

Title: Tuesday, April 8, 2003 Private Bills Committee

Date: 03/04/08

[Ms Graham in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. We'll get under way with this meeting of the Standing Committee on Private Bills. I hope you all had a restful week off and are ready to get back at it. I see I'm beginning to lose my voice here this morning, so I think I had a good time when I was off.

Anyway, without further ado let's have a look at the agenda. Unless there are any changes needed, I would entertain a motion to approve it. Mr. Goudreau so moves. All in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Chair: Any opposed, please say no. The agenda is adopted, then, as circulated.

You also have the minutes of the last meeting, March 25, 2003. Assuming that there are no additions, corrections, or changes needed, I would entertain a motion to adopt the minutes as circulated. Mr. Jacobs so moves. All in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Chair: Any opposed, please say no. The minutes are adopted as circulated.

Well, we're gathered here today to hold the hearing on Bill Pr. 2, the Forest Lawn Bible College Act, sponsored by Mr. Pham. As you know from having reviewed the material, this bill would incorporate a religious college, to be located in the city of Calgary, that would be empowered to provide instruction in degree programs in divinity and in certificate and diploma programs in education, arts, science, and other fields as the board may from time to time determine.

The petitioner on this bill is Pastor Thanh Nguyen. He is in attendance today with others as part of his group. We had requested that the Department of Learning review this bill and comment on the contents of it, and we have received a letter from the Deputy Minister of Learning, Ms Maria David-Evans. Her letter of March 20, 2003, was circulated to you I believe last week, and I would bring that letter to your attention. The sum total of the letter from Learning is that there is no objection to the bill proceeding. The letter does indicate that under the Universities Act, of course, only "universities, private colleges offering accredited degree programs and approved non-resident institutions can offer degree programs and grant degrees." But there is an exception for "degrees in divinity that are described in regulation and the granting of degrees allowed by the Colleges Act or the Technical Institutes Act." However, as you can glean from the letter, it would appear that there aren't any regulations yet defining the parameters of a degree in divinity. So that's something for us to keep in mind.

As well, it has been suggested that there be an amendment to clarify the types of programs the college intends to offer by an amendment to section 3(a) of the bill. I'll just ask Parliamentary Counsel to comment on that proposed amendment, which she has drafted for us.

Ms Dean: Thank you, Madam Chair. The proposed amendment is very minor in nature. Really, it simply links section 3, which sets out the objects of the college, to section 5, which sets out the powers of the college. So it's really just a link explaining exactly what fields

of programs will be offered by the college. Again, I've drafted it based on the suggestion in the letter from the Department of Learning and in consultation with Ms Sprague from the department.

Those are my comments.

The Chair: I anticipate that Ms Jean Sprague, director of the private institutions branch for the Department of Learning, will be in attendance today at the hearing. Oh, she's here. Yes. If I only would have looked up. Welcome. That's good.

All right. The only other matter that I wanted to bring to your attention was the copy of the letter circulated to you I believe late Friday or yesterday that was received by Parliamentary Counsel from Mr. Ron Leech, the senior pastor of Eastside City Church, voicing certain objections to Bill Pr. 2 proceeding.

Rev. Abbott: Can we ask Jean a question about this letter? Can we do that now before our guests come in, or is that not good protocol?

The Chair: Well, let's hear the question, and then we'll go from there.

Rev. Abbott: I guess I'm just wondering what the department's view is on this letter. Like, how does this fit in? You know, because there are no regulations regarding divinity, then I suppose the letter would not be a barrier to passing this act.

Ms Sprague: Are you fine with me responding at this time?

The Chair: I think that, you know, this question would more properly be put in the hearing.

Rev. Abbott: So then the people who are coming in are aware of the letter?

The Chair: Yes. They were notified on Friday.

Ms Dean: They were provided a copy.

The Chair: They were provided a copy. But you can certainly put that question again, Rev. Abbott.

Rev. Abbott: Okay.

The Chair: Mr. Leech was in touch with Parliamentary Counsel, Ms Dean, and it was my understanding that while he was not prepared to be here today, if the committee wished to interview or question him, he would be available on another day. But I think the letter is self-explanatory and contains certain allegations, which of course are allegations at this point.

All right. That covers those preliminary matters that I wanted to bring to your attention. I think we are now ready to proceed with the hearing, and I'll ask Parliamentary Counsel to bring in the witnesses and have them sworn.

[Pastor Alexander, Mr. A. Nguyen, Pastor T. Nguyen, and Ms Jean Sprague were sworn in]

9:15

The Chair: Well, good morning, gentlemen and ladies. My name is Marlene Graham, and I am the chairman of this committee, the Standing Committee on Private Bills. It is my pleasure to welcome you here this morning. Our purpose, of course, as you well know, is to conduct the hearing on Bill Pr. 2, the Forest Lawn Bible College Act.

Before we get under way, I'm wondering if the petitioner, Pastor Nguyen, would just put on the record who is present with you today and who will be speaking as part of your presentation. I see that you have a large group with you, and it would be good to have on the record who is present with you.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Madam Chair, if I may, on behalf of the college.

The Chair: Oh, of course.

Mr. A. Nguyen: My name is Austin Nguyen, barrister and solicitor. Pastor Nguyen is on my right today. He is the petitioner for the college. On my left is Pastor Joseph Alexander, who is going to be one of the presenters today. We have four other members of the college whom I'm going to introduce one by one at a later time.

The Chair: I see. All right.

Just for the record, then, we have as well Ms Jean Sprague, director of private institutions for Alberta Learning. Welcome to you all.

Before we get under way, I would like to introduce you to all the members of the committee. This is an all-party committee of the Legislature.

[The following members introduced themselves: Rev. Abbott, Mr. Bonner, Mr. Goudreau, Mr. Jacobs, Mr. Johnson, Ms Kryczka, Mr. Lord, Mr. Maskell, Dr. Massey, Mr. Pham, Mr. Rathgeber, and Mr. Vandermeer]

The Chair: Before you begin, I'd also like to introduce you to Ms Shannon Dean, our Parliamentary Counsel who assists the committee, and Ms Florence Marston, our administrative assistant, who also assists the committee.

