position trans rights in opposition to the "sex"-based rights of cis women. Individuals and organizations who are against trans rights often rely on discriminatory tropes that construct trans women as threats to cis women, especially in gender-segregated spaces like washrooms. These claims are utterly unfounded. These are stereotypes not based in reality but, unfortunately, they gain traction through the rise in transphobic attitudes.

There should be no concerns associated with passing Bill 43 given that "gender identity" is already a protected ground within Manitoba's Code, which means that provincial public services already have a responsibility to not discriminate against Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people based on their gender identities. Including "gender expression" as a protected ground within Manitoba's Code will ensure a more complete level of protection for Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people by prohibiting discrimination against an individual's gender expression – that is how they express their protected identities. Bill 43 is an important gesture to further symbolize the validity of Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people's identities and the right for trans people to express their identities in ways that they see fit.

Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people have been subject to a long history of regulation at the hands of medical authorities and government agencies alike. Bill 43 is imperative to move toward the self-determination that Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people deserve.

I wish to remind the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that Bill 43 is important in keeping with other provincial and federal human rights legislation. I commend the Province of Manitoba for protecting "gender identity" within its public services and urge the Legislative Assembly to move forward in passing Bill 43 to ensure more complete protection of Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people.

Leon Laidlaw

Re: Bill 43

I believe it is important to protect minorities who are at risk of harm and/or discrimination from hateful speech. Forcing children to out themselves to parents who may not be a safe place of expression puts children at risk, therefore the "parental rights" is a foil for controlling children and preventing them from safely exploring and accessing their identity.

I believe it is important for Manitoba to be on the same page as the rest of the country - we must protect our trans and gender diverse youth.

Raven Hebert-Lee

Re: Bill 43

Human rights or human rights and need to be enshrined

Do the right thing. Do not exclude my children from protection.

Lynn Granke

Re: Bill 43

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in wholehearted support of Bill 43, which proposes adding gender expression as a protected characteristic under Manitoba's Human Rights Code.

While Manitoba has already taken an important step by protecting gender identity, this alone does not shield people from the discrimination they face simply for being seen—for living authentically. Gender expression is how we move through the world. It's how we dress, speak, gesture, and carry ourselves. It's

what others notice first, often before they know anything else about us. And too often, it's what people are targeted for.

Discrimination based on gender expression is not theoretical. It happens in classrooms and workplaces, in healthcare settings and on city streets. It impacts children who are bullied for how they dress, adults who are denied jobs because of how they present, and elders without access to gender-affirming long-term care. No one should have to hide who they are to be treated with dignity and respect.

At a time when queer and trans rights are increasingly under attack across Canada and around the world, it is more urgent than ever that Manitoba take clear, concrete action to protect our communities. Passing Bill 43 sends an essential message: there is no world without trans people. There is no justice without protecting those who live at the intersections of vulnerability and courage.

Adding gender expression to The Human Rights Code will help ensure that everyone—cisgender, transgender, Two-Spirit, non-binary, gender-nonconforming—has the right to live authentically and safely. It closes a critical gap in protection, and affirms that everyone deserves to be valued not in spite of who they are, but because of who they are.

I urge you to pass Bill 43 without delay. Our communities deserve to live fully, visibly, and safely—now and always.

Megan Wray

Re: Bill 43

Dear Minister,

I write on behalf of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association to commend you for introducing Bill 43, the Human Rights Code Amendment Act, and to recommend its passage. Gender expression is a key aspect of recognizing individuals' rights to define their own identity.

UMFA always appreciates cases when Manitoba is acting as the vanguard of advancing progressive rights, but in this case Bill 43 brings the provincial human rights code up to the standard that Ontario reached in 2012, and British Columbia reached in 2016, when those provinces amended their human rights codes to include "gender expression" as a prohibited ground for discrimination. The current amendment is justified because everyone should enjoy equal dignity and respect, including those

whose gender expression is different—or is seen to be different—from their birth sex.

Protections for gender expression are crucially important for transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming people. As these forms of expression of gender identity and experience are visible and public, it is crucially important to protect their dignity by protecting them from negative treatment, harassment and discrimination based on their gender expression. The protections of the Human Rights Code should be extended to gender expression.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Erik Thomson
President
University of Manitoba Faculty Association

Re: Bill 43

I support adding gender expression to the human rights code.

Don't listen to the hate. People left to live and love in peace are not dangerous. They're just people.

Sarah Schira

Re: Bill 43

I am writing to you today to express my concern with Bill 43.

Bill 43 undermines our civil liberties and holds potentially serious implications for Manitobans who stand on the truth that there are only two genders and that a man is a man and a woman is a woman. Just because some may believe there are more than two genders does mean I need to believe it, especially when that belief directly contradicts my spiritual beliefs.

This bill weaponizes transgender people so that everyone will have to affirm their worldview and ideology, regardless of their own conscience and beliefs. For example, if you refuse to call a transgender man (a biological woman) a man, a human rights complaint could be lodged under the Human Rights Code and you would have to defend yourself before the Human Rights Commission if the process got to that point.

This bill forces compelled speech, which runs contrary to our right to freedom of speech, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience.

When it comes to Human Rights Commissions, the process is the punishment.

A Manitoban could be accused of deliberately misgendering someone, a human rights complaint lodged, and the defendant would have to spend thousands of dollars and considerable time defending themselves, not to mention the negative media coverage and the consequences of having your name dragged through the mud.

Please stand up for our freedom of speech in regards to this bill before it passes.

Sincerely,
Breanne Wall

Re: Bill 43

I write to voice my support for Bill 43. Adding gender expression as a characteristic for which no Manitoban should ever be discriminated for is an important change to our Human Rights Code.

Fraser Young

Re: Bill 43

I am writing in support of Bill 43. I am in favour of placing gender expression in MB legislation.

Doug Derksen

Re: Bill 43

Protecting gender expression protects the rights of everyone. While policing gender expression is mostly used against trans and gender non-conforming people, by allowing everyone the right to express their gender however they wish we allow for a broader human experience.

It also ignores that gender - particularly how one *performs* gender - is a social construct. Allowing for freedom of expression only makes sense in this light, and in a society that largely conflates certain genitals with certain expression.

On that vein, we have seen a disturbing rise in adults expecting children to provide proof of their gender to participate in school sports (e.g., Kelowna June 2023). This is dangerous on many levels, including potential sexual exploitation of minors.

Science has proven that trans people exist, as do intersex people.

Allowing people freedom of expression in their gender harms no one. But restricting it can lead to massive harm, including increased suicide and self-harm rates among youth.

Do the right thing and protect gender expression.

Thank you.

Katie Derksen

Re: Bill 43

Please help protect our vulnerable transgender and nonbinary communities by making "gender expression" protected in Manitoba!

Miriam Robern

Re: Bill 43

as someone who has people in their life who are queer, this act means a lot to me to have those people i care about be given the right to a safe and happy life

Brooke Reed

Re: Bill 43

I would like to express my support for adding gender expression as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba human rights code. This is absolutely the right time to protect our LGBT+ kids. Thank you.

Kelly Hughes

Re: Bill 43

I have concerns with how the NDP government is taking away Freedom of Speech with their proposed amendments in Bill 43. This is about compelling and legislating speech, forcing people to agree with another person's ideology, forcing compliance. This is government over reach, and taking away our freedom. You can't legislate respect. It doesn't result in the desired inclusion, instead it causes division.

We have the freedom in our country and province to speak, according to our conscience, and to hold personal beliefs, without being punished by our government. This is how democratic societies work.

In Manitoba, let's not spend our time and tax dollars regulating pronouns! Let's fix our medical system, address rising crime and rising taxes!

Thank you

Darlene Blatz

Re: Bill 43

Hello,

Although I do not live in Manitoba anymore, I grew up in Brandon for the first 23 years of my life, and most of my friends and family still live there.

I want to indicate my support for Bill 43. Feeling uneasy as a queer person was one of many reasons I moved away from MB. The pressure to look the same as everyone growing up, even if I wanted to dress slightly differently, was a constant tension in my life. I want you to know although I am part of the lgbtq community, I am a fairly feminine presenting lesbian. If even I felt uncomfortable, think of those who may not "fit" what is expected.

I would also like to highlight that this is more than just lgbtq people. It is about everyone. I look at the changes this government has made since the election and see that Manitoba is becoming a place where the community looks after everyone and tries to show up for people. It makes me proud.

I invite you not just to consider the voices of those who attend this meeting and think about all those who are not there. Many of those people do not feel comfortable or safe, and it is for them you make these decisions.

Suppose Manitoba can continue to be a place where people can be themselves regardless of what that means, from the most mundane to the most colourful. Everyone, even if they do not know it, benefits. Having this philosophy in legislation is vital, especially if a time comes when things taken for granted today are threatened. We see in the USA today how quickly agendas can change and how fast erosion of fundamental rights can begin. Putting gender expression in the human rights code will make that much harder.

Thank you, and please move forward with the bill.

Sandra Schira

Re: Bill 43

I am writing in favour of Bill 43 and the amendment to the Human Rights Code in this province. I am a Two-Spirit Métis woman, born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I am a citizen of the Manitoba Métis Federation. I am also an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba.

In this moment in particular, it is essential that Manitoba enshrine the protection for gender identity and expression within law. The attacks on trans and non-binary community members in the United States have spread here and the vitriol is chilling. We stand at a crucial moment to be able to formalize this support for gender expression. While other prairie provinces are moving towards hate, Manitoba has an opportunity to do the right thing and protect the lives, safety, health, and happiness of trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming residents of this province.

I urge the committee to support this amendment unequivocally and make a statement against hatred in this province.

Lucy Delgado

Re: Bill 43

Dear Elected Representatives,

I support Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, because I believe that protecting gender expression under our Human Rights Code is important.

Adding gender expression as a protected category simply ensures that people can live openly, safely, and equally – no matter how they present themselves.

This amendment doesn't threaten anyone's rights. It protects the basic human rights of a group that has gone without clear legal recognition.

Manitoba has a proud history of leading with love and courage. We support a diverse community made only richer by transgender people who deserve our support and protection. Here in the home of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights let us ensure that everyone's human rights are safeguarded.

Sincerely,

Amanda Morris

Re: Bill 43

We are writing this letter in support of Bill 43, which would add 'gender expression' to the Manitoba human rights code as a protected characteristic. We represent a coalition of parents in Manitoba who came together out of love for our transgender children and a mutual desire to keep them safe.

The rise in misinformation and dangerous rhetoric being spread about transgender people, particularly our children, has been deeply concerning for us as parents. We have seen firsthand the impact of this added stress and bullying on our children's well being. It can be hard enough to feel different when you are a child growing up never mind adding the stress of your identity being called into question, your rights put under siege and your safety threatened. All children deserve the freedom to be their authentic selves and to learn and grow in safe environments.

We call on Manitoba to protect all people regardless of their gender expression. The passing of Bill 43 would be an important step towards keeping our children safe and protecting their fundamental right to exist.

Sincerely,

Sara Tarrant

Parents And Relatives Allied with Transgender Individuals (PARATI) of Manitoba

Re: Bill 43

People are very afraid and hateful in Manitoba especially when it comes to gender. Gender is a personal choice and something to follow your heart about. All the young children who are being bashed and hated on should be empowered to the max. They should be armed with whatever we can give them and we should stand with them and forgive them for whatever they do in self defense because we haven't done nearly enough to protect them.

Owen Toews

Re: Bill 43

As a queer non-binary person I strongly support the proposed amendments outlined in Bill 43. Including gender expression under the list of protected characteristics in Manitoba's Human Rights Code is both needed and timely.

We can see a need from the every day discrimination based on gender expression many people face that continually causes harm and inhibits our ability to live our day to day lives. We can see a need because there have been discriminatory laws passed in other provinces that directly target and harm trans and non-binary individuals that could very well come to pass in Manitoba as well. This amendment is needed now considering the outdated and harmful views that inform the platforms of certain political parties that are currently running for office.

Our rights are at risk and must be protected. This amendment is a step towards protecting those rights and ensuring a safe and equitable province for all those who live here.

Maddi Reed

Re: Bill 43

I strongly disagree with this new Bill. For example, as a Grandfather of a 9 year old Grand-Daughter, it would allow a Man to go into a public bathroom with her, and profess to identify as a Woman, and the Law would be there to Protect His Rights, and not my Grand-Daughters. Canadians are fed up with our Core Values and Moral standards being stripped away.

Robert Martens

Re: Bill 43

My name is Anny Chen. I think that adding gender expression to the human rights code makes sense because it protects everybody's ability to express their gender and prevents people from being discriminated against based on narrow definitions of what gender can be.

