



**Third Session – Forty-Third Legislature**  
of the  
**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**  
**Standing Committee**  
on  
**Legislative Affairs**

*Chairperson*  
*Shannon Corbett*  
*Constituency of Transcona*



**Vol. LXXX No. 8 - 6 p.m., Tuesday, May 12, 2026**

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Forty-Third Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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	Ind.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
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
ROBBINS, Colleen	Spruce Woods	PC
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>	The Pas-Kameesak	

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

**Tuesday, May 12, 2026**

**TIME – 6 p.m.**

**LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**CHAIRPERSON – MLA Shannon Corbett  
(Transcona)**

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

**ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4**

*Members of the committee present:*

*Hon. Min. Cable, Hon. Min. Marcelino*

*MLAs Chen, Corbett, Messrs. Guenter, Narth*

**APPEARING:**

*Hon. Ron Kostyshyn, Minister of Agriculture*

**PUBLIC PRESENTERS:**

*Bill 11 – The Employment Standards Code  
Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences)*

*Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour  
Kyle Ross, Manitoba Government and General  
Employees' Union  
Nichelle Desilets, Doctors Manitoba*

*Bill 29 – The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act*

*Michelle Pereira, University of Winnipeg  
David Grant, private citizen  
Michael Shaw, private citizen  
Peter Miller, University of Winnipeg Faculty  
Association  
Cannan Daree, University of Winnipeg Students'  
Association  
Alan Koshy, private citizen  
Jino Distasio, private citizen  
Erik Thomson, University of Manitoba Faculty  
Association*

*Bill 19 – The Animal Care Amendment Act*

*Kaitlyn Mitchell, Animal Justice  
Krista Boryskavich, Winnipeg Humane Society  
Jill Verwey, Keystone Agricultural Producers  
Debra Vandekerkhove, Manitoba Animal Alliance*

*Bill 45 – The Yellowquill University College Act  
and Amendments to The Advanced Education  
Administration Act*

*Bobbi Pompana, private citizen*

*Bruce Unfried, private citizen*

*Doreen Stranger, Yellowquill University College*

**WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:**

*Bill 11 – The Employment Standards Code  
Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences)*

*Cheryl Smukowich, Manitoba School Boards  
Association*

*Bill 19 – The Animal Care Amendment Act*

*Michelle Costantini, private citizen*

*Nicole Jutras-Scott, private citizen*

*Zoe Gourdie, private citizen*

*Danae Tonge, private citizen*

*Carson Callum, Manitoba Beef Producers*

*Tamara Bodi, private citizen*

*Christie Ratcliffe, Manitoba Animal Save*

*Bill 29 – The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act*

*Tanis Ostermann, private citizen*

*Chantal Fiola, private citizen*

*Mark Ruml, private citizen*

*Dawnis Kennedy, private citizen*

*Julie Chamberlain, private citizen*

*Cathy Mattes, private citizen*

*Bill 45 – The Yellowquill University College Act  
and Amendments to The Advanced Education  
Administration Act*

*Sharon Desmarais, Sandy Bay Child and Family  
Services*

*Annabelle Cameron, private citizen*

*Courtney Penner, private citizen*

*Jeffrey Edwards, private citizen*

*Adam Hopkins, First Nations Technical Institute*

*Rebecca Jamieson, Six Nations Polytechnic*

*Shirlene Asham, Southern First Nations Network  
of Care*

**MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:**

*Bill 11 – The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences)*

*Bill 19 – The Animal Care Amendment Act*

*Bill 29 – The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act*

*Bill 35 – The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act*

*Bill 45 – The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act*

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**Clerk Assistant (Ms. Melanie Ching):** Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs please come to order.

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

Are there any nominations?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I nominate MLA Corbett as Chair.

**Clerk Assistant:** MLA Corbett has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Corbett, will you please take the Chair.

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

Are there any nominations?

**MLA Cable:** I nominate MLA Chen.

**The Chairperson:** MLA Chen has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no other nominations, MLA Chen is elected Vice-Chair.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bills: Bill 11, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences); Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act; Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act; Bill 35, The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act; Bill 45, the Yellowquill university act and amendments to the advanced education administration act.

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public

presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill, except by unanimous consent of the committee.

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

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in a committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members.

Questions shall not exceed 45 seconds in length, with no time limit for answers. Questions may be addressed to presenters in the following rotation: first, the minister sponsoring the bill or another member of 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 the 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 someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I have to say the person's name first. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Written submissions from the following persons have been received and distributed to committee members:

Cheryl Smukowich, Manitoba School Boards Association, on Bill 11; Michelle Constantini [*phonetic*], private citizen, on Bill 19; Nicole Jutras-Scott, private citizen, on Bill 19; Zoe Gourdie, private citizen, on Bill 19; Danae Tonge, private citizen, on Bill 19; Carson Callum, Manitoba Beef Producers, on Bill 19; Tamara Bodi, private citizen, on Bill 19; Christie Ratcliffe, Manitoba Animal Save, on Bill 19.

Tanist [*phonetic*] Ostermann, private citizen, on Bill 29; Chantal Fiola, private citizen, on Bill 29; Mark Ruml, private citizen, on Bill 29; Dawnis Kennedy, private citizen, on Bill 29; Julie Chamberman [*phonetic*]—Chamberlain, private citizen, on Bill 29.

Sharon Desmarais, Sandy Bay Child and Family Services, on Bill 45; Annabelle Cameron, private citizen, on Bill 45; Courtney Penner, private citizen, on bill 20–45; Jeffrey Edwards, private citizen, on Bill 45; Adam Hopkins, First Nations Technical Institute, on Bill 45; Rebecca Jamieson, Six Nations Polytechnic, on Bill 45; Shirlene Asham, Southern First Nations Network of Care, on Bill 45.

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

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

**An Honourable Member:** Out-of-town presenters first.

**The Chairperson:** Recognize out-of-town first?

Oh, sorry.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Out-of-town guests be recognized first, please.

**The Chairperson:** Okay, out-of-town guests—[*interjection*]—out-of-town in person or out-of-town virtual?

**An Honourable Member:** In person, for sure.

**The Chairperson:** Out-of-town in person. Thank you for your patience. We will now proceed with public presentations.

I—this one first? I will now call on Nichelle—Dr. Nichelle Desilets—

**Clerk Assistant:** I believe they are going to be presenting virtually.

**The Chairperson:** —from Doctors Manitoba.

**Clerk Assistant:** So they are virtual.

**The Chairperson:** Oh, okay.

### **Bill 11—The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences)**

**The Chairperson:** Okay, we have Kevin Rebeck from the Manitoba Federation of Labour.

Okay, Mr. Rebeck, please proceed with your presentation.

**Kevin Rebeck (Manitoba Federation of Labour):** I'm Kevin Rebeck, president for the Manitoba Federation of Labour. The MFL is Manitoba's central labour body, made up of more than 30 affiliated unions representing the interests of more than 130,000 unionized workers from every sector and every region in our province: in the public, private sectors and the building trades.

The MFL works to promote good jobs, fairness in the workplace and social and economic justice for all. I'm glad to be here today to support this bill, which follows the advice given to the minister from the Labour Management Review Committee, or LMRC.

The LMRC is made up of business and labour representatives and strives to provide consensus advice to government on employment standards and The Labour Relations Act changes. This bill follows the advice of Doctors Manitoba, who calculated that over 600,000 sick notes are requested annually in Manitoba, with each note taking three to four minutes to write. This adds up to over 36,000 hours of physician time in just writing sick notes.

Sick notes are not an effective way to manage sick leaves in a workplace and are of little practical value. Requiring a worker to see a doctor when they're infectious can increase the worker's exposure to other illnesses and is bad for public health.

Many short-term illnesses such as migraines, headaches or stomach issues do not have objective verification methods. By the time an employee visits a doctor, they are often recovering or symptom-free, making the requirement largely administrative rather than medical.

Almost every other province has taken steps to put restrictions on when employers can request an employee to get a sick note, and we're glad that Manitoba is implementing restrictions to curb this wasteful practice. Changing the rules to limit when a sick note for short-term illness can be asked for is good for everyone.

\* (18:10)

From a worker perspective, this means workers can rest and recover rather than drag themselves into a doctor's office when they're infectious—pardon—weak. It means they don't have to go through the hassles of finding time to go to a doctor's office for an illness that doesn't warrant a visit. Workers are better able to see a doctor when necessary if the doctors aren't busy wasting time writing sick notes.

It's good for employers to shift to a better attendance management system that doesn't rely on a verification system that doesn't verify anything medical. It means workers can be trusted to stay home when they're ill and be more productive by not coming in to avoid the hassle of getting a sick note and infecting others.

For doctors, it means less time wasted on writing non-medical-informed notes, that are really just repeating what a patient tells them, and more time to help Manitobans who need medical attention.

I want to commend Doctors Manitoba for working with employers and labour on these recommendations and for their work on a tool kit for employers to review as they modify their attendance management systems, ideally in collaboration with labour.

And thank you to government, once more, for listening to the consensus advice of the Labour Management Review Committee. We take our role seriously to provide good advice, and unlike the previous Conservative government who asked for advice and then ignored it, we appreciate this government listening to the LMRC advice and acting on it.

Employers and workers have to live with the impact of legislation—that it has in the workplace and we're best positioned to give advice that can be respected and followed by future governments. That serves us all well.

Thank you.

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

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Thank you, Mr. Rebeck. I just wanted to thank you for coming to committee tonight and for even bringing some of the other provincial labour leaders here with you tonight to witness our committee proceedings.

Also wanted to thank you for years of advocacy on this very topic of sick notes and limitations to them, as well as for the hard work that you're putting in at the LMRC to come up with consensus items for us to consider in putting into legislation regulations.

Thank you for all this hard work that you guys do on behalf of workers across—

**The Chairperson:** Minister Marcelino, that's time.

**K. Rebeck:** Thank you, Minister. We really appreciate you acting on this advice and entrusting us to build consensus and work together. When business and labour can come eye to eye and give advice to government, it's wonderful to have a government that acts on it, and you show true leadership by doing so, so thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Any further questions?

Thank you, Mr. Rebeck.

I will now call on Kyle Ross from the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union.

Mr. Ross, please proceed with your presentation.

**Kyle Ross (Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union):** Good evening. My name is Kyle Ross. I'm the president of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union.

The Manitoba Government and General Employees Union, the MGEU, represents 34,000 Manitobans who live and work throughout the province in a wide variety of workplaces, including members employed directly by the Province of Manitoba, Crown corporations, universities and colleges, health-care facilities, social service agencies, arts and cultural organizations.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of MGEU members on this welcome change to the Employment Standards Code, legislating the use of sick notes for employee absences. I'd specifically like to thank the minister and the members of the Labour Management Review Committee for the work on this issue and for bringing forward these amendments. These changes will benefit members, employees, and alleviate the burden on doctors whose valuable time is better spent caring for patients than completing unnecessary administrative documents.

The reality is that sick notes are not often an effective way to manage absenteeism. In practice, requiring a worker with a minor illness to produce a sick note will often push employees to attend work

while ill rather than spend time and money on getting a note.

This increases the risk that the illness will spread to co-workers, reducing overall workplace efficiency. This is why the MGEU supports the measures in Bill 11 that eliminate the ability for an employer to request a sick note in the first week of illness.

Sick time is there to ensure members can rest and recover. Instead, the current process can prolong illness and stress and lengthy—and lengthen recovery time. The burden of arranging an appointment, travelling to a clinic or ER, paying for parking, sitting in a full waiting room while contagious and then paying out of pocket for a sick note is wasteful and ineffective. These burdens are especially unfair to lower income workers, rural workers and those without timely access to a family doctor.

Workers with minor, short-term illness should be able to stay home, rest and recover, not sit in a waiting room and pay out of pocket. This is why the MGEU supports the legislated requirement in Bill 11 for employers to foot the bill for a sick note.

Beyond the workplace, whenever an employer asks an employee for a note to prove they're sick, it takes doctors away from patient care, it adds unnecessary clinic and emergency room visits and costs employees time and money.

According to Doctors Manitoba, over 600,000 sick notes are written per year in Manitoba, taking up over 36,000 hours of physician time that could be redirected to providing patient care. We support the amendments in Bill 11, will free up doctors and health-care workers to focus on patient care.

MGEU members and all workers deserve fair, practical and respectful rules when they are sick or injured. They should not be forced to seek unnecessary medical appointments simply to prove their short-term illness to an employer.

Bill 11 is an important and welcome step towards modernizing Manitoba's employment standards, reducing barriers for workers and freeing up health-care capacity for patients who need them.

Thank you.

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

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**MLA Marcelino:** Thank you, Mr. Ross, for coming in today to give your observations and for your

support for this—passage of this bill. Thank you very much.

**The Chairperson:** Any further questions—oh, sorry. Mr. Ross.

**K. Ross:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you for the work that was done on this. We—our workers are really, really happy that this is coming. I'm sure all Manitoba workers will benefit this. It's a good step forward. We really appreciate this effort.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Any further questions?

Thank you for your presentation.

I will now call upon Joan Stimson for Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act. Joan Stinson [*phonetic*]? Joan Stimson will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Now we have Jill [*phonetic*]—Jennifer Thomas, sorry. Jennifer Thomas? Jennifer Thomas will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

#### **Bill 29—The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act**

**The Chairperson:** For Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act, Michelle Pereira.

Michelle Pereira, please proceed with your presentation.

**Michelle Pereira (University of Winnipeg):** Good evening Madam Chair, Minister Cable and committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

In my capacity as the chair of the University of Winnipeg Board of Regents, I have observed considerable support for the proposed amendments in Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act, currently before the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. We respectfully urge all members of the Legislative Assembly to vote in favour of this legislation and call upon the Lieutenant Governor to grant royal assent, at which point this important reform will become the law of the Province, coming into force July 1, 2026.

The Board of Regents welcomes the amendment reducing board membership from 36 to 21 members. A smaller, focused board is a more agile and effective governing body providing the ability to better be positioned to deliberate efficiently, reach decisions with clarity and exercise the strategic oversight that a modern university requires. This change aligns the

University of Winnipeg with best practices in post-secondary governance across Canada.

The board strongly supports the new requirement that two of the 10 Lieutenant Governor-in-Council appointees identify as Indigenous. The University of Winnipeg is situated on Treaty 1 territory and the traditional Homeland of the Métis Nation, and we are committed to meaningful Indigenous representation at the highest levels of university governance. The accompanying provision directing the appointees reflect the diversity of the student population and the communities from which they come further ensures the board remains connected to those that we serve.

The nine-year consecutive service limit followed by a mandatory three-year pause before the reappointment strikes the right balance between continuity and renewal. This reform brings fresh perspectives to the board on a regular basis while honouring the valuable institutional knowledge of—that experienced members contribute during their tenure.

The requirement that the board adopt a formal conflict of interest bylaw which speaks to the mandatory disclosure, withdrawal from deliberations and public record keeping, reflects the university's commitment to the highest ethical standards.

\* (18:20)

While the board currently maintains a conflict of interest bylaw, the proposed amendments will help inform, strengthen and—existing practices. Transparency and governance builds confidence among students, faculty, donors and the broader community that decisions are made in a university's best interest.

The provision-making board meetings open to the public by default, while providing greater clarity around the use and documentation of in camera sessions, is a welcome step toward greater transparency. Although the board already holds public sessions and utilizes regular in camera proceedings, where appropriate, the proposed amendments will strengthen and further formalize those processes. The University of Winnipeg is a public institution, and the public has a legitimate interest in how it's governed.

The new requirement for annual performance reviews of the president and vice-chancellor, including periodic external reviews, as well as the explicit exclusion of the president from deliberations concerning their own review, remuneration and terms of employment, reflects sound governance practices and ensures appropriate checks and balances at the executive level.

While the university already maintains established processes and practices for the presidential review and evaluation, the proposed amendments will assist in informing and strengthening the ongoing development of a more formalized and clearly documented framework for those reviews.

In conclusion, these amendments have the potential to position the University of Winnipeg for continued excellence in teaching, research and community engagement. The proposed changes are widely viewed as a constructive step towards strengthening the university's governance framework. We commend Minister Cable, Deputy Minister Forster and Assistant Deputy Minister Kachulak for bringing this forward to the legislative and respectfully urge the Legislative Assembly to pass Bill 29 without delay.

Upon receiving royal assent from the Lieutenant Governor, this act will represent a meaningful and lasting improvement to the governance of our institution.

And thank you so much for this opportunity.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Pereira.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I don't have any questions. I just want to sincerely thank you for your service on the board and for your constructive interactions during this process of looking at governance. And thank you for seeing the broader picture and helping to ensure that post-secondary is sustainable from now into the future. I really thank you for your service.

**M. Periera:** Yes, it's my pleasure, and thank you to you and your department for listening to us, hearing us, making some adjustments that we felt were important, one of them being the amount of seats that the government should hold and that the board chair isn't a government—doesn't necessarily have to be a government appointee. So we appreciate that autonomy.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Pereira.

Any further questions?

Thank you for your presentation.

**Bill 11—The Employment Standards  
Code Amendment Act  
(Sick Notes for Employee Absences)**  
*(Continued)*

**The Chairperson:** We will now go back to Bill 11, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences).

And I would like to call on Dr. Nichelle Desilets, I believe who's joining us virtually.

**Nichelle Desilets (Doctors Manitoba):** Thank you, honourable Chairperson, and good evening, everyone. My name is Dr. Nichelle Desilets. I'm board chair and past president of Doctors Manitoba. I'm also a family physician practicing in Neepawa.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on Bill 11. My feedback that I bring to you today is submitted on behalf of physicians and medical learners of Manitoba. I am pleased to say very clearly and directly that doctors strongly support this legislation. In fact, Doctors Manitoba requested it.

Let's back up for a moment and remember why: paperwork and administrative burdens that take physicians away from patient care. In fact, doctors spend about 10 hours a week on desk time—basically one full workday a week—and almost half of that is unnecessary.

Administrative burden is a leading cause of burnout, and it's also a leading contributor to physicians considering retirement, moving away or reducing their practice. Sick notes are a major contributor to that desk time burden. As we heard from previous presenters, every year in Manitoba, we estimate more than 600,000 sick notes are requested, primarily by employers. That translates into tens of thousands of hours of physician time spent on paperwork and unnecessary appointments that often provide little real medical value.

At a time when Manitoba continues to 'fache' physician shortages and challenges acting—accessing care, this does matter. Every unnecessary sick note appointment is time that could have been spent caring for a patient with a medical need.

After all, eliminating sick notes would free up physician time equivalent to 300,000 patient visits. That's the same as adding over 50 doctors to Manitoba's health-care system. It's no surprise, then, that we recommended eliminating sick notes.

Manitoba was one of only two provinces that hadn't taken any action to limit sick notes, and that is

something that new physicians are noticing when they consider where to set up their practice. Rather than letting sick notes keep clogging up our clinics and our ERs, Doctors Manitoba brought together leaders from business, labour and government to fix this problem.

Our research helped prove that sick notes do not work the way that many people think they do. For most short-term illnesses or injuries related—sorry—illness- and injury-related absences from work, patients do not need medical care, and yet we drag contagious or recovering workers out of bed, out of their homes, into clinics and urgent-care centres or emergency departments, simply to satisfy a human resources process. In fact, many workers say they would rather go to work sick than go through the hassle and cost of getting a sick note.