Mr. Nguyen, I'm sure you appreciate that our purpose here today is to hear you and the other members of your group describe the bill, describe to us the purpose of the bill, the rationale for it, and just outline for us any other relevant information that would support the passage of this bill. At the completion of all of the evidence I anticipate there will be questions from members of the committee. Our typical form is not to make a decision today but to hear all of the evidence and deliberate on a subsequent date. So with that, then I'll ask you to please proceed.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Before that, I need some water. I get nervous.

The Chair: I think we can accommodate that. Mr. Nguyen, please proceed.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yes. I have a habit of standing up when speaking. However, today I believe that I can sit down and talk at the same time.

The Chair: Well, give it a try anyway.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yes. To the hon. committee members, Parliamentary Counsel, and the representative of Alberta Learning, my name is Austin Nguyen, barrister and solicitor. I represent the Forest Lawn Bible College. Before you today on behalf of the college as petitioner are a number of members from various communities.

First, Reverend Thanh Nguyen. He's from Vietnam. Originally a boat person, he's been teaching the word of God since 1989. He's the president and a founding member of the college.

On my left is Pastor Joseph Alexander. He is from the East Indian

community in Calgary. He's co-pastor of the multicultural Christian church. He studied at the International Bible College in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan. He's a teacher in the college.

The next person is Pastor View Mangozho, who is from Zimbabwe. She's the founder of Calgary World Harvest Church. She has a BA in leadership ministry teaching.

The next person is Tamara Jorgic. She's from Yugoslavia. She has a BA at the University of Novi Sad. She's a teacher in the ESL support program at the college.

The next person is Marcos Magpantay. He's from the Philippines community, an organizer in this Christian ministry.

Last but not least is Minh Nguyen. She's the wife of Reverend Thanh Nguyen. She's very active in supporting the president and pastor in this college here.

Our presentation today has two parts. The first one, the role and objective of the college, will be presented by Pastor Joseph Alexander. Then I will provide the hon. committee members the reasons for this private bill and answer questions from the committee members. When the questions come, I would like to have first shot at it, and if I am not able to, I will redirect that to the other members of the petitioner.

The Chair: Very good.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yes. Thanks.

9:25

Pastor Alexander: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Pastor Joseph Alexander. I have no problem to stand up and speak any day.

I'm so privileged to be here addressing the issue about the Forest Lawn Bible College. For the last many years I have been enrolled as an active minister among the ethnic groups, focusing on individuals and communities to show the genuine love of Jesus Christ. Also, I'm going to be teaching at Bible college, at FLBC. I strongly believe it is very important for the needs of a Bible college to represent many cultural groups to function with a distinctive nature under the private school act, which will be a great asset in our society.

Also, in my opinion, I strongly believe that it would be most beneficial for multicultural communities to have this bill passed so that people from diverse backgrounds could come together and learn the word of God and the love of Jesus Christ, which will also allow them to learn in an environment, relating to one another, especially people with multicultural values and principles, also people from different backgrounds. With the help of the college they impact people's lives with the word of God. Persons from the following countries are involved in teaching and going to college: Zimbabwe, Philippines, India, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, and Canada. Our teaching staff consists of persons having not only life experience in teaching the word of God but also having gained qualifications from diploma to degree levels.

I convey my sincere thanks for providing me this opportunity before the committee. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yes. This goes to the reason for the establishment of the college, especially this college, established as a result of an overwhelming need in the communities. I stress the plural in "communities." There were not any colleges providing the service of theological instruction that suits the needs of the congregations of these particular communities. There have been in the past private

bills that have been passed for other Bible colleges. Precedent-setting is clear, an example of which is the Evangel Bible College in 1995, Bethesda Bible College, in the same year Rocky Mountain. They're all under very, very similar bills. The Forest Lawn Bible College would be marked differently from other colleges if it is not passed under the private bill.

The second reason for the distinctiveness of this college here: it's a community-based Bible college. People in the delegation here came from different ministries. Though they enjoy it and worship there, they feel the need to have a distinct college where students from different communities can come and study in their own way, being taught by people who know the background and the values of their own communities.

In addition, the plan of the college is that not only people in Canada but people wishing to come to Canada as visa students to study the word of God from this diverse college can bring back with them to their homeland or where they came from the studies that they learned in this college. The same applies to people from different communities, representing now only seven communities here. They come to this college, study, and bring the teaching back to the ministry. The overwhelming need of the communities to establish that has been for a long time, and the way to go is the private bill. Otherwise, they will feel different and apart from the existing system that we have, the colleges that I named. I'm asking the committee members to go in the same path, approve this college here so people can go on with their studies and teaching in this college.

We'll take questions from the committee members.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Nguyen, for your submission here this morning.

Are there questions from the committee members?

Rev. Abbott: I have a question, and I'd like to direct it to Pastor Nguyen as well as to Jean Sprague. Maybe you could both comment on this question. There was a letter – you've probably seen it – circulated by Ron Leech, the senior pastor of Eastside City Church, and I'm just wondering what your response would be to that letter, Pastor Nguyen, and also what the department's response is to that letter.

The Chair: Before Ms Sprague addresses that question, I was remiss in not calling on her to give the department's position. Perhaps she can do that as well as address your question. If you would, Ms Sprague.

Ms Sprague: Thank you very much. I guess I'll respond to your question first. The department, as you know from Madam Chair's opening remarks, does not regulate divinity programs. We would have no comment to make on the letter. I believe the letter was directed to me because I was the one name that Mr. Leech knew within the department. He had met with me about another matter a few months ago.

