

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

Chairperson
Mr. Matt Wiebe
Constituency of Concordia

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES**

Monday, September 9, 2013

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mses. Allan, Irvin-Ross, Hon. Mr. Rondeau, Hon. Ms. Selby, Hon. Mr. Swan

Messrs. Allum, Friesen, Helwer, Mmes. Mitchelson, Rowat, Mr. Wiebe

Substitutions:

Mr. Smook for Mrs. Rowat

APPEARING:

Hon. Jennifer Howard, MLA for Fort Rouge

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Mr. Corey Shefman, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties

Ms. Karen Friesen, private citizen

Mr. Rick Peters, private citizen

Ms. Carolyn Peters, private citizen

Mr. Adam Crookes, private citizen

Ms. Karella Crookes, private citizen

Ms. Chantelle Friesen, private citizen

Ms. Jolene Funk, private citizen

Mr. Kelly Friesen, private citizen

Mr. Dale Funk, private citizen

Mr. Ryan Zacharias, private citizen

Mr. David Halstead, private citizen

Ms. Suzanne Toews, private citizen

Ms. Jennifer Thompson, private citizen

Ms. Shirley Schroeder, private citizen

Mr. Brian Schroeder, private citizen

Mr. Samuel Harder, private citizen

Ms. Rebecca Hein, private citizen

Mr. Devin King, private citizen

Mr. John Hiebert, private citizen

Mr. Ken Peters, Gateway Church

Mr. Evan Wiens, private citizen

Mr. Markus Reimer, private citizen

Mr. Reece Malone, private citizen

Mr. Bill Bage, private citizen

Ms. Sara Peters, private citizen

Mr. Ron Lambert, private citizen

Ms. Melissa Penner, private citizen

Mr. Stephen Kennedy, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Mary-Jane Kehler, private citizen

Cindy Wiebe, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

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

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Ms. Monique Grenier): Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Human Resources please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a new Chairperson. Are there any nominations for this position?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I nominate Mr. Wiebe as Chair.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Wiebe has been nominated. Are there any other nominations?

Seeing none, Mr. Wiebe, would you please take the Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Our next item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Swan: Yes, I nominate Mr. Allum as Vice-Chair.

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

Seeing none, Mr. Allum is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider Bill 18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools).

I'd like to inform members of the committee that, in accordance with our agreement of the House dated June 20th, the committee may, by leave, decide to

hear from presentations in addition to those 30 scheduled for tonight's meeting—I believe there's actually 34 scheduled for tonight's meeting. Since there appears to be more than 30 presenters on the list before you, what is the will of the committee? My apologies. So the agreement was that there are 30 scheduled—there should be 30 scheduled for each night. Tonight we have more than 30. What is the will of the committee?

Mr. Swan: Let's proceed until we've heard all 34 that are present tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement to hear all presenters until we're completed? *[Agreed]*

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

Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education): Well, we have in previous evenings just gone with the numerical order, seeing as 80 per cent of the—or 90 per cent of the list is from out of town, and that was actually Mr. Goertzen's recommendation a couple of nights ago. So we—it's been working for us and we haven't—so we're prepared to proceed in that way.

Actually, and the other reason for that is because individuals who were signing up in the Clerk's office have been told where they are in the order, so they would arrive and think that they were in a certain specific spot, and then get here and it would be rearranged. So that's why I'm suggesting that.

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to hear the presenters in the 'numor'—numerical order listed on the sheet? *[Agreed]*

A written submission on Bill 18 from Mary-Jane Keller, private 'cit'—Kehler, sorry—private citizen, has been received and distributed to committee members.

Does the committee agree to have this document appear in that 'tran'—Hansard transcript of this meeting? *[Agreed]*

Before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider. For the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written materials, we ask that you provide 20 copies. If you need help with

photocopying, please speak with the staff and they can help you with that.

As well, I'd like to inform presenters that, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members.

Also, in accordance with the rules agreed in the House for meetings hearing from presenters on Bill 18, if a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list of tonight's presenters.

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

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

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

Committee Substitution

Mr. Chairperson: I'd also like to inform the committee that there has been a substitution on the committee, Mr. Spook—sorry—Mr. Smook for Mrs. Rowat. Smook for Rowat. Apologize for the mistake.

Mr. Chairperson: I will now call on Corey Shefman, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties.

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

Mr. Corey Shefman (Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: I'll ask the staff to assist you in distributing those, if you just give them a moment to do so.

And you may proceed with your presentation, then, when you're ready, Mr. Sheffield—Shefman.

Mr. Shefman: Thank you. Honourable ministers, members of the committee, members of the

Legislative Assembly, as you've heard, my name is Corey Shefman. I'm the president of the 'manis'—Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties. I'm also a lawyer in Winnipeg, and I am a gay man.

It's my pleasure and honour to appear before this committee for the first time on behalf of the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties. MARL is a non-profit human rights and civil liberties organization which, since 1978, has sought to promote respect for fundamental human rights and civil liberties and to defend, extend and foster the recognition of those rights and liberties in Manitoba. MARL is the Manitoba affiliate of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Manitoba's premier human rights organization. MARL values the rights and liberties of all Canadians, and it is in situations exactly like these, where the real issue is a conflict of rights, that MARL's role is particularly important.

Bill 18 has generated an enormous amount of discussion, and it is important to acknowledge that opponents of the Bill do have valid concerns. However, there is a real risk that the real issues which do exist with Bill 18 may be drowned out by the excess of emotion generated from overblown rhetoric and those neglecting to put the safety of our youth first.

Let me be clear: MARL supports the aim and overarching methods of the bill. We support the mandatory requirement that schools allow the formation of various socially conscious groups. And we support the mandatory requirement that schools permit activities which promote the awareness and understanding of, as well as respect for all people with the explicit inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, people with disabilities and anti-racism and gender equity issues.

* (18:10)

These specific protections recognize that members of certain groups are targeted more often and more—often more harshly than others. According to a 2009 study of Canadian students, 59 per cent of LGBTQ high school students face verbal harassment at school, compared to only 7 per cent of non LGBTQ students. Perhaps most important, however, is that 73 per cent of LGBTQ students reported feeling unsafe at school. Ladies and gentlemen, this is unacceptable. And these are the facts.

These are how young people are being treated in our schools—our schools. And make no mistake, it's the hatred, the vitriol and the rhetoric coming from

certain segments of our communities that encourages and fosters exactly this treatment of LGBT students. We support this bill in large part because it simply recognizes that there are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students in every single school in Manitoba and these students must be protected. No one will be required under this bill to attend a GSA event, a gay-straight alliance event, and no one will be forced to advocate for human rights—for gay rights if they choose not to do so. But, yes, schools and communities will have to acknowledge that there are GLBT students in their schools and communities.

However, we do have some specific concerns, and I'd like to address them now. I'd first like to draw your attention to section 3 of Bill 18, which amends section 1.2(1)(a) of the act. It would—we would propose that invasion of privacy be added to the section to take into consideration the realities of our digital world where much of our personal information is stored behind only the most basic of security measures. As we've seen in recent highly-publicized incidents throughout this country, the invasion of privacy is a serious bullying issue.

Subsection (1)(b) of that same section we fear may be overbroad. The objective requirement that is behaviour which, quote, "should be known to create," end quote, is too subjective in our opinion and may in the wrong circumstances intrude too far into the frame of expression. And second, the language, negative school environment, should be clearly defined so as to prevent inconsistent application. For example, it may be changed to read, hostile school environment, instead of negative, which we feel better captures the intended scope of the section. We propose that section 1.2(1)(b) therefore read, quote, therefore creates or is likely to create a hostile school environment for another person.

Academic freedom and the importance of challenging students to question their preconceptions may sometimes involve discussions which do not have a place outside the classroom but are absolutely crucial to be had within the classroom, questions like the—discussions, that is, like the one we're having today about conflicts of rights. It is extremely important that classroom discussion not be stifled. Therefore, we propose in section 3 of the bill that section—that a section 1.2(4) of the act be added, quote, for greater certainty, bona fide discussion of any issue of school or public importance should not be deemed to be bullying, end quote.

Moving on, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is one of the most important documents for Canadians across this country. When crafting policies as contemplated by the amended section 41(1.7), schools and school boards should not only have regard for the code but also for the Charter.

Moving on, with regards to the amended section 41(1.8), we are concerned with the possible implications of the use of the term equity instead of equality. We believe that this may be an incorrect use of the term and suggest that further input be sought from specific stakeholder organizations that may be concerned with that—with the equity instead of equality.

Next, there will always be those who feel unrepresented or underrepresented, this is something that MARL knows special—especially well. MARL and similar organizations exist to promote human rights and civil liberties, regardless of the specific issue of the day, and we suggest adding to the list of protected student groups, organizations that, quote: promote civil liberties and human rights generally. End quote.

In addition to these specific concerns, we also have a number of more general concerns. There has been some question since the bill was first made public as to whether it applies to private schools. In the interest of providing clarity to educators, parents and students, we suggest that this fact to be added to the bill explicitly.

Finally, and I believe most importantly, is the issue of enforcement. Although the bill currently requires school boards to put in place, quote: "a respect for human diversity policy," end quote, and to accommodate any students who wish to establish and lead certain activities and organizations, there doesn't appear to be any follow up, any built-in recourse aside from a court order that the student or parents or I suppose teachers may seek if the school board or school fails to abide by these requirements. We suggest that either the minister, the Ombudsperson or some other individual with proximity to the school system, be empowered to issue compliance orders with appropriate punishments if those orders are not followed.

This bill is about bullying, but more than that it's about the kind of society that we as Manitobans want to build for ourselves, for our children and for our grandchildren, what kind of province we want to live in. I believe most Manitobans believe that we can continue to move towards becoming a truly inclusive

and just society. MARL understands that when rights come into conflict, emotions can run high. Those—these questions go to the very core of who we are as a country, who we are as Canadians, but a balance can always be struck. Compromise can always be had. We believe that Bill 18 does an admirable job of balancing competing interests, of reaching that compromise.

I'm happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Shefman, for this very well-thought-out presentation.

I just wanted to comment on the consequences issue that you raised in your brief. All schools have to have a code of conduct according to the Safe Schools Charter. But we have heard this issue come up since Bill 18 was introduced of the 4th of December last year, and I have sent letters to all of my education partners, including the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools, which represents the funded independent schools that the Manitoba government funds. And we will be working with them on the oversight committee to determine a provincial code of conduct so that those consequences for bullying will be clear and they will be common across the province. We've got an excellent working relationship with our education partners and we are very confident that that'll be good work here in the province of Manitoba.

Thank you once again for being here this evening.

Mr. Cameron Friesen (Morden-Winkler): Thank you, Corey, for coming to present to us this evening. You've got a well-prepared presentation to us and I know you've given considerable thought to this.

I wanted to just remark one thing you stated in your presentation. You said there will always be those who feel under-represented or unrepresented. And you actually suggested to even add to the list of protected student groups in that amended section 41(1)(a)–(1.8)(a). I wanted to ask you just with respect to the Manitoba Human Rights Code, now The Human Rights Code, of course, already prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, race and gender and, as a matter of fact, so does Bill 18. The difference comes in because the Manitoba Human Rights Code additionally protects social

disadvantage or religion and creed or ethnicity. Bill 18 is silent on those matters. I would ask just for your comment on why do you think it is that the Bill 18 does not mirror the Manitoba Human Rights Code.

Mr. Shefman: With respect, I don't think I can speak to why the bill doesn't speak to it. I think I can speak to why MARL isn't suggesting that we add each of the enumerated groups. Would that be okay if I answered your question in that manner?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Yes, that would be fine.

Mr. Shefman: Our issue with the list of enumerated groups comes down to the fact—a couple of facts. First of all, if we are looking at the statistics and the facts in terms of which students are feeling targeted in schools, which students are being victimized disproportionately, it's the protected groups. It's students with disabilities, it is women, it is LGBTQ students. It's not generally, for example, religious students—I'm religious myself, I should have clarified that at the beginning—or students from different socio-economic backgrounds, for example.

What's more, we found in our discussions with our stakeholders, with students and teachers and individuals across the province, that it is the students in the enumerated groups in—that are currently in the bill that are in need of this protection. The reason that we've suggested adding specifically groups that promote civil liberties and human rights generally is as a catch-all for the—maybe the smaller groups that we can't enumerate in the bill because it's impossible, of course, to enumerate every single group in the bill, in any law. And so we believe that having this—these generalized groups in the schools accomplishes the same thing that MARL accomplishes, which is to make sure that every group is represented.

*(18:20)

And I have to tell you that we've received many comments from individuals who disagree with our position or believe that our position takes one side unfairly in this particular discussion. And I've been very thankful that I've had the opportunity to discuss with some of these people who've called our office about these issues and to discuss how when rights compete in this manner we need to find a balance. Bill 18 finds that balance. As I said, and I think this is important, nobody by mandating the groups that were mandate—that are being mandated, nobody is being forced to participate in these groups.

I would also suggest—and, finally, before I finish my answer—but also suggest that I personally, and in my role as president of MARL, have not heard of any student who is—who has been not permitted to start a group of the type that you're talking about, be it religious or with regards to socio-economic status, at their school. If these examples exist, of course, we'd be happy to work with those people to come up with a solution on our end, but we haven't heard of that happening.

Mr. Chairperson: Time for questions has expired. Thank you once again for your time, Mr. Shefman.

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

Good evening, Ms. Friesen, do you have written materials for submission to the committee?

Ms. Karen Friesen (Private Citizen): Just this.

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

Ms. Karen Friesen: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I'm grateful to live in and be part of a country that has in its Legislature the fundamental freedom of (a) conscience and religion, and (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression. It matters today not only that we speak to our government about our concerns, but that our government listen to the hearts and concerns of its people.

I would like to start with a question to all of you: How many of you were bullied in school when you were growing up? I was bullied from grade 4 to high school. It was a small town and I was new to the 'comm'—the school and the community, and the kids noticed some physical features about me that I did not notice myself and I became the brunt of their jeers. The teachers never noticed; at least if they did, they did nothing about it. I did not feel I had a voice and so I did not say anything. Instead, I became a bully, too, for which I am ashamed of.

I can honestly say that had this bill been enlisted at the time, it would have done little to help my situation because there already is written into our Charter of Rights the right for equality and equal protection.

But what if a teacher had taken the time to notice or care, and what if the kids who had bullied would have had their parents brought in and they would have been able to hear what their bullying had done to the victim, and would this not also give a voice to the victim?

I think our teachers have an incredible job and most of them do it well. But Bill 18 will take more power away from the teachers and potentially force them to look the other way. Section 15.(1) plus (2) of the Charter of Rights states: the right to equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic group or origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability. It does not preclude any law, program or activity that has as its own-object to the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups included—including those that are disadvantaged because of race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.

Section 29 states that nothing in this Charter can do away with or criticize or make inferior any rights or privileges guaranteed by or under the Constitution of Canada in respect of denominational, separate or dissentient schools.

Bill 18 puts at risk our freedom to teach that marriage should be between one man and one woman, and that sex should be practised under the confines of heterosexual marriage.

So what will this bill accomplish? I believe it will cause greater division. Look at what has done—what it has done already before it has been enforced. It is singling out one people group which, I might add, is 2 per cent of the population being bullied. I ask what you intend to do about the other 98 per cent; either include all people groups or none at all.

My biggest concern is not the bill's intentions to protect students from bullying, but rather the infringements on our rights and freedoms as citizens of Canada. For example, section 1.2(1) of Bill 18 states: Bullying is behaviour that should be known to cause harm to another person's feelings or self-esteem.

That is a very broad definition. It would likely hurt my grandkids' feelings if I said, no, you can't eat your food on the couch while watching a movie. By definition of this bill I would be bullying them. It is not the government's job to parent our children and to instill values and morals; that is the job of the parents.

I thank you for this opportunity and I hope you will strongly consider how this bill will affect all people, not just one group.

Thank you.

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

We will now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Ms. Friesen, for being here this evening and for coming to the Legislature to make a presentation on Bill 18. We appreciate the comments that you've made. And once again, thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Karen, for coming to present to us this evening. I appreciate what you had to say. You've given my colleagues and I a lot to think about.

You mention the fact that the bill as written would have provided little difference in your own situation having been someone who was both bullied and then later on bullied yourself, and I wondered if you would just comment on the extent to which you feel that the bill, as written, does it offer any real practical tools that would help teachers and administrators in real situations make a difference in our schools?

Ms. Karen Friesen: Well, I think the Charter of Rights already touches on that and it would appear that that already is not being either made known to people or to students that it is their right that they be treated equal and that they would be told that either by the teachers or by the parents and that that would be something that would be made known. So I don't know—because that's already in place that why would Bill 18 be any different when that already could be enforced with the fact that it's in the Charter of Rights.

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

We'll now call on Rick Peters, private citizen.

Mr. Peters, you have written materials for distribution?

Mr. Rick Peters (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

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

Mr. Rick Peters: Thank you.

As mentioned, my name is Rick Peters and I just thank you for the opportunity that I have here this evening to provide my opinion on Bill 18.

I'm uncertain if any of what is being said by any of the presenters here will matter at the end of these hearings. Our current government seems to be bent on passing legislation, whether legal or not. Over 300 of these presentations will be heard and whether or not there will be any resulting changes to the bill remains to be seen. I am not optimistic. But I'm also not scared to say that I was wrong about the hearings with the committee and say that it did have an effect after all.

Bullying is an act that is deeply hurtful to students and it should not be tolerated.

I did take a little bit of time to look over the safe schools section of our Public School Act; this only left me scratching my head even more. Why are we taking the time to make an amendment to a-to legislation that is already in place? If there's a need to change the act why is there such a broad definition?

Bill 18, as currently proposed, defines bullying as behaviour that (a) is intended to cause or should be known to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property. Does this wording not leave the impression that the minute my child walks through the doors of a school that he or she is both a victim and a perpetrator?

Hurt feelings and feelings of a person's self-esteem happen each and every day in the real world. It happened to me in school. It happens at work. It happens in friendships.

My son was not invited to a birthday party of one of his friends at school. Were his feelings hurt? Absolutely. Was he intentionally not invited? I believe so. Was he bullied? Under the proposed definition the argument could be made that, yes, he was.

Under the section characteristics and forms of bullying in the proposed bill it reads, (a) characteristically takes place in a context of a real or perceived power imbalance between the people involved and is typically, but need not be, repeated behaviour; may be direct or indirect; and may take place by any form of expression including written, verbal or physical. This section is also left wide open. If my child indirectly, not knowingly, hurts another child's feelings, he or she under this wording could be accused of bullying.

Under the section, Student activities and organizations, in the proposed bill it reads: A respect

from human diversity policy must accommodate pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that (a) promote gender equity, antiracism, the awareness and understanding of and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and use the name gay-straight alliance or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils.

Are people of all sexual orientation and gender identities not already protected under The Human Rights Code? Why the need to put legislation such as this into The Public Schools Act when it already exists?

*(18:30)

I understand that Premier Selinger has publicly stated that the law has to be broad enough to cover all the groups that are required to be protected under human rights legislation. If this is the case, why, then, is there a need to single out one small faction of our society such as the grey-gay-straight alliance in Bill 18? The definition of bullying in this bill is so encompassing that if students inadvertently hurt another student's feelings with a single off-handed comment or gesture, they could be charged with bullying. There are other jurisdictions that have laws that make it clear that bullying is harassment and not off-handed comments. By contrast, this bill faces hurtful but inadvertent comments on the same level as severe physical and verbal abuse.

Some forms of interaction are clearly more damaging than others and the law must reflect that. A common characteristic in many of the proposed laws of this form in Canada focus on combatting homophobia. Antibullying legislation would be—would better serve children if it promoted respect for all students because of their values as human beings regardless of their characteristics. This would ensure the principles of tolerance without undermining the religious freedom of faith-based schools through forced acceptance of principles that contradict what they believe. After all, we have heard many times that the reason for Bill 18 is to create a safe and caring learning environment for all of the students in our classrooms. I would like to challenge this committee and this government to be a leader in our country and come up with legislation that truly does include all students and not just one specific group.

Has a study ever been done in Manitoba schools with respect to the reasons for being bullied? I would venture to guess that it would be fairly close to the

one that was done in the Toronto area. A study of students in grades 7 to 12 by Maria Yau and Janet O'Reilly found that the top three causes for bullying were body image, with grades and cultural background coming in second and third respectively. Gender and religion came in tied for a distant fifth place cause for bullying. A suggestion I would have is that we do a study here in Manitoba to determine the top causes for bullying and go after those top causes first.