Now, this was even more surprising. Over a third of the time, patients no longer have symptoms left by the time they get in to see the doctor. That means that there is nothing for the physician to objectively verify. The patient did not need medical care; they came only because of an employer-required documentation.

All of this does not help employers, it does not help workers and it certainly doesn't help the health-care system. Physicians became increasingly vocal that this practice needs to end, but when we first recommended eliminating sick notes, there was understandable apprehension. How would employers manage absenteeism? How would HR departments adapt to this? Would there still be accountability? After all, many workplaces have operated in this way for decades.

So rather than simply criticizing the problem, Doctors Manitoba went on to work on solutions. We brought together leaders from business, labour, government, human resources, occupational medicine and employment law. We held workshops. We created an advisory group. We reviewed research from across Canada and internationally. We examined how other provinces approach sick note limits, what's worked well and where gaps remain.

Eventually, the government referred our recommendation to eliminate sick notes to the Labour Management Review Committee. The labour and employer representatives reached a consensus on a joint recommendation to Minister Marcelino.

And now, after two years of engagement and collaboration, bringing in HR and legal experts, occupational medicine specialists, along with public- and private-sector employers and unions, we have

legislation. Bill 11 is practical, evidence-informed and urgently needed. It will reduce unnecessary administrative burden on physicians, improve access to care for Manitoba's patients, support healthier workplaces and modernize an outdated practice that no longer serves employers, workers or the health-care system well.

The rules can be clear: sick notes are prohibited unless a worker's absence extends longer than a week or if they have more than 10 cumulative days of absence over a calendar year. With this legislation, Manitoba will move from no limits on sick notes to the clearest and strongest rules in Canada.

To put it more plainly, Manitoba is moving from worst to first. And that is something that this legislator should be proud of.

Now, I do want to speak briefly about one friendly amendment that we are requesting. The only concern we have with the legislation is the proposed six-month delay before the limits come into force. We respectfully request that the legislation instead come into effect upon royal assent.

There are several important reasons for this. First and foremost is the impact on physicians and patients. Every single day that we delay means another 1,500 sick notes requested in Manitoba. Over six months, that means 300,000 more sick notes. That's the equivalent of roughly 150,000 patient visits that we aren't freeing up over the next half year for patients with genuine medical needs. This is a significant capacity in a strained health-care system.

\* (18:30)

Now, we understand why the six-month implementation period was originally proposed. The six-month delay emerged through the Labour Management Review Committee process, and the intent was to ensure that all employers had sufficient notice and time to adapt. That was reasonable when the recommendation was made last October, without knowing how quickly the government would announce plans and introduce legislation and what type of education and support employers would receive.

We would respectfully suggest that the situation has changed a lot since then. Manitoba employers have already received substantial notice. In fact, the government first announced its intention to limit sick notes in the Throne Speech on November 18; 175 days ago. On December 12, Doctors Manitoba joined the Minister of Labour and CPHR Manitoba at a joint

press conference, and the news coverage highlighted the recommended limits. That was 151 days ago.

That same day, we released an HR tool kit designed specifically to help employers transition away from sick note requirements. That tool kit has already been downloaded more than 4,400 times. In January, we ran a large ad in the Winnipeg Free Press advising Manitobans and employers that changes are coming. In January and February, we partnered with CPHR Manitoba to host educational webinars for HR professionals. More than 600 people attended. And in June, we will hold another employer webinar in partnership with Manitoba Chambers of Commerce.

How did other provinces approach this? In BC, the government announced the details of their sick note limits on November 12, and they came into effect that day. In Ontario, sick note limits came into effect immediately upon royal assent. Nova Scotia provided 75 days notice. Quebec provided 84 days notice. The only province we found with a similar six-month delay was Saskatchewan. And as we head into football season, I think we can all agree that we don't want to have the same record as Saskatchewan. We want to beat them.

In all seriousness, we believe employers and unions would support a shorter implementation timeline. Manitoba has already provided more notice, more education and more implementation support than any other province in Canada. We hope the government will consider that amendment.

On the whole, however, physicians are deeply appreciative of the collaboration that led to this bill. We appreciate this government's leadership, and we appreciate the support shown by opposition members. We appreciate the willingness of employers and unions to work together with us on a practical solution. And, most importantly, we appreciate that this legislation recognizes physician time as valuable, patient access as precious and outdated administrative practices as something that we can improve together. We hope this Legislature will pass Bill 11 quickly and with a needed minor amendment that will allow us to—not next winter but this spring—say that sick notes have finally been eliminated in Manitoba.

Thank you.

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

Are there any questions for Dr. Desilets?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** Yes, thank you, Dr. Desilets, for your

time today. I don't think we've ever—I've ever been to a committee hearing where I could see an exam room like that, so my first time. Thanks for your advocacy on this and your leadership on this; for the research, all the recommendations that were put together by Doctors Manitoba and even all the work that you guys did to put—help put together the tool kit along with the Manitoba Chambers and the Chartered Professionals in Human Resources Manitoba. I really appreciate all this work. And I am open to your friendly amendment, and we'll see what we can do about it today.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**N. Desilets:** Thank you, Minister Marcelino, for acknowledging our request, and we'd be happy to work together again on that. Yes, this is the inside of a clinic. I didn't write sick notes today, but I am filling out a lot of insurance forms, and that's why I'm still here.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Are there any further questions?

Thank you for your presentation.

I would now like to call upon Mrs. Fernanda Vallejo. Ms. Vallejo? Mrs. Vallejo will now be dropped to the bottom of the list.

#### **Bill 19—The Animal Care Amendment Act**

**The Chairperson:** We will now move on to Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act, and I would like to call upon David Grant. David Grant? We will now drop David Grant to the bottom of the list.

Fernanda—Mrs. Veranda *[phonetic]* Vallejo? Mrs. Fernanda Vallejo? We will now drop Mrs. Vallejo to the bottom of the list.

Ms. Kaitlyn Mitchell?

Ms. Mitchell, please proceed with your presentation.

**Kaitlyn Mitchell (Animal Justice):** Good evening, everyone. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here tonight to speak to you about Bill 19. And I would like to thank Minister Kostyshyn and his staff, in particular, for their dedication to improving the welfare of companion animals in our province.

My name is Kaitlyn Mitchell, and I'm a lawyer and the director of legal advocacy with Animal Justice, which is Canada's leading national animal-

law organization. Animal Justice has worked with rescue groups in Manitoba to urge the Province to enforce the companion animal breeder licensing regime set out in part 5 of The Animal Care Act. Bill 19 would repeal that in its entirety.

Nonetheless, because those requirements have not been enforced in over a decade, and because our understanding is that the intent of this new bill is to fill this very dangerous legal gap, we are very supportive of Bill 19. Because those who breed companion animals do so for the purpose of selling them, we hope that the new licensing requirements set out in Bill 19 can be developed in a way that addresses the serious animal-welfare risks posed by the breeding and selling of dogs as well as other companion animals.

Irresponsible breeding operations pose significant risks of animal suffering. Animals are often confined in crowded and filthy conditions. For instance, in 2024, Manitobans were shocked to see dogs from a large-scale breeder just north of this city surrendered. These animals were in desperate need of medical attention and were brought into shelters here in Winnipeg.

Last year, Animal Justice shared heartbreaking footage of Canada's largest ferret-breeding operation, which is actually located right here in Manitoba. The footage was difficult to watch. It shows hundreds of ferrets confined in barren metal cages. The ammonia stench in the barns and the sheds, I'm told, was absolutely overwhelming. The operator of the facility admitted to gassing unwanted ferrets in a makeshift box and also discussed problems associated with wildlife entering these sheds that are not enclosed from the elements and killing the ferrets enclosed, including ripping the legs off of babies.

A link to this footage is included in the presentation brief that I have provided to members of this committee, and photographs of the facility are enclosed as appendix 2 to that brief.

Now, we have photographs of this facility, but I want to be clear that it's very rare for Manitobans to see the conditions inside of breeding operations. Most breeding operations operate on private property, behind closed doors. There are no licensing requirements for these facilities, so law enforcement officials don't even know, quite often, where they're located, never mind have the ability to go and proactively inspect them. Inspections occur only in rare instances where a member of the public learns about abuse or neglect and alerts the Chief Veterinary Officer.

It's far easier to stop cruel, large-scale breeding operations from starting up in the first place than it is for officials to respond to complaints and deal with dozens—or even hundreds—of animals in need of care and rehoming, and that's why licensing is so important.

But it's not only the animals that are confined at breeding operations that suffer as a result of the lack of oversight at these facilities. These operations also contribute to the province's overpopulation of animals, including dogs in particular, leaving rescue groups and shelters to take in unwanted animals or those seized from situations of abuse at breeding operations.

\* (18:40)

As you will undoubtedly hear this evening from other presenters and probably in some of the written briefs that you received, our province is experiencing a very serious dog overpopulation crisis that not only causes suffering to dogs and puppies but also puts communities at risk, and children in particular. We have seen, time and time again, really devastating attacks on people in these communities, and it is truly a public health and safety crisis as well.

I've provided a detailed presentation brief that outlines our key suggestions to strengthen Bill 19, and in the interests of time, I'll just focus on three of those tonight. And I do want to be clear that while we've set out some key recommendations there, many of our recommendations can also be incorporated in regulations, and I look forward to discussing that approach as well.

So the first recommendation that we have is to ensure that when a person's selling animals—because that's the focus of the bill: sellers of animals and folks who transfer ownership. So when the seller of an animal is a commercial breeder or retail operation, we would like to see additional licensing requirements apply to those persons beyond the more general requirements that apply to, say, an individual's merely rehoming their personal animal, or to rescue groups.

So, for instance, the seller's address may be different from the address or addresses at which they keep animals or use animals for breeding purposes. So we'd like to make sure that the act requires that the licence application includes all addresses of breeding premises and places where animals are kept.

Because inspection powers set out in the act at section 8 only let animal protection officers proactively enter some areas for proactive inspections,

we want to ensure that the requirements to license sellers of animals allow our animal protection officers to attend and inspect not only the licensee's business address but also the actual locations where animals are kept.

We've also set out recommendations for licensing requirements for sellers of animals—again, the ones who are breeders or commercial retailers—to have to require with prescribed standards of care. And those, of course, would be set out by regulation, and examples of some of those standards or—care are set out in our presentation brief.

But in addition to, you know, standards related to husbandry and housing, we'd really like to see limits on the number of animals that a given facility can keep and limits on the number of litters that a female animal can be forced to have over her lifetime and each year. They should also include prohibitions on cosmetic mutilations of animals, like tail docking.

By establishing these separate requirements for sellers who are commercial stores or breeders, the Province could also ensure that the licensing fees for those operators are more substantial, because it really is those individuals who profit off of the sale of companion animals who should be bearing the cost of this system, and not rescue groups or Manitobans more generally.

The second key point that I'd like to emphasize is that although the government's focus is understandably, as I understand, on the sale of dogs, the term pet animal should include all companion animals or at least the larger breeders of other types of companion animals. I appreciate that that definition is going to be set out in regulation in the future, but because it is just such an important point, I did want to make sure to mention it to you tonight.

Shelters and rescue groups that take in small and exotic animals are inundated with requests to take in unwanted rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters, most of whom were purchased from pet stores. Now, I mentioned earlier the truly horrific conditions at the ferret breeding facility here in the province, but I've also enclosed some Kijiji ads from a large python breeding operation that I recently learned about near my home in River Heights.

As is common with many snake breeding operations, this individual appears to be keeping snakes in snake racks, which are basically small drawers. They do not allow snakes to engage in their natural behaviors. They truly are inadequate. So, at the

very least, what we'd like is for the definition of pet animal to include not only dogs but also the larger sellers of other types of companion animals.

The third and final recommendation that I wanted to touch upon tonight is that section 10.2 of the act should allow for orders prohibiting animal ownership for more than three years. Section 10.2 allows the director to apply to a justice for an order restricting ownership where, because of the number of animals that a person has or the type of animals, they can't provide proper care. And we fully support the amendments to section 10.2(1) that are contained in there.

But the bill would still restrict those orders to prohibiting ownership for a maximum of three years. Three years may be enough in many circumstances, but unfortunately folks who acquire large numbers of animals and can't properly care for them do have a tendency to repeat that behaviour. So we'd like to have discretion to allow orders that are longer than three years, and that can mirror some of the language that's already in the act, actually, in section 35.

So, in conclusion, I do want to just thank you once again for the opportunity to appear before you tonight; and, again, thank you to Minister Kostyshyn and his staff.

I look forward to answering any questions and continuing to work with the government to improve the welfare of companion animals.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Mitchell.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Thank you so much for the insightful information. And I don't think I have to educate the general public that's here today of the challenges we see on a daily basis with the dog population and the lack of care and consequences of packs of dog that are, you know, in challenging times, and the human element of challenges that we see, unfortunately, by a pack of dogs, basically due to starvation.

So I thank you for your presentation. We're very conscientious of the importance of this bill getting some authority and opportunity that we want to minimize the, I guess, the marketplace of dogs that are not looked after, not properly trained. And I want to assure you, we are determined to deal with the situation—

**The Chairperson:** Minister Kostyshyn, your time is up. Thank you.

**K. Mitchell:** Well, thank you very much, Minister Kostyshyn, and I do appreciate how genuine your concern is not only for the dogs but also for community members who are at risk.

Perhaps I'll just take this opportunity to mention another recommendation that we set out in our presentation brief which I know I've discussed with you in the past, but The Animal Care Act allows for the creation of an advisory committee. And one opportunity that we see would be to create an advisory committee to establish a community-led approach to our roaming and stray dog crisis in the province.

And that would allow rescue groups, community members, Indigenous leadership, veterinarians to all come together and really think about a sustainable plan that would help communities in the province and, again, help not only animals but also children and other community members who are at risk.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you. Any—Mr. Narth.

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Thank you, Ms. Mitchell, for attending tonight's committee and sharing your experience and your knowledge around this bill.

My question for you, since you're quite experienced in animal care and animal justice: Since the bill sets out to repeal all licensing that currently exists and you've identified that that creates a gap, are you concerned that much of this bill is going to be set out in regulation with no clear inspection and monitoring system outlined, no clear identification of the permitting and how—

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Narth, your time is up.

**K. Mitchell:** Thank you for the question.

Certainly, if there is a lack of guidance in the regulations, I would be extremely concerned. We already have a system where we have a law on the books that hasn't been enforced in over a decade. I don't blame the current government for that, but what we do need is clarity. And so whether that clarity comes in the act itself or in regulations, it is needed because inspection powers, as you mentioned, are so vital to making sure that the system works.

So, certainly, you know—and I guess right now, unfortunately, we're limited to talking about the bill, and I know that there will be that future regulatory amendment process which we can be consulted on,

and we look forward to that. But it is so important. And, certainly, any risk that this law will sit and be unenforced or will lack the teeth to really protect animals is a serious one that we all need to make sure does not happen.

**The Chairperson:** Any further questions?

Thank you for your time, Ms. Mitchell.

I would now like to call upon Krista Boryskavich to come to the podium.

**Krista Boryskavich (Winnipeg Humane Society):**

Good evening, Minister Kostyshyn, committee members. My name is Krista Boryskavich, and I'm the director of animal advocacy and legal and government affairs at the Winnipeg Humane Society, and I'm pleased to be here tonight to speak in support of Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act.

\* (18:50)

The bill does touch upon various issues. I'm going to focus my remarks tonight primarily on the licensing regime for breeders and for sellers because I think that's the bulk of the new provisions in the act, and so I think it's important to focus my time there.

On principle, the Winnipeg Humane Society opposes the breeding of pets solely for profit and without proper regard for the health and safety of the animal. We have long been an advocate for addressing the chronic issues related to the proliferation of backyard breeders within Manitoba. It is critical that, if the breeding industry is to continue to exist in Manitoba, appropriate oversight through a robust regulatory system must be in place.

And we believe that is what Bill 19 seeks to put in place. So this oversight must ensure that all breeders adhere to best practices and welfare standards so that animals in breeding facilities are not the victims of needless suffering or abuse.

And, of course, the chronic overpopulation that results from backyard breeding is also contributing to the shelter overpopulation crisis. At the Winnipeg Humane Society, 6,284 animals came into our care in the last year alone. And that number—it sounds like a large number, and it is—but it doesn't even account for the animals that we are unable to take into our care because shelter capacity and resources simply don't allow it. We find ourselves declining requests for animal intake on a nearly daily basis.

The Winnipeg Humane Society has also been a strong advocate for the regulation of online sales and

giveaways of pets. This what I'm going call wild west of homing and rehoming sentient beings often doesn't come with background checks or due diligence on the parts of the sellers. This has many consequences, one of the most dire being that animals may end up in the hands of unfit owners, where they may be abused or treated inhumanely.

And, for instance, you know, we know of two recent and high-profile animal cruelty cases: one where the courts just handed down one of the most significant sentences in Canada for animal cruelty, Project Artemis; and the other a situation where deceased cats were—and I'm sorry, I should probably say trigger warning here—but allegedly tortured and dumped under a Winnipeg bridge.

Both involved circumstances where animals were obtained through online sales or giveaways. So those are the worst case scenarios, but unwanted animals may also end up in animal-hoarding situations or other instances of neglect, just because a backyard breeder wants to make a quick dollar or an overwhelmed owner may give their animal away to the first response that they get to an online ad.

As a society, we must do better in protecting the vulnerable among us. So, to that end, the Winnipeg Humane Society had put forward a proposal to address both backyard breeders and online sales or giveaways of companion animals, which included three primary components: strengthened regulations governing breeders, new regulations for the online sale and giveaway of companion animals and increased resources for the enforcement of both of those provisions.

We were pleased to see the introduction of Bill 19 in the Legislature, which is a positive step toward addressing these key animal issues and creating a regulatory system which holds backyard breeders and online sellers accountable.

And, you know, in part to address the honourable member's question to the previous speaker, we recognize that this legislation is enabling legislation and the details of the regulatory system will follow through the adoption of regulation.

We also recognize that the devil is in the details, so I'd like to take this opportunity to put on the record some items that, from the Winnipeg Humane Society's point of view, must be addressed during the development of the regulations. And, to be clear, we're not asking for them to be included in the legislation. We understand that it's enabling; but, when the regulations

are developed, we think these are important pieces to have addressed.

So first, licensing requirements must be robust and include checks on an applicant's history for past animal cruelty issues such as convictions. Second, the regulatory system must set out mandatory animal-welfare standards that include proactive and routine inspections of licence-holder facilities. Third, similar to the requirements of the City of Winnipeg's Responsible Pet Ownership By-law, breeders should be limited in both the number of litters permitted per year and over the lifetime of the animal.

And I'm going to mention something that, while not necessarily the subject matter of The Animal Care Act, it does tie into this issue, in that sellers should also be required to pay taxes on the sale of these animals because, at the moment, this is free income for people looking to make a quick buck in an unregulated industry.

Fourth, an offence should be added for dumping unwanted animals, because we don't want to simply solve one problem by creating another.

Fifth, the regulatory system must be proactively and adequately enforced, with significant penalties for non-compliance.