In terms of general comments I would just reiterate that Alberta Learning has no concern with the degree-granting authority laid out in this bill. It is very clear that the matter has to do with degrees in divinity. I would mention that our department is undergoing a legislative review at this time. One of the concerns that has been put before the department in terms of divinity programs is that there's uncertainty among the public as to what a degree in divinity means. So I think that we would definitely consider making it clear. We have no regulation at this time, but we may consider putting in a very

brief regulation that just describes what a degree in divinity is so that prospective students are clear on that matter themselves.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Sprague.

Mr. Johnson.

Rev. Abbott: Sorry. I was expecting a response also from Pastor Nguyen.

The Chair: Oh, okay. My apologies.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yes. I would take on that question. With the help of Florence before the meeting here I took the opportunity to make copies and now would like to pass them on to committee members.

In the letter from Pastor Leech I identify four distinct concerns. The first concern is the style and the conflict in how one teaches the word of God. If you can recall that letter, it talks about the disagreement in the doctrine that Pastor Leech has in comparison to Pastor Nguyen. One should say: who has the licence to teach the right wording here? The different style, that's what it's all about. That's why the need for the college. The same word of God can be applied in many, many ways in different circumstances and in different communities.

9:35

With respect to the second allegation – that's the first page on your handout – that was dealt with, and I'm sorry to see that Pastor Leech was misinformed of the facts. The fact was that Bow Valley College and Pastor Thanh, who, gratefully, brought some students from Vietnam to study English in Canada, had chosen the Bow Valley College program for them initially. When those students found the need and suitability to go elsewhere to study in different Alberta or Calgary institutions, Bow Valley College was not happy with that. They kept the money back and transfer it to different institutions, and that's been done, over with. You saw the letter there. It's not anything sticky or anything not clear.

The third point is the immigration issue. This was the goal and purpose this year, as I mentioned, and we need the private bill to pass as soon as possible in favour. They would like to bring students not only from the communities in Calgary or in Alberta or other provinces; there's a need, a request from other countries that would like to come here to learn and go back home. The issue raised in Pastor Leech's letter is exactly it. We need to bring people here, and people have applied, and we say: hold it; we're not ready yet. That is the issue immigration read in the letters coming to them. They heard that the Forest Lawn Bible College is about to establish. They applied to it. There's a need there for international students to come here to study and bring that teaching back to their ministries.

The letter from Pastor Leech is very frank. I respect his openness in the letter. However, I wish that he would get the facts straight. He's not here, so I cannot challenge him on those issues. However, I try my best to bring to the committee members here the facts as they are. All the issues embraced in Pastor Leech's letter have been answered clearly, and I hope it is not an issue in the mind of the committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you very much. I actually have two questions, and they're presented for clarification really. My first question is taken from the first page of the act, section 3(a). When I think of

divinity courses or Bible courses, I immediately think of postsecondary education. However, in 3(a) it says, "To establish, maintain, conduct and support an educational institution for secondary and post-secondary Christian education." I wonder if you could just clarify for me what is really meant by "secondary," whether this may be connected to the Alberta curriculum at all or whether you're talking about ESL courses only. So that's my one question. If you could just clarify that.

Shall I ask the second question now? They may be related. The second question is really, I guess, taken from section 6 on page 4, where it says:

The College may, upon recommendation of its faculty, confer upon graduates of the course of study provided by the College

- (a) diplomas or certificates;
- (b) degrees in divinity.

Now, I realize that the province has no accrediting legislation or regulations regarding divinity degrees, but I wonder if there are other accrediting agencies such as national agencies or international agencies. I wonder perhaps if you could just clarify if you know, and if you do know, are you intending to seek accreditation from any other agency that might exist?

Mr. A. Nguyen: Thank you, sir, for the questions. I'll answer in that order. I think the department mentions that they have no problem with the college granting degrees in divinity, exactly what they're going to grant, not any other program.

The postsecondary question is that people often have their high school completed and require further study. The ESL program is one of the postsecondary. As students come to this college, they have to finish their high school elsewhere, so it may be beyond the high school program, and it has no interference with the program or cost of the program provided by Alberta Learning.

The second point is the accrediting. At this point the college does not seek accredited programs. In the future, when it's fully grown and the programs are more refined, they will seek accredited programs from existing accredited colleges, some of which are from Canada, some of which are from the States, but that's going to be selected on a course-by-course basis, a program-by-program basis. At the present time there's no foreseeable future when they are going to seek accreditation for the college.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you.

Mr. Maskell: Good morning. I wonder if you can help me. You know, I'm quite familiar with international student programs, though this is a church-based program, faith-based program. Are the majority of your students going to be acquired through international recruitment? I mean, are these going to be students coming from abroad, from Vietnam, the Philippines, wherever?

Mr. A. Nguyen: No, sir. The school accommodates according to the pastors and the people who are heading this college. The doors are open to all people.

Mr. Maskell: I understand the doors are open, but you spoke about people wanting to come to your program from other countries. So, you know, how would they know about it? You must have a recruitment program of some kind in place.

Mr. A. Nguyen: First off, the college was established by communities in Canada, communities in Alberta. The people you saw today put the effort in, wishing that members from the community could go to that college. We're not going to say no to

some other students from abroad that would like to study at the college, but they have to meet visa requirements; they have to meet other standards of Canada before coming in, sir. So we're not targeting for a majority of students from abroad. If they come and apply, they have to meet the stringent conditions of Canadian immigration, and we accept them only when they are accepted under that visa program.

Mr. Maskell: Of course, you don't have a choice in that they have to have that visa.

Thank you.

The Chair: Reverend Abbott.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you, Madam Chair. My question relates to Mr. Johnson's question with regard to the accreditation. I'm wondering if the Forest Lawn Bible College will be affiliated with any denomination or with any church. Are you affiliated with any other Christian associations, et cetera?

Mr. A. Nguyen: The people present today come from different ministries and different churches themselves. The Forest Lawn Bible College at the present time is based on those ministries, not any particular church or community. They are broad based. They made the decision jointly and go forward with that but not exclusively with any church at all.