This bill is being proposed to protect our children from being bullied. Perhaps you should be focusing equally as much on the bullies themselves. I do believe that being a bully is not a natural characteristic of a child. There are reasons that perpetuate a child to become a bully and I realize that there's likely not one single cause, rather a multitude of them. What is being done to help these children? Is it perhaps that the real agenda behind Bill 18 lies with the agendas of the LGBTQ and of the Manitoba Teachers' Society? Why the focus of one group? Is there perhaps a sexual agenda behind this? The Manitoba Teachers' Society passed a resolution on May the 25th of this year to lobby the provincial government to revamp its entire spectrum of existing curricula to include the LGBTQ issues, people and values. Am I or are my children being pressured into values that we do not believe in? It sure feels that way to me. And, if I feel that way, Bill 18's definition of bullying will leave me a victim.

At last year's annual general meeting, the Manitoba Teachers' Society decided to lobby the government to prevent parents from opting their children out of any portions of the Manitoba curriculum. As a parent, am I being pressured into having my children being taught things that I do not agree with? As a parent of four children currently in grades 7 to 12, my wife and I are very much of the philosophy that teaching our children is a joint responsibility between mom and dad and the teachers in our schools. We appreciate our teachers and we tell them that, but we also let them know that we are in this together because we believe that is the best way. It is not the responsibility of government to be manipulating children into whatever the government is being pressured into.

Thank you for listening, and I really appreciate the time that you take to be here every evening.

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

I will now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Peters, for being here this evening and taking the time to put together a presentation about Bill 18. We appreciate the comments that you have made and, once again, thank you for being here.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thanks, Rick, for coming out this evening. You have four kids from grade 7 to 12, so you're obviously a busy guy, and I know that school has started up now so thank you for making the time because it shows that this is obviously important to you.

We've asked the same questions that you've asked in terms of what studies have been conducted in Manitoba, and, actually, through the course of this committee it's been revealed that there has been some studies done in Manitoba and they reflect very much the same kind of findings as the Toronto study. But I appreciated your comment to say that there would—that what's really needed is a study to determine what really is needed when it comes to all of this, and I wondered if you would just comment on something.

In the process of Estimates, the Minister of Education indicated that in the province of Manitoba, instances of bullying is not tracked and reported to this minister. So to what extent do you think we can be successful if we're not actually, even as a province, tracking instances of bullying as and when they take place in Manitoba schools?

Mr. Rick Peters: I think that we could—we could start tracking them and have the divisions either report them or we do a study, a survey of the students and of the schools and ask them if they feel that bullying is a problem or what things they are being bullied for, and just ask that question. Leave it to them.

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

We'll now call on Carolyn Peters, private citizen.

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

Ms. Carolyn Peters (Private Citizen): I do.

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

Ms. Carolyn Peters: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Feel free to start whenever you're ready.

Ms. Carolyn Peters: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

First, I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to speak to the standing committee here today. I recognize the sacrifice that you are making and I want to thank you for that.

So, opportunity. Today I want to speak to you about an opportunity that you all have. Opportunity, however, is very different than being opportunistic. I'll start by telling you a little bit about myself. As a child, I was raised to do the right thing and have a positive attitude, regardless of my circumstances. The underlying lesson I learned along the way was to refuse to allow another individual to exert power over me through their words or actions, but to choose my response to be positive and to forgive.

The next stage of my life brought me to parenthood of my own. My husband spoke earlier, so we have been busy, and we do have four teenagers ranging in age from 12 to 17, so that does leave us very busy. Our children have experienced incidents in school of inappropriate behaviours, rude and hurtful comments. One of our children was pantsed in school. Is everybody familiar what pantsing is? No? Pantsing is when you—when one child goes and pulls down the pants of another child in school for the purpose of humiliation, all right? So, I certainly wouldn't want to have that happen to me. And it's no fun in a school setting.

Now, the other—one of our children, our son Josh, was born with a cleft palate and, as such, experienced bullying as a result of his physical differences.

On the other hand, our kids have also been perpetrators of bullying to some of their classmates. Adults in the education system have made some good decisions regarding some of these incidents. Other educators, however, exhibited bullying tactics of their own towards our children. This happens. We live in an imperfect world. Life is not fair.

What are we going to do about it? As a mom and dad, we teach our children right and wrong; that is our job. We teach them about how to have a positive attitude, how to apologize and make things right. We teach them about their sexuality and how to be respectful. We teach them how to say some very difficult words: I was wrong and you were right. And this is our responsibility. I have never gone to school, dropped off my children and said, here you go. Raise

my children the way you believe is right. That's my job.

In preparing for this presentation—I apologize—I watched the Amanda Todd video. How many of you have watched it? It's heartbreaking. My children never experienced that kind of harassment, and I wholeheartedly support reinforcing antibullying legislation, especially for cyberbullying.

Law enforcement needs to get involved in situations such as this, as well as the recent case involving Rehtaeh Parsons in Nova Scotia. Both are incredibly tragic cases where the perpetrator should have been stopped, or someone should have stepped in. They were failed by educators, by law enforcement and by the student body.

* (18:40)

When you look at both cases, neither, however, have anything to do with gender identity issues. My concern with Bill 18 is that the NDP government is focusing on gender identity issues and the GSA groups rather than the much more prevalent issues that cause bullying. Why not focus on social justice groups and school-wide events that encourage acceptance regardless of our differences? Why not protect and respect the religious beliefs and the various faith communities? To truly support human rights, all groups should be equally represented rather than the one group appearing to have favouritism by their government.

Our 15-year-old son, Josh, spent many evenings researching Bill 18 and the ramifications of the proposed antibullying bill. He sent his viewpoints to our local MLA, to the Education Minister, the Education critic as well as the Premier (Mr. Selinger). We want to also thank you, Kelvin Goertzen, who opened his comments to the Legislature with excerpts from Josh's paper. As I was preparing for this presentation, I asked Josh, who is now in grade 11, what message he felt I should focus on, and his response, just to remind the committee what their job was, and that's what I'm going to attempt to do.

To have the genuine desire for positive change is admirable; to be manipulated by any group to only achieve their agenda is not. The role of the committee is not to be pressured by the Manitoba Teachers' Society or their president and his agenda, is not to be pressured by the Rainbow Society or any LGBTQ group. To quote Nancy Allan: It is to create safe and caring learning environments for all of our

students. It is not to provide preferential treatment to the group that provides the most pressure. That, committee members, would be responding to bullying to keep the bully happy.

I bring this back full circle. As I mentioned earlier, the underlying lesson I learnt along the way from my parents, was to never allow another individual to exert power over me through their words or actions, but to choose my response, to be positive and to forgive, to do the right thing. This is often not the easy path to take. I don't want to be here tonight. I am a weepy person and I did not want to be crying in front of all of you, let me tell you, and I think that you probably have other things to do tonight as well.

So—but I believe that this is the right thing to do. The legislation Assembly of Manitoba states, and I quote: Since the public has the opportunity to have direct input into the law making process, the committee stage is important. Members of the public may present oral and written submissions concerning proposed bills. After the public has been heard from, the sponsor of the bill and the opposition critics may make opening statements. The committee then proceeds to a clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. At this time, amendments may be proposed and considered.

This is the responsibility, as I understand it, before the committee.

CTV News, on September 3rd, reported a quote from Nancy Allan: I'm not prepared to make any amendments that don't provide safe and caring environments for all schools—for all students in our schools.

The Huffington Post writes on September 9th that Education Minister Nancy Allan has vowed to press ahead with the bill regardless of public input.

I would really like to believe that the media has misinterpreted these comments. I would like to believe that this process that we're a part of is not in vain.

In closing, Mr. Chairperson, I would propose that you, along with the Honourable Nancy Allan as the sponsor of the bill, and the rest of the committee make the following two amendments to Bill 18: one is to replace section 1.2(1)(a) and (b) with the following: Interpretation: bullying: 1.2(1) In this act, bullying is behaviour that is so severe, pervasive or objectively offensive that it substantially interferes with a student's educational opportunities or benefits

and places the student in actual and reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property.

The second recommendation is to provide for a truly safe and caring learning environment for all human diversity. It is impossible to include all differences, and highlighting only a few discriminates against the rest. To replace section—my recommendation is to replace section 41(1.8)(a) and (b) with the following: That student activities and organizations: 41(1.8), A respect for human diversity policy must accommodate pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote antibullying, respect and inclusiveness for all students regardless of their gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, family status, political belief, disability or socio-economic level.

And, as some of the previous presenters have mentioned, this is part of what is in The Human Rights Code already.

I believe that when we are given the opportunity to lead, we have a greater responsibility to ensure that the rights of all, including the overlooked and underprivileged, are heard. You, as our government representatives, have an opportunity, and I ask that you use it well.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, Mrs. Peters, thank you so much for your presentation. Bill 18 is very emotional. It's a very emotional piece of legislation and I want you to know that you are in a safe place. More people, I think, have cried in this room than I can begin to tell you. And I appreciate you showing emotion because, you know, we all are parents and when our children are hurt, we want to do the best for them.

Thank you for your presentation and for coming in to see us this evening. Thank you for the suggestions that you have made in regards to amendments to the legislation. We appreciate that and I can guarantee you that I do not make legislation in regards to any organizations. This is a piece of legislation that is supported by my caucus 100 per cent, and it's in—and it is going to protect all students in our schools. Thank you so much for being here. We appreciate it.

Ms. Carolyn Peters: I just want to respond saying that I do disagree that it will protect all students.

I disagree wholeheartedly on that statement. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Carolyn, for coming. You should not be ashamed about a few tears. You have courage and you have conviction and you have compassion, and you shared that in your presentation with us this evening. You've given us a lot to think about. I liked your suggestions for the bill changes. I think you think like a legislator. You brought in some bill changes and some amendments that I think would be—that the minister would be wise to consider.

I just wanted to ask you, at the local level, where your children go to school, are there already some good efforts in the schools that attempt to get at this issue of including students and, in your words, encouraging acceptance regardless of differences?

Ms. Carolyn Peters: Yes, there certainly are. There is a social justice committee and there's also—they've had projects come in like Rachel Scott, who was part of the Columbine—her brother was part of the Columbine shooting. That was helpful, and they also recently had The Robb Nash Project, which is just fabulous. I don't know if any of you have had the time to take a look at his comments, and he actually has comments specifically about the gay-straight alliance and how those types of things actually have been found to be ineffective for students of this nature.

And another comment, you know, this is one of things that my son Josh had mentioned, was when you create small groups like the gay-straight alliance you end up creating cliques, and that's really not what we want. We want to have them—everyone feeling accepted and regardless of their situation. But I also really disagree with the fact that when you want some religious exercises in your school, you have to have a petition of 60 to 80, yet you can't—you don't need that—the same isn't done for these, for the other side of the beliefs, right, to have a petition for a gay-straight alliance. It's different rules for different segments of the population. So that's something I think really should be considered.

Mr. Swan: Yes, well, thank you for coming down and presenting. I've got two daughters of my own, one who's a teenager, the other who becomes a teenager tomorrow, so—

Floor Comment: Good luck.

Mr. Swan: Thank you very much.

I've just got a comment and a question. Like you and I think everybody else, I was certainly touched by the Amanda Todd case and the Rehtaeh Parsons case. I'm the provincial Justice Minister and I instructed my officials to work with officials from across the country to see if there were gaps in the Criminal Code that need to be filled. And, indeed, they came up with some ideas of how we could strengthen the criminal law for the most serious circumstances, and I'm certainly hopeful the federal government will bring forward—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute.

Mr. Swan: —items which will be very helpful and will certainly support that.

The question I've got for you is that Bill 18 already contains in section 41(1.7) the requirement that in preparing its respect for human diversity policy a school board must have due regard for the principles of The Human Rights Code, meaning all of the principles of The Human Rights Code that are contained in the draft clause that you've written. Does that section give you some comfort that, indeed, when the schools are sitting down now, in light of Bill 18, that they will indeed be including all of those considerations?

Mr. Chairperson: Mrs. Peters, you have about 30 seconds.

* (18:50)

Ms. Carolyn Peters: I'm not sure that I would have confidence in that, no. But the point that I'd like to make in this is the fact that, really, everyone needs—the comment that I proposed there was for the student-led organizations, right—versus the actual point that you're referring to, which is a section before that, I believe. So what I'm referring to is a student-led organizations, that they as well need to be inclusive for all and not point out one specific segment.

But I also, just, seeing as you're here, I have to also say, thank you, I'm appreciative that you disagreed with the definition of bullying as well, Minister Swan, in your comments to, in Legislature, with Jon Gerrard's statements.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks—[interjection]—thanks very much. Order—[interjection] Order—[interjection] Order. Time for questions has expired. Once again, thanks very much for your presentation tonight.

Now call on Adam Crookes, private citizen.

Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee? And can you help me with the pronunciation of your last name? Do I have it right, Crookes?

Mr. Adam Crookes (Private Citizen): Crookes, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Crookes. Thank you very much, and you may proceed then when you're ready.

Mr. Crookes: Thank you for letting me come and speak. I strongly oppose Bill 18 the way it is written. I want to start off by saying I am against all forms of bullying against all of God's people. The way the bill is written, it really only gives protection for four things: gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities. Yes, I agree all children should be protected from all of these things, but how can it be that religious beliefs are explicitly left out?

I, for one, was the victim of bullying. I could be a poster child for that. For almost all of my grade 4 to grade 9 years I was called all kinds of names due to my size and the poor family that I had come from. Fast-forward 25 years, and my daughter this last year was a major victim of bullying. And, matter of fact, she missed the last three days of school because me and my wife were not comfortable with her going and being in that situation anymore. So it's very, very sad.

It is a fact that bullying has to do with body image, their grade, gender, sexual orientation accounting for about 5 per cent, along with religion for another 5 per cent. So my question is: Why do we want to give the kids more to worry about and talk about? As a parent, it should be my choice what my kids are taught and exposed to. It should not be the school board or the government's job to tell me how to raise my kids. There are enough programs and clubs that I can sign my 'kibs'—my kids up for after school, and there's just—there's no way of protecting them all. There's just so many different things that you can put in there.

Let's not also forget our freedom of religion, what happens to not be written in here. And that's it.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Crookes, for your presentation this evening. And I hope, in regards to your daughter's situation, that the officials in the school help you and your wife with that. And

thank you so much for being here this evening and for your comments.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you for coming, Adam, to present to us. I'm sorry to hear that your daughter has experienced bullying in the school system. I know how much trouble that causes for individuals and for families. It's a terrible burden to bear. But we thank you for making the time this evening to come out to present and to give your views on this important subject.

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

We'll now call on Karella Crookes, private citizen.

Ms. Crookes, do you have written material for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Karella Crookes (Private Citizen): Just this.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Please proceed when you're ready.

Ms. Crookes: Thank you. Good evening. I strongly oppose Bill 18 as it is written. I am 100 per cent against bullying of any kind, but, unfortunately, this bill only lists a small portion of these groups that may be bullied. The list of things that children can be bullied for is endless. If we are going to protect certain groups, we need to ensure that we protect all groups. We are a democratic country, and all deserve to be treated with safety and respect, no matter our beliefs or lifestyle.

In a democracy, we, the people, have a voice—all people, not just one or two groups. Tolerance, acceptant—acceptance and inclusion are a two-way street. They should not be extended only to certain groups as listed in Bill 18, but to all Canadians. If it is not, the result would be bullying and persecution for those not specifically listed, including those who hold certain religious beliefs. By elevating the rights of only certain groups, you are disregarding the rights of others, and that is not being inclusive. A democratic government cannot play favourites. Thank you.

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

We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mrs. Crookes, for your presentation this evening. We appreciate the comments that you've made. And I hope that things work out with your daughter.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Karella, thanks for coming, thanks for sharing with us and thank you for the concerns that you've expressed about the fact that what we really want to do is protect all students in our schools. And we thank you for your thoughts on this matter.

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

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

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

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

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

Ms. Chantelle Friesen: First off, I just want to thank you for this opportunity for hearing my voice on concerns and thoughts about Bill 18.

Good evening. My name is Chantelle. I grew up here in Manitoba. I'm here today to speak my concerns about Bill 18.

I was first made aware of the needs of students back in grade 10 when our psychology teacher took us downtown to Winnipeg for the weekend to help less fortunate children. It became very obvious to me that the most of these children were not taken care of by their parents the way that they should have been, and needed a lot of love. It shudders me to imagine how much they would feel—or how they would feel if they also would have been bullied for being poor. The students I saw in downtown Winnipeg would most likely have been bullied, or as result had become one for their body image and appearance.

I have an aunt who teaches elementary school presently and has done for 29 years, can honestly say that body image and appearance and ability level are the main types of 'bullying'. According to a recent survey called Stop a Bully, name-calling occurs 63.5 per cent and homophobic comments occur 15 per cent.

She cannot imagine to form a group of students—for example, who are all in a club because they are overweight or unusual tall or very small or wear glasses, the geeks and et cetera—that would only emphasize their differences. All students in essence just want to fit in and feel accepted and loved. To

hold fat student activities is just absurd as holding gay-alliance activities.

Segregated groups activities would only escalate phobias and not make individuals feel they are part of a school. The students are encouraged not to form exclusive 'gloop'-clubs as a—as that will not create the unity a class and school needs.

Furthermore, as a Christian teacher, my aunt teaches that all students are created equal. She teaches that each individual is uniquely created by God and she explains to all students in her care that everyone has talents and is a useful member of society.

This year, as it was last year, within the first few days of school an overweight student was made fun of and was called fat at recess. My aunt spoke to the victim's parents and told her that she prayed that that would not happen again and she explained to all students in her class that no one in her class was allowed to make any such comments to another students because each student has a heart with a feelings and that each heart is precious. She talks to her students about including all people when they play and interact in school and not to judge others by their looks. When this happened to the last year's overweight student in September, it was dealt with by the teacher and the principal, and not one of the more than 300 students mocked her for being overweight. Everyone knew such bullying was not accepted.

She's never had a gay student yet, but she would not dream to isolate the student and label the student as different, but to encourage others to look at the heart of the gay student and to make him and her feel loved. Sadly, boys who have been hurt just because they did not have the right last name or the right skin or right clothes, and now hurt others with words and actions. Girls often bully slyly and not the lesser, overweight, geeky or poor girls be part of the elite group. That is the real, predominant issue at schools.

In elementary school, it starts and as the bullies get stronger and unchecked, the victims get weaker and so much pain is endured without help. Bill 18 does not address these needs.

My cousin was bullied by a sly girl who was smart enough to con a very smart—a school-smart grade 5 teacher to think that she was innocent about her bullying at school. Another of my cousin was bullied from hockey long enough without help from a teacher, despite the parent's plea, that he himself

became a bully. Another cousin had a run away from his bully at lunchtime or else he would get beat up. This is just a small synopsis of real issues of bullying.

Gays should not be targeted, isolated, nor labelled; neither should many minority groups and issues in school.

* (19:00)

Ironically, Bill 18 demands that a Christian school to enforce to have gay alliance, but Christians are not allowed to form a group according to Bill 18, amendment 4 and 5, which states—amendment 4 allows the formation of groups. Notice gender, sexual orientation, racial and disability groups are covered but not religious. With a list, some end up left out.

An amendment by making it a law for Christian schools will force these schools to drop Biblical principles. How can a gay-straight alliance be formed in a Christian school when the whole point of a Christian education is to follow the morals of Scripture. Scripture clearly forbids the acceptance of homosexuality. Furthermore, amendment 1, 2 and 3 are worded very broadly and do not detail all that is happening in bullying, and it definitely does not address enough solutions.

The reality and the pain and hurt of all bullying should be addressed by teaching teachers and parents to recognize bullies early, even in kindergarten. Money should be spent to get speakers, performers and behavioural specialists to come and teach students in assemblies and classrooms and community centres and, as a result, make it a high priority to abolish all bullying. We need to target the heart of the people and accept others for the uniqueness created by their Heavenly Father and not segregate them with alliance and activities that will only target them for further more prejudice. Thank you.

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

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much, Ms. Friesen, for your presentation. It's obvious you have put a great deal of thought into your presentation, and I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your reflections about Bill 18 as well as your suggestions.

Thank you very much for being here this evening.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Chantelle, for coming and presenting this evening. The comments and concerns that you express line up with those of many, many others who have come to this committee. They also line up with some experts who actually express the same kind of concerns that you have when it comes to the clubhouse effect or what you talked about isolating students according to certain identifying factors.

I appreciated the comments you put on the record about your auntie's classroom and how the work in her classroom actually works to create compassion and empathy and understanding and kindness in the hearts and the minds of her students, and I think that's a great approach to have in a classroom, you can tell her for us.

Thank you for coming.

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

We'll now move to—we'll now call on Jenni Funk, private citizen. Jenni Funk, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Funk. Do you have written materials for distribution? We'll just ask the staff to help you distribute those, and you may proceed when you are ready.