I grew up as a tomboy in the back alley of my West End home, always scraping my knees and clambering over fences. This was a really nice uncomplicated time of life. Growing into a teenager, I became bigger and taller, hair started to darken on my upper lip, my outgoing and bossy nature started becoming more of an issue, and I started experiencing bullying and feelings of insecurity. I desperately wanted to feel and be seen as feminine.

It's taken years and a lot of work to get comfortable with myself and who I am, to be okay with being a woman who is fat, who is tall, who has dark hair on her upper lips, who often takes charge. I often think

about how much better it would have been to grow up thinking all these things were okay, that all these things can be perfectly good and acceptable ways to be a woman. That's what protecting gender expression means to me.

Anny Chen

Re: Bill 43

This is a form of people's identity. It should be protected as a part of their human rights. When we strip people's rights to express themselves in whatever way they feel most comfortable we start to enter murky territory of controlling other people's bodies. The government should not be making laws confining what people do with their body. That is nobody but each individual person's decision. How people choose to present themselves and identify does not harm others. It is a form of self-expression. It is just their human rights and they deserve those. We live in a wonderful country and I think that we need to take this step to protect people's rights in the future and continue to better ourselves as a country and as a whole.

Morgan Schroeder

Re: Bill 43

As a non-binary person who has many loved ones and friends who are transgender, I would like to express my support for this bill - it is a human right for each person to determine for themselves how they experience and express their gender, and it is their right to request that others treat them with courtesy and respect. With the unconscionable attacks on trans and non-binary people we are seeing in the US and the UK, not to mention a few other provinces right here in Canada, it is important that Manitoba show the way in supporting and protecting trans and non-binary folks.

Emèt Eviatar

Re: Bill 43

As a trans person, Bill 43 will help me and other trans people by enshrining our right to look, act, and live our lives without interference from self-appointed moral guardians. For all the talk from those in opposition about 'parental rights', the freedom they want is the freedom to push us out of public life, and back into the closet. We want our freedom to live,

work, and participate in our communities without risk of discrimination or violence.

We just want to live our lives as gender freaks without getting bashed in the head by transphobes screaming at us. We might look and sound weird, but they want us to live as dull versions of ourselves. They're the weird ones.

Best regards

Hillary Siemens

Re: Bill 43

My name is Katie Leitch, and I am writing in support of Bill 43: The Human Rights Code Amendment Act which seeks to add "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under the Human Rights Code.

Gender expression is an essential component of identity, and there is substantial evidence (including from the Government of Canada itself) demonstrating the significant consequences of gender-based violence which disproportionately impacts trans and non-binary people. This includes, but is not limited to, higher rates of unwanted sexual behaviors, physical and emotional violence, and online harassment.

I am heartbroken to recall the numerous instances of discrimination and violence that I have witnessed in my personal and professional life, including repeatedly and intentionally misusing pronouns, deadnaming, and blatantly rejecting the existence of trans and non-binary identities. I have seen first-hand how this can result in acute and prolonged mental health problems, not feeling safe in the workplace or classroom, and a general loss of hope and joy.

As a queer person, community member, and post-secondary educator, I am heartened to see the province propose additional protection that will directly and positively impact my loved ones, my community, and my colleagues and students. This legislation is a critical step in combating the hateful rhetoric and misinformation that has been intentionally and strategically used to target trans and non-binary people, a disturbing trend that has escalated in recent years with the normalization of extremist politics.

The role of the government is to represent its citizens, and that needs to include people of all gender expressions. I am hopeful that Manitoba will follow suit of the other provinces in Canada that have already passed legislation on this matter.

Thank you for your time.

Katie Leitch

Re: Bill 43

Including gender expression as protected in the Human Rights Code is essential for our province to continue toward equality and inclusion for all. This bill needs to pass so we can all be safe, and have the Code available for our defence if and when our rights are violated.

Tara Forshaw

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious convictions.

Leah Krahn

Re: Bill 43

Hi, I'm Leo Cortens - a resident of Winnipeg South Centre.

I'm writing to support Bill43, the Human Rights Code Ammendment act, which would include gender expression as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Empathy, kindness, and compassion are at the core of my values. The freedom to express oneself as one chooses is so clear, so straightforward and obvious,

that it should go without saying. Unfortunately, in light of recent attacks on queer, trans, and gender nonconforming individuals across North America, we must strive to do our best to protect those individuals, and to enshrine, into law, this freedom and right of individuals across this province.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Leo Cortens

Re: Bill 43

As trans rights are under attack globally, it is more important than ever that we enshrine the right to gender expression in Manitoba. Trans kids are looking to us to protect their rights to explore what gender means to them in an environment that is safe and welcoming. Instead, all over the world children are being told that their natural exploration and questioning of gender norms and expectations is wrong or shameful. I do not care if children assigned the same sex at birth play on the same sports teams. I want sports to be inclusive spaces for kids to have fun and learn the value of team work and respect and working hard to achieve your goals. I do not want our trans children to be weaponized for the advancement of a far right agenda.

Trans people are not dangerous or immoral or shameful, but the far right is making people think they are, putting the lives of trans people at risk. As a queer person, I want my community to live without fear of persecution. I want my trans siblings to live in joy, fully themselves, because that diversity and self confidence helps strengthen our communities. Please hear the pleas of the trans and queer communities and protect our right to be ourselves, safely and joyfully.

Kaitlyn Duthie-Kannikkatt

Re: Bill 43

Hello, my name is Joel and I am writing in support of Bill 43: The Human Rights Code Amendment Act which seeks to add "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under the Human Rights Code.

As a teacher in Winnipeg, Manitoba, I see everyday how important gender expression is to myself and my students. I believe my students deserve the right to grow up without fear of violence or reprimand because of their chosen gender expression. I want my students to feel proud of the place they call home and feel safe within the communities it provides.

I believe that supporting Bill 43 will be a step forward in resisting instances of discrimination and show people of all walks of life that we care about their identity. Our Communities and our laws should strive for inclusivity and respect for one another. This is what I teach in my classroom and this is what I expect our government to reflect.

Joel Siemens

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that religious that may contradict their religious convictions.

Heather Krahn

Re: Bill 43

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

I write this submission regarding Bill 43 to express my opposition to Bill 43 - The Human Rights Code Amendment Act.

Bill 43 undermines our civil liberties and directly attacks our freedom of religion and speech, recognized, declared and granted to us by the Canadian Bill of Rights, by potentially imposing serious implications and penalties on anybody who opposes or missuses certain gender language. Anybody who stands on the fundamental truth that there are only two genders, male and female, a man is a man and a woman is a woman, is under threat by this

Bill. Bill 43 weaponizes transgender people to demand affirmation of their worldview and ideology, by everyone, regardless of their own conscience and beliefs. We have seen such weaponization over the last few years in an alarming, increasing rate not just in Canada but all over the World. Numerous lawsuits and court cases regarding 'misgendering' and not affirming a transgenders worldview have been filed and taken place, as well as defamation campaigns launched against anybody who does not affirm or support that worldview.

Yet we can learn from history that such weaponization of one particular group of people creates segregation rather than inclusion and community. Long before Jews were forced to wear a yellow David star in Nazi-Germany, Hitler's propaganda machine started by weaponizing the German people. They presented them a worldview and forced affirmation of the same by calling the German people 'Arisch' to the point where it was even stated in their official identification documents. Ultimately it led to anti-semitism, separation and segregation and a call for the 'ultimate solution' of eradicating an entire human race. While gender language might not be aimed at a human race, the principle is the same, just on a civil, scientific and religious level. It is a weaponization and propaganda to appease and affirm the worldview and ideology of a select few, while forcefully stepping on and stealing away the rights and freedoms of many against their own fundamental beliefs and conscience. At the same time the beliefs and conscience of those that are being potentially oppressed, do not impede on the beliefs and ideology of those that seek affirmation of the same. That is not an amendment for the Human Rights, but rather opposing Human Rights on a large scale level.

There is no scientific evidence opposing the fundamental truth that there are only two genders, male and female, and that a man is a man and a woman is a woman. Matter of fact, countless scientists, medical professionals and even psychologists and therapists have stated over the last few years that it is proven that there are only two genders. The chromosomes in our DNA prove it, unquestionably. No matter how strong the will of a person is, how many surgeries a person has, or what clothes a person wears, even when everything is done to make this person look and sound and feel like the opposite gender or a mix of genders, the fact still remains, that an examination of the DNA of that person, will clearly show the original gender that is bound in the DNA from conception on.

Further, numerous truthful tests, studies and experiences that psychologists, counselors and therapists have written and talked about show, that people who claim a different gender than the one genetically given to them by conception, seem to suffer from a spiritual or psychological cause, rather than missgendering. It would be much more beneficial to provide help and support to those people, via proper and good counseling, that is based on scientific facts, rather than ideology and worldviews.

Furthermore this counseling would be very helpful in these cases, since we see an alarming increase in depression, anxiety and suicide rates amongst people who belief there are more than two genders, compared to those who belief there are only two genders. Those alarming statistics are not just local to Canada, but rather a world-wide phenomenon, even in areas where so-called 'gender affirming language' is implemented already. Proper, factual, loving counseling would potentially be much more helpful and possibly save the lives of these folks and bring them much happier, joyful and fulfilled lives, compared to potentially threatening a large percentage of Manitobas population and infringing on their rights and freedoms. Testimonies of people who used to claim that they are 'transgender' or the opposite gender or even another gender all together and have received loving and caring counseling and changed their mind about those statements, confirm these claims that counseling and spiritual guidance have helped them and protected many of them from possibly committing the regrettable act of ending their own lives.

Recent events and drifts in numerous societies and cultures around our beautiful planet, have shown that there are only two genders. One recent event is the ruling of the UK Supreme Court stating that the biological sex determines the gender and not any other factors. It would be in the best interest of all Manitobans to rather stay with scientific facts and provide spiritual help to those that claim a different gender than their biological one, rather than to go through the same lengthy and hurtful process that other cultures and societies have already taken and given us example after example that the truth remains a fact, that a man is a man and a woman is a woman and that is determined by their biological sex.

I implore this committee to not pass 'Bill 43 - The Human Rights Code Amendment Act', not just for the protection of the Human Rights of those who might suffer under such potential weaponization of the transgender community, but also for the protection of the Human Rights of those that claim a different

gender than their biological sex and rather bring a bill to the floor that would make psychological and spiritual counseling regarding gender questions easily accessible to every Manitoban who might have a question about their gender or the topic in general.

Jonathan Janzen

Re: Bill 43

as a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protection be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious conviction.

George Krahn

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in nonviolent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights

protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious convictions.

Sierra Krahn

Re: Bill 43

With due respect if some wishes to be called by something and they find people to do that that's fine. Do not force me to lie when the person is clearly not what they say they are. Causing them to believe in their reality and making mine a lie. This is unheard of and truly mental hypocrisy. Even if an individual gets some to call them what they want this cannot be law as it bridges deception and lies to be accepted as truth. So now punishing someone for believing something else or punishing someone for not believing something is of utter stupidity. Let the cards stay where they are if some wishes to be called something other than what they were assigned at birth no problem, they will find people to do so but you should also find persons who are not for that and that is fine as well. Stop trying to force people to conform to lies.

Stokely Lindo

Re: Bill 43

Subject: Support for Bill to Add Gender Expression to the Manitoba Human Rights Code

On behalf of the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1505, I am writing to express our full support for the NDP Government of Manitoba's bill to add gender expression as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

This is a vital and long-overdue measure that sends a clear message: every person in Manitoba deserves dignity, safety, and legal protection—regardless of how they express their gender.

Throughout history, the struggle for human rights has been met with resistance and even regression. From the fight for women's rights, to civil rights for African Americans, to Indigenous rights to the ongoing struggle for recognition and equality by the LGBTQ+ community, progress has never been guaranteed—it has been demanded, earned, and defended. We must remain vigilant in protecting these hard-won rights.

As we face shifting political landscapes, it is more important than ever that we stand firm in our commitment to equity and justice. We cannot allow

the rights of the most vulnerable among us to be rolled back. We are in 2025, and humanity should be doing better—not worse—when it comes to protecting basic human rights and creating a society where every individual can live authentically and safely.

ATU Local 1505 represents the front-line transit professionals who serve the public every day across Winnipeg. We are proud to stand with our members—and with all Manitobans—who deserve to live and work free from discrimination. Transit workers reflect the rich diversity of our communities, and we know firsthand how important it is to create workplaces and public spaces that are safe, respectful, and inclusive for everyone.