9:45

Rev. Abbott: So I guess the follow-up would be that if you're not associated with any other churches or denominations, then where would the degree be recognized or where would it be used? Where are you expecting the degree to be used once somebody gets a degree in divinity?

Mr. A. Nguyen: Could you give me a second on that? I would seek advice.

Rev. Abbott: Sure.

Mr. A. Nguyen: The answer is as I expected. It did not tilt to any denomination. The divinity degree and program will be tailored to the general teaching of the Bible.

Rev. Abbott: Thank you.

Mr. Vandermeer: What I'd like to know is: what was the doctrinal difference that Forest Lawn had with the other college, the Bow Valley College? What was the doctrinal difference that made the separation between the two?

Mr. A. Nguyen: I believe that the Bow Valley College belonged to Alberta Learning. You mean all the Bible colleges?

Mr. Vandermeer: Yes.

Mr. A. Nguyen: There's no significant difference from those colleges. However, the guidance, the driving force for this college here is community based. When I say community-based college, it literally came from the different communities of different nations that you see here today. The teaching will be from, for example, Pastor Alexander or Pastor View. So the teachings are different, but the core material or the doctrine would be the same.

Mr. Vandermeer: That does not answer my question. There was a doctrinal dispute between the pastor and this Pastor Ron Leech. It does not say in his letter what that difference was. I asked you to give me what the difference was, and you didn't answer that.

Mr. A. Nguyen: With the letter of Pastor Ron Leech, as I see it, the difference is in the correctness. Pastor Ron Leech says that Pastor Thanh Nguyen was not correct in his teaching; it's not the difference in doctrine. One should not hold that I have a licence from God to teach and other people are wrong if they teach that way or differently than me. That's what I read from the letter. He said: I told him so, but he did not listen to me. I don't see a doctrinal dispute here. I see it as whether or not I accept the way you teach or whether or not you agree with me in the way I'm teaching. So I don't see any dispute in doctrine or in that core value.

Mr. Vandermeer: The reason that I used the words "doctrinal dispute" is because that's what you used earlier.

Mr. A. Nguyen: I don't see from the letter here any dispute in doctrine at all. As I mentioned, there's no one way to teach the Bible. There are so many ways to do that. That's why these people before you here at one time or another came from a ministry headed by Pastor Ron Leech. It's how they separated and how they would like to have their own ministry, not the dispute between Pastor Ron Leech and Pastor Thanh. That's why this private bill was submitted, but the difference may be with other people as well. So I'm not going to decide that there are doctrine differences here, only the disagreement in how to deliver the material. That's what I read from the letter.

The Chair: Perhaps that could be revisited later.
Are you finished, Mr. Vandermeer?

Mr. Vandermeer: I'm finished. I'm not satisfied.

The Chair: I would just say this, Mr. Nguyen. In Mr. Leech's letter – and I recognize, as we all do, that these are allegations and that Mr. Leech isn't here today to, you know, further explain his letter. But the allegation from the letter is that Pastor Nguyen was teaching doctrine contrary to Scripture, so to my mind it seems pretty clear that it is a difference in doctrine as opposed to a difference in teaching method. I think this was the point that Mr. Vandermeer was trying to pinpoint. I don't know if that helps to clarify at all, but it seems pretty clear that the allegation is a dispute on content, not on method of teaching.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Pastor Nguyen is wishing to speak now, if he is allowed to.

Pastor T. Nguyen: Thank you. I would like to answer these questions. When I joined with Pastor Ron Leech, I founded the first Vietnamese charismatic church in Canada. We couldn't afford at the time a missionary in Hong Kong. The Holy Spirit of God in the Bible touched my heart. The Holy Spirit of God was sealed in my heart and gave me power, and I shared with Pastor Ron that I would like to found a Vietnamese charismatic church, a pentecostal church, the first in Canada.

In the meantime I rented a building the size of a city church. He advised me to come to study in his Bible school. I prayed and fasted, I asked God, and I saw no answer. I was involved in prayer at 4 o'clock in the morning, opened the door for Pastor Ron. I prayed from 4 o'clock in the morning, and at 7 o'clock I went home.

I am involved in reading the Scripture. I look to read the word of God, and He advised me to come to his corner. I provide the community and the church, and I provide financing, and I need to maintain my time. The reason why he thinks I don't agree with him and go under him – he thinks I'm not over him.

9:55

The second thing. I accept his teaching. He's not teaching wrong about the word of God. With me, everybody knew that I was teaching the word of God because the word of God is unlimited, and the spirit of God is the word of God. I'm teaching about the thumb; Pastor Ron is teaching about the finger. We are teaching the word of God together, but he has a different view. I accept his teaching, but he thinks that I don't go to his Bible school because I need to go to work. I am involved reading the word of God. I want to communicate with God, be able to sit with God. One day I will become a teacher of the word of God to other people, and change other people, other believers. I want to be under the will of God and with the Holy Spirit guiding me on, and he wants me to be under him, but I'm under God, under the will of God.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

All right. We'll move on then. Mr. Rathgeber, you were on the list again.

Mr. Rathgeber: Thank you. Yes.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Dr. Massey. I missed you, but I'll come back to you.

Dr. Massey: Thank you.

Mr. Rathgeber: I'd like to ask a follow-up question to that asked by Reverend Abbott because I'm not sure if you didn't understand it or if you just didn't answer it. You're proposing to grant divinity degrees. Now, presumably, to follow up Rev. Abbott's question, that is going to qualify individuals to teach the Scriptures in various settings. In answer to my friend Reverend Abbott's question, you indicated that Forest Lawn Bible College or the people promoting Forest Lawn Bible College are not associated with any denomination of the Christian church. So my question is: where are your graduates going to teach what they learn in your institution should your application be successful?