Ms. Jolene Funk (Private Citizen): Hi, my name is Jolene Funk, and I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to present on Bill 18. I am a mother of three children in grade 3, kindergarten and preschool. I believe Bill 18 has been drafted with good intentions to create a safe and inclusive school environment for all children. I believe that nobody should be bullied for any reason, and all students should feel safe at school. I also believe that Bill 18, as it is currently written, will not accomplish that intended goal.

I am concerned with Bill 18, as it is currently written, for the following reasons. The definition of the word bullying is too vague. The definition is so broad that it can include any and everything. It minimizes real bullying and creates an environment where unintentional hurt feelings can occur. This definition of bullying is so generic that it will be almost impossible to enforce and will cause more unnecessary work for our teachers. As we all know, each child varies greatly at his or her level of development, understanding and maturity. One thing can mean a totally different thing to another, therefore creating hurt feelings. All this takes is a

little teacher and parent intervention, not government policing.

North Dakota has a very well-worded antibullying law. It states that bullying is so severe, pervasive or objectively offensive that it substantially interferes with the student's educational opportunities; places the student in actual and reasonable fear of harm; places the student in actual and reasonable fear of damage to the property of the student; or substantially disrupts the orderly operation of the public school.

This, I believe, is a perfect example of how Bill 18 should be amended. It does not single out any groups and does not exclude others.

I also believe that a revised Bill 18 should include notice to parents of the bullies and their victims because, after all, it is their child to discipline, not the government's.

Number 2, Bill 18 specifically protects children in four categories and four categories only: gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities.

Creating specific groups only singles them out to be bullied more. It also leaves out many other reasons as to why children are bullied, like, for their faith, their looks, their grades and their family's economic stance, to name a few. Children get bullied for these examples way more than or, at the very least, the same amount as they do for their gender, race, sexual orientation or disabilities. Where is the protection for these groups? Why are there only a few being singled out? I believe the wording needs to be changed to include everyone.

When parents and students choose an independent faith-based school, they do so specifically because it offers a certain school environment and set of values. Bill 18 erodes that choice by requiring these schools to accommodate and promote groups whose beliefs are in direct contradiction to the teaching of many independent faith-based schools.

According to the current wording of Bill 18, Christians and other religions are being bullied by the government into promoting lifestyles in their schools that they do not stand for. No independent faith-based school should be forced into doing things against their beliefs. According to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as Canadians, we have the right to freedom of religion. Bill 18 is taking that away.

In conclusion, I agree all bullying needs to stop, but Bill 18 is a weak response to a serious issue and will cause more problems than it solves. The wording needs to be amended to include freedom of religion for all faith-based schools and to have a clear definition of bullying and its consequences.

Thank you for your time.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Ms. Funk. I appreciate the presentation that you have made tonight and your comments in regard to Bill 18, and we appreciate you being here this evening. Thank you.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Thanks very much, Jenni, for your very well-thought-out presentation, as many have been. I think all the presentations we've heard, so far tonight anyway, have been well thought out, and people are speaking from personal experience and from their own beliefs.

I want to say especially that you have obviously read the bill and thought a lot about it and did some research into what is happening elsewhere and have put forth some very thoughtful amendments that we're hoping might be considered as we begin to go clause by clause and look at moving this bill forward.

And so I want to thank you for that. It's great to see recommendations for ways that, you know, a bill could be strengthened and improved.

So thank you for your presentation, Jenni.

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

I'd like to make a correction for the committee. I—the last presenter we called was Jenni Funk. However, the presenter was actually Jolene Funk. So, very similar names, but different presenters. So I'm just going to go back to No. 8, presenter No. 8, and call once again: Jenni Funk, private citizen.

Okay, seeing that Ms. Funk is not here, we will drop her name to the bottom of the list.

An Honourable Member: Which one isn't here?

Mr. Chairperson: Jenni Funk, presenter No. 8, has been called and now has been dropped to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on Kelly Friesen, private citizen.

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

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

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

Mr. Kelly Friesen: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for listening to our views here tonight as Manitoba citizens speak out for our concerns for Bill 18.

The bill has been named the antibullying law. The schools in Manitoba have bullies and, of course, those that are being bullied. There are many reasons to pick on our kids: from their size, colour, religion, language, social status, even being shy, disabled, poor academics, poor in sports, socially challenged and even, yes, sexually orientated—orientation.

Growing up, I was bullied for many of these reasons. To simply bow my head before a meal was to be ridiculed for being a Bible thumper, in a Christian community at that. To be a poor sport, to be—sorry—to be poor at sports got me jeers from fellow students and last to be chosen on a team.

*(19:10)

To be short and chubby got the girls sneering and shunning me as I walked by. I also became the punching bag for the stronger kids in my class. Most days I had hisses for—most days I had—sorry, I'll start this over. Most days had me hissing—that's hiding for cover, as not to draw attention to myself for fear of being pushed down and pinned to the ground to be submitted to a crowd of chants and cheering. I did not fit into the community as well, either, for not knowing the German language. I am shy, and grades were barely passing at best. It all added up to being a great target for the bullies in my grade. This went on through elementary and junior high. Thankfully, in high school, I went to a school most of my previous class did not attend. It was a relief to attend a school where I could be myself and was accepted. In this atmosphere I excelled in sports and academics and became more socially active.

This story could be told by many of you and countless Manitobans. It is not new nor will it be changed without awareness and hard work. My humble opinion is that Bill 18 would not have improved my silent pain that I experienced most of the days in school; for instance, I admit that a larger part of my being bullied was from hurt feelings.

I anticipated snide remarks and took great offence from it. My teachers may have been somewhat aware of this treatment, but I can't imagine how they would have policed it among all the students in the playground. I also can't imagine my bullies being persuaded to stop because it was legislated. How many 9-year-old to 14-year-old boys or girls even know the knowledge of the law of the land. We don't give this much—we don't even give them that much responsibility at that point. Who is going to police this bill? What are the consequences of bullish behaviour? Kids will find ways to pick on each other, in or outside of the schools.

My, again, humble suggestion would be to bring the bully and the victim together and have each of them talk about what they experienced. Parents should be involved to get—parents should also be involved; if there is some understanding of what the other is going through, the bully and the victim, it may bring some sympathy and even restoration to the individuals. This concept is being used in northern Canada. I've heard of many success stories up there.

Ultimately, the bully needs to genuinely apologize and the victim needs to forgive. Parents need to be involved, and teachers or supervisors need to detect this behaviour. I'm completely against bullying, of course, of any kind as I was a victim myself. We are all deserving of a safe place to be educated and an opportunity to excel in our own way. I don't believe this bill addresses the majority of Manitobans' bullying issues; in fact, it almost seems like a bullying law and not an antibullying law. Again, my humble opinion.

The bill does not address the countless issues we have all faced in one form or another. It seems only to isolate one particular group. It seems by pointing out a specific group places all the emphasis on them and everyone else just better live up with—better live with their pain. As soon as you protect one group, there is another that will be offended. I'm also curious why you chose to target this group. I'm only one of 300-plus speeches you will have, no doubt, have to hear them all by—have heard a lot of them by now, but this whole sexual orientation aspect seems like an attack on the Christian community. I am sure you are aware how we as Christians stand on this issue. However, are you aware how Christians are to treat those who oppose them? It is with love just as Christ loved us. To force a Christian to love someone or tolerate someone living contrary

to God's Word should not be difficult but already in practice.

You may ask, then, why is this law such a big deal if we already love those that live outside of God's ways? We are told to love others but to hate the sin. This sin—this hate for sin needs to be deciphered between the individual and the individual's actions. All of us have sin in our life. If we were to hate people because of our sin, we would hate everyone. Instead, we can love that person, separating the individual from their sin.

If we wanted to discuss the topic of sexual sin, we as heterosexuals have the gay and lesbians beat by a long shot. Our sin of adultery, fornication, incest, pornography and so on has our population deeply messed up.

Bottom line: we already have a Charter of Rights that seems to have covered the main points of our freedom here in Manitoba. If we add to this, we are likely taking away from another to accommodate. Place some education posters and videos in the kids' hands to battle bullying, promoting speaking out and encouraging restoration between the victim and the bully. Both the victim and the bully are hurting and need help.

Thanks for taking the time to listen to me this evening.

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

We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Friesen, thank you very much for your presentation this evening and for the personal story that you shared with us about being bullied and the silent pain that you experienced because of your hurt feelings. I'm sure that was very difficult for you. Thank you as well for the comments and the thoughts that you have presented to us this evening. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Kelly, for coming this evening and sharing your story. We've heard from so many people who have come to tell us about what it means to be bullied in schools. It's a pain that does not go away easily. We've also heard from bullies who've come in and talked about years of being racked with guilt, trying to find their victims and locate them and try to make amends. What I appreciated in your presentation this evening is the ideas that you put forward about actually bringing in people together to try to create that empathy and to

try to provide an opportunity for restitution to take place. I appreciated those comments and I think they're important.

I think that your comments about the difficulty of policing this are valid. I just wanted to make one comment and ask for your feedback on it. I've asked this of a few people. I noticed you said very specifically that parents need to be involved. I know that when I read this bill there is no provision in this bill for parents to be involved. Are you concerned with the fact that, when I read Bill 18, you cannot find any indication in this bill that parents be involved in any way?

Mr. Kelly Friesen: Yes, that would be a concern. And I certainly do believe that it—that the parents do need to be involved, yes.

Mr. Swan: Now, Mr. Friesen a couple times has mentioned something not in the bill that's already in The Public Schools Act. Based on his last question, does it give you—*[interjection]* Sorry, I've got the floor.

Does it give you any comfort The Public Schools Act already provides that if there is harm, there's an obligation on the school to contact the parent?

Mr. Kelly Friesen: Sorry, could you repeat the question?

Mr. Swan: Just to make it clear, The Public Schools Act, which already exists, says that if a child is harmed, the school already has an obligation to call the parent. Does that give you any comfort based on the question Mr. Friesen asked you?

Mr. Kelly Friesen: Yes.

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

I'll now move to presenter No. 11, Dale Funk.

Mr. Funk, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee? I'm going to ask the staff to help you distribute those, and you may proceed whenever you're ready.

Mr. Dale Funk (Private Citizen): Hello. My name is Dale Funk. Thank you for this opportunity to speak about my thoughts on Bill 18. I appreciate that bullying is being addressed, but I feel that this effort has missed the target. I do not support bullying of any forms, and all students should feel safe at school. I'm a father of three children, one in grade 3, one in

kindergarten, and the other is in preschool. I live in Mitchell, Manitoba, and I'm a roofer by trade.

I do not think that Bill 18 should be implemented as it is written for the following reasons. The definition of bullying is very broad. If somebody's feelings are unintentionally hurt, an act of bullying hasn't occurred. How can an indirect act of hurting someone's feelings label a person as a bully?

* (19:20)

Certain groups are protected under Bill 18, and it doesn't protect others. Four groups are protected. I feel that protecting certain groups and not others is unfair; it's showing favouritism. Every student should have an equal protection, not some students or most students, but everyone.

GSAs are being used as a specific example here. Bill 18 will protect GSAs and give them the right to promote themselves. Every other group not in this category is left out for the school administration to decide whether it promotes a positive or negative school environment. Religious rights are not protected; this is huge for me. How can such a large group not be protected, yet GSAs are singled out and protected?

There are no exemptions for independent schools. I'm a Christian and I attended a Christian school. This bill will force a Christian school, for example, to accommodate GSA groups. GSAs will be allowed to promote itself within independent faith-based schools. They can't—the Canadian Constitution Act promises me my religious freedom. I feel that this bill will take that away.

I want a school for my kids to go to that reflects and promotes my faith, that defines the person you see here today. Forcing religious schools to accommodate groups that contradict its beliefs is a perfect recipe for a negative school environment.

I'm scared where this bill will take us. I feel that the government is going too far. Forcing schools to accommodate certain groups and not all is favouritism. Bill 18 tells me that the government cares for those groups the most. Section 41(1.8) should be omitted from Bill 18; by doing this, it'll show equal rights for all.

I'm a hard-working person with debt and lots of bills to pay for. I have never contemplated home-schooling until now. I do realize it's good for kids to socialize with others, but at what price? I want the

best for my kids and soon I'm not even sure if a Christian school will be able to offer that. I want them to stay on the best Christian path as possible. I don't know that I'm—I don't know what I'm going to do.

I want a school that promotes Christian values and Christian values alone. A school shouldn't be forced to compromise its beliefs. Promoting a homosexual lifestyle within a Christian school compromises its values.

My brother has now decided to home-school his daughter. She just entered grade 3. He was always thinking about home-schooling his kids, and when Bill 18 came around, it cemented his decision. He also wants to enrol his kids into a Christian school when they are old enough, and now he's not sure what he is going to do. Like I, he will wait and see how this all plays out.

In conclusion, I ask that Bill 18 be amended to work on the definition of bullying and let schools have the right to allow or deny promotion of groups in order to sustain a positive school environment. Instead of singling out groups have an antibullying group where all who are bullied are welcome. They are all there for the same reason; why single them out?

Thanks.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Funk, thank you very much for your presentation this evening and thank you for your reflections on Bill 18. We appreciate you being here tonight. And I know you're a hard worker because you're in the trades, and my 26-year-old daughter's an electrician. So all the best and all the best with your three young children. Thank you for being here this evening.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Dale, thanks for coming this evening. Thank you for joining us at committee and taking time out of your busy schedule to be here at the Manitoba Legislature and to take part of this process, which I believe is so important to the development of good legislation and also to democracy and the exercise of democracy.

You made some very good comments to us today. I'm sad to hear that you're contemplating home-schooling as a result, but I'll tell you very

honestly you're not the first person to express it at this committee.

I wondered do you think there'll be others—Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Protestant, Catholic, Coptic, others of different faiths—for whom home-schooling might also become an option because of the wording of this bill?

Mr. Funk: For sure—like, yes. We're a big group. Religious people are a big group. We're not even listed on the bill to be protected. And I see a lot of people pulling their kids out of school because of this for sure; I want to. I'm a hard worker, but could I afford it financially? I don't know. My hands are tied and it kind of sucks.

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

I'll now call on Cindy Wiebe, private citizen. Cindy Wiebe, private citizen? Ms. Wiebe's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on Ryan Zacharias, private citizen.

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

Mr. Ryan Zacharias (Private Citizen): I do, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: If I could just ask the staff to help you distribute those. And you may proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Mr. Zacharias: Good evening. Thank you for having me. My name's Ryan Zacharias. I'm not here representing any organization or group. I'm just someone that could have been possibly affected by Bill 18, had it in place at the time while I was still in school.

Eight years ago when I was in middle school I was bullied. Bullying is a well-known concept to many folks in society. Some have first-hand experience as a result of being victimized, or if you've even been the instigator, while others know only through shared stories and experiences from friends, family, and acquaintances. Many know that bullying exists, but only few can truly understand and comprehend the kind of toll that it takes on someone. At a time when having friends is crucial, where popularity is treated like currency, middle and high school proposes to be an extremely delicate part of one's life.

Going to school every day and being told that you're a fag, a queer, or being told that you have no

friends, being told that no one likes you, that hurts. Even when it's not true, when you know it's not true, the mental anguish that goes along with such statements really takes a chunk out of your self-esteem and your overall positivity.

As a result, rather than wanting to go to school, you're forced to it. Once feigning illness no longer allows you to stay home, you're subjected to a Monday-to-Friday schedule of verbal and physical abuse. This is not to say that there are no measures currently in place which allow for the intervention of bullying. Among other things, teachers and counsellors are there to help students with any problems they may have. However, and this is from experience, sometimes the problem is not resolved but is only temporarily bandaged. While they try to be as supportive as possible, there is often a lack of connection between parties. Sometimes you just need to talk to someone you can better relate to.

For example, people who enjoy chess can join the chess club. People who enjoy a specific sport can join a sports team. Why can't people who are having a tough time in school be able to form their own kind of group or alliance?

Critics of Bill 18 have cited that the definition of bullying is too vast. The reality is that bullying does have a wide span. Just to name a few, there is cyberbullying, physical bullying, verbal bullying, and bullying by intimidation. A narrow or overly specific definition of bullying would cause confusion and would likely miss specific kinds of violence or abuse.

Critics say that Bill 18 would put teachers and other crucial people at risk because of the concept of hurt feelings. While I can see where there would be a similarity between criticizing someone and having someone feel like they're being verbally bullied, I believe that youth are able to understand the difference between being told they need to practise something versus being told they are useless and will never be a part of whatever it is they want to do.

The notion that Bill 18 won't actually stop bullying is actually a fair one. If someone wants to do something and they feel that strongly about it, they will do it, regardless of possible consequences. Bill 18, however, is a step in the right direction, as it at least shows that there is progress being made in what seems to be an endless quest to end bullying. As someone who has suffered through and recently gotten over their fair share of both physical and mental abuse, allow me to be the voice for the youth

with none. Allow me to speak for the ones who are afraid to be heard, and allow me to be known by many.

As much as counselling and mentorship help, youth need peer support. To be able to discuss your problems with someone who can relate to you, to someone who has been through or is currently going through what you are, would make schools a much more comforting and welcoming environment. The youth will feel better, much better about when they spend their day in a place where they at least know that there's always someone there who can help with what's needed.

Thank you.

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

We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Ryan, for your presentation this evening, and thank you for telling us your personal story because I think your personal story is important, and I think that young people these days would be proud to have your voice speak for young people that experience the same kinds of things that you have experienced.

Thank you for being here and all the best.

* (19:30)

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Ryan, thank you for coming and sharing with us this evening. It takes courage to come here. As a young person, you've told your story and we appreciate you taking the time to do it in these long committee evenings.

I want to ask you a question about the reporting of bullying as being someone who experienced bullying. There's been some concern expressed that when there is a reporting of bullying, it can actually lead to more instances of bullying, and in some jurisdictions, some educators and some experts and even some politicians are considering the idea of, like, a non-reported bullying or an anonymous way of reporting bullying instances. What do you think of the idea of anonymous reporting of bullying instances? Would it have helped you?

Mr. Zacharias: By chance, I'm familiar with BC. They're introducing that kind of thing where you can report it online. Just—could you elaborate on your question a little, please?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I'm actually just wondering what you think about that idea to—the idea that

somehow bullying or instances of bullying could be reported in an anonymous way so as to not lead to reprisals.

Mr. Zacharias: I think that if a student goes to, say, a teacher, principal, any official in school, there's definitely a chance where there could be that kind of bias backlash; you're known as a rat, a snitch, that kind of thing. I believe 'anom'—sorry, anonymity would be a great start, as well as, perhaps, peer support because as I was saying before, peer support really is, you know, what students are looking for.

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

We'll now call on David Halstead, private citizen.

Good evening, Mr. Halstead. Do you have written materials for distribution? I'll ask the staff to help you distribute those. And you may proceed with your presentation when you are ready.

Mr. David Halstead (Private Citizen): Good evening, ministers and MLAs. I'm a life-long educator, high school, college, university, a little bit of international experience, and for the last 12 years I've been reading that brain research as it relates to behavioural development as it—and a predictor—bullying, and I've given workshops across Canada, into the States, New Zealand and Australia. I—first of all, I'm going to try to get two-day workshops reduced down to 10 minutes so just hang tough.

An Honourable Member: Go.

Mr. Halstead: Go. First of all, bullies are everywhere, whether they're in churches or at schools or in community clubs. They may even be in this room; who knows? Bullies are everywhere. When bullies are in an organization, they leave the place physically and psychologically disturbed and people perform—underperform.

Prior to deciding that I would make a presentation, I was dismayed by some of the articles—some of the items that I read in the paper, and I really got the impression that a great many people, both inside the House and outside the House, were not taking bullying seriously. This is not a game, folks. People die because of bullying. It's a life-and-death struggle for any number of young people on any given day, and last night, I just mentioned this, what I was going to do today, and my neighbour said that his friend's son in Toronto, who's in grade 12, and all of a sudden, he was gone. Not sure, I wasn't able to

get all the details but there he was and the surprise was, there was no inkling as to why this happened but bullying was—other than bullying was in the background.

The principal reason we have a brain is to keep us alive. Bullies have problems staying with the course because of some cognitive or emotional frailty; they overreact to differences; they try to establish their spot and other people are hurt by it. Our principal emotion is fear. If it was love, we could all go home tonight because there wouldn't be a need for this bill; there wouldn't be a need for this committee. Fear is dominant. We fear change; we fear new information. We fear people that don't talk like us, that don't look like us, that don't share our social values, who succeed when we don't succeed and who are smarter than us and are better athletes than us. We fear them, and out of these fears comes some kind of convoluted sense that they need to be put in place, they need to be punished in some way. And so we have this frenzy in our communities and have had that—this frenzy in our communities forever and ever.

