



Second Session – Forty-Third Legislature  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**Standing Committee**  
**on**  
**Social and Economic Development**

*Chairperson*  
*Jennifer Chen*  
*Constituency of Fort Richmond*



Vol. LXXIX No. 1 - 6 p.m., Tuesday, April 22, 2025

**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 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Tuesday, April 22, 2025**

**TIME – 6 p.m.**

**LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**CHAIRPERSON – MLA Jennifer Chen (Fort Richmond)**

**VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mrs. Rachelle Schott  
(Kildonan-River East)**

**ATTENDANCE – 6      QUORUM – 4**

*Members of the committee present:*

*Hon. Min. Schmidt*

*Mr. Blashko, Ms. Byram, MLA Chen, Mr. Ewasko,  
Mrs. Schott*

**PUBLIC PRESENTERS:**

*Bill 17 – The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Nutrition Equality for Lasting Learning Outcomes)*

*Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour*

*Bill 39 – The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Campaign Financing for School Trustees)*

*Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour*

*Paul Moist, Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees*

*Adrian Challis, private citizen*

*Tom Simms, private citizen*

*Jordan Bighorn, Community Education Development Association*

*Elizabeth Ambrose, Just Elections*

*Kate Kehler, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg*

**MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:**

*Bill 6 – The Public Schools Amendment Act*

*Bill 16 – The Municipal Councils and School  
Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools  
Amendment Act*

*Bill 17 – The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Nutrition Equality for Lasting Learning Outcomes)*

*Bill 18 – The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Indigenous Languages of Instruction)*

*Bill 19 – The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Safe Schools)*

*Bill 20 – The Community Child Care Standards  
Amendment and Education Administration  
Amendment Act*

*Bill 39 – The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Campaign Financing for School Trustees)*

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**Clerk Assistant (Ms. Melanie Ching):** Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

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

Are there any nominations?

**Mr. Tyler Blashko (Lagimodière):** I'd like to nominate MLA Chen.

**Clerk Assistant:** Mr. Blashko has nominated MLA Chen.

Are there any other nominations?

MLA—hearing no other nominations, MLA Chen, will you please take the Chair.

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

Are there any nominations?

**Mr. Blashko:** I'd like to nominate MLA Schott.

**The Chairperson:** Mrs. Schott has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, Mrs. Schott is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Bill 16, The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act; Bill 17, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Equality for Lasting Learning Outcomes); Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Indigenous Languages of Instruction); Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools); Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act; and Bill 39, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees).

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hours of adjournment. A standing committee meeting is—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.

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

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.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Out-of-town presenters first, and then in order, as listed.

**The Chairperson:** Hearing out-of-town presenters first, as he suggested, is it the committee's wish to hear the presentations?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**The Chairperson:** Hearing agreed, thank you for your patience.

We'll now proceed with public presentations.

### **Bill 17—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Nutrition Equality for Lasting Learning Outcomes)**

**The Chairperson:** I will now call on Mr. Rebeck for Bill 17.

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

**Kevin Rebeck (Manitoba Federation of Labour):** Yes, I do.

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Rebeck, please proceed with your presentation.

**K. Rebeck:** The Manitoba Federation of Labour is Manitoba's central labour body, with more than 30 different affiliated unions representing 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 Manitoba building trades.

The MFL wholeheartedly supports this bill's goal of ensuring that Manitoba's universal school nutrition program continues well into the future, no matter who forms government.

Children can't learn on empty stomachs, and Manitoba's universal school food program will make a huge difference in the lives of children and working families. Nutritional meal programs in schools can lead to improved attendance, health, learning and behaviour for students.

Free meal and snack programs also help ensure students have access to essential nutrients throughout the day and can lead to food skills education opportunities, while introducing them to new and healthy food choices. And because this program's universal rather than income tested, it ensures it will help working families across the board.

Studies show that children who are well nourished have improved memory, problem-solving skills and creative abilities. However, prior to the introduction of the universal school program, 31 per cent of elementary students did not eat breakfast daily. The universal school program will change that.

And I aim to make special mention of former minister of Education, Nello Altomare, and of the Manitoba Teachers' Society for their advocacy about the need for a universal school program.

Poverty is one of the biggest barriers to learning, and Manitoba has the highest child poverty rate among all Canadian provinces at 27 per cent. Our province's child poverty rate is well above the national

average of 18 per cent, based on 2022 Statistics Canada data.

The percentage is even higher among Indigenous communities, where nearly one in two First Nation children, one in four Métis, and one in four Inuit live in poverty; all higher than Canada's national average.

\* (18:10)

This universal school program will help reduce barriers to education and help to build a more equitable Manitoba. Proper nutrition also supports student learning and can improve children's long-term health, school attendance and social cohesion.

And we're glad that the government's taking steps to protect this universal school food program because we know that, shocking as it sounds, other governments have been opposed to feeding hungry schoolchildren.

Former premier Brian Pallister was clear in his opposition to a universal school program, saying in this very Legislature that if children are going to school hungry, then parents aren't fulfilling their responsibilities, and criticizing the idea of a universal school program as state-funded cafeteria meals.

Former PC Cabinet minister James Teitsma said, a universal school program for Manitoba students was a bad idea. Well, most Manitobans know that it's important to provide the kind of social safety net that ensures children do not go hungry at school. It's important to be reminded that there are politicians who will try to undo the important work that has been done with this universal school food program.

While it's unfortunate that the PCs think it's okay for schoolchildren to go hungry, the MFL's glad the NDP government has stepped up to ensure our province's universal school food program is protected now and into the future.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Rebeck, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Thank you very much, Mr. Rebeck, for your presentation.

I'm—appreciate your organization's support of this bill. We also—we would agree that it's very important and worthy of protecting through legislation.

I also just wanted to say thank you for your words thanking Nello and recognizing his leadership on this, but also for recognizing the work of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. You know, the concept of a school nutrition program, or the idea that, you know, if we want to really improve outcomes here in Manitoba, a lot of that happens before kids even get to the classroom. And that's why nutrition—a universal nutrition program is so important.

So thank you very much for your support. Thank you for recognizing the amazing advocates that have led to the program being introduced and now for it being protected through legislation.

I suppose maybe one question I might have is—so, I know that you cited some of the more public comments that were made by former premier Brian Pallister and former MLA James Teitsma, the comments that they made. I'm curious if, in your role as the president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, if you or any of your affiliates are aware, did you ever meet with the former government on this program—on a program like this, on a nutrition policy initiative and what that response might have been.

**K. Rebeck:** Yes, I know that the Teachers' Society did have that meeting with the minister of Education and they brought that up with us, and it didn't amount to anything. But I do know since this program has been put in place, we've heard—and I've heard personally from teachers, from unions that have workers that represent others in schools, teacher aides and others, that this program is an amazing success, that it makes a real difference in providing food for children that are then able to be much more focused and productive.

And, again, the universality of it, eliminating any kind of stigma that might go with children who might otherwise feel awkward getting it levels the playing field for everyone and makes sure that there's a standard that people can live up to. So the workers certainly notice it as a positive change on the front lines.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Rebeck.

And I want to remind the committee members that questions shall not exceed 45 seconds.

Any other questions?

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I know rules are rules and you're going to stick to them. That's great.

Thank you, Kev, for coming your long distance to committee tonight.

So quick question for you. Do you feel that with the money that's been provided and from what you've put in your submission, are you—first of all realize that the previous PC government more than doubled the food nutrition grant? And also, secondly, that we've said on multiple occasions, it's not okay for school-children to go hungry.

Do you feel it's fine to spend 70 cents per child per day at school?

**K. Rebeck:** I think we should be spending whatever it takes to make sure that children are fed and have nutritious meals.

I'm glad to hear that you're now saying that the PC government or PC Party is in favour of a school nutrition program and that—are supportive of that, and I hope you support this bill to make it a success and enshrine this for the future.

**The Chairperson:** Are there any questions?

**Mr. Ewasko:** So my question was about the 70 cents per day because, according to StatsCan, there's just about 220,000 students in Manitoba, \$30 million from the provincial government, which works out to \$136 per student per year. That works out to 70 cents a day.

Do you feel that we're able to do a universal child nutrition program for that cost?

**K. Rebeck:** If you're suggesting we do more, I would agree with you. We need to build on this program and make it a—more successful and continue to make that investment.

So if the question you're driving at is, do I think 70 cents is enough? No. Do I think it's a good place to build from? Absolutely, and we should make sure that we continue to have this program and enhance and invest in it.

**Mr. Ewasko:** So presently the own Education Minister's report showed that there were only about 31 per cent of students were actually accessing this child nutrition program.

So unless—do you have other stats that backs up your submission that you presented today?

**K. Rebeck:** I'm not sure what stats he's looking to have back up what's said in my submission. My submission speaks to the importance of this program and making sure that we continue to invest and enhance it and build upon it, and I stand by that suggestion and submission.

And I hope hearing you saying you believe that children should be—have access to a universal nutrition program, that your government will support that and help build on it.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Rebeck.

And the question period is expired.

### **Bill 39—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Campaign Financing for School Trustees)**

**The Chairperson:** I will now call on the next presenter for Bill 39, Mr. Rebeck.

Do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

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

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Rebeck, please proceed with your presentation.

**K. Rebeck:** The Manitoba Federation of Labour is MFL's central labour body, with more than 30 different affiliated unions representing 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 bill as it will ensure greater fairness in school trustee elections and keep big money from influencing local school trustee elections.

During the last school trustee elections in 2022, we saw wealthy Torontonians Walter Schroeder attempt to buy several school trustee seats in Manitoba by donating large amounts of his own wealth to various school trustee candidates.

This was allowed because Manitoba school trustee financing rules are woefully out of date and out of step with nearly every other jurisdiction in Canada. A fundamental tenet of our democracy is the value of free and fair elections, and election interference has become a real threat to the functioning of our democracy.

For too long, there have essentially been no rules when it comes to school trustee campaign financing in Manitoba, leaving our schools vulnerable to wealthy interests. This is totally out of step with campaign financing rules at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, where long-standing rules exist to ensure fair elections that are free from the influence of big money.

We are glad to see the government is following up on its Throne Speech commitment to bring in legislation to prevent third-party interference in school

trustee elections, the next round of which will occur in fall—in this fall of 2026.

By bringing in individual campaign donation limits and banning corporate and union donations, this bill will bring our provincial school trustee elections in line with elections for other levels of government. School trustees do important work in our public school system, and it's vital that school trustee elections be decided by Manitoba voters. At a time when democracy is under threat around the world, it's important to take steps to safeguard our democracy here at home.

I wanted to extend a special thanks to the group Just Elections, a coalition of organizations, including unions and individuals, that are interested in strengthening provincial legislation to promote free and fair school board elections in Manitoba, along with protecting school board elections from election interference. Their advocacy has helped to shape this bill to strengthen democracy at the local school board level.

\* (18:20)

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Rebeck, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Again, thank you, Mr. Rebeck, for your presentation. Thank you to your organization for all the great work that I know that you do in encouraging and promoting democracy and people to get involved into elections. Thank you, also, for shouting out Just Elections.

I guess the question—you raised a lot of good points, I believe, in your presentation. I think it was very comprehensive.

You talk about safeguarding democracy. What do you think that this bill would have—what effect do you think it might have on the diversity of candidates, or would you anticipate a greater part—greater democratic participation?

**K. Rebeck:** Yes, I think by putting these kind of rules in place that safeguard our democracy to limit—put more limits that Manitobans are the ones who are engaged and involved and that we're not allowing, you know, individuals or corporate or external interests kind of influence what candidates are there does promote more diversity, allows it to be more accessible to people

who might otherwise be just priced out of even being able to compete or have materials or get the word out.

And I think at a time when we see what democracy is doing south of the border and the limitations and influences that are happening there, making sure that we're taking steps to protect our democracy at home and have it free and fair is extra important to protect voices and allow people at the local level to be engaged at the political level.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** So, thanks, Kevin, for your presentation.

So just a quick question in regards to the monetary limits, whether it is the candidate themselves or a donor to the campaign. What's your view on the limits that have been set? Too high? Too small? Just right? Was the Manitoba Federation for Labour consulted on that?

**K. Rebeck:** We didn't speak in detail about the limits themselves. I'm glad to see that we're putting limits in place. I think there's room to improve this legislation down the road. I think \$7,500 for an individual to self-finance their campaign may be a good transitional level and, hopefully in the future, we can see that come down.

Right now, today, people are used to potentially doing a lot of self-financing themselves so not allowing any of that right away might be problematic, but I would like to see down the road that get more in line with municipal or provincial limitations and limits as we go forward.

I think part of that is making sure that we then find resources to provide some of the same kind of tax credits or rebates that people might benefit from when they give at other levels. So it's a good first step and I think there's room to make this legislation stronger down the road.

**MLA Schmidt:** Mr. Rebeck, you mentioned in your presentation one example of what could be perceived or as presented as, you know, an attempt to sort of—non-Manitobans to be involved in the Manitoba election.

Just curious for the benefit of the committee, in your work, have you—do you have any other examples?

**K. Rebeck:** You know, I think in the last election, we certainly saw kind of the—what was coached under the guise of parental rights, which was really another way of talking about limiting diversity and kind of anti-homophobic, anti-trans kind of code words were being used and being financed and supported by

out-of-province forces that were trying to influence election outcomes here in Manitoba by investing in candidates who shared similar websites, who shared similar verbiage and signage and whatnot.

It didn't make sense to me why an outside-out-of-Manitoba funder and voice should have that kind of influence on our election. And this law would cut that out from being allowed, so I'm glad to see this law in place to create some limits on that.

**Mr. Ewasko:** And so, absolutely, we on this side—opposition for the time being—strongly feel that definitely the free and fair elections are the way to go.

So I guess you sort of alluded to it a little bit, Kevin, with part of your presentation, but do you feel that third-party interference is going to be cut out because of this bill?

**K. Rebeck:** Well, I think third-party, out-of-province interference certainly gets cut out from this bill. I think third parties will still play a role, but they'll have to be clear in that they're delivering their own message, not contributing to candidates with direct funds and allowing them to do things going forward. By having corporate and union donations banned, that eliminates that ability for that kind of direct candidate-funded interference.