Pastor T. Nguyen: Thank you. You see, on the Earth today, for example, Benny Hinn, Pastor Benny Hinn, is preaching. His background is Catholic, but the Holy Spirit of God is touching him. He has not gone to Bible college. He has no schooling, he has no education, but he came to the United States and he's preaching in the healing ministry. He lays hands on thousands of people, touching and healing. He has no education. For example, like doctors and teachers in Korea he has helped millions. He has not gone to Bible college, but he continues meeting and continues teaching many, many people. They have the certificate.

With me, God called me to become a leader. I cannot do all, but I know that a leader pays a high price. Many things attack the leader. Well, God called the leader to bring the people right in to do the purpose of God, the will of God. We help here some teachers, PhD candidates. They are not much experienced in their work, but they have the schooling. They have a PhD. I walked with God for many years. I walked with God, and I heard the voice of God very clear. God called me to become the leader and founder and bring

many people together, and with the will of God we do the purpose of God.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Rev. Alexander, would like to directly answer the question of denomination that you raised? Thanks.

Pastor Alexander: I would like to clear up that answer. Even though we look different colors or different creeds, we believe the same doctrines, just like many Pentecostal doctrines in North America; for example, Assemblies of God in Canada, the United States, the same thing for Gospel Apostolic Church as well as the Church of God Pentecostals. So the main doctrines that we are focusing on are born again experience, water baptism, as well as filled with the Holy Spirit. These are the main issues.

The previous question I could answer also. I'm closely associated with Pastor Ron Leech. Even now, for many years, I have a very close relationship with him. Pastor Ron is such a tremendous man. He's a man of God. There's no problem. I have even still a very good friendship with him. We go together for breakfast, lunch, things like that. I don't clearly see, unless he's clear, that there is a doctrinal difference. After all, if it isn't clearly mentioned in his letter, I can't see very much difference in the doctrinal issues. So it's not something like a cult or something that we are teaching here. It's just the pure word of God. Again, I can't see any point unless it has been clearly mentioned in his letter that we are different from his teaching. As long as I know Pastor Thanh and many of the other members, we here certainly believe the same doctrines like many of the Pentecostal teachings in Canada.

Thank you.

The Chair: All right. Thank you for that.

Dr. Massey.

Dr. Massey: Thanks, Madam Chairman. I have two questions, if I may, at this time. One is that in Rev. Leech's letter he alleges that Thanh is under investigation. You addressed it, but my first question is: what is the nature of the investigation? Then I have one for Ms Sprague if I may.

Mr. A. Nguyen: That paragraph is damaging without any evidence from Pastor Ron Leech, similar to other allegations. As I mentioned before, all the students who heard that the Forest Lawn Bible College is about to form submitted an application to come to Canada through the immigration office. With that, the immigration office came back to co-ordinate with the college, but it turned out that at this stage here the college has not been approved under the private act as yet. That's why I'm asking and that's why it's urgent for the private bill to be passed and supported so that it would not happen again. The investigation – the wording seems serious, but the point is that there's a need for the college to be established. Many people within Canada's communities, other people, they wish to come here to learn at the college, and that is how the problem arose.

10:05

Had the college been approved or had the bill been passed, we would not have this problem here. But the issue, the problem, has been corrected. The college has put a stop to any attempt or any prior wishes of the students to come here. There's one student from Zimbabwe and one application from Thailand. Those are two cases from two different countries that would like to come to Canada so much to study under a student visa and then go back to their homeland. However, that has been stopped now, and I urge you to approve this bill so that they can go on with their business.

Dr. Massey: Okay. So the immigration department wouldn't allow students into a college that Pastor Nguyen had claimed was an accredited college?

Mr. A. Nguyen: No. At no time did he claim it was an accredited college. The urge from the students was to come here early. They submitted an application. They wished to come to Canada to study at the college. At the point that they made application to Immigration Canada, the bill had not passed. Had the bill been passed, then there would not have been any problem at all.

Dr. Massey: If I may, Ms Sprague, what has been the rationale for the department not requiring program approval for colleges?

Ms Sprague: For divinity programs?

Dr. Massey: Yes.

Ms Sprague: By and large, these programs over the years have been programs that have been designed by specific religious groups to train people to teach in that particular faith, so the department has not interfered with the content, the feeling being that members of that faith are the individuals who would be best prepared to design a program of that nature.

Dr. Massey: Thank you.

Mr. Maskell: The college is operating now though; is it?

Mr. A. Nguyen: Pastor Thanh advised me that the college is in a slow mode of operation, by which I mean we don't want to have any further misunderstandings. At the present time two students study by correspondence and six are in the ESL program in preparation for the college. But we hoped that the bill would be passed so that they can have a full program that would be designed and worked on by many people in different communities.

In short, yes, it is but just in a very early stage, only two students in correspondence and six in the ESL program in preparation for that. Those students that are in the ESL program are students within Canada. They would like to be more active than at the present time, but everything is subject to this bill.

Mr. Maskell: In the letter from Pastor Leech it speaks of Pastor Nguyen being a recruiter for the college at one point, and then the students decided they wanted to go elsewhere. I'm assuming that they're at Forest Lawn now. So you have a total of eight students, and they're all international students, I'm assuming.

Mr. A. Nguyen: The two issues are different. The two things are different now.

Mr. Maskell: No. You don't have to answer that first part, but the eight students you have now are international students, the two and the six?

Pastor T. Nguyen: No. They are here.

Mr. A. Nguyen: They are not international students. They are not international students that I mentioned.

The word "recruiter" is – I'm a lawyer, so I'll put it like this – vicious. Okay? He passed the time. He is a refugee from Vietnam. Vietnam is very inhibiting of religious activities. Some of the

students wished to come to Canada as visa students to study here and to come back either in ESL or religion to participate in his ministry. Those students came – and that’s an encouragement of Canada to come here to study – to take the ESL program or learn English at Bow Valley College.