With reference to 1.1(1), when I'm doing my workshops, I'm talking about bullying in the sense of it being repeated, it's been—it's 'one-directional'; it's cruel. There are big things happening here, and they're happening repeatedly. One instance seldom is a bullying incident. However, most bullying incidents by themselves are really not all that serious. However, multiple bullying incidents become really problematic.

As for people knowing what they should do and what they shouldn't do, our jails are full of people that should have known not to do certain things. But they're there. One of the things about bullying is lower levels of empathy. Baron-Cohen writes that empathy is one's ability to be sensitive to the needs of others and to be able to act in an appropriate manner—to be sensitive to the needs of others and act in an appropriate manner. Bullies do not do this, or very seldom do they do this.

The imbalance of power in 1.2(2): The imbalance of power comes in many forms. It could be physical size, age, group support or group indifference. Bullies know how to read this thing. They know when it's safe for them. They also, in many cases, receive parental and community support, whether it's totally open or somewhat behind the scenes. They feel a sense of entitlement. Bullies abuse their power advantage to diminish the

physical and psychological status of their victims. Bullies are cowards. Seldom is a 98-pound weakling going to tackle a 210-pound football player, unless he thinks he can run really fast or he's really smart. They choose their victims carefully, and they choose their modes of attack carefully.

Hence, bullies find ways of isolating their victims and intimidating them; otherwise, they work in the shadows of the school, whether it's behind the lockers in the locker room or in the washrooms or around the school corner. Wherever it is, they are in the shadows. This is why cyberbullying is such a creative thing for them. It's a godsend for them because they can try to operate behind the scenes on the social media. They can say all kinds of things, they think, about others without being caught.

I've mentioned before and I'll mention again: Bullying is repetitive and most individual acts are of little consequence, but over and over again the cumulative effects are significant. Leanne Nazer-Bloom writes: Bullies—victims—pardon me—live with intense feelings of loneliness, rejection, hopelessness and anger. I think you've heard some of that tonight already. Didn't use—necessarily use those words, and I probably didn't use those 'wor'—wouldn't have used those words; although, I talk about the thing a lot. Four words: loneliness, rejection, hopelessness and anger. Therefore, it's not difficult to appreciate why there are suicides and why there are extreme acts of violence conducted by victims of bullying. In actual fact, victims of bullying are punished more times in schools than bullies themselves—why?—because they overreact to situations and they get caught.

To me, it's unconscionable, morally wrong, for anyone to advocate that victims of bullying be denied access to support programs that are either professionally or peer driven.

* (19:40)

In summary, let me emphasize a few things. We're living in 2013. We're living in Canada. We're living in a country that has a high level of education, and it also has many cultural traditions. It's populated by many who have fled countries where there's been political or religious persecution. It's populated by people who fled because of economic deprivation, and they found safety and opportunity within our borders.

We have, as has been mentioned earlier tonight, many freedoms including the freedom of thought,

beliefs, opinion, oppression—expression, pardon me, freedom of association, critical, freedom to live life with liberty and security. But with all freedoms come responsibilities, and freedoms may clash, requiring that priorities and accommodations be established.

Item 2. Over the generations things change. Things change—have changed in this province and, for example, in terms of women's rights women have been—all of a sudden were allowed to vote, many years ago.

Mr. Chairperson: One minute remaining.

Mr. Halstead: Okay, sorry. Let's just go to item three, diagnostic manual. Homosexuality is not a mental disease; it's a genetic thing. We need informed, supportive leadership. We need to be able to respond to the new information that's out there, and, lastly, I'll just finish up with this—several items.

Manitobans need to realize that bullying is a human frailty that is cruel, uncivilized and can be deadly. That victimization is unwarranted, unwanted, negatively impacts on human well-being for the lifetime; it can be self-destructive. All students deserve to attend school safely and treated with dignity, and, lastly, we must be willing to study, to grow, to open ourselves to reviewing certain aspects of our social values and responsibilities and arrive at 21st-century solutions to make our communities healthier and to dynamically provide support and care to the healing of victims of bullying.

Mr. Chairperson: Time for presentation—for your presentation has expired. Thank you very much, Mr. Halstead, for your presentation this evening.

We'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, I know it was tough to put a two-day workshop into 10 minutes, Mr. Halstead, but you definitely tried. Thank you so much for your presentation this evening, and thank you for your commitment to this topic. All the best, thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Mr. Chair, first, I just wanted to ask if there'd be agreement around the committee table to have Mr. Halstead's full report entered into Hansard so there'd be a permanent record of your full report. I noticed that he did not get a chance to get down to the bottom of it.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there agreement of the committee to include the entire written submission from Mr. Halstead in the written—in the Hansard of this evening. *[Agreed]*

Good evening, Thank for the opportunity to speak to what I believe is an incredibly important issue and Bill.

*I have been a high school teacher and counsellor, a college teacher, counsellor and Dean of Students, an university administrator and for the last dozen plus years have been reading the relevant brain research and writing and speaking on brain development as it relates to learning and behaviour specifically bullying. This later interest has included workshop presentations across Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand and the writing and publishing of the book *The Bully Around the Corner*.*

First a few general comments.

#1 Bullies are everywhere within our society including: student's homes, their school yards, and community recreation facilities, administrative and corporate structures of all kinds, church congregations and hierarchies, team sports etc. You name it, they are there, and they are rendering their environments physically and psychologically unhealthy and underperforming.

#2 I am dismayed by some of the comments and concerns raised before and now during this set of hearings. Let's cut to the quick, and realize that bullies kill people either directly or indirectly. For many students bullying is a life and death issue. In the scale of issues to be addressed here life should be the priority. This is not a game.

#3 The principal reason for having a brain is survival and most people bully because a minor to major cognitive and/or emotional frailty impedes their ability to compete and interact with others in a normal, safe manner.

#4 Our dominant emotion is fear. If our dominant emotion was love we wouldn't need Bill 18 or this hearing. We fear change, we fear new information, we fear people who do not look like us, who do not speak like us, who do not share our culture or cultural values, who succeed where we don't succeed, who are smarter, who are better athletes etc. In other words we fear people who are different and in some convoluted way are seen as being threats. These perceived threats lead many people to bully those who are different.

With reference to Bullying behaviour 1.2(1) while the writing of this definition may meet the requirements of a legislative bill, in my workshops I explain bullying as an act of cruelty motivated by a range of negative emotions, perhaps some mental

shortcomings, some inappropriate parental and community attitudes and a lower than normal sense of empathy.* While we may know what is right and wrong, the reality is that the emotional urge to survive coupled with "wrong headed" cognitive messaging can lead us to do things which are just wrong. Our jails are full of people who knew or should have known better but committed crimes anyway.

*Baron-Cohen writes (and I paraphrase) that empathy is one's ability to be sensitive to the needs of others and to be able to act in an appropriate manner.

With reference to 1.2(2) the imbalance of power comes in many forms. It could be physical size, age, group support or group indifference and, unfortunately, may come from parental and community biases including feelings of entitlement to name a few. Bullies abuse their power advantage to diminish the physical and psychological status of their victims.

Furthermore, most bullies are cowards and they choose their victims and their modes of attack carefully. Hence bullies find ways of isolating their victims, intimidating them and otherwise causing harm in the "shadows" of the school, playground or other community areas, or in era of the new technology, using social media to abuse and defame the victims, all the while trying to hide their identity.

The vast majority of bullying is repetitive and most individual acts of bullying may be observed as of little consequence but when these acts are repeated over and over again the cumulative effects upon the victims are significant. In the words of Leanne Nazer-Bloom victims are left with intense feelings of loneliness, rejection, hopelessness and anger. Therefore, it is not difficult to appreciate that suicide or extreme acts of external violence can be the outcomes of being bullied. To me it is unconscionable, morally wrong for any one to advocate that victims of bullying be denied access to support programs that are either professionally or peer driven.

In summary let me emphasize.

#1 This 2013, we are living in Canada, a country of many cultural traditions and populated by many who have fled, or are descendents of those who have fled, political and/or religious persecution or economic deprivation and have found safety and opportunity within our borders. We have many freedoms including the "Freedom of thoughts, beliefs, opinion

and expression ..., Freedom of association, ... Freedom of right to have life, liberty and security.

But with freedoms come responsibilities and freedoms may clash requiring that priorities and accommodations be established.

#2 Over the generations societal changes* have taken place in Manitoba many of them focussed on women specifically voting rights, property rights, career options just to name a few. These did come about easily and some of these and others issues still need work. Attitudes had to change. Research, education, persistence and a willingness to find new solutions were the answers and are still the answers.

*Staub writes that these changes happen when "we have a positive view of others, concern for their welfare and a feeling of responsibility for others ... upholding basic moral principals like justice ... and empathy."

#3 The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in its last two editions did not and does not consider homosexuality as a mental disorder but rather a genetic condition that occurs and has occurred throughout all time. While the numbers are difficult to determine it may be safely assumed that at least 2-3% of Canada's population are either homosexual or bisexual.

#4 Adolescence is an extremely stressful time for all teens but immeasurably more stressful for individuals who come to the realization that their sexual orientation is not heterosexual. They definitely do not need to be denied critical support such as may be offered through a Gay Straight Alliance or similar structures.

#5 Schools cannot be expected to deal with all the dynamics of bullying and the resulting victimization alone. Informed, supportive leadership is needed in every community.

#6 Change is difficult, but we no longer harvest our crops with sickles and flails, we no longer send messages to other regions of the world by steam train and sailing ships. New information and new technologies drive our economies and virtually every other facet of our lives. The challenge for all in this room and for all Manitobans is to realize:

- that bullying is a human frailty that is cruel, uncivilized and can be deadly,
- that victimization is unwarranted, unwanted, negatively impacts on human well being often for a life time and can be self destructive. All

students deserve to attend school safely and be treated with dignity,

- *and lastly we must all be willing to study, to grow and open ourselves to reviewing certain aspects of our social values and responsibilities and arrive at 21st century solutions to make our communities healthier and to dynamically provide support, care and healing to the victims of bullying. This is the moral thing to do.*

Lastly let us commit these words to our memory.

The world of the victim of bullying is filled with loneliness, rejection, hopelessness and anger. No one deserves to live like this.

Thank you.

Sources:

Zero Degrees of Empathy: A New Understanding of Cruelty and Kindness—Simon Baron-Cohen

The Bully Around the Corner: Changing Brains—Changing Behaviours—David Halstead

Affluent, Angry and Alone: An Anecdote About Aiden—Leanne Nazer-Bloom

The Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults and Groups Help and Harm Others—Ervin Staub

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Halstead, for being here this evening and sharing with us your opinion and your expertise in the area of what I must suspect is an area of specialization for you.

I thought it was interesting that you seem to come back to a definition of bullying relying on a test of repetition, and in that sense, you take issue with the definition of bullying as offered by this legislation which defines in 1.2(2)(a) bullying as not necessarily having to take place more than once.

I just wondered if I could invite a comment from you in terms of the test of this definition being that bullying can be deemed to have happened if it takes place once. How do you explain that?

Mr. Halstead: I think there are probably situations where there's some kind of let's say intense racial thing where all of a sudden some people are moving through a given area and are attacked just outright because they are of colour and somebody else isn't of colour. That's one of the examples I can think of. But the literature seems to speak mostly of repetition of middling things. One of the expressions that sometimes is used has been nibbled to death by a duck. Just time and time and time again the person is

ridiculed, is hit, is pushed into the locker, is, you know, shunned, whatever. But I suppose there are incidents where some kind of serious act can happen once based on some kind of differences, but it's not where I am most of the time.

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

Now call on Suzanne Toews, private citizen.

Ms. Toews, do you have a written submission for the committee?

Ms. Suzanne Toews (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

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

Ms. Toews: Hello, my name is Suzanne Toews. I am a wife, a mother, daughter, a sister, a Christian, and I am against bullying for all people.

But I am here because I am concerned about Bill 18 as it is currently written. Like a lot of people I know, I have a child who's currently in the school system and has had to deal with a bully. My child has been bullied verbally for believing in God, and physically.

Currently, the bill gives protection to children under four categories; gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities, and I totally agree with this. However religious beliefs are left out. What I am trying to teach my children is that there are different beliefs and opinions in the world, and while we may not agree with all of their views, we will not ever disrespect them as people, and that we obey the commandment of love your neighbour as yourself. I am asking only for equal consideration to be given to all children, not to prevent rights to people but to also make sure rights are not removed from anyone either.

This brings me to my second point that The Human Rights Code already covers gender identity and sexual orientation in it, but the Charter of Rights says that we also have freedom of religion, thought, belief, opinion and expression; this goes for all religions. And, if we respect the Charter, then we need to respect religious schools and their right to different beliefs and opinions. The way the bill is currently written, it states wanting a safe and inclusive learning environment, the acceptance and respect for others and creating a positive environment. These are all wonderful goals, and I one hundred per cent want this kind of environment for my children, but if this can only come through

religious schools having to deny their beliefs or children not being able to freely talk about their religious beliefs, then that is bullying the schools.

A few days ago I read on the Daily Hope with Rick Warren the statement only courageous people resolve conflict. I really hope that we can all be courageous enough to work together to building a better bill that includes all children, that maybe encouraging—encourages an antibullying group as an alternative, and that will empower our children to know what bullying is and what to do about it.

My daughter asked me what I was writing, and I told her I am writing a speech that says bullying is wrong and that all people should be protected. I think this is our common goal and I hope that we can get there.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you much—very much, Ms. Toews, for your presentation. It was very well done.

We'll now move on to questions.

Mr. Swan: Yes, Ms. Toews, thank you very much for being with our committee tonight and presenting, and I assure you that all the MLAs present do—we do listen to the presentations that are made. And I do hope that you're able to work with the school to prevent the bullying issue that you've told us about tonight.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Suzanne, for coming and sharing this evening. I think your daughter would be proud of what you presented this evening.

I noticed that—I just wanted to—I don't know if you were here at the beginning, but the first presenter this evening said that he took no exception to the fact that there's no prohibition in this bill against discrimination on the basis of social or disadvantage or religion or creed or ethnicity; basically, he says those weren't needed because people aren't predominantly bullied for reasons of religion. That doesn't seem to be the experience of your daughter.

Floor Comment: It was my son.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Can you just comment on that? Oh sorry, of your child. Can you just comment on that for us?

Ms. Toews: Yes. It's my son that was bullied. He was bullied last year for those beliefs; specifically,

the teacher said that he was put in position to be with that child because my child was the only one that had—showed patience and kindness towards that child and then he was bullied verbally and physically.

And, in regards to your statement before, we did not receive any calls from school. We had to go approach the school about it, and as of yet nothing has happened.

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

We'll now call on Jennifer Thompson, private citizen.

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

Ms. Jennifer Thompson (Private Citizen): No.

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

* (19:50)

Ms. Thompson: Hello. My name is Jennifer Thompson. I'm a mother of two boys who attend public school here in Manitoba. I am here today because I have concerns about Bill 18 and how it is written.

As a mother of children in the public school system, I am, of course, against all bullying for any reason. I believe that we are to love everyone, regardless of belief or lifestyle choices. We certainly teach this to our children as it is God's greatest commandment in Scripture: Love God and love your neighbour. And in school, all children are my children's neighbours.

Bill 18 gives protection to four specific groups of children: gender, race, sexual orientation and disabilities. While I am grateful for these groups, as my children are both hearing impaired, and no child should be bullied for any of these reasons, I'm concerned for the omission of another group of children—those who have religious beliefs. Because of those loose definitions of what bullying can look like, my child may be punished for simply disagreeing with someone and hurting their feelings. If my child decides he wants to start up a Christian group in his school, will he be protected? Or be considered a bully because he does not share another group's beliefs or values. This bill needs to be all-inclusive, so that, indeed, it is going to make all children feel safe and included. Unfortunately, since

the release of this bill, that has not been the case. Thank you.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Mr. Swan: Yes, Mrs. Thompson, thank you for coming down and presenting to our committee tonight. It's appreciated that so many Manitobans have come down to give us their views on this bill.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Jennifer, for being here, for presenting to us. I know that it's important. I think the message you gave is—gave us is that all children are worthy of our best efforts to make schools a safe place for them and we appreciate that message.

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

We'll now call on Shird—Shirley Schroeder, private citizen.

Ms. Schroeder, do you have written materials for distribution of the committee?

Ms. Shirley Schroeder (Private Citizen): I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Feel free to begin whenever you're ready.

Ms. Schroeder: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It's nice to see some faces of MLAs and ministers and 'ministerettes' and all the rest of you. So—and I'm very nervous, because, you know, I'd rather just, you know, stay in my little shell. So, but here I am, trying to be a good citizen and just speak my heart to you tonight.

So, regarding Bill 18, my concerns being a citizen of Canada, a mother with children that are in school and a dedicated and practising Christian, I just thank you again for taking the time to hear me out.

I guess my biggest concern with Bill 18 is how it may infringe on my family's religious freedoms, freedoms that my country was founded on, but also the implications that this bill will have on Christian teachers in my school, my kids' schools, as well as the Christian schools here in Manitoba.

Just reading the bill, there were some words that just caused a little bit of concern for me, words like feelings, promoting, accepting and accommodating human diversity. And what concerned me there is when it comes into direct conflict with our religious beliefs as Christians, and for our Christian teachers,

that they're going to be forced to comply when it comes into clear conflict with their belief. So then it makes me think ahead: What is this stepping toward, this so-called promoting, accepting and accommodating? Is it going to show up in our school curriculum in how the teachers are teaching my children, and are they going to be subtly taught to question their own gender or even encouraged to go down that path of thought? These are my concerns as a parent.

I so appreciate the value and skills that the teachers that have come across my children's paths, teaching them to read, write, reading, writing, arithmetic, right, and just preparing them to be an active part of society here in Canada. But yet I feel I remain the parent of my children, and I guess I just don't really appreciate the government trying to influence how I raise my children in regards to my Christian beliefs.

So I just ask and I appeal to you: If you feel Bill 18 must be amended, I just ask that these changes do not come at the expense of anyone else's rights. And please understand that I do not promote bullying. I am against it, like everybody else. I don't think anyone should have to go through being bullied. There's people close to me that have gone through it, and it's not fun.

And I also believe that every human life is valuable. So, again, I just—I appeal to you and ask that if you're making any changes, that they don't come to—come at the expense of anyone else's rights.

At the end of the last school year, I attended assembly, and as we stood up and we sang O Canada, those words really penetrated my heart. So preparing this presentation, it's been a wonderful experience for me. It's made me think more about Canada and what makes Canada such a lovely place to live. So, as I was just thinking on Canada and the lovely words in that song, I just kind of researched it a bit online and found the original poem in 1908, written by Stanley Weir. And I'm just going to take up the whole 10 minutes for you guys, here, and I'm just going to read this to you because it really touched me, and it really—it brings across how Canada came to be. And I love it.

O Canada / Our home and native land / True patriot love / Thou dost in us command / We see thee rising fair, dear land / The true north strong and free / And stand on guard, O Canada / We stand on guard for thee / O Canada, where pines and maples grow / Great prairies spread, the lordy rivers flow / How

dear to us thy broad domain / From east to western sea / Thou land of hope for all who toil / Thou true north strong and free / O Canada, beneath thy shining skies / May stalwart suns and gentle maidens rise / To keep thee steadfast through the years / From east to western sea / Our own beloved native land / Our true north strong and free / Ruler supreme who hearest humble prayer / Hold our dominion within thy loving care / Help us to find, oh God, in thee / A lasting, rich reward as waiting for the better day / We ever stand on guard.

And then there was this, the French version of O Canada that was—I'm going to read it in English because you wouldn't understand my French, unfortunately:

O Canada / Land of our forefathers / Thy brow is wreathed with a glorious garland of flowers / As in thy arm to wield, ready to wield the sword / So also it is ready to carry the Cross / Thy history is an epic of the most brilliant exploits / Thy valour steeped in faith / Will protect our homes and rights / Will protect our homes and rights.

So there's the French version that was never changed.

And then on July 1st, 1980, they modified Weir's poem to the song that we still sing today:

O Canada / Our home and native land / True patriot love in all thy sons command / With glowing hearts we see thee rise / The true north strong and free / From far and wide / O Canada, we stand on guard for thee / God keep our land glorious and free / O Canada, we stand on guard for thee / O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

It just reminded me that our country was founded in God. We sing to Him in our anthem. We read about Him in our history. And when I was reading about the Legislature and how you guys kind of run things around here, I realized that you include praying to God in routine proceedings. That's awesome. I love that. I was so encouraged, and I think if we pray to God in all these areas of our country, doesn't it just make sense that we want to obey Him as well?

