

Second Session – Forty-First Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Human Resources

Chairperson
Mr. James Teitsma
Constituency of Radisson

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
BINDLE, Kelly	Thompson	PC
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
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LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
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MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
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SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	St. Paul	PC
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WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC
YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

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

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson)

VICE - CHAIRPERSON – Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Gerrard, Schuler, Wishart

Mr. Lagassé, Ms. Marcelino, Messrs. Michaleski, Micklefield, Ms. Morley-Lecomte, Messrs. Swan, Teitsma, Wiebe

APPEARING:

Mr. Wab Kinew, MLA for Fort Rouge

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Mr. Nick Brown, Brandon University Students' Union

Ms. Whitney Hodgins, private citizen

Mr. Drew Caldwell, private citizen

Mr. Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

Mr. Dele Ojewole, private citizen

Mr. Wayne Chacun, Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union

Mr. Michael Barkman, private citizen

Ms. Tanjit Nagra, University of Manitoba Students' Union

Mr. John Prystanski, Westland Foundation

Mr. Darrell Rankin, Communist Party of Canada–Manitoba

Ms. Megan Linton, private citizen

Ms. Laura Garinger, University of Winnipeg Students' Association

Mr. Niall Harney, private citizen

Ms. Brianne Goertzen, private citizen

Mr. Matt McLean, private citizen

Ms. Sadie-Phoenix Lavoie, private citizen

Mr. Peyton Veitch, private citizen

Mr. Coty Zachariah, Canadian Federation of Students

Ms. Annie Beach, private citizen

Ms. Lauren Webster, private citizen

Ms. Ayla Hamilton, private citizen

Ms. Allison Kilgour, University of Manitoba Students' Union

Mr. Patrick Harney, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Krystal Kayne, private citizen

Lonnie Patterson, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 31–The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

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

Our first item of business is the election of a Vice-Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): I would like to nominate Mr. James Teitsma–[interjection]

Let's go with–

Clerk Assistant: No. Mr. Teitsma has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): I would like to nominate Ms. Morley-Lecomte.

Clerk Assistant: All right, so I now have Ms. Morley-Lecomte also as a nomination. Is that okay? All right.

All those in favour of Mr. Teitsma as Chairperson, please raise your hand. [interjection] I'm doing the election of the Chairperson right now.

An Honourable Member: We haven't nominated for Chair yet.

Clerk Assistant: I know, I'm doing that. I'm doing the Chair—we will start this from the top.

Our first item of business is the election of a Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Micklefield: I would like to nominate Mr. Teitsma.

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

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

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

Mr. Bob Lagassé (Dawson Trail): Like to nominate the member from Seine River.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morley-Lecomte has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing no nominations, Ms. Morley-Lecomte is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider Bill 31, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

I would like to remind the committee that the Standing Committee on Human Resources will meet again tomorrow, Thursday, October 26, at 6 p.m., to continue consideration of Bill 31.

As per an agreement between the House leaders, a set number of presenters were scheduled to present at tonight's committee meeting, so we will hear from 28 of the presenters registered to speak on Bill 31, and you have those list—that list of presenters before you.

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

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): I think, as per our past practice, and keeping in mind how far some of our presenters have travelled tonight to present to us, I would suggest that we consider the out-of-town presenters first.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for that suggestion. Is that agreed? *[Agreed]*

Then we will proceed in that manner.

We've also received written submissions on Bill 31 from the following persons, and those have been received and distributed to committee members: namely, from Krystal Kayne and from Lonnie Patterson.

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

Now, before we proceed with the presentations, we do have another—a number of other items, rather, to—and points of information to consider.

First of all, if there is anyone else in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with the staff at the entrance to the room. Please note that additional presentations will only be heard if time permits after hearing from those previously listed for this evening.

Also, 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 at the back of the room.

As well, in accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentation, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. And if the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

I would like to remind the members of the public who are observing the committee meeting to please not disturb the committee proceedings by applauding or commenting from the audience.

And taking of photographs are not permitted from the public gallery, as well as any audio-video recordings. So please ensure your phones also are on silent mode.

* (18:10)

Now, prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's

name. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Bill 31—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Mr. Chairperson: So thank you for your patience and we will now proceed with public presentations.

I'll now call on Nick Brown, from the Brandon University Students' Union.

Thank you, Mr. Brown. Do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Nick Brown (Brandon University Students' Union): No, nothing this time.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Brown: Hi, everyone. Thank you very much for letting me speak here today.

My name is Nick Brown, I'm the president of the Brandon University Students' Union. This is my fourth year on the students' union. I'm now the longest serving executive there and I'd like to speak very much against Bill 31, as I feel it adversely affects students and is punitive on students, to the detriment of the students. And it does not—it does not fix any of the issues budgetarily that the university has, especially at Brandon, but across Manitoba.

Over the last 19 years, we've really enjoyed significant protections from—started with the NDP, with the 10 per cent reduction in tuition. And then the introduction of the act as it stands, increasing at the rate of inflation. And that has meant that our tuition has been stable and—has been stable for a very long time. And so it's very predictable as to the amount of tuition that students are going to pay every year and especially over the course of their degree.

This bill takes that very stable 1.3, 1.4 per cent that we've seen and takes it to a 6 and a half per cent. And that doesn't include the deregulation of the course fees, which universities will take and just—they will meddle with them and increase fees as they see fit to further detriment of students.

This bill doesn't only affect domestic students at Brandon University, who would see over the course of a degree from a \$6,300 year in tuition to an \$8,700 year, but it doubly affects our international students, who are here and they currently pay about \$13,000. And with this bill—\$13,000 a year. And with this bill, over the course of their degree—if they started next year, their tuition could be in

the range of \$20,000. And that is ridiculous. That's—students coming to Brandon University, primarily undergraduate arts university, would be forced to pay tuition fees that we see in professional schools and med schools in Manitoba and across this country.

It also significantly harms our indigenous students at Brandon University. We've—just about 10 per cent of our student population identifies as indigenous, and those students who are funded through programs like the PSSSP and other sponsorships, those dollars are not increasing at the same rate as this tuition—as this bill would cause tuition to. And so we would see—out of—if we had 50 students coming next year to Brandon University, 50 indigenous students from the PSSSP next year, the year after that might be 48 and 45 and 40. And those students who took a year or two, suddenly their education is cut short and they're simply left to their own devices to attempt to find funding to take on multiple jobs, to go to university. And that's just ridiculous and punitive on those students who are most in need, that they would suddenly be not able to finish an education, not able to better themselves. And I—once again, we'd kick it down a generation that—if this generation isn't educated, the next one is less likely to be, and all the way down.

This bill—increasing tuition by 6 and a half per cent a year is also massively punitive on our domestic students who are already working way more than they were 10, 15, 20 years ago. A lot of them are working two or three part-time jobs, more than 50 hours a week during the school year. And some of those students are—at Brandon, especially—the health studies and education students who are already working practicums out in the schools, out in the hospitals, working to be professionals in this province who, suddenly, are taking on three part-time jobs, working 50 hours a week, minimum wage, and are not able to fund the education that they're trying to get so they can go to being a full-time professional in their field of interest.

The flip side to the 6 and a half per cent increase to tuition is also the zero per cent increase that we received last year as a university to the operating grant. Brandon University needs \$2.3 million next year to balance our budget without any cuts to programs, to professors. This year we left five positions vacant through attrition; five professorships are vacant through attrition. Next year we're proposing to leave 10 positions vacant through attrition. And we're very lucky that we've been able to find those positions at Brandon University, but the

year after that and the years following that, if we're having to take five positions left vacant year after year, that means that departments are not able to fill enough positions to then run enough courses to allow students to finish their degrees that they started.

At Brandon University, most of our departments are three—have three professors in them: two professors and then the chair. And that chair rotates every couple of years. But, suddenly, if we have only two profs in a department, they're only able to cover six courses between the two of them in a year. That is not enough courses for students to take to finish a four-year degree in chemistry, biology, history. That is not enough professors to teach those courses, to—so the students can finish. And suddenly they're being pushed back a year while they're working more just to afford the tuition that they need to pay to go to university to get a degree that they might be able to get in six or seven years if those delays happen.