**The Chairperson:** The time for question period is expired.

Thank you so much, Mr. Rebeck, for your time and presentation tonight.

I will now call on Ms. Kehler for Bill 6.

Okay, we now move on. I will now call on Mr. Moist for Bill 39.

Do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Moist, please proceed with your presentation.

**Paul Moist (Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees):** Thank you, Madam Chair and members of committee.

I'm pleased to speak today as president of the Manitoba Federation of Union Retirees. We're an umbrella group of retired union members here in Manitoba, part of the 500,000-member Congress of Union Retirees of Canada, that functions under the Canadian Labour Congress. And we appear today to speak in favour of Bill 39 and its primary goal to protect local democracy and prevent third-party interference in school board elections.

Bill 39, in our view, provides much-needed transparency and spending limits to align with the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. Our organization is aligned with many citizen groups back in 2021 when we opposed bill 64, introduced by the previous government, which among other things would have eliminated elected school boards and elected school trustees in favour of a centralized, non-elected body. Bill 64, thankfully, was withdrawn in the face of massive citizen opposition, a clear demonstration that Manitobans value their elected boards of trustees.

Bill 39 further strengthens this important level of government, and we support it in the main. We do align with other groups, such as the Just Elections coalition and the Winnipeg Labour Council in calling for amendments to Bill 39 to strengthen it further. And these are,

(1) Reduce registered candidate personal contribution limit. We think the suggested level of \$7,500 for candidates to contribute to their own campaigns is too high. It doesn't align with our neighbours to the west, and it favours wealthy candidates over working-class candidates. Alignment with The Municipal Act and The City of Winnipeg Charter—the councillor limit for the Winnipeg charter—which allows a maximum of \$750 personal donation, is much more appropriate.

(2) Lower individual contribution limit. We believe that a \$750 personal donation limit, aligning with the province's Municipal Act and The City of Winnipeg Charter, would be more appropriate than the suggested \$1,500 donation limit.

(3) Enabling legislation for contribution rebates. We suggest that Bill 39 align with our Municipal Act and The City of Winnipeg Charter through incorporation into this bill of enabling language within the legislation to allow school boards, should they choose to do so, to provide a rebate or a tax credit for election contributions.

\* (18:30)

That decision should made—be made not here at the Legislature, but at the school board level. Encouraging participation in the political process, including public support for citizen support for candidates of their choice, strengthens democracy as it enables participation from citizens at all income levels.

(4) Campaign expense limits. Bill 39 should be amended to align with the provincial Municipal Act and The City of Winnipeg Charter in terms of specific campaign expense limits. And that would align us



with our three provinces to the west as well, who all put limits in place on what you can spend—specific limits.

And, lastly, election campaign bank account. We support an amendment to Bill 39, which would require a separate election bank or credit union account to be established for candidates. This would support transparency and accountability and would see Manitoba aligned with school board election financing legislation in other provinces.

So, in closing, we want to commend the government for introducing Bill 39. We think it could use some tweaks and we're happy to answer any questions if you have any.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Moist, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**MLA Schmidt:** Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Moist, and for the advocacy you do on behalf of your organization, and for all the incredible work that you do for our province with the many hats that you wear.

So, yes, we appreciate very much the support of the bill and also the feedback that we have received. Some of the balancing that we've been trying to do as government in introducing this bill is to—certainly, to increase the accountability and the—what's the word—the alignment and the transparency while also not trying to put forward barriers that might limit participation.

We haven't had a great line of sight on what's happening at school board elections, so we think that this is a good first step. So in that—you know, under the theme of finding that balancing act, would you suggest that this bill—

**The Chairperson:** Minister, your time is over.

Mr. Moist, would you like to respond?

**P. Moist:** I think that it is a good first start, but I think we can't go wrong. We shouldn't be imprisoned by what other jurisdictions do in the country, but we should look at what they do.

And when I look at something like prohibition of out-of-province, non-resident contributions, Alberta—yes, they prohibit it; British Columbia prohibits it; Ontario prohibits it; Quebec prohibits it.

So I think it's worth looking at that, being specific on those things. We don't need any resident outside of

Manitoba contributing to any election, in my view, let alone school board elections. It's up to Manitobans to decide if they want school trustees, and I would say make the same comment with respect to spending limits.

I've raised a lot of money for all levels of government for candidates of my choice to run for school boards, for municipalities and at all three levels—the senior levels of government. The senior levels are partisan and there's rebates in place, and I won't talk about those.

But I once had an event at my house for school trustee candidates. And I asked people to come to the house, have a glass of wine and—do you want to support this person in the neighbourhood who's running? And a lady said to me, well, I'd like to come, Paul. I can only contribute \$100.

And I said, well, that's a huge contribution; \$100 is a lot of money and I want you to come. And if 20 people show up and donate \$100, \$2,000 at the school board level is a significant—significant campaign. And it shows the community that you got 20 different people prepared to put their money where their mouth is.

So I think when you have a contribution level of \$7,500 to your own campaign, (1) I think that excludes working-class people and perhaps new Canadians, people just starting out—number one; (2) I think if you want to run for the Legislature or a school board or a municipality, you should have broad-based support.

And you don't need to come up with a cheque for \$7,500 for yourself. And I think it's exclusionary. I think that we'll have campaigns where people with money can run easier campaigns than people who raise money at \$100 a piece.

So I think we can strengthen this level of government—this democratic level of government—by putting rules in place. And I think Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec—there must be reasons those legislatures came to these rules.

And we could be more specific in this bill, in my view.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Moist.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thanks, Mr. Moist, for coming forward and bringing your recommendations and the proposed amendments to Bill 39, so please take back to your organization that strongly feel that way.

Have you had a chance to have this discussion before today with the Minister of Education? Because,

I mean, we, as well, feel and we see the threats that are happening to our democratic society, not only provincially but federally and also municipally. So there's some really good amendments here.

Have you had a chance to chat with the minister prior to this or even run this by Manitoba School Boards Association?

**P. Moist:** Yes, through the Chair, we've not spoken to the school board association and we've worked with the coalition that's mentioned in our presentation, and tonight's our first opportunity to speak to any elected representative.

But I do think we should value having school boards and elected school trustees. And I was worried a few years ago when that was on the chopping block, and I give credit to the former government for withdrawing the bill.

But I never—I'll close by saying, I never thought I'd be voting in a federal election, ever in my lifetime, let alone in 2025, where we're actually voting on the state of the—of our democracy. And there's a lot of components to our democracy, I think—many components to democracy.

I was at Young United Church many nights in the last year where we're having democracy conversations. And we had two educators there one night, and they reminded us that less than half the countries on the planet have universal education systems; by that, I mean where all children go to school as a matter of public policy and they don't pay at the doorstep of the school.

Most advanced democracies have elected trustees, and they don't make a lot of money and it's not a place to get rich, but it's an important accountability feature. And I think if you tweak this bill, which I think you should, I think the amendments should be aligned with encouraging all kinds of Manitobans to run, not just those of heightened financial means.

**The Chairperson:** So the time for question period is expired.

Thank you so much, Mr. Moist, for your time and presentation tonight.

I will now call on Mr. Faron Edel. Mr. Faron Edel? Mr. Faron Edel's name will be dropped to the end of the list.

I will now call on Adrian Challis.

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

**Adrian Challis (Private Citizen):** I'm sorry, I didn't—I missed that.

**The Chairperson:** Do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

**A. Challis:** No, I don't. I'm speaking off the cuff.

**The Chairperson:** Okay. Please proceed with your presentation.

**A. Challis:** So I'm here as a private citizen. I'm here as a resident of the Winnipeg School Division—a former employee—teacher of the Winnipeg School Division, a parent of two children who graduated from the Winnipeg School Division and a long-time volunteer for school trustees that have run for the Winnipeg School Division.

In fact, my first election was in 1973; I see not many of you would have been around at that point. And since then, I've had—I've volunteered for several other elections, some of whom the candidates have been successful; in many others, unfortunately, not successful.

But I'm here, specifically, to talk about one part of this bill, which is, as I read it here, bill—according to Bill 39, a registered candidate can contribute only—can contribute up to \$7,500 of their own money on the—on their campaign.

\* (18:40)

Most, if not all of the trustees that I have volunteered to work for, would have been very hesitant to pay an amount of money like that in order to become a school trustee. It strikes me as unfair, inequitable, when someone could, in fact, run a campaign simply by their financial means running against, well, someone like me, who would require individuals to go door to door, deliver pamphlets. But that, to me, is a preferred way of electing candidates that would make good trustees for the sake of our students and the employees of the division.

With individual participation, I think you get a much greater degree of inclusivity. Volunteers come together; they discuss ideas; they argue with their candidate. I think at the end of the day you get a better—or at least a different—kind of candidate.

To me it strikes me as more democratic than just being able to reach into your bank account, write a cheque for \$7,500, and that would be, quite frankly, an enormous amount of money, compared to the elections that I've worked on. It strikes me that it would be a significant advantage.

I don't like that idea. I would rather that it be an even playing field.

You know, and I know—bear with me on this—but I don't like the idea of money in politics, and it's a slippery slope. We see that slippery slope in the elections that just took place to the country to the south of us. I don't want to see more of that or any of that in Canada. Elections should not be overwhelmingly to the advantage of those who have money.

The kind of school trustee that I assisted in getting elected was the kind of school trustee who I could pick up the phone and phone and discuss issues pertaining to education. I was a teacher. I felt like I had knowledge and information that might be helpful for them in making decisions. I don't know, and I'm not convinced, that candidates who would be able to succeed in being elected because of their financial circumstances would necessarily be as open to that kind of dialogue and collaboration with an ordinary citizen like myself.

Personally, I have sometimes thought of running as a school trustee. I may be past that date, but if I—I would have trouble coming up with \$7,500 if that's what my—the person I was running against could do. I think, again, it strikes me as unfair.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Challis, for presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**MLA Schmidt:** And thank you, Mr. Challis, very much for your presentation and for your suggestions.

So appreciating that ostensibly—I agree with you—that ostensibly, right, a smaller contribution limit could lead to the need to create more donors and could ultimately be more democratic. However, the reality, as it exists today, is there are no limits, right. So right now we very much could have trustees that are right now self-funding their campaigns at amounts far greater than \$7,500. So we think that this is a great step to put a limit on that.

And anecdotally—my apologies—anecdotally we do—and we only know this anecdotally because, again, we don't have a line of sight right now on elections campaign expenses when it comes to trustees, so—

**The Chairperson:** Minister's time has expired.  
*[interjection]*

Mr. Challis—I need to recognize you, Mr. Challis, please.

**A. Challis:** I applaud the fact that there's going to be election limitations. I mean, I think that's a good idea.

**The Chairperson:** Any other questions?

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thanks, Mr. Challis, for coming and doing your part in this wonderful democracy that we have here in Manitoba, and bringing forward your presentation.

So the contribution limits, is that your—so this is going to be a two-part question—is that your only concern with this bill? And, secondly—it's not that I disagree with you, whatsoever—is there any additional amendments that you would bring forward to this bill, coming with your expertise as far as helping with some elections in the past and just moving forward into the future?

It's a good first step. Free and fair elections is what should be happening.

**A. Challis:** So, primarily, I'm here today because when I saw that amount of \$7,500, that got my—caught my attention.

But I also do feel that there should be spending limits. And, I mean, some of the other things I've just heard from some of the other presenters, money coming from other provinces, especially, is very disturbing to me. If there were spending limits, I don't think that that would—I think they would be less inclined to come from outside, if they could only contribute \$50.

I don't know what a reasonable amount is, in terms of limitation, but at the school board level, maybe at all levels of government. I don't know, but I'm familiar with school boards and their jobs and the kind of work that they do for elections and, well, or do for our schools.

I think community-based, you know, resident participation, I just—from both my experience and to me, common sense, suggests that's a better way to serve our children.

**MLA Schmidt:** So I think, you know, we are a listening government. And this bill fills a gap that was very wide. There's—there was really a legislative gap here, right? And so what we're trying to do in putting forward this bill is to improve our democracy, at the same time, also, not wanting to be too disruptive to the system, and to—also not to create any unintended barriers, right?

So what I can tell you is that now that—with Bill 39 being passed, it will give us a line of sight into what these campaign expenses look like, what—who is taking advantage of these contribution limits, and we will adjust accordingly.

So, I guess, my question to you is: Will you come back and work with our government, as we—after the next municipal election and as we go forward through elections to ensure that we're getting the right limits?

**A. Challis:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Any other questions?

Seeing no questions, thank you so much, Mr. Challis, for your time and presentation tonight. Thank you.

I will now call on Mr. Tom Simms for Bill 39.

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

**Tom Simms (Private Citizen):** Yes, just handing them out now.

**The Chairperson:** Okay.

Mr. Simms, please proceed with your presentation.

**T. Simms:** Okay, thanks very much. I really appreciate the opportunity to present before the committee on Bill 39.

I'd also like to really commend the government for taking leadership on this issue. It's been, you know, successive governments of both political stripes that have left this as a vacuum. And so, it's long overdue and we really appreciate the work that the government's done on this bill and we really appreciate the speed with which the government acted because the 2026 elections are coming up and this legislation will be done in time, around that.

I'd also like to express I appreciate the amount of consultation that has gone on. Your previous legislative assistant who's now a minister, Moyes, was absolutely fantastic in sort of bridging with the community around this issue, because it was really—a lot of stuff was coming up from the community. And Minister Moyes was fantastic in bringing that forward and building those bridges to government.

Then when Minister Moyes left we thought, oh, man, we're losing someone really good. Then we wind up—your education assistant—I don't know how you—MLA Blashko. I used to teach him, so it's hard to—but you know, fantastic as well, too.

\* (18:50)

And then this morning, we met with the minister, so we appreciate, you know, that opportunity for dialogue.

I want to do two things. I want to share a story, and then I do have a proposed amendment.