My family and I—my family, I guess I'm part of that—we're going to continue to uphold all of you as our leaders in Manitoba, here, in prayer. You guys have a tremendous responsibility before God and before His people, so I just want to thank you so much for your time and for listening to my simple words here.

Thank you.

* (20:00)

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

We'll now move on to questions.

Mr. Swan: Well, thank you, Mrs. Schroeder, I think you told us right at the start of your presentation that you were trying to be a good citizen. I think you are, and everybody who comes down to a committee—whatever their point of view is—is exercising their citizenship. And Manitoba is one of the few places in Canada, indeed, in the world where, when a bill goes forward, any Manitoban can come down to the Legislature and tell a committee of MLAs their views. And you've done that, I think, very passionately tonight, and I just want to thank you and wish you and your family all the best.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thanks for coming, Shirley, and thanks for exercising the rights and privileges of your citizenship tonight. I wasn't sure if you were going to speak those words or sing them to us, but in any case, I think you gave us a lot to think about, and you gave us something new to think about that perhaps has been expressed less often at committee, and that was the idea that teachers instructed to do these things might face a crisis of conscience. People of faith—in the role of a teacher—may face a crisis of conscience.

I just wanted to ask you a quick question with regard to that because it made me think—do you know of teachers who have expressed that concern to you, or do you know of teachers for whom that may become a concern under this proposed legislation?

Ms. Schroeder: Yes, I know several teachers that it's a very big concern.

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

I'll now move on to presenter No. 18, Brian Schroeder; however, I noticed there's also a presenter No. 21, Brian Schroeder. Not exactly sure how we handle if there's two Brian Schroeders, decide who goes first, but we will call at least one: Brian Schroeder, private citizen.

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

Mr. Brian Schroeder (Private Citizen): I do not.

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

Mr. Schroeder: I was interested to see who the other Brian Schroeder was, so—*[interjection]* Yes.

Ladies and gentlemen, as everyone before me, I thank you for this opportunity to come before you and share my concerns with Bill 18. It is my intent to convey why I believe this bill is a threat to my family's right to religious freedom. I'm asking to consider the consequences of promoting someone else's rights at the cost of my children's rights and my rights. I hope my words remain respectful to you, the leaders of our government, as well as those in favour of the proposed bill.

As a follower of Christ, sorry—I'm a follower of Christ, a husband, a father of four school-age children, and a fifth generation Canadian. My Mennonite forefathers migrated to this Canada from Europe to escape oppression and persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ. Here's a brief history of how I arrived here. Historically, the Mennonite people have been a people of migration, parallel to—somewhat to the children of Israel. In spite of our shortcomings, our history is a powerful testimony to the survival of a faith amidst wanderings and hardships of a pioneer. For more than 400 years, we have retained our identity while wandering from the Netherlands to northern Germany to Prussia, from Prussia to Russia, and eventually to the Americas. My forefathers honoured their kings and czars. They were instructed to do—or encouraged to do so by the Apostle Paul in Romans 13. They brought 'pos'—prosperity, excuse me; they brought prosperity to otherwise unproductive lands. The church community looked after the downtrodden, the sick, and protected the sanctity of life, long before governments were expected to do so.

History has repeated itself in the generations of my forefathers, and this generation may not be any different. The safe sanctuary we have found here in Canada may eventually be threatened by those who do not recognize or fear God. With the legislation proposed by the NDP government, through Bill 18, I can clearly see a similarity of the beginning of the oppression faced by my forefathers that—which possibly lies before my generation here in our country. We may someday be asked to choose to compromise our faith in order to remain in this wonderful country, or flee in search of a place where we can remain faithful to our God. I believe this bill,

as it is written, is a step, however small, to history repeating itself.

As Christians, we are perceived as judgmental hypocrites that look down on those around us. Unfortunately, Christians are often a poor reflection of Christ. We are called to reflect His image through the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans that we've all fallen short of the glory of God. Basically, he's saying that nobody can be without sin other than Christ, so don't measure yourself to anybody but Him.

Many of those in favour of this bill wrongly believe that Christians hate anyone who does not share their faith. The reason why I personally oppose Bill 18 is not because of hate or judgment of someone else's lifestyle choice; it's because I don't want somebody else's choice forced upon me. I want the equal right to choose.

I have chosen to live a Christian lifestyle and it is my responsibility to model that lifestyle and to teach it to my children, to love others, and to live a life that is desirable for those who do not have Christ in their lives. Christ has not asked me to be His salesman. He's called me to be a billboard for a life lived in a way to draw others to desire the same lifestyle, not by condemning others' choices.

If you feel that you must change Bill 18 to provide a safe learning environment for children, then do so, but I ask that these changes do not promote one's beliefs at the discrimination of another. If you encourage me to be tolerant of other people's choices, I expect the same courtesy in return. I appreciate the desire and the skill of teachers to convey understanding of skills associated with history, reading, writing, arithmetic, but if government begins to dictate and control what is acceptable regarding the lifestyle and religious beliefs of my children, we move from a democracy to something that history has proven to be a catastrophic failure.

Thank you for your time.

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

We'll now move to question.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much for your presentation tonight. I appreciate your personal reflections on Bill 18, and thank you for being here.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Brian, for coming and sharing with us your opinions, your thoughts this evening. I can tell you that others have shared similar concerns to your own, but thank you for reminding us about the slippery slope of what happens when we are asked to promote and enhance values that might stand in opposition to one's own values, and that's certainly an area of concern and interest, and we've heard a lot of that. So I thank you for sharing that this evening and sharing your views with us.

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

We'll now call on Samuel Harder, private citizen.

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

Mr. Samuel Harder (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

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

Mr. Harder: Okay. Hello. My name is Sam Harder. I am 18 years old and grew up in the Grunthal area. I was home-schooled from kindergarten until I graduated. I am now employed as a construction worker. Some of you may think that Bill 18 has nothing to do with home-schoolers because its aim is public schools, but this soon will have a wide ripple effect that will gradually eat at the moral structure of our province and, ultimately, our country.

Firstly, as taxpayers, we are financially supporting the public school system and therefore would like to see our money being used wisely, not spent promoting unhealthy lifestyles as gay-straight alliance would be encouraged—would encourage. More importantly, as Christians, we are concerned for the spiritual welfare of our future generations. If they are consistently exposed to what the Bible clearly calls an abomination, Leviticus 20:13 says: If a man lieth with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them. Quoted from the Holy Bible.

This is how detestable homosexuality is in God's eyes, that it merited the death sentence. This antibullying law was introduced in 2011 under Bill 14, so why is it being pushed again? We feel that it is an umbrella that will protect and encourage gays to practise openly, and no one will be able to tell

them how sinful it is. Never mind the fact that children who want to follow a heterosexual lifestyle may become confused and wonder if they are out of the loop.

* (20:10)

When a certain leader was promoting his agenda of building an empire, he knew that to push his ideas on the older people would never work, so he decided to aim his propaganda at the children in schools who'd be more likely to conform to his glorious ideas about the country's future. Many, many children followed him and those whose parents were concerned were often pressured or persecuted until they also submitted. Those parents who refused to allow their children to join the youth programs would also be beaten or possibly jailed. What was the outcome of all this? In the end, millions of people died.

Introducing this bill is the parallel to this example. Our moral fibre is being attacked and is starting with our innocent children. An unhealthy lifestyle is being promoted and many more people will die from AIDS and other venereal diseases than ever before.

I found a 'stas'—statistic, sorry, that stated that the risk of suicide in homosexuals is over 200 per cent, and his/her lifespan is an average of 24 years shorter than a heterosexual's. From the beginning, God created one man and one woman to become one flesh. When we start perverting that by having multiple partners, be it heterosexual or homosexual, there are always consequences. Scripture says in Galatians 6:7: Be not deceived, God is not mocked. For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Thank you.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Harder, thank you so much for being here this evening and making your presentation. We've had many young people make presentations over the last few days to committee, and we appreciate you being here. Thank you once again.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Sam, for coming this evening and to share with us at committee. For a young person to come and make the time, it tells us how important this issue is to you. And so we thank you for the presentation that you've made here this evening.

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

We'll now call on Rebecca Hein, private citizen.

Good evening, Ms. Hein. Do you have written material for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Rebecca Hein (Private Citizen): Yes, Sir, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll just ask the staff to help you distribute that and you may proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Hein: I, Rebecca Hein, would like to thank the committee for allowing me to speak and for caring enough to take time to address bullying in the Manitoban school system. Thank you for diligently serving Manitobans and devoting much effort to building up the future education and safety of Manitobans.

I, too, am a follower of Christ, and I was home-schooled for all 12 years of school, but I believe that this bill has a broad effect on all citizens. So I'd like to address various areas of concern regarding Bill 18.

Honestly, I do not know where to begin and I do not want to be doing this right now. I am 18 years old and I believe that it's critical that the youth make their voices heard in our nation, but it's such a stressful and overwhelming procedure it scares many off so.

However, I would like to address section 1.2(1) of the bill which says that bullying is behaviour that should be known to cause harm to another person's feelings, self-esteem. I believe that the problem with this is that the definition is far too broad and subjective. With this definition, bullying could include practically anything based vastly on a person's own feelings or fallible interpretation of his peer's behaviour.

A student might assume that everyone else whispering around him is gossiping about him and thus feel bullied, when in reality he has no grounded evidence to base his feelings on. Or just because a student feels awkward, like he doesn't fit in, does not mean that he is being bullied.

I feel that this broad definition of bullying could easily lead to potentially dangerous situations in which a student's feelings and their self-esteem were unintentionally hurt by another to a level even requiring administrative scrutiny.

I would like to propose that the words, feeling and self-esteem, and the phrase, should be known to cause, be removed from the bill.

The same idea can be carried into section 1.2(2) which states that bullying, quote, "takes place in a context of a real or perceived power imbalance," end quote. And that it may be direct or indirect and may take place by any form of expression, including written. Once again, this leaves room for subjection, ungrounded assumptions and misinterpretation. It also stifles students' freedom to express their own unique feelings or beliefs simply because another student might choose to take offence and feel hurt when no harm was intended or directed at any individual. I feel that, in order to clearly see when bullying really occurs, these standards or characteristics should be removed.

At the end of the explanatory note, the bill states the following: "The policy must accommodate student activity that promotes the school environment as being inclusive of all pupils, including student activities and organizations that use the name 'gay-straight alliance'."

If the policy is inclusive of all students, why must special effort be made to ensure that one specific group is included beyond the rest? Clearly, the phrase all students is justly inclusive of everyone. But I feel that the phrase, "including student activities and organizations that use the name 'gay-straight alliance'" should be removed, for it is unjustified and unfair to all other groups that are not being promoted.

Also, in section 41(1.8), the bill says that a respect for human diversity policy must accommodate pupils who want to establish and lead activities and organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of and respect for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities and use the name gay-straight alliance or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of a positive school environment that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils.

Making sure all students feel loved and accepted is crucial; however, here specific groups, also including those who encourage gender equity, antiracism and respect for the disabled, are highlighted and given special privileges over those not listed. Everyone desires justice; therefore, the promotion of certain groups above others cannot be justified. Never was there ever any reference given in respect to religious groups, to name just one category. If the purpose of this act is to include everyone, why does it advertise differences?

If we are all here to get along, why does it matter if we are gay or straight, disabled or not disabled? I believe what is lacking here is genuine love for all people, regardless of any differences. Amendment could be made to this area of the bill by removing section 41(1.8)(a)(v)–(iv), sorry, and 41(1.8)(b) and by adding the definition of genuine love, which brings unity despite any or all differences. Love is patient, kind, not jealous, does not brag, not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly, does not seek its own, is not provoked.

I strongly believe that unity comes not by labelling our differences, but by seeing past outward labels or identities and loving and honouring each other for who we really are and not who or what we call ourselves. After all, who wants to be called gay or straight? Can't we just leave it at this: that we are all fellow human beings designed with the freedom to live as the unique individuals we were created to be?

I want to thank you all for allowing me this opportunity to share my views and concerns. Thank you for listening and to taking them into careful consideration.

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

Ms. Allan: Thank you, Ms. Hein, Rebecca, for this presentation. Thank you so much for the just-suggestions that you have made in regard to Bill 18. Thank you for your definition of love. And thank you for putting into your presentation that we are all fellow human beings designed with the freedom to live as unique individuals we were created to be. I think this is the world we would all wish for. Thank you.

* (20:20)

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Rebecca, thank you for coming this evening. Thank you for sharing with us. Thank you for being so honest to disclose that the process made you nervous. But thank you for overcoming that to actually presenting. Sometimes saying nothing worthwhile is ever easy, and you showed by virtue of the fact that you came here tonight, how important this issue is to you. So we do thank you for that.

You talked about the fact that you would reject the definition that's offered by this legislation because feelings wouldn't be a good test of whether bullying has taken place. I just want to invite you to

comment. We've also had presenters talk about the difficulty that that might place teachers in when hurt feelings might be, you know, used to gauge whether bullying took place. I wonder if you would agree or disagree with that idea that somehow, then, when a teacher does discipline a student or a basketball coach makes a cut to the basketball team that someone could say that bullying took place.

Ms. Hein: So there—so what were you—

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I was just wondering if you might also say that that would be another reason why perhaps feelings wouldn't be the best test of whether bullying took place. I don't know if you'd agree or disagree with that; I just invite your comment on that.

Ms. Hein: Well, I—sorry, I didn't—

Mr. Cameron Friesen: I'll just rephrase—and that's totally fine. I was just going to—I'll just rephrase it and just ask you to say just one more time for us, then, why was it that you had said that perhaps feelings wouldn't be the best measure of how to judge whether bullying took place?

Ms. Hein: I feel that you can often, well, or you never know how people are going to take what you—or if you believe something and you express that, you don't know whether people are going to be for that or against that, and so I just feel that you can't have the feelings as interpretation of—or people can't go by their feelings because, if you have a right—a definite right or a wrong, somebody is always going to take and be offended by that and because everybody believes differently so.

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

Now call on Brian Schroeder, private citizen. Brian Schroeder, private citizen? There may have been a mistake in the list this evening. That being said, I will drop Brian Schroeder's name to the bottom of the list to be called later.

I now call on Devin King, private citizen.

Evening, Mr. King. Do you have written materials for distribution at the committee this evening?

Mr. Devin King (Private Citizen): I do not.

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

Mr. King: Mr. Speaker, Minister Allan, honourable members, thank you very much for your time.

I grew up on a farm in rural Manitoba and like many people, both in rural Manitoba and not, I was bullied for being gay, and, like many people who are bullied for being gay, I am not gay. However, the intent was clear. I was disliked and, regardless of who I was, some of the students in my school knew that it would disempower me if they tried to shape my identity as a gay student. Luckily I wasn't gay. I don't mean to say that it is bad to be gay, far from it. But I know that, if I had been gay, existing in a school where people talked to me in such a way would have been devastating. My sense of who I was would have been in jeopardy every day. I know that would've been bad, but I suspect I have no concept of how psychologically damaging that would have been. All I can do is empathize, and so, being unaccepted by some of my peers would have been one awful dimension to this.

But, as I look back, I try to think about who I could've gone to for help. We had no clubs, no supports, no teachers, no available avenues where I would have felt safe. My options would've been to admit who I was and face inhumane torment or lie about who I was, casting into doubt my own identity. We forget that one of the most basic stories we tell in literature and films is that school can be a miserable experience; even at the best of times, it can be a horrible experience.

What's great about this legislation is that it makes things easier for a significant per cent of students who face hatred and intolerance on a daily basis. It may be challenging or even strange for someone to understand that simply knowing that the Province has created rules that recognize your humanity and identity is a profound thing. It means that the government and school system exist in opposition to those who wield power against them. It reminds students that they are good and human. It may be silly to say—it is sad to say, but some students in schools need that reminder.

And I think we forget how hard things were in high school. Even when things were fine, there was a sense of urgency that made everything feel life or death. And for some students we know, that death was a reality. It's hard to image going through all that and being genuinely, powerfully hated, not only by your peers, but also by the adults in your community; not because you did anything violent or stole anything, but because you chose to love.

The small town where I grew up seems more interested in the past than the future as a recreation

of a village to celebrate the heritage, and I can't help but think that by casting our thoughts back so much, so often, we ultimately damage our communities. There's a time and place for the past and tradition, but too often we settle for the status quo just because it has worked for some of us some of the time.

Our history books then become a sort of social ouroboros, constantly feeding on the ideas of the past regardless of the success or the modern context. I think of how the history books will remember now, and what I see is an important and, in some ways, difficult decision being made in Manitoba. This is one of those moments, often rare in politics, where a group of people realize a drastic wrong and rather than look to history for advice, look forward to the solutions that could help many.

I almost didn't come here. But, Minister Allan, I came after hearing you speak at a university course I attended this August. It reminded me why I chose to be a teacher. I imagine it's why you all became elected officials. You wanted to make this place better. You saw the world around you and realized that there was more that could be done. You saw the potential, ambition and hope that lives inside your community and said, I want to lead this place to something even better.

That is why I support Bill 18. It makes Manitoba a safer place for students. And not just for LGBTTQ students, though the focus may be placed on these students as they've had so little institutional support in the past, but for all students. It is unfortunate that so much attention has been spent referring to this as a redundant, vague piece of legislation. It isn't. Only good will come of this bill passing.

I have a son now, and most of my decisions revolve around him and his future. I'm not sure if you have children, but mostly having a kid has made me scared of everything all the time. I can't fathom the challenges that he and his generation will face with some of things that you and I face as children, let alone some of the things that we read in the news today. Mostly, I just worry about what he will have to go through.

But, after the passing of Bill 18, one thing that I can worry less about is how he will be treated in school. What this does is build a framework for a more kind, more understanding school culture. We know that that translates to a society changed, as well. I don't know how my son's identity will manifest in the years ahead, but what I do know is,

when the time comes, Manitoba and the schools in it will be a safer place for him.

Minister Allan, when you were appointed Minister of Education, I was disappointed. A friend asked, do you not think a former trustee is qualified? I said no. I felt that only a classroom teacher would be qualified. Minister Allan, I'm here to say that I was wrong. The leadership that you and your colleagues have shown has demonstrated that we can make schools a more open, more accepting place to be. It can be miserable, and it ought not to be.

I want to thank you all for your work, your determination and your bravery in the face of 'obstinance.' It is a great pleasure to stand beside you, as do many Manitobans, in support of Bill 18. Thank you.

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

Ms. Allan: Well, Mr. King, thank you so much for your presentation. And I'm so glad you're not disappointed anymore. That truly makes me happy. Thank you for your presentation and for your comments. I think you're going to be a great parent and I know you're a great teacher. Thank you very much for being here.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thanks, Devin, very much for your presentation. And your personal story was something that I think we all felt. It must have been very difficult for you to come here and to express what you experienced as you were going through school. But you rose above that and you became an educator because I think you wanted to make a difference in the school system. So thank you for doing that.

And thank you, as you move forward as both an educator in our province and as a parent in the challenges that you will face in both areas of your life. So, again, thank you very much for your presentation.

* (20:30)

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

Before I move to the next presenter, I'd like to advise the committee that Cindy Wiebe, No. 12 on the list, who was previously called, has requested that her written material be considered by the committee as a written submission. Does the

committee agree to include Ms. Wiebe's submission in Hansard? *[Agreed]*

I will now call on John Hiebert, private citizen. Mr. Hiebert, do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. John Hiebert (Private Citizen): No.

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

Mr. Hiebert: I'm a father of four children. I'm just here to say I'm—I do not approve on the Bill 18. That's all I have.

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

Question—we'll now turn to questions.

Ms. Allan: You certainly, definitely, win the prize for the most brief presentation over the 300 presentations that we are going to receive. And so thank you so much. It—you're an out-of-town presenter, obviously, from the list; you have a little star beside your name, so you've come a long way to—but you've made it very clear what you wanted to say tonight, and that we appreciate. Thank you so much.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, John, for coming and expressing your opinion, and I think that's—it's a feature of the Manitoba Legislature that we contain this provision that allows people to come and to speak on any bill and to make their opinion known. And, you know, whether you spoke a long time or a short time, you took advantage of that opportunity today and you came and said what was on your mind and in your heart, and we appreciate that. Thank you for coming.

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

We'll now call on Ken Peters, Gateway Church.

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

Mr. Ken Peters (Gateway Church): Yes.

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

Mr. Ken Peters: Thank you for this opportunity to share this evening.

I'm writing on behalf of Gateway Church to register my concerns regarding Bill 18. We are

agreed that Manitoba students need whatever protection that legislation can legitimately provide against bullying in our schools. I myself experienced significant bullying during my junior high school years, enduring verbal threats, classroom mockery, after-school aggression and fear in the locker room.