This bill is the worst attack on students in 20 years in this province, and I encourage you to recommend its defeat. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I'd like to thank you for coming in tonight and expressing your opinion. This is all part of democracy. In Manitoba, we are one of the few provinces that still provides the opportunity to have a public input in the bill process. And I do wish you safe travels back to Brandon tonight as the forecast is a little uncertain. Thank you.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Mr. Brown, for your presentation. Nice to see you again. Hopefully, you found a good parking spot. I saw him outside before committee started.

I think that public hearings are great for democracy, but it really only becomes democracy if the government listens to the things that they're told when they consult with the public.

So I'm curious to know, you know, government talks about consultation. What was the message that you shared when government reached out to you around tuition?

Floor Comment: The government did not reach out to us around tuition. We were—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, that was my bad—thank you, Mr. Kinew.

Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown: The government did not reach out to us about this Bill 31 or generally anything. We've not seen this current government speak to us about anything since the election. Last—that was last time that we saw them on campus talking about MSBI and Manitoba bursaries and scholarships initiative. But through the board of governors at Brandon University, we had our normal budget consultations with the deputy minister of Education, but that was the only government contact that I had about these tuition increases and about Bill 31.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Yes, I just wanted to take a quick second just to also thank you, Nick, for coming in. Really appreciate your perspective from BU and getting to hear the perspective of the students there and especially you as being, as you said, the longest serving executive member. It sounds like you had some insight not only into the student body and the concerns that they have, but also sort of the inner workings of the university and some of the pressures that they feel. So I just wanted to take that opportunity to thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Brown, did you want to respond?

Mr. Brown: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions?

Okay, seeing none, then we'll move on to the next presentation. Thank you very much.

* (18:20)

The next presenter that we have, going first through the out-of-towners, is Whitney Hodgins.

Whitney, do you have any materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Whitney Hodgins (Private Citizen): No, it's all oral.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Hodgins: All right.

Hello, tansi, bonjour. I am Whitney Hodgins. I am marked as a private citizen, but on the off chance, I am also the accessibility director of BUSU. My role is I advocate for people, particularly students with

disabilities. And part of that role is realizing how such things as Bill 31 will impact them. And so today, I am here speaking against Bill 31 because it—Bill 31 creates barriers to students with accessibility needs on a variety of different levels.

It's a very intricate thing. First of all, students with accessibility needs have costs associated with their education. Not just their tuition, but things that they will need such as digital software, alternative formats, having a note-taker in the classroom—things that sometimes don't get covered and so it comes out of our pockets as a result. Furthermore, this also comes into play for things like medications, wheelchairs, crutches.

So it goes to say that accessibility and Bill 31 is a huge barrier. But to pull more onto the intricacy of it is, if students cannot afford their education, we cannot afford to have things like specialists, therapists, doctors, nurses—things that we with accessibility needs depend on. And these needs will not simply go away overnight. They will continuously be there and, you know, it's something that we need to really consider.

On the plus side, people with accessibilities diversify the workforce. We see things in different perspectives. We also see things in terms of—how do I put this? We see things from a different perspective and a different light. With that being said, without a proper education, we will not be able to diversify the workforce, and that's not only hindering people with accessibilities, but it's hindering society as a whole.

It—we also passed a legislation within the last few years called the accessibility of Manitobans act. With Bill 31 being put into place, it almost in a way contradicts the accessibility of Manitobans act in that the accessibility of Manitobans act says we need to provide access to people with accessibility needs. How are we providing access if we are not providing things like bursaries and grants and scholarships with people with disabilities? And particularly BU; we're a small university. Whenever I go and look on the scholarship and bursaries website we have, there are none in regards to students with disabilities.

So we are partially put at a disadvantage in that regard because now we're in a pool of people with 3.5 GPAs, 4.0 GPAs, the dean's list. It goes on and on. But if this bill passes, I just think overall it would be a hindrance to everyone, not just people with accessibilities, but everyone as a whole. And that's really all I have to say in just—I don't mean to take 10 minutes, but that's the gist of it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much, Whitney, for coming in and expressing your opinion tonight. It's particularly important to hear from someone representing the community with disabilities. I think they have some special concerns, and I'm very pleased to—that you came in to express your opinion and be part of the democratic process here in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Wishart.

Further questions?

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, Ms. Hodgins, for your presentation. Also, thank you for the work that you do on the Brandon University campus to make it a safer space for people with accessibility needs.

You—the argument, like, as I understand it, is that there's numerous barriers that people with disabilities face and I guess tuition would be one of those barriers and that increasing the cost of tuition too quickly might put post-secondary further and further out of reach for people with disabilities. And, you know, I take seriously your argument that if we want our workforce to be inclusive of those with accessibility needs that we should make education inclusive as well so that there's educational attainment and then people can find role-jobs in the broader economy.

What have you been seeing over the past number of years in terms of strides that are being made? Are we making progress in terms of being more inclusive? Like, would this be a turning of the tide, or would this be, I guess, just a continuation of what you've seen?

Ms. Hodgins: I feel with the AMA it was a huge win for people with accessibility needs. I myself have an accessibility need and I got to sit for the first time with my university last year and hash out new policies, particularly for students with accessibility needs to break down those barriers. With that being said, we are a long way from being anything but inclusive. We have a long ways to go, I understand that, but I feel like with Bill 31, it would put that objective out of reach, most definitely.

Mr. Andrew Swan (Minto): Yes, Ms. Hodgins, thank you very much for presenting to us tonight. I've had the chance to work with a few graduates of Brandon University, including my friend Jennifer

Howard, who, as you know, has a physical disability and wound up serving as a Cabinet minister in our government and I hope you'll continue to be active.

You came very close to saying it, but I just want to ask you the question very bluntly: Do you believe that Bill 31 and the tuition increases that will come along with it will mean that some students of Brandon University with a physical disability will be unable to continue their education?

Ms. Hodgins: Absolutely. It would hinder us greatly. It's very hard for people with accessibility needs to access education at all, and so for those few of us that do manage to get into programs and into student accessibility services to get the help that we need to be able to be successful, it's a very long road to get to that point, to walk across that podium as a graduate, and Bill 31 would prevent that from happening for a lot of different individuals from a lot of different spectrums, as it were.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions from the committee? Hearing none, I thank you for your presentation and we will now move to the next presenter.

Continuing with the out-of-town presenters, the next presenter is Drew Caldwell.

Do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee, Mr. Caldwell?

Mr. Drew Caldwell (Private Citizen): No, I don't, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Caldwell: First, I want to take this opportunity to thank the committee for allowing this opportunity to appear before you. As was previously noted, Manitoba's one of the only jurisdictions in Canada that still has this process for the public to weigh in on bills, and it's something that we should cherish as part of the fundamentals of democracy in this province, so it is a privilege to be here and I want to acknowledge that.

I'm going to address this issue with a bit of a personal perspective of myself. I'm the son of a disabled vet and his wife, both of whom—a World War II vet, just to age me a bit—neither of whom had an education outside of junior high school. I grew up in a family of five in a four-room apartment. I didn't realize that we were poor when I was growing up because we had a very good family dynamic, so I didn't have an understanding about money and

what—how money can allow people greater access to programs and opportunities than the absence of money, which is oftentimes a hindrance, in fact, not oftentimes, pretty much always is a hindrance to taking advantage of programs.

* (18:30)

So, when I grew up, first person in my family to have a high school diploma, and then the first person in my family to be able to go to university, it was a real privilege for me to go to university, and I worked really hard to be able to afford to go to university. My family worked really hard to be able to allow me to go to university, and in the event my two brothers and myself all obtained university educations against the odds. That was fundamentally because we worked very hard as kids to have jobs and also because we had a good student loan program back in the late '70s. And, third, we had a very supportive family and I was fortunate enough to live in Brandon and get my undergraduate degree from Brandon University with the university being five blocks, four, five blocks from the house I grew up in. So everything was okay for me, notwithstanding the fact that we weren't a family of means.