And so the story I want to share is I'm appearing here as a private citizen. I volunteered on school board campaigns for 40 years. I really believe that it's important, that school-board level politics is really important. I always joke around: it's like the east coast hockey league kind of thing around politics. But there's really important things that happen there. And so I've worked on a lot of elections. We probably lost more than we won, but you learn a lot out of that.

And what I want to share is the 2022 election; I live in the North End, right in the middle of Point Douglas, in ward 8, in the Winnipeg School Division. The candidate that we worked on for—with, two or three elections, an Indigenous woman who's a leader in the community was able to get elected.

And in 2022, we were really shocked and it was unbelievable of what we were seeing around our neighbourhood. All of a sudden, there were all these billboards that were up. There used to be glass on bus shelters, so there would be billboards in there; they were up. They were on bus benches that had the opponent's name on it. There were—the opponent had these huge signs all over the place. The social media was really robust. The videos were professionally done. And we felt really powerless. We felt really, really powerless.

And, oh, yes, the other thing that was—and only in the North End people would get this is—Boogie's restaurant, right on the corner of Redwood and Main, has this huge, huge sign, and the candidate had advertised on the sign for the whole election: meet and greet and the candidate's name and all this kind of stuff. So we were really demoralized. We really felt like this is awful, I don't know how we're going to pull this off, right?

And so the candidate had previously won by a plurality of 2,400 votes. Somehow we worked really hard, and I still don't know how we did it, and the plurality was reduced to 150 votes. So I guess what—I'm just sharing that story is that's the impact of third-party money coming in from out of province. You feel really powerless. You feel really overwhelmed. You feel that this is not fair.

And one of the things we took away from that experience is that we're glad we live in a democracy. We're glad we live in a place where money should not

determine who gets elected, and we put a lot of energy in, a whole bunch of us, to say, we're going to go to the provincial Legislature and ask that this be fixed. So we really appreciate the government is fixing this. We think the prohibition of corporate and union and out-of-province donations is very strong, very clear and probably one of the more fundamental things the bill is doing. So we really appreciate that.

And I talk about, from a personal point of view, of that feeling of utter powerlessness with all this money flowing at you and as volunteers you're trying to do things. I feel really proud that we live in a democracy and that we can make sure that that never happens again. So I think this legislation does that. So applaud the government for initiating that.

There are things, though, that I think we can improve in the bill, and I want to speak to one of them, about removing barriers. And I guess I would talk about, you know, removing the same kind of barriers that we talked about in this transition in terms of, you know, people are used to self-financing—self-financing their campaigns. There's a lot of people who could never self-finance their campaigns and have worked to look at raising funds themselves. And, you know, we urge the government to think equally about those people who are not able to self-finance their campaigns.

The \$7,500 limit is a lot. We thought, oh, they must've missed a decimal point or something. But that is a lot. It's way more than, you know, municipal or provincial levels. We think that's really unfair. And so, you know, others will be talking about what needs to be happening there.

But what I've put in front of you is, you know, how do we look at honouring local jurisdictions, especially in the rural-urban issue, we really need to honour that. So we're talking about looking at removing barriers for low-income and moderate-income candidates who can't self-finance their own election campaigns.

I know for us—you know, we would get, like, 50 people to give 50 bucks each, you know, and that's how you raise money. We think there's ways of supporting that self-financing.

So, we're looking at enabling legislation so that that would give authority to school divisions if they chose to do so, to look at providing rebates or tax credits at election time. And we're not just pulling this out of thin air.

The Municipal Act and The Winnipeg Charter Act has this legislation. It's enabling legislation that councils may provide their own rebates. And the

concrete example is in City of Winnipeg. They provide rebates. City of Brandon doesn't provide rebates. So we leave the decision to the local level.

We put a little table there already. School divisions are paying money for elections. They have to contract with the City of Winnipeg to pay for elections. We've put out what they—sort of a model of what the 2022 election was like in terms of the number of candidates and if there was, you know, roughly as the City council rebates about 75 per cent, what it could look like.

And, I guess, you know, the thing that we're looking at here is this isn't costing the provincial government any money. It's not forcing anyone to do anything. It's all, you know, by choice. And that we think that, you know, as a counterpoint to the self-financing, there needs to be tools for the non-financing, for the low- and moderate-income trustees. And that—I know, year after year when we've run these elections, it takes a lot of work. It takes a lot of work.

It's just not the money; it's the time you're putting into doing that instead of what others are able to do in terms of the political or door-knocking and stuff like that. So, we'd be asking the government to look at this proposal of enabling legislation that would allow local school boards to make the decision as to whether they will provide rebates—that it's a local decision.

So, if rural communities—we know there's a lot of challenges in terms of getting trustees out. Maybe that's not their cup of tea. But in school divisions where there is an interest in doing that, just give people—the school boards the authority to make that choice.

So we don't think it's costing you any money in terms of provincial taxpayers' money, and we think it's not alienating anyone because it's a choice. You're not forcing anyone to do anything. We do think those tools are really important for the volunteers that work with people who can't self-finance their campaign.

So, if we're trying to find the balance—you know and I—there's a good discussion we had this morning. You know, I understand what people are trying to do around the transition and seeing what's happening around the limits that you've set.

I'm asking you to consider also, in that balance, supporting the non-self-financers who've done this for a long time and that really could benefit from that kind of support.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Simms, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**MLA Schmidt:** Mr. Simms, thank you so very much for your presentation, for all the time and energy and effort that you've put into this. Your passion for this topic is palpable. I am feeling very inspired, so, because we only have five minutes and in case I don't have any more time, what I would like to ask you is, as someone who feels so strongly about democracy and these school board elections, what would you say to Manitobans to encourage them to consider putting their name on a ballot and why is this important to you?

And if you'd like to put a spin on it and why Bill 39 might help them make that choice, that would be great. But I'd love to hear from you.

**T. Simms:** Well, the 40 years I've been volunteering, to me, my motivation is how do we make sure that the school board decision-making table reflects the community it serves, and it hasn't.

We need to remove barriers. That's why I like your point about removing barriers. So I like to raise this idea of, you know, the need for options for school boards to provide, you know, rebates as one of those structural barriers.

And so I think that we need to think about what are those barriers to level the playing field. And, you know, there's other things. I don't have time in this session, but we'd be, you know, pleased to talk about: what are the systemic structural barriers? We've been working on them. We need to continue to work on them.

\* (19:00)

It isn't about trying to look at any preference or anything; it's just trying to make things fair. And we've had a lot of experience of seeing how there's systemic things that aren't fair, and, you know, I think there's interesting ideas that could then open up those things.

I think the challenge in rural and northern communities is huge. We looked at the 2022 election results: 70 per cent of the trustees were either acclaimed or those seats remain vacant—70 per cent. Forty per cent of all school divisions had their whole school division either acclaimed or vacant seats. And I'm not—I don't have the answers to that, but as a citizen of Manitoba, I really worry about that kind of

democracy, when you have 70 per cent of the trustees just sort of put their hand up and they're in.

So what are some of the systemic issues we need to look at there, and, you know, I know that's a really challenging thing. School boards are, especially in rural communities, those are really important things. So I don't have any answers on that, but I'm—I guess those are to me some of the things to think about around those things.

There are some interesting models. Like, I don't know if we've looked a little bit at Frontier School Division. You know, as—what are some alternatives? I think just repeating, election after election after election, having 70 per cent of the trustees acclaimed? That's the definition of insanity, right? Like, how do we do the problem solving on it?

And so maybe to look at models, and to me a big part of that is authentic partnerships and collaborations with residents to get their ideas around it too. Like, there's no way that that can be a top-down thing. But how do we look at that? But I do think we have our heads in the sand if we think it's okay as a democracy to have 70 per cent of the people that are running our school system to be acclaimed or that the positions are vacant. It screams that there's something that needs to be done.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Mr. Simms, thank you for coming out and giving us your presentation, and you sort of hit the nail on the head with part of the question I was going to ask you, and I'd like to thank the minister for actually asking that question as well: the encouragement and the idea as to how do we get more and more people involved.

And I—and so you've answered sort of part of my question that I was going to ask you, which was, so then money, if we've got 70 per cent vacancies and acclaimed, so then the money part is not really part of it, and we're all on the same page, I think, with making sure that that third-party interference needs to be out of here. And because there's always pressures and threats as I mentioned to one of the other presenters.

So I guess my question to you, you mentioned earlier you had met with the minister or the legislative assistant. How long ago was that—

**The Chairperson:** Member's time has expired.

**T. Simms:** This—we do a lot of grassroots-up kind of things. Like, there's a lot of things that get done that are nowhere on the radar screen of either administration or

elected officials, right, and this has been one of them, right.

So when—we approach quite early on; at the time the legislative assistant, Mike Moyes—Mike had a keen interest in this. He had a passion in it, you know? I think he was trying to look at an independent—or a, whatever you call it, an individual member's bill. And so we—

**The Chairperson:** Apologies, but the five minutes allotted for questions has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Simms, for your time and presentation tonight.

I will now call on Mr. Jordan Bighorn. Mr. Bighorn, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

**Jordan Bighorn (Community Education Development Association):** No.

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Bighorn, please proceed with your presentation.

**J. Bighorn:** See the clock to make sure I'm on time here.

Well, I'll just take a quick moment just to acknowledge you all this evening. I know for myself, I got out of dishes tonight to be here; I'm not sure if that's the same for you all in your homes and families and loved ones. But coming off my colleague's words earlier, on behalf of CEDA, which I serve as executive director and as a community member, resident, parent, in Louis Riel School Division in Windsor Park.

What I would present and share will be from an organization that supports the Just Elections platform and suggestions of amendment, which I'll touch on near the end, but I thought I would just perhaps share a little bit more personally, particularly to this theme of how does one feel even standing at this podium, in this room with you all, in this process of democracy and sharing with elected officials.

I mean, the weight of this building, not only today with the global political issues that we have, but the history, at least, in my time here in Winnipeg and Treaty 1 territory since 2006 and moving here and witnessing various things that leaders that we would see on TV or in the news or elsewhere on our community, streets and neighbourhoods, that you would form different opinions and understandings about, and could I ever do that, could they do that, is this what it looks like to be in leadership, is this what it costs, not

only financially in a personal sense, but cost to your heart and soul?

And I must say that, just between the folks sitting on either side of these tables, I would've witnessed a founding member, a founding director of CEDA, who's a former premier, go through such hardship and heartache in this position of leadership. I would see, as was mentioned, a former premier who had to make the comment, as I recall, of having to steal Christmas. But who would've thought that he would've been in that position to bear the weights of that pandemic and guide us through all of that?

And there's all kinds of opinions on either side, but in the middle of it, there's a human being that has to represent that. And then, of course, most recently, with our current leadership and trying to advance messages and plans and ideas around being one community, one Manitoba, in the midst of such challenge that would remove and pull that out from all—of under us, similar to issues where elections and leadership and power and authority seem to be at such whims of money or party or ideology, et cetera.

And perhaps maybe this is just the changing times that we're in now as a global community, to acknowledge that these ideas that have held power over those—many of those in my community as an Indigenous person, and others—perhaps those ideologies and systems, their time has come, and we're just seeing a natural change, an inevitability of the people themselves being fully represented not only in idea and presentation, but around the tables.

And we think, of course, of young people which have—which invariably, this—these amendments and this bill and all the ones today around education are ultimately meant to impact. As I mentioned, my four children from grade 1 to our first high school graduate this year—hopefully—is what this is all about: our future, and the kind of complexities that they'll have to undertake, either in approaching a career in leadership, in a career in, you know, in their employment, perhaps in community service or eventually in political office that may lend themselves to the exposure that many of you would've faced through campaign, whether at the trustee, the City, the Province, or, perhaps now, we're a week away, federally.

So these amendments, to me, and there was questions earlier as I was listening, as to what impacts they may have: Are they lines of sight, are they blind spots?

I feel like, just to draw on another global situation, a global event with the passing of the Pope and the

acknowledgement on CBC recently about the conversations around the revoking of the papal bulls, particularly the terra nullius that would've set the course that we're dealing with now in the whole theme of truth and reconciliation, that there were no systems here; it was wide open. There was nobody here, and therefore it's open for anything you might want to bring in. That would eventually set up the systems and the systemic issues that we're facing today.

And, as was mentioned, there's—that's quite an extreme pull together, I admit, but, you know, without kind of any sort of boundary, of system in place to guide, you know, trustee elections, whether financial through donors or outside influence, et cetera, then it does present, once again, a bit of that Wild West environment.

Or you might think that the best values that we would carry and hope for, certainly, are an equal measure with those that will say: I do have resources; this is how the system works; I've been raised by it; I've been put in positions of authority and power by it, and therefore, there should be zero question that, without different rules and regulations and parameters, boundaries, that I can simply walk ahead without any interference.

\* (19:10)

And sometimes, those values bring with them communities behind them. They bring other ideas. It was mentioned earlier with the—with really, again, that code word of enhanced parental rights.

Meanwhile, I will share with you that in a kind of a one on one on becoming a trustee and a presentation that was given, and it was specific to the fact that there was zero financial kind of legislation or requirement, and therefore, as a trustee running, you didn't have to report really on anything of the funds that you were raising.

But the question from one of the community members at the time immediately went right to: so that means, if we get elected, does that mean that we can fire the superintendents? And I thought that that was, yes, an understanding of going right for the steering wheel, right for the vein of power.

And perhaps, as another comment from a current trustee in a article some time ago about an event that did happen in Louis Riel School Division, where the school board and the office was really stormed by community members that you might say were exercising their right to free speech, but they were using speech in such ways that were meant to really harm. And that

comment from the trustee was acknowledging that perhaps there was a lot more education needed about these systems and how to affect change, as opposed to going right to the point that power and authority and position means that I can remove you.

So these, to me, are all steps. There's a long way to go. One of the trustees at our presentation not long ago with Just Elections with the Louis Riel School Division was simply about, well, will this—what will be the immediate impact? What would make the change? And my response to that was, this is not so much to expect that tomorrow, as with any kind of major change like this, you're going to see an immediate reflection of this change.