Mr. Thanh on their behalf put up the fee for them for Bow Valley College to keep as a requirement for the duration of study. When the students changed their minds for one reason or another, economics or fee-wise, they came to a different college. Bow Valley College, of course, would like to have those students remain there. They’re not happy and stated that those fees would remain at Bow Valley. They thought that would be serving the students well, but after a discussion with them they saw their point and released that money so that the students would not be confined in Bow Valley.

Mr. Maskell: “Recruiter” is not a vicious term. I mean, that’s a common term. Recruitment of international students is big business now. “Recruiter” is not a bad word. It’s a way of finding students.

In 3(a) it talks about secondary Christian education, you know, and it’s outside the faith-based part of the education, a reason why the students are attending this school. What about the Alberta program studies? These are secondary students. We’re talking about grades 7 to 12. Are they being taught the Alberta curriculum, and what’s the accreditation of the teachers? Is it all through correspondence courses? How’s it being done at the moment, and how will it be done in the future?

Mr. A. Nguyen: With respect, I believe you have three questions in that statement. The last one was the qualifications of the teachers. Is that correct, sir?

Mr. Maskell: Yes.

Mr. A. Nguyen: As you see here and as I introduced to you the teachers in this college, they have a bachelor degree from the ESL program to the main program. Okay?

The second question of yours is whether or not the seventh or eighth grade students come here to study and be granted the same degree?

10:15

Mr. Maskell: No. My question was: outside of the faith-based education they’re receiving – that’s the reason why they want to come to your school – you talk about, you know, the rest of it, the Alberta program of studies, their math, English, and so on, the courses that all Alberta students take. I mean, I’m assuming those are being taught.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Not by the college.

Mr. Maskell: So they’re being taught outside the college at another school?

Mr. A. Nguyen: It has to be outside. Yes, sir. The college has no intention or wish to interfere with the very creditable, well-designed program of Alberta Learning. Those are strictly by law. They have to be taught outside. The college here is looking – only a small angle and a small corner of that is divinity programs.

Mr. Maskell: But for your secondary students? Not the postsecondary, your secondary students. These are the grades 7 through 12 students. They’re only being taught religious studies,

nothing else?

Mr. A. Nguyen: Nothing else.

Mr. Maskell: But you talk about ESL.

Mr. A. Nguyen: ESL. Not everybody speaks English.

Mr. Maskell: Okay. Thank you. I’m confused with your answers.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yeah. They learn it. They pick up English.

Mr. Maskell: Ms Sprague, how does Alberta Learning, you know, check these things out, I guess, to put it simply?

Ms Sprague: If a private college wished to offer the Alberta curriculum at the secondary level, they would have to go through the department in order to become accredited to do so.

Mr. Maskell: The bill kind of alludes to that.

Ms Sprague: It does, yeah.

Mr. Maskell: Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I would just draw to everyone’s attention the time, and we have about five other people on the speaking list.

Ms Kryczka: Thank you for your presentation today. My thoughts are that I’m trying to understand the whole concept of what you are about. Pastor Joseph maybe said it well, and you said that it was multicultural, and this is what this whole thing, you know, is around. But I did hear an understanding statement about the Pentecostal doctrine, and I just also heard some answers that you don’t teach academics. You maybe teach some ESL for people who come from these many countries, but it’s to teach your ministry or your doctrine. That’s the main purpose? And people may be here already, or they may be international students and they may go back. I don’t know if that really concerns us here today. If I’ve said something wrong here, I’m just trying to understand what you are about. I do know that recruiting international students is big business. I used to be on the senate of U of C, and it’s important to them in the overall scheme of things to have a certain percentage of international students. So maybe that’s what happened with Bow Valley College, but that’s another issue.

What I would like to just really focus on – and my colleague Mr. Maskell did – is the qualifications of the teachers. The people you introduced – originally I heard you say of different countries and they have degrees. Are these people the teachers? That was really my question for you here but also for Alberta Learning. If you’re doing a review of the divinity programs, not so much the content, I would really want to see qualifications. Do we have standards for qualifications for the teachers? I guess my question really is around qualifications, whether it’s for you at the Bible college or Alberta Learning.

Ms Sprague: Would you like me to respond first?

The Chair: Yes, please.

Ms Sprague: With respect to the question of teacher qualifications for divinity programs, because these programs are excluded from the Universities Act, there is no regulation. There is no interaction between Alberta Learning and private colleges that offer divinity

degree programs, so the matter of teacher qualifications is not addressed.

Mr. A. Nguyen: From the view of the college, to be credible, the college has to have qualified teachers. The teachers here came from various ministries, and they've been teaching in the ministry in the community for a number of years. For example, Pastor View has a BA in leadership ministry. Pastor Joseph Alexander has a BA as well. Tamara Jorgic has a BA from her own country, the University of Novi Sad, as well. So the desire and the credibility of the college rests in the qualifications of the teachers, and they have that in their hearts and minds at all times.

The Chair: All right then. Mr. Lord, you are next on the list, but Mr. Pham has asked if he could perhaps address the committee and clarify some of the points that have been raised. Do you mind if he goes ahead?

Mr. Lord: He would do that first, please.

Mr. Pham: Thank you, Jon. I sense there's confusion among committee members about this issue, and I would like to offer some advice to committee members as the sponsor of the bill. Even though I had very little to do with the content of the bill itself, I believe that the petitioners have at one time or another been closely associated with the Evangel Bible College of Pastor Ron Leech, and that is where they got the idea from.

There were questions asked of the petitioners about: where were the graduates of the college going to be teaching? I think that is a good question. As a common practice in many ethnic communities, the Vietnamese community for example – in Calgary there are about 30,000 of them. They began settling in about 1979 and 1980. Since then there have been many pastors. There have been two or three pastors now like Pastor Thanh. What they do is set up their own church, and there is a great need for that because of the language barrier. A lot of the youngsters, younger than 25, can easily adapt to the new society and go to a regular church, but older people at the age of 50-plus who have a significant difficulty with language tend to go to the church that speaks their own language. That is where I find that many of the Vietnamese and Chinese and Indian pastors were able to set up their own churches. Some of them built their own churches. Some of them entered into an agreement with a local church to share their facility with them. So even though they don't have their own brand of church like we do in Canada, they do have a certain level of recognition among themselves for this kind of education.