So, when I went to Brandon University as a young man, 1978 is when I entered Brandon University, and I should add we've had two people from BUSU here. I was also president of the Brandon University Student Union back in those days, and appeared before committees here at that time with three other governments, Sterling Lyons's government, Howard Pawley's government and Gary Filmon's government.

When I entered university, I wasn't particularly political, although my father being a World War II veteran always instilled in his boys that paying attention to politics was very important. It was important because from his perspective decisions were—life-or-death decisions were being made during his generation by political figures of the day, and economic decisions that could advantage or disadvantage people. So politics and paying attention to politics and participating in democracy was something that was always—always had a high value placed upon it in our household.

So, once I got to university I understood that I came from a fairly—a family of fairly modest means because you're surrounded with people in a university environment that are oftentimes from not that demographic, because of tuition policy primarily

and the ability to take time out of earning a living or having a family support you to be able to attend a post-secondary institution.

I very quickly became politicized when I was at Brandon University in 1978-79 when tuition started to go through the roof. Very similar policies to this premier of the day, Sterling Lyon implemented sweeping changes to all sorts of policies around the province that were detrimental and harmful to people, particularly of lower and modest incomes. And I was hit by that forcefully in my first two years of university with tuition going up, ancillary cost going up, supports declining, the same sort of constellation that we're dealing with now today in this Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act, and I was politicized.

And, you know, I speak to the students that are here today that it's important to be engaged in politics and be politicized because things like this bill and other bills have a direct impact on individual lives and the lives of families and communities. When they are undertaken those impacts can be beneficial or they can be detrimental. And in 1978-79, when tuition essentially doubled over the four years of the Lyon administration, it politicized me and it politicized a lot of people in my cohort at the University of Winnipeg, at the University of Manitoba and at Brandon University, as well as the collège and community colleges throughout the province.

Brandon's got-home to Brandon University and Assiniboine Community College. So there's two post-secondary institutions that are very dear and dear to me as a citizen of Brandon, and this will have a huge impact on the ability of folks from rural Manitoba that have to come into the city to go to school and folks from the city of Brandon itself, an area that are of modest means and are barely making ends meet now to get to university.

So I was politicized. I took a party card out with the NDP in 1978-79, '77 or in that-'78 I guess it would be and worked really hard to try and change the government of the day, because of this issue specifically as how it hit me as a student.

That government was a one-term government. There was a sigh of relief amongst university students, college students, throughout the province when that government changed and we started to get some more progressive tuition policies in place again.

Fast forward 20 years, maybe a little bit longer than 20—about 20 years, 25 years—1999, I was the minister of Education in this province when we were elected in September '99, I was appointed minister of Education. Best job I had in my life. Minister Wishart, I hope you enjoy it; it's a great job. It's—education's the foundation for our economic development of our province, for our social cohesion as a province, for our healthy province. It really is fundamental to the individual people's lives, but, more importantly, to the fabric of our society in Manitoba and how we as a society, as a province, build this beautiful and wonderful province that we have in Manitoba.

So I'm very, very bullish on education and I'm very bullish on making and advocating for the widest opportunities for post-secondary educational attendance in—for Manitobans. And this is where this bill fails us horribly by putting up boundaries, particularly for low-income Manitobans, but for everybody to attend. Tuition fees can be raised annually by 5 per cent plus inflation. Then you're looking at 7 per cent increase, 8 per cent increase, 6 and a half per cent increase, roughly 30 per cent, 40 per cent over the course of a student that's in the university now, over the course of their term as an undergraduate student. The bill removes restrictions for course-related fees, which is on top of the tuition. It allows for the deregulation of ancillary fees, which, again, is a cost driver for students.

The provisions in this bill will have a negative effect on enrolment in our post-secondary educations, and it'll have a negative effect on people—on individual's lives for now, throughout their entire lives.

I know that when I was the minister responsible for freezing tuition in 1999 and implementing a 10 per cent cut in 1999, which was the regime for four years, and Manitoba had a very, very low tuition—

Mr. Chairperson: One minute.

Mr. Caldwell: —policy. And that drove enrolment. And our critics said, well, it drove enrolment broadly speaking; it didn't focus on specifically low income. That's a plus. The more people we can have attend post-secondary education in the province, the better individuals are that are attending and the better our province as a whole will be. So I can't speak enough about how this bill is harmful to our post-secondary system and harmful to the lives of Manitoba students, and I would urge the government to

withdraw this legislation and engage in consultations with the students and the student organizations in the province to get a policy that does meet the needs of Manitoba students. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Caldwell.

Are there any questions from members of the committee?

Mr. Kinew: I thank you, Mr. Caldwell, for presenting to us tonight. Always cool to hear about stories from the Doer years.

What was the rationale used to pursue the tuition freeze at the time?

Mr. Caldwell: Well, we took the view that first the increases that had gone on over the course of the Filmon government had seen a decline in participation at our post-secondary institutions. That was a trend that we wanted to arrest. So that was one of the drivers for a low-tuition policy. Secondly, we wanted to increase not just arrest the decline in participation, but increase participation across the system, across the post-secondary system, the college system and the university system. And we saw advice on—by the Canadian Federation of Students—a low-tuition policy as being a, probably the key driver in increasing participation. And, in fact, that is what happened. We had a significant spike in enrolment over the next number of years. Critics took us to task for the fact that the increase in participation was across all income sectors, high income, middle income and low income, which is, you know, a legitimate criticism if you're just focused on the low-income group. But we wanted all Manitobans to benefit from this policy, and, in fact, all Manitobans did benefit from this policy and the post-secondary institutions themselves benefited from increasing their capacity at the schools throughout the province.

* (18:40)

So it was basically an economic development strategy to get young people back into the post-secondary system and to enhance participation levels across the board, and it did succeed in that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Caldwell.

Mr. Kinew: Just to clarify, you listened to the students at the time, and you listened to student voices, and that helped to design tuition policy in the government.

Mr. Caldwell: That's exactly right. We'd undertaken to consult with the Canadian Federation of Students pre-election, 1998, 1999. We were involved in a number of significant consultations and dialogues with student leaders throughout the province. And, in fact, when we came into office, some of the CFS folks joined the government as staffers, and they were—CFS was really instrumental in helping us determine this policy.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Caldwell.

Mr. Wiebe: Just very quickly, you know, I appreciate, Mr. Caldwell, your personal take on the story and your personal experience, and I guess it just strikes me that, you know, for the student leaders that are in the room here today, to see your path as a student leader, you know, advocating for tuition, advocating for accessibility for students, and then to, you know, eventually be in this House, to sit in this House and to actually be the Minister of Education, I just—it just strikes me that that's probably a pretty inspiring story, not just for all of us here, but especially for the students who are just getting involved and taking the time to be here tonight to participate in democracy and follow that path themselves. So I just wanted to thank you for coming out, for sharing your personal story here tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Would you like to respond, Mr. Caldwell? Yes, go ahead.

Mr. Caldwell: Thank you very much for that, Matt. I appreciate that. And I can't stress enough how important it is for people to engage in politics. You know, it is so important in our democracy to be active and actively engaged.

And, again, it is lessons my father told me when I was a kid, but it's important for student leaders that are here tonight: 1978, 1979, I was in the same position here, with some hair, as a young person, basically arguing the same points I'm doing right now, so '88, '98—30 years later. Some things—this is—this was an important issue to fight for in 1978, '79. It's equally if not more important to do it today. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Any additional questions from the committee?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Caldwell, for coming in, and I—must feel a little like déjà vu in many ways coming back to present from the other side of committee, from your point.

It's certainly interesting to hear your history in terms of motivation, and I know that there are many other people that follow somewhat similar paths in terms of being motivated by particular issues.

While you were in government, the issue of debt became an—has raised its head quite a bit. And that is a cause for concern for a number of people as well, and I know that that motivates not only from a student debt point of view, because I know it costs money to go to school—particularly if you're rural or remote, it costs money, without a doubt—but it also costs money to accumulate debt and leave that to the next generation.