And sixth, a public education campaign should be developed not only to educate on the new regulatory system but to provide information to sellers on how to properly conduct due diligence to ensure their animal is going to a safe place.

That's something that the Humane Society does do at the moment through our social media channels and our website, but I think a high-profile education of sellers in this regard—because sellers do bear some responsibility—would be prudent. And to assist in tracking and enforcing these requirements, breeders and sellers should be required to have permanent ID for their animals, such as a microchip.

Now, this next one might be a little controversial, but ideally, a requirement for all animals sold or given away into this regulatory system to be spayed or neutered would go a long way in combating the pet overpopulation and shelter capacity crises that I mentioned previously.

So as I close, I'd like to commend Minister Kostyshyn, Deputy Minister Sinclair and their staff for moving forward with a plan to address these critical animal welfare issues through the introduction and hopefully the adoption of Bill 19.

The Winnipeg Humane Society looks forward to contributing our knowledge and expertise as the regulatory system is further developed and regulations are prepared.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Boryskavich.

Are there any—does the committee have questions for the presenter?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Let me just acknowledge, first and foremost, the Winnipeg Humane Society and what you contribute to the unfortunate treatment of animals and pets, and so I just want to compliment the organization for what you do.

Definitely to put your mind at ease in the, you know, audience, is that this is start of consultation, and we will continue to work for the betterment of pet animals to be treated equally and fairly and appropriately, and the regulations will dictate that to a certain extent.

So I just value the operation—or the Winnipeg Humane Society, of your involvement—just—and other organizations, that we want to do this right, first and foremost, and have animals treated the way they should be, not treated to be—rather than being abused by the general public.

So thank you for being here today.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**K. Boryskavich:** Yes, and thank you very much. And we really look forward to participating in the process on a go forward.

**Mr. Narth:** Yes, thank you, and thank you for your presentation. I was hoping to have the opportunity to ask a representative from the Humane Society this question that I did have.

We talked about potentially—the minister and I in the briefing—that there would be exceptions. And it's something that, when I look at from me being the critic of Agriculture, from a rural lens, that the restriction around the licensing could cause a situation where if there was an unforeseen litter in dogs and if someone didn't obtain a licence that—like, let's say it's a farm dog that was bred by a neighbour's dog—if there wasn't an exception for that case, that, you know, the litter may be dumped, right? And that would cause additional burden to—

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Narth, your time is up.

**K. Boryskavich:** Yes, and as I mentioned in my presentation, the dumping of animals is something that we're concerned about as well because we don't want to create one problem as we're solving another. So that's certainly something that needs to be looked at.

I know that there are at least one or two municipalities who've included—and I hate to call it this—but anti-dumping provisions in their animal control bylaws. So I think it is something significant to look at in this context.

And then I will also say, with respect to exceptions, we recognize that there are certainly different situations. There is a difference between a commercial breeder, somebody who has, you know, an unexpected litter of animals. I think that that's something that will need to be examined more closely in the development of that regulatory stage, because I think you've got to be careful with that exception process.

\* (19:00)

An unwanted litter might happen once; if you have the same seller or the same person with multiple unwanted litters throughout the course of years, then that develops into a different issue. So I think, you know, that's got to be looked at very closely to determine what those exceptions would look like and how to make sure that people aren't taking advantage of those exceptions as a loophole.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Yes, maybe in somewhat of a reply to members opposite on the question. Let's be realistic. You know, certain things happen. It's not intentional, and those kind of individuals, I think there will be some understanding of uncertain circumstances, but—being a farmer for 40 years of my life and having numerous dogs—occasionally certain things happen.

But I think in the long run, we're not pursuing those kind of situations. We're trying to minimize the overpopulation of puppy mills and the market that seems to be very attractive of marketing them somewhere else.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**K. Boryskavich:** Yes, and I think that's perfectly reasonable and a perfectly reasonable approach because, you know, the one-off litter of puppies is not what is causing the overpopulation crisis. So.

**The Chairperson:** Any further questions from the opposition?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I just wanted to thank you on behalf of people all across the city for the work that you do at the Humane Society. My daughter would be really angry at me if I didn't take a moment to say thank you for saving all of the beautiful animals that you have. We have rescues in our home and I just want to—from the bottom of my heart—thank you for the work that you do.

**K. Boryskavich:** Well, thank you very much for your comments, Minister, and thank you as well because we cannot do our work without people who are willing to adopt or foster those rescues. So it really does take a team. Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

I would now like to call Mrs. Debra Vandekerkhove. She's online. Mrs. Vandekerkhove? Mrs. Vandekerkhove, you need to be promoted to panelist in order to present.

Mrs. Vandekerkhove will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I would now like to call upon Mrs.—Ms. Julie Braga. Ms. Julie Braga?

Ms. Braga will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I would now like to call upon Jill Verhey [*phonetic*]—Verwey. She's on virtual; she's from the Keystone agriculture producers. Ms. Verwey?

Hi, Ms. Verwey. Please proceed with your presentation.

**Jill Verwey (Keystone Agricultural Producers):** Good evening, Chairman and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. My name is Jill Verwey, and I'm president of Keystone Agricultural Producers. KAP is Manitoba's general farm policy organization and we represent all Manitoba farmers and 18 commodity associations.

I am here this evening to speak to Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act. The Animal Care Act is important legislation that helps guide and support animal welfare here in Manitoba. The expectations on how livestock producers care for and handle their animals are clearly set out in the act and the regulation through accepted codes of practices and other standards. Every farm adopts acceptable husbandry, handling and management practices that are essential

to the health and well-being of their animals. Manitoba producers work every day to ensure that their animals are cared for appropriately and with a goal of preventing unnecessary discomfort and distress.

The Canadian Agri-Food Research Council publishes relevant codes of practice for Manitoba producers to follow. The codes of practice are science-based, involving extensive research and consultation with stakeholders. The rigorous process occurs for code development, and consensus is key when developing these codes of practice.

When developing codes through the Canadian Agri-Food Research Council, consulting members include commodity groups, provincial ministries of agriculture, animal welfare groups. This collaborative approach is important because it ensures that animal-care standards are practical, credible, evidence-based and reflective of continuous improvement within the livestock sector. Reviews occur every five years, and updates generally occur every 10. Importantly, farm animals in Manitoba have a code of practice that producers follow. We want to ensure that any future code, standard and guideline that is updated in the animal-care regulation continues to be science-based and supported by industry stakeholders.

We support Bill 19 in that it enables the Department of Agriculture to reference the most recent version of the animal-care code standard and guidelines in the animal-care regulation without having to amend each time an animal code—a practice or standard is updated to keep it current.

This change will also reduce red tape, which we've been advocating for and helping to reduce the regulatory burden on producers and operations in Manitoba. To government, this change is a good example of streamlining processes and improving regulatory efficiency that we have been advocating for.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present this evening, and I'm pleased to answer any questions from the committee.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Verwey.

Any questions from the committee?

**Mr. Kostyshyn:** Thank you so much, Jill, for your support and the opportunity to work together with the Keystone Agricultural Producers, Jill. You know, one of many organizations, Jill—and you've been very helpful; the organization has been very helpful.

And it's going to be a team approach, as we see the people in attendance today and through organizations such as the Keystone Agricultural Producers. We really feel this is—we want to do it right, we want to do it once. And everybody's going to have a chance to voice their thoughts, what is the right way of doing it appropriately so we minimize the unwanted dogs that, unfortunately, we see way too often, and the problems that the Winnipeg Humane Society or other organizations need to find opportunities to help out these stray animals.

So thank you so much, Jill, and appreciate your comments.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**J. Verwey:** No, I just want to identify—you know, thank you very much, Minister Kostyshyn and the department, and working together with that collaborative approach to ensure that we're advocating for that regulatory burden but to ensure the continued safe husbandry and practices of producers here in Manitoba.

So thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Are there any further questions?

Okay. Thank you, Ms. Verwey.

I would now like to call upon Joan Stimson.

Sorry, Lori Zahara. My apologies. Lori Zahara?

Lori Zahara will be moved to the bottom of the list.

### **Bill 29—The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act** (Continued)

**The Chairperson:** We will now move forward to the next bill, Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act.

I would like to call Mr. David Grant.

Mr. Grant, please proceed with your presentation.

**David Grant (Private Citizen):** My apologize—apologies for not being here beginning of the last bill. I was in the other room.

I agree with a number of elements of Bill 29. A board with 36 members on it can doom it to inaction. So it's—does seem like far too many people to be—to all be heard and to be directing, aiming the board.

\* (19:10)

So the bigger problem is the conflict of interest reference in this bill. That there should be a conflict of interest bylaw adopted by this board seems like a good idea.

Unfortunately, this leaves a little bit to chance, and it would have been better, I think, to—or maybe the minister could bring forward a regulation—look at the—scan the environment and see what similar university boards have for codes of ethics and the merits of them and suggest one, rather than just leave it up to the board to adopt something. I think, too often, if you leave it up to an organization or a body like a small board, what limitations should we put on ourselves? And if nobody's watching, there won't be much limitation.

So that was—the main thing I had to say was that the—we—enabling the board to write its own code of ethics, it does put them in a perceived conflict of interest because you can't ask somebody who might be tempted to do bad things once in a while, or might see that in the future, to make their own rules. Generally, that's why the Legislature is here, to give good thought to everything and to make sure the rules imposed are meaningful and not what we would pick. So that was—the main comment I had to make was the spelling out what the code of office should be.

I noticed nowhere in this does it say the—because it's dealing with the board of the university—does it say that the terms of office should be overlapping. And I think, on a board, that's very important because if the board—if their terms all expire at the same time, then you get—may get a bunch of newbies in and there are a bunch of other operational problems.

So that's something that should be in a bill like this describing a board. That—one of the boards I'm on, we just brought that in a year and a bit ago. So at that point, we decided to draw lots, and all the people on the board either got a two year or a one year. And that meant half of us would go for re-election at the end of that time period.

So it's a simple process, and I think it ensures continuity for the board. And I'm not sure if it's in there now, but I would hope that it would be in the future. And, again, that's something that could be in the bill, it could be in a regulation. But I would just push those two ideas.

And thank you very much for your time.

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

Any questions from—Minister Cable?

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Mr. Grant, it's always lovely to see you here. I've said it before and I'll say it again: I appreciate how much time you commit to staying abreast of the changing legal framework in our province, and I sincerely wish that more people were engaged in the way that you are. These are very astute observations, and I thank you for your feedback.

**D. Grant:** Yes, I—thank you, Minister. And in the early days of the Winnipeg Police Board, I had board experience and was talking to their first secretary about how people get put on a board that had never been there before. There was a very learned person who wrote a book about being newly appointed to a board. So I suggested it to Jane [*phonetic*], the secretary of that board, and she was so impressed she bought a copy for her board. So having—and again, that's because it was a new board; U of W isn't.

But how things work and how they're supposed to work is very important. I commend this organization. The standing committees are always run flawlessly, and so I commend you on doing that. There are small boards and there are boards in little towns that can't boast that, and anything we can do to help.

So thank you very much, Minister.

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

Any further questions?

Okay. Thank you for your time.

I would now like to call upon Michael Shaw.

Mr. Shaw, please proceed with your presentation.

**Michael Shaw (Private Citizen):** Thanks very much, and thanks for your time this evening. I apologize for my attire, but I spent the day at the CLC, and I didn't get a chance to take off my anti-scab T-shirt.

First up, I'd like to talk a little bit about how I look forward—I check the website all the time and I look for bills from the minister. I remain puzzled, two and a half years into the mandate, that we haven't done bill 33, which is in your mandate letter. And then I expected maybe this one was going to be the health care for the international students. And again, also in the mandate letter, and yet, hasn't been acted on. So then I opened the document and had a read, and I do have some comments on this bill.

I work at the University of Manitoba. I'm deeply involved in the governance of the University of Manitoba. I serve on the senate there, as well as the

senate executive; been active in the UMFA, which is the union there, for many, many years.

But I want to just comment on a few things in this bill that I think are a little bit problematic. They're—step in the right direction. We're down to three religious appointments to a public secular university, funded by public money. That is in the right direction—three short of the actual goal in my mind, but you're getting there.

And I've talked to some of my colleagues at the University of Winnipeg about this and they say, well, it's historic, it's where we came from, it's what we used to be, the United College and so on. And then I would counter that argument with what now is Louis Riel School Division and used to be, many, many years ago, St. Boniface school division; and going back—and it had dedicated positions for the Catholic Church.

But we're now in a time where it would be wholly unacceptable if Louis Riel School Division's board had designated positions for the Catholic Church. We've moved beyond that as a society. We've moved beyond that. Religion—freedom is very, very important; having an opinion about religion is very important.

But if you are in a position of authority over the public purse deciding on the future and direction of a public institution, you shouldn't be placed there because of your affiliation with a particular religion. And so while I commend the work that's occurred here to reduce the number of appointed members from the United Church, I think it's still three short.

And the other thing that's in the bill and I think can be strengthened, and hopefully we're thinking about a similar bill for the University of Manitoba at some point in the future, I think it's absolutely key that all four of our public universities—board of governors or regents, whatever the term happens to be—meetings must, by default, be open.

There has to be a compelling personnel reason or some other—are your—well, they probably won't have the negotiating ones open to the public. I can see their thoughts there. But the default for public universities in Manitoba must be that the board of whatever the governor and call is—governors, regents—must be open and there must be compelling reasons to go in camera.

I know my own institution, University of Manitoba, every standard agenda has got in camera. And I have served for three years as an assessor on that body, and I've participated in those in camera. I'm not allowed to tell you what happened, but there is

much in there. Discussing the strategic plan of an institution shouldn't be private. Discussing, you know, all of these sorts of things shouldn't be public.

So when we're making these university amendment acts, the default of in camera—pardon me, the default of in camera—the in camera sessions and the sessions where people are excluded, members of the public, members of the institution in terms of the staff and students, that should be in a rare instance where there's a compelling reason to have those people excluded from the conversation.

So I look forward to a future where I am here discussing your amendments to bill 33 that were put in place by the previous government and to remove those from that act. And I look forward to seeing a day when, once again, international students in the province of Manitoba have access to health care, the same way that all of us do.

I look forward to those two days, as in your mandate letter, and I look forward to a U of M implementation act for some sort of governance in the future. And if you ever want to talk about what I think should be in that, I'm always available, but those are my comments on the U of W act.

**The Chairperson:** Just moving forward, Mr. Shaw, political slogans or props are not allowed, so in the future, please just ensure that you're wearing something appropriate or maybe even turn it inside out. I don't know.

Any questions?

**MLA Cable:** Thank you Mr. Shaw, for your thoughtful comments.

University of Manitoba is coming. University of Winnipeg is the first out of the gate on much overdue legislation reform. I very much take your points on the meetings by default being open. I agree. And finding real justifiable reasons to have in camera sessions are—I mean, that is the intent now.

\* (19:20)

I will speak to bill 33 and international student health care. I can assure you that international student health care is moving along. I unfortunately do not have the ability in my department to deliver that particular piece, but it is—I'm looking at the people at the back of the room here, part of my team.

I can assure you that we are working on it and bill 33 as well, looking at what parts of that that we

can move on without putting students in undue risk of having—

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Minister Cable, your time is up.

**M. Shaw:** I understand that the international health care is not a solely Advanced Ed issue. I will remind you—I'm sure you know—it's also in the mandate letter of the Minister of Health. So I think that that solution needs to be coming, and I look forward to the U of M amendments—and I can't remember what you said about bill 33.

**MLA Cable:** Bill 33: We're looking at what we can act on for fear that—*[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** Oh, sorry.

Any further questions from opposition? No.

Sorry, Minister Cable.

**MLA Cable:** My turn? Sorry. We just want to make sure that the students are not unduly harmed by not having a provision around tuition. That is the big fear, especially in times right now. As you know, it's very unstable in the sector with the loss of international students and increasing instability in the post-secondary sector, so we want to make sure that stability is top of mind.

**M. Shaw:** Thank you very much for that. I appreciate that it is a unstable time. It was one of the discussions today at the CLC in terms of what's facing the post-secondary across Canada. And Manitoba has been less affected than places like Ontario and British Columbia, but I appreciate the efforts that your department is making to that.

And I apologize to the whole committee for my inappropriate shirt.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Any further questions from the opposition? Or any questions? No?

Okay, thank you, Mr. Shaw.

I would now like to call upon Dr. Peter Miller from the University of Winnipeg Faculty Association, and he is online. Dr. Miller?

Hi, Dr. Miller. Please proceed with your presentation.

**Peter Miller (University of Winnipeg Faculty Association):** Certainly. So my name is Peter Miller. I'm president of the University of Winnipeg Faculty Association.

UWFA is the union that represents all instructional, research and library staff at the U of W, and that is over 600 members on any given day. As I know members of the public and others here know, UWFA members are the core of the university. We represent decades of service to the university and its community of students, alumni, staff and the general public. So when I come here as UWFA president, I hope you acknowledge we're speaking with the voice of generations of university service and people to whom the university is part of their life and their life's work.

I'd like to begin by thanking the minister, the deputy minister and their staff for their work on this bill. It's been a pleasure to work with a government to listen to faculty, who consulted with us as experts, who respected us as professionals and took our suggestions seriously.

Many of the things we suggested are present here, and we agree with them: oversight of the president and the president's recusal from reviews of their performance, for example; maintaining the restriction of government appointees to less than 51 per cent of the board; the reduction of United Church representatives—though here I will agree with the previous speaker. We advocated for zero; we don't believe United Church representatives are appropriate on a modern public education board—but I take the point of them having an historical role, and I'm glad to see it reduced.

In any case, we agree with much needed modernization of this board. We support the size reduction of the board, which we believe will make the board more responsive to the university community, better to manage the university and especially, perhaps foremost, performing its important role of oversight of the president.

We do, however, have one criticism that I would respectfully ask the government to address, and that's support staff. So there used to be two support staff members on the university Board of Regents. Support staff have lost all representation on the board. They're the only group that has lost all representation.

And this is something with which the UWFA strongly disagrees. We held to this position in all consultation and discussions with the department informally and formally. It was a unique element of UW board to have support staff, but I believe it represented the culture of the U of W.

Staff, as we all know, are decades-long employees. They bring university service and

employment expertise to the board, something that's— which the board always needs and can always benefit from. Staff are integral to university culture and its governance. They are stakeholders, in our opinion, on the same level as faculty, students, alumni, and certainly on the same level as the United Church.

So we would suggest, respectfully, an amendment to this act to add a single support staff member to keep that representation and to maintain the unique culture of the U of W Board of Regents. This could be done by adding a member to the total. It could be done by reducing the church appointees. It could be done by reducing the government appointees.

In any case, this would, I think, maintain this unique element and ensure that the U of W Board continues as it has in the past to represent all constituencies and all stakeholders at the University of Winnipeg. But I'll stop here and thank, again, the minister and her staff for their work and for their consultation with us on this bill.

Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Dr. Miller.

Are there any questions?

**MLA Cable:** I'm not sure where the camera is here. There. There it is. I appreciate you taking the time to provide your feedback, Dr. Miller. I can appreciate life is very busy so, thank you, again, for your help during the consultations and look forward to continued conversations.

**P. Miller:** Yes, thanks so much. Future NDP voter and University of Winnipeg student is behind me. But no, thanks so much for your work and for your support of the university. And I'll just close by also echoing what Mike just said.