This legislation builds meaningfully on the progress made in 2012 by the previous NDP government to protect gender identity under the Code. By now also recognizing gender expression, Manitoba is sending a powerful message: that no one should face discrimination for being who they are or for how they choose to express themselves.

We commend the Government for taking this important step forward, and we urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to support this bill.

Respectfully,

Chris Scott
President Business Agent
Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1505

Re: Bill 43

Good Evening, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill. I do not support this bill to add "gender expression" to the human rights code because I don't feel it is necessary. Sexual orientation and gender identity were already added to the human rights codes as grounds for protection against discrimination. If people who choose a different gender identity are already protected from discrimination, what are the benefits of this bill for those people? And how will it impact everyone else?? How can you know if someone is being discriminated against based on gender expression? How can anyone prove or disprove that? Will this apply to children? eg. Bullying? Are HRC going to make children pay huge human rights fines? Where do parental rights fit in to discuss this issue with their children without legal repercussions? Adding gender identity to the human rights code already enforced the preferred pronouns, which many people feel is compelled speech, and goes against the rights and freedoms of those who disagree or don't believe in the new gender ideology. How will this amendment make any further practical

difference? We are already seeing that upholding one person's freedom can infringe on another's. We are also seeing freedom of speech eroding. I am fearful to even submit this. But I am compelled to ask - in what scenarios is the government envisioning using this protection? In addition, I believe this will further divide society and segregate people who express their gender in untraditional ways. It will actually make the general public more fearful to interact with them out of fear of possibly being accused of discrimination and a complaint made to the HRC! While this bill tries to reduce discrimination, I predict it will actually make it worse. I don't want to live in a country or a province that evokes constant stress of losing my job or HRC fines or worse because I cannot freely speak according to my conscience and deeply held spiritual beliefs, even if someone doesn't like it.

Jason Hodson

Re: Bill 43

This bill represents a severe restriction on the ability of a citizen to speak, or openly express themselves. By having compelled speech, in this case, the mandatory use of pronouns sets a dangerous precedence.

This policing of speech by the government is a major breach of our freedoms and rights in Canada. In this specific example it lends preference for one belief or creed over another in a clear example of a government deciding which way people should think, act and believe.

This opens a extremely dangerous area, where the current government in power can deem which type of belief and expression is and will be deemed acceptable. This allows for the open prosecution and suppression of political adversaries, opposition or anyone that does not align with a governments preference.

This can include private companies, social media posts and apps, media in general and even political opposition.

Allowing a government to wander into this area goes against the founding principles of Canada and Manitoba where a free and open society is allowed to discuss ideas, hold beliefs and values independent and sometimes in contrary to the popular consensus.

It is my sincere hope, that Bill 43 not only does not pass, but should not be explored in any variation whatsoever to uphold the responsibility of any elected

government; to protect the rights and freedoms of ALL its citizens not just preferred categories.

Robert Lentowich

Re: Bill 43

As a Canadian deeply committed to both my faith and the principles of democratic freedom, I am writing to express my opposition to the proposed legislation that would include "gender expression" as a protected ground under human rights law. While I believe in the importance of protecting all individuals from harassment and violence, I am concerned that such measures could infringe upon the fundamental freedoms guaranteed under Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically 2(a) freedom of conscience and religion, and 2(b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion, and expression. In recent years, there have been instances (such as the Oger v. Whatcott decision by the B.C. Human Rights Tribunal) where citizens have faced legal penalties not for inciting hatred, but for expressing traditional beliefs about gender in non-violent ways. I respectfully urge you to ensure that any expansion of human rights protections be carefully balanced against these constitutional freedoms, so that Canadians are not compelled by law to affirm beliefs that may contradict their religious convictions.

Victoria Hornblower

Re: Bill 43

I am writing to state that I support gender expression be a protected characteristic under human rights code. Trans rights are under attack and we must stand up against hatred, bigotry, transphobia and misogyny – all characteristics of the far right. Please do the right thing and uphold the rights of trans people.

Sarah Borbridge

Re: Bill 43

My name is Dr. Joe Curnow and I'm writing in support of the amendment to include the protection of gender expression in the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

As a scholar of equity and justice in learning and educational spaces, it is important to me that gender expression be included alongside gender identity as a protected characteristic. Research demonstrates the need for legal protections in this area, and as a member of the University of Manitoba Faculty of

Education, I can see quite clearly that children, youth, families, and teachers who are trans and non-binary need legal tools to protect their access to education (and the quality of that education, access to equity-oriented materials, etc) now more than ever.

In an era where some governments have chosen to curtail protections and actively harm trans and non-binary gender expression, this bill represents an important opportunity to build in protections which enable trans and non-binary and other gender-minoritized people to safely live their lives, access state resources, and contribute to our communities in ways that they are entitled to and which benefit everyone.

Thank you,

Dr. Joe Curnow

Re: Bill 43

Dear Honourable Ministers,

I am writing in support of Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act. As a former educator and now as a professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba, I believe that this legislation will protect citizens—including children—from discrimination based on gender expression.

Bill 43 is especially important as we have seen the efforts of far-right organizations (e.g. Action for Canada, One Million March for Children, and Hands-Off Our Kids) mobilize actions that aim to undermine the rights of children and to discriminate against children (and their families) based on their gender identity and gender expression. These organizations have helped to fuel the "parental rights" movement and a moral panic that has influenced some provincial conservative governments to delimit the rights of children.

The legislative moves in New Brunswick, Alberta and Saskatchewan deny other parents' concerns (those who support LGBTQIA people, for example), delimit school-based sexual health education, and violate the rights of children. It is important to note that there are no legislative or human rights laws or policies in Canada that protect "parental rights," but there are numerous commitments to supporting the rights of children in Canada. For example, the Canadian Charter protects the rights of all citizens in Canada – including children. In addition, Canada is legally bound to uphold the rights of children as enshrined in

the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Bill 43 will enhance the rights of all citizens—including the rights of children. I strongly support Bill 43 and see this as way to protect human rights and recognize the equality of all people.

Sincerely,

Melanie Janzen, PhD

Re: Bill 43

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my support for Bill 43. I think it is important that gender expression become a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code. I am a teacher and I supervise a Gender and Sexuality Alliance at my school. My students' gender expression is an important part of their identities and being able to express their identities plays a significant role in supporting their mental health and well-being. It is distressing to hear that gender expression is not currently protected under the Human Rights Code, particularly given transphobic policies and legislation that has emerged and continues to emerge in other provinces and states. I hope that Manitoba can take a strong stance against transphobia by passing this bill.

Thank you for devoting your attention to this matter. I hope that this bill is passed successfully.

Thank you,

Ellen Bees

Re: Bill 43

I agree with adding "gender expression" to the list of protections under the Manitoba Human Rights Code being presented at the leg this evening. I support the right for gender expression and want to see this right protected in Manitoba legislation.

Jeff Patteson

Re: Bill 43

To the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba,

I am writing to express my support for Bill 43, which proposes important updates to the Manitoba Human Rights Code. These changes—replacing the French

term orientation sexuelle with identité de genre, and adding gender expression as a protected characteristic—are vital steps toward ensuring inclusive and equitable protections for all Manitobans.

Language matters. Updating terminology to better reflect people's identities not only affirms dignity but also strengthens legal clarity and consistency. Including gender expression as a protected ground is a necessary evolution that acknowledges the diverse ways people live and express their identities.

By passing Bill 43, Manitoba can continue to lead in human rights protections and demonstrate its commitment to building a safe and respectful society for everyone.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Frances Wilson

Re: Bill 43

I am writing in full and enthusiastic support of Bill 43 The Human Rights Code Amendment Act. This is much needed legislation as it will protect the rights of trans and gender-nonconforming individuals in our province. This is especially necessary for the young people in Manitoba who need the extra protection of legislation so that they can be assured of schools that welcome, protect, advocate for, and make space for every individual. Our younger citizens are more vulnerable for having their rights infringed upon when there is parental or community pressure to control their identities and take away their rights to safe and affirming spaces in public schools. However, I urge legislators to be brave and support this necessary bill. All students in Manitoba need to live with dignity, joy, and love and to be guaranteed full inclusion and welcoming learning environments where they can thrive.

As an Associate Professor at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education, I am a teacher educator and an educational researcher that focuses on addressing and confronting gender based sexual violence in K-12 schools. We know that students with intersectional identities are at the most risk for facing physical, emotional, and sexual violence in and out of schools. Policy at schools to protect gender diverse individuals is often driven by legislation like Bill 43. This legislation will be a catalyst for school divisions to make sure their policies and practices align with the Human Rights Code. It gives divisional leaders and teachers in classrooms the clearly articulated legislation that helps them to work towards

(re)imagining and committing to schools that protect, uphold, and promote the flourishing of all students, staff, and community members.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jennifer Watt
Associate Professor, University of Manitoba

Re: Bill 43

Hi, my name is Karlie Higgins, and I'm writing today because I too believe in fairness, safety, and dignity for every Manitoban. I have chronic illness that makes writing difficult sometimes, and a friend helped me write this letter, but I added some personal touches in as well.

Bill 43 – The Human Rights Code Amendment Act – is not about special treatment. It's about protecting people from harm. It's about saying no one should be denied housing, work, or basic respect because of how they express their identity. Some of these people are members of my family and friend group.

I know change can be uncomfortable. But at its heart, this bill is about kindness. It's about saying every person deserves to be treated with humanity – whether we fully understand their journey or not.

Protecting gender expression doesn't take anything away from anyone – it simply brings us closer to a society where we all feel safe being who we are.

That's a Manitoba I want to live in. I hope you do too. Thank you.

Karlie Higgins

Re: Bill 43

I support this legislation as it will protect Manitoban workers from discrimination based on gender expression. No one should experience discrimination based on what they wear, their mannerisms or how they speak.

Fenton Litwiller

Re: Bill 43

Hello, my name is Raelene Hall, and I'm sending this email as a Manitoban who cares deeply about fairness, safety, and human dignity.

I'm writing in support of Bill 43, The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, because I believe that

protecting gender expression under our Human Rights Code is long overdue.

This isn't about special rights. It's about protecting people from discrimination – something that's still far too common. A 2022 Statistics Canada report showed that transgender and gender-diverse individuals experience significantly higher rates of harassment, violence, and mental health challenges than the general population.

In fact, over 40% of gender-diverse Canadians report experiencing discrimination in daily life – at work, in housing, or in public spaces. That's not political. That's real people being left vulnerable under the law.

Adding gender expression as a protected category simply ensures that people can live openly, safely, and equally – no matter how they present themselves.

This amendment doesn't threaten anyone's rights. It protects the basic human rights of a group that has gone far too long without clear legal recognition.

Manitoba has a proud history of leading with compassion and courage. I urge you to continue that legacy by supporting this bill.

Thank you for reading,

Raelene Hall

Re: Bill 43

I want to add my voice in opposition to Bill 43. As a parent and a Manitoba taxpayer, I strongly disagree with this Bill being passed as legislation in Manitoba. The Canadian federal government has already made provision for personal transgender identity rights and freedoms in our nation. This Bill is entirely unnecessary and a waste of our taxpayer dollars, valuable elected officials time, and is a clear violation of parental rights.

Mary Peladeau

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with bill 43.

Kathy Bergen

Re: Bill 43

I am writing this letter in support of Bill 43: The Human Rights Code Amendment Act.

This legislation will bring Manitoba in line with the majority of other provinces and territories in Canada.

It is absolutely crucial that the Human Rights Code expressly includes language referencing gender expression to ensure that this right is enshrined in law. As such, this codified language can be used to protect individuals from discrimination.

In a moment when there is rampant disinformation about "gender ideology" in schools, it is critical that students and teachers can rely on the language of the Human Rights Code to protect their right to flourish within classrooms and shared spaces, to hear their chosen names and pronouns, and to see themselves in the curriculum. Without this specific language, the complaints of some parents and community members can be used to undermine and erase these basic human rights as some school leaders feel that these rights are open to interpretation. School leaders and teachers need to be able to point to specific language in order to show that these rights are not debatable in our schools and classrooms.

Shannon Moore

Re: Bill 43

I believe 'gender expression' should be a protected characteristic under the human rights code. Full stop.

Lani Zastre

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill 43! We should never pass this Bill.

Joan and Leo Kirouac

Re: Bill 43

I am writing in support of proposed bill 43 recognizing gender expression as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code. I'm proud to live in a province that cares for the wellbeing of all community members that hopes to enshrine the rights and freedoms of all into law.