Do you feel comfortable that the next generation should pay for the cost of post-secondary education?

Mr. Chairperson: I'll just ask you to answer quickly. Our time is very short in question period, but I will give you an opportunity to respond.

Mr. Caldwell: I think that it's important for governments to operate the same way we do as families in terms of managing our debt and making priorities in terms of party decisions. Education is the top priority moving forward. You don't have a choice in terms of health-care management, although there's choices being made right now that are causing a lot of discussion. But education is—it is fundamental to actualizing individuals' lives and fundamental to actualizing the full potential of communities and provinces and nations.

So discretionary removals of support from education are fundamentally short-sighted and fundamentally damaging to the future prosperity of the province. So, in answer to your question, education's the best investment we can make as a province. It's the best investment we can make as a society, and this is removing investment from the public education system, not building it.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you, Mr. Caldwell. Our time is up.

We'll now proceed to the next presenter.

Continuing with the out-of-town presenters, call Kevin Rebeck from the Manitoba Federation of Labour. Good of you to arrive only a few moments ago.

Do you have written materials for distribution to the committee?

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

Mr. Chairperson: Very good. I ask you to proceed with that presentation.

Mr. Rebeck: Great. Thank you. The Manitoba Federation of Labour is the central labour body representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers. We stand in solidarity with Manitoba's post-secondary students in opposing Bill 31, as it will erase long-standing protections for students to keep post-secondary education affordable and it will open the door to even higher costs on students for university and college courses by deregulating course-related fees.

This bill will enable tuition fees to rise 5 per cent plus inflation every year. That means that over the course of a typical four-year undergraduate degree students in Manitoba will see their tuition jump by over 30 per cent.

When you factor in the additional course-related fees that this government's allowing schools to charge, that figure rises to 40 per cent over four years.

In speaking to the legislation when it was introduced, the minister called these modest increases. I'm not sure what average Manitoba family would see the cost of bills increasing by up to 40 per cent over four years as a modest increase.

For many years Manitoba's post-secondary students have been supported through relatively affordable costs for tuition when compared with other students in Canada. Although Manitoba's tuition and course-related fees from 1990 to 2000 were around the national average, in the early 2000s the Province froze tuition fees, then implemented a 10 per cent rollback and resumed the freeze at the lowest levels in Canada, after Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Following that, legislation was passed that limited tuition increase to no more than the rate of inflation on an annual basis. This support for making education more affordable was furthered through the Manitoba Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate program, which provided up to \$25,000 in rebates to any post-secondary graduate who chose to build their future here in Manitoba, allowing them to pay off their debt, save for a down payment or buy a car.

Unfortunately, government has announced plans to eliminate tuition fee rebates next year, which will remove over \$50 million in savings opportunities for post-secondary graduates.

Post-secondary education's becoming increasingly important in today's workforce and will continue to be in the future. The MFL believes that government should work with colleges and universities to lower barriers to entry, not enact new ones.

The evidence is clear. Post-secondary education is a path to good jobs, considerably higher lifetime earnings, and a better quality of life.

Education is a great equalizer and one of the most reliable ways for building a bright future for workers and our economy, yet in this time of sharply rising income inequality and increasingly precarious work for young people, this government's making post-secondary education less accessible to Manitobans. This is both unfair and unjust.

According to the Canadian Federation of Students, the average Manitoba student carries \$20,000 in education-related debt after completing an undergraduate degree. It takes graduates eight to 10 years on average to pay that debt off. Higher debt levels result in graduates having to delay major life decisions like starting a business, buying a house, or starting a family, all of which negatively impacts our provincial economy.

Statistics Canada analysis shows that student debt continues to affect Canadians' finances long after graduation, with borrowers less likely to have savings and investments and less likely to own homes.

As mentioned, for nearly two decades, our province had a relatively progressive view on tuition costs, and these policies kept fees affordable and essentially assured that tuition fees did not increase beyond the overall increase in the cost of living.

The upfront cost of college and university education can pose a major barrier to accessing higher education and skills training for students from low and middle-income families.

Students from a lower income background continue to be underrepresented in universities despite the availability of student loans and bursaries. There are already too many families and young people in Manitoba that are facing difficulties trying to make ends meet.

Increasing tuition by over 5 per cent annually and opening the door to a free-for-all unregulated increase to additional course-related fees will add

hundreds of dollars to the yearly bill for post-secondary students and their families.

The conventional argument that students are heavily subsidized because tuition fees do not cover the full cost of their education misses an important way in which students repay the cost of their education through higher taxes they pay over their working life after they graduate.

*(18:50)

We know that higher education has a clear impact on higher earnings of graduates over their careers relative to workers who've not graduated from a post-secondary program. In other words, education is a sound financial investment for our public dollars, which benefits our province as a whole.

One of the best guarantees on having a successful economy over the next few decades is ensuring that Manitoba has a well-educated and well-trained workforce. This government should be making it easier for young people to access the skills and training they'll need to afford successful careers for themselves and their families, not harder.

To add to the increased financial pressures being placed on the back of students and families, this government has already legislated that Manitoba's minimum wage will not be enough to lift those who are earning it out of the poverty line. We know that the mint-stereotype of minimum wage earners being overwhelmingly lung-young people are not true, but it is the case that 37 per cent of minimum wage earners in Manitoba are students. At the same time the government's adding hundreds of additional costs on students every year, they're also ensuring that students who work minimum wage will continue to work for poverty wages. This is compounded by the fact that young workers are dealing with exceptionally high rates of unemployment or underemployment, and have been for many years. Precarious work is a major concern for many young people and their families, and this issue requires more investment in job training and employment opportunities for young people. That's why Canada's unions have called for a national job strategy and a living wage of \$15 an hour to create more opportunities and support for young people to get ahead in today's economy.

This government's approach heads in the wrong direction when it comes to supporting young Manitobans to build bright futures here at home.

Thank you.

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

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, Mr. Rebeck, for your presentation.

You sort of touched on this briefly, but I'm wondering if you can speak a bit more about the changing nature of work in our economy, the changing nature of jobs in our province and how increasing the barriers to getting a post-secondary education will impact the lives of young people as we move into a knowledge economy, a digital economy.

Mr. Rebeck: We hear from all levels of government, including this one, that we need to have a well-trained workforce, that that's going to build a solution for making sure that we grow our economy and drive it. You don't build an economy by cuts, you build it by investing and making smart investments. And there's no smarter investment than making sure our future workforce has the skills and training that they need to succeed. And we only do that by making sure that we're backing that up and getting more people through our post-secondary education system, not less.

This bill puts more financial barriers that limit the ability for young people to access education in our province, and we think it's wrong.

Mr. Chairperson: Additional questions from the committee?

Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Rebeck, for your presentation.

We'll now call the next presenter. Continuing with the out-of-town presenters, Dele Ojewole. I hope I didn't butcher that too much. You can correct me.

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

Mr. Dele Ojewole (Private Citizen): No, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Ojewole: Hello, good evening, everyone. My name is Dele Ojewole. That's correct.

I'm here to speak—I'm a student at the University of Winnipeg. I'm a final year computer science student and I'm also the deputy chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students. I'm here to speak against Bill 31.

Bill 31 is a catastrophic and cruel bill that will—eliminates the cap tuition increase that rates of inflation. Talking from a personal perspective, Bill 31 will have a negative effect on the lives of Manitoba students who are already struggling with the high cost of post-secondary education in the province.

After many months of student consultation by Canadian Federation of Students MB, we can categorically say that—with a high level of certainty, that Manitoba students cannot—once again, cannot afford an increase in tuition while many of them are already working multiple jobs while studying full time. You know, to have to fund the education.

From the eradication of tuition tax rebate to increasing tuition by 5 per cent with the rate of inflation, students has never had as bad in this province. Nowadays, most students graduate with crippling student loans debt. They cannot afford to down—to put a down payment on a house. They're looking to get a job at a—that's relevant to their degree with a salary that honours their education.

So, instead of encouraging students to graduate, to stay in Manitoba, to grow the economy, the government proposal is taking away incentives for university educated people to stay in the province, to create a positive change, to deliver well-trained skills to the workforce.