But I believe that Bill 18 is a flawed piece of proposed legislation that, if passed, will reduce the freedoms of a large portion of Manitobans in order to force all Manitobans to adopt a particular point of view that will do very little to address a great deal of the bullying that goes on in Manitoba schools. It seems to us that, in a country which has long sought to preserve freedom of speech, freedom of religion and freedom of association in order for groups to corporately express and practise the beliefs they share, that a bill that intends to enforce a select belief system upon every Manitoba student and school and that requires all Manitoba students and schools to adopt practices that may contradict the religious beliefs of many to be a step backwards as a society.

The point of view or the select belief system to which we are referring is the perspective that homosexuality is a lifestyle that every student and school must approve of. Bill 18 has been referred to as an antibullying bill, but it appears to us to be more of a promotion of homosexuality bill. The writers of the bill include sexuality in a list of four seemingly arbitrary issues that are identified as needing the legislative right to establish groups in order to promote themselves in schools, while overlooking seemingly more obvious causes of bullying, such as academic abilities or physical appearance. Furthermore, sexuality is unaccountably singled out as an issue by the way the writers of Bill 18 chose to give special mention to just one method of expressing inclusiveness and go out of their way to mandate an actual name for those wanting to promote the homosexual lifestyle, gay-straight alliances, which schools must accommodate if students request it.

Bill 18 thus clearly illustrates the point of view that not being aligned or in agreement with homosexuality is tantamount to bullying. It assumes that disagreement is equal to bullying or even hatred, while from our point of view disagreement does not have to be unloving and our children will be better served by a bill that helps schools to teach students to disagree with one another's perspectives respectfully and lovingly.

In addition to those concerns, we also have particular concerns regarding the definition of bullying in Bill 18. To describe bullying as a behaviour that is intended to cause or should be known to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property, seems to be both impossible to assess and to avoid.

In terms of assessing bullying behaviour, how can authorities know for certain that an accused person intended to hurt someone's feelings or self-esteem? How can one know that a student should know that the words they might speak would potentially hurt another student's feelings?

Students all have varying degrees of awareness and maturity in regards to knowing how their words or actions impact others. Students also come to school from many different backgrounds, whether they're from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or some other community of people who may disagree with homosexuality. If one of these students has been taught at home that homosexuality is wrong and then says so to another student with no malice whatsoever, then how can they be accused of having the intent to bully others, or how should they know that to disagree with others on this subject is considered bullying?

But this definition of bullying seems even more difficult to avoid than to assess. How often are children's feelings hurt by other students? How often does self-esteem get bruised by some unintentional slight? Among the many instances in which this happens in a school full of children, how are teachers supposed to know what was intentional or unintentional, or how are they are to be sure that any given student should have known better and is therefore now a bully? Yet Bill 18 is proposing that this wide range of behaviours all be classified as bullying. Such a general view of bullying will make accusations of bullying more difficult for schools to assess, imaginary cases of bullying impossible to avoid and will also serve to trivialize all the true cases of bullying that need to be addressed.

What this definition of bullying also fails to acknowledge is that the Supreme Court of Canada has already ruled in a case regarding a Saskatchewan man's freedom to publicly express his opinions regarding homosexuality when the court declared that Canadians are free to preach against same-sex activities, to urge its censorship from the public school curriculum and to seek to convert others to

their point of view, as long as they not be conveyed through hate speech.

In this way, the Supreme Court of Canada distinguishes between disagreement and hate. And I would say that that infers that it's also different than bullying and affirms a freedom to speak up about that disagreement. So if it's legal for me to write this letter respectfully disagreeing with the affirmation of homosexuality in our schools, then why is it wrong for an actual school, such as an independent school or a particular student, to respectfully disagree with homosexuality without it being constituted as bullying?

It seems to us that real issue that needs to be addressed to protect students from bullying in schools is to promote the acceptance of people of diverse opinions and backgrounds without equating that acceptance with unquestioning agreement with their lifestyles. The goal of education is not merely to fill children's heads with information and perspectives but to address how they can think about diverse perspectives while also expressing love and acceptance toward the people with whom they choose to disagree, as well as to not feel hurt just because someone disagrees with them.

Our understanding is that such education of children does not happen exclusively in schools but also in homes and in places of spiritual formation. And we do not want to see Manitoba's government or Manitoba's school boards forcing independent schools to align themselves with the pro-homosexual viewpoint despite the fact that such schools may have had core beliefs that do not agree with the promotion of homosexuality. And nor should students who have a home background in which the homosexual perspective is not approved of be expected to limit their freedom of speech simply because someone decided that disagreement on a certain issue is considered bullying.

We would hope that a bill that seeks to address such a serious concern to so many Manitobans, members of the Evangelical Christian, Catholic, Coptic, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities included, would be revised to better reflect the diversity of a province as multicultural as Manitoba.

Thank you.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Peters, for being here this evening to make a presentation on behalf of your congregation at Gateway Church. We appreciate the comments that you have made about Bill 18, and thank you once again for being here.

* (20:40)

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Ken, for coming to committee and taking the time to present to us this evening.

We've heard from many presenters who have shared similar comments to your own, but thank you in particular for drawing our attention to the Supreme Court of Canada decision with regard to the difference between disagreement and hate. I know this decision; I know that many of my colleagues do too. I think it's a very important point to bear in mind as we consider these things.

I wanted to ask you a quick question about having been bullied yourself, and thank you for sharing a bit of your personal story. These are—they're troubling stories to hear; they're far more troubling to have lived, I know.

And I wanted to ask you: It's been a common refrain at committee here, people have said that this bill would not have made a difference in their own experience. Would this bill, written as it is today, have made a difference for you in your experience?

Mr. Ken Peters: I'm sorry, yes. No, it wouldn't have addressed anything regarding what I was going through. What I was going through had to do with being a combination of a 98-pound weakling and having an accent from a foreign country, which didn't go over well in junior high school when everyone's expected to kind of either line up, be the same, or being—be able to stand up for yourself.

And so, you know, these kinds of things happened in such obscure ways that teachers wouldn't have noticed. I wouldn't have wanted to draw attention to it. For example, joining a club that would have drawn attention to it wouldn't have been easy, because it would have just sort of drawn attention to my own insecurities and my own fears. And so I don't think this would have addressed it.

My personal feeling is that—you know, the main clincher for me is that we live in a world in which so many people disagree about so many different things, we—it's just an everyday occurrence in life. We disagree with one another. We learn to agree to disagree with people. And, you know, as—what

I experienced had nothing to do with someone disagreeing with me, but what Bill 18 is dealing with is dealing with something about alignment with a lifestyle, a gay-straight alliance and being aligned and agreed that it's acceptable, and I prefer to teach kids and for my kids to grow up learning how to disagree with somebody but to do so respectfully, to do so lovingly, and I feel I put that into practice myself in various ways.

When I was in school, just by the way, in expansion on this whole idea of bullying, one of my closest friends in high school was gay. And I don't think if you had asked him at any point in our high school time together if he had felt that I didn't care for him as a person, he would have said, certainly, I think Ken cares, he's one of my closest friends. But, if you'd asked him, does Ken agree with being gay, he would have said, no, absolutely not, I know exactly what Ken stands for.

So this is—that's what I grew up practising and that's what I would love to teach my kids to practise, is to be able to learn to live in a world in which there's lots of disagreement but we love one another anyway.

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

We'll now call on the next presenter, Evan Wiens, private citizen.

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

Mr. Evan Wiens (Private Citizen): I do, yes.

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

Mr. Wiens: All right. Okay. Well, first of all, thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak in front of you. I think it's really important that citizens can voice their opinions like this in a committee and have our voices heard.

I first heard about Bill 18 in February of this year. I noticed that Steinbach Christian High School was holding an information and prayer meeting for Bill 18. I also noticed that my local MLA, Kelvin Goertzen, was strongly opposed to Bill 18. Steinbach felt very divided at this point in time. To me, this was like the beginning of a very large and very long-put-off battle.

When I heard that Bill 18 would make it that all schools must accommodate gay-straight alliances, or

GSA's, it all started feeling very personal. When I was in grade 10, I asked my school if I could create a GSA. They told me that it was possible for me to do so, but there was a catch: I could not advertise the group in the form of putting up posters or making announcements. I felt extremely unsupported at this point, so I disbanded the group after one unsuccessful meeting.

This year, when all of the Bill 18 controversy began stirring in Steinbach, I was inspired by it all. I was inspired to give it another go at creating a GSA at my high school. I began the journey by asking teachers if they would sign a form I created with their support for a GSA. This was quickly discovered by school administration and I was asked to stop. I was also told once again that I was welcome to create a GSA but advertising was not allowed.

At this point all I felt was anger, but I converted this anger into empowerment and I decided that I was going to fight harder than ever for a GSA to be able to advertise. I contacted media outlets and a series of interviews began. My story was slowly spreading throughout Manitoba, but nothing seemed to be moving forward at school. In fact, in—during some of these interviews, I was shouted slurs on the street—during two of them, actually. So just kind of gives you a view of the kind of bullying I experience in Steinbach.

At the end of March, I decided that enough was enough. I made up some poster designs for the GSA, and I was going to put them up at school with or without permission. The day that I decided to put up posters, they were taken down within an hour and the superintendent of my school division was notified of my actions. And, as well, while putting up posters, I was told, get back to class faggot, while putting up posters for the group.

I met with the chair of my school division's board of trustees and they told me that I had an opportunity to meet with the board. I had 10 minutes, like now, to present my reasons as to why they should allow a GSA to advertise. So, on April 2nd, my 17th birthday, I met before the board. The following day, I met again with the superintendent and board chair and they told me that I had succeeded in changing their minds and that it was now division-wide policy that a GSA may advertise in the same way as any other student group. Best birthday present ever.

Looking back on it now, I went through a lot. I especially went through a lot just to get a GSA to

be able to advertise. But I've seen the benefits. In the two months last year that our GSA was running, we got together every Thursday. We got to know each other, shared ideas, passions. We even held a bake sale and raised over \$300 for an organization at our school. Sometimes I think to myself and wonder what things would be like if my school division had waited until Bill 18 had passed to allow a GSA advertising. None of the things we accomplished would have happened. I am so grateful for my school division for making the decision they made when they did. I see the benefits of it every day. So I'd like to say thank you to Randy Dueck, Randy Hildebrand and the Hanover School Division Board of Trustees for being so brave as to make a decision that the whole town seemed to be against.

I think that the saddest thing I've seen since hearing about Bill 18 is the amount of people in Steinbach and area who oppose the bill because they believe that it infringes on their religious freedoms. Ever since hearing that, it's never made sense to me. I have yet to understand how Bill 18 infringes on anybody's religious freedoms. Local churches are welcome to come into my public high school and perform morning prayers daily. They are also welcome to put up posters advertising their own activities, such as a high school worship night. But a school division who bans someone from putting up posters for a GSA isn't an infringement of gay rights? Of my rights? So it's okay for a school division to blatantly infringe on those rights, in a sense, but because there's legislation that would force schools to accommodate GSAs, religious freedoms are suddenly being threatened?

Faith-based institutes such as Steinbach Christian High School should not be exempt from Bill 18. They are funded by public taxes, so why should they not have to follow public law? Because they're afraid of having a GSA in their school? There are gay students at SCHS. There are gay students there who may need a place to go, and for the school to refuse to accommodate a safe space for them is disgusting. If SCHS does not want to follow public law, they should become 100 per cent independent and hike up their tuitions.

Bill 18 is simply making it available for minority groups to have the same opportunities as religious groups do in schools. It's not forcing schools to create GSAs, only to accommodate them should a student create one. Bill 18 is not taking away any rights given to religious groups. This has brought me to think whether or not people who oppose Bill 18

are really afraid of having their religious freedoms threatened or if they're just using that as an excuse to cover up their disapproval for LGBT people.

I want to quote a line from a song called Same Love by Macklemore, it's kind of popular right now: "...God loves all his children, is somehow forgotten / But we paraphrase a book written thirty-five-hundred years ago."

Whether or not you believe that being gay is a choice or that two men getting married is wrong or that GSAs promote sexual activities, does not matter. What matters is the safety of students, and that needs to come before any religious input. If Bill 18 is passed, it is going to be possible for kids and teenagers across the province, just like me, to get a GSA up and running with ease and without fear of the school being unsupportive.

My battle is a perfect example of how Bill 18 could work in schools. Had Bill 18 been in effect, I could have simply gone to my principal and asked for a GSA to be set up, and proper advertising could have followed directly. Instead, I had to go before my school board and ask them to consider changing their policy. Does this seem fair? No. But I believe that I did the right thing, and although it was difficult, I hope that no future student has to go through what I went through. I have faith in Bill 18. I can't wait to see it passed and see students across the province receive the safety and assurance that they need and deserve.

* (20:50)

I want to say thank you to Minister Nancy Allan for proposing Bill 18 and for being so strong with it. She has stuck by me since the beginning, and our support for each other has created a bond that I believe will stay forever. And thank you to everyone else who has stood by me all this time. Without all of the love and positivity that you surrounded me with, I couldn't have done what I did. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak and listening to me.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: You know I was thinking about your presentation and I thought maybe I should practise my thank-you to you because I figured I would try to get it-through it without crying. Evan, one of the gifts of public life is the incredible people that you

meet along the way and you have been phenomenal, and I want you to promise me that when I'm an old lady in the personal care home that you'll come visit me. Thank you so much, Evan. All the best and thank you for being here.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Evan, for coming. It's a pleasure to meet you. I know that this issue has had you in it for a long time and you have been a powerful and articulate spokesperson for your point of view. We thank you for coming tonight, taking the time to come to committee.

I wanted to ask you one question and just invite your response to it. It was something you said in your presentation about the fact that a school that didn't follow this particular bill should lose its funding, and I wondered if you would just comment on this. Do you think that forcing a faith-based school, whether it's Sikh or Muslim or Catholic or Protestant or Coptic, to change its view of human sexuality based on religious belief or lose its public funding, do you think that could be construed as bullying?

Mr. Wiens: First of all, I didn't say that they should lose their public funding. I just believe that if they don't—if they are happily receiving 50 per cent of their tuition by public funding, by public taxes, I don't think that it's fair for them to then say that they should be exempt from a bill that's going to help all students. And I just wouldn't find that very fair and I don't think that they should have to change their views in any way. I just think that regardless of what religion you believe in, there are gay people in every religion. There are gay people in every city, every school, and they need a safe space rather than being told that what—who they are is wrong and that they've chosen that, and I believe that all schools need to follow Bill 18 regardless if they receive public funding.

Hon. Jennifer Howard (Minister of Family Services and Labour): Yes, Evan, I just want to also thank you and I got a chance to meet you earlier this year. I want to thank you for your incredible courage, and I'm glad you addressed in your presentation why Bill 18 would have made it easier for you to do what you did because we can—you're exceptional. You're an exceptional person, and we can't count on everybody being as courageous and having the perseverance and being as exceptional as you are to protect kids from bullying. And that's why we need to make it easier for other kids.

And I just want to thank you not only for speaking tonight with such self-possession—you're so poised and articulate, it's impressive—but you don't know and maybe you'll never know how many kids and families and older people you've inspired. You'll never know how many people finally felt free to come out to the people that love them because they saw your example, and that's a real blessing for you and it's a blessing for everybody who's been inspired by you. So thanks for coming tonight and thanks for doing what you're doing.

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

We'll now call on Markus Reimer, private citizen.

Good evening, Mr. Reimer. Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Markus Reimer (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

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

Mr. Reimer: The Bombers won. Sorry, I have to do that; otherwise—[interjection]—yes.

Bullying is something that has been with me all my life, believe it or not, because I used to be very small. I'm 6'5 now and 240 pounds which in grade 11 turned me into that bully. I was bullied because of culture, because of where I came from. I was bullied because I didn't speak the language. I was bullied because of what I wore. There's—I mean, bullying is such a grave and huge thing to look at, it's tough to single out certain aspects of what it is.

But what I really appreciate about tonight is the fact that this is a democratic thing. I mean, we should all be allowed to speak and—so I'm going to hit this—my speech kind of comes from a little bit of a different angle. Like, I think everybody here would agree that everybody should be allowed to speak either pro or negative without being—affect any which way, right?

So what I want to do today is I want to speak on behalf of a teacher. I want to speak a teach—about a teacher who has taught for a number of years in this province. A teacher who believes, as I do, that Bill 18 is a poorly worded bill with little actual in it that'll affect change in schools. This teacher would like to be here and present this personally but has been clearly told by the Manitoba Teachers' Society and their local branch of the union that they cannot

speaking publicly about Bill 18 unless they speak it in favour of it.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society, under the direction of Paul Olson, has effectively muted many teachers who are against Bill 18 from having their voice heard. This teacher has been threatened with loss of employment if they present personally against Bill 18. In a letter from the Manitoba Teachers' Society, this teacher was told that teachers need to understand that the duty of fidelity to the employer trumps the right of freedom of speech. That is actually a direct quote. Teachers are being bullied into not speaking out.

From here on out, I'm going to read in the first person. Paul Olson, president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, has repeatedly misrepresented teachers' opinions and positions on Bill 18. He has stated that being against Bill 18 is being against safe schools, and I quote: "It is also vital that a strong show of support for this legislation be shown by the entire educational community, and all of those who support safe schools." That's from a May 10th press release from Manitoba Teachers' Society.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society magazine, the teacher, has been filled with articles mocking and making light of those who are opposed to Bill 18. Some examples are: Let all bitterness and wrath... be put away, by George Stephenson; President's Column, by Paul Olson, both in April and May of 2013 edition of the teacher magazine. I bring this up as it shows just how undemocratic this process has been for us. Would it not be logical to hear from teachers on both sides of the argument, from those who are at the front lines of the fight against bullying? However, one side of the argument has effectively been silenced by Paul Olson and the Manitoba Teachers' Society. But then, to add insult to injury, in the August 31st edition of the Winnipeg Free Press, Paul Olson is quoted as saying, and I quote: Overwhelmingly, Bill 18 is something that teachers are living in hope of. So the union feels that they can tell teachers what they are not allowed to oppose—that they are not allowed to oppose it, then claim overwhelming support from the teaching community.

Having taught for a number of years, I have witnessed bullying. I have had bullying reported to me and I have been involved in dealing with bullies. I have worked for months with students who chronically bully other students. I have worked together with school administrators and with parents

in dealing with bullying, dealing with consequences for bullying and dealing with the effects of being bullied. It's a simple statement: bullying does happen. It happens every day. It happens for many, many different reasons and it's one of the most difficult things to deal with properly. That is why we need effective legislation to allow schools to deal with bullies, all bullies, not just certain bullies—certain groups, sorry, and to build protections to prevent the bullying from being—from happening in the first place.

Unfortunately, I feel Bill 18 does not do this. I believe it for these following reasons: Bill 18, in my opinion, is too vague. There is nothing in the legislation that directs schools on how to deal with bullies. Bill 18 clearly puts one group of students ahead of all others. Yes, all students—all students—need to be safe from bullying, but by only listing one group of students and legislating that that one group is allowed to create groups, puts that group ahead of all the others.

The Public Schools Act, section 47.1 will—already lays out what schools need to do in regards to bullying, in defining bullying according to The Human Rights Code. Why is Bill 18 needed if section 47.1 of The Public Schools Act already deals with bullying so clearly? It is very clear that there is something else going on. The current Public Schools Act allows protections for all students no matter what they're bullied for. In fact, there are many studies that clearly show that the reasons that students are most commonly bullied for are not directly addressed in this bill. So why are we choosing to single out a special status for one group of kids when they are not the ones that are necessarily bullied the most?

* (21:00)

I'm a very proud Canadian. I'm a proud Manitoban. But the conduct of our NDP government lately has really made me ashamed of the democratic process in Manitoba because, clearly, to us it's not democratic. I want to believe that this legislation was brought forth with noble intentions. I want to believe that the government wants a strong antibullying law put in place. It is not what I see happening.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

NDP MLAs have been quoted as saying that they will not make any significant changes to this bill. Does that mean they're not going to make any changes at all? But it seems clear that our

government's mind has been made up, so I don't expect that my comments will make a difference. But to be a part of the democratic process, even though I must do it indirectly as the Manitoba Teachers' Society has attempted to muzzle me, it is important to me. I hope and I pray that my comments and the comments of the other speakers tonight will be heard and listened to. Thanks.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Reimer, and thank you for your presentation.