It just is simply, first of all, opening doors. It is creating an environment that welcomes in. It establishes means by which, as was mentioned several times this evening, from \$7,500 to \$750, levelling the playing field a little bit, because, quite frankly, when I think of \$7,500, I think more of my credit card debt than I do what I could raise to run for trustee.

And it's just all these notions that immediately, you know, put people that I would know of, that I think would be an incredible trustee or representation in my community—that yes, are struggling to put food on the table, that are managing kids on their own, et cetera, et cetera. And then to think about how would I—who would even want me to be there, and then somebody next door would have family inheritance or plenty of funds or business behind them or a funder from out of province that will put up a billboard, there's zero kind of comparison with that example.

So, in any event, I'd just like to, again—once again, close my comments to acknowledge this opportunity, once again, to be here. And I must say, again, like, these are all, I think, generational shifts and changes.

I think the opportunity to do this together, as I see on this committee from all representation of our government, and then for an individual, for myself, to just to feel the weight of this room, I'm desperately looking for things that would remind me that it's safe, it's—I'm familiar, I do have a right to be here, and all I can think of is that these ceilings remind me of my kids' LEGO; I don't know if you've noticed, you know.

Anyway, thank you very much and that's the end of my section.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Bighorn, for your presentation.



Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**MLA Schmidt:** Thank you very much, Mr. Bighorn, for your presentation and for your work with CEDA.

And also, thank you very much for taking that moment to sort of ground us in this space, but also in this work. You know, we're sitting here talking about a bill about democracy, and I think it was very important and it surprises me that I didn't even reflect on that, that this is work of this committee and of all of you, what we're doing right now. So thank you very much.

You've made some really good points of this bill. It seeks to improve participation and diversity in school boards.

Is there anything else we should be thinking of as government when it comes to achieving those outcomes?

**An Honourable Member:** Big question.

**J. Bighorn:** Yes, a big question. I—well, I, from—and again, from a very personal note and then perhaps whatever card I suppose is respectful to put on the table as an Indigenous person and as a guest on Treaty 1 territory. My community is from down south, oddly enough, on the eastern Montana and Fort Peck—Assiniboine and Sioux tribes.

There's, I think, as I mentioned earlier, an inevitability to issue that is going to continue to force us to not only live and work together but perhaps we talk about oneness and unity to actually make decisions together to—when we say the best interests of those that we're in charge of, our children or our constituents or our public, that are going to—you know, the Creator has a way of making things happen whether we like it or not.

And, more and more, thanks to social media, of course, as we know, for better or worse, but I think of what just comes right to mind is the murder of George Floyd and a 17-year-old who was able to push a button and go live, and it was the only reason, perhaps, that that was able to shoot around the globe and we responded in such ways. And many more examples like that.

I would just suggest that as—again, as coming into these doors and going through security, and which were very—they were very good, by the way; wasn't randomly selected—that this is what I think the community and young people are looking for in this day and age is, as much as there is team Canada and unity as a country with threats elsewhere, there is still yet a

Manitoban identity that could be inspiring, that could be understanding that we need two sides of a question to really have a good debate and consultation and that how, as much we talk about doing things respectfully and whatnot, but there are systemic issues and barriers that do have to be removed, and this removes them because these other systems that have laid the groundwork for those that have resources, that have access to one another, access to things that others will not, and then systemically will not have access, then it allows for building that, as was mentioned earlier.

As most of you may know, your constituents or your classrooms have dramatically changed, and a lot of neighbourhoods have dramatically changed because the world continues to come to Turtle Island; the global community continues to come here. So the diversification of our communities is just untapped resource. I mean, that's the real economy to me, and avenues like this will continue to reap those benefits.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thank you, Mr. Bighorn. It's great to see you again, and thanks for your presentation, and a big congratulations to your eldest for coming up graduation. It's proud parent moment, right?

So I guess the biggest thing on our side what we're seeing and what we're seeing with this bill as well is trying to reduce—making sure that there's no barriers so that anyone can run for elections in those things.

So when we talk about affordability, and whether it's in jest or not, you mentioned credit card debt and affordability. I think part of it, which this—which the minister, I'm sure is what's going to happen from this, is there is going to be an amendment to the bill that will reduce the overall out-of-pocket limit for spending, a major reduction, to make sure the playing field is fairer. I can almost see that coming, and I can almost say that—

**The Chairperson:** Member's time has expired.

Mr. Bighorn, do you—would you like to respond?

**Floor comment:** I appreciate that, and I know Mr. Ewasko as an educator. I mean, you come from a standpoint of wanting to ensure students are coming up through the system where nowadays when AI, of course, is replacing teachers and points of authority and time, time that you would spend being able to go to the library or go to find a grandparent to get answers when now you just click, and the time that you can spend understanding that going through a process like this and these things are important. And so instilling belief in that for young people is important.

**The Chairperson:** I'm sorry, Mr. Bighorn, I need to recognize you first.

Would you like to repeat your answer again, Mr. Bighorn?

**J. Bighorn:** No, I will not. Thank you. Appreciate that. Okay.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Mr. Bighorn. And the five minutes allotted for questions have—has expired.

Thank you, Mr. Bighorn, for your time and presentation tonight.

I will now call on Ms. Elizabeth Ambrose. Ms. Ambrose, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

\* (19:20)

Ms. Ambrose, please proceed with your presentation.

**Elizabeth Ambrose (Just Elections):** I'm just going to begin by letting you know a little bit about myself. I'm a former school trustee in the Winnipeg School Division and I was elected to represent Ward 3 from 1995 to 2006.

I co-chair the Just Elections coalition, along with Kathy Mallett, who is also a former trustee from the Winnipeg School Division, and she was elected in 1992 to 1995 and is the first Indigenous woman to be elected in the Winnipeg School Division for the board of trustees. And there was a second Indigenous person, Bill Sanderson, at the time, and in the history of the 100 years of the Winnipeg School Division, that was the first time Indigenous candidates had been successful in an election.

As we were told earlier, Just Elections is a coalition of organizations and individuals that are interested in strengthening provincial legislation to promote fairness and equity in school board elections. Presently, unlike federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, Manitoba does not have legislation for governing financial and goods and services contributions for school board elections.

Just Elections did a review of school board election financing legislation in the other jurisdictions and found that Manitoba is out of step with other provinces in Canada who have an election financing legislation in place. A summary table of the regulatory requirements in those jurisdictions has been provided as supplementary information to the members of this standing committee.

Provincial leadership on this issue is long overdue and Just Elections commends the government for introducing Bill 39. Bill 39, The Public Schools Amendment Act, will better protect democracy of school board elections by regulating campaign financing for candidates which also will protect democracy from third party election interference.

In order to further strengthen the proposed legislation, the coalition has identified five amendments that will align it better with the municipal election financing legislation. The guiding principles adopted by Just Elections for the legislation amendments are based on (1) transparency—accountability to the public; (2) accessibility—minimize barriers for community members to run for school board trustee; (3) evidence, which is comparative school board election legislation in other provinces; and (4) precedent—consistency with election financing legislation for federal, provincial and municipal levels of government.

The first of the five amendments recommended by the coalition pertains to lowering the candidate personal contribution limited from \$7,500 to \$750, which, of course, has been under a lot of discussion tonight. For the context, the municipal election financing legislation limits the personal contribution a mayoralty campaign can make to their own campaign is \$1,500 and \$750 for a councillor. By lowering the personal contribution to \$750, it will level the playing field for low- and moderate-income candidates.

The second amendment recommends Bill 39 include enabling legislation for rebates for persons who donate to school trustee campaigns. Both the City of Winnipeg Charter Act and The Municipal Act have enabling legislation that provides local councils the choice to establish a donor tax rebate for election contributions.

Using Winnipeg and Brandon as examples, Winnipeg has chosen to provide rebates funded by city council and Brandon has chosen not to provide contribution rebates. Enabling legislation would allow school boards to pass a bylaw if they choose to use division funds to provide rebates or tax credits for contributions to school trustee campaigns. This would align with the other election financing legislation and would promote more equitable opportunities from persons from a wide range of income groups to run for school trustee.

Thirdly, the campaign expense limit needs to be more specific in Bill 39. Sections 27.81 and 27.6 would put the campaign expense limit at \$7,500 which does not align with the municipal financing

legislation. For example, the City of Winnipeg is based on a set amount for a per voter formula, which is 35 cents per voter for mayor, and 90 cents for councillors. Brandon's limit for councillors is \$4,800. The proposed campaign spending limit for school elections—school board elections could be set at 35 cents per voter. That is indexed to inflation, which would result in a campaign expense limit of \$5,000 to \$7,000 for a ward size of 15 to 20 thousand voters. However, spending limits could be modified based on adjustments to the amount set for the per voter formula.

Fourth—the fourth amendment recommends lowering the individual contribution limit from \$1,500 to \$750. The individual donor contribution per councillor is \$750 in the municipal election financing legislation. Lowering the limit for school board elections would make 30—Bill 39 consistent with the legislation of the other levels of government.

Finally, it is recommended that Bill 39 should require school trustee candidates to set up a separate election campaign bank account. This would promote greater transparency, accountability and is based on best practices of school board election financing in other provinces.

A handout of the five proposed amendments has been provided as supplementary information to yourselves.

I thank you for your attention and the opportunity to speak on Bill 39.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Ambrose, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**MLA Schmidt:** Thank you very much, Ms.—Mrs.—Madam Ambrose—Elizabeth—Liz?

**Floor Comment:** Liz.

**MLA Schmidt:** Liz, there we go. Thank you very much, Liz. Thank you so much for your presentation. Thank you very much for all of your years of service as a trustee and all of your work in advocating for elected trustee boards since then.

So I guess I would just like to hear from you because your experience goes back to 1995 or maybe even before. In your experience, how has the landscape shifted or changed for school trustees? And, yes, I saw your eyebrows go up so I'm guessing there's a lot, but if you can think of one or two of the most

impactful things, where you've seen the biggest change, whether that's a positive change, a negative change. What's been your experience?

**E. Ambrose:** I think, just sort of generally, over the years, especially in the '90s and the early 2000s, school boards were really hit with a lot of criticism and a lot of interest in taking away the taxing rights of school boards and wanting to change it.

The—but I think for me personally, the biggest change that I have seen that has been the most monumental has been the change in the size of the Winnipeg School Division is the ward boundaries. That when I ran in—was up in—I forget when it was changed but it was three wards. There were three trustees per ward.

And Ward 3 ran—started at Panet Road on the east. On the west, it went over to Route 90. On the north, it roughly went along Talbot, Inkster, up into Meadows West and the railway lines below.

No rules. Nothing. I actually—you know, I had worked on elections. I—you know, I went out and I got myself a little ledger book and I got a separate bank account. And, you know, thinking about all of those things at that time, I thought for sure somebody was going to come and ask me, you know, how much did I get, how much was I going to be spending.

So that never came. I ran against—one of the candidates had very deep pockets and was able to, like we—you could never know—get voters lists in terms of who was going to be voting for you. All you could do is put up signs and hand out leaflets and talk to as many people as possible, and then cross your fingers on election night. The first night—the first time I ran in 1995, 17 candidates.

So this legislation, I see very much as—is being a building, a building to breaking down barriers. And just speaking first of all to the No. 1: \$7,500 is too much. You know, what is decided on and what is determined based on evidence and discussions afterwards will be, I guess, determined.

But it is a lot of money and, you know, you just take the examples of Bill and Kathy. We need to break down these barriers and have greater diversity on our school boards. It's a great privilege to serve on a school board. You're closest to the community. You're serving children. And it's a—I said I would never run for school board; I loved it, so.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thanks, Ms. Ambrose, for your presentation.

So just looking at some of the contributions and I know earlier, to Mr. Bighorn that I mentioned on the record that I see this as being an easy amendment as far as the total limits that a candidate is able to bring forward. So I'm holding high hopes for the minister to bring forward amendment to lower that number.

Did you have a chance with your coalition to have a sit-down meeting with the Education Minister or anyone else from the department?

**E. Ambrose:** Yes, this morning. We met with—there was a group of us that met with the minister, yes.

And we have been doing presentations to the school boards and to other organizations as well too, yes.

**The Chairperson:** Any other questions?

\* (19:30)

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thanks, Ms. Ambrose, for that.

Just another quick question: in regard to—so, we talked a little bit about your experience being a trustee and having to run against so many people back in 1995-ish.

I'm going to steal the minister's question from earlier on: Do you have any suggestions for the minister and for MSBA and that on how we can encourage more people? Because as one of the presenters earlier said, 70 per cent acclaim/vacancies. We're in some trouble.

**E. Ambrose:** I don't know—well I do think there might be just a general drop-off as well as interest in school board issues. When I was chair of the Winnipeg School Division in 2000, there was issues going—I remember—we had, there was a number of things that were going on, and at the time, like, as chair of the school division, I was in the paper getting attention as much as the premier or Glen Murray at the time, who was mayor of—

**The Chairperson:** Apologies, but five minutes allotted for questions has expired.

Thank you, Ms. Ambrose. *[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** Is there leave for—Mr. Ewasko.

**Mr. Ewasko:** I'm just going to canvass the committee if we can ask for leave for Ms. Ambrose to finish her statement.

**The Chairperson:** Leave has been requested for Ms. Ambrose to finish the answer. *[Agreed]*

**E. Ambrose:** Yes. I just think issues related to school board and education have really fallen off the radar

and off of the public domain. As I said, you know, just giving an example, that—you know, there was a lot of attention given to school board issues at the time.

I think that is one place to start, but I also think that probably needs to—there's no one answer to that. I think there are some issues that maybe—there'd be issues different in Winnipeg, in the urban centres versus the rural. So I do think it might take more of a coalition, another coalition, a group of—to kind of just start looking for the answers to that question.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Ambrose, for the time and presentation tonight.

I will now call on Ms. Kate Kehler. Ms. Kehler, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

**Kate Kehler (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg):** No, not this evening.

**The Chairperson:** Okay. Ms. Kehler, please proceed with your presentation.

**K. Kehler:** All right. Thank you all, good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you this evening.

So I'm the executive director of the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. We are an organization with more than a 105-year history of working to create a better Winnipeg for all. Our current vision is for a sustainable community that is just, equitable and caring. Our mission is to provide leadership that addresses inequity and improves social conditions through research, engagement and action.