Even with the current rate of tuition, students like myself who are funding education are struggling, knowing the job market is strangling and the student debt is rising. I'm a domestic student with over \$22,000 in debt, in student-loan debts. Many international students in Manitoba will have triple that amount of that debt of the average domestic student.

On numerous occasions, the government has justified Bill 31 as a promise to increase bursaries and scholarships. However, this solution is unassertable. Increasing funding for bursaries and scholarships is not equal to a cap on tuition prices. A cap on tuition puts at offers while scholarships and bursaries may affect—may be given to just a few students. We should be encouraging and rewarding students who work hard and graduate with a degree

that can help grow the Manitoba economy by giving them incentives to live here and work here.

Why the government still continues to justify Bill 31 as a way of improving the quality of education in the province? I want it known, from an economic standpoint, that an increase in fees will not by anyway guarantee an improvement in the quality of education in this province.

Today, students in university of Brandon show their disapproval against Bill 31. I was just in Brandon a few hours ago. I saw over 20 students that actually were very passionate about defeating Bill 31. They have their own personal experiences. Talking to students about how this bill will affect them, how this bill will affect their lives, an increase is not what the students in this province want. An increase will affect their lives.

Over the past couple of months, people have been saying that students are not working; that's why it's not affordable. People are working. Students are working. I myself am working. However, with this current rate of tuition increase, with this current trend of tuition in the post-secondary education in the province, it's still not affordable.

On October 26, which is tomorrow, students in this province will take a strong stand against Bill 31. When this bill comes into voting, I implore you to recommend that this bill be defeated, because the bill will affect the future of the students in Manitoba. The students that will prevent from following their education dictates such exorbitant tuition. A 5 per cent increase is only accessible to the rich and not to the middle class or the lower class. This fight is not for us alone as students. This fight is for the future of post-secondary education in Manitoba. This fight is for the future of the province. This fight is for your coming generations.

I will conclude by saying that there's this common saying that says education is not an expense but an investment. Bill 31 is a threat to post-secondary education in the province. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Ojewole, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Ojewole, for your presentation. I know that students that come from a distance, foreign students in Manitoba have special issues when it comes to the cost of tuition and we

certainly take that into consideration and I appreciate your point of view.

Mr. Chairperson: Would you like to respond?

Mr. Ojewole: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Other questions from the committee?

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, Mr. Ojewole. You talked about some of the student actions that are planned and have already taken place. The one in Brandon, did it happen today or is it next week? I forget. Anyway. That's just an aside, I don't need him to answer that on the record.

You talked about some of the activism, some of the action and the organizing that students have done. I'm curious if you can share with the committee some of what you have heard from students themselves, what are the concerns, what are the viewpoints that students who will be paying the burden of Bill 31 directly—what are they telling you?

* (19:00)

Mr. Ojewole: Thank you very much, Mr. Wab Kinew.

Actually, the Brandon rally happened today, so just to state that. And also, over the years, over the months that we've been consulting with students, each of them have their different stories. Most of them are not—cannot come over here to talk about it. However, we being the student representatives are the voice for them.

Over some—over the past couple of months, I have had the opportunity of talking to students from the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg, international students included. They have told me about how this bill will affect them—most of them international students—how it will affect their funding, how it will affect them work—their work schedule. Because even with an increase, with the current rate right now, it's still not affordable.

So, while the government is trying to balance the books, as it's been called, on the back of students, is something—that is something that is very concerning to those students in the province because an increase in tuition, it's not something that we should be even to be talking about right now because, as I said, education shouldn't be an expense but an investment on the future of the province, and that should be the top priority of everyone, including the Minister of Education.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Ojewole.

Mr. Andrew Micklefield (Rossmere): What degree are you studying to obtain, and what do you hope to do with that degree?

Mr. Ojewole: Currently, right now, I'm a member of the Canadian Armed Forces serving in the reserve. I'm studying computer science at the University of Winnipeg, and I hope to finish in a couple of months. I hope to work in the province, and I hope to work in my sector, which is the IT, information technology sector. Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Ojewole. I can note that I also have a computer science degree, so we have that in common.

Any other additional questions for the presenter?

And I thank you very much for appearing before the committee, and we'll move on to our next out-of-town presenter, which is Mr. Wayne Chacun.

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

Mr. Wayne Chacun (Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: A staff member will assist you with that. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Chacun: Right. Thank you very much for hearing me this evening. Thank you all for giving up your evening to be here.

Good evening, Chairperson and honourable members. My name is Wayne Chacun, and I'm the first vice-president of the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union. The MGEU represents over 40,000 Manitobans who live and work throughout Manitoba in a wide variety of workplaces. We represent members at Red River community college, Assiniboine Community College, Université de Saint-Boniface, University College of the North and Brandon University.

These institutions are crucial to ensuring that workers are trained and prepared to work in Manitoba's fast-changing economy. Our members are proud to be part of a team that supports Manitobans in their goals of attaining a post-secondary education and an opportunity to get a good, family-supporting job. The public education provided by our members is a public good that benefits all Manitobans.

Manitoba is a diverse and vibrant community where people from all walks of life make their home

and build for their future. Our college and university classrooms should represent this diversity through universal access for all people, regardless of where you are born or how well off your parents are.

The University College of the North, UCN, has been crucial to the economic development of the North. Bringing post-secondary educational opportunities to northern and remote communities helps to make education a reality for more Manitobans. We encourage this government to continue investing in programs at UCN to keep education affordable and enable access to quality education. If these programs are cut, students will have to travel further and pay more for their education.

And, as somebody who lives rurally and who works in health care, I want to also stress that we know that people who have to travel for education have many higher costs already, having to live away from home. The new tuition increases and fee increases are going to make it much harder for people who have to live away from home.

We also know that people from rural areas are more likely to return to those rural areas to work, as opposed to somebody from the city coming out to get a job. As somebody who works in health care, I've seen emergency rooms have to close down because of unfilled positions in labs and X-rays, nursing positions, paramedic positions and physicians. We need our rural and remote students to be able to afford to come to school and then return to get jobs.

Students across Manitoba who are fortunate enough to gain access to post-secondary education are already saddled with high debt loads, which directly impact their economic well-being. With this bill, their ability to buy a home, buy a vehicle and pay bills will be delayed, further impacting the economy.

Despite the glaring evidence that we should be investing more in public education, not less, we have seen the recommendations from the KPMG audit. If implemented, these changes will make the situation worse. A recent opinion from two professors said that the crude calculus of short-sighted value for money undermines the role of a post-secondary education system in society. In other words, stripping away the value of critical thought, creativity and benefits that are not calculated in the value-for-money exercise hurts our communities.

We also know that barriers to access disproportionately impact people living with disabilities, indigenous people, queer and trans people, people raised in single-parent homes, people from low-income families and rural residents of Manitoba. The steep tuition and fee increases enabled by this bill will make things more difficult for students and their families. These barriers will directly impact the makeup of these classrooms by excluding students who can no longer afford educational opportunities.

Our public education system should be set up to realize everyone's potential, not push these communities further to the margins. We recommend that Bill 31 be reconsidered to ensure that public education is more accessible, not less.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Chacun, for your presentation. Are there questions from the members of the committee?

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, Mr. Chacun. It's nice to see you again. I think last time—well, one of the last times I saw you, anyways, was near Deleau, Manitoba, a barbecue this summer. So there was a lot of good times.

I was wondering, you know, drawing on your experience in the health-care field, if—maybe you could just share with the committee a little bit about what some of the people that you work with or that you see in your capacity with your role in MGEU. What is the impact of carrying student debt on them through their working lives and into their careers?