Secondly, the issue of international students should be clarified as well. The world today is getting smaller and smaller. International students are very well aware of what options they have when they want to go and study abroad. They have many recruiters, like Bob mentioned, from big institutions going to different countries and recruiting students. There is a need for international students who want to study at a Bible college in Canada. In Canada we have freedom of religion, and we take that for granted, but in some countries, in Vietnam for example, religious freedom is oppressed. The government over there is very fearful of the evangelical church because they think that the church was set up by the CIA during the Vietnam war.

10:25

As we speak today, there is no official Bible college in Vietnam. Out of a population of 18 million people once in a while there are two or three or four people who want to study the Bible and want to

become pastors, and they have been doing that underground for so many years. The older pastors get to the age that many of them do not have the physical health to continue teaching anymore, so some of them try to go overseas to study, to get some basic knowledge, and they can go back and resume those works.

For us to think that those students who come to Canada – they already have the choice of whether they want to go to the U of C, to the U of A to study a regular program or to study a Bible program. I think that's up to them. The market forces will always work. If a Bible college is set up and is run properly, it will attract students. If it isn't run properly, if the students find that they don't get what they're looking for, they could go somewhere else.

The other issue of teaching doctrine contrary to Scripture. I personally feel that there is more of a difference in language. I know that Pastor Nguyen is an active pastor in the Vietnamese community, but I don't know if he can be considered today as a great preacher in English because of the language barrier. I think that because of that, there may be some confusion. There may be some differences in interpretation the way that he teaches and maybe the material that he teaches. I think that there is only one Bible. That Bible is translated into many languages, but it still has one source, that is the Bible. There are not two Bibles as far as I know.

Those are the comments that I offer the committee members, and I hope that it clarifies the situation a little bit.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pham. I think that was helpful to committee members.

Mr. Lord.

Mr. Lord: Thank you, Madam Chair. This certainly has been an interesting discussion, touching on a number of issues that we struggle with in our society. It appears to me that we have issues surrounding differences of opinion on doctrine and methods of teaching, perhaps centering around the charismatic, evangelical-type approach, but from what I gather – and I will be asking a question of Ms Sprague – we don't regulate that in this province. It would appear that regardless of what type of Bible college one wanted to set up, whether it be the Church of Scientology or Reverend Sun Myung Moon's evangelical movements or any other group that wanted to have a Bible college, it's completely unregulated and, therefore, this committee would have no basis to even discuss that. Am I correct in that assumption?

Ms Sprague: You're correct. In Alberta, as is common in a number of jurisdictions, there is not a regulation of degree programs that are in divinity.

Mr. Lord: So regardless of our opinions or personal beliefs or anything else it's not appropriate for this committee to make any decision on this on the basis of doctrine, methodology, or any criteria that relates to the actual course or content or methods of teaching them?

Ms Sprague: These are not matters that come under the auspices of Alberta Learning.

Mr. Lord: Right. The question I do have, though, is that because there have been questions of propriety in terms of perhaps being overly optimistic in holding out that there is a college in existence, it would appear that there are some issues that are being investigated there, and of course everyone has the right to be judged innocent until something has been proven.

I guess the only question in my mind is that if an organization in

Alberta which we had accredited had made representations as to the course content and the material and how it was going to be taught and a student from a foreign country paid a considerable sum of money to come over here and join this college and then it was determined that they were not happy with the methods of teaching and they wished to leave, do we have any provisions or regulations in the area of holding these moneys in trust or ensuring that the students that come over here to perhaps attend this or any other college are protected, I guess, in terms of what was represented to them that they would be taught as opposed to what in fact they found when they got here?

Ms Sprague: I'd like to offer just some information as a backdrop first. In Alberta recognition is given for educational activity on a program basis. So if the question is asked if a particular teaching institution is recognized or approved, that is a difficult question for Alberta Learning to respond to. There are mechanisms whereby programs are approved. It is possible for an institution to have degree-granting authority that took place through an order in council being passed. It is also possible for that same organization to be licensed under the Private Vocational Schools Act and offer vocational training, and at the same time the same institution, if it is of a religious denomination, can offer degrees in divinity that are not regulated at all. So I think the matter of someone, whether it's overseas or not, hearing that a particular institution is recognized by the Alberta government is a complex question. It's not simple, because approval is given on a program basis.

With respect to your question about someone endeavouring to come to this country because they understand that there is a program and then coming here and finding the program is not what they wish, there is no regulation in place for that.

Mr. Lord: That was my basic concern.

Mr. A. Nguyen: If I may. I do immigration work as well. There's a mechanism for that. The students who come here often change programs. For example, they come here to study at Bow Valley College, and they find that Bow Valley College only teaches ESL. Where they can get ESL and then move on to a technical program at SAIT, they do that. With a letter to immigration they get approval to change the program. The institution will act as if another student in Canada – the fee will be prorated or refunded according to their policy, and they move from institution to institution with the approval or the prior advising to immigration to change the institution. I haven't seen any time that immigration said no if they moved to a new school to fit their needs. When they come to Canada, there are so many programs open to them, so they often change that. If they would like to take mechanics instead of business admin, they change the program all the time from institution to institution. So that is the mechanism in the immigration regulations, and they approve that and protect them that way. It has to come from the students themselves though.

10:35

Mr. Lord: Okay. Thank you.

Well, it appears to me that the province has no role in what is approved or what would be done through an approval. It appears that we have no role in protecting the interests of any students but we are asked to give our stamp of approval to the entire process. That's what we've been doing, and everyone else has gone through this process, so it appears to me that this committee has little or no role to play other than to give the stamp of approval the way we've done in the past and the way that our legislation permits us to do

today.