And are there questions for Mr. Reimer?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Well, thank you, Markus, for coming this evening and for being here. I know you said in the end of your presentation that you questioned whether being here makes a difference. I can tell you that for me it makes a difference. I've been here three nights at committee and I've heard over a hundred people come on both sides, on all sides of this issue. And I'm struck by the amount of Manitobans who have availed themselves of this opportunity to come here, and so it makes a difference.

I didn't know where you were going when you started giving your presentation, but I have to tell you, as a former teacher, someone who was 12 years in the public school system, I was deeply saddened to hear that a teacher would feel that they didn't have the right to come here, that somehow the opinion was being formed for them and that their—and that, like you said, that they wouldn't have that freedom to be able to come here, like we've talked about. And we've talked this evening about the value of being able to come here as Manitobans.

I wanted to ask for a quick question to be answered from you and then I'm going to ask you a second question because of that. You had mentioned that you have teaching experience. I wanted to ask if you were a teacher by trade and if you were still in the classroom?

Mr. Reimer: No, I am not. This is—I am reading this on behalf of a teacher. This is actually a speech written by a teacher.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you. The second question I wanted to ask you is, if you were a teacher, would you have had—would you have felt the freedom tonight to have come to a committee like this to present a view that would run in contrast to that of your association, or at least the—your association president, or would you have feared reprisals as a result of coming here, and is that the

reason your friend has chosen to be represented by proxy through your presentation?

Mr. Reimer: It depends on what I would have been told as a teacher directly from my superiors. In this case, knowing what the—and reading the emails that went back and forth, yes, I'd—I would not have come.

Ms. Allan: Mr. Reimer, thank you very much for being here this evening and making your presentation on behalf of your colleague. And you can know that Mr. Olson is here this evening in the audience, and so you can inform the individual that you read your brief on behalf of that not only did our committee members hear the presentation that you read this evening first-hand, but also so did Paul Olson, the head of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: You have 30 seconds, Mr. Reimer.

Mr. Reimer: I'm just wondering if you've had any teachers here that have opposed the bill.

Ms. Allan: I have been here for every presentation, every evening, every—all day Saturday, for every presentation, and we have heard passionate speakers, passionate speeches from teachers in regards to Bill 18 who have all supported Bill 18. I think perhaps there was one on—the other day, perhaps might have been from a former teacher that opposed it. But mostly, I can tell you that most of the teachers that have spoken—and, in fact, on Saturday afternoon there was a passionate speech from a teacher who is gay, who is the parent of three children. So we have heard a range of speeches from all—from lots of presenters in regards to Bill 18.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you. The time for presentation and questions and answers has concluded. But thank you for your presentation.

I will now call on Reece Malone.

Good day, Mr. Malone. Do you have any material for the committee?

Mr. Reece Malone (Private Citizen): I do not.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Then you're welcome to begin.

Mr. Malone: Thank you. Firstly, I would like to note that I appreciate all your time and efforts in crafting the bill and allowing for the privilege for myself and other Manitoban citizens to speak to it.

My name is Reece Malone. I'm a first-generation Canadian, born in Altona and spent my years in

Winnipeg. I'm a graduate of Maples Collegiate, a graduate with highest distinction from the University of Winnipeg in sociology, a graduate with a master's of public health and a doctorate degree in human sexuality. I'm a previous consultant to the World Health Organization, the Pan American Health Organization and the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I'm a Catholic. I'm a practising Christian. I'm a person of faith. And I'm alive today because my teacher Lynda Brethauer Venton single-handedly created a safe space in her classroom for all her students, regardless of their identity.

I'm 38 years old now, and I just wanted to show you all that this was my suicide note when I—that I wrote when I was 16. I kept this note tucked safely between the pages of my Bible, knowing that I was unconditionally loved by the Creator, and it served as a reminder of how close I was to leaving.

By the time I was 12, I knew what my sexual orientation was, and by the time I was 16, life as a teen—never mind being a visible and invisible minority—was already a bundle of awkwardness and struggle. Like many others, my life was not reflected in policy and curricula, and when it was, my identity equated to overt or insidious hostility or ripe for parody.

I kept my days occupied with extracurricular activities. I vied to attain the highest marks to show my value, and I remained stoic when I was—when I experienced racism, sexism and homophobia. I was told not to cry or show weakness when I and my friends, by association of our friendship, were bullied. It will forever be etched, the graffiti left on my desk, the remarks left about me on several chalkboards, which only I ended up erasing, the whispers and the fear of my teachers grading me based on their personal values rather than the merit of my work.

My calls to the Kids Help Phone were no longer effective as a coping strategy. My constant nausea prevented me from eating, and I experienced daily anxiety and dread. No young person should ever experience daily dread for simply existing. I wrote my note and I thought, if it didn't get better within three weeks, I was done. And I prayed daily.

It was until one day in my biology class, my teacher, overhearing a homophobic remark, paused by—while writing on the chalkboard and said, hey,

that comment is not acceptable in my classroom; I have gay friends. And she turned back around and continued with her lesson plan. Our biology class immediately became an unspoken GSA and her declaration of being an ally spread throughout the school. It was the first space where youth assembled, hung out during lunch and, for many, a place to give themselves permission to be their authentic selves in a space that was declared safe.

The infamous ally card is given to all those who complete antihomophobia, -biphobia and -transphobia curricula, the program that I created to co-ordinate and deliver—and I deliver it through the Rainbow Resource Centre. The power of one teacher inspired me to become a human sexuality professional and provide such trainings in hope that no other student would have to experience the isolation that I and others faced.

Speaking as a human sexuality scientist, identity pluralism and sexual gender diversity exist. I recognize that it can be scary for those who aren't in the field or believe otherwise because of what they were simply told. Such diversity is captured anthropologically with many more countries and cultures socially and 'legali'—socially and legally recognizing such diversity. Human variation including race, anatomy, gender identity, sexual orientation, body shape and size are innate aspects in each and every one of us.

As young people experience many developmental, long-term imprints throughout their school years, the fiduciary duty of schools is endeavour to do everything that they can both humanly and legislatively possible to provide a safe and optimal learning environment. Today, with how the world operates, advanced technologies, social medias, communication, more exposure to hard-core violence and environmental atrocities and more stimuli compared to our days, a young person's developmental fortitude and critical decision making is being left more and more to their own devices, rather than what once an entire village interdependently provided.

Bill 18 is a step in allowing for such a village to once again interdependently thrive. It encourages youth to be their authentic selves; it encourages citizenship; it allows for the creation of safer spaces. It helps to dissolve shame, build hope and nurture camaraderie. Systems continue to evolve and as our culture and society evolves, so, too, should the rights and protections of a—of diverse students evolve.

Let's not forget the centrality of the purposes of Bill 18. As you deliberate, please keep in mind, with all the criticisms of the bill being too vague, too broad, too narrow, too inclusive, by not passing the bill the messages that are heard and felt by young people are: I don't deserve a safe learning environment; I do not matter.

I will never begin to understand why anyone wouldn't want to help create safer schools. I have not lost faith in the bill, and I am encouraged by every teacher, every educator, every education assistant, every librarian, every cafeteria and custodial staff person and every administrator who continues to show their leadership in standing up against bullying and supporting the creation of GSAs, social justice groups, anti-racist groups or any other group that nurture individualism, resilience, empowerment and citizenship.

Safe teachers, safe schools and safe spaces save—saves lives. It saved mine. Thank you.

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

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you, Reece, for your very personal story and your very personal experience and for sharing that with us today, and aren't we lucky that you are a part of our community here in Winnipeg and Manitoba. We're very pleased you were—could be here this evening and share your personal reflections on Bill 18. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Reece, for coming and for telling your story, for saying it so eloquently and articulately. You've put a lot of thought into this presentation. It's deeply personal. It's deeply troubling at times, right, because you've had to carry a lot of things, but we thank you for being here, for presenting your perspective.

And I appreciate your comment about your teacher single-handedly making that safe space for all students in her classroom. And, you know, I think that's the best evidence of a peer support group, when a teacher is able to do that. We all know what a classroom looks like when that's not the case; we all know what it looks like when that is the case.

I just wanted to invite your comment on one idea, and that is you said that there was some criticism or—that you've heard that the bill is too inclusive. I would say that the vast majority of criticism to the bill that I've heard in the three nights of committee—and, mind you, I haven't been here

every night—has been that the bill has been less inclusive, more exclusive. And I wondered if I could just invite a quick comment from you on the fact that this bill stops short where the Manitoba Human Rights Code does not stop. This bill does not contain explicit provisions for the bay—for the discrimination to be prohibited on the basis of social disadvantage, religion or creed, or religion—or ethnicity. I wanted to ask you: Do you think the bill would be even more inclusive to also contain those words?

Mr. Malone: I've read the bill, and thank you very much for the question. I think what I've heard tonight, as well as what I have read and other people's opinions, that people are 'narr'—misinterpreting the bill as being too exclusive and narrow. I think that the bill is inclusive. I think that it names a particular group. Like any other groups, I wouldn't disagree if the—personally, I wouldn't—and professionally I wouldn't—disagree if GSAs or any other social justice group were named. I think that all groups need to be named and especially those that are most vulnerable.

Ms. Howard: Thanks, Reece, for coming, and I just want to be—and I know that you've read the bill, so you know this, but I want to be clear that every child is protected from bullying by Bill 18. Every ground of discrimination that is in The Human Rights Code is in Bill 18. It makes direct reference to The Human Rights Code. It's clear that a human diversity policy at a school has to be developed in accordance with the Manitoba Human Rights Code and all the grounds of prohibited discrimination. So I know you know that, despite the misinformation that others want to put out there, that is clear.

But I also want to say to you I know that part of your work is working with schools and professionals and teachers and all kinds of folks from across the province, and really across the world. And I know you've seen directly the difference that having people who've been educated in antihomophobia training can have, and I wonder if you could speak more about that, particularly in places that are more remote and more isolated and what the impact is of having those voices in those communities.

Mr. Malone: Yes, I have presented in many communities rurally and remote, and the impacts that teachers and youth have disclosed to me is by, at the very least, naming that they do exist, that their identity is just as valuable as any other minority or majority, and I think that this isn't about pitting one particular group of people as being better or not.

I think that it's important that youth feel reflected in the curricula. I feel that youth need to be in a place where it's safe. I feel that I—that could be possible, where a safe environment is created so that optimum learning occurs. And so what I do see is youth who don't feel safe, whose grades have deteriorated, who have left school, who feel rejected by their institution, and that—and it's not even a—it's not even overt; we're talking about, the insidious, covert forms of oppression that is not named and should be named, and I believe that the bill brings to the surface those insidious and unspoken oppressions that youth face.

Mr. Chairperson: Time for questions has expired. Thanks once again for your presentation this evening.

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

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

Mr. Bill Bage (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

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

Mr. Bage: Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Bill Bage and I'm a parent. I have two children, and when they started kindergarten, I, like many parents, hoped that they would be safe, that they would enjoy their school experience and I hoped that they would be in an environment that was conducive to learning and tolerant of their possible differences. I wanted them to enjoy school because I wanted them to love learning. I didn't want to have to persuade or force them to go to school, I wanted them to be happy to go on their own.

When your child reaches grade 1, they probably spend upwards of seven or more hours a day in school. Those are seven days—or seven hours when you, as a parent, lose a lot of control over their environment, and, speaking as a parent, that lack of control can be very worrisome. You worry that your kids will not be supported academically or emotionally, and you hope that they make friends and that they won't be bullied. I was very fortunate my daughter and my son were not bullied at school. They seemed to be fairly well liked, they had friends and they did quite well academically. As a parent, that was what I was hoping for. However, while I was very lucky, there are parents who are not, and I have seen first-hand what bullying does not only to the children but to the parents of those children.

* (21:20)

In this case here, the child didn't want to go to school. She would get physically sick prior to leaving the house. Her parents felt bad because they kept insisting, you have to go to school. On many occasions I saw the mother brought to tears because her daughter was being bullied at school and she didn't know if—what or if anything she could do to help. It was extremely difficult for her and it was extremely difficult for me. There were school staff who were in her daughter's corner, who were trying to help and who did a lot of good stuff. But it was difficult for them because they didn't feel that they had all of the tools that they required.

I believe Bill 18 is another tool or option for student, for parent and for teachers. There are children who are bullied on a daily basis in school, and while school leaders are doing what they can to support the children, it's hard for them to keep up with all of the technology, the different forms of bullying. With the emergence of social media, young people spending more time on the Internet, cyberbullying is becoming more prevalent, people can say things to each other and there seems to be no consequences.

Bill 18, I believe, gives schools the power to take matters and to combat this increasingly form of bullying. I support this government for doing all they can to help these kids and I think Bill 18 is a step in the right direction. There may be more to do, but this is a step, and if this bill helps one child it's definitely worth my time coming here and, I believe, you folks sitting here.

A few years ago this government brought in legislation to prevent harassment and bullying in the workplace. I believe that that legislation has gone a long way in making workplaces in this province safer and better places to work. I believe Bill 18 can do the same for our schools.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak on this and I would ask all of you to support this bill, support our children. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks very much, Mr. Bage, for your presentation this evening. We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Bage, and thank you for speaking this evening as a parent and thank you for talking about cyberbullying. Quite often I feel that

cyberbullying in this legislation is a piece that sometimes doesn't get as much attention as it should, and we all know what a difficult and complex issue that is. Thank you so much for being here and for your reflections on Bill 18.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you for taking the time, Bill, to come here this night and to address us as a committee. It's obvious this is an important issue for you and, you know, like you mentioned tonight, bullying affects everyone. It affects families, and even if we haven't seen it ourselves, we see it very nearby. And I thank you for your time to come here and express that view.

I wanted to ask you, just with respect to the bill, we've heard other concerns tonight about the threshold that is used in this bill to determine that bullying has, indeed, taken place. And that threshold can include hurt feelings or damage to self-esteem. Do you think it's possible with the bill with the definition as presented that students who didn't really legitimately bully anyone could get ensnared in the definition and be accused of bullying because someone got hurt feelings for something?

Mr. Bage: Well, I believe that a person doesn't have to be punched or struck to be bullied. I believe there are many forms of bullying out there, and I have no problem with the definition as it is.

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

We'll now call on Sara Peters, private citizen.

Ms. Peters, do you have written material for distribution? Okay. You may begin your presentation whenever you're ready.

Ms. Sara Peters (Private Citizen): Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in regards to Bill 18. I live outside of 'wim'—Winnipeg, so prior to coming here I googled to ensure I would get here correctly, as it's been a number of years since I've seen the—or visited the Legislative Building. This got me thinking, when we head out on a road trip or journey we need to first look at a map and outline the route we will need to take in order to get us from point A to point B safely so we don't turn down a wrong road, get lost or miss an activity due to arriving late.

As parents, we also—and need to ensure that we send our children down the right route in life so that they can live a productive, meaningful and happy

life. How do we do this? We teach them from young on what is right and what is wrong, where the boundary lines are and, subsequently, what happens should they venture beyond the boundary lines or detour down a route that was forbidden.

We clearly outline the rules within the household, stating what the consequences of not following these rules will be, and then, as parents, we enforce these rules. Naturally, we are all human beings and we all err. We follow off the route set out for us. And we also—as parents, we need to teach our children how to rectify the wrongs that they have done.

Herein is where I feel that Bill 18 is weak, in that it does not clearly define bullying nor does the bill clearly outline what the consequences will be for a student who partakes in bullying while in school. How are students to know what the boundaries are at school and whether or not they've stepped over the boundaries? The route for their journey through school is not clearly mapped out for them.

I agree with the bill in section 41(1.6), the respect for human diversity policy, where it speaks about promoting and enhancing the acceptance and respect for others. The Bible notes many times that we are to love our neighbours as ourselves. We are to love everyone or have respect for everyone, no matter what their beliefs, their background or their lifestyle is.

What I don't agree with the bill is that it requires schools to accommodate and support student groups that may completely contradict what the school's faith principles are. I think that this bill needs to be modified to allow faith-based schools to discern what groups are being formed within the school and ensure their activities do not conflict with its faith principles.

If you want schools to truly be an all-inclusive learning environment, why, then, note only one specific student group under section 41(1.8)(b)? Again, modify this section to either note all the other student groups in a school or note none at all in order to be truly inclusive. I feel that as the bill is written, it is promoting one group's beliefs while forcing another group, the Christian group, to potentially silence themselves on what they believe in for fear of being labelled as a bully.

Often referred to as the golden rule, Matthew 7:12 reads, so in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you. I think that if

this rule was taught more to our children, bullying would reduce significantly.

Also, children learn best from watching those around them. So, if we, as adults, would practise this daily by teaching—or by not gossiping, not judging or looking down on others and not being bullies ourselves, that would encourage our children to treat others fairly, to treat them with respect, and it would create more harmony in this world.

I think that we, as parents, need to work together with teachers, school administrators and government officials to send our kids down the right path in life; a path that teaches them to love and respect others even if they do not believe or live a lifestyle that they agree with, but, in the end, that we all live in harmony and in peace. Thank you.

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

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Ms. Peters, for your presentation and your comments. We appreciate them and thank you once again for being here.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Sara, for coming this evening. We're getting down towards the bottom of the presenter list, and that means you've been sitting on a chair for probably a long time. Thanks for finding your way to the Manitoba Legislature; I'm glad that Google Maps didn't steer you wrong. And I'm glad that you came to express—I heard you express a particular concern about the lack of consequences in this bill's wording for bullies.

I wanted to ask you, do you have a concern that without ideas about what appropriate consequences would look like when instances of bullying are deemed to have taken place, that the bill would lack an ability to make a difference in schools and actually change student behaviour?

* (21:30)

Ms. Sara Peters: Definitely. I think that when kids know clearly what the rules are and what the consequences are for not following those rules, they are more willing to follow rules because they know what their consequences are, whether it be, you know, at home if it's a 3-year-old child who hits their sibling, then they get time out, well, then they learn not to do that. And in this way, too, that if students know in school what is expected and not expected of them, then they will learn and behave in the appropriate manner.

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

We'll now call on Ron Lambert, private citizen.

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

Mr. Ron Lambert (Private Citizen): They'll be—they're being run off at this moment.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we'll have the staff distribute those when they're ready. You may proceed whenever you're ready.

Mr. Lambert: The raven called a gathering to see a new creation. This was a line in a pivotal story that I read last week from a book of a visiting friend. The raven had a new creation and it wished to show it to the animals. They all claimed that the new creation did not resemble any of them. It did not show their strong, identifying characteristics. In the end, the raven said that each was to show the new creation their own strong characteristics and together they were all responsible for bringing up this new creation.

Bill 18 is a new creation and a new creation for the people of Manitoba. It has the wisdom of looking at the past and the current situation with the people and providing a new creation, the GSA, for making of a strong people who can live safer in the school.

School safety is everyone's concern and the No. 1 business each day. Students wishing a GSA can be assured that in Manitoba schools, climate and character will be improved and that students will be able to mature and be more capable in helping each other on important issues.

Tomorrow brings world suicide day to us and the realization that many LGBT students are victims of uncivilized bullying that would not be condoned in most locales of society. The Rainbow Resource Centre and the Sexuality Education Resource Centre are aware of the alarming increases of LGBT suicide rates. This reflects the shortcoming of the present system in schools for LGPT students to manage their own psychological depression and to deal with it—to deal with the cause of it, most often without any help being sought or any helping hand offered in the face of demeaning comments about their gender and sexuality.

Today, Wentworth Miller, age 41, disclosed his own gay story in the media, and the fact that at age 15 he attempted suicide, then hid the reason for doing it until today. Would a GSA have helped him

then? I would say it would. Prove it—prove that it would not.

In every school teachers and principals are more aware of these gender and sexuality issues for all students and the specific marginalization for LGBT students. Often the response is one of being silent or shunning instead of engaging and healthy dialogue, or it is a quick fix of changing something—the school—or trying to change the person's own gender or sexual identity to the right, quote, normal, unquote, appearances. The current suicide rates show the failures of these types of, quote, investment in the future generation, unquote, of the LGP students—sorry, children in the school. Most students are looking for a change in the school attitude and practice. Bill 18 engages students in this change.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society started participation in the Winnipeg Pride parade. At the MTS AGM in 2011, I encouraged other teacher associations to join the president—and I'll add this in; it's not on your presentation—Paul Olson, who's present in this room right now, and myself behind the MTS banner with their banner. By doing this, we supported the Pride parade. This and following Pride parades clearly demonstrate our engagement in the public conversation on LGBT and GSA issues, and especially those affecting our first responsibility: the student.

Personally, having walked with the Manitoba Teachers' Society in all three Pride parades—this being a photograph of my first walking with the Manitoba Teachers' Society and Paul—

Mr. Chairperson: I just ask the presenter—sorry to interrupt, but I would ask the—remind the presenter that we are not—we do not allow exhibits in the presentation, so just ask you to refrain from showing the committee any material. You may continue with your presentation.