Mr. Chacun: There are—many of my co-workers or people I know who are carrying a substantial debt and it has impacted their ability to secure housing, having to choose certain communities to work in and other ones not to because rurally, the price of housing can be quite different community to community. So, it can have an impact on that. They may have to take multiple years to get their degree done, as opposed to over the course of just, you know, a regular time frame, because if they have to work more, they have to raise more money. My neighbour next door, he—wanting to go to school, wants to get into a trade. He's taken a year off so he can raise the money because he's going to have to move away from home to be able to live for that time. So, these can have many effects on that ability.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. More questions from the committee? Okay, seeing none, then I want to thank you very much for your presentation and we'll

now proceed to the next presenter. That's all the out-of-town presentations that I have listed, so we're going to go back up to the top of the list with Mr. Michael Barkman from the Canadian Federation of Students in Manitoba.

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

Mr. Michael Barkman (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Barkman: Feels like a while since I've been back here. When I registered for this, it was back when I had an elected role with the Canadian Federation of Students and that since has passed and we have new, very exciting leadership and more and more students who are speaking about this and I think what we've heard again and again are really personal stories, because I think this is a very personal issue. So I think I want to thank the people who have spoken already and especially those who told stories and those who are going to continue to do that tonight.

* (19:10)

So I'm here as a private citizen and, honestly, with little time to prepare. It's been a tough week.

Again, we're sharing personal things and personal stories; my grandma had a stroke on Monday and in between work and being at the hospital, it's been hard to prepare notes. But happy news that the blood clot did pass, and my grandma is a feisty, funny woman who would never let any day go by without talking about politics, especially with me. So we did that yesterday and I told her that I was doing this tonight.

A lot of people have been talking about history of post-secondary education in this province, and that was something that we were talking about yesterday.

My grandma grew up in many different rural communities in Manitoba: Grandview, Gilbert Plains, Roland and Portage la Prairie. She came from a very poor family and she benefited from a time in history, particularly after the Second World War, when across Canada we were building a post-secondary education system, primarily for veterans who were coming back from war who didn't have many other places to go, and trying to expand our education system knowing that it was the only

way that we can continue to build our economy as a nation.

My grandma studied at Wesley College. She became a teacher and she contributed throughout her working career in Winnipeg as a teacher and other rural communities and in retirement as well. And, thankfully, with the clot passing I know will continue to do that over the next three years. All this to say that she is someone who benefited from a post-secondary system at a time in which were expanding it to create access for as many people as possible.

I can't be talking about my grandma without talking about my grandfather on my dad's side. My grandpa, who passed away a year ago now, was a driver in the Second World War and any other Mennonites in the room know that this is certainly something that was very earth-shattering for my Mennonite Barkman family. Upon his return, he was certainly having still issues with the family due to these religious reasons, but also his ability to gain work, given his experiences in the war, was very challenging. His ability to access a post-secondary system that was increasingly open to him meant he got a degree and he was able to own a business in Steinbach for many years, and actually served on town council.

All these stories to say is that it's been an emotional week and talking about and thinking about these things is personal and I know so many people here think about them in different ways, and I could tell more and more stories, more current stories, but I'm thinking about the past.

My grandparents were part of a post-secondary system that was building on the idea that every person in our province, in our economy, will be stronger when people can get to school. Yesterday, hearing from my grandma, and I know if my grandpa were still alive he would believe that Bill 31 is doing exactly the opposite. It makes getting to school, university, college, trades programs, more challenging for Manitobans. For people like my grandparents, if they were my age today, it would make getting a post-secondary education for them virtually impossible, and these are people certainly who aren't from our lowest socio-economic statuses and certainly aren't our most low-income Manitobans.

I want to talk about the argument in those scenarios that we have the scholarships and bursaries

initiative and that'll fix this. I really don't believe that it will.

First, we have evidence right now that the money is not being raised in the way that we thought it would, but I think generally, and deeper than that, accessing scholarships and bursaries, especially for people who are the first in their families to get a post-secondary education, like my grandparents, even ability to apply for those things is a massive barrier. If we talk about the actual infrastructure of how to go and to find those scholarships and bursaries, it is so, so challenging, and advertisements on Instagram and Facebook by the government is just insulting. People are not knowing how to apply for these things, they don't have the language but they want to get to school.

I also want to talk about the argument that this is just a small increase, and again I don't think that that's true. Our pocketbooks as a generation are already being stretched to their maximum. We are the most indebted generation in Canadian history in personal debt, and decisions by the generation ahead of us will only worsen the economic situation for us.

So my proposals are, in order to strengthen our post-secondary system and ensure that we're getting as many people to school as possible, to build our economy and investments in Manitoba, first don't pass Bill 31 and reconsider the public investment in the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative. Instead, an immediate step because we're investing public dollars in a program that I think is ineffective—instead invest that in the Manitoba Bursary Program. It's a grant program that we can track. It has results and reports and it's administered by the Province. I think that's a first step.

I also want to point out that a tuition increase in Bill 31 was not part of the Progressive Conservative platform in the last election. I think we need to re-examine and work towards ways to reduce and eliminate tuition fees in Manitoba instead. I strongly believe that this is the right way forward. And I think, and I hope, that people on all sides here are considering what role do we want for post-secondary education in Manitoba. I hope people are thinking deeply and thinking ahead about the vision that we have. Why aren't we building a more accessible system for all? Why would we ever view education, a key to a productive and happy society, as a business, and find ways to milk people for more money? I want people to think about and consider, does that seem sad to you? It seems depressing to

me. I think we can do better, and I really hope that folks here, or especially those who haven't asked questions tonight, can think about how they envision post-secondary education and the role that it plays, and if they're really thinking about it in the way as a great equalizer and a builder for our province.

So, to conclude, in my conversations with my grandma yesterday, and I'm sure tonight when I have to go back to the hospital, she was an educator, again, for 30 years and, yes, yesterday still got riled up about any challenge to accessible education happening in this province. And she told me in the way that she could, that education changed her life and certainly continues to change all Manitobans' lives, including her grandchildren. I implore you to listen to her as someone with extreme wisdom, and to listen to all of us today and the stories from students. I don't think that we're being extreme we're—when we're saying that Bill 31 and the resulting tuition hikes would devastate the opportunities and possibilities for education for so many Manitoba families. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Barkman. I don't think I'm being too bold by expressing that we're grateful to hear that your grandmother received the care that she needed, and I hope you give the regards of this entire committee to her, and we wish her well in her continued recovery.

Is there any questions from the committee for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: I certainly would like, and I know the Chairman already has passed on our regards to your grandmother, and I do hope she recovers quickly and enjoys many more years of political debates with her grandson.

I just wanted to make one particular point, and I would—I do appreciate what you have to say this evening. The—Bill 31 does not touch on the colleges or the trades in any way, apprenticeship in particular. So just to be clear on that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Barkman, did you want to respond?

No? Okay.

Additional questions.

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Barkman, thanks so much for coming in.

You know, I think you're exactly right that the personal stories that are shared here tonight are the

most powerful ones, and, obviously, you have a very important one to talk about tonight, so I just want to thank you for sharing that.

You know, the other thing that we talked about—it's been mentioned a few times here—just about the numbers. You know, we're talking about the impact it's going to have over a four-year degree, 40 per cent increase potentially, you know, for a student entering university today. Well, this is one of those circumstances. It's very rare in our system where the opposition has an ability to make a difference, you know, about legislation that's coming forward. You know, generally the legislation that's introduced by the government, is passed; we know that. They have the majority of the seats in the Legislature, and they can pass whatever bill they want. In this case, we've actually managed as an opposition to hold this bill over to this particular fall session. And what that's done is it's actually delayed the implementation of this bill. It's delayed, potentially, an increase for students this year. And so it's actually saved students money in this actual year of their studies.

So I think it does make an impact. But what—when we're talking about that first year, you know, our calculations may be \$300 plus. That may seem like a little bit of money to people sitting around this table, but I wanted you to share your stories that you hear from your—from students that you know about what that kind of money—what that impact would have, just in their first year and going forward throughout their university career, how that would impact them and the kinds of things that they—the affordability that they would have to complete that degree.

* (19:20)

Mr. Barkman: I can think of countless stories. I think of people I've talked to in my former, former formal role. I can think of personal stories. I can think of siblings, cousins. I can think of recalling what Whitney was talking about of people who live with physical or mental accessibility issues. You know what, I can think of breakouts that I've had where the key issue is that the debt and the person trying to find money impacts their mental health and their well-being in order to get to school so much that being in a relationship becomes an impossible thing. And I know that's perhaps an extreme example, but honestly that's happened twice.