This bill is necessary to protect trans and gender diverse community members who face discrimination and bullying and recognizes that this will affect a person's quality of life and social equity. As a cis-woman I have not experienced the same level of discrimination as gender diverse community members but have been a witness to it. I have also heard throughout my life that I should wear makeup to make me prettier, had reasonable emotions blamed on hormones, and had dresses and frills forced on me at

times I was not comfortable wearing them. I've heard boys mocked for 'throwing like a girl' or not 'being man-enough'. No one is safe from being made to feel less-than for not conforming to socially constructed gender norms, and this bill recognizes that it is a right for all to be who they are.

Showing support for all people creates net positives for all communities; Manitoba can only benefit by adding these protections to the human rights code.

Natalie Wiebe

Re: Bill 43

I am eager to submit this letter in support of Bill 43, which proposes the inclusion of gender expression to the Manitoba Human Rights Code as a protected characteristic.

As an informed citizen who attends many of the rallies in support of transgender individuals, who attends protests to counter groups who feel that pronouns, gender, and freedom of expression should be weaponized and removed from schools, families, and even common rhetoric, Bill 43 seems like so much more than a good suggestion. It is needed to protect the rights of all Manitobans.

Every day, in the media, in casual conversations, and especially on social media, we see echoes of the antitrans rhetoric of our neighbours to the south, in Europe, and sadly, also in provinces to our East and West gaining ground here, in the province we call home.

Right now, we have the best party to speak for trans rights in our province. I beg you not to let this opportunity to be on the right side of history slip by. The time is now to make a difference.

Aimee Rice

Re: Bill 43

My name is Cale and I'm writing in support of the amendment to include the protection of gender expression in the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Gender expression is an important distinction from gender identity and including protections for it is crucial for keeping gender non-conforming people safe. Recent attacks on transgender individuals due to perceived deviances are now being extended to anyone presenting non-traditional expression. These expressions are harmless to everyone and can be as

small and innocuous as men having painted fingernails, or women having short haircuts. The pushback to gender expression protections is, in my view, a reactionary and fear-mongering response that aims to reduce everyone into narrow, constrictive boxes of so-called traditional gender roles that repress everyone. I believe that a society which values free speech and expression, such as Manitoba and Canada, must include protections for non-conforming expressions of gender. This is a basic protection that can be afforded to citizens and residents who may simply be expressing themselves aesthetically, or more seriously, be experimenting with their gender identity, a practice which can cause serious anxiety due to threats of violence, actual acts of violence, and the present anti-trans political landscape developing across the globe (see for example the UK's recent regressive 'definition of a woman' legislature).

Manitoba, in my view, has shown commendable progressive leadership in these very troubled political times at the interprovincial, national, and international levels. Our government must enact these protections as they will form a safeguard for ensuring other protections, such as those for gender identity, sexual identity, religion, or ancestry, are maintained and celebrated in our society.

Finally, diversity fosters innovation through including multiple perspectives and voices, but only under safe conditions. By not ensuring the right of safe expression for everyone, the province will lose important resources that will help our society continue to progress and resist actions that would see us diminished, or worse.

Please, take these thoughts into account when discussing and voting on this bill. I trust the Manitoba Legislative Assembly to do the right thing and vote to update the Manitoba Human Rights code.

Thank you for your continued representation of the voices of our communities.

Cale Gushulak

Re: Bill 43

Dear committee members

I am writing as a social scientist to communicate my support of the amendment that will add protection of gender expression to the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Contrary to a not uncommon opinion, there is nothing new about variation in how humans express gender. There is nothing novel about people living the reality that in the world today we call gender in ways other than binary identities of male and female. And there has also long been variation in how people have lived or expressed masculinity and femininity. As anthropologist Nancy Lindisfarne and historian Jonathan Neale put it in their 2023 book *Why Men? A Human History of Violence and Inequality*, "there are many ways to experience gender, and... these are situational and often fleeting and fluid." To give just one example, in North American societies before the arrival of European colonialism "there were an enormous variety of gendered categories, identities and sexual practices."

We are currently living in a moment of history in which how people live and express gender is changing. Unfortunately, some institutions and organizations are responding to these ongoing changes in ways that are harmful to persons who express gender in ways with which they disagree. Those institutions and organizations propagate hostility to such persons, often in ways that scapegoat them for problems in society that such persons have in no way caused. This hostility easily flows into harmful actions. Philosopher Judith Butler has ably analyzed this hostility and its dangerous consequences for society in their excellent 2024 book *Who's Afraid of Gender?*

Quite simply, adding protection of gender expression to the Manitoba Human Rights Code is a small but significant way to reduce the harm experienced by people who live gender in ways that are different from those that today are most common. It is a necessary measure that should be adopted without delay.

Sincerely,

David Camfield, PhD
Professor, Labour Studies & Sociology and
Criminology
University of Manitoba

Re: Bill 43

My name is March and I'm writing in support of the amendment to include the protection of gender expression in the Manitoba Human Rights Code. Protection of gender identity is a good start, but it means little if people can still be discriminated against for being weird. A government that shudders at the idea of differences in gender expression is not a

government that will have my back when more serious issues of bodily autonomy and freedom of choice arise.

Shannon March

Re: Bill 43

Hon. Moses, Jamie,

I am opposing Bill 43.

Bill 43 is a violation of free speech.

Elizabeth Matte

Re: Bill 43

When I was twelve, my parents who were diligent individuals, experienced a few years where money was tight and often there were no meals so bills could be paid; no new shoes or clothes for school, and nothing frivolous. To continue to go to school, I had to wear a lot of my older brother's hand-me-down clothes. It did not bother me in the least. They were jeans and jean jackets, t-shirts, and ball caps. I was an athlete and did not mind this look in junior high and chose to continue it on in high school. My parents were asked at the border one time as I slept in the back seat, "Is that your son?" I had short hair and a hat on, and the border guard assumed my identity without even looking at my ID. People will always judge and should not be based on the clothes you wear or how you choose to cut your hair.

The point of these stories is that I chose to continue to wear these clothes because they expressed who I was. I was not trying to look like a male, simply enjoyed the look and the comfort they gave me in my life and in my skin. People do not get to harass you for wearing what makes you comfortable in your skin.

As a proud member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community now, whose partner is non-binary, I am grateful to live in a province where we can dress how we want. I am excited to see this amendment to add gender expression to the list of harassment free human rights.

Gender expression refers to the ways that people present themselves to the world. Me wanting to continue to look like an athletic female, does not harm anyone and it did not indoctrinate my high school friends to dress the same (they were all into the GAP and Le Chateau and trendy female clothing, which was perfectly fine by me). It made me succeed in school as I felt I could be myself, and I was able to be

my best self, get two degrees, provide a life for myself and my partner. We are both educators and make a positive impact on young people in this province every day.

Positive people create positive additions to this Province. They excel, they prosper and in turn make their communities prosper with their contributions. They model strength and courage for young people. As a teacher, I see my students struggle so much with popularity and expression to fit in. The energy they spend on trying to just fit in at school would be better spent in performing their best at school. They need to see adults in their life who can express themselves and come to work as their best self.

By amending the Human Rights Code to make it illegal to harass individuals over how they choose to express themselves, you are continuing to promote successful individuals and allow all people to contribute to their full potential to the Province of Manitoba.

Thank you, and I urge you to please vote in favour of this amendment in Bill 43.

Cathy Pleskach

Re: Bill 43

I disagree with this bill, as it directly opposes other protected characteristics in the Human Rights Bill. Gender Expression includes the use of preferred pronouns. If a man asks me to call them a she because they genuinely believe they are a woman, then I am lying to them if I comply. Because an actual man cannot become an actual woman. My religious beliefs require me to honour the truth and not intentionally deceive others. This bill will force me to abandon my religious beliefs and lie against my will, whenever it is requested by another person.

Timothy Giesbrecht

Re: Bill 43

I believe that all human beings have a right to be their authentic selves. I believe that all forms of discrimination (including gender discrimination) are acts of hatefulness, and that all Manitobans have a right to live fully and freely—when their life choices are not harming others.

I fully support Bill 43: Amendment to Human Rights code, protecting gender identity as a human right.

Thank you for sponsoring a bill that helps all Manitoba citizens to live in dignity, fully protected by law.

Wayne Serebrin

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with bill 43.

Please do not go ahead with it.

Greg McFarland

Re: Bill 43

My name is Gretchen Derige Cortens,
And I'm writing in support of the amendment
to include the protection
of gender expression
in the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

My beloved people move through different worlds.
Some of my beloved people are free to live,
To work, to study, and to play
Without unkind or hateful eyes
With a grace and ease, easily taken for granted,
Because there is a resonance between the inside
And the outside
Between who they are
And how the world perceives their gender.

Some of my beloved people are not free to live, To
work, to study, and to play,
Instead, they're pinned down by unkind and hateful eyes
The world cramps and constricts them,
Tries to tear them down in a myriad of ways
Does violence to them, to their bodies,
Because who they are does not always resonate
With how the world perceives their gender

Such cramping, such constriction, such violence
Was done by human hands
And can be undone by human hands
By human words
By adding such a simple phrase:
"gender expression"

If you say that "gender expression" does not deserve
to be protected

Then you are saying that my beloved people
My friends and my co-workers
My godchildren and my friends' children

My family, my cousins, my uncles and aunts,
My nephews, nieces, and nibblings
And the students I work with every day --
You are saying that they do not deserve to be protected
You are saying that they do not deserve to be free
You are saying that they should be left vulnerable
To the harms of this world
And I cannot abide by that.
I refuse to.

So let's amend that.
Let's amend this Code
That should have always protected our beloved people
Let these added words be a blessing
Not only armour, protection, or a roof over our heads
But an open sky
That grants the grace and ease
To move freely through this world
Exactly as we are.

Thank you.

Gretchen Derige Cortens

Re: Bill 43

I do not support the passing of this ammendment

Cherie Schellenberg

Re: Bill 43

I am praying Bill 43 is Not passed into law. It is a total
infringement on freedom of speech and it further
pushes more counter culture in our country.

It is a waste of government time and resources
focusing on such ridiculous bills. We have much more
urgent concerns in Manitoba.

Debbie Whyte

Re: Bill 43

I am in favor of adding gender expression to the list of
protections, discrimination based on gender
expression has no place in our province.

Sara Patteson

Re: Bill 43

I'm writing to firmly support the expansion of
protected characteristics under The Human Rights
Code to cover gender expression. Please move to

extend this protection to all Manitobans and ensure the safety and security of gender diverse individuals. I urge all members to vote in favour of this change. Thank you for your consideration.

Sarah Leeson-Klym

Re: Bill 43

I am writing in support of Bill 43 as an individual Manitoban and as a union member of the University of Winnipeg Faculty Association. I am also a trans man who has experienced workplace harassment and chilly climates due to my transition and changing gender expression.

This amendment is a crucial step forward in respecting all Manitobans and protecting the rights of trans and gender-diverse people living and working in this province. Including gender expression in the Human Rights Code is much needed legal step to protect an increasingly vulnerable set of populations. Its passage by this government will also help send a clear message across the province that all people are welcome and respected in Manitoba.

In the past two decades, there have been important many advancements in the rights of trans, non-binary, Two-Spirit, and gender diverse individuals in Canada. Unfortunately, we are now in a period of reactionary backlash to that hard won progress. The work is not done, and yet further advancement of trans and gender diverse rights is being threatened even as these rights have not been adequately entrenched in policy and law.

The Manitoba government has the opportunity to stand up for the rights and dignity of all Manitobans in continuing to support this Bill and resisting any regressive opposition it may face. The Manitoba NDP have promised to champion 2SLGBTQIA+ rights in this province, and must continue to deliver on those promises, including through the passage of Bill 43 into law.

As an educator, I am especially urging this on behalf of all my students, particularly the many trans and gender diverse students it has been my privilege to teach over the past decade. Show them it is worth staying in Manitoba and making lives for themselves and their families. Show them they matter, not just in election season, but all year round. Show them what can be achieved when we work together to build solidarity, support each other, and develop law and

public policy based on the best evidence and substantive public consultation with impacted groups.

I encourage the government to stand by its principles and defend the dignity of all Manitobans by steadfastly supporting the passage of Bill 43.

Noah Schulz, PhD

Re: Bill 43

I strongly disagree with this amendment

Garry Schellenberg

Re: Bill 43

My name is Marley Pauls, and I am writing regarding the immense importance of protecting gender expression as a human right.

I grew up in Manitoba, spending my summers at The Forks, playing with my friends at Kildonan Park, and, beginning in 2011, cheering on the Winnipeg Jets downtown. I have grown up with this city. My studies at the University of Manitoba challenged me, built me up, and ultimately led to my current trajectory: completing my master's thesis at Carleton University in our nation's capital.