International student health care is foremost in importance to our members as well, and so I'm glad to hear that it's coming. And maybe—I'll have to probably say that's the end of what I've got to say now before I'm pulled off.

So thanks so much.

**The Chairperson:** Any questions from the opposition?

Thank you, Dr. Miller.

I would now like to call upon Ms. Cannan Daree. I apologize if I said your name incorrectly.

Cannan—please proceed with your presentation, Cannan.

**Cannan Daree (University of Winnipeg Students' Association):** Good evening. My name is Cannan Daree, and I am the vice-president, External Affairs, for the University of Winnipeg's Student Association.

As a UWSA representative speaking on behalf of students, I'm here today to speak about Bill 29 and the importance of meaningful student representation in university governance. The Board of Regents makes major decisions that directly impact students. These decisions shape tuition, importance—tuition accessibility, student services and overall direction for—of the university.

Students are not passive observers of these decisions. We live them every single day. The positive aspects of Bill 29 are continuously being highlighted to students. We are told that students will still have representation because two seats remain on the Board of Regents, but what is not being highlighted is what students are losing.

We are being told that we are going from four student seats to two seats. In reality, we are going from eight student seats to two. Historically, students could hold up to eight seats on the Board of Regents. There were four solid student seats connected to the UWSA, as well as two student seats with the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council and two student seats connected to the United Church appointments.

If all student positions had been properly protected and enforced, students should have represented 20 per cent of the board instead of 9.5 per cent. Due to Bill 29, the board is going from 36 members to 21. The overall board is shrinking by 40 per cent and student representation is being reduced to 75 per cent. That is not proportional representation.

Students are the largest stakeholder group in post-secondary education, yet our representation continues to shrink. We are also asking for meaningful consultation. Presenting students with a nearly finalized proposal and asking them to accept it is not consultation, but notification.

Student representation should not be optional; it should be guaranteed within legislation. And I ask this respectfully: Why should certain external stakeholders hold more guaranteed representation than the primary stakeholder of the institution?

We are not asking for special treatment; we are asking for equal and proportional representation, which is four solidified seats on the board. A reduction of eight student representatives to two would effectively disenfranchise students and weaken the

student voices within university governance. As a UWSA representative speaking on behalf of students, we believe students should not merely witness governance, we should actively help shape it.

\* (19:30)

What is often highlighted to us is that many university boards across the country do not include students. But I ask: Is that truly the standard we would like to aspire to? All we are asking is for meaningful representation, proportional representation and guaranteed seats at the table because universities should strengthen student voices in governance and not reduce them.

Thank you so much for listening to me and thank you for your time.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Daree.

Any questions? Oh, sorry. Minister Cable?

**MLA Cable:** I just want to thank you for your time, for coming here and for the engagement with the department and appreciate it very much.

**C. Daree:** Thank you so much for listening. Like I said, I appreciate having a seat on the board, like we said. And, yes, we just hope to hear from you. Thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Any questions from the opposition?

Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Daree.

I would now like to call upon Mr. Alan Koshy.

Mr. Koshy, please proceed with your presentation.

**Alan Koshy (Private Citizen):** Sounds good. Honourable Chair, members of the committee, I appear today as a private resident, a student of philosophy at the University of Winnipeg and a former student leader.

I've seen the mechanics of university governance from the inside, and I know that its strength lies in the ability to balance diverse institutional perspectives. When we looked at Bill 29 from a student's perspective, it's brought forward as a move towards government—or governance efficiency. But we must look at it—but we must look at what is being sacrificed on the altar of efficiency.

Math here is not just unbalanced, it is egregious. The government is reducing the total board size by roughly 40 percentage. However, student representation

is being slashed from eight seats down to just two, a 75 per cent reduction in student voice.

When you cut the largest stakeholder nearly twice as deep as the rust of—rest of the board, you aren't just slimming down a group. It comes forward as a value judgment: the student expertise is the most expendable part of the university mission. While the two remaining seats will be elected by the student association, we must address the vacuum that's left behind.

Previously, there were eight student spots on the board. Four were student elected and the other four ensured a student presence within the wider appointment pools. Under Bill 29, there is no longer a requirement that the general council or the LGIC appointments include students. By removing these mandates, you are effectively building a barrier around the student voice, containing it to a tiny corner of the board rather than integrating into the core of the university's decision-making process.

So the ask is meaningful amendments. Because of this change in seats, I'm asking for specific amendments to the Bill 29 to ensure that student representation is not a courtesy, but a structural requirement. My ask is based on three pillars.

Protected selection and expansion: We need a legislative guarantee that the student appointments are written into the general council and LGIC categories. We cannot leave student presence in these pools to chance or the goodwill of any active group in those pools.

Proportionality: If the board must shrink, the student voice must maintain its current proportional share. A 75 percentage cut to students while the rest of the board is cut by 40 percentage is not proportionality; it is a tragic—it is a targeted reduction of oversight.

And proactive partnership: I would like to point out that accessibility has been brought forward by the current government, and I would like to thank that. And governance is most effective when it is a program—proactive partnership rather than a reactive one. I'm asking this committee to view students not as a group to be managed, but as partners in the university's mission, who provide the lived experience necessary for the board to make informed and equitable decisions.

The 2020 report called for better oversight and accountability. You do not achieve that by removing the people that constitute the biggest stakeholder of

the university. Students are the core of the university's mission. Our lived experience on everything ranging from tuition, campus life, campus safety, all the way to even student services, is the most vital expertise available to any board. We are not merely customers of an institution; we are its primary stakeholders and its first line of accountability.

Reducing the size of the board is a logistical choice, but deciding that the student voice is too much to handle is a choice about value. And I urge this committee to amend Bill 29 to ensure that student representation is protected, proportional and woven into every level of board appointments.

I wish that student voice is not silenced, and—student voice is not silenced, as it is the very people the university has been built to serve.

Thank you.

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

Any questions?

**MLA Cable:** Thank you for joining us, private citizen Alan. Thank you for your service on—your previous service on the UWSA board. You did a fantastic job advocating for students. And I want to assure you that the changes here—there is actually a larger share of student voice in this new arrangement. But I absolutely appreciate all of the sentiments around what you had to say.

And thank you for being here tonight, even when it's no longer your job and you are a private citizen. I really appreciate that.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**A. Koshy:** Thank you so much, and I think the part of the reason we came is we understand the reason of going towards a smaller board. We understand the purpose. And we want to be part of that process in an effective manner. And we want regulations put in place so that student voice doesn't drown out.

And although I'm not in my former role as well, student voice and representation is always going to be a priority for me in every role that I take. Yes.

So thank you. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to speak here and thank you for listening to me, and I hope to continue the conversation going forward.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Any further questions?

Thank you for your time.

I would now like to call upon Jino Distasio.

Mr. Distasio, please proceed with your presentation.

**Jino Distasio (Private Citizen):** Good evening, everyone. I'll try to keep my comments brief.

I would like to start, if the committee will indulge me, in thanking Jan Forster—she took time out to present the changes to the bill to both our senate and last night to our Board of Regents—and to Minister Cable and setting that team up to come out and answer some tough questions and present these important changes.

I'll keep my presentation short. I'd like to echo the comments of our board chair, Michelle Pereira, and really focus on supporting the changes to the bill. I think it's timely that we support change in the governance model of the University of Winnipeg.

And I'll take you back—just, you know, as a faculty member and the interim president, I do like to tell stories. Last week, I was in Calgary and Edmonton at some alumni events. I met alumni from 1965, and we spoke about the role of the United College at the time. And to me, this change is similar to that in that it is a transformative change—not necessarily going from a college to a university, but for modernizing the governance structure that is fundamental to how we operate as a university.

And as some of you know, in one way or one shape or another, the university has stood on those grounds for over 150 years. And we've seen a lot of change. And I think this is an important change. And while that change comes with some challenges to, perhaps, representation, to change in the composition of whether staff are represented, whether our wonderful students are represented by eight—but they still are represented, and the voice of two can be as strong as eight, and if not stronger and more powerful on a smaller board that becomes more nimble.

So, as we, as a university, have moved to a staff and a cohort of over 10,000 in the downtown, I do really think that this is the time that as a public institution, to have the oversight that is possible through this transformative shift in our board. This gives us the ability to have the right set of skills, the right types of committees and to empower a smaller board to do more things. And I think that's the fundamental change from a board of 36 that is not dysfunctional, but it's oversized for the operations that need to be

done. I think at 21, it modernizes us, it brings us in greater alignment with not just the university but I suspect the other post-secondaries as these acts continue to be changed.

\* (19:40)

So, in summary, thank you for the opportunity to present briefly. I support the amendments as presented and thank you very much.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**MLA Cable:** I want to take a moment to thank you for coming tonight and specifically for thanking you for stepping into the interim president role. I know that that is a role that comes with a lot of uncertainty on top of uncertainty, and thank you very much for your service there and for supporting this important legislation.

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Distasio? Any further questions? No? Thank you.

I would now like to call upon Mr. Erik Thomson from the University of Manitoba Faculty Association.

**Erik Thomson (University of Manitoba Faculty Association):** Thank you for allowing me to talk. I did go to the CLC today, but I knew the rule, so I took off my shirt beforehand.

My 1,300 members are not directly implicated in these changes, but I think and hear that these sorts of changes will be coming forward, and I would like to applaud lots of things in these bills. I particularly—sorry, in this bill. I particularly applaud the specification of two Indigenous board members. I applaud making some things that have been internal matters necessary: the conflict of interest, the specification of open meetings by default, more measures for transparency and the exclusion of the president from annual performance reviews.

I also applaud the courage of restricting the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council's appointments. There's of course a necessity for the university to be accountable to the government, but there's also dangers in governments being too involved in the day-to-day running and policy setting of an institution that, among their responsibilities, can be supporting scholars that could criticize or differ from the government in supporting their research. I might ask you to go a little further and also increase the disinterested expertise available to the board and the capability of the board to—and, you know, maybe go beyond and be a leader in university governance, at least in Canada, and not merely follow current best practice.

I might add a new (g)—so suggest an amendment to (g)—to appoint a member of the board named by both the Canadian Association of University Teachers and university Canada, who possesses expert knowledge of Canadian university governance. CAUT and Universities Canada have, in the past, helped shape Manitoba's universities. The University of Manitoba Act was introduced by George Johnson, Walter Weir's minister of Education, invoking the Duff Berdahl Report, a joint report from both of those organizations, one which normally represents the administrators of universities and one which represents the faculties. The University of Winnipeg Act was also formed originally, as it departed from its status of United College, with input from both CAUT and Universities Canada.

Why do I think it might be now necessary to have an expert on the board? Better board governance now is more urgently needed than ever because universities are facing challenges that are faster, and knowing what the best practices is and examples from other places allow the best practice of board governance to take place. It would be ludicrous for an important corporate body—like a bank—to exist without corporate knowledge on that board. And universities are no less important than banks and no less peculiar in the expertise that's required to govern them well. I'll note perhaps it's also an influence of my—an institution from my natal state, one of the universities—New Jersey's universities—which has a very old charter, but on it—on its board universities, it regularly includes members of other universities, administrations and faculties to give that disinterested knowledge about what is best for university policy.

I would think that the Canadian Association of University Teachers and Universities Canada would also be a very Manitoba solution to this problem of disinterested expertise because we very often approach problems by looking for, sort of, employer side and the labour side organizations to come together as a source to recommend expertise that solve problems and look to go ahead.

I don't know whether the government would be willing to give up less power, but I'd argue it is a beautiful thing for governments to govern more effectively by governing less. And so, by reducing, maybe, the Lieutenant Governor's appointments to nine, it would not create additional representational concerns of the sort that we've heard eloquently expressed by students and ex-students here before.

And I hope the government will continue this amendment and applaud its attention to good university governance in the wake of the Auditor General's report of some years ago.

So thank you very much for letting me come and speak.

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

**MLA Cable:** Thank you so much for coming, and I always love when there's a historian in the room, and I forget how much I like to learn about times gone by, so thank you for walking us through some different things.

I really appreciate your solution—or your suggestion about a disinterested party. I think it's very, very interesting. I know that it's making my staff team kind of look a little frantic right now, but I really appreciate the suggestion. And thank you, as always, for providing really good useful feedback. *[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Thomson?

**E. Thomson:** Oh, sorry.

**The Chairperson:** No, it's all good. Mr. Thomson, please proceed.

**E. Thomson:** I apologize to the Speaker; it's something thing I always do when I am here, sorry.

**The Chairperson:** It's all good.

**E. Thomson:** And thank you for your consideration, Minister Cable.

**The Chairperson:** Any further questions?

Thank you for your time.

**Bill 45—The Yellowquill University College Act  
and Amendments to The Advanced  
Education Administration Act**

**The Chairperson:** We will now proceed to Bill 45, The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to the Advanced Education Administration Act.

And I would like to call upon Ms. Bobbi Pompana. We've got a shift change going on.

Did I say your name correctly? *[interjection]* Ms. Popana *[phonetic]*, please proceed.

**Bobbi Pompana (Private Citizen):** Okay, well, good evening everyone that's here. Thank you very much for listening to what Yellowquill needs to say. I was hoping that Doreen, who is the director of the—

Yellowquill, would come up first, but she told me to go ahead—since you called my name, to go ahead.

I just want to introduce myself, first off: My name is Bobbi. I'm from the Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. I've—I come from a strong line of really strong Dakota women, who really fought for women's rights and all of those kinds of things over the years, so, I mean, I sort of continued to do that. And I'm really proud of my heritage and proud of where I come from.

My grandparents and my parents both went to residential school. We were fortunate in that we did not have to go, but we did suffer the consequences of two generations ahead of us going through that route. You know, I think, as being the third generation that I can remember, you know, I worked really hard at becoming a better—a parent—a better parent than my parents were to us because they didn't know how to be parents. And I think that we learned a lot from our—my grandparents' and my parents' mistakes, you know. And people don't normally say we learn lots from other people's mistakes. But, you know, I think I became a better parent because of that.

And I think that the whole—you know, that whole generation—or our whole generations right now still suffer greatly from those experiences that we had back over the years. And, you know—and I think that there's lots that we can still do to fix that.

And, you know, I spent almost my whole education life going through school that did not ever make me proud of being First Nations and didn't ever teach me anything about First Nations people. I mean it was just, I guess, because of my age, when I was going to elementary school, it was just not something that was ever brought up.

You know, things are getting better. Things are improving now. It's still not as good as it should be, but it is improving, and things are getting better. So, I mean, like, I know through elementary, high school, you know, a stint at the college, going to university, that none of those places ever really did what they needed to do, to teach First Nations people to work with First Nations people. And I think that that's one thing that's so important and I think that that's one thing that Yellowquill does really well, right now, is that we understand our people.

\* (19:50)

We know what kinds of knowledge people should have to go work in our organizations or our communities and they learn things that make sense to them, you know, so if we're going to go to—in out into the

workforce, then they—at least they learn how to do that. And I think that that's something that is, I guess, is kind of lacking in some areas right now.

You know, my entire workforce, like my entire work career has always been with First Nations people ever since I graduated from university. It was like every organization or every place I worked was specifically for First Nations people. And I spent lots of years working in Child and Family Services and lots of years working in education. And, I mean, I can safely say that what I learned going to university did not prepare me to go to a First Nations community and work. It just didn't. You know, the expectations, the language, the—it was all kinds of things that sort of get in the way of being able to really work with the people that you're there to work for.

You know, I think that we—like the whole—like with my experience and the whole education, the whole work experiences has always still been kind of a colonial kind of environment. There was government policies—I worked for Child and Family Services for a very long time and there was always a Child and Family Services act that really did not—was not made for First Nations people. You know, 90 per cent of the kids in care were First Nations but the act did not go with that, and it's basically the same with education as well.

I think when we were going through discussions around how do we develop the act, and we talked a lot about reconciliation, we talked a lot about the reality of where our students were going to go work when they graduated. We talked about the reality of how students who were not First Nations, who were going to work with First Nations people, really should learn a whole lot more about that environment: the cultural pieces, the traditional pieces, like those are all really important if you're going to work with that group of people.

And, you know, Yellowquill is open to anybody, and I've done lots of hiring over the years. I mean, I was the director of an agency for over 20 years, I was the CEO of the Southern Network for a few years, I did a stint with Yellowquill as a director of Yellowquill. So I'm like—I know when we're looking to hire people to come and work for us, it's really difficult to find people who have a really good base and a really good understanding of what kinds of things do they need to know to work with First Nations people.

Yes, I don't really want to—no, I won't say. But I just think that one of the things that I think that's

really important for us, too—and we maybe sometimes compare ourselves to other institutions—is that we don't want to create unnecessary barriers for students who want to come to a university college. You know, we have to understand the cultural pieces, the traditional pieces, the way of life, I guess, for First Nations people.

You know, like I know sometimes people or students get—are absent for a week, and it's because someone in their community passed away. And traditionally and culturally, it's really important that you're with your family during that time. So, within our institution, we understand that. We find ways to make sure that students can catch up, they can do the work that they missed while they were gone, because we're not going to expect them to change their cultural values because they want to get an education. Nobody should have to do that.

So, I mean, I think that that's one of the things that we find really important. And I think we all realize as well that, you know, First Nations people generally have gone through a tremendous amount of trauma over the years because of all of the things that have happened to us. You know, our students who come to our school experience those same things as well. You know, so we have to do—and we're prepared to do extra things for our students rather than say, okay, we're going to withdraw you now because you missed too much time, or we're going to withdraw you now because you didn't hand in an assignment.

You know, so I mean, like, we'll work with them, we'll encourage them to continue to stay and to be successful. You know, like sometimes all it takes is for one successful step for them to keep on going in that direction. You know, we've—most of my involvement, I think, with Yellowquill—right now, I'm doing the contract with Yellowquill, working on this process of getting Yellowquill recognized. But most of my involvement has been around education and around our bachelor of relational studies, which is what we call our bachelor of social work program.

And—now we've worked really hard at getting all of our programs accredited. They're all accredited through some accreditation process. And that's all really important, but we also want—like, we were teaching only diploma programs up until 2021 when we started our bachelor of education program.

And it was at that point that we decided that maybe it was necessary to sort of work with the Province, get that recognition so that our teachers would be certified through the certification branch.

And I just—I do want to thank, you know, the Department of Education for their support and all of that because we did get degree-granting status for our education program.

But it's the same with our social work—or our bachelor of relational studies. You know, we attempted to work with other institutions to get some of our courses transferred into their programs, but because our programs are specific to First Nations people, the other institutions don't offer the same programs that we do. You know—and I guess we could, in turn, say the same thing to them if they wanted to transfer to us because they don't teach the same things that we do either.

You know, I think that there's some compromise that we could probably make on how we would work towards that, but our students who would—who came through our child and family service program, which is a two-year diploma, our addictions and mental health program and our Jordan's Principle program, they're all two-year diplomas and there really wasn't any place else for them to go once they finished that, right? If they went to the university, they would have to start all over again from year one, go forward.

So we designed our own program where the—our program was a post-diploma program. If you had one of the diplomas, then you came back for an additional two years and you got a degree in bachelor of relational studies. Our program will be—

**The Chairperson:** Ms. Pompana, your time is up.

**Floor Comment:** Pardon me?

**The Chairperson:** Your time is up.

**Floor Comment:** Oh, okay.

**The Chairperson:** Yes. *[interjection]*

You can finish your comments during the question period if you'd like.