And I think that's something where we're seeing it so many times where people are so dramatically

impacted by even the ability to scrape that much money—which perhaps doesn't seem like a lot to the folks around the table, but it's different in the way that we access that money. It's a different kind of debt, and the impact that it has on someone's well-being, as well as on their economic future, I think, is really severe. And so that's why I think—in my talk, I was really trying to get people to think about the long-term vision that they have for post-secondary education in this province, to consider—I mean, you're elected people that—you're not just thinking four years, you're thinking about this entire system, for what we're setting it up for future generations. Are you thinking about how we're building post-secondary education and the kind of people that are entering the doors and how they're entering those doors?

And I would encourage, maybe, that people think a little bit more visionary in the way that we can build a system here in this province that's the best it can be, that opens the doors to as many people as it can.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Barkman.

Mr. Kinew has a question—I just want everyone to be aware we only have one minute left in question period.

Mr. Kinew: Thanks, Mr. Chair, I'll take that full minute at your direction.

Sorry to hear about your grandma, but also silver lining, glad to hear that she's doing better. I really liked the personal dimension to your presentation.

I wanted to ask about your previous role, though, as the head of CFS Manitoba. So, during consultations that I assume you would have had with the provincial government, what did they come to you with in terms of the tuition increases that they were proposing to you in your formal capacity as CFS Manitoba chair? What did you tell them about what you wanted to see on tuition?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Barkman, I'd just ask that you keep it brief.

Mr. Barkman: Yes. I'll talk about before the election quickly.

When we asked all parties about information on funding as well as tuition, we got answers from two parties. We didn't get answers from the Progressive Conservatives.

I'll talk about afterwards. We did have meetings, certainly. We presented definitely that we were opposed to tuition increases, and presented a lot of evidence on that. And we also talked about ways to increase money toward Manitoba grants. It's hard for, you know, a non-profit civil society organization to do the kind of research that government has the capacity to do around grants, so we weren't able to get into all, like, the nitty-gritty details, and we were hoping that government could do that sort of work. But, to my mind, that hasn't happened yet.

But certainly we—on tuition increases, we were opposed.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Barkman, for taking the time to appear here. I wish you well on the remainder of your evening.

Our next presenter is Tanjit Nagra, from the University of Manitoba Students' Union.

Ms. Nagra, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Tanjit Nagra (University of Manitoba Students' Union): No, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Nagra: Good evening.

I'd like to start off by acknowledging that we are located on Treaty 1 land in the homeland of the—or, sorry, original lands of the Anishinabe Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Metis Nation.

I want to thank the committee for the opportunity allowing me to speak today. I just learnt that we're the—one of the only provinces that still has public speaking time for citizens, so that's great to hear and I'm glad we're honouring that.

My name is Tanjit Nagra, and I'm the—I'm a fifth-year Faculty of Arts student at the University of Manitoba. I'm also the—serving as the current president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union. I'm here today on behalf of over 24,000 undergraduate students from all of the University of Manitoba campuses, and I'm here today to make the position of the U of M undergraduates clear. That is: we oppose any government legislation or policy that allows post-secondary institutions to further increase tuition fees.

Now, I'm aware that many students are in the position where they have support from their parents or guardians to help pay for their tuition. But the reality is that these proposed changes will not make education accessible and a tool for those that could really use it and need it and utilize it.

For example, Manitoba has a very high indigenous population, yet only 5 per cent of the students at the University of Manitoba identify as indigenous. This, to me, is very concerning.

I'm also aware and appreciative of the government's contribution to the Manitoba Scholarships and Bursary Initiative. Many of the bursaries that we give out at the students' union are also contributed to by the government's MSBI program. However, as we heard previously, the unfortunate matter is that scholarships and bursaries only go a far way—only go so far to help those who need additional supports, and I worry about these proposed changes and how they will impact the supports for students.

I also worry about international students as the current proposed legislation does not protect international students whatsoever. On August 16th, I wrote to Minister Wishart in hopes of having a cap added for international students so that they would have some predictability.

The reality is that many international students, or most international students, are already struggling. They're utilizing emergency loan programs, hardship funding, and many are also visiting our food bank. This is on top of the fact that they also have families back home who are putting every dollar and every penny into them being here and towards their child's education so that they can have a better life.

All of the emergency funding programs do not allow to help pay for their tuition, which is probably the No. 1 thing that students need help with, and though there are scholarships and bursaries available, but also we heard previously they're very hard to locate, and a lot of international students are not eligible for this assistance.

On August 31st, I received correspondence back from the assistant deputy minister and, amongst other things, she wrote that the proposed legislation can give institutions more revenue to increase the quality of their educational programming. This will only happen if the government does not cut operating grants to institutions.

Cutting operating grants not only will force institutions' hand to increase tuition to the full amount allowed, but they will also have the ability to further raise tuition for international students.

Two years ago that is exactly what happened. The operating grant to the University of Manitoba was given no increases, and the University of Manitoba Board of Governors voted to increase international student tuition from 10 all the way to 18 per cent, and these were not gradual increases either. They were voted on the summer of 2015, and these changes took effect a few months later in September.

International students returned to the University of Manitoba from their visits back home over the summer to an awful surprise.

With this, I want to stress that I believe it is the job of elected officials to represent marginalized communities and create equitable and fair opportunities for all.

Currently, the proposed legislation will give unnecessary licences to institutions to further increase tuition, making education less accessible for students that could really benefit from it, and it's taking away opportunities for more communities.

To conclude, I would ask that you consider further protections for marginalized communities and marginalized students. Please think about the impact that this legislation would have on students from a lower socio-economic status, students with children, indigenous students, international students, students with disabilities, and any student who is already struggling to pay for their own education.

With this, I thank you for your time, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Nagra.

Questions from the members of the committee?

Mr. Wishart: And I thank you very much for coming to make a presentation. I know we've had some discussions around this and related issues, and we appreciate the point of view that you represent. So thank you for coming and participating in the unique characteristic of democracy here in Manitoba.

Mr. Kinew: And thank you, Ms. Nagra, for your presentation. I think there was a lot of good points that you raise. We know that the operating grant was frozen, you know, for this year as well, so even if there's a freeze, not necessarily a cut to operating

grants, there's still that pressure on universities to go back to students with—ask for increased tuition, course fees, right, because the costs are rising even as the operating grant is frozen. So there's a requirement to go there.

But I want to maybe just kind of ask you about a different area, and that's just based on what you're seeing in your experience in student leadership. Do you think that maybe, like, there's another factor at play here, too? Is there maybe too much of a—sort of a corporate ethos amongst administration at universities? Like, is it too much going down the, you know, priorities on revenue generation, anything like that—things like that rather than focusing on education as a public good?

Ms. Nagra: Thank you for the question. I think definitely. We hear about it a lot, public institutions like universities being very top heavy, and I think the reality is, like, there are certain issues happening there. And I think as student leaders, I know myself and a lot of—a lot of the students in the room do our best to ensure that our concerns are taken seriously and there definitely—there are a lot of concerns.

*(19:30)

This is my second year as president of the students' union at the University of Manitoba, and last year we also—last few years, actually, we actually had budget cuts at our institution as well. We were seeing decreases and declining quality of education across the board. As an arts student, I experienced it myself in less course offerings available, especially for my major, political studies, and a lot of the smaller departments as well. And I think the government should have a bigger hand in supporting education, because I think the impact on what a degree and what a student or a young person or anyone attending a post-secondary institution, no matter what age, has on the community and the impact they can make is very important, and I think we should be focusing and putting our resources towards that.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Ms. Nagra, for your presentation tonight, and you represent one of my daughters and perhaps by next year another daughter. We were at the Evening of Excellence last night at the U of M. One of the concerns that I've heard from many students is that money that is placed into scholarships goes in large measure to entrant scholarships, which help out students for the first year. They complete that first year and then there's no help for following years. Is that something that

you've experienced with the undergraduate students you represent out at the U of M?