My research focuses on authenticity and discourse within queer communities in Canada. I focus on the importance of subgroup identities like "butch" and "femme" within lesbian communities. These identities, like many others, are built on gender expression. What I can tell you is that these identities are historical. They are grounded in the history and maintenance of a unique lesbian subjectivity. They are inextricably connected to a way of knowing and being that is negotiated and maintained in queer communities, where meaning is constructed multimodally through hairstyle, clothing, and mannerisms. Women and Gender Equality Canada calls this "gender expression." Every single one of us gay or straight, cisgender or transgender expresses our gender every day. I am someone who is dedicating my life to becoming an expert in this area, and I humbly admit I have much left to learn. What I do know, as a butch and non-binary lesbian myself, and through my three years of research production and dissemination on this topic, is that for our most vulnerable populations especially the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, gender expression is more than just a daily decision. It is a construction of identity. It is a communal process of meaning-making that ties us to our community, both past and present,

to our queer and trans siblings who came before us and fought for our rights.

What I ask is this: My right to visit my hometown, to visit my parents, and to cheer on the Jets in a way that is true to myself and my identity. I ask to do this in a way that gives me meaning, connects me to my past, and creates for me a historically and community-centered identity. Gender expression is a human right, and for those of us who face discrimination on that basis, it is one that needs protecting. Gender expression of queer and trans people is an act of identity, meaning-making, community, and resistance. I encourage you all to be part of that resistance, so that queer and trans Manitobans can live here and visit home as our whole selves.

Marley Pauls

Re: Bill 43

Hello. I am writing to you in support of Bill 43 that will allow gender expression to be protected as a human right. This move will align Manitoba with the majority of Canadian provinces and territories that already offer this protection including Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Yukon, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Nunavut. It also aligns with the federal government of Canada. This protection is already implicitly applied in Manitoba since at least 2016. Making it explicitly written into legislation will offer human rights protections that will benefit all Manitobans. For greater visibility, I am a trans masculine Manitoban and I am very fortunate to work at a company that celebrates diversity. The names and pronouns of all of our office members are proudly displayed at our desks and it fosters a safe and respectful environment. I wish for all Manitoban workers to experience such a culture of inclusion, where no matter their gender expressions they feel safe and embraced by their colleagues and are provided the same opportunities as any other gender to reach their full potential. Thank you for your understanding and support.

Shane Thevenot

Re: Bill 43

Good evening,

My name is Marianne Shaibu and I'm writing in support of the amendment to include the protection of

gender expression in the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

This amendment is crucial to the lives of queer and trans folks, ensuring that both identity and expression is protected from attack.

When protection stops at identity and does not explicitly safeguard expression, it leaves a dangerous gap. Without clear legal coverage, employers can penalize, landlords can refuse, and service providers can harass—then hide behind technicalities that "gender identity" was never discussed.

Conversely, when people are afforded the space and support to express their gender without constraints, while knowing they are protected, mental-health outcomes improve. There are often dramatic drops in depression and anxiety when individuals are free to align outward presentation with inward sense of self. Furthermore, transgender and cisgender youth can flourish within this kind of supportive environment. Students allowed to experiment without fear develop stronger self-esteem and are less likely to self-harm.

This amendment also speaks to Manitoba's leadership in a fraught national and international political climate. By explicitly protecting gender expression, Manitoba can send a clear message: our province will not retreat on human rights.

I elect representatives to safeguard the dignity and safety of every resident. Your job is to craft legislation that anticipates real-world harms and prevents them, not merely to acknowledge identities on paper. Enshrining gender expression protection affirms that Manitobans—trans, questioning, or cis—can dress, speak, and move through the world without fear of reprisal.

I urge you to pass this amendment without delay.

Thank you for your time and commitment.

Sincerely,

Marianne Shaibu

Re: Bill 43

I oppose Bill 43. The Human Rights Code protects all Canadians as it currently stands. We should not be forced to use specific language. This is against our human rights of free speech.

Joan Armstrong

Re: Bill 43

I support Bill 43. It protects gender nonconforming people. As a trans person this is an essential Bill that will protect me.

Cameron Griffiths

Re: Bill 43

I support Bill 43. I know a lot of gender nonconforming people and it is imperative that their expression be protected especially given the possibility of a conservative anti-trans federal government and within the broader wave of "anti-trans ideology" that is sweeping the western world. Our government must be unwavering and strong in their support of the queer community because that is what they promised to do.

Grace Carey

Re: Bill 43

Hello,

My name is Emmanuella Shaibu and I'm writing in support of the amendment to include the protection of gender expression in the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

A friend of mine (a transmasculine high school student) was recently told to change into "more appropriate" clothing after wearing a button-up shirt and tie to a school event. While his identity was technically recognized, his expression was policed, and there were no clear protections in place to support him. This kind of discrimination is exactly why explicit legal recognition of gender expression is urgently needed.

Protecting only gender identity without also protecting how that identity is expressed leaves too many vulnerable. Without this protection, people can face discrimination in school, at work, or while simply going about their lives.

But when people are free to express themselves without fear, we all benefit. Anyone, regardless of whether they are trans or cis, should be afforded the space and protection to embody outwardly what most aligns with them. Gender expression should never be grounds for mistreatment, especially in a time when legislation across North America is threatening queer and trans lives. Manitoba has the opportunity to lead with clarity and compassion.

Elected officials have a duty to protect their constituents not just in theory, but in practice. This amendment would affirm that everyone, regardless of how they look, dress, or express themselves, has the right to live safely and fully.

Please pass this amendment. It matters more than ever.

Sincerely,

Emmanuella Shaibu

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Elis Wautier, and I'm writing in strong support of Bill 43 and the amendment to include gender expression as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

As someone who has been on a personal gender journey, the ability to express myself freely through how I dress, speak, and move through the world has been deeply tied to my sense of safety, identity, and belonging. Gender expression is not just about fashion or presentation, it is about being seen and respected for who we are.

Without legal protection for gender expression, trans and non-binary people, as well as cisgender individuals who do not conform to gender expectations, are left vulnerable to discrimination in housing, employment, healthcare, and public life. I have experienced firsthand the fear of being misjudged or mistreated based on how I present, even in everyday situations. This fear should not be the cost of authenticity.

Protecting gender expression is a necessary step to ensuring that all Manitobans, regardless of how they identify or present, can live with dignity and without fear. At a time when trans rights are under attack around the world, it is crucial that our provincial legislation reflects inclusion, protection, and care for all members of our communities.

I urge you to vote in favour of Bill 43 and show that Manitoba stands on the side of justice, visibility, and human rights for all.

Thank you for your time and for considering this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Elis Wautier

Re: Bill 43

I fully support the enactment of Bill 43 - the amendment of The Human Rights Code to include gender expression. Gender is a spectrum and the binary of man or woman are colonial and systemic constructs that erase historical gender expressions. This amendment to include gender expression in The Human Rights Code is an important movement to make those that do not fall into the binary of man or woman visible and included. It does not hurt or harm anyone that identifies within the binary. Gender inclusivity is an important step in the protection of folks during a time when these identities are experiencing more risk and violence than ever before. The Province of Manitoba has a duty and obligation to include and protect all of its residents.

Jacklyn de Visser

Re: Bill 43

My name is Zacharie Montreuil, and I am a resident of Winnipeg. I am writing in support of Bill 43: The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, which would include gender expression as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

It is my conviction that the role of the government at all levels is to protect the free and peaceful expressions and activities of people from those who would repress or antagonize them. It is also my belief that the role of the government is to protect its people from harm that they do not have the means to reasonably prevent or address themselves.

It would be harmful to people to restrict their free and peaceful expression of gender in ways to which they do not consent, and I believe that many groups antagonistic to free gender expression have either the intent to harm, or are ignorant to the harm that they inflict.

Given that gender is a form of human identity that is expressed in a way that is ubiquitous and diverse amongst people and cultures, and that there are parties that wish to limit or repress its expression beyond reasonable concerns, I believe that it is the responsibility of the provincial government to enshrine the expression of gender as a legal human right.

Thank you.

Zacharie Montreuil

Re: Bill 43

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill 43 - the Human Rights Code Amendment Act.

No one should be discriminated against because of how they choose to express their gender, but unfortunately, that is an all too common reality for trans and gender non-conforming people. Adding gender expression to the list of protected characteristics under human rights code would help make it clear that this is not acceptable. Trans and non-binary people have always existed in society and always will. Their existence is not a threat to anyone else living the way they want to live. They deserve to be treated with respect and dignity just like anyone else. Their safety deserves to be entrenched in law in this province.

This step of entrenching protection into law is especially important in times like today where we are seeing these protections being rolled back in the United States and coming under threat in Canada as well. I'm so happy to see the government propose this amendment and wholeheartedly support it.

Anna Levin

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43.

Helene Bernardin

Re: Bill 43

I do not support bill 43

Caleb Mcneish

Re: Bill 43

I am strongly opposed to bill 43.

Louis Richard

Re: Bill 43

I strongly disagree with this bill.

Jacqueline Rados

Re: Bill 43

I fully support the proposed legislation to add "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Manitobans are already protected from discrimination based on their ancestry, nationality, ethnic background, gender identity, religion, age, sex, family status, socioeconomic status, political beliefs, and physical and mental disabilities – and Manitobans should be similarly protected against discrimination based on their gender expression. Not only does this additional protection align with the existing protected characteristics, it also aligns Manitoba with the rest of Canada and the federal code.

There is an urgent need to protect Manitoban's right to gender expression. In the United States the Trump administration has been actively and openly discriminating against trans people, falsely claiming that there are only two genders, and issuing draconian orders banning trans people from serving in government and the military, and participating in athletics. Attempts at similar actions are similarly occurring in Canada. As a Health Sciences Librarian, I have witnessed the negative implications this false and misinformation is creating not only for Americans, but Canadians, including Manitobans. The United States has long provided high-quality, evidence-based free health information that has been utilized around the world. Starting in February 2025, the Trump administration has obliterated the autonomy and evidence-based practices of all major government health agencies in America, forcefully requiring agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to post warnings on their websites that:

"Any information on this page promoting gender ideology is extremely inaccurate, and disconnected from the immutable biological reality that there are two sexes, male and female. The Trump Administration rejects gender ideology and condemns the harms it causes to children, by promoting their chemical and surgical mutilation, and to women, by depriving them of their dignity, safety, well-being, and opportunities. This page does not reflect biological reality and therefore the Administration and this Department reject it"

all of which is patently false and harmful misinformation. Manitoba's provincial government has made clear that providing healthcare to Manitobans is its top priority, and introducing protections to affirm factual health information (including factual information about gender and gender identity) aligns with that priority.

Protections in Manitoba's Human Rights Code have positive real-world implications. My union, the University of Manitoba Faculty Association (UMFA) recently ratified a new collective agreement that now requires hiring, tenure, and promotion committees to take into consideration the protected characteristics in the Human Rights Code. Though discrimination against protected characteristics has never been permitted nor tolerated in our workplace, multiple studies have revealed that faculty members, staff, and students are treated differently based on these protected characteristics. This includes being paid less, promoted less frequently, being ranked lower by hiring committees, etc. The new language in our Collective Agreement requires hiring, tenure, and promotion committee to appropriately consider career path differences associated with protected characteristics in the Human Rights Code. Continuing to strengthen and expand upon these protections, including incorporating gender identity as one of these protected characteristics, will make workplaces like mine more inclusive and diverse.

I again reiterate my full support for adding "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Sincerely,

Orvie Dingwall (she/her)
Health Sciences Librarian
University of Manitoba

Re: Bill 43

This is important because discrimination based on gender expression limits quality of life and social equity. This is about showing support for all people, this can create net positives for all communities and protects the gender expression of all Manitobans regardless of gender identity. Also this puts Manitoba in line with the Canadian Charter of Human Rights of Freedoms.

Leyla Shahsavar

Re: Bill 43

I am writing to express my unwavering support for Bill 43 that seeks to explicitly include gender expression as a protected aspect under the Human Rights Act. This amendment is crucial for ensuring comprehensive protection for all individuals regardless of gender. This amendment will also provide clearer legal recourse for those who have

experienced such injustices and promote a more equitable society. It also represents a significant step towards safeguarding the rights and dignity of all Manitobans. I urge you to support this important legislation to help create a more inclusive Manitoba for everyone.

Alexis Miller

Re: Bill 43

I strongly oppose Bill 43! Please do not move forward with this bill which limits free speech, a God given right.

Mary Richard

Re: Bill 43

Good evening, boon swayr Ministers, Committee Members, and gathered community.