So I will ask Minister Cable—or—if there's any questions.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I would like to waive my time to allow Ms. Pompana to finish, but before I do that, I just want to say—give a sincere thank you for the work that you've engaged in with folks in our department, with legal counsel. It has been a transformational activity for everybody who has been involved, so thank you for pushing for 40 years to get it done.

And I cede my time to have you finish what you're saying. *[interjection]*

**The Chairperson:** Ms. Pompana.

**B. Pompana:** Thank the Premier (Mr. Kinew) because he's had a—he's always had a significant interest in Yellowquill and did spend time coming to our institution quite regularly.

I thank Renée Cable and her staff. You know—and I mean they were excellent. They—we worked really well. We had fun as well as working very, very hard—yes.

The legal writers, I mean that was the very first time I think that legal writers ever sat in on how something was developed and it worked really well. And I wanted to thank them for the work that they've done as well. The secretariat—the reconciliation secretariat was involved as well.

And, of course, our own board of directors and the people who work with DOTC with—and with Yellowquill.

So thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Are there any questions from the opposition? No?

Thank you, Ms. Pompano *[phonetic]*—Pompana. Sorry.

I would now like to call upon Mr. Bruce Unfried.

Did I say your name properly?

**Floor Comment:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Okay, Mr. Unfried. Please proceed with your presentation.

**Bruce Unfried (Private Citizen):** Thank you for the opportunity to make this presentation to the legislative committee.

\* (20:00)

For the purpose of my presentation tonight, I'd like to speak on my own and active involvement with Yellowquill University College, commencing in 2005, when I was invited to be part of a planning committee to develop a diploma program in First Nations Child and Family Services.

After 23 years of working in northern Manitoba and 10 years working in Winnipeg and four years at the University of Manitoba, I decided to join the team, which was led by Dakota Ojibway Child and Family

Services, whose director was Bobbi Pompana—was the push behind the development of the program.

The agency was finding it was difficult to hire staff. It was hard to hire staff from programs at the University of Manitoba and other work—and, often difficult to really send folks into the community, out of school, with, really, a lack of knowledge. And I can speak from experience because that was my own experience coming out of university. Some of the key issues were identified were the lack—lack of trained staff, difficulty in recruiting staff and the reality that newly hired workers from the current post-secondary educations often lacked a basic understanding of cultural relevant practices. It was a learning issue.

We began the—after a series of agency community consultations, the program was launched in September 2007 by Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services in Yellowquill College. The initial site for the program was in Brandon, Manitoba; the program subsequently moved to rented space on Border Street in Winnipeg and into the present site at Yellowquill University College. The two-year program—diploma program prepares students for a career as a child and family services worker with a specific focus on services to children and families in First Nations communities.

I was subsequently hired as the sessional instructor in the diploma program in 2007. I also worked as part of the team with the college in curriculum development for the child and family program. I also was involved in working with the board, management and staff in preparing Yellowquill University College for the external accreditation review. In 2007, seeing Yellowquill University College was approved for a 10-year accreditation by the National Indigenous Accreditation in the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium.

Particular attention in the work at Yellowquill College also was spurred on by the provincial government. And the—this government was the first government in my tenure in Manitoba to take a lead role with the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry child-welfare initiative. The report of the eight—Aboriginal Justice Inquiry came out in 1991; the real action started about 1999. And the change brought about some major changes in the recommendations and work of agencies.

We also work with students in helping students understand the history of the residential schools, also a history of the various types of institutions where students were—children and families were placed. So we had major working issues to go with. Currently,

now, the difficulty has always been—is that the work has always been governed by the provincial Child and Family Services Act. And, really, what that does—we know historically—it has had major problems for families.

The major change occurred in 2003 when The Child and Family Services Authorities Act came in, and the duties and powers of the authorities were changed. But, again, it made major changes in terms of jurisdiction, expanded jurisdiction. It created the four authorities. It set up regional agencies, designated intake agencies, et cetera. But, again, the problem was in one part of the act as agencies—First Nations agencies in Manitoba tried to struggle with developing their own standards. They were handcuffed by the authorities act. Section 19 of the authorities act says it ensures that culturally appropriate standards for services, practices, procedures are developed. The next section says they must conform to provincial standards. And that has always been a drawback.

So, again, it does have a potential to make changes. What has changed everything, in my view, is in 2020, the federal legislation, an Act respecting First Nations, Inuit, Métis children, youth and families. This came into force. The Peguis First Nations child and family services is the sole agency in Manitoba that has their own jurisdictional agency with the new legislation. The act is more important that it allows communities to decide what's the best care for their families and children.

The—in 2024, again, this government introduced bill 38, an Act respecting Child and Family Services Indigenous Jurisdiction. The bill affirms the right of Indigenous people to exercise jurisdiction. So they moved the legislation into a federal one to ensure that it met the legislation part. So right now where we are today with the key passages of the new legislation, it does now allow—allow for the jurisdictional development of culturally appropriate standards.

I speak in support of the legislation before you tonight, which recognizes Yellowquill University College as a formally approved university college and ensures recognition as a legitimate post-secondary education provider within the Manitoba system.

In my view, Yellowquill University College is strategically positioned to take on a key role in partnering with students and communities, incorporating a new learning environment for children and families. And, again, you'll be making decisions over the next little while for the passage of the legislation.

And the other part that is important too is the 'pursuit'—the post-secondary education system is often described as a two-pillar system: universities and colleges. The current bill will enable Yellowquill University College to become the third pillar as a learning institution focused on cultural values and tradition in their learning structure.

In closing, I'd like to refer to an article entitled: Study probes experiences of Indigenous grads, in Winnipeg Free Press, May 4, 2026. The Canadian Centre of Policy Alternatives conducted a series of research and made series of recommendations to better support students from under-represented populations to complete post-secondary programs. Researchers found that intergenerational trauma, mental health challenges, caregiving responsibilities and institutional racism are often barriers to enrolment and completion of higher education.

Yellowquill university's mission confirms the need to embrace all learners and provide a holistic education and training. Bill 45, in my view, will ensure the continuance of human and financial resources to continue on Yellowquill University College's journey with a renewed focus on accessibility and inclusiveness aligned with respect for Indigenous learning.

Thank you.

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

**MLA Cable:** I sincerely thank you for your years of service to community, for teaching learners along the way and for being here tonight to speak in support of this. Thank you very, very much.

**The Chairperson:** Mr. Unfried, any questions? Okay. No? It's all good. Thank you for your time.

I would now like to call upon Doreen Stranger.

Sorry, and how do I say your name?

**Doreen Stranger (Yellowquill University College):** Oh, sorry. I'm Doreen Stranger, interim director of Yellowquill University College.

**The Chairperson:** It is.

Thank you, Ms. Stranger. Please go ahead.

**D. Stranger:** Good evening, members of the standing committee, ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to be able to present to you today and grateful for this opportunity such as this, to have worked with members of the government of Manitoba.

The—this conversation cannot begin without naming the legacy of the Canadian Indian residential school system. That system was just not—was not just about schools, it was about control: control over language, identity, knowledge and future generations. And while those institutions are no longer operating, the impacts are still with us today in education gaps, in language loss and in systems that were never designed for First Nations learners.

Change is needed. For generations, First Nations people have had to enter education systems that did not reflect who they are, systems where language was removed, knowledge was dismissed and success was defined by someone else.

\* (20:10)

The question we are facing today is just—not just about access to education. It is about who controls education. The Yellowquill University College Act is a significant step forward. It formerly recognizes Yellowquill University College as a First Nation post-secondary institution in Manitoba. More importantly, it does something deeper. It gives Yellowquill the authority to grant its own degrees, which we already have; it affirms its right to design its own programs, which we already do; it protects its ability to embed First Nations language, culture and knowledge into education; and it establishes a knowledge circle as an Indigenous-led academic authority. This is just not inclusion into an existing system. This is the recognition of a different system, one grounded in First Nation ways of knowing.

At the heart of this act is something more powerful: educational sovereignty. For far too long, First Nations education has been shaped by external institutions. This act changes that. It affirms that First Nation communities have the right to define what knowledge is, decide how it is taught and determine what success looks like. The knowledge circle is a clear example of this, placing academic decision making in the hands of those who carry the knowledge, the culture and responsibility. This is what self-determination looks like in education.

Language is not just a communication; it's a world view. Languages like the Ojibwe language, the Cree language, the Dakota language, carry teachings, relationships and ways of understanding the world. When education systems do not support these languages, something much deeper is lost. This act ensures that language, culture and traditional knowledge are not added on but are foundational.

We often hear the word reconciliation, but reconciliation must be more than statements; it must be action. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada called for meaningful change in education. This act answers that call. It moves us from intention to implementation, from acknowledgement to accountability. What does this mean for our students? It means learning in an environment that reflects who they are, seeing their language and identity valued and being supported not just academically but culturally and spiritually. It means higher success, stronger identity and real opportunity. This is not just about education outcomes. It is about well-being, belonging and future generations.

This act not only benefits First Nation communities. It strengthens Manitoba as a whole. It builds more inclusive and effective education systems. It contributes to workforce development, and it supports healthier—healthy, stronger communities. And it positions Manitoba as a leader in Indigenous-led education.

What happens if nothing is done? We risk continuing the same systems that already have failed many learners. We risk losing more language, losing knowledge systems and missing a real opportunity for change. Doing nothing is not neutral; it maintains the status quo.

This act is more—about more than legislation. It is about who holds knowledge, who defines it and who it serves. It is about creating a future where First Nations' education is not shaped by limitation but by strength, culture and self-determination. Today there is an opportunity to move reconciliation from words into law, and that matters not just for today but for generations to come.

In closing, I want to thank all of you for listening, for working with us and especially Minister Cable for allowing your staff and working with us to bring this forward today. I've been at Yellowquill for 37 years now, and this is, I guess, what we've been working towards in the end.

Thank you very much.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you, Ms. Stranger.

**MLA Cable:** Yes, gosh, I thought I could get through this tonight without crying, but I need to thank you for your patience in getting us to this place and for having the fortitude and the vision to keep pushing. And I am so filled with gratitude and hope for what comes from this.

**The Chairperson:** Ms. Stranger, go ahead.

**D. Stranger:** I was just going to say we are—I am touched.

Thank you for your kind words.

**The Chairperson:** Any further questions or comments?

Thank you, Ms. Stranger.

We will now go back to Bill 11, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences), and I will call upon Ms. Fernanda Vallejo.

Ms. Fernanda Vallejo? Ms. Fernanda Vallejo will be dropped.

We move on to Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act.

And we will go to Ms. Joan Stimson—David Grant. David Grant? David Grant will be removed from the list.

Ms. Fernanda Vallejo? Ms. Vallejo will be removed from the list.

Ms. Joan Stimson?

Debra Vandekerkhove? Mrs. Vandekerkhove will be removed from the list—oh, sorry.

#### **Bill 19—The Animal Care Amendment Act** (Continued)

**Debra Vandekerkhove (Manitoba Animal Alliance):** Hi there.

**The Chairperson:** My apologies. Can you please show your video?

**D. Vandekerkhove:** Yes, I will.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

**D. Vandekerkhove:** There you go. Can you see me?

**The Chairperson:** Yes. Ms. Vandekerkhove, please go ahead with your presentation.

**D. Vandekerkhove:** Hi everyone. Excuse me, I'm in my garage right now. I just got home. My name is Deb Vandekerkhove. I'm the managing director of Manitoba Animal Alliance. I wanted to say firstly that we do operate on Treaty 1, 2 and 5, with a commitment to reconciliation and also the Calls to Action number 18, 19 and 22 and how it applies to our work and partnerships in Indigenous communities.

I've been at the forefront of animal health safety and neglect and care and abandonment of companion pets for over 15 years in Manitoba. Manitoba Animal Alliance has helped re-home approximately 18,500 companion pets.

We spay and neuter over a thousand animals per year in the past five years and are the original grassroots team that introduced the non-surgical birth control implants in Manitoba in 2012. Since then, we've implanted over 3,000 dogs and have been collecting data and doing research on the lifespan and health of each dog, specifically in Cross Lake, Manitoba and Norway House, Manitoba.

When we first originally started in 2012, the lifespan of a dog in one of these communities was approximately 1.6 years. We found that a lot of the dogs weren't even living past the life of the birth control implants. Since then, we've been able, with the work that we do in the communities, the health score that has gone from a two out of 10 or one and a half out of 10 has gone up to an average of four to five out of 10. And we are also seeing an extension of lives to anywhere from three to seven years on a lot of dogs.

So work within communities and working with communities does help when it comes to being present and contributing to those communities with their health and safety programs for people and pets.

\* (20:20)

We're not funded in any way by any government entity, and we are volunteers, so we 100 per cent fundraise for everything that we do.

Our remote independent clinics are typically held in northern Manitoba, central Manitoba and one in a rural municipality. For your consideration today we are focusing in two areas of concern: one is the rural Manitoba backyard breeders and puppy mills and what we believe is a good framework for the—for an efficient animal welfare act.

I attend animal prosecution conferences every year and have for the past five years, which gives me some experience and reminds me of how I should be writing when we are registering a complaint of an animal that needs the Province to step in and take over.

Rural backyard breeders and puppy mills I'm going to speak about at the end. I'm more focusing on the animal welfare act and how it operates. This act should be incorporated within a teamwork framework from the phone call of an animal welfare concern all

the way to a Crown attorney's office. We would like to start with what we have done—what we have as a framework now, which most people on this panel are probably already aware of, and acknowledge the new framework of animal welfare that's been seen across Canada in many of the conferences that I've attended.

The Five Freedoms is the basic platform that we are currently working out of with Manitoba, which is freedom from thirst, hunger, malnutrition, freedom from thermal or physical condition, freedom from pain, injury and disease—don't mind me, I have to switch my page—freedom from fear and distress and freedom to express normal behaviour.

One of the concerns that we have with the current Manitoba Animal Care Act is the subjective view of the Five Freedoms and what it looks like when it is—what it looks like based on an animal care officer's opinion. It is based on opinion and not written directly into The Animal Care Act how and what suffering animals go through.

And this is just a little question to the panel: When there is no specific offence in The Animal Care Act, for example, in regards to an animal that's tied up to a dog house for its entire life, because of this humane act, it still remains subjective under our Manitoba care act. How do you think a dog feels when he's tied up on a chain to a house for his entire life? Probably not very good.

We're all very well aware of the unethical practices of some sled dog owners. I myself have been witness to many dogs who have been tied up their entire life, only to be pulled out the odd time to be attached to a sled for a race. One particular person in this industry in Manitoba that still exists, we have seen first-hand on the ground and experienced the neglect that these dogs live and die to.

As myself going to a entire sled dog group of animals that was being surrendered it is still traumatizing for me thinking about what we saw: the three-foot chains and what these dogs had to experience their entire life. All of those 21 dogs, by the way, have been adopted.

So trauma for the volunteer animal rescue people such as ourselves is what we see, especially when we are faced with an entire sled dog team that's in crisis that we're asked to take—the smell, their lives, the desperation—this will all be forever etched in my mind.

While the Five Freedoms have shaped evidence-based investigations, animal welfare and what we know of suffering has evolved completely. We no

longer accept that evidence-based investigations is the only way that investigations can be done. Under the new and widely internationally accepted animal welfare model changes from the basic Five Freedoms to the Five Domains Model. I've attached a couple of photographs of some more simplistic Five Domains model and the standard Five Freedoms model for everyone's viewing. You can easily google the model and it'll get into much more depth as to what the five—this domain model, what it represents.

*The Vice-Chairperson in the Chair*

The five-domain model, which has been widely used since 1994, specifically being introduced to many provinces in Canada and used in court testimony on cases of animal abuse and neglect in regards to animal welfare. The five-domain model also recognizes animals as 'sentinent' beings and dives deep into the specific framework to create the address of 'sentinent' beings: their emotional needs, their physiological needs, their psychological harm and the damage done to an animal when they are neglected, suffering or abused.

What the five-domain model does and why it is important for us to use as a guideline for investigating officers in Manitoba and basic framework for the Manitoba Animal Care Act. This has been a proven model not only based on subjectivity of limited written guidelines, but it also provides a closure in gaps in the animal welfare act. It is set up to provide more detailed report writing for Crown attorneys when presenting animal welfare cases.

A change in the current animal welfare act—a charge under the current animal welfare act is a lot of times just a charge. And for somebody such as myself who works every single day with RCMP officers and doing reports, we both—you know, those teams and ourselves, we know what goes on in communities and how difficult it is to actually charge someone.

*The Chairperson in the Chair*

This is a proven model, and it's not based on subjectivity of limited written guidelines. This is to provide a closure in the gaps of the animal welfare act and to provide more detailed report writing for Crown attorneys when presenting animal welfare cases. A charge under the current animal welfare act may not—we may not see very many charges and convictions from those charges. A lot of times, even with the reports that we have done and the people that have actually been charged, it hasn't really gotten anywhere.

As a director that's been—this has been a part of—that's been a part of many animal welfare charges. I can honestly say that, without presenting a case in the victim's eyes, animal abusers are more—are being slapped on the hand versus longer sentences. So that's really important to us—

**The Chairperson:** Ms. Vandekerkhove, your time is up. Perhaps you can finish during the question period.

And I'll call on Minister Kostyshyn.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, Debra. Very, very interesting comparison in your region, and I want to compliment you and your team for what you do. And it's a tireless job and sometimes you kind of wonder whether—how rewarding it is because you just continue to work all the time, trying to stay ahead of the problem.

But I take your comments very seriously, and I think as we start to kind of finalize the information and policies as we move forward on this, I think your thoughts and some of your ideas are going to be very helpful to kind of fulfill our wishes of finalizing some of the important policy procedures as we move forward.

So thank you so much, Debra, for that.

**D. Vandekerkhove:** Thank you. I said thank you. Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Are there any questions from the opposition?

Okay. Thank you, Ms. Vandekerkhove.

I will now call Joan Stimson. Joan Stimson? Joan Stimson will be removed from the list.

Ms. Julie Braga? Ms. Braga will be removed from the list.

Jennifer Thomas? Ms. Thomas will be removed from the list.

\* (20:30)

Lori Zahara? And Lori Zahara will be 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?

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** Numeric.

**The Chairperson:** Numerical? Is that the will of the House—or the committee, sorry. *[Agreed]*

We will now proceed with a clause-by-clause consideration of these bills.

**Bill 11—The Employment Standards  
Code Amendment Act  
(Sick Notes for Employee Absences)**  
*(Continued)*

**The Chairperson:** Bill 11.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 11 have an opening statement?

**Hon. Malaya Marcelino (Minister of Labour and Immigration):** I want to thank everyone for joining us tonight to discuss the proposed amendments to the Employment Standards Code.

The purpose of this bill is to limit when an employer may require a sick note for an employee who is absent from work due to illness or injury. Employers may only require a sick note if an employee's absence continues for more than a week or if an employee has been absent or—on more than 10 days—10 working days rather, in the same calendar year.