The Chair: Well, if you're saying that we are, you know, bound to do that, I think our role is to investigate it. It's true; there's no legislation governing whether or not the conditions are established to agree to the incorporation of this private college, but that's what we are here to do, to investigate and use our best judgment in determining whether it would be a good idea, having heard and looked into all of the issues. I think – correct me if I'm wrong, Ms Dean or Ms Sprague – that in order for an institution to grant a degree in divinity, it needs to be a body corporate or a legal entity before it can do that.

Ms Dean: I can't comment specifically on that because degree programs in divinity, as Ms Sprague has said, are not regulated. There is no regulation that says that it must be a body corporate, but what I am hearing today is that this organization that Pastor Nguyen is leading is seeking some status as an entity, and the vehicle by which he's doing this is the private bill. So it's a substitute for being incorporated as a society or a corporation. I'm not sure if that answers your questions.

The Chair: That might be something that we will call on you to further investigate for us.

Mr. Lord: Could I just ask one more question, Madam Chair? Sorry.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Lord: To take time perhaps of our own counsel, if that's appropriate right now, are there any criteria whatsoever against which this application could be judged versus any others? If we did not want to proceed with this, on what basis, on what justification would we do so?

The Chair: I think, with respect, Mr. Lord, that would be something that we can take up when we, you know, deliberate.

Mr. Lord: Okay. I'll visit it at a different time.

The Chair: Certainly that is a legitimate question, and it goes to the heart of what we have to do. But I am mindful of the time that we have this morning, and I think we have exhausted the speakers list. I do have a few short questions, and I know Ms Dean has a question before we conclude. So I'll just list off my questions.

I recognize that strictly speaking it may not be necessary that Pastor Nguyen have a degree in divinity, but I would like to know Pastor Nguyen's credentials to teach divinity. I would also like to know who the other incorporators are, other than Pastor Nguyen, that are listed in the bill. I would like to know where Mr. Roberts is today, because we adjourned this hearing so that Mr. Roberts could attend, and I don't believe he is here. I would also like to know how many students you intend to enroll in the college and what the amount of tuition per term or per year is to be or is. Those are my questions.

Mr. A. Nguyen: The credentials of Pastor Nguyen that I provided earlier – since 1989 he has been a preacher of the words from the Bible. He advised me that he was a born-again person in that year and began doing the work of God. He has been very active in the Vietnamese community. He established the Vietnamese Alliance group, which now has over 200 members. He was an adviser to the

newcomers at the Mennonite centre. He established the Vietnamese Alliance Church in Nanaimo, B.C. prior to attending Rocky Mountain College. During that time he worked and took courses and participated part-time with the Mennonite ministry.

The Chair: Mr. Nguyen, it's been suggested – and I think it's a good idea – that perhaps you could provide Pastor Nguyen's résumé or CV or the equivalent to the committee in writing and the answers to the other questions that I had. We all are required, or most of us, to be at a meeting at 11, and I don't want to cut you short on providing a full answer. So if you could do that, we would appreciate it.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yes, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Ms Dean also has a question that may or may not lend itself to a written answer, but go ahead, Ms Dean.

Ms Dean: These are questions for the petitioner's counsel. You've provided us today with what appears to be five different documents. I've had a very quick look at them. I have a sense as to what the first three documents are, as they appear to relate to the dispute with Bow Valley College and the petitioner. There is a fourth document called "Agreement to Manage Joint Account." I'm not quite sure how that relates to the petition. Lastly, there is a letter that seems to be a letter in support of Pastor Nguyen. It makes a recommendation for some entity called the International School of Ministry. I'm not sure that that name has come up yet today, but perhaps you can itemize and describe each of these documents in further detail in writing for the committee.

Mr. A. Nguyen: We'll do that now.

The Chair: All right. That being the case and it would appear that everyone has had an opportunity to question the petitioners, on behalf of all of the members of the committee I would like to thank you for attending before us today and for your patience in answering our questions. It has been a full hearing, and we will look forward to receiving the answers to the last questions in writing. We're scheduled to meet one week from today to make our decision on this matter, so we would ask that you get this material to Ms Dean just as quickly as possible so that we can have it in advance of next Tuesday.

Mr. A. Nguyen: Yes.

The Chair: Ms Dean.

Ms Dean: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I could ask that if at all possible we receive that information by close of business on

Thursday in order that I can circulate it to members of the committee in advance of the meeting on Tuesday morning.

Mr. A. Nguyen: We will do that.

The Chair: Okay. Just briefly before we conclude here today, as I mentioned, we will be meeting as a committee next Tuesday to review and consider the evidence that we've heard today and consider the merits of the bill. The committee can do one of three things: either recommend to the Legislature that the bill proceed as is, as presented, or with amendments – there has been an amendment suggested, and I understand that the petitioner agrees with that amendment – and the third option is to recommend that the bill not proceed.

10:45

So those are the options. We will advise you soon after our meeting next Tuesday of our decision. If the bill is to proceed, it will be recommended as such to the Legislature, and then the bill would proceed through the usual stages of a public bill. It's already received first reading, so it would go to second reading, to Committee of the Whole, to third reading, and if it passes all of those stages, then it would receive royal assent in due course.

Thank you, Pastor Nguyen, Mr. Nguyen, Pastor Alexander, and all other members of the delegation. Thank you for your attendance, and Ms Sprague, as well.

Mr. A. Nguyen: On behalf of the petitioners and the delegation from the Forest Lawn Bible College we thank you so kindly for your time, your attention, and giving us your consideration in this process. I thank you very much.

The Chair: You're very welcome. Thank you.

Dr. Massey, you're moving that we adjourn?

Dr. Massey: Yes.

The Chair: Everybody agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: All right. I hear no dissent, so we'll adjourn, and we will see you all here next Tuesday at 9 a.m.

[The committee adjourned at 10:47 a.m.]