I thank the Committee for your time tonight as this important Bill is discussed. My name is Laurie McDougall, though I'm known by many as Mac. I am a cisgender Métis woman from Winnipeg, and it is my pleasure and privilege to write in support of Bill 43.

Firstly, at the Federal level, the terms "gender identity or expression" were added to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code as protected grounds in Bill C-16 (alongside the preexisting grounds of age, race, sex, religion, and disability, among others) which was given Royal Assent in the summer of 2017, nearly a decade ago.

Kevin Klein's op-ed against this Bill, published in the March 19, 2025 Winnipeg Sun, asks "Where is the (provincial) government's focus? Not on the basics. Not on the real priorities." Yet for most people, their gender expression IS the basics, and is often a priority. Here's the thing: whether you believe it or not, every single person in this room makes gender expression decisions... Every. Single. Day.

For example, every time "Pastor John" trims his beard and puts on a suit and tie, he's choosing how he presents as his gender. Every time "Mrs. Penner" curls her hair before putting on a dress and lipstick to go to sing soprano at church, she is choosing how she presents as her gender. The amendment presented in Bill 43 protects Pastor John and Mrs. Penner exactly the same way as it protects Manitobans with different gender identities and expressions.

Author Stella Fosse said in 2020 "(we have) been divided ... by the belief in a zero-sum game: that

whatever gains are made by women, or people of color, or people with disabilities, or people who love the same gender, that those gains are made at the expense of someone else. That one person's ability to marry somehow threatens another person's marriage. That one person's access to education somehow limits another person's ability to learn. None of this is real." To summarize that more concisely; equal rights for others does not mean less rights for you. It's not pie. Respect is not a zero-sum game; one person's gain does not mean someone else's loss. That said, freedom of speech has never meant freedom from consequences.

What Bill 43 is enshrining is another layer of human decency, of kindness, of mutual respect. I wonder what the response would be in this room right now, if we replicated Jane Elliott's famed racial-discrimination experiment. How many people who have registered in protest of Bill 43 would trade places today with a Two-Spirit, transgender, nonbinary, or otherwise gender-diverse person? To quote Elliott herself after not a single person raised their hand during her seminar, "You know what you just admitted? That this is happening, and you don't want it for you. So why are you so willing for it to be the case for someone else?"

If you don't want to be marginalized in your career, if you don't want to face opposition and hardship when falling in love and raising a family, if you don't want to be at greater risk of harm or even death simply because of the way someone else perceives you - why on Earth do you want someone else to have that experience in life?

Adversaries of this Bill complain about how much time this Government is spending on these two little words, but without their lengthy oppositions and complaints, we'd have put this to bed and moved on. Many people on both sides of this Bill are familiar with the Golden Rule (and I am confident in this statement, given it appears in the world's 10 major religions and belief systems): do to others as you would have them do unto you (Christianity); that which is hateful to you do not do to another (Judaism); hurt not others in ways you yourself would find hurtful (Buddhism); one should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self (Hinduism); and so on and so forth.

I can't explain to this Bill's adversaries how to have care and compassion for others. I don't know what magic words will make this Bill's adversaries suddenly see the beauty and strength in our diversity

as Manitobans, as humans. I do know that Bill 43 should be passed, for the good of all Manitobans. It's a small change, but a meaningful one.

Marsi, thank you.

Laurie McDougall

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill 43

Sharon Vandembosch

Re: Bill 43

I am writing on behalf of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU), which represents 32,000 members across the province, to express our strong support for the proposed amendment to include "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under The Human Rights Code. We commend the Government of Manitoba for this important step toward equality and dignity for all Manitobans.

The MGEU is committed to fairness, inclusion, and respect for human rights. Our members reflect the diversity of this province, and we believe it is our shared responsibility to advocate for protections that support everyone in our communities.

Adding "gender expression" corrects a gap in Manitoba's human rights framework and brings us in line with most Canadian jurisdictions, including Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and the federal Canadian Human Rights Act, which has recognized gender identity and expression since 2017. Manitoba remains one of only a few provinces that have yet to explicitly include this vital protection.

While "gender identity" has been protected in Manitoba since 2012, this amendment affirms that outward expression—through appearance, behavior, or mannerisms—is a distinct and critical part of one's identity. Discrimination often targets people not only for who they are, but for how they are perceived or present themselves.

Explicitly protecting gender expression sends a powerful message that trans, non-binary, gender-diverse, and gender non-conforming individuals are entitled to the same rights and respect as everyone

else. This legal clarity will support employers, unions, and workers in building safer, more inclusive workplaces and communities.

This amendment also addresses the real-world harms many individuals face—stigma, harassment, and exclusion—particularly in workplaces, where rights protections directly impact safety and well-being. It is a step toward greater justice and compassion for all Manitobans, especially those most vulnerable to discrimination.

Expanding The Human Rights Code in this way is more than symbolic—it is a tangible action that affirms every Manitoban's right to live and work free from discrimination. We urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to support this amendment.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion. The MGEU remains steadfast in our commitment to advancing human rights and equity in Manitoba.

Submitted by:

Kyle Ross
President
Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union

Re: Bill 43

The human rights code of Manitoba needs to change to protect all Manitobans. Federally, protections were extended based on gender expression with C-16 which passed in 2017. It's time for Manitoba to catch up and do the same.

Canadians have been a consistently strong voice for the protection of human rights, from our central role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Manitoba should have a role as a province that defends human rights, and works to extend protections to people who have been historically marginalized and mistreated.

Andrew Single

Re: Bill 43

I support this bill.

Gender expression should be added to the list of protections under the MB human rights code.

Sherise Fleury

Re: Bill 43

I'm writing in support of Bill 43's Human Rights Code Amendment. As an ally, a parent, a colleague, and a guider to trans individuals, I feel that this bill is essential to the wellbeing of transfolk across our province. The easiest thing to do to support trans individuals is to show them the basic respect of acknowledging their gender expression and use their correct pronouns (which to be clear are the pronouns they tell you to use). This bill ensures people can't microaggress individuals by deliberately misusing pronouns, creating a hostile environment for a person who is already more vulnerable than those of us who are cisgender. Respecting a person's gender expression isn't challenging or difficult, it's something good people do, regardless of their age or circumstance. Please protect trans Manitobans and vote in favour of Bill 43.

Cortney Pachet

Re: Bill 43

I am not in agreement with Bill 43

Carla Gervais

Re: Bill 43

Dear committee,

I speak from my 18 years experience as a K to five educator, as a scholar who holds a masters degree and researched gender norms in an early years classroom for her thesis, and as a queer, gender non-conforming person.

Gender norms are the expectations of how children are supposed to look, act, and feel. Gender norms, which include gender expression, are suffocating, and are based on a construct of idealized, masculinity and femininity.

Gender norms deeply impact all children and sanction bullying. The adage "boys will be boys" is alive and well. I recently called a father to discuss how his son was being bullied at his daycare by other boys. He dismissed it by saying "boys will be boys". His dismissal simultaneously invalidated his son's hurt and condoned the perpetrators' actions.

As an educator, we need gender expression included in our Human Rights Code so that we may better notice, understand, and address the true actions and motivations of our students in their interactions with each other. What often seems like innocent playgroup games are actually deeply rooted in gender norms and serve to ostracize and penalize nonconforming children.

We need to help children be OK with differences. Teachers need to have the freedom to chip away at those harmful gender constructs such as girls are pretty, quiet, and submissive, and boys are loud, aggressive, and athletic. As a society, we need gender expression included in our Human Rights Code to take away the unspoken and sanctioned right to exclude, harass, discriminate, and harm others based on our artificial binary construct of gender.

Thank you very much for your time.

Nicole Trottier

Re: Bill 43

I support Bill 43 adding gender expression to the Human Rights Code! Always!

Robyn Dyck

Re: Bill 43

To Whom It May Concern,

It has come to my attention that there are not currently protections for gender expression in this bill 43 which is up for discussion today. I support protections for gender expression and freedom of said expression as a human right.

Jo Turner

Re: Bill 43

I am expressing my support to Bill 43, an amendment to The Human Rights Code adding "gender expression" and "l'identité de genre".

I feel this is an important change ensuring that all Manitobans' voices are heard and rights are protected. Thinking of those closest to me and even myself who have experienced discrimination and harassment in our professional and personal environments, these experiences leave one feeling unsafe, excluded, and,

hurt, limiting our potential for growth and engagement in our work and social communities.

When these rights are supported and protected in legislation, it can be an important step in making space those most vulnerable and disenfranchised and creating a more just and inclusive world. For full the participation of all it is important to be represented in our society, our governments and our laws as we grow and evolve. These protections can greatly improve better quality of life and social equity, as well as healthier communities and environments. If we are not all free, we are not free.

Further, this amendment puts our Code in line with the Canadian Charter of Human Rights. Ensuring laws, especially The Human Rights' Code and other similar laws, is important to demonstrate that we are a vibrant and evolving community. As Manitobans we can work towards being a positive example of inclusion, diversity, equity, and integrity.

Jennifer Nembhard

Re: Bill 43

I would like to see the right to gender expression be protected against discrimination under the bill of human rights (Bill 43).

I feel that freedom of gender expression is not only important to the healthy development of our citizens both in mind and spirit it is a human right. Thank you!

Sauna Neault-Pawlychyn

Re: Bill 43

I oppose Bill 43.

Rosalie Madden

Re: Bill 43

Concerning Bill 43, my questions to the NDP Party is, is this Bill to amend the Human Rights Code political maneuvering? The reason I ask is because as I read the Minutes of the Second Reading of this Bill (dated Thursday, April 17, 2025), it was very unfortunate to read Mr. Wiebe's comments on the opposite view and his comment about Mr. Khan's race during the past election as being "divisive and disgraceful". And so I wonder what is truly motivating the NDP Party to make this amendment? Are you resorting to

short-term political maneuvering or focusing on the long-term needs of ALL Manitobans?

Members of the NDP, are you aware of the level of dissatisfaction among Manitobans with political ploys? We are looking for governments who will put people before politics and political posturing. Rather than dismissing and disrespecting opposing views, which is ironic in this case as this is a Bill concerning Human Rights, should you not engage in honest dialogue and transparent decision-making?

Has the NDP thoroughly reviewed situations and the effect this Bill will have in Manitoba? Have they reviewed whether the high resignation rates of teachers due to mental stress could be in part by the influx of changing programs and demands on them? How will the NDP address a teachers shortage?

What will the NDP do with an already taxed legal system when women who are emotionally distressed not wanting to share a bathroom or change room with a trans gender female files a complaint? Is the NDP ready for a surge of outraged taxpayers because the taxpayers (Manitobans) will have to foot these legal bills?

Has the NDP considered the long term effects on family life where a minor disregards their parents' views and in fact becomes untrusting of their own parents?

So I end, again, with this question: Is this a political move on the part of the NDP? Or are you just following along with some of the provinces; as the saying goes: two wrongs don't make a right. Could Manitoba just keep the Code as it stands at "gender identity", until further study on the impact and effects of all that a change to the term "gender expression" could entail? I ask this for the sake of family, children, and all people of Manitoba. Thank you.

Vicenza Enns

Re: Bill 43

I am admittedly in support of Bill 43, amending The Human Rights Code to expand the list of protected characteristics to include gender expression.

It is imperative Manitoba exists as a society where everyone in the 2SLGBTQ+ community is loved, valued, and included, socially and economically. I urge the House to adopt the motion to introduce Bill 43 into the legislature.

Lindsay Kane

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43.

When did we, as a province, ask for this? When did the voters of Manitoba decide that policing speech was the government's role?

This is not progress. It's government overreach – plain and simple.

Governments are elected to provide core services. They are expected to ensure hospitals function, streets are safe, taxes are reasonable, and public money is spent responsibly. They are not elected to control how people think, speak, or believe. Yet, here we are. This government seems to believe its mandate includes the power to enforce ideological conformity through legal means.

Bill 43 is being sold as a necessary step toward "inclusion" and "equality." Does anyone honestly think legislating language leads to mutual respect? Passing laws that force people to use certain words – or face consequences – doesn't foster understanding. It creates resentment. It divides people even further. We've seen this play out in other places.

Mark Derksen

Re: Bill 43

"I am admittedly in support of Bill 43, amending The Human Rights Code to expand the list of protected characteristics to include gender expression. It is imperative Manitoba exists as a society where everyone in the 2SLGBTQ+ community is loved, valued, and included, socially and economically. I urge the House to adopt the motion to introduce Bill 43 into the legislature."