When a sick note can be requested, it may be issued by a variety of health professionals. Also, where an employer requests an employee to provide a sick note after the restricted period, the employee will be entitled to reimbursement from their employer for costs of the sick note if incurred.

This bill also provides clarity to verification requirements for long-term protected leaves. With these changes, Manitoba builds on restrictions found in other Canadian jurisdictions that implemented sick note restrictions, including the federal government, British Columbia, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Saskatchewan. Educating employers on these changes will be a key focus to support the changes and ease the transition away from sick notes.

Doctors Manitoba has introduced new supports for employers, including a new educational toolkit and webinars in partnership with Chartered Professional in Human Resources Manitoba, Manitoba Chambers of Commerce, and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. These changes will ensure that employees can focus on rest and recovery at home from shorter term illnesses, employers can better plan for longer term leave requests and physicians can

redirect the time saved to better meet the needs of Manitobans.

I thank all members of the Labour Management Review Committee and Doctors Manitoba for their valued expertise and invaluable support. I also want to acknowledge and thank all who have made the time today to be part of this process.

Thank you.

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

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

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.

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

Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; clauses 4 and 5—pass; clauses 6 through 11—pass; clause 12—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 19—The Animal Care Amendment Act**  
*(Continued)*

**The Chairperson:** We will move on to Bill 19.

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

**An Honourable Member:** Yes, I do, Madam Chair, thank you.

**The Chairperson:** Minister Kostyshyn.

**Hon. Ron Kostyshyn (Minister of Agriculture):** Thank you to the Chair and the committee members. Special thank you to the presenters. I very much appreciate what I've heard today.

On behalf of Manitoba Agriculture, and I'm very pleased to speak on Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act. Manitoba is strengthening animal welfare protection by modernizing the act. We are making important changes and we're increasing the maximum fines for serious offences. We've fallen behind from several other provinces. There should be more strong deterrence for people that animal abuse.

We're also setting up new licence requirements for the sale or transfer of pets. In this process, it is proposed that we will be initially focusing on dogs.

Exceptions to licensing and fees will be set out in the animal care regulation following consultation.

As we establish this approach, we're also going to be focusing on education. The most important thing that the public can do is to stop puppy mills, is to look for signs of ethnobreeding. That means viewing of the breeder's facilities, meeting with the puppy parents and confirming veterinarian care as we move forward to intend to communicate to the public how important it is that they will look for these signs.

The bill also makes other changes. This allows us to do more—adopt—quickly adopt animal health and welfare codes and standards. These standards are supported by animal industry of quality assurance programs.

Lastly, the bill also addresses some procedural matters when Manitoba pursues a court order with individuals who are no longer able to care for their animals. And we need to ensure people have access to the justice while also preserving our strong system of animal protection.

It is our intention to bring forward regulatory changes to support this bill. I've mentioned some elements, including exemptions to licensing, and we also intend to make it an offence to abandon pet animals.

In summary, we are bringing forward significant changes to support animal welfare in our province.

Thank you, honourable Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Konrad Narth (La Vérendrye):** I'd like to thank everyone for being here this evening. Participation is a critical element in our democracy and I'm sure all members are pleased that you have taken advantage of this opportunity to speak and be heard on Bill 19.

Legislation created in a vacuum is almost guaranteed to be bad legislation. It is vital the government of the day listen to your concerns whether you are in favour of their approach or oppose it.

I believe it is also incumbent on the government to take into account what is raised here this evening and make necessary adjustments to their plan to ensure it works in the best interest and—in the best interest of those affected and not unduly burdened.

In the case of this bill, I'll briefly share our position as the official opposition. We all love animals. We all are wanting animals to be dealt with in a manner that is kind and responsible. And we are not opposed to reasonable restrictions to ensure that that happens.

However, with this legislation, as is characteristic of so many of the government's bills, we're concerned about sloppy planning and unintended consequences, consequences that are too often the opposite of the government's good intentions.

One example is how this legislation will affect veterinarians, which the province already has a shortage of. Another is how easy or complex getting these new licences will be. Given this government's regulatory track record, I'm not optimistic about their ability to implement something that is common sense or user-friendly.

There's also legitimate concerns about potential government overreach. If I live on a farm and I want to sell or gift my dog to my neighbour, why on earth does the government need to be involved in that private transaction? Why potentially criminalize law-abiding citizens? And if enforcement is not to be stringent, then why undertake the effort to legislate this in the first place?

So we think the intention here is good, but there are legitimate questions and concerns, as we have heard from many of the presenters tonight. I hope that the regulation that forms as a result of tonight's committee and the planning for this legislation will take those into consideration.

**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.

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

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; clauses 4 through 7—pass; clause 8—pass; clauses 9 through 11—pass; clauses 12 and 13—pass; clause 14—pass; clauses 15 and 16—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

**Bill 29—The University of Winnipeg  
Amendment Act**  
(Continued)

**The Chairperson:** We will now move on to Bill 29—is that right? Okay, thank you.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 29 have an opening statement?

**An Honourable Member:** Yes.

**The Chairperson:** Minister Cable.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** Thank you so much. I appreciate the committee's time tonight and I want to thank the committee and everybody that prepared a presentation in advance and came to present at committee.

If members are interested in reading Hansard after this—these proceedings, there are some fantastic written submissions that were made on this bill and I thank those folks for sending them in.

Bill 29, The University of Winnipeg Amendment Act, modernizes the university. Manitoba has a strong and co-ordinated post-secondary sector where each of our institutions plays a unique role. I am pleased to move forward with legislation for the University of Winnipeg that will modernize governance to build on the strengths of the sector.

Our government respects institutional autonomy and the principles of academic freedom. Good governance strengthens institutional autonomy and is the foundation on which our public colleges and universities operate and make decisions.

Governance is not flashy, but when it goes wrong there are significant and often public implications. The University of Winnipeg is the first institution we prioritize for governance modernization as part of a broader set of work to strengthen oversight and accountability across Manitoba's post-secondary system.

This work addresses recommendations arising from the Office of the Auditor General. It is informed by extensive system-wide consultations and best practices, these Auditor General recommendations that sat on the desks of the opposition.

Bill 29 proposes to reduce the board to 21 members while ensuring diverse representation and effective operation. In addition, this proposed bill updates the legislation to strengthen clarity and enhance transparency and accountability.

Bill 29 strengthens governance by adopting stronger conflict-of-interest rules and clearer presidential oversight provisions. This bill enables the board to make bylaws, to govern in-camera meetings and support more transparent and consistent practices, including around confidentiality and the handling of decision records.

The bill further strengthens oversight of institutional leadership by requiring the board to make bylaws providing for an annual performance review of the university president.

Stakeholders were united in their feedback that strengthening diversity and inclusion to 'reflect—reflect different lived experience was essential, and we listened. Bill 29 reflects the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in modern public governance by including Indigenous representation. Its expectations that the board's composition and practices reflect the community the institution serves while continuing to support a skills-based approach to governance. These provisions allow—align with sound governance principles and help ensure that boards can carry out their oversight responsibilities appropriately.

This bill focuses on governance structures, how the board is composed, how it conducts work and how it exercises oversight. It does not impact institutional autonomy nor does it interfere with academic freedom.

Taken together, these changes lay the groundwork for stronger accountability, clearer processes and a more effective governance model for the University of Winnipeg.

I appreciate the views and contributions that have been shared as this bill proceeds through the House. And, once again, I want to thank all of the members of the community, of the University of Winnipeg for sharing in the extensive consultation around this process and for coming tonight to share their views on this bill.

Thank you.

\* (20:40)

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

Does the member—does the critic from the official opposition have an opening statement?

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.

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

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Clauses 1 and 2—pass; clauses 3 and 4—pass; clauses 5 through 8—pass; clauses 9 through 12—pass; clauses 13 and 14—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

### **Bill 35—The Adult Learning Centres Amendment Act**

**The Chairperson:** We will now move on to Bill 35.

Does the minister—oh, yes. Does the minister have an opening statement?

**An Honourable Member:** I do.

**The Chairperson:** Minister Cable.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I want to thank the folks who came tonight to see this through at committee stage and thank all of the folks who contributed to this legislation and to ensuring that it came to this stage.

Bill 35 removes the mandatory requirement that First Nations must partner with a registered educational institution for three years before operating an adult learning centre independently. Making this partnership requirement optional through amendments to The Adult Learning Centres Act recognizes the autonomy of First Nations and their right to determine the adult education model that best aligns with their community priorities, governance structures and capacity.

Partnerships can be beneficial for some communities and will remain an option. However, the mandatory requirement has created delays and barriers for many First Nations that are already well positioned to meet the learning needs of their communities.

Bill 35 addresses this by introducing an additional pathway, allowing First Nations to apply for stand-alone status without first completing the three-year partnership requirement. This amendment does not change the act's existing registration, accountability or operational requirements. First Nations band councils, like all operators, must follow the established application process and meet program and quality standards to ensure learners receive recognized education.

The amendment supports more timely access to adult education and enables First Nations communities to respond more quickly to local learner needs. The need in First Nations communities is clear. In 2024-25, Indigenous learners represented 42 per cent of all adult learners in Manitoba. In the North, Indigenous learners account for nearly all learners, the vast majority of whom identify as First Nations.

By increasing access to adult education in First Nations communities, this amendment supports Manitoba's economic growth, particularly in the North, by preparing learners for further training and employment opportunities.

Bill 35 is another important step in advancing our commitment to truth and reconciliation by supporting greater self-determination in education and removing barriers that no longer reflect the realities and strengths of First Nations communities.

I appreciate all of the input and thoughtful correspondence with various groups, and I want to thank the committee.

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

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

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; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

\* (20:50)

### **Bill 45—The Yellowquill University College Act and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act** *(Continued)*

**The Chairperson:** We will now move on to Bill 45.

Bill 45. Does the minister have an opening statement?

**An Honourable Member:** I do.

**The Chairperson:** Minister Cable.

**Hon. Renée Cable (Minister of Advanced Education and Training):** I want to thank everyone who came tonight to speak on Bill 45 and, very specifically, the leadership at Yellowquill University College and legislative legal counsel, who went above and beyond

to really embark on a journey that government has never taken before in truly co-developing legislation. And they're sitting behind me and I want to make sure that the record shows that you were—

**The Chairperson:** We should not involve the gallery. Sorry, Minister.

**MLA Cable:** I want to thank Leg. legal counsel and acknowledge the incredible work and transformational work that this is. I think today about the honourable Justice Murray Sinclair and his words that education got us into this mess and education will get us out. And today, I am very, very proud to be part of a government that understands the obligation of helping to right wrongs that were made.

Bill 45 formally establishes Yellowquill University College as a university college with authority to offer degree programs. It is a first-of-its-kind public bill in Manitoba that recognizes an Indigenous-led post-secondary institution as an integral part of our education 'systide'—system. This bill is also unique and historic as it is legislation that was co-developed directly with Yellowquill. The approach was collaborative and grounded in principles of transparency, respect and inclusion.

Yellowquill has been providing culturally grounded, community-driven education for more than 40 years. Yet, despite its long-standing leadership, it has never been formally recognized in statute. This legislation changes that. It affirms First Nations governance, Indigenous control of Indigenous education and a nation-to-nation approach rooted in respect, partnership and reconciliation.

Manitoba's current framework recognizes public universities and colleges, private vocational institutions and private religious institutions, but not Indigenous-governed post-secondary institutions. Recognizing Yellowquill with degree-granting authority affirms Indigenous knowledge systems within Manitoba's post-secondary landscape. This bill is reconciliation in action as it advances some of the most transformational changes in Manitoba's post-secondary education system in many years.

The bill advances our government's commitment to renewed relationships with Indigenous peoples, strengthening nation-to-nation relationships and supporting Indigenous people's inherent right to self-determined education. It responds to TRC calls to actions 10 and 11 by supporting culturally appropriate curricula, protecting language rights and eliminating

barriers for First Nations students pursuing post-secondary education.

Upon enactment, Yellowquill will become Manitoba's first fully recognized First Nations-owned and operated post-secondary institution with degree-granting authority.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to representatives from Yellowquill for their time and commitment to this first-ever process in reaching this monumental shared accomplishment.

Thank you. Miigwech. Maarsii.

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

Does the critic from the opposition have an opening statement?

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

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Shall clause 1 pass?

**An Honourable Member:** No.

**MLA Cable:** My proposed amendment to Bill 45 is the Yellowquill at—university—oh, pardon me.

I move

*THAT Clause 1 of the bill be amended by replacing the definition "Yellowquill University College" with the following:*

**"Yellowquill University College"** means the corporation continued under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* with the amended name "Yellowquill University College Incorporated". (« Yellowquill University College »)

**The Chairperson:** It has been moved by the Honourable Minister Cable

*THAT Clause 1—of bill—of the Bill be amended by replacing the definition "Yellowquill University College" with the following—*

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**The Chairperson:** Dispensed?

The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

Is the committee ready for the question?

**Some Honourable Members:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** Shall the amendment pass—the question before the committee as is—is as followed.

*THAT Clause 1 of the Bill be amended—*

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**The Chairperson:** Thank you.

Amendment—pass; clause 1 as amended—pass; clauses 2 and 3—pass.

Shall clause 4 pass?

**An Honourable Member:** No, I have an amendment.

**The Chairperson:** Minister Cable.

**MLA Cable:** I move

*THAT Clause 4(3) of the Bill be amended by striking out everything after "by-laws or in" and substituting "the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act."*

**The Chairperson:** The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions. *[interjection]* It has been moved by Minister Cable

*THAT—*

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**The Chairperson:** The amendment is in order.

The floor is open for questions.

Is the committee ready for the question?

**An Honourable Member:** Question.

**The Chairperson:** The question before the committee is as follows: The Yellowquill—

*THAT Clause 4—*

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**The Chairperson:** Amendment—pass; clause 4 as amended—pass; clauses 5 through 7—pass; clause 8—pass; clauses 9 and 10—pass; clause 11—pass; clause 12 and 13—pass; clauses 14 and 15—pass; preamble—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill as amended be reported.

The hour being 8:58, what is the will of the committee?

**Some Honourable Members:** Committee rise.

**The Chairperson:** Committee rise.

**COMMITTEE ROSE AT:** 8:58 p.m.

## WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 11

The Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) represents all public school boards in Manitoba and the Manitoba Institute of Trades and Technology (MITT). MSBA advocates on behalf of its members to ensure the continued strength, responsiveness, and sustainability of public education in Manitoba.

MSBA appreciates the opportunity to provide comments respecting Bill 11, The Employment Standards Code Amendment Act (Sick Notes for Employee Absences).

Bill 11 proposes amendments to The Employment Standards Code to limit the circumstances under which an employer may require an employee to provide a sick note. Specifically, an employer may only request a sick note where an absence exceeds seven consecutive days or where an employee has been absent for more than ten scheduled workdays within the same calendar year. The Bill also expands the categories of health professionals who may issue a sick note and requires employers to reimburse reasonable costs associated with obtaining such documentation.

The Bill implements recommendations advanced through the Labour Management Review Committee (LMRC) process and reflects a broader effort to reduce administrative burden while supporting access to health care services. MSBA is therefore supportive of the overall intent and direction of Bill 11.

In particular, MSBA recognizes and supports:

- The effort to reduce unnecessary administrative burden associated with sick notes;
- The acknowledgement of pressures within the health care system and the need to prioritize patient care;
- The expansion of recognized health professionals who may provide documentation; and
- The reliance on recommendations developed through the Labour Management Review Committee (LMRC).

MSBA also strongly supports the continued use of the LMRC as a collaborative, consensus-based mechanism for reviewing proposed legislative changes impacting employers and employees. The LMRC process provides an important forum through which balanced and practical policy recommendations can be advanced.

While Bill 11 is broadly applicable across sectors, its implementation has practical implications for school divisions as employers.

School Divisions operate within a distinct legislative and administrative framework under The Public Schools Act. In particular, school division governance, operational planning, and financial management are structured around the school year (July 1 to June 30), rather than the calendar year (January 1 to December 31).

This distinction has direct implications for how employee absences are tracked, managed, and reported within school divisions. Our recommendation is to therefore amend Bill 11 to better promote alignment with the school year framework

Bill 11 currently establishes a threshold tied to absences occurring within a calendar year. MSBA recommends that the legislation be amended to allow for an alternative 12-month period to better align with sectors that operate on a different statutory or operational cycle. Specifically, MSBA recommends that Bill 11 be amended to permit employers to apply the 10-day absence threshold over an alternative 12-month period, such as a school year (July 1 to June 30), where appropriate.

This adjustment would:

- Align legislative requirements with existing tracking and budgeting systems in the K 12 public education sector;
- Reduce administrative complexity for tracking systems;
- Support more accurate and efficient human resource management practices; and
- Maintain the intent and integrity of the Bill while allowing for necessary operational flexibility.

This proposed amendment is narrow in scope and does not alter the policy objective of the legislation. Rather, it ensures that implementation is practical and consistent with existing statutory frameworks governing public education.

MSBA notes that other Canadian jurisdictions have adopted approaches that incorporate flexible 12-month measurement periods and similar thresholds when determining when a medical note may be requested. For example:

- Saskatchewan (Employment Standards Act, s. 2-40(3)) provides that employers may not request a medical note unless an employee has been absent

for five consecutive days or has taken two or more non-consecutive sick days within a 12-month period;

- Nova Scotia (April 2023 amendments) provides that employers may not request a medical note unless an employee has been absent for more than five working days or has already had two absences of five or fewer days in the previous 12 months; and
- Quebec (October 2024 amendments) similarly allows for thresholds to be assessed over a 12-month period.

MSBA encourages the Committee to consider approaches such as these, which maintain the policy objective of reducing unnecessary administrative burden while providing flexibility in how absence thresholds are calculated. Incorporating similar language in Bill 11 would support consistency with other jurisdictions and ensure that Manitoba employers, including school divisions, are able to implement the legislation in a practical and efficient manner.

As with other amendments to employment standards legislation, MSBA emphasizes the importance of:

- Clear communication and guidance to employers;
- Adequate implementation timelines; and
- Ongoing consultation with stakeholders, including MSBA and school divisions, as regulations or guidance are developed.

In closing, MSBA appreciates the Government's efforts to modernize The Employment Standards Code and reduce unnecessary administrative requirements related to sick notes. MSBA supports the intent of Bill 11 and the collaborative LMRC process through which its recommendations were developed. At the same time, MSBA encourages a minor but very important amendment to ensure alignment with the school-year-based operational framework of Manitoba's school system.

By incorporating flexibility with respect to the 12-month reference period, the legislation can better reflect the realities of public sector employers while maintaining its policy objectives.

MSBA looks forward to continued engagement with Government as this legislation proceeds and is implemented.

Cheryl Smukowich  
Manitoba School Boards Association

Re: Bill 19

To whom it may concern

I am in full support of stricter rules for breeding or punishment for animal abuse

Michelle Costantini

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Re: Bill 19

We need better legislation on welfare, education, and support for dogs and cats.

Nicole Jutras-Scott

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Re: Bill 19

I firmly believe our government must step up when it comes to animal welfare. Please consider strengthening our animal welfare laws with this bill.