Mr. Lambert: Thank you—which followed two years of participation with my own Anglican church—yes, I'm a proud Anglican—I see the need for the change this Bill 18 will bring when put into practice by teachers and principals as the need arises.

Furthermore, having—being close to a relative who will celebrate 20 years of same-sex marriage this September 11th and having been close to the Rainbow Resource Centre in Brandon, as our daughter worked there for a year recently and continues to host GSA workshops this year, I think the time is right for this Bill 18. I'm encouraged by

the University of Winnipeg and their new initiatives in the area of gender and sexuality and the psychological perspectives on LGBT issues. In short, in a short few years, they will see the helping hand we, with the passage of Bill 18, will be giving to LGP students—LGBT students with the GSAs, and this will facilitate their continuing post-secondary education and skill training.

The raven called a gathering to see the new creation. Let this new creation flourish in healthy schools.

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

Ms. Allan: Thank you very much, Mr. Lambert, for your presentation this evening and for the story about the raven. Thank you for your comments and for being here this evening with us. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Ron, for coming this evening and sharing with us your opinions and your thoughts about Bill 18. And in keeping with your metaphor about the raven, I think what you've done tonight is you've come to say your piece and to show your strong identifying characteristics, as others throughout these evenings at committee have also done, and together it is all our hope that we will build something that is new and reflects all of us. Thank you for coming.

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

Now call on Melissa Penner, private citizen. Good evening, Ms. Penner. Do you have written materials for distribution?

Ms. Melissa Penner (Private Citizen): I'm actually not going to distribute it, if that's okay.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, no problem at all. Yes, that's fine. Please proceed whenever you're ready.

Ms. Penner: I, Melissa Penner, would like to thank Nancy Allan and the Bill 18 committee for taking the time to address bullying in Manitoba. I thank you for diligently serving Manitobans in many capacities and building up the education system.

At this point, I would like to also say I do not agree with Bill 18. I am opposed to it, but I am not in favour of bullying. As somebody who has been bullied for many years or throughout my whole school career in many capacities, it is something that is on my heart.

So I would like to address Bill 18, a few concerns that I have, one of which is highlighting the gay 'alli'—straight alliance topic. In section 41.8, it refers to anti-racism, gender equality and protecting those who are disabled with barriers. All of them are covered in the human rights act, so why do we need to single out certain groups and why do we need to have a bill that specifically goes and segregates them? In society where people are struggling to find their identity or to fit into a group, why does it make sense to adding another clique and trying to find out, like, where do I fit? There are so many groups to begin with. Why not take those away and allow everybody together? And, like, how can we have a community of—in a school, because that is a community, right? How are we supposed to have unity if we have different groups everywhere? So, what if we were to take those away and encourage everyone to love and respect each other who are—and for who they actually were created to be rather than—and that—than adding different things.

* (21:40)

So my suggestion I offer you today is to amend section 41, point 8, which states: the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of sexual orientations and gender identities, and use the name gay-straight alliance or any other name that is consistent with the promotion of positive school influence that is inclusive and accepting of all pupils. And why not change it to: the awareness and understanding of love and respect for all students, staff and anyone who enters the building. What would love be defined as? In section—put section b, love is patient, kind; it is not provoked; it does not take in account wrongs suffered; it believes all things; it is not arrogant; it does not seek its own; it does not act unbecomingly; and it does not act in unrighteousness.

By teaching each pupil and staff to love each other will eliminate many struggles. Removing labels will encourage the student body to fellowship with each other and realize we don't have to be different to be liked. We can be who we are created to be and in that identity, which is in Christ. So by loving each other, this will cover all bases and would not need to separate or even list different ethnic groups and peers and et cetera, and it would not discriminate because love—and if you add the students and the teachers and the staff and anybody who even enters the building, then you can't discriminate any group.

So if everybody would make a conscious effort to put the other person before their own needs, we would live in a much better place.

Another concern I have is in section 1.2(1)(a). It states, bullying is a behaviour that is intended to cause, or should be known to cause, fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress or other forms of harm to another person's bodies, feelings, self-esteem, reputation or property. Well, under that statement there, this would be considered bullying, because I'm a little intimidated right now. And you guys aren't bullying me, so that's just one example right there; that's not bullying, right? So that definitely needs to be looked at.

So my concern with this section is that feelings and self-esteem is such a hard thing to be defined. And offences will come, but it's whether—it's up to the person whether or not they choose to become offended or bullied. Each person is subject to their own feelings, so I feel that it is unfair to have a bill based on feelings or emotions.

Bullying is a huge topic to cover, and, as myself—as I said, I have been a victim of it. How do we go about solving such a big issue? I do believe, as I've stated above, that if we were really, truly to put our needs before others, we could not only make the schools but a better—the world a better place to live.

So I thank you for taking the time to not only hear my concerns but the 'scern'—concerns of many Manitobans who are opposed to Bill 18. I would also like to thank you for serving the Province of Manitoba in many different capacities and the—and there are—and that are only known to those who are behind the scenes. So I'd like to acknowledge you for the efforts that are unseen.

And it's been encouraging to hear everybody come forth and just share their concerns, and that they have a voice. And so I appreciate you guys opening this up to have people share their concerns and being open to that. And so, yes, I hope what I've said will bring insight of how this bill can be changed and/or amended. And, yes, so thank you and blessings.

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

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you, Melissa, for your presentation. It's heartfelt, and, you know, I think your comments in regards to the fact that people can come here and share their opinions on Bill 18 is

important. I think we're very lucky to have this process in Manitoba, and I think that we've heard—I'm not exactly sure, but I think we're close to about 230 presentations. And I think people have felt that this is a safe place to express their opinions, regardless of what they are, about Bill 18. So thank you for being here, and we appreciate your comments this evening.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Melissa, for coming this evening and sharing with us. You're near the end of the list of tonight's presenters who've sat a long time. You've heard a lot of presentations, and you've stayed with us to give your own, and we're glad that you did.

You expressed concern about the bill creating new groups, further segregating or creating cliques, and I appreciated your reminder that school is a community and that you use the words love and respect. I can't tell you how often in the last number of nights we have heard the words love and respect, and I just wanted to invite your comment on something. A presenter just a few before you made a comment that disagreement is not hatred; disagreement is not disrespect, and I just wondered if you would—if you could just respond to that, or just—I'd invite your comment on that to the extent that I would believe that, you know, the best activities are—of schools are the ones that actually promote understanding, bridge differences, reach across. And that seemed to be what you were talking about would be the important values in schools. I'm just inviting your comment on that.

Ms. Penner: Well, sir, can I just get you to rephrase the question, please? Is that okay?

Mr. Cameron Friesen: It was a wandering question; I'll make it clearer. I just thought it was interesting that you've used the words love and respect, and we've heard those many times. I just ask you to comment on why those are important things to see in school and how you go about seeing those things more in schools.

Ms. Penner: Well, I think love and respect is so important because that is the basis of how we are to treat each other, with respect. And, you know, people come from different backgrounds of life and there's a lot to take into, but, you know, we can love the people for who they are and who they created to be. We don't have to necessarily agree on what they do, and as one of the—the guy from—the speaker from Gateway, he said he had a friend, right, who had, you know, who was gay. And, you know, I have friends,

too, and so I've told them outright, like, I don't believe what you're doing is right, but I still love and respect you because you are a human being, and so I think that is extremely important.

And just to add, you know, I heard peoples, you know, that were coming up and who were for the bill, and just to hear their heart and how they've been hurt, and hurt by the church. And I just—I'd like to proclaim, like, on behalf of the church, I'd like to apologize if anybody has been hurt, because that is not showing the face of God. And so I'd like to apologize because that is not right. The love and respect we are to show, and the things that have been done to hurt is not showing the face of God. So I'd like to apologize on behalf of them.

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

Now we'll call on Stephen Kennedy, private citizen.

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

Mr. Stephen Kennedy (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

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

Mr. Kennedy: Thank you. You guys got a crazy job. Man, wowzers, like, I honour you guys for what you're doing. I honour the members of the committee here tonight.

I guess my first question is—I was concerned that there was a buzzer that would go off because I'm a preacher. Is there a 10-minute buzzer that goes off? I'll try—there's the clock right there. I'll keep my eye on the clock. No, it won't be that long.

I'm here tonight to explain about what love is and to share that with you. We have gone through, in our own family—I have five children, we moved to Manitoba seven years ago, small community. As it is in a small community, at least in this one, all the young ladies had grown up together, so they knew one another. The families knew one another. So when our daughter entered into the situation, she didn't make a lot of friends. It was hard for her. It was difficult. And so there's so many different levels of bullying, and it's hard and I would say impossible to legislate everything that goes into how a child is bullied. It was hard and difficult for her. We teach her love; we teach her to forgive those who treat her badly, to forgive them. That's the core value of what

we teach our children regardless who the person is or what they've done. The forgiveness is the first grounds of love, because if you don't show that, then you do not show love.

* (21:50)

And so she went on from there. We home-schooled her for a while. We actually took all three of our kids. It just seemed to be the right thing to do at the right time. And, then, when it was ready for her to go back to the public school system, we sent her to a faith-based school which was another school district away, and it was a lot of travel, and she's ended up staying overnight at a friend's house that was in that district a few nights a week. So it was hard for us in that way, but it was the best thing for her.

So bullying does come in so many forms, and I would say here tonight, each one of us has been hurt. There's not one of us hasn't been hurt in some way. Friend has disowned us, our allegiance has been broken, many ways, each one of us and bullying. And those hurts are real. They're a part of who we are.

I want to give you a story. There was this young man in one of the churches we were pastoring. I didn't know him. I was a pastor of a Salvation Army church and we were doing the teen camp that summer. Well, this father of this young man was at his end's wit; he didn't know what to do with his son any longer. He was stealing cars, going for joyrides, he was bullying at the high school, disruptive at home. And so I don't know how the dad found out but he found out about this camp, and he literally drove to the camp and dropped the son off. He—I don't know what he told him, what story he gave him. But he dropped him off at our camp. I'm, like, wow. This is crazy. I mean, he didn't—the father just took off and, like, who is this guy? Who's this kid here?

And, so, I mean, he didn't want to be there. When he found out what was going on—this is a church camp—oh, man, he was dead set against it. But he didn't want to walk home; it was too far. So he was kind of stuck. His dad's plan worked and by the end of the five days after we just poured love on this kid, he—his heart was changed. It was transformed. He came back totally different. And that's what true love does; it changes you from the inside out. It makes you a different person. And it took a while for his dad to really find and believe that his son had changed, but after a number of

months, his dad held a party and said come on over. Like, we're going to celebrate what's happened in my son's life. He's not the same anymore; his heart has been changed.

That is the issue of any bully. It's that their heart, it's hurting; it's in pain. They're suffering; they don't know what to do; they don't know where to turn to. They've been bullied; now they've become bullies. We've heard that story again and again.

And so this bill is just so vague. It's just covering so many things that you're not going to be able to monitor it all. It's impossible. We need to go after the kids' hearts, where they are, and come down to their level and say what's going on in your life? What's happening in your home situation? I've worked with so many families where their homes are just so upside down, so disruptive, they don't know how to talk, except have an argument. Drug abuse, alcohol abuse, winos, I've worked with every person. And it's the disruption in their home that the kid doesn't know love any longer, so he just acts out. And that's why it's so difficult in the school system. I just feel for the teachers; they don't know what to do with these kids because they're not being taught at home. They're not being taught morals, how to love and show love to one another, and so the kids no longer love themselves. And that's the first thing, for us to love one another is that we need to even love our self. And if you don't love yourself, you can't show love to someone else.

So the core values that we need to go in and show these kids that they are loved, they're valued for who they are, who God created them to be, and that they have destiny and they have purpose all over their lives. And we will see a change happen in our schools.

Another story I have is just to share that, as I've worked with so many young people—I'm not sure how long I've gone already—

Mr. Chairperson: Five minutes left.

Mr. Kennedy: Five minutes, oh. I'm only halfway, good. Praise God.

That because many children I've worked with have grown up without a father in home or a disruptive father, because they've not had that loving arms of father wrapped around them to show them that they cared, to even say that I love you. I've worked with so many kids that have never even been told that they're loved. They've never even heard that from their own father or mother or even who was

ever around. And, so, because of the lack of love that they've been shown, they can't show love to anybody else. It's impossible. They haven't even learned it. It's like sending back an inmate and telling them we're going to send them to prison to get rehabilitated. Well, he doesn't even know what that is because he's never had a life that's been normal. You can't rehabilitate someone that's never been 'habilitated,' however you say that. You know what I'm saying.

They've always writ—I mean, I've worked with so many inmates; they've never lived a lifestyle where it's been normal. It's always been disruptive. So you can't rehabilitate something that they've never had built into them. They never had a heart that's been changed, that now can love and show love to others.

And so the 'creeshoo'—crucial issue that we're really dealing is with the hearts of our children this day. They're being robbed. Our children in Canada are being robbed; they're being stolen from us. And so I encourage you to do what God's called you to do in the place and the positions He's put you, to put forth legislation that is going to encourage every child, no matter where they come from or their background—I believe that putting in anything to do with sexual orientation is taking away—it's actually taking away from the hard issue that we really need to go after: the core values of children that need love shown to them and need to be shown how to love others. And so I would consider that we would go on the foundation of what we've previously heard about what love is. Love is patient; love is kind; it does not envy; it does not boast; it is not proud; it is not rude or self-seeking; and it keeps no records of wrongs.

And that's what we teach our children: Don't hold on to any wrongs because you'll be offended. Each one of us, if we hold on to them, then they just continue to build up. We begin to grow up into a heart of pain, and bitterness grows into anger, and anger can become rage and gets out of control. And that's where bullying just takes over. And it can happen in adults; it can happen in children. It doesn't matter who we are.

The hard issue is that we need to see our children loved for who they are and created to be and encourage them to go—the world is theirs; take hold of it; prosper and be successful at everything you set your hand to for God's enabled you to do that.

So I thank you for listening to my presentation this evening.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks, Mr. Kennedy, for your presentation.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Allan: Well, thank you very much for your presentation. It's obvious that you care deeply about the work that you do, and thank you for the work that you do with young people. And I agree with almost everything you said—almost everything.

And I just want you to know that this legislation is about safe and caring school environments for all students, because it's exactly as you said. Not all students have a safe place to come from. They don't all have supportive homes, and it's our job to make sure that our young people in our schools are safe and reach their full potential. Thank you.

Mr. Cameron Friesen: Thank you, Stephen, for coming this evening and sharing with us. I can tell you're a preacher because you hardly looked at your notes once, and the buzzer didn't go off. I wasn't sure if it did on a regular basis in your congregation, but tonight you came in inside the buzzer line. But I did want to thank you for sharing with us.

You—obviously, you've had experience on the front lines of what it means to reach kids, to reach their hearts. And I appreciate what you had to say this evening. I know my colleagues on both sides of this aisle did as well, so thank you for taking the time. Thank you for sticking it out to the end, and thank you for the words that you have left us with and the challenge that you've left us with.

Mr. James Allum (Fort Garry-Riverview): I also wanted to thank you for coming tonight, Mr. Kennedy. My dad's also a preacher. He never knew how much time had elapsed during a sermon nor would he ever have asked, so that separates you from him.

But I guess what I wanted to ask you is, when a school sets up a GSA, aren't we showering that child with love and acceptance for who they are?

Mr. Kennedy: I would say that you're giving them the opportunity to identify with who they are, but I would question about purity of love that really is only shown by one person and that was through God, who so loved the world that He sent His only Son for us. And that's what really explodes a person's heart, when they experience that love.

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

Now I'll call on Nelson Camp, private citizen. Nelson Camp, private citizen? Okay. Well, Mr. Camp's name will be moved to the end of the list.

I'll now call on Mark Zoldy, private citizen. Mark Zoldy, private citizen? Mr. Zoldy's name will also be moved to the bottom of the list.

I will now return to those individuals who I have called once and call them again.

Jenni Funk, private citizen. Jenni Funk, private citizen? Okay. Ms. Funk's name will be moved to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

Brian Schroeder, private citizen. Brian Schroeder, private citizen? Seeing Mr. Schroeder is not here, his name will be moved to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

Nelson Camp, private citizen. Mr. Camp's name will be moved to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

Mark Zoldy, private citizen. Mr. Zoldy's name will be moved to the bottom of the global list of presenters.

That concludes our list of presenters for tonight.

The time being 10 o'clock, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Before we rise, it would be appreciated if members would leave behind the copies of the bill so they may be collected and reused at the next meeting. Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Subject: Bill 18

Hello Committee members,

My name is Mary-Jane Kehler, thank you for taking the time to read my submission regarding Bill 18. I am a wife, a mother, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a Christian. Am I always perfect? No! Have I been guilty of bullying as defined by this bill? Yes! I dare say we all are or have been at some point. I agree that bullying is a terrible thing, it hurts many and leaves scars that are invisible to all but those who bear them. I grew up in a small school, most of the students were very close due to growing up together and being in the same class from K-Grade 9. There were, however, a few students who were

different, they didn't quite fit in with the rest of the kids. Some had learning delays, some had very different interests, some just didn't have great social skills. They were teased mercilessly, called names, left out of social events like birthday parties and sleep overs. None of the people I knew in school were teased or bullied because of their sexual orientation! To write a bill protecting the bullied but singling out only those bullied because of their sexual orientation does a great disservice to all other bullied children and adults. I agree that action needs to be taken against bullying, it has for years. This bill isn't the answer. It's flawed, it lists only those bullied for their sexual orientation as protected, it has too broad a definition of bullying, (if hurt feelings defines bullying, I would be guilty everyday, people hurt other people's feelings. It's often unintentional but it does happen), it requires religious organizations to accommodate groups that are in direct opposition to their own beliefs. My husband and I are Christians, we are also foster parents. We want to raise our children to love and accept people no matter what their orientation, race, gender, belief. We want to raise them to have a strong belief system, to stand up for their beliefs and to stand up for those who are bullied, for any reason. They are learning that they don't need to agree with others on all points, but need to be respectful of their differences. As I write this I have had a discussion with and put my 4 year old son in time out for slapping his brother over a difference of opinion. These things must be taught early, and they need to be taught at home!

Bill 18 was written to be an anti bullying bill, to bring people together. I have seen little unity over this bill. What I have witnessed was people bullying each other (harassing, screaming at, cussing others out, threatening, hurting each other emotionally) over their differing opinions over the bill. I saw Media painting Christian pastors as monsters for daring to speak out and point out the flaws in this bill.

If this bill is supposed to protect the bullied, why aren't all religious groups included? Why are Religious leaders being painted as monsters for preaching what their religion teaches, and the bible being billed as hate literature? Again, I agree something has to be done about bullying, no question. My concern is that Bill 18 really isn't going to address most of the problems. Please take the time to change this bill to include all people, give a better, less broad definition of bullying, and allow for the protection of religious freedom. After all, many

people, my ancestors included, moved to this country because they were promised freedom of religion.

Thank you once again for taking the time to consider my letter.

Respectfully,

Mary-Jane Kehler

* * *

Bill 18 Speech

Hello. Thank you all for the opportunity to present today. My name is Cindy Wiebe. I am concerned about bill 18 as written. My issue with this bill has nothing to do with being in favor of bullying, I am against all forms of bullying, but rather with the wording of the bill, which protects certain groups of children over others. This bill gives protection from bullying to four categories of children: (1) Gender, (2) Race, (3) Sexual Orientation & (4) Disabilities. I agree that all children should be protected and no child should ever be bullied for any of these things. The problem is, however, that religious beliefs are left out.

When this fact is combined with the weak definition given to the act of bullying, the results could be devastating for children of faith and faith based schools. The definition of bullying in Bill 18

includes "hurt feelings". Bill 13, a similar bill that is now law in Ontario, defines bullying much more appropriate as "aggressive and repeated behavior".

As written in bill 18, this broad definition of bullying suggests that a mere disagreement can be the cause of hurt feelings and therefore punishable by the school administrators. The foundations of our legal system are in the freedom we have to state our opinions and disagree with each other in order to find the best solutions for all. Are we really going to take this freedom away from our children?

My fear is that, in the eagerness to protect a few, more will begin to fall into the categories of needing protection, and more and more legislation will need to be created. I feel that this bill is a good start, yet amendments will serve to accomplish the goals that it actually sets out to do.

So instead of naming a few groups, can we not say that protection should be for all and maybe even suggest "anti-bullying clubs", rather than clubs for a specific group? A simple, unintended remark should not give a student the label of "bully".

Thank you all again for this opportunity to present, and I promise to keep you in my prayer and pray for wisdom.

Cindy Wiebe

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>