We identify with community-led development approaches, and one of our guiding principles is: that which you do for me without me, you do to me.

I'm speaking in support of Bill 39, but as a member of the Just Elections coalition, I'm also going to speak to their recommendations later on in this, because I do believe those proposed amendments will make the bill stronger.

The bill is long overdue and much needed. School trustees hold a tremendous amount of power to influence the education, and therefore the world views of students from a very young age into early adulthood.

Here in Canada we often like to identify as, well, we're better off than the—we're better than the US. These days that would be damning with faint praise. But it's simply a reality that we have our own bigots, we—haters, extremists, white nationalists, however

you want to name folks that don't align with, hopefully, progressive and a more caring world.

We have our own trustees backed by special interest groups who want to ban certain books from school libraries; oppose gay-straight alliances; use offensive, demeaning language that leaves some students and their families feeling targeted and unsafe. There also seems to be very little the other trustees can do to stop one from pushing their personal agenda, once elected.

There can be good, evidence-based and progressive personal agendas, but there can also be ones based in hate and/or ignorance. So it is essential that we know who is backing candidates.

As an example of how things can potentially go wrong, prior to the pandemic there was a video created here in Winnipeg about the North End. It purported to be a documentary. I say purported because documentary standards such as informed consent were not followed. This documentary was created by a former paramedic. While not being transparent and just stating that it was an anti-needle exchange video, the editing, et cetera, made it clear that it was an anti-needle exchange video.

I was at different public presentations, and each time someone would ask something like so—to the creator: so are you for or against needle exchange programs? And the creator would always say he was opposed. And, of course, as a former paramedic, his word and his experience held power and sway.

When I questioned him, I asked him if he was an addiction expert. The answer was no. When I asked him if he had any expertise in harm-reduction work or research, the answer was no. He simply believed that since his experience demonstrated that the problem was getting worse, needle exchange programs must be a contributing factor.

We know, based on evidence, that needle exchange programs and other harm-reduction approaches such as supervised consumption sites do not contribute to drug use, and they save lives.

One example of the manipulation in the video would be that it showed a woman in the North End, clearly under the influence of some substance, so could not have given informed consent. But they were expounding on how wonderful a particular community organization was. The documentary then went to interview the leader of that organization and also a volunteer from that organization. While the leader did not oppose needle exchange, the volunteer did. The

editing made it seem as if the entire organization and also that first woman were in support of anti-needle exchange views. So—and there were multiple other issues with the video.

So why am I mentioning it here? It's because that video was screened for school trustees, and at a large meeting, the then-lead of the Manitoba School Boards Association stood up and publicly said he wanted the video screened in all schools and, I was told, with a lot of support in the room.

So at different public meetings, also, parents stood up and said the same, some even citing Scared Straight-type programs, which have been proven to be an utter failure in helping kids stay out of trouble.

So just in case you're asking yourself, why identify as a community-led development organization? How do we pick which ones—which things we support from community? It's because we get to rely on evidence and research.

So the video didn't end up getting wide circulation in schools. I and others made presentations to boards and superintendents, and hopefully that helped. But probably, though, we all kind of took it that the cost the creator associated with screening in a presentation also had a factor in it not being widely distributed. So had it been free, we don't know how much influence it might've had.

I'd also like to bring in the issue of the school resource officers and how that played out in the 20—in the leadup to the 2022 election, as other people have mentioned. As a member of the Police Accountability Coalition, we were part of a call to pause the program until an actual fulsome third-party evaluation could be done. One had not been done since the SROs were introduced in our schools in 2002.

The Winnipeg Police Service does not have a good and trusting relationship with too many Indigenous, Black and other people of colour and religious minority community members. There is discrimination and a culture of it's us against them in too many members of the service.

The pushback from SRO supporters, including our previous police chief, was that SROs are just there to build relationship with youth, create some familiarity and trust, et cetera. They were not there to police or become involved in discipline matters. And yet, when the WPS released information on the number of restorative justice referrals it made, it cited SRO data. A restorative justice process would only be initiated if

there was a problem or a conflict that needed to be managed.

So a real lack of transparency and consistency as SRO involvement in discipline matters seems to have been based on division, school, principal, teachers, with any anecdotal—with only anecdotal evidence to back the need and outcomes rather than an actual evaluation. I am getting somewhere.

When the Louis Riel School Division announced, based on a research report that proved harm from the program—decided to discontinue the program, and the WSD1 decided due to budget constraints they would also discontinue the program, a former Winnipeg but ongoing philanthropist to his alma mater, the North End, Mr. Schroeder, who's been mentioned earlier, offered to fund the program directly. He was not taken up on the offer; however, when we had—we then had the '22–2022 election, and the same Mr. Schroeder was found to have been interviewing and vetting potential school trustee candidates, with the offer of backing for their campaigns.

While a couple of candidates were upfront, with one saying at no time did they or would they ever agree to be influenced based on campaign donations, it made many question the state of our democracy, on what the Manitoba School Boards Association, which seems to be opposed to these changes, called a—largely voluntary members of each community who are able to seek election with minimum barriers standing in the way of what remains the most grassroots form of non-partisan democracy in Canada.

A school trustee, just like any other person, has their views, beliefs and biases. While the role is officially non-partisan, that does not mean it is apolitical, and those views, beliefs and biases will influence their decisions.

\* (19:40)

Currently, the electorate does not have access to the information we do have at all other levels of democracy when electing, as I mentioned at the top, a person who can wield a tremendous amount of influence on children as they grow and develop into adulthood. This, in my view, demands far more transparency; we need to know who is backing them, to help them get into this position of influence and power.

So in closing, I want to thank you for introducing the legislation. I hope that all here and in the Leg. will—full legislation will give it its due consideration. However, I would like to add my voice to the Just Elections amendments. Normally, as a pragmatist, I'm

kind of all in favour of the don't let perfection be the enemy of the good. I still think, though, as it's written right now, it still leans too far to favouring people of wealth, or at least who have wealthy friends.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Kehler, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**MLA Schmidt:** Thank you very much, Kate, for your presentation here tonight, and for all the great work that you do in the community, and advocating on behalf of the community.

So something that you touched on that I think has been a bit absent from the conversation that I would love to hear more about is—again, we're here talking about how trustees get elected, and what are the rules about them getting elected. But what you spoke about and what I'd—for the benefit of the committee, I think that it would benefit us to hear a little bit more about—is about that role that the trustee plays in ensuring that there are safe, inclusive, diverse, welcoming spaces for our kids to receive their education and to participate in their education.

So if you'd like to talk a little bit more about that, about the important role that the trustee plays once they are elected, and why does this—ultimately what we're talking about here, right?

**K. Kehler:** Thank you. The—yes. As I said, like—it just—it has the—they have the ability to influence what is being taught our children, and what could be more powerful than that influence?

The school trustees that I know, typically, were a parent, and perhaps their child was not having a need met, and so that is a personal agenda. But as long as that personal agenda is there to serve the greater good, then there's nothing wrong with that, with why somebody got motivated to become—to go into politics. I'm sure you all had your reasons for deciding to run in politics; it could've been a personal issue at the municipal level, federal, provincial level, obviously. But that's the idea behind it.

So it's about getting a number of people elected, and they need to be, in my view, reasonable people, because they know they're not there to make the decision on their own. They're going to have sit in a room full of people and come to some sort of consensus and come to agreement on what is going—

what is the best for the entire student body, not just the ones that they're concerned with.

**An Honourable Member:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Ewasko:** Thanks, Ms. Kehler, for coming today and practising your democratic right. You know, there's only a couple provinces in Canada that have the first reading, second reading committee and then third reading, so thank you for bringing forward your presentation and joining us this evening.

**K. Kehler:** That's a tough rule. Thank you very much, you're welcome and all of that wonderful stuff. Really, thank you for your time this evening, and thank you for all the time that you actually put into the work that you're doing to make Manitoba better.

**The Chairperson:** Any other questions?

Seeing no questions, thank you so much, Ms. Kehler, for your time and presentation tonight.

I will now call on Mr. Faron Edel.

Mr. Faron Edel has been removed from the list.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

\* \* \*

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

**MLA Schmidt:** Numerically.

**The Chairperson:** Numerically has been suggested to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of these bills.

Is it the committee's wish to proceed? *[Agreed]*

#### **Bill 6—The Public Schools Amendment Act**

**The Chairperson:** We shall now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 6.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 6 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Yes, I do.

Thank you very much to the committee for being here tonight for—to consider Bill 6, which I am pleased to present.

So I'll try to do this very briefly because I know it's been here—it's been a long day. Each day—pardon me—each year the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day, takes place on September 30. This is a very important day for all

Manitobans to learn about reconciliation and to acknowledge the impacts of the residential school system.

Orange Shirt Day honours the survivors and remembers all of those who are lost. Orange Shirt Day is very important because it promotes reconciliation. It acknowledges the trauma that Indigenous peoples endured and encourages reflection on how we can all support healing and justice for Indigenous communities in Manitoba. It is especially important that we educate the next generation of Manitobans, and that's why our government was proud to make Orange Shirt Day a statutory holiday and is furthering Indigenous education in classrooms across the province.

That's why Bill 6 makes sense. Historically, the common day in Manitoba to count enrolment at public and independent schools was September the 30th, which is now Orange Shirt Day. This count is very important because it informs public reporting and the amount that each school division must remit to the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine.

So Bill 6 changes the date from September 30 to the first Wednesday in October, a date that was chosen in consultation with school divisions. This change to the enrolment count date is just one very small way in which we are listening to the education sector, supporting their work and working on advancing reconciliation, here in Manitoba.

In this bill and in all of our work and as—in all of my work as a Minister responsible for Education and Early Childhood Learning, we are guided by the underlying principle that every child matters. That principle guides this bill as well.

So merci. Thank you. Miigwech.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the minister.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Again, we thank the minister for coming forward and bringing forward this piece of legislation.

We, on the PC team, are committed to advancing and supporting truth and reconciliation. And, of course, September 30 helps us with bringing forward some truth and leading us into action to build a more inclusive and brighter future for us all.

I see Bill 6 as an administration change, ability for school divisions and for the department to move forward, also with the counting for finance, as well, for school divisions.

So thank you, Madam Chairperson, for the opportunity.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 16—The Municipal Councils and School Boards Elections Amendment and Public Schools Amendment Act**

**The Chairperson:** We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 16.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 16 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Very pleased and honoured and privileged to bring forward Bill 16 here today.

\* (19:50)

I think many Manitobans would be surprised. I was certainly surprised when I learned that, today, in the year 2025, in the great province of Manitoba, that there are still thousands of Manitobans who reside on reserve who are not able to vote in all elections here in Manitoba, specifically in school board elections. And we think that's wrong. This is true today despite the fact that many children living on reserve attend school in those school divisions and are ultimately impacted by the decisions of those school boards.

Bill 16 will correct this inequity and enfranchise thousands of First Nation Manitobans, and frankly is long overdue.

We know that all Manitobans care about education, particularly the parents who have a right and a responsibility to be knowledgeable and to engage in the education of their children. So, consequently, those Manitobans care about who serves on their local school board.

We just heard many presentations tonight at committee from passionate Manitobans who are passionate about who serves on their school boards and who can stand as a trustee. Many Manitobans care about who are their trustees. Many Manitobans are motivated to run to be trustees and serve on their school boards.

And that's why Bill 16 is required, because it enables Manitobans living on reserve not only to vote in municipal school board elections and school divi-

sion elections, but also to stand as candidates in those elections, and we believe that's important.

This bill is scheduled to come into force upon royal assent, which means that First Nation Manitobans will have the opportunity to vote and stand for election in the upcoming 2026 general trustee elections. As minister responsible and as a member of this team, I can share that we are very, very excited for the 2026 election and the impact that Bill 16 will have.

So in closing, I'd like to thank the many, many Manitobans who reached out to my office, to many of the MLAs that are lucky enough to be elected to this Chamber to express their concerns about the inequity as it exists today. We are a listening government. We are prepared to take action and to take swift action to correct what is no doubt a historical injustice.

We will always stand up for and protect our democratic processes and our freedom to participate in it. We believe in the equality of all Manitobans. We are one Manitoba.

With that, I will conclude my remarks.

Thank you very much. Merci and miigwech.

**MLA Chen:** We thank the minister.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** So as we've heard tonight during a few presentations, we on this side of the Chamber—PC team—absolutely believe in a fair and public democracy, because anyone running for office, I believe, is a very noble sentiment. And putting your name on a ballot or even then having the opportunity throughout these many, many years since the wars, to have the opportunity to be able to cast a vote is—it should be considered an absolute privilege because there's many countries in this wonderful world of ours that do not have that honour and that privilege.

We know that as we've also heard today the fair and—free and fair elections are very significant and we need to make sure that we uphold our democratic rights, not only in Canada but, of course, here in Manitoba.

And, of course, when we start talking about voter turnout, whether that's people putting their names on a ballot, which I'm hoping that, you know, this legislation will help with that. We heard earlier today, we have about a 70 per cent acclaimed and vacancy rate. But we need to do better as a society and we need to encourage people to get involved.



So with that, we need to make sure that the public feels a sense of confidence in not only the process but those that are elected to serve them, whether that's at the school board level, municipal, provincial or federal level. And so I think that, you know, making sure that all people in Manitoba have the ability to cast that vote, in this instance for school board elections, is important, because I know that I've had the pleasure of serving, and the honour of serving, many communities and First Nation communities that have had their children attend public school systems outside of the First Nation communities. And I think it is important for them to be able to have an opportunity to have a voice on who is not only representing them but, of course, representing their children. And I think that's sort of the main point to all of this.

So, again, voter turnout has tended to be on the lower end, and I'm hoping—and I guess time will tell, with some other pieces of legislation that we're talking about today, but definitely with this one—time will tell whether we're seeing a larger voter turnout and also people stepping up to be part of the democratic process and putting their names on the ballot.

So thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity today again.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

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

Also, if there's agreement from the committee, the Chair will call clauses in blocks that conform to pages, with the understanding that we will stop at any particular clause or clauses when members may have comments, questions or amendments to propose.

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Clause 1 and 2—pass; clauses 3 through 5—pass; clauses 6 and 7—pass; clauses 8 through 11—pass; clauses 12 through 14—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 17—The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Nutrition Equality for  
Lasting Learning Outcomes)  
(Continued)**

**The Chairperson:** We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 17.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 17 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I do.

I want to thank the presenter that was here this evening, Mr. Kevin Rebeck, for sharing their thoughts about Bill 17, also known as Nello's Law.

Very pleased to bring this bill forward, The Public Schools Amendment Act, also known as Nello's Law. I've said this in a few different rooms and in a few different spaces, so forgive me if you've heard me say it already, but, you know, it is really the great honour and privilege of my lifetime to serve Manitobans as an MLA and certainly a humbling honour to serve as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. It is my pleasure to bring forward this bill that is so important and really transformative, enshrining the universal nutrition program into law and protecting it.

\* (20:00)

However, you know, I wish nothing more that I was not here presenting this bill. I wish that Nello were here presenting this bill. I wish that he were still the minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning. I think he was—no disrespect to anyone else at the table—I think he was the best one Manitoba has ever had for his leadership and for his vision. This was something that Nello was—and when I say this I mean the universal nutrition program—the universal nutrition program was something that Nello was passionate about for years, maybe decades.

And, again, please forgive me. I know it's been a late night, and I will try to keep my comments relatively short here. But I do want to—and we've had many opportunities to celebrate and lift up and acknowledge and remember Nello, and I thank and appreciate everyone for their recollections and the things that they've shared and remembered about Nello.

But, yes, this bill, this work, was very important to him and something that he advocated on, again, well before ever becoming the minister of Education, well before ever becoming the opposition critic, a role I know he valued very much and learned a lot during his time, but also in his role as an educator in our community.

He understood that good teachers and good curriculum and good supports and additional resources and all of that is great, but it only goes so far when kids are coming to school without the basic building blocks that they need to learn, which is a healthy breakfast and a snack and a lunch to get them through the day.

So I just want to take a moment and again thank you, everyone, for indulging me in just talking about

Nello a little bit. I might talk about him a little bit more, but I think about him so much in doing this work, and I mentioned this earlier, I think it was when I spoke to Bill 6 and I mentioned how the guiding principle behind my work is that every child matters and that's something that I learned from Nello and something that I will carry forward always—I will always carry forward as a great lesson that he taught me.

And I really do sincerely think about it every day with every decision that we make as government, is the guiding principle that every child matters, and every time I'm making a decision or talking about something I try to remind myself about Nello's important lesson, and that lesson, the guiding principle of every child matters, really centres this work.

So I would just like to thank the vision of my predecessor, Nello, and celebrate all Manitoba students who are benefitting from his vision and from the access that they have to food in school.

We're already seeing the amazing benefits of the universal nutrition program across the province. Unfortunately, at this point, we're only here anecdotally. The member, the opposition critic, Mr. Ewasko, mentioned earlier about—he mentioned some statistics about maybe a small percentage or a relatively smaller percentage of students are accessing this program.

The report that he is referencing dates back to a time before the universal nutrition program was introduced in the way that it is now with a \$30 million funding behind it. There were nutrition programs offered in schools here in Manitoba prior to the government's universal nutrition program being offered, but that was largely driven by the non-profit sector with some funding from government, surely. But it did not exist in the way that it does now, and a \$30 million annualized universal nutrition program.

So I believe that those numbers—we will see the next time that report is produced and the report after and the report after, we're going to see those numbers climb, certainly.

So right now all we really have is some anecdotal evidence, but the anecdotal evidence, as it was, I think, mentioned by some committee members here tonight, is really pouring in and is really powerful and important to reflect on.

So I've mentioned this previously, but I think it's worth noting again the Park West School Division has noted that not only are more students showing up consistently, they're showing up on time because they

know when the breakfast program starts, and they show up ready to learn.

Mystery Lake and Frontier School divisions have both seen an increase in attendance and in-class engagements since the inception of the program. Portage la Prairie School Division has seen improved attendance rates on days where buses are cancelled, which traditionally would be a low attendance day. On those days, last year compared to this year, they're seeing a 20 per cent increase, so that's fantastic.

Again, I mentioned this earlier, that this is really a transformative—this is a generational change that's happening here that was championed by Nello and implemented under his leadership. And that's why we're protecting it with Bill 17, Nello's Law, nutritional equality for lasting learning outcomes.

And I think that's really important to think about, to centre us. It's not just—it's great that it is an acronym that spells out Nello, and that's fantastic, but I think that there's also a lot to be learned from the title: nutritional equality for lasting learning outcomes.

When we talk about lasting learning outcomes—and I mentioned this earlier—again, you know, all of the teachers, all of the resources, all of the supports, all of the school funding, all of the best curriculum can only go so far when students are not showing up at the same starting line.

So if we really—the sector has been telling us for years; experts has been telling us this for years; the research has been telling us this for years: if you want to level the playing field and if you want to improve outcomes here in Manitoba, what we need first and foremost is a nutrition program. So that's what we delivered under Nello's leadership.

And just the equality that that brings. Again, unfortunately, something I heard recently, something our Premier (Mr. Kinew) said, you know, is that talent and ability is distributed equally amongst society, but resources are not. And we're not all born into the same situation, and so not every student shows up to school on any given day, again, at the same starting block.

We believe that our universal nutrition program starts to level that playing field and makes sure that no child has to learn on an empty stomach, but also that there's greater opportunity in the classroom to achieve your full potential.

So for far too long, food insecurity has been a barrier for many Manitoba children. It's prevented many students from succeeding in their studies.

We believe that children should show up to school ready to focus on learning and not worrying about their next meal.

So Nello's Law amends The Public Schools Act to make our universal school nutrition program mandatory across the province, ensures that the programs are tailored to meet specific needs of the students that they serve. And, as was mentioned earlier, unfortunately, despite all of the many and clear benefits that we know exist from feeding hungry kids in school, we do also know that members of the opposition, members of the previous PC government here in Manitoba not only did not believe in it, but they believed that it was wrong, that it was bad policy.

So, you know, the member from Lac du Bonnet once called our universal nutrition program dishonest and that sandwiches, fruit, vegetables, milk and more were not a real meal for kids. Those are the member's words from Hansard on October 3—coincidentally, was the one-year anniversary that our government won the election, so it's nice that the member reminded Manitobans why they no longer wanted a PC government.

And we heard many other PC caucus members during their time in government denounce and mock—mock—feeding hungry kids in school. That's why Nello's Law stipulates that Cabinet members will be subject to a 20 per cent cut in ministerial salary if a bill is passed to reduce or repeal the legal obligation.

**The Chairperson:** The minister's time has expired. We thank the minister.

Does the critic from the official opposition have an opening ceremony—opening statement? Sorry.

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** It's unfortunate that the minister just couldn't help herself as we are going through such a collaborative, collegial discussion today on education and with the many bills coming forward.

Well absolutely, honourable—or Madam Chairperson, we on this side of the Chamber, the PC team, absolutely know that there's too many kids going to school hungry, and we recognize the importance of good nutrition in education, and it definitely leads to success. And kids can concentrate better with their bellies are full.

It's unfortunate that the minister decides to put misinformation on the record. If she would actually take a look at what was being discussed at the time, it would be the announcement that the Premier (Mr. Kinew) sat at a classroom student's desk with this

whole great big plate full of sandwiches and fruit and vegetables and all of that.

\* (20:10)

And if the minister thinks that all students across this great province of ours are sitting down each and every day with a plateful of food like that, that's what I was calling dishonest in regard to trying to publish this as a universal nutrition program, because that's not reality out there. And it's definitely not reality when we start to break down the numbers.

And I know that math is hard, especially for the NDP government; it's always been a challenge for them. But when you start to break down the numbers of almost 220,000 students in this great province of ours, you break it down—and I don't know where the Premier is stop—is shopping for his \$13-to-\$16 salads that he's giving himself on a daily basis, but the money that they've put towards the universal nutrition program is equating to about a 70 cents per student per day.

And I don't know where, again, Premier's shopping. I think any family out there, parent, guardian, teachers, staff would find it hard-pressed to get that type of meal—snack even—for the children in this province. So I'm hoping that carrying on with the rest of today's bill discussion as we continue to pass these bills today through committee and into third reading, I'm hoping that we can get back to the collaborative, collegial chat that we're having.

And also, I do want to give a big shout-out to all those teachers, all the staff within the education world that are out there that work tirelessly day in and day out to then bring forward, you know, whatever they're supplying to the students on a day-to-day basis, whether that's snacks; whether that's meals, sandwiches, fruit. It does take an entire team to make sure that those meal programs are possible.

But it's not only the schools; it's the community volunteers and it's also the community organizations. And we do have a lot of work to do yet.

And so, you know, I'm appreciative that we're coming forward with this—with the universal nutrition program, but I don't want the minister to fool herself that this is a silver bullet. It's a definitely a good start, but I also want to remind the minister that in 2021, the former PC government created a provincial task force on poverty and education to explore the impacts of poverty on education and identify strategies to remove the barriers to learning.

When the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba started receiving funding in the early 2000s, mid-2000s, there was not an increase to them in the 11 additional years that the former NDP government was in power, and it was our government, the former PC government, that more than doubled the contribution to the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba.

And with that, as well, we knew that there was more work to be done, and that's why not only did we have real partners and real stakeholders come to the table and actually provide these task forces. And if the minister would look in her office and blow the dust off some of those reports and actually bring some of those action plans to fruition—and, matter of fact, I know that she's going to, because that's just the way it seems to be with this NDP Kinew government: taking credit for what others are either bringing forward or other ideas.

That being said, in the summer—I believe it was July of 2022, we had a education ministers conference from all across Canada in British Columbia. And at the time, Karina Gould, who was the Minister for Families and Social Development had started talking about how the federal government was going to help out provinces with a universal child nutrition program.

And so many of us, with bated breath, waited. And we waited and we were told, you know, you can't move forward on anything until the feds sort of pull the proverbial trigger on that. And that's why we had more than double the money to the Child Nutrition Council of Manitoba at the time, to try to sort of put in a little bit of a helping hand out there, because we knew that many community organizations, churches, food banks, restaurants, grocery stores, were all contributing to this cause.

And even today, the minister fails to give compliments and congratulations and thanks to those many organizations that actually take the time to still lobby and ask for donations towards children nutrition councils—or, sorry, children's nutrition programs in this great province of ours.

So I'm hoping that the minister will take this to heart and, as she continues on in her role as the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (MLA Schmidt), that the amount of patting on the back should actually go to those organizations, partners and stakeholders that are actually doing a lot of the heavy lifting out there.

So it was unfortunate at the time that Minister Gould was unable to deliver on some of those things

that were said earlier on. I'm glad to see that the—I guess the former, I guess, in-transition Trudeau Liberal government came to the table with some money. But I think, also, when the current Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister of Manitoba starts talking about education funding, the amount of funding to school divisions actually has reduced considerably under her watch.

And I'm hoping that as we continue to move forward, some of those funding levels will get back to that 88 per cent of government funding coming from government as opposed to, you know, local taxing authority, which, unfortunately, this Kinew government has put all the tax increases on the shoulders of school boards to the point of having to go and put double-digit values—percentage increases on property owners. And now is not the time for that.

We're all struggling with affordability issues all across this great province of ours, and I think now is not the time for the Education Minister, the Finance Minister and, of course, the Premier (Mr. Kinew) to go and try to lay blame on another level of government where it's actually the Kinew government that had strapped the hands of school boards.

And so I know that the minister is upset that she didn't put even more words on the record on Bill 17. But with that, Madam Chairperson, I thank you for the opportunity and—because I see, whether it's Bill 17 or other bills that we're talking about today going through the committee stage, I know that there will probably be some amendments.

And Bill 17, Nello's Law—rest in peace, my friend Nello. I know that we worked together on a few initiatives, and I did value your friendship and your collegial manner and how you held yourself in your role, both as opposition critic and is—in minister.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; clause 7—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

\* (20:20)

**Bill 18—The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Indigenous Languages of Instruction)**

**The Chairperson:** We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 18.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 18 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I do.

I'm happy to speak to Bill 18. And before I do, I would just like to address the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Ewasko). He's offered me—he loves to offer me advice and his wisdom, and so I regret I feel the need to respond to it.

I regret that he feels that my comments in my statement about Bill 17 were not collegial. The fact of the matter is, is I was speaking to a substantive part of the bill, being section 47.1.7(3), so I felt it was relevant to cite Hansard. These are factual statements that were made on the record by yourself, and those comments speak to the necessity to have section 47.1.7(3) included in the bill. So that was the reason for my comments.

The member from Lac du Bonnet then went on to talk about the Premier's (Mr. Kinew) salads and all sorts of very, you know—comments that had nothing at all to do with Bill 17 and were, in fact, quite unbecoming. So if I could offer him a piece of advice in the same way that he likes to offer me advice, I would encourage him to keep his comments to the relevance of the bill before us.

So having that being said, I would like to speak to Bill 18; and our government, led by the vision and the example of our incredible Premier is taking important steps to revitalize Indigenous languages in Manitoba, and Bill 18 is an important step in that direction. It is important to note that it is impossible to talk about Indigenous language revitalization in Manitoba without addressing the real harms of colonization and residential schools, notably, that a generation of speakers were banned and were punished for speaking their own languages at school. And that was wrong.

I know everyone in this room can agree that we have an opportunity, as legislators and as Manitobans, to move forward in a good way by ensuring that Indigenous language immersion can be taught in Manitoba's schools, a place where those languages were once banned. As it exists today, currently only French and English may be taught as a language of primary instruction. Indigenous language instruction

can only take place for less than 50 per cent of the day in our province.

Through Bill 18, our government seeks to change this by allowing for Indigenous language immersion programming. I want to note how symbolic Bill 18 is; the importance of Indigenous languages being taught in schools—the very environment where they were once taken away—is not lost on our government. It also recognizes and centres the historical significance of the first languages spoken on these lands. Those languages were not French or English. Do not get me wrong; the English and French language are foundational languages in our province and across our country. But they were not the first.