Elena Anciro

Re: Bill 43

Passing Bill 43 would be greatly helpful to trans people in Manitoba, perhaps giving them a safety net in school or workplace environments to have their identities respected. It would be extremely beneficial for evrryone if this bill were to go into effect. I hope you will recognize this bill and do your best to support it. Thank you.

Isabelle Costanzo

Re: Bill 43

Hello,

My name is Roan Regan and I am a trans and queer resident of Winnipeg Centre. I'm writing in support of Bill 43 which would add gender expression to Manitoba's human rights code. As a trans individual with a large trans community around me, this bill is very important and relevant to me.

With growing discourse around trans issues due to the United States legislations suppressing trans rights (and many cropping up around Canada), it's important that Manitoba safeguards its transgender and gender diverse citizens from hateful legislation and from our own communities.

This bill will not be used to prosecute the ignorant or those unsure about trans issues and identities, but will protect trans people from larger scale discrimination in the workplace, in schools, and communities. As a trans person, I do not expect everyone to understand the ins and outs of my identity, but I do expect them to respect my personhood and desire to live and present the way I'd like. I would argue that most trans folks aren't itching to file human rights complaints, but would prefer to know that it is an option when a serious situation involving discrimination against gender expression occurs.

Those opposed to this bill are bandwagoning on increasing fear mongering surrounding trans people, and are not considering the real life implications of how this bill could protect people. I urge you not to let the divisiveness of this issue sway you towards voting against a bill that will only protect members of your own community from acts of social violence.

Thank you,

Roan Regan

Re: Bill 43

To the Standing Committee,

I'm writing as a Manitoban and an ally to express my full support for Bill 43: The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, which would add gender expression as a protected ground under Manitoba's Human Rights Code.

This protection is long overdue. Everyone deserves the freedom to show up in the world as their true selves—without fear of judgment, discrimination, or harm. Recognizing gender expression as a human right is not radical; it's responsible. It's the bare minimum.

Other provinces and the federal government have already taken this step. Manitoba needs to catch up—and more importantly, step up.

This is about dignity, respect, self-expression, and autonomy. It's about saying clearly that trans and gender-diverse people belong here, and that their safety matters.

Please pass Bill 43.

Amanda Mondaca

Re: Bill 43

"Gender expression" should be included in both official languages. The physical, social, emotional and mental health of all is a right inherent in our personhood. Gender expression is a step toward a balanced healthy life for each citizen of this amazing province.

Carolynn Derksen

Re: Bill 43

I believe that 'gender expression' should be a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Gail Matheson

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill 43

Gilbert Vielfaure

Re: Bill 43

To the Standing Committee,

Every person deserves the right to express who they are—freely, safely, and without fear. That's why I'm writing in strong support of Bill 43: The Human Rights Code Amendment Act, which would add gender expression to the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

In my work in community safety, I've seen how safety begins with autonomy—the ability to live and express ourselves without fear of judgment or harm. That freedom isn't a luxury; it's a foundation for individual and collective wellbeing.

Protecting gender expression is not only a matter of human rights—it's essential to public safety. People are safer when they are respected and seen, not when

they're forced to hide or conform. This is especially true for trans and gender-diverse individuals, who are often targeted simply for being themselves.

As someone who benefits from privilege as a cisgender, heterosexual man, I believe it's especially important to use my voice to advocate for those whose rights and safety are still not fully protected. I support this bill because I want to live in a province where everyone can exist freely and fully—where autonomy is protected, and where safety doesn't depend on fitting into narrow gender expectations.

Passing Bill 43 is a clear, concrete step toward making Manitoba safer, more inclusive, and more just. The time to act is now.

Sincerely,

Victor Mondaca
Community Safety Consultant
Nahuen Consultation

Re: Bill 43

The opposition to this act is nothing more than thinly-veiled transphobia. Everyone has a right to have their identity recognized and accepted by society, and for non-cis people, this is an uphill battle. This act serves to acknowledge the existence of these people. No person or group will be harmed by acknowledging the existence of another, and so I see no reason to oppose the act. The only effect it has is to take a small step in the right direction, of uplifting a marginalized group, and updating our language to match our current society. This act will help affirm the identity of a group of people, and harm no one in the process.

Hunter Reynolds

Re: Bill 43

To the Members of the Committee on Human Rights and Legal Protections,

I am writing to express strong support for the proposed amendment to include gender identity and gender expression in the Human Rights Act. Legal recognition and protection are not abstract concepts, they are instruments through which societies define whose safety, dignity, and futures are worth safeguarding.

Failure to explicitly protect individuals on the basis of gender identity and expression sustains a legal grey zone—one that enables discrimination in housing, employment, education, and access to public services. These gaps are not incidental. They are systemic vulnerabilities that disproportionately impact already-marginalized populations and permit bias to persist unchallenged.

The role of human rights legislation is not to reflect the popularity of an identity, but to set clear boundaries for what a just society will not tolerate. This amendment is a corrective step toward ensuring that protection under the law is not contingent on conformity to traditional norms of gender.

Codifying these protections is not radical—it is responsible. It provides clarity to institutions, employers, and public bodies. It sends a message that dignity is not up for debate, and that harm born from prejudice is unacceptable regardless of the form it takes.

I urge this committee to adopt the amendment and affirm that the right to exist safely and authentically is not conditional.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Altunbash

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill 43 which would give needed protections against discrimination on the basis of "gender expression". As a parent of young children growing up in this province, I believe it is important to ensure that all children and adults can grow up and live in a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment regardless of how they express their gender.

Every child and every person deserves to be seen for who they truly are. That means being able to express themselves—through their clothing, hairstyle, voice, and yes, their pronouns—without fear of ridicule, discrimination, or harm. As a society, we teach our children to treat others with kindness and dignity. Bill 43 reinforces those values by protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our communities: trans and gender-diverse youth.

Right now, trans and gender-nonconforming people often face daily challenges, simply for living as

themselves. This bill ensures that when a child asks to be addressed in a way that reflects their identity, that request is respected—not politicized. Respecting a person's pronouns isn't about ideology; it's about basic decency.

Those who oppose this bill often speak about "parental rights," but as a parent, I believe our biggest responsibility is to support our kids and teach them to respect others. Bill 43 doesn't take rights away—it affirms that no one should be treated as less-than because of how they express who they are.

Other provinces and the federal government already recognize gender expression as a protected ground under human rights law. It's time for Manitoba to catch up. Our children are watching how we respond to these issues. We have a chance to show them that fairness, compassion, and justice matter.

Passing this bill will send a clear message: that everyone belongs, and everyone deserves to feel safe being themselves. I want my child—and every child—to grow up in a world where they're respected for who they are, not forced to hide it.

Bill 43 isn't just good policy—it's a necessary step forward. I urge lawmakers to pass it without delay.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Mitchell

Re: Bill 43

Dear members of the Standing Committee on Justice. I'm here today to speak in support of Bill 43. Adding "Gender Expression" as a protected category under Manitoba's Human Rights Code is long overdue and very much welcome.

Manitoba was a leader when it became one of the first Provinces to add Gender Identity to its Human Rights code in 2012. However, it has since become clear that the protection offered by such a Code is incomplete without also including Gender Expression.

The Federal government recognized this when it amended the Canadian Human Rights Act in 2017 to include both Gender Identity and Gender Expression. Today, every province and territory with the exception of Manitoba and Saskatchewan include Gender Identity and Gender Expression in their Human Rights Codes. Manitoba now has an opportunity to correct this oversight and avoid being known as the last province in Canada to protect Gender Expression.

Gender Expression is related to but distinct from Gender Identity. Gender Identity is how one identifies internally, while Gender Expression is how one presents externally, and is therefore highly relevant to one's experience of discrimination on the basis of identity.

I move through the world with the privilege of someone whose gender identity and expression match the sex I was assigned at birth, so I can't speak to the personal impact this bill would have for me. But I know that for too many of my trans and nonbinary friends, discrimination and harassment on the basis of their very being is a painful and constant reality.

Recently, I heard from a friend whose daily experience in the workplace is so toxic and abusive that they are considering changing careers, leaving a profession about which they are passionate and excel in, and one that desperately needs more representation, not less.

Even cisgender folks whose Gender Expression doesn't neatly fall into the binary construct of Male and Female face discrimination. Protecting Gender Expression protects everyone.

Furthermore, we know that those most at risk of discrimination are trans and nonbinary folks of colour, particularly Black and Indigenous trans women, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit people.

Especially in light of escalating attacks on trans rights in the US, in neighbouring Provinces, and recently in our own Province, it is more important than ever to provide comprehensive protection under the Human Rights Code.

History has shown that queer communities are often the first to be targeted by far-right and extremist hate, and that these attacks signal a rise in fascist movements that pose a threat to us all. Ensuring that trans and nonbinary people have full protection under the law is crucial to ensuring and preserving human rights for everyone.

The Human Rights Code asserts that "all members of the human family are free and equal in dignity and rights". I would add that everyone has the right to live as their authentic selves without fear of persecution. This Bill is a step towards making that possible for trans and nonbinary people.

Élyse LeBlanc

Re: Bill 43

I am adamantly in support of Bill 43, amending The Human Rights Code to expand the list of protected characteristics to include gender expression.

It is imperative Manitoba exists as a society where everyone in the 2SLGBTQ+ community is loved, valued, and included, socially and economically. I urge the House to adopt the motion to introduce Bill 43 into the legislature.

Stacy Cardigan Smith

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Manitoba Bill 43, which seeks to add "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code. This important bill will help close a gap in current protections by ensuring that individuals are not only protected for their gender identity but also for how they express that identity through their appearance, mannerisms, and other personal expressions.

In the face of increasing opposition from transphobic groups, it is crucial that we take a stand to support the dignity and rights of all individuals, particularly those who are gender non-conforming. This bill will help create a more inclusive and equitable society, where everyone is afforded the protection and respect they deserve.

I urge you to support Bill 43 and ensure that Manitoba continues to be a safe place that upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of how they express their gender.

Sincerely,

Ashley Walklett

Re: Bill 43

My name is Luca Gheorghica, and I am writing in support of Bill 43 on behalf of myself and a group I am part of called Poverty Awareness & Community Action. Our group believes in the importance of sharing the knowledge, experiences, and solutions of people who have lived experiences with oppression. I am transgender community based advocate who strives to create accessible and safer spaces within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

When we deliver our poverty awareness workshops, one of the most impactful things students learn is that most people who experience poverty also face other systemic challenges, such as gender-based discrimination and violence, and as a result, it is crucial for service-providers and other community members to work from a trauma-informed approach.

Gender affirming care has and continues to save my life. It's made my mental health wellness stronger, and being able to express my gender means that I no longer need to live my life in constant fear as a trans person. If Bill 43 doesn't pass, the risks and harms for those in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community will continue to happen. Let's make a better community for all of us.

Luca Gheorghica
Poverty Awareness & Community Action

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill 43 - It is against our "freedom of speech" and our "freedom of religion"!

Barbara Cowan

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill 43 which would give needed protections against discrimination on the basis of "gender expression". As a parent of young children growing up in this province, I believe it is important to ensure that all children and adults can grow up and live in a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment regardless of how they express their gender.

Every child and every person deserves to be seen for who they truly are. That means being able to express themselves—through their clothing, hairstyle, voice, and yes, their pronouns—without fear of ridicule, discrimination, or harm. As a society, we teach our children to treat others with kindness and dignity. Bill 43 reinforces those values by protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our communities: trans and gender-diverse youth.

Right now, trans and gender-nonconforming people often face daily challenges, simply for living as themselves. This bill ensures that when a child asks to be addressed in a way that reflects their identity, that request is respected—not politicized. Respecting a person's pronouns isn't about ideology; it's about basic decency.

Those who oppose this bill often speak about "parental rights," but as a parent, I believe our biggest responsibility is to support our kids and teach them to respect others. Bill 43 doesn't take rights away—it affirms that no one should be treated as less-than because of how they express who they are.

Other provinces and the federal government already recognize gender expression as a protected ground under human rights law. It's time for Manitoba to catch up. Our children are watching how we respond to these issues. We have a chance to show them that fairness, compassion, and justice matter.

Passing this bill will send a clear message: that everyone belongs, and everyone deserves to feel safe being themselves. I want my child—and every child—to grow up in a world where they're respected for who they are, not forced to hide it.

Bill 43 isn't just good policy—it's a necessary step forward. I urge lawmakers to pass it without delay.

Sincerely,

Jill Carr

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43.

Miranda Hutlet

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Manitoba Bill 43, which seeks to add "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code. This important bill will help close a gap in current protections by ensuring that individuals are not only protected for their gender identity but also for how they express that identity through their appearance, mannerisms, and other personal expressions.