Zoe Gourdie

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Re: Bill 19

Dear Chair and Members of the Standing Committee,

On behalf of Manitoba Animal Save, we welcome this opportunity to provide feedback on Bill 19, The Animal Care Amendment Act. While we appreciate the provincial government's intent to modernize animal welfare laws and increase penalties for cruelty, we believe that Bill 19 must go even further to protect the most vulnerable animals in our province: those within the food system. Manitoba has a massive agricultural sector, with millions of farmed animals who receive almost no protections under the law.

Manitoba Animal Save urges the Committee to consider the following recommendations to ensure Bill 19 truly protects all animals from distress.

#### 1. Codifying the NFACC Codes of Practice (Section 3)

We support the inclusion of codes and standards in Section 3 but urge the government to explicitly adopt the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) Codes of Practice as the minimum legal requirement for farmed animals. Without clear, enforceable standards, "accepted agricultural practices" remains too vague, and often allows industry practices which cause significant suffering.

#### 2. Proactive Inspections for Commercial Operations

While Bill 19 did increase penalties, these penalties are only effective if cruelty is discovered. Currently, oversight of farmed animals is largely complaint-based. Because these animals are housed on private property away from public view, abuse often goes unnoticed. We recommend that Bill 19 be amended to mandate proactive, unannounced inspections of commercial livestock facilities.

#### 3. Addressing the Conflict with "Ag-Gag" Legislation

While the increased penalties in Bill 19 (Section 23) are a positive step toward deterrence, we remain concerned that existing "Ag-Gag" laws (Bill 62) prevent whistleblowers and advocates from documenting the very cruelty Bill 19 seeks to punish. We urge the Committee to prioritize transparency so that the legal system can hold large-scale operations accountable.

#### 4. Defining Distress Beyond Standard Practices

We ask that the Committee refine the definition of "animal in distress" to ensure that it is not overridden by standard industry practices that cause extended physical or psychological harm, such as extreme confinement (i.e. Sows in gestation crates). Legal protections should be based on the biological needs of an animal, not the convenience of the industry.

Manitoba Animal Save believes that a society is judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. We ask that you strengthen Bill 19 to ensure that farmed animals are granted the same considerations for welfare and protection as the companion animals with whom we share our homes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Danae Tonge  
Manitoba Animal Save

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Re: Bill 19

Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) thanks the members of the Standing Committee on Legislative Affairs for the opportunity to provide some written comments regarding Bill 19 – The Animal Care Amendment Act. MBP supports efforts to protect the health and welfare of animals.

MBP represents approximately 6,000 producers involved in various aspects of the province's beef cattle sector, including the cow-calf, backgrounding and finishing sectors. Our mission is to represent all

beef producers through communication, advocacy, research, and education—within the sector and to governments, consumers and others, to improve prosperity and ensure a sustainable future for Manitoba's beef producers.

Beef production is Manitoba's single largest livestock commodity in terms of the number of individual farm operations. These farms and ranches are widely geographically dispersed across the province, reaching as far north as The Pas. In 2025, Manitoba cattle and calf receipts rose to a record \$1.2 billion, and those dollars flow back into the provincial and national economies, creating numerous benefits.

Additionally, privately-owned and leased agricultural Crown lands managed by beef producers generate considerable environmental benefits, supporting biodiversity critical to a wide range of plant, animal and insect species, including endangered species. Other benefits include carbon sequestration and preserving wetlands which help provide resilience during times of floods and droughts, among others.

Manitoba's cattle producers take very seriously their responsibility to provide their animals with quality care, and they are guided in this process through resources such as Canada's Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle. This Code serves as the nationally recognized standard of animal care requirements and recommended practices for beef producers. It was first created in 1981 and has undergone regular reviews and updates since then. It supports continuous improvement and public trust in responsible animal care. The beef Code covers a range of important management practices, including feed and water, housing, handling, transportation and euthanasia.

The Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle (as well as others related to farm animals in Canada) is developed through an industry-led, science-informed, consensus-based, multi-stakeholder approach undertaken through the independent National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC). The beef Code is currently being updated. This process is led by a 15-person Code Committee that involves participants from across Canada, such as beef producers, animal welfare and enforcement officials (including representatives from a national animal welfare advocacy association and a provincial animal protection enforcement authority), researchers, veterinarians, and federal and provincial government representatives, among others.

There is also a Scientific Committee that develops a report summarizing current, peer-reviewed, published research conclusions on welfare-related topics of high applicability to the Code (priority welfare issues) being examined. This report helps to inform the Code Committee's deliberations by grounding discussions in the most current available research, consistent with NFACC's science-informed approach.

For more information on the Code development and review process see [www.nfacc.ca/code-development-process](http://www.nfacc.ca/code-development-process).

The proposed amendments in Bill 19 allow for regulations concerning animal health and welfare created under this Act to incorporate codes and standards published by recognized animal care and welfare organizations. The existing Animal Care Regulation under the Act already references the NFACC Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Beef Cattle, among several other codes of practice for different species.

If new codes from additional organizations are to be incorporated into the regulation, Manitoba Beef Producers believes it is important that they adhere to a similarly rigorous review and evidence-based and consensus-driven development process as that used by entities such as the National Farm Animal Care Council. This will help ensure greater credibility in the codes of practice by those using them, including producers, retailers, government and others, as well as citizens interested in animal health and welfare.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide written comments on behalf of Manitoba's cattle producers regarding Bill 19—The Animal Care Amendment Act. Codes of practice are important to demonstrating various animal-related sectors' proactive, ongoing commitment to responsible animal care and continuous improvement.

Respectfully submitted,

Carson Callum  
Chief Executive Officer  
Manitoba Beef Producers

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Re: Bill 19

Bill 19 represents an important and welcome step forward for animal welfare in Manitoba, particularly in its efforts to address irresponsible breeding practices, strengthen penalties, modernize oversight and improve accountability. The proposed legislation

reflects growing public concern about puppy mills, neglect and inadequate enforcement.

However, Manitoba also has an opportunity to think more broadly about what modern animal welfare policy can become.

Around the world, animal welfare is increasingly understood not as a narrow issue concerning only pets, but as something connected to public health, mental well-being, emergency preparedness, education, housing stability, reconciliation and community resilience. Manitoba is well positioned to become a Canadian leader in compassionate, evidence-based animal welfare policy.

One of the most important emerging frameworks internationally is "One Health"—the understanding that human health, animal health, environmental health and community well-being are interconnected.

Research has shown that companion animals contribute significantly to emotional support, social connection, physical activity and mental well-being.

At the same time, gaps in Manitoba's broader animal welfare framework place increasing pressure on shelters, rescue organizations, foster networks, veterinarians, municipalities and emergency responders — many of whom already operate with limited resources and heavy reliance on donations, volunteers and fundraising.

Across Manitoba, these organizations are responding to growing challenges including irresponsible breeding, animal abandonment, housing-related surrender, rising veterinary costs, northern transportation barriers and emergency response needs. Despite playing a critical role in public safety and community well-being, much of this work continues to rely on charitable organizations and volunteers rather than stable, coordinated public support systems.

For Bill 19 to succeed, enforcement must also be proactive rather than reactive. Manitoba's previous breeder licensing system was widely viewed as ineffective due to limited enforcement capacity and oversight. Strong legislation only works if accompanied by adequate inspections, enforcement resources and transparent accountability.

The province should consider:

- proactive inspections and audits
- annual public reporting on enforcement activity
- whistleblower protections
- sufficient staffing and enforcement resources

Without these measures, there is a risk Bill 19 could face many of the same challenges that weakened previous regulatory systems.

While public discussion around Bill 19 often focuses on dogs, the legislation should also ensure meaningful protections for other companion animals vulnerable to neglect, irresponsible breeding or poor living conditions, including cats, rabbits, birds and reptiles.

Manitoba should also begin developing integrated emergency evacuation planning for companion animals. Wildfires, floods and other emergencies increasingly affect Canadian communities, including Manitoba communities. Across Canada, evacuation systems still often rely heavily on pet owners independently finding transportation, temporary shelter, veterinary care or pet-friendly accommodations during crises.

Research from multiple jurisdictions has shown that people may delay or refuse evacuation orders if they cannot safely evacuate with their animals, creating additional risks for families, communities and emergency personnel. During emergencies, animal welfare organizations and rescue groups are often left filling gaps without formal integration into emergency planning systems.

Many jurisdictions in the United States and internationally now incorporate companion animals into emergency preparedness frameworks through coordinated sheltering plans, transportation support and veterinary partnerships. Manitoba should begin moving toward a similarly coordinated approach that recognizes companion animals as part of broader public safety and community resilience planning.

Animal welfare policy should also recognize the connection between housing stability and companion animal care. Across Canada, many individuals and families face significant barriers finding long-term rental housing that permits companion animals. This contributes to housing instability, animal surrender, overcrowding in shelters and emotional distress for both people and animals.

For many Manitobans, companion animals are important members of the household that contribute to emotional support and mental well-being.

Yet many families are forced into impossible decisions between securing housing and keeping their animals.

As Manitoba modernizes its approach to animal welfare, the province should begin broader con-

versations around pet-inclusive housing strategies, responsible tenancy standards and incentives that encourage reasonable accommodation of companion animals in long-term rentals.

The province should also explore mandatory empathy and humane education programs in schools, particularly in urban centres where many children may have limited opportunities to safely interact with animals or learn about responsible coexistence.

Colombia, for example, adopted "The Empathy Law," which promotes mandatory education around animal protection, empathy and responsible relationships with animals within schools. These approaches recognize that compassion toward animals is connected to emotional intelligence, violence prevention and community well-being.

In an increasingly urbanized society, humane education can help children better understand responsible animal care, coexistence with wildlife and the emotional capacity of living beings. Manitoba could become a Canadian leader in age-appropriate, evidence-based humane education initiatives developed in collaboration with educators, Indigenous communities and animal welfare organizations.

Future animal welfare policy discussions should also respectfully acknowledge Indigenous perspectives and relationships with animals. Many Indigenous worldviews have long emphasized interconnectedness, stewardship, reciprocity and coexistence with animals and the natural world. Future policy development should include meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations.

A promising example of community-led progress can already be seen through initiatives connected to Matawa First Nations Management and its animal wellness efforts in northern Ontario. Matawa's community-led Animal Wellness and Animal Services pilot program has supported spay and neuter clinics, vaccinations, wellness exams, school-based education and responses to infectious disease concerns in remote First Nations communities.

Importantly, the program emphasizes partnership, prevention, community involvement and long-term wellness rather than relying solely on enforcement or crisis response. It also reflects a broader One Health understanding that animal well-being, community well-being and public health are interconnected.

Manitoba can learn from and build upon similar models through partnerships with Indigenous

communities, veterinarians, educators, animal welfare organizations and local governments.

Manitoba also faces significant challenges related to veterinary access, particularly in northern, rural and remote communities. Long-term improvements should include strategies focused on veterinary accessibility, spay and neuter services, mobile veterinary care and support for underserved communities and frontline rescue organizations.

The province should also support expanded veterinary education and workforce development opportunities that reflect the growing importance of One Health principles and community-based animal care. Future veterinary training partnerships should help prepare students not only in clinical care, but also in public health, emergency preparedness, Indigenous engagement and community wellness.

Strengthening Manitoba's long-term veterinary capacity will require collaboration between governments, educational institutions, Indigenous communities, veterinary organizations and animal welfare partners.

As Manitoba modernizes its animal welfare framework, the province should also begin broader conversations about moving beyond outdated legal concepts that treat animals primarily as property. While responsible ownership remains important, animals are fundamentally different from inanimate property. Scientific understanding and public attitudes increasingly recognize animals as sentient beings capable of experiencing pain, fear, attachment, stress, comfort and social bonds.

Around the world, governments are updating animal welfare laws and policies to reflect this evolving understanding. Manitoba should participate in that evolution by exploring legal and policy approaches that recognize animals as living beings with welfare interests extending beyond traditional property definitions.

Bill 19 is an important beginning. Manitoba now has an opportunity to create a more modern, compassionate and forward-looking approach to animal welfare—one that recognizes animals not as isolated issues, but as part of the broader health and well-being of communities themselves.

Tamara Bodi

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Re: Bill 19

I am concerned about why Canada is shipping horses to Japan for slaughter! It's barbaric abusive cruel and evil

Christie Ratcliffe

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Re: Bill 29

As Government of Manitoba appointed Regent with the University of Winnipeg I would like to express my support for the changes to this legislation. The current number of Regents defies best practice and constitutes a barrier to efficient governance. It increases the number required for quorum and, by virtue of the number of voices that need to be heard directly, limits discussion. Particular limitation of United Church appointees is a logical step to reduce the number of Regents, as the existing and future role of the Church in the University of Winnipeg is materially different than at its founding.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

Tanis Ostermann

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Re: Bill 29

Dear Members of the Committee,

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the engagements and proposed amendments to UW's Act regarding the UW Board of Regents.

I wish to make my support known, specifically, for the following proposed amendments:

- Reduction in overall size of the UW Board
- Elimination of most of the United Church seats
- Greater transparency of Presidential spending and Presidential reviews
- Clarification and strengthening of in-camera sessions
- Inclusion of an EDI statement
- Inclusion of a floor (minimum 2) Indigenous LG in C seats

I encourage ensuring the Indigenous seats undergo Indigenous identity affirmation (UW can assist). These changes will strengthen UW's Board of Regents and benefit sound governance of the University of Winnipeg.

I participated in several engagements and, each time, requested updating the UW Act Senate composition to also include a floor/minimum number of Indigenous Senators. On January 22, 2026, in consultation with myself, UW's Board Officers, and Legal Counsel, UW's University Secretary proposed language to ADM Kachulak with respect to amending Section 17(1) of the UW Act, to designate specific seats on Senate for First Nations, Métis or Inuit faculty:

17(1)(p) such number of full-time First Nations, Métis or Inuit academic staff members as senate shall by resolution determine may be elected to senate.

This would empower Senate to determine a floor/minimum for Indigenous Senators. I am reiterating this request.

The University of Winnipeg has long supported Indigenization, Reconciliation, and Indigenous Excellence, including in our new five-year strategic plan. Perhaps the most meaningful and powerful example of mobilizing these priorities is the Indigenization of governance at UW.

A floor/minimum number of Indigenous Regents and Senators would best position the University to continue this critical work by ensuring Indigenous voices are at key decision-making tables.

Marsii for your consideration,

Dr. Chantal Fiola  
Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement  
University of Winnipeg

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Re: Bill 29

Should be Indigenous representation on the Board of Regents. At least one representative should be First Nations from Treaty One territory.

Mark Ruml

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Re: Bill 29

Dawnis Kennedy ndizhinikaaz, minawaanigogiihigook ndigoo, waabizheshi ndoodem, bigwaanishkoziibing ndoonji, gikinoo'amaadiiwigamigong ndananokii University of University of Winnipeg ezhinikaadeg, ndanishinaabekwew niin.

My name is Dawnis Kennedy, I am marten clan from Roseau River Anishinaabe First Nation. I work at the University of Winnipeg. I was newly hired as part of the Indigenous Faculty Cohort and am now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Criminal Justice. Like my mother, my grandmother and the women before them, I am an Anishinaabe woman.

I support the following proposed amendments:

- Reduction in overall size of the UW Board
- Elimination of most of the United Church seats
- Greater transparency of Presidential spending and Presidential reviews
- Clarification and strengthening of in-camera sessions
- Inclusion of an EDI statement
- Inclusion of a floor (minimum 2) Indigenous LG in C seats

I also support the request made by Associate Vice-President, Indigenous Engagement, Dr. Chantal Fiola, that Section 17(1) of the UW Act be revised to read

17(1)(p) such number of full-time First Nations, Métis or Inuit academic staff members as senate shall by resolution determine may be elected to senate.

To designate specific seats to provide for Indigenous representation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit faculty, empowering Senate to determine a floor/minimum for Indigenous Senators.

I also believe that it is critical to ensure that any seats committed to the representation of Indigenous peoples

- 1) require any candidates for these seats undergo Indigenous identity affirmation, and that
- 2) representatives in these seats be elected by Indigenous people.

As regards Indigenous senators, this would limit not only the candidates for these seats but also those who participate in voting for these representatives to those whose Indigenous identity has been affirmed. For example, if the seat was designated for an Indigenous academic staff member, those eligible to vote for these candidates would also need to be full time academic staff members whose Indigenous identity has been affirmed through the University of Winnipeg's Indigenous affirmation process.

First Nations peoples have called for First Nations control of First Nations education since the Assembly

of First Nations was the General Assembly of the National Indian Brotherhood (Indian Control of Indian Education, 1972).

Other jurisdictions are recognizing (and funding) Indigenous Institutes that are governed, operated, and accredited by Indigenous peoples as well as encouraging reciprocal partnerships between these institutes and other post-secondary institutions to ensure flexible, personalized, and culturally responsive learning programs.

The University of Winnipeg has committed itself to Indigenization, Reconciliation, and Indigenous Excellence, not only in our new five-year strategic plan, but also in numerous ways throughout the last decades. This is not simply by choice but also in recognition of calls made to universities by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada to transform Canadian education's colonial relation to Indigenous peoples.

And yet, many of the designated Indigenous positions at the University of Winnipeg are appointed, selected, or chosen by non-Indigenous people. A commitment to reconciliation, Indigenous Excellence, and Indigenization must be accompanied by a commitment to Indigenous governance.

This request is only a first step to investing in Indigenous education governed by Indigenous peoples, but it is a significant step I am urging you to support.

Dawnis Kennedy LL.M, Assistant Professor  
University of Winnipeg, Department of Criminal Justice

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Re: Bill 29

Dear Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the proposed amendments to the UW Act, especially the inclusion of a floor number of Indigenous members of the Board of Regents. I am writing to ask that the committee include in the amendment a change to Section 17(1) of the UW Act, as well, to designate specific seats on Senate for First Nations, Métis or Inuit faculty. The revised language could read: "17(1)(p) such number of full-time First Nations, Métis or Inuit academic staff members as senate shall by resolution determine may be elected to senate."

This would empower Senate to determine a floor/minimum for Indigenous Senators.

The University of Winnipeg has long supported Indigenization, Reconciliation, and Indigenous Excellence, including in our new five-year strategic plan. Indigenization of governance at UW is a meaningful and powerful aspect of this.

A floor/minimum number of Indigenous Regents AND Senators would position the University to continue our critical work by ensuring Indigenous voices are at key decision-making tables.

I respectfully request that you consider including this in the proposed amendments, while the UW Act is on your agenda.

Sincerely,

Julie Chamberlain  
Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Urban and Inner-City Studies

Re: Bill 29

I want to share my support and one recommendation for the UW Act being presented to the Provincial Government today. I strongly urge that there be a floor number of Indigenous members on the Board of Regents and Indigenous faculty on the Senate. This would not only help UW uphold Pillar #3 of the Strategic Plan but ensure consistent representation on both boards.

Due to circumstances such as research leave, teaching schedules, and admin requirements of Indigenous staff and faculty, there is risk that the Senate may sit without Indigenous representation at times. This is likely, unless by chance a faculty member sits in a specific position (like Chair or Program Coordinator), or gets voted in by election.

I sit on Senate but am going on research leave in January 2027. If a Metis professor wasn't just voted in this Spring, that would have meant that there would have been no Indigenous faculty member on the Senate during my leave. If someone else selects to take my place as Program Coordinator of the Art History program (HISA) during my leave, then that could mean a longer time without adequate Indigenous representation as I would no longer be sitting on Senate and there would be only one.