So teaching Indigenous languages in schools creates the opportunity to ensure Indigenous languages, lessons and traditions are passed on to future generations. As we all know, the ability to learn and speak one's own language has a deep tie to our culture, our understanding, our ways of being and our ways of knowing the world. Through Bill 18, we are responding to the TRC's Call to Action No. 14, recognizing the importance of Indigenous languages and the need for those languages to be protected, but also to be revitalized.

So Bill 18 is an important act of reconciliation in the education sector. I think myself, like many folks, we think and we reflect on the words of the Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair—the late Honourable Justice Murray Sinclair who was the chair of the TRC. We reflect on that in our work as legislators. Certainly, when it comes to education, you know, that education is what got us into this mess, but that education is the key to getting us out of it.

Bill 18 puts those very insightful words into action. Bill 18 is an important piece of legislation on this journey that we are walking together as Manitobans, and as minister responsible, I know that my government colleagues agree we will continue this important work in the education sector and, in fact, across government.

Bill 18 empowers school boards to authorize immersion programs in Cree, Dakota, Dene, Inuktitut, Michif, Ojibwe and Ojibwe-Cree. We'd like to thank all of the many community advocates and teachers who have 'adocated' for enhanced Indigenous-language programming and our government is proud to introduce this bill and move forward in our commitment to Indigenous language revitalization in Manitoba.

I would like to recognize and, again, thank all of the elders and the knowledge keepers, all of the many educators, administrators and school staff who have helped inform Bill 18, but are also going to help us move forward in bringing Bill 18 to life.

Your heart-work, your knowledge, your expertise in the area of language, teaching, pedagogies and leadership in this area is recognized and very valued by our government. Thank you very much. We look forward to working in collaboration with you on language immersion projects in the years ahead.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to put some words on the record here tonight in regards of Bill 18. I think that this committee is an important step in this process. And I, in advance, I thank the member opposite for his words on this piece of legislation.

I very briefly want to shout out and thank and acknowledge the work of our Assistant Deputy Minister in Indigenous Excellence, Jackie Connell, and all of the incredible work that she's done on bringing Bill 18 to life, and I know that she'll have much work in seeing it come to fruition, to thank her and her team. And again, the many Manitobans that contributed to this work.

I will conclude my remarks there. Thank you very much.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the minister and the reminder that we need to keep comments relevant to the bill before us and to not speak about the bill that has been dealt with by the committee.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I do.

Thank you for your sage advice on moving forward on having a discussion and bringing forward a few words on this bill.

I was just looking at the time clock there, Madam Chairperson. But I do appreciate the Education Minister, even though I'm sensing a tad bit of sarcasm in her voice. But again, advice—I've always appreciated advice no matter who the advice came from. And because advice usually is free, it's one of those things where someone can either take it or leave it and I know that the Education Minister has sort of, you know, stated where she wants to land on that.

But Bill 18: as we all know, there's over 70 distinct Indigenous languages that are currently spoken by

First Nations people, Métis, Inuit, all in Canada. And we're proud to stand with the First Nations, Indigenous peoples, again, on advancing truth and reconciliation.

And the minister knows—she won't necessarily give credit for it, but the minister knows that it was the previous PC government that brought forward Mamàhtawisiwin which is a policy as a holistic approach to Indigenous excellence in education, helping Manitoba educators to incorporate Indigenous languages, cultures and identities into their teaching and practices.

The minister will not share that with the public. So that's why we have to continuously remind people that this work had started a while ago. This is also not work that just started when the policy came out. It took many years of consultations, collaboration with education partners and stakeholders all across this great province of ours, from the north, east, south and west.

We know that Manitoba is a rich and diverse multicultural society with strong heritage and languages spoken by individuals and families from many, many different cultures and backgrounds, of course.

We know that establishing more Indigenous language programs in schools was a—was something to increase and part of the questions that I had asked on Bill 18 was, you know, what are we looking at for numbers, in regards to educators?

\* (20:30)

And then, I know that I had the privilege and the honour of working with some incredible individuals within the Department of Education that had seen the necessity and the need for more French language instructors and teachers, and so we had groups of individuals have a partnership and had those conversations with educators in France as well on—if we could get some form of a collaborative approach on training the various educators from both countries and then maybe having a bit of an exchange program.

So I thought that was—that is going to be one of those trees that were planted under the former PC government that now the Education Minister will get one of those little stools out and pluck the little low-hanging fruit off the trees and call it her own fruit.

But, again, something that definitely needed to have happened—needed to happen decades ago because, of course, we know that there's people that are retiring, the baby boomers.

And so, again, you know, I'm hoping that in the future when this education and early learning—

childhood learning minister does that announcement—or if it's not her, it's another Education minister—is privileged to get the rewards from those trees that were planted for those individuals, hopefully she'll just give a little bit of a shout-out or a credit.

And so that's part of making sure that not only in the K-to-12 system are we working on Indigenous language and trying to preserve not only the language but the cultures, but it's also to make sure that the educators are there because we know that in some communities—in most communities, in all communities—the ones to best support their communities is that home-grown talent.

And I think that's a big thing that, you know, again, just a small piece of advice—minister can take it or leave it—but definitely work with those communities and make sure that the—some of the barriers are reduced so that individuals who want to become educators, teachers, in whichever language they're choosing from our First Nation communities, our Indigenous communities, making sure that they have those opportunities to become those teachers who will then come back into their home communities and teach.

As I mentioned earlier, Mamāhtawisiwin was the policy that we brought forward. It's nice to know that the now Education and Early Childhood Learning Minister is going to take that policy and then move forward into early childhood learning with the same policy and then, again, much like anything in education, is to then take those ideas and hopefully strengthen them.

We know that in—as part of the Manitoba Museum's Nametwaawin, the land and language project, our previous government had distributed nearly 3,000 books, which were bilingual, English and Anishnaabe, to 37 school divisions in 71 First Nation schools. Topics covered by the books included the Ojibwe language.

So, again, there were many great things happening, and we see, as we continue to move on, I think this is a great initiative, definitely something very important to, again, strengthen culture, strengthen language, and I think many of our heritage Manitobans who celebrate a culture or their own heritage, I think, can definitely work towards strengthening their language.

One thing that I was a little disappointed in that I'd heard from this Education Minister, which was cancelled not that long ago, was the teacher idea fund. We saw when we were in government, to reach out to the grassroots, the front-line educators, the teachers,

to come up with ideas and then to be able to move forward with those ideas and to fund those ideas. Many of the front-line educators bolstered Indigenous education via the teachers idea fund, and it's unfortunate the NDP government had completely scrapped that idea. No doubt what's going to happen is they're going to take that idea and revisit it and call it something else and, again, pat themselves on the back.

So I think we, on this side of the House, Madam Chairperson, is looking forward to passing Bill 18 to third reading. And with those few words on the record, again, Madam Chairperson, I thank you for the opportunity.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

#### **Bill 19—The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools)**

**The Chairperson:** We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 19.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 19 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** I do.

I am very pleased to speak to Bill 19, The Public Schools Amendment Act, for safe schools.

The safety and protection of students and children in our province is certainly my No. 1 priority as minister. It is a No. 1 priority of our government. And that's why we've introduced Bill 19, which will amend The Public Schools Act to enshrine into legislation requirements for all school division staff and volunteers to complete approved sexual abuse prevention programs. This legislation will also require that all coaches and sport volunteers complete approved sport-focused abuse prevention programs. School divisions will need to ensure training is renewed at least once every four years.

As mentioned, student safety is a top priority for myself and our government and certainly as a parent. And I know, for all parents that are here tonight and all parents across Manitoba, the safety and well-being of our children is paramount. Our government has heard from Manitobans that they want their government to

take action to protect children and families, and our government is delivering on that.

Bill 19 will also require school divisions and districts to develop policies to identify appropriate and inappropriate interactions between students and staff, on and off school property. This will include supportive processes for students and their families to report inappropriate or concerning interactions that may have taken place.

We have heard from survivors and advocates that raising awareness, reporting concerning interactions and supports for students and their families are essential. And I just want to quickly speak to those victims, those survivors, those advocates, and thank them very much for their work, and know that your experiences are deeply regrettable, that as minister responsible that we apologize, that those things—that you had to endure those things in schools, and that we will take every step, including introducing Bill 19 and many other steps that we're taking, to ensure that situations like that do not happen again here in Manitoba.

This legislation will require that these policies are actively communicated and shared with families across our province. In every school across the province, principals must inform students and families of all these policies at the beginning of every school year. This mandatory annual communication will ensure that children and families have the resources and supports they need if any issue arises.

I would like to also note that this bill complements Bill 21, which was introduced by the Minister of Sport, Culture, Heritage and Tourism (MLA Kennedy), which also aims to strengthen the preventative training and abuse reporting processes so that our young athletes are protected wherever they might engage in sport, whether that's in or outside of the school system. Together, these two bills will enhance the protections for Manitoba children and families by creating training, policies and communication requirements for all individuals coaching and mentoring our children in sport and those who are supporting youth in other volunteer capacities.

We are continuing to work across government to ensure that our legislation, our policies and our supports are meeting the need of families, and we'll continue to do that good work on behalf of Manitoba children, youth and their families.

\* (20:40)

I know for all of us as legislators and as MLAs on both side of the House—being educators, having been coaches, volunteers—that we can all agree that Bill 19 is an important piece of legislation. So, again, thank you to everyone that has guided this work, and has informed this work. We look forward to this bill receiving unanimous support in the House, once it comes to a vote, in the name of protecting children.

Thank you very much. Merci. Miigwech.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the minister.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** So thank you to the minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation, making sure that The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe Schools), Bill 19.

Well, I'm not going to take up the full 10 minutes, maybe close, on talking about a lot of the things that had been put in place, and it's going to be interesting when we did have the line of questioning, Q & A, for bills, because that's part of the democratic process here in Manitoba; is where, you know, a sponsor, a minister, an MLA brings forward a piece of legislation and it goes through first reading, second reading, committee and, of course, third reading.

And when it comes forward for second reading, you get a chance to ask questions and hopefully get some answers. And so on this part, for this bill, Bill 19, I think there were a few answers, which was good, but I think, again, a lot of patting on the back, again, for a lot of good work by many different Manitobans all across this province of ours.

And so we know that every student in Manitoba deserves to feel safe and respected in school and in, of course, their community. And providing a safe and caring school environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours is a top priority for all Manitoba school divisions.

And as the minister had mentioned, I do strongly believe that, on all sides of the Chamber, that is definitely a goal for everyone as well, whether you're a minister, an MLA, department staff, anyone in government or in the education world. I really strongly feel that the majority of people are good people and that they want that to happen. But we do know things happen, and there are some people that are not all that great out there.



And so this is Bill 19, again, is talking about safe schools and really focuses on sports and there were some questions in the question-and-answer time when I didn't feel that we fully got the answers on how we're going to move forward. But I know that, being a parent myself, and a coach and a teacher, and we're always surrounded by individuals who take the time to volunteer within our—not only our school communities but in our communities in Manitoba, because, of course, Manitoba's a relatively small province and there's always a 16th degree of separation.

And so we want to make sure that that sport is safe, no matter—safe and accessible, no matter of the socio-economic background of the students or the children and the families, parents or guardians. And again, doesn't matter of 'ethnicity' or even culture or ability.

So we want to make sure that everyone is free of abuse, harassment and discrimination, and so that's why we, former PC government, again, partnered and worked with and collaborated with the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the Respect Group, Mr. Sheldon Kennedy and his group. We worked on respect in schools, respect in sport. Again, you know, now the defunct teacher idea fund; a lot of great ideas came from that grassroots front line that enabled us to move forward with a lot of those ideas.

Worked quite closely with some of my colleagues, other MLAs, again, of all party stripes. The minister mentioned the former Education and Early Childhood minister, the former MLA for Transcona, Nello Altomare. Again, we had many conversations in regards to this topic when he was Education critic and then, of course, again when he was the minister.

So with this I look forward, Madam Chairperson, to seeing this bill move forward to third reading. I would like to see this be a—even though this is going to be in legislation, I would like to see this bill be one of those living, breathing documents because we know that some of the things that the minister has put in the bill—and I mentioned it in second reading, life and society is changing rapidly and dramatically, and we have to be able to pivot and be adaptable to different situations that happen in our society.

And, so with that, honourable Madam Chairperson, I look forward to seeing this bill pass through committee into third reading.

**The Chairperson:** I thank the member.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

### **Bill 20—The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act**

**The Chairperson:** We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 20.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 20 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Okay.

**MLA Schmidt:** I'm pleased to present Bill 20, The Community Child Care Standards Amendment and Education Administration Amendment Act.

So Bill 20 will amend those acts to require the establishment of a First Nations, Inuit and Métis policy framework for both the K-to-12 and the early learning and child-care sectors. This will support positive outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis children.

Our government is committed to continuing on the path of truth and reconciliation, and that's why we've introduced these amendments to support Indigenous children by introducing Indigenous perspectives in training, education and child care. And we know that this bill will not only benefit Indigenous children, but will benefit all children and ultimately all of us that are lucky enough to live here in Manitoba moving forward.

So Bill 20 will strengthen the department's existing Education policy framework, Mamāhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With, which was developed through broad consultation with Indigenous communities and stakeholders. I have a feeling that the member from Lac du Bonnet is going to tell us a little bit about that, so I will leave my comments on Mamāhtawisiwin there.

Bill 20 will also ensure that the framework stays updated by the minister responsible. Our government recognizes the importance of First Nations, Inuit and Métis policy frameworks in Education, which is why we'll be extending that framework and those initiatives into the early learning and child-care sector. It is important for all Manitobans to learn about

Indigenous culture and the history, the truth of our province and our country, no matter how young you are, and we believe that this learning should begin as soon as possible.