In the face of increasing opposition from transphobic groups, it is crucial that we take a stand to support the dignity and rights of all individuals, particularly those who are gender non-conforming. This bill will help create a more inclusive and equitable society, where everyone is afforded the protection and respect they deserve.

I urge you to support Bill 43 and ensure that Manitoba continues to be a place that upholds the rights of all

individuals, regardless of how they express their gender.

I have friends and family members who would be directly affected by this bill. I'd be grateful to be able to know they're safe in this Province to be themselves.

Ruth Baines

Re: Bill 43

I Do Not agree with Bill-43!

Lorraine Bisson

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Manitoba Bill 43, which seeks to add "gender expression" as a protected characteristic under the Manitoba Human Rights Code. This important bill will help close a gap in current protections by ensuring that individuals are not only protected for their gender identity but also for how they express that identity through their appearance, mannerisms, and other personal expressions.

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I urge you to support Bill 43 and ensure that Manitoba continues to be a place that upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of how they express their gender.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hancharyk

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43

Jacques Lavack

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43. Trying propose two possitives with a negative hoping it will cover up the negative aspects is no way to govern the people.

Michael Van Damme

Re: Bill 43

I do not support Bill 43 due to the following questions I have regarding this Bill:

1) With the rights of parents being steadily taken away, can this government tell me how far this bill will go with removing further rights of parents in choosing what's best for their children?

2) Shouldn't parents themselves be given a survey that they can fill out and give this government direction on how the needs of gender expression can be best handled?

Harv Enns

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

I'm submitting writing today as I am unable to make it in person to express my support for Bill 34. Gender expression absolutely must be protected under the Human Rights Code. The Code was implemented in 1987. Since 2017 the Canadian HR Act has included gender identity and gender expression as well as every other province except Saskatchewan including it in their codes too. Manitoba added gender identity in 2012. I would also like to note that Manitoba was also an early province that allowed for abortions to be performed here, Manitoba is a place that has historically served its people in the Human Rights front and has the opportunity to continue this track record. Right now there is a gap in the protections that are needed, we have watched as many other countries and regions comparable to Canada (such as the US and UK) turned their back on Trans and other gender diverse people - even writing human rights violations into their policies. As we see these countries who have also previously been beacons of democracy move backwards, we must ensure that at the very least this province meets the basic needs of our own residents. In the face of increasing opposition from transphobic groups, it is crucial that we take a stand to support the dignity and rights of all individuals, particularly those who are gender non-conforming. This bill will help create a more inclusive and equitable society, where everyone is afforded the protection and respect they deserve.

I urge you to support Bill 43 and ensure that Manitoba continues to be a place that upholds the rights of all individuals, regardless of how they express their gender.

Sincerely,

Natalie Mark

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43.

Jean-Paul Hutlet

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for Bill 43 which would give needed protections against discrimination on the basis of "gender expression". As a parent of young children growing up in this province, I believe it is important to ensure that all children and adults can grow up and live in a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment regardless of how they express their gender.

Every child and every person deserves to be seen for who they truly are. That means being able to express themselves—through their clothing, hairstyle, voice, and yes, their pronouns—without fear of ridicule, discrimination, or harm. As a society, we teach our children to treat others with kindness and dignity. Bill 43 reinforces those values by protecting some of the most vulnerable members of our communities: trans and gender-diverse youth.

Right now, trans and gender-nonconforming people often face daily challenges, simply for living as themselves. This bill ensures that when a child asks to be addressed in a way that reflects their identity, that request is respected—not politicized. Respecting a person's pronouns isn't about ideology; it's about basic decency.

Those who oppose this bill often speak about "parental rights," but as a parent, I believe our biggest responsibility is to support our kids and teach them to respect others. Bill 43 doesn't take rights away—it affirms that no one should be treated as less-than because of how they express who they are.

Other provinces and the federal government already recognize gender expression as a protected ground under human rights law. It's time for Manitoba to catch up. Our children are watching how we respond

to these issues. We have a chance to show them that fairness, compassion, and justice matter.

Passing this bill will send a clear message: that everyone belongs, and everyone deserves to feel safe being themselves. I want my child—and every child—to grow up in a world where they're respected for who they are, not forced to hide it.

Bill 43 isn't just good policy—it's a necessary step forward. I urge lawmakers to pass it without delay.

Sincerely,

Erin Bergen

Re: Bill 43

I am opposed to Bill 43.

Dorothy Giesbrecht

Re: Bill 43

I don't agree with Bill 43

Lise Lavack

Re: Bill 43

I'm opposed to bill 43

Reginald Giesbrecht

Re: Bill 43

I am writing to express my support for the implementation of Bill 43. As a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and as the parent of a Two-Spirit Non-binary child, I commend Premier Wab Kinew on bringing forth Bill 43 to pass.

As a youth I struggled with my identity and did not have a safe place to explore my gender. My family, school and friend groups did not offer me the support I needed to be my authentic self. This had a terrible impact on my self-esteem and led to me entering into very unhealthy relationships. As a survivor of GBV and someone who has unfortunately not always had my rights upheld, I stand in solidarity with folks who simply want to express their gender without being treated with prejudice and hatred.

As a parent, I am honoured that my child was able to share their concerns that their gender identity may not align with their sex assigned at birth at the young age of 5. I am incredibly proud of them for knowing who

they are at such a young age and reaching out for my support to ensure that others continue to respect them and their identity.

I understand that everyone does not have access to the same opportunities that I have. Before I attended university I lived in a tight-knit community where differences were not accepted, and I knew very little about gender identity or expression. But as I have met more folks and expanded my knowledge, I have learned that our gender identity and expression do not always align with our sex assigned at birth. I am grateful for the knowledge I have gained from community and through my studies, so that I can be a better person and parent.

Today my child can go to school expressing their gender in any way they choose and will use their pronouns of choice, and I will not only be aware of it, I will support them, I will amplify their voice and I will advocate on their behalf to ensure that they are being included and will have their human rights upheld. The love of a parent is unconditional and is the foundation for our self-esteem, demonstrating to us how we should interact with others, and how we should expect to be treated. I am thankful that my child will never have to choose between being who they are and being loved by their family. They will always have my love and support as their parent. Today and everyday I choose kindness and respect. I hope that you will choose the same. Thank you.

Kay Maskiw-Connelly

Re: Bill 43

Hello,

My name is Jen Gieg and I'm writing in support of the amendment to include the protection of gender expression in the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

I, as well as many others, believe that gender expression should be protected as well as gender identity. As gender identity and gender expression are different get tangential to one another, it only makes sense that both are to be protected. If you align yourself with any gender, or even none at all, your expression of said gender or lack thereof should be protected, and this goes for every person in this room, no matter if you are trans or cis, it applies to every single person and on Earth. With the rise of rampant anti-trans hatred, I implore you as our government to

protect all Manitobans, especially those marginalized and at risk, in every way you can.

Thank you for listening, and I trust you will listen and make the right choice in voting for this bill to pass.

Jen Gieg

Re: Bill 43

I am opposed to Bill 43. It is not the government's mandate to legislate speech. In Canada we have the freedom of speech.

Angela De Koninck

Re: Bill 43

I am opposed to Bill 43.

Donald De Koninck

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43.

Ivy Fraser

Re: Bill 43

Dear Committee Members,

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Passing this bill will send a clear message: that everyone belongs, and everyone deserves to feel safe being themselves. I want my child—and every child—to grow up in a world where they're respected for who they are, not forced to hide it.

Bill 43 isn't just good policy—it's a necessary step forward. I urge lawmakers to pass it without delay.

Sincerely,

Kathleen McCandless

Re: Bill 43

I am in support of this amendment because as a trans person I think that it is the government's duty to protect the rights and liberties of all citizens regardless of gender expression, sexuality, creed, or race. Any argument against it is in direct contradiction of the entirety of the medical community as well as religious dogma which should be kept out of government.

Alexander Gregovski

Re: Bill 43

This act violates the rights of the majority of Manitobans who do not think that a person can choose or alter their gender, and believes that sexual identity is determined by biological sex at birth. It does this by forcing them to deny that sexual identity depends on biology through requiring them to use gender pronouns that do not conform to biological sex. The belief of this majority of Manitobans about gender conforming to biology is reasonable and true, and they should not be forced to deny it by compelled speech. Many trans individuals end up regretting their adopting a different gender. By forcing Manitobans to

accept the supposed gender of trans individuals, it forces them to confirm trans individuals in their harmful and self-destructive beliefs. The act writes into law a trans ideology that is harmful to women and discriminates against them. It thereby strips women and girls of protection against men competing against them in sports and using their private spaces. It is a deeply misogynist proposal that should be rejected.

John Lamont

Re: Bill 43

I am opposed to bill 43.

Denis Robert

Re: Bill 43

Please oppose bill 43.

If passed, it would unduly punish those who either accidentally or intentionally use a questionable gender title. This bill is not as much about which ideologies one aligns with. Much more is at stake.

No matter which side of the fence you sit on, this bill violates our freedom of speech rights enshrined in our constitution and also our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

'Freedom of expression' is one of the fundamental freedoms protected by section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Section 2(b) provides that everyone has "freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication."

In *R v Keegstra*, the Supreme Court of Canada identified three main objectives underlying the guarantee of free expression. First, free expression is "instrumental in promoting the free flow of ideas essential to democracy and the functioning of democratic institutions." Secondly, free expression is "an essential precondition of the search for truth." Thirdly, free expression is "worth protecting for its intrinsic value to the self-realization of both speaker and listener."

Controlling the speech of any segment of the Canadian population is a very slippery slope.

We cannot legally contradict our enshrined democratic constitution or freedom of speech rights in

order to provide a segment of the population with a sought after type of speech desired.

We are each entitled to choose our own thoughts and words.

We are not yet China or North Korea.

If bill 43 passes however, then there will be more speech restrictions to follow every new ideology promoted as time passes. If this bill passes, our children will experience a very different Manitoba and Canada. If this bill passes then I stand corrected; we have become China and North Korea.

Please vote this bill down.

Jane Gattinger

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43

Erika Couto

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with this bill-43

Brittany Priest

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43

Jennifer Demare

Re: Bill 43

I'm opposed to this bill. I'm concerned about any bill that requires certain speech of people.

It seems this bill is unenforceable. The ability to distinguish between an honest mistake and a purposeful use of the wrong pronouns comes down to intent. It requires mind reading or going off stereotyping people as "the type of people who would misgender someone on purpose".

OR the weight of evidence that the misgendering is purposeful would have to be so much that I would think that behaviour could already be encompassed in current harrasment laws.

Gillian Moore

Re: Bill 43

I oppose bill-43. Free speech is vital to a free and democratic society, even if it causes offense.

Kyle Coffey

Re: Bill 43

I do not believe in Bill 43

George Gervais

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill 43

Danielle Chammartin

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43.

Sara O'Leary

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill 43

Tim Killoran

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with bill 43.

Derek Pena

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43

Chantel Gueret

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43

Erik Bonnefoy

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with bill 43.

Christine Musick

Re: Bill 43

I don't agree with Bill-43

Kimberly Manaire

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with proposed changes to this bill.

Gareth Priest

Re: Bill 43

I strongly oppose bill 43, there are only two genders. Truly loving our neighbors does not mean encouraging them to do anything they want. If our government truly cares for its people they would put an end to promoting this destructive lifestyle and stop trying to convince everyone, especially our children that this is normal behaviour. Shame on all mla's who support this bill.

Daniel Malo

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43

Chantal Schriemer

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43.

Helene Tymchen

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill 43.

Meaghan Madden

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43!

Sabrina Abreu Schlickmann Gil

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill - 43.

Sandra Hernandez

Re: Bill 43

I support Bill 43 - The Human Rights Code Amendment Act. I support expanding the list of protected characteristics in Manitoba to include gender expression. I think that all people need to be able to express their gender(s) in whatever ways they wish and should not be discriminated against for their gender expression. I think that it is especially important to add gender expression and not only have gender identity as a protected characteristic in the Human Rights Code. Gender expression and gender identity are different and both should be protected characteristics. Protecting peoples' right to express their gender however they would like to is important for cisgender, transgender, gender non-binary, gender queer and all genders of people. I am a parent and I want my kid to grow up in a world where gender expression is not policed and where there is a way to protect individuals who are discriminated against because of their gender expression. People should not have compromised access to healthcare, education, housing, employment and other goods and services that are necessary to life and necessary to a good life based on their gender expression.

Anna Weier

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with bill 43.

Lisa Lavack

Re: Bill 43

I do not agree with Bill-43!

Rafael Jose Cardoso Gil

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>