Therefore, in my opinion, there should be at least two Indigenous delegated spots on each board, and

ideally with a mixture of First Nations, Metis and Inuit representation.

Marsii,

Cathy Mattes, PhD.  
Associate Professor in Art History  
History of Art program – History Department  
University of Winnipeg

Re: Bill 45

My name is Sharon Desmarais and I am the Executive Director for Sandy Bay Child & Family Services. My knowledge is with child welfare and this is where I will focus my comments on. Sandy Bay CFS is currently working on capacity development in the community whereas we are training and supporting our staff to develop and learn best practices and service delivery in child welfare, especially in the community where it is very challenging to hire educated qualified staff. Sandy Bay CFS also supports our community members to pursue a type of formal education that will prepare them in being effective workers in the community. Currently, we have three staff taking the two year cohort program at Yellowquill Community College to obtain a diploma in the First Nations Child & Family Program. Once they complete that program, they have the option of pursuing a degree if they choose to further their education. These three workers were raised in the community and have been employed at SBCFS for some time. After having experienced the Brandon University, one staff member has found YQUC to be more comfortable, accepting, supportive, and enjoyable. Coming from a remote community where saulteaux is their first language, they feel comfortable enough to explore and ask the questions without feeling afraid or ashamed. Learning alongside other adults who speak the same language and have the same understanding of the culture and history is both comforting and familiar to them. The positive experience and atmosphere they get from the staff and peers will hopefully encourage them to work through any challenges that might come up for them and give them the confidence and strength to make positive connections and supports that will only push them through any barriers they may face.

Yellowquill also offers a cultural component in thier curriculum which not only creates a sense of familiarity but a comforting environment where they can share their own teachings, knowledge, and norms from their culture which is very important to

incorporate in the field of social work, especially in the first nations communities. The cultural component is especially important as our history shows that colonization tried to erase first nations culture and norms. This is an era that many first nations people continue to work through and will continue to work through as we endeavor to decolonize the systems around us.

After having some involvement myself with Yellowquill University College, I really appreciate that they tailor their programs and courses around the needs of first nations communities and their members. They recognize the need for prerequisite courses to prepare the students for success. The cohort also allows students to use real scenarios in their discussions and training to get the full benefit of the training.

Yellowquill University College has taken the time to research former and present child welfare staff to ensure they capture all the needs of training cfs workers and to ensure that they encompass all areas related to the field of studies. They ensure they are up to date with the legislative changes and forms as the field is always evolving. I've heard many presentations and speaking engagements from representatives of Yellowquill University College speak to the various programs they have to offer and how they do their best to make it accessible not only in Winnipeg but to rural communities as well. When Yellowquill Community College promoted their Bachelor of Education program, they offered it in the rural community to accommodate the students needs and to ensure they would succeed in their endeavors because they recognized that it would be too expensive and challenging for students to attend to Winnipeg from such a remote community. Many adults who make up the student population in Yellowquill University College already have families to think about and need to plan around them when entertaining post secondary education. Yellowquill University College takes into account the many barriers that make it challenging for First Nations people to pursue an education, especially a post secondary education. They celebrate the small accomplishments and have supports available to all their students. They really do go above and beyond to help celebrate the students accomplishments and in ensuring they have employment after completion of their studies.

Remote first nations communities have waited a long time for an educational facility to work directly with them in the delivery of services to their remote

communities. Unfortunately this was never available or seemed impossible until Yellowquill University College created an exceptional program that could do just that. Although a very challenging endeavor, their persistence and determination has made the impossible possible. Many remote communities are grateful for the opportunity and to have the opportunity available to their communities.

I fully support the province in recognizing Yellowquill University College as a Post Secondary Institute, especially for the amazing work Yellowquill University College undertakes in ensuring we have first nations representation in the workplace especially in areas that really matter and will truly impact the lives of other first nations children and adults.

Sharon Desmarais  
Sandy Bay Child and Family Services

Re: Bill 45

As a former student and employee, and now an employee, I am expressing my strong support for Yellowquill University College (YQUC). Since its founding in 1984, Yellowquill has been a cornerstone of Indigenous-led education in Manitoba, providing a holistic and culturally grounded environment where students thrive.

For over forty years, YQUC has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to the Seven Sacred Teachings—Wisdom, Love, Honesty, Humility, Truth, Respect, and Courage.

As the first college in Manitoba owned and operated by First Nations people, YQUC has paved the way for self-determination in higher education.

Yellowquill University College recently achieved a historic milestone with the Manitoba government recognizing its First Nations Bachelor of Education as a provincially recognized degree, allowing graduates to teach in any school across the province.

Beyond academics, YQUC provides critical student support services, including personal counselling and land-based cultural teachings, ensuring students succeed both professionally and personally.

With over a thousand graduates, YQUC directly addresses critical labour shortages in First Nation communities through specialized programs in addictions and mental health, business, and social work.

From 1984 to 2025, Yellowquill University College has had approximately 2894 graduates from across Canada in 63 different programs. Graduates include individuals with their unique stories, such as mature students returning to college, those juggling work and family, and those overcoming significant barriers/hurdles. Regardless of their background, all graduates from all walks of life are celebrated for achieving a significant milestone through hard work and determination.

I graduated from the Clerical Certificate program in 1991 and the First Nation Governance program in 2005, and gained the skills and knowledge at YQUC to secure meaningful, full-time employment. While in the First Nation Governance program, I was introduced to First Nation history, which was not taught in elementary or secondary school. I gained many friendships while attending and working at YQUC. I have always supported and will continue to support Yellowquill University College.

Yellowquill University College is more than an educational institution; it is a vital partner in reconciliation and the preservation of Indigenous culture. I wholeheartedly endorse their continued growth and the essential role they play in the future of Manitoba's educational landscape.

Miigwetch

Annabelle Cameron  
Swan Lake First Nation  
Treaty 1

Re: Bill 45

Thank you to the Standing Committee for the opportunity to provide a written statement on Bill 45, The Yellowquill University College Act.

My name is Courtney Penner, and I am a member of Swan Lake First Nation. Ever since I was young, I believed education could open doors and create opportunities. But growing up as a First Nations student in rural Manitoba, I also learned what it felt like not to fully belong.

I was raised in a small community in Manitoba's rural Bible Belt, where I attended school alongside all non-Indigenous students. I am grateful for the education I received, although there were moments throughout my childhood that stayed with me. Anytime First Nations people were discussed in class, I could feel the eyes turn toward me. I often felt alone in class-

rooms where nobody looked like me and where my culture and experiences were not reflected or understood.

As a young person, those experiences affected me deeply. I began questioning where I fit in, and over time, I learned to make myself smaller, quieter, and less noticeable just to get through each day. Even when nobody directly told me that I did not belong, I could still feel it in the room around me.

People from my school years would probably remember me as shy and quiet, but that was never truly who I was. That was simply how I learned to protect myself in a space where I did not feel fully safe to be myself. In reality, I have always had a voice. I am strong, outgoing, and full of personality, qualities shaped by my family, my community, and the people who believed in me. At Yellowquill, we strive to do the same, helping students hold onto those parts of themselves instead of feeling like they need to change who they are to succeed.

That is why institutions like Yellowquill University College matter so much.

At Yellowquill, students walk into classrooms and no longer feel invisible.

They hear their languages. They see their cultures reflected around them. They are not made to feel like they need to shrink themselves to succeed. They are taught that their identities are strengths, not something they need to hide. Students are not treated as outsiders or placed into separate spaces as though Indigenous identity must be set apart from the rest of education. Instead, Yellowquill was built by First Nations people for all people, grounded in belonging.

For many of our students, Yellowquill is the first place where they truly feel accepted and safe in education. This experience is meaningful to me because I understand what it feels like to move through education without truly feeling accepted.

Despite those challenges, I continued pursuing my education. Moving to Winnipeg was intimidating at first, but I remained determined to build a future for myself. I eventually became a teacher, and education continued to shape both my life and career.

My connection to this legislation comes from my work at Yellowquill University College, where I have worked since 2008 in a variety of roles. Over the years, I have taught courses, worked in administration, and served as a program coordinator. These experiences have given me a broad understanding of

the institution and the students we serve, and I have learned a tremendous amount throughout my time here.

Since opening in 1984, Yellowquill has grown from a small community-based school into a respected university college offering degrees, province-wide programming, and flexible delivery directly within First Nation communities.

Much of that growth has been shaped by strong leadership and a deep commitment to students. One of the greatest influences on me throughout my years at Yellowquill University College has been Doreen Stranger, the director who first hired me in 2008 and who continues to lead the institution today.

Doreen taught me that First Nations education is rooted in respect. She leads with high standards, while also recognizing students' value and supporting them as people. She gave me an opportunity when she hired me. That same philosophy has shaped Yellowquill into the institution it is today - one that believes in giving students opportunities, helping them build confidence, and respecting what they bring into the classroom and back into their communities.

First Nations students deserve the same opportunities as any other student, and Yellowquill delivers that without asking them to hide who they are.

This is why Bill 45 is so important. This bill matters because it recognizes the work our students, communities, and leaders have put into building First Nations-led education. For decades, Yellowquill has worked to create something meaningful for our people. Bill 45 recognizes that work and the generations behind it.

I support this bill because it marks a historic milestone for Yellowquill University College as the first, First Nations-led university college recognized through legislation in Manitoba. That recognition is important because it acknowledges more than 40 years of hard work, perseverance, and success in Indigenous-led education.

Across the country, many First Nations institutions are working toward this same recognition. Manitoba now has the opportunity to lead by recognizing something that our communities have already known for decades—that First Nations-led institutions are capable of delivering quality post-secondary education rooted in our cultures, values, and ways of learning.

This is what our people were advocating for when Yellowquill was created in 1984. Our people wanted education that reflected who we are, where we come from, and what our communities needed. They wanted First Nations people to have a say in how education was delivered to our own people. Bill 45 honors that vision.

For over 40 years, Yellowquill has built strong Indigenous educational leadership rooted in community and student success. Our graduates continue contributing back to their communities across Manitoba. We may be small compared to other institutions, but our strength comes from our people and our commitment to students.

One of the most important things I learned throughout the development of this bill is that Yellowquill is not trying to replace one system with another. Instead, this legislation shows that systems can work together through respect, partnership, reconciliation, and shared responsibility. Bill 45 honors the hard work and vision of First Nations people who built this institution from the ground up because our Nations demanded better for our people and future generations.

Yellowquill was built differently because our people understood what it felt like to be left out of education. Inclusion is part of the entire school, not confined to one room or program. Students are welcomed into a community where they finally feel like they belong.

I have worked at Yellowquill University College for 18 years, and during that time, I have coached, supported, and walked alongside many students as they worked toward their goals. I have seen what can happen when students are given respect, encouragement, and a place where they feel safe to be themselves. I have watched students who once doubted themselves become confident graduates, employees, leaders, and role models within their families and communities.

That is why I have dedicated nearly two decades of my career to Yellowquill. I believe in this school and in the students. Many of our students struggled in other educational environments, but at Yellowquill, they finally begin to believe in themselves again.

We help students reconnect with their strengths, cultures, and sense of purpose while preparing them for employment and leadership opportunities. Many leave carrying themselves differently because they finally know they belong.

Bill 45 is important because it gives our Nations and our people confidence that Yellowquill will continue to grow, continue serving our communities, and continue changing lives for our people. Passing this bill means recognizing not only an institution, but also the strength, determination, and vision of First Nations people who built something powerful through education, leadership, and community.

For me, Yellowquill's recognition is personal. I spent part of my childhood learning how to make myself smaller just to fit into education. At Yellowquill, I have watched students do the opposite. I have watched them find their voices, rebuild their confidence, and learn how to stand tall again. That is why Bill 45 means so much to me, and why I believe it will change lives for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Courtney Penner

Re: Bill 45

As both a resident of Manitoba and an employee of Yellowquill University College (YQUC), I am writing to express my support for the passing of Bill 45. Since its establishment by the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council in 1984, the institution has provided First Nations students an opportunity to learn at a post-secondary level, offering mainstream educational programs blended with a traditional environment.

I feel that the passing of Bill 45 will yield benefits to not only First Nations students—past, present, and future—but also the province of Manitoba as a whole for the following reasons:

- **Addressing the Qualified Labour Shortage:** YQUC programs provide specialized, certified training in sectors critical to both First Nations and the broader Manitoba economy. The ability to offer provincially recognized Bachelor's degrees in First Nations Education, First Nations Studies, and Relational Studies—along with diplomas in Aboriginal Financial Management, Child and Family Services, and Addictions and Mental Health—ensures that graduates are fully qualified to fill essential roles anywhere in the province
- **Financial Stability:** Historically, YQUC has struggled with inconsistent support and a lack of formal recognition within the provincial framework. This bill will provide the legislative

foundation needed to move toward a more stable, sustainable funding model. By formally recognizing the college as a degree-granting institution, the province ensures that YQUC can grow its infrastructure and long-term programming with the same institutional security enjoyed by other public post-secondary entities in Manitoba. As Benjamin Franklin famously noted, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest."

- **Truth and Reconciliation:** We need to move beyond virtue signalling by formally recognizing First Nations-led education as a "third pillar" in Manitoba's post-secondary system. It formally validates Indigenous teaching methods and ensures the YQUC has the independence to lead its own educational future. This recognition is vital because, in the words of the late Honorable Murray Sinclair, "We must never give up the responsibility of doing what we can, when we can... Education is key to reconciliation."

The passage of Bill 45 is a commitment to the future of our province and a recognition of the hard work YQUC has performed for over four decades. By supporting this legislation, you are supporting a proven model of success that empowers Indigenous learners and strengthens the social and economic fabric of Manitoba.

Please support the passage of Bill 45 to ensure that Yellowquill University College can continue its mission with the legislative backing and stability it deserves.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Edwards, CPA, CA  
Accounting Instructor, Yellowquill University College

Re: Bill 45

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI), I am writing to express our strong support for Bill 45, the Yellowquill University College Act, currently before the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

FNTI recognizes the importance of Indigenous-controlled post-secondary education and the vital role institutions such as Yellowquill University College play in strengthening Indigenous communities, lan-

guages, cultures, and educational sovereignty. The work being undertaken by Yellowquill University College represents a significant and historic advancement for Indigenous education in Manitoba and across Canada.

As an Indigenous post-secondary institution that has worked to advance Indigenous-led programming, governance, and accreditation pathways, FNTI understands both the importance and the complexity of establishing formal recognition within provincial post-secondary systems.

Yellowquill's progress toward full institutional recognition reflects years of dedicated leadership, community accountability, and commitment to learner success.

We commend Yellowquill University College, the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council, and provincial partners for advancing legislation that acknowledges the legitimacy, strength, and autonomy of Indigenous-led institutions. The development of degree programming and the pursuit of full post-secondary recognition are important steps toward ensuring Indigenous learners have access to high-quality education grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems and community priorities.

The passage of Bill 45 would represent a meaningful step forward in reconciliation and in the recognition of Indigenous Institutes as essential contributors to Canada's post-secondary landscape. It also serves as an important example of how Indigenous communities can lead the development and governance of institutions that reflect their own educational visions and aspirations.

FNTI strongly encourages the Committee and the Legislative Assembly to support Bill 45 and the continued advancement of Yellowquill University College.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Brant  
President  
First Nations Technical Institute

(Submitted by Adam Hopkins)

Re: Bill 45

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of Six Nations Polytechnic (SNP), I am writing to express strong support for Bill 45, the Yellowquill University College Act, currently under consideration by the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba.

Six Nations Polytechnic is an Indigenous post-secondary institution that has worked to advance Indigenous-led programming, governance, and accreditation pathways recognized by provincial post-secondary systems.

Six Nations Polytechnic recognizes the importance of Indigenous-controlled post-secondary education and the vital role institutions such as Yellowquill University College fulfil in strengthening Indigenous communities, languages, cultures and education sovereignty. The work underway by Yellowquill University College represents a significant and historic step forward—not only for Manitoba, but for Indigenous education nationally.

Yellowquill's progress toward full institutional recognition in Manitoba is a result of years of dedicated leadership, community accountability and commitment to learner success.

The formal recognition of Yellowquill University College as a provincially legislated post-secondary institution affirms the inherent right of Indigenous communities to design, deliver, and govern their own education systems. It acknowledges the strength and legitimacy of Indigenous-led institutions that are deeply rooted in language, culture, and community priorities, while meeting rigorous academic standards.

We commend Yellowquill University College, the Dakota Ojibway Tribal Council, and provincial partners for their collaborative leadership in advancing this legislation. The progress made since 2021—including the successful delivery of a Bachelor of Education program and attainment of degree-granting status—demonstrates both readiness and excellence in institutional development.

The passage of Bill 45 will contribute to reconciliation through meaningful structural change in the post-secondary sector and the recognition of Indigenous Institutes as essential contributors to Canada's post-secondary landscape and economy.

Six Nations Polytechnic strongly encourages the Committee and the Legislative Assembly to support Bill 45 and the continued advancement of Yellowquill University College.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this letter of support.

Sincerely,

Dr. Richard Anderson  
Interim President  
Six Nations Polytechnic

(Submitted by Rebecca Jamieson)

Re: Bill 45

Dear Standing Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for The Yellowquill University College Act, and Amendments to The Advanced Education Administration Act. I urge you to vote in favour of this legislation as presented.

This Act represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of identified policies listed in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Education Calls to Action and advancing meaningful reconciliation in education. By passing this legislation, we affirm our commitment to ensuring the continued growth, recognition, and sustainability of the vital work currently conducted by Yellowquill University College continues.

I strongly believe in the continued development and application of culturally appropriate curricula, as this will assist in improving education attainment levels and success rates for post-secondary students attending Yellowquill University College.

In September 2025, Southern First Nations Network of Care (SFNNC), entered a partnership with Yellowquill University College (YQUC) to deliver a

two (2)-year First Nations Child and Family Services Worker–Advanced Diploma Program aimed at strengthening Indigenous led Child and Family Service. The program currently supports 50 enrolled students, and they are divided into two (2) cohorts participating in a flexible work and learn model. This allows the students to attend their course one week each month while maintaining full-time employment. The students in these two (2) cohorts are employed with child welfare agencies governed by Southern First Nations Network of Care to provide provincially mandated services.

The response from the students and their agencies to this learning pathway has been very positive. It is indicative in the student's level of confidence when they return to work with the increased knowledge, confidence, and skills gained in their courses. Given the challenging, and demanding nature of child welfare, Yellowquill University College provides the students with the option to advance their learning in a holistic education setting that is supportive and understanding of those challenges. The feedback from agencies has been so favourable that SFNNC continues to be contacted by its member agencies to see if there are plans to offer another cohort so other staff may also have this opportunity.

In closing, I strongly believe that the continued growth and recognition of Yellowquill University College reflects the importance of Indigenous education that is grounded in culture and community experience. The positive feedback from students and agencies demonstrates the value of a culturally appropriate post secondary education. As we continue in the conversation regarding the future of indigenous education, I strongly believe that this legislation will help support and sustain First Nations communities and contribute to the success of future generations of First Nations children, families and communities.

Shirlene Asham  
Southern First Nations Network of Care

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings  
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

**<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>**