This bill will ensure that educational resources are accessible to all Manitobans and are regularly reviewed to support a positive learning experience for both students and educators throughout our beautiful province. Our government is very proud to continue collaborating with First Nations, Métis and Inuit leadership in Manitoba to support the vitality of Indigenous languages and cultures and teachings for future generations, while also helping the next generation of Manitoba children understand the history and the truth of our province and our country.

With that, I will leave my comments there.

Thank you very much. Merci. Miigwech.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the minister.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Okay. I appreciate the minister bringing forward this important piece of legislation.

\* (20:50)

I'm not quite sure if Bill 20 necessarily needed to come forward, but that being said, I think, again, it's a great policy initiative to make sure that the hard work of so many great education partners and stakeholders across this province, who had come together at the culmination of Mamàhtawisiwin, that great policy—and as the minister, you know, started saying, and then corrected herself—which was great, I'm glad to hear that—that policy framework is not just for Indigenous students. Primarily, it is to make sure that language and culture and heritage is preserved and taught.

But it's also one of those things where I had the pleasure of working with some incredible elders, way back when, even before I received my teaching degree and worked with them and then on various different policy frameworks as we continued moving on within the education world. And that—I believe it was early 2000 when we started talking about the fact that not enough people know many things in regards to Indigenous cultures and languages, and of course, the heritage.

And so the one terminology that I repeat quite often, and which isn't—I'm not sure in committee, can I? Yes, I guess I can—which isn't an Ewaskoism; it's a

terminology that I've borrowed from an elder and it basically is, you don't know what you don't know. And I think it's very important to have that mentality when you're—not only in the education world, I think every day in life when you just don't quite—you can't quite honestly say that you know everything about a certain matter or topic, or whatever else.

But what you do have to know is you do have to know and make those lifelong contacts and connections with people that are, if they're not experts, they're pretty darn close to experts in certain fields. And that's where I was thrilled to have the opportunity to work with some many great people when we did bring forward that policy framework—Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With.

But, again, that happened in 2022. I mean, we talk about the years prior to building towards that and I think that was very important and it's nice to see that we're going forward with the framework and creating framework and policy to extend that to early childhood education. I know that this is a great step, a great thing moving forward.

Again, when we start talking about the holes in the system in regards to the amount of teachers, whether that's, you know, English, French, soon to be various different Indigenous languages, as well, and we start to look at taking those policy ideas, concepts into early childhood education, you have to make sure that you have not only the bricks and mortar and have the spaces for the children, which unfortunately, this Education Minister and her government had kiboshed a lot of those spaces.

But in addition to those spaces, you actually need the teachers, the early childhood educators to be part of that. And I know that in this past budget, there really wasn't much in the budget in regards to working with the Manitoba Child Care Association on increasing—recruiting more of those early childhood educators. And also giving those early childhood educators the reason to stay in the profession, to retain them.

I know that we had much more work to do as far as the former PC government, but we did take the average salaries quite a ways up the mountain to try to bring it to a more of a wage where somebody would want to stick it out in the profession.

And I think a lot of people, no matter of their wage, stuck it out in the profession anyways because they know that each and every day they woke up and made a difference in a child's life.

That being said, we had to make sure that it was a wage that would be attractive for new people—new professionals to come into the profession, get educated and stay in the profession, because, again, Manitoba works because child—Manitoba Child Care works, and that's not—that's another non-Ewaskoism; that's an actual Jodie-Kehlimism. So we'll just put that out there.

I guess, moving forward, honourable Madam Chairperson, thank you for the opportunity on—put a few words on the record on Bill 20. I look forward to seeing this bill go through committee, into third reading and then passing.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; clause 6—pass; clause 7—pass; clause 8—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 39—The Public Schools Amendment Act  
(Campaign Financing for School Trustees)**  
*(Continued)*

**The Chairperson:** We will now proceed with clause by clause of Bill 39.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 39 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Tracy Schmidt (Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning):** It is my pleasure to put a few words on the record in regards to Bill 39 and the committee process that we had tonight. I think—it's getting late, so I think they've all left.

But in their absence, I would still like to say a sincere thank-you to the many presenters that took time out of their busy schedules to come down tonight and put words on the record about Bill 39. I don't think I'm misspeaking in saying that the speakers were supportive of Bill 39. There were certainly some advice and some feedback and some recommendations; and as a listening government, we are happy to take in that feedback and to consider it.

The—many of the presenters just spoke with so much passion and were very inspiring. I'm certainly feeling very inspired, and it's one of my great privileges. I reflect on this often in the role that we are

so lucky to have as MLAs and as elected officials. It is such a great privilege.

The greatest privilege, I would argue, of this job is the opportunity to meet with Manitobans and have them come to you and, whether you're knocking on their door, whether you're meeting with them in your constituency office, whether you're discussing a bill at committee, it is such a privilege, a really humbling privilege, to have the opportunity to meet with Manitobans and connect on them on the issues that they are passionate about and that have meaning for them.

So I very much value and appreciate all the words that were put on the record tonight from all the presenters.

I do have one matter to correct, and I wish he were still here: Mr. Simms, because I can't let him get away with this. As someone who has spent her whole life living in the north side of the city, it is not Boogie's restaurant; it is, in fact, Boogie's Diner. I've had the pleasure of being a patron of Boogie's Diner many times, and so I will be sure the next time I meet with Mr. Simms to correct the record so that the folks in the North End and the north side of the city feel represented.

So I'm—our government cares about investing in our communities. We care about being engaged in our children's educational experience, and we heard from many of the presenters here tonight about that importance that we all—the value that we all see in playing a role and being engaged in our children's educational experience. And that's why our government is introducing Bill 39.

\* (21:00)

School trustee elections are so important because they give Manitobans a say in the education of children in their communities. And, as we're all aware, campaign financing is a key factor in many elections, including school board elections. That's why it's important for us to have rules that promote fairness and prevent outside interference. And this is very much key in any democratic process.

Currently, there is nothing in either The Public Schools Act or The Municipal Councils and School Boards and Elections Act, or in any act, in fact, in Manitoba, that sets out rules regarding school board election financing, which leaves elections vulnerable to outside influence and individual donors having significant impacts on elections.

Our government understands that this is not right and can certainly perpetuate inequities in getting Manitobans elected to school boards. Bill 39 is intended to promote equity, transparency and accountability in election of school board trustees. This bill will align Manitoba with other jurisdictions across our great country by amending The Public Schools Act to establish campaign financing rules for school board trustee candidates.

An important part of this process will be ensuring that we have clear definitions of appropriate campaign expenses and the campaign period. Each candidate will have to register before soliciting or accepting contributions. I also want to note the importance of how this bill will make it so that only individuals who normally reside in Manitoba may make contributions to a candidate.

And I just want to highlight this point because I'm not sure if maybe I misheard, but I believe there was some representation tonight at committee that perhaps, other jurisdictions prohibit, you know, non-resident donors and that Manitoba is not. I just wanted to make clear that Bill 39 also prohibits donations from residents outside of Manitoba. So just for clarity, for the committee.

This change protects our local elections and ensures the voices that have influence are from people who reside in our province. We think that's very important. The bill also limits financial contributions to a maximum of \$1,500 and candidates will be able to contribute up to \$7,500 to their own campaign and, however, will be prohibited from incurring a deficit.

So I wanted to put a few more words on the record about the \$7,500 limit, which we heard from a few committee members that had different opinions about what that limit should be. And I think it's important to, again, recognize that currently in Manitoba, absent Bill 39, there are absolutely no individual contribution limits for trustee candidates. So we think that this is a very important step.

And when it comes to the dollar amount, again, we are a listening government. We are here to take in feedback. But I think it's also very important to note that there is no line of sight on what an average trustee campaign would cost. We are really, right now, relying on anecdotal evidence. Some of the presenters that came here tonight used numbers that—they put forward numbers about how much it costs to run a trustee campaign. They used the numbers of about \$3,000 to \$5,000. And, respectfully, you know, that is not data that we can rely on.

From some of our anecdotal conversations that we've had with school trustees in developing Bill 39, we've heard numbers more in the range of—that these campaigns cost anywhere from \$5,000 to \$12,000 or upwards of \$15,000.

So, respectfully to the presenters, I think that until Manitoba has a great line of sight into how these campaign expenses are going to roll out that, again, we need a greater line of sight to land on what might be the most appropriate number, based on the information that we have before us. Based on the consultations and the research that our department has done, we believe that \$7,500 is an appropriate starting place, shall we call it.

We want to ensure that elections are accessible, equitable and fair for all Manitobans across the province. Bill 39 takes another step in that direction. This bill also mentions that failure to comply with these basic election financing requirements will be considered a provincial offence.

Our government believes in elections that promote fairness, transparency and accountability. We want to ensure that school boards reflect the needs of Manitobans across our province, and we want to ensure that boards have the tools necessary and the regulations necessary to achieve that outcome.

I want to express my sincere hope and our government's sincere hope and intention that Bill 39 will really promote greater equity on our school boards by encouraging folks of diverse backgrounds to engage in the political process and have a seat at the decision-making table for our school divisions.

And, again, I will take a moment—we had some presenters that did it quite eloquently, but I would encourage any Manitoban who is interested and who takes an interest in their local school division in having a greater voice on their local school board to consider putting their name on a ballot.

We know, all of us around this table as elected officials, know the sacrifice and the dedication and the courage that it takes to put your name on a ballot, and we would encourage Manitobans to do so, and we think Bill 39 is a great step that provides, finally, some clarity and some guidance for folks looking to run for a trustee position, and exactly what their campaign might look like and how they might fund it.

So—apologies, looking back at my notes. Yes, I would like to again thank all the speakers that presented tonight, all the many people that went into informing this important work. As one of the presenters

mentioned, this has been a vacuum, you could call it, in Manitoba, for a great number of years. Previous governments have failed to fill in that vacuum. Our government is very proud to finally put forward Bill 39, and to show that we're listening to the sector; we're listening to the experts; and that we are committed to protecting our democracy and our freedoms here in Manitoba.

And I want to take a moment to correct something that the member from Lac du Bonnet said, and I really don't do—I do this with all due respect. Earlier, the member from Lac du Bonnet said that when it comes to voting, that it's really such a privilege. I would correct him respectfully that I don't believe it's a privilege; I believe it's our right. It is a great privilege, and I don't think that he meant that it wasn't a right. But I just wanted to put on the record that participating in democracy in Manitoba here is a right and our government believes in that—

**The Chairperson:** The minister's time has expired. We thank the minister.

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

**Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I do.

I thank the minister for bringing forward Bill 39, and I'd also—I too, on behalf of the PC team, would like to thank presenters who came forward today and brought forward their thoughts and opinions. And some of them left their notes and suggestions for some amendments to the bill, and with that, I mean, I just want to start off by saying that again, we, on this side of the Chamber, absolutely believe in free and fair election process here in Manitoba, and making sure that that is central to a healthy democracy.

And so when we start taking a look at many of the amendments brought forward by the presenters, and I more than appreciate the presenters, you know, talking about their time of collaborating and consulting with this Education minister as early and as late as just this morning. So that was sort of interesting.

And so I take a look at some of the amendments, and as I shared on the record before, again with the seven presenters that came—made their way to practice their democratic right to come to the Legislature and bring forward their suggestions. I want to thank them again for bringing forward these amendments.

When we take a look at the various different contribution limits and that, I think what has happened,

and from what I'm sort of hearing from the presenters and also from the Education minister is that she's looking for something—again, low-hanging fruit—that she can try to show to Manitobans that she is listening to Manitobans.

And so I want to be the one to say it on the record, yet again today, in regards to Bill 39: I can see that the—one of the things that she's going to do an amendment on is that candidate contribution limit because, provincially, we have contribution limits. And so if you want to contribute to the provincial election, one individual can give \$6,000.

\* (21:10)

Now, I appreciate the minister putting in a number of \$7,500 contribution limit, but I don't quite understand why she would put that number in there. I mean, absolutely, this could not be the Wild West that it has been forever in decades and decades and decades, for sure not. But when asked about, you know, having those conversations with Manitoba School Boards Association and that, I wasn't quite getting the answers that I was looking for, or any answers when we were doing the Q & A time.

But, that being said, I can see, to those presenters probably that went home and are finishing watching this committee stage, you know, from their luxury at home, I can see that potentially being an amendment that this minister will bring forward to show that she's listening even to some of those of you that actually met with her just this morning, potentially for the first time.

I do see some other amendments brought forward by—that seem to be consistent with some of the presenters, and I know as the opposition we're going to be taking a look at some of those and see, you know, see what the Education Minister is open to in potentially strengthening this bill. Because, at the end of the day, we all want to make sure that, again, our election process is fair and we want to encourage more people to be able to participate, because as we've heard in—from multiple presenters, plus we just know this to be fact—that 70 per cent of trustee board positions are either won by acclamation or remain vacant.

And so I'm hoping that, somehow, that this starts to open up the fact that people will want to run with confidence in the upcoming school elections, I guess, in 2026. And we know that, over time, what we've seen at the school board municipal, provincial and federal levels, the threats to that democracy, making

sure that there's not that third party interference. That I'm not quite seeing in this bill.

Yes, out-of-province donations into the province to back a certain candidate or not—absolutely. You know, that shouldn't be allowed, which, this bill takes care of that. But I see there's potentially other things that can happen, and I had approached or had asked a few of the presenters earlier on, and they couldn't quite give me an answer either, and I know that the minister had a few words and things to share with the presenters that she didn't necessarily see eye to eye with either.

But I guess, as we move along and see Bill 39 move from committee stage to third reading, I guess we'll see if there's any potential amendments being brought forward from this minister or we're going to be seeing, sort of, the next election sort of play out and get some stats from that. Yes, it seems that's the angle that the minister is wanting to go with this.

But I do think that the amendment to the contribution limit will probably be changed before this bill does receive royal assent.

So, with that, honourable Madam Chairperson, thank you for allowing me to put a few words on the record on Bill 39. I look forward to seeing this go to third reading.

**The Chairperson:** We thank the member.

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

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clause 5—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The hour being 9:15, what is the will of the committee?

**An Honourable Member:** Rise.

**The Chairperson:** Committee rise.

Thank you, everyone. Good night.

**COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 9:15 p.m.**

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