Ms. Nagra: Thank you for that question once again.

Definitely, that is an issue. This is issues that I've raised at the University of Manitoba with administrators. This—we see this a lot, especially with international students as well. When we're doing recruiting in other countries, and they're—international students are coming to the University of Manitoba with a bunch of entrance scholarships, thinking, oh, there's money here; I'll be okay, and then the year after, if their education is then raised 10 to 18 per cent, what are they going to do? And there's less and less offerings for—less and less offerings of scholarships and bursaries available to them. So, definitely, it is a very big concern, for domestic students as well. Scholarships and bursaries are very hard to locate sometimes, scholarships, especially. Some are advertised through the universities; some aren't. So it is very difficult.

Mr. Chairperson: Any additional questions from the committee?

If not, I thank you very much for your time, Ms. Nagra.

And we'll now proceed to the next presenter. I call on John Prystanski from the Westland Foundation.

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

Mr. John Prystanski (Westland Foundation): Yes, I do, Mr. Chairman. I have my—

Mr. Chairperson: Staff will assist you.

All right. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Prystanski: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen, Minister Wishart.

We're here this evening on behalf of the Westland Foundation. I'm John Prystanski. I'm the president and the founder of the foundation. And joining me here this evening in the audience is Marilyn Camaclang. She's our foundation's co-ordinator of our communications and development.

Westland Foundation is a federally registered charity. We are a volunteer organization with one paid staff. Westland's primary goal is to provide full academic scholarships to every inner Winnipeg student who wants to attend either Red River

College, University of Manitoba or the University of Winnipeg.

For the 2017-18 academic year, Westland anticipates awarding 100 scholarships with a value in excess of \$82,000. Since 2009, Westland has awarded over 605 inner Winnipeg students with scholarships in excess of \$377,000. And we have endowed for this purpose \$1.9 million as a volunteer organization.

Westland scholarships go directly to offsetting tuition fees. As a federally registered charity and a non-partisan organization, we are here tonight to say that we understand and we recognize the need for post-secondary institutions to raise funds and tuition fees to support their operating costs. We know that—excuse me—we know that tuition fees support the rising costs of utilities, wages, building and ground maintenance and other similar required expenses. We also know that, as you consider Bill 31, you will take into consideration the varying effects this bill will have once it's proclaimed into law and, in particular, on those that are required to pay their tuition.

We ask that in your consideration—when you are considering providing various supports to organizations such as Westland who are in the trenches raising funds for inner-Winnipeg student tuition fees, we hope that you will consider organizations such as Westland to provide to them and with them possible supports to help that—to provide possible supports. Possible supports to Westland-type organizations are similar to the MSBI, such as providing matching funds for—my apologies—providing matching funds for financial campaigns and access to government programs for organizational development.

Moving forward, we welcome being able to meet with this government on these matters. We take seriously our commitment to helping inner-Winnipeg students, and these are students that come from all various ethnic backgrounds, communities, whether they're new students or existing students, whether their families have been here for 100 years or 1,000 years or recently as one or two years. We don't take into account who they are; we take into account the fact that they want to attend a post-secondary education.

We believe and we know, that everything rises. Costs rise; we do not have a choice to deal with that. We have a choice, though, with organizations such as Westland who are volunteers who provide their time and support to raise these scholarships that we

ask, that as you consider moving forward, that you consider how you may be able to, as a government, provide these—provide supports to organizations such as Westland so that we may be able to continue and meet the—our objectives, which is to ensure every inner-Winnipeg student has an opportunity to go to post-secondary education.

With that, I have nothing further to say. I like to be short and brief and hope I covered all my points. Having said that, if there are questions, I'm happy to answer.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Prystanski. We'll now move on to the question period.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Prystanski. I know that we've had a number of discussions before on the good work that you do on behalf of your foundation, especially with inner-city students, and I certainly would like to, again, thank you for the great work that you have done.

I appreciate your point of view. You know that government has some realities to deal with, and I know that you appreciate what some of those are. But we certainly would like to continue working with you in the future, and we will make time to have that happen.

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Mr. Prystanski, for being here tonight. It's nice to see you again, and congratulations to the Westland Foundation for the work they do in raising money to provide scholarships. Of course, I represent, in the Legislature, Tec Voc High School and Daniel McIntyre Collegiate, so I can tell you either one of those schools could easily use all the money you're able to raise in a year.

I actually want to ask—sort of follow up on the question I asked Ms. Nagra just a second ago. The scholarships that you're able to give out to students, are those entrance scholarships you give to graduating grade 12 students?

Mr. Prystanski: They are to graduating grade 12 students. Briefly, the way the fund operates—every time a student in grade 7 to 12 in inner Winnipeg—and we use the term inner Winnipeg as opposed to inner city because inner Winnipeg denotes a neighbourhood. It denotes a community. It talks about the positive aspects of living in a city. Inner city could be downtown Toronto, Vancouver, but inner Winnipeg talks about our home, talks about my home.

And so those scholarships are aimed at students in grade 7 to 12 in the foundation boundaries, which are the Assiniboine and Red rivers, Route 90 and Inkster. Annually, there is about 5,000 students who can earn a scholarship. That's grade 7 to 12. The scholarships operate every time a student in grade 7 to 12 earns at least 80 per cent, and in some cases, 70 per cent. We will credit them with a scholarship, and it's varying amounts. It ranges from, I believe, this year, a low of about \$15 up to a high of about \$35. And those students, for the most part, if they attend the University of Winnipeg or the University of Manitoba, receive a first-year scholarship.

* (19:40)

But, because of the fundraising and the funds that we have endowed at Red River College, we're able to offer a scholarship for students in year 2 of their studies.

So our ultimate goal—and we're not here to announce anything, but our ultimate goal is to go out and raise about \$55 million as a volunteer organization. And what we want to do is give a scholarship for every student. So we believe \$55 million is the magic number. We're working hard at it. I can see—I see some people in the room here that have known my—known me when I was on council for the City of Winnipeg. We started the foundation then, back in 1992, and we've been going at it ever since.

Next year, we celebrate our 25th anniversary as a formal organization. So consider this today your invitation to all. Come join us for next year's celebration in whatever form they may be yet to be determined.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for that invitation. I'll be sure to take you up on it.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Prystanski, for your presentation. I think the work that your organization does is laudable, and I think everyone can appreciate the effort that you put in, and the other volunteers that help run the organization put in.

You may have heard today some discussion around the amount of money that has been raised privately for bursary—for the bursary program and how there's a pretty significant shortfall so far this year in meeting the government's targets in reaching out to organizations like yours and others to up their contribution to the bursary program. And I just wanted to get your perspective as somebody who

works on the ground with, you know, with that private pool of money that's available.

Do you feel that there is a significant amount of money that your organization or other organizations, could contribute to make up the shortfall in the next few months to the end of the fiscal year, or do you feel that their, you know, that the funds that you have are limited and maybe even tapped out at your level?

Mr. Prystanski: I did not hear earlier presentations that talked about actual amounts of monies, but answering the part of your question that do we think there's enough money out there in the community, I believe—and I say this sincerely—that Winnipeggers and Manitobans are the most generous people in the country and—if not in North America.

I also believe that many times we receive requests from many different people for many different causes: education, health, various activities, whatever they may be. And I believe that Manitobans and Winnipeggers are very generous and they will find ways to continue digging down deep and to giving, because that's in our nature.

To use a phrase, I like to do often: that's how we roll. That's what—who we are. That's our identity. But can we do more? Yes. Do we need help? Yes. Do we need partnerships? Yes. So we always ask—and I'm not ashamed to ask—and I'm not ashamed to ask on bent knee. We do need more support.

We will continue to develop our volunteer base. We recently celebrated our volunteers at a small event. I believe we had about 35 to 40 people attend. At that event, we recognized our volunteers. Who came out and recognized the volunteers? It was the scholars—the people that received the scholarships, and the donors. Because it was the volunteers that brought everything together. Those same volunteers will find more energy, find more motivation and will continue moving forward. So we will reach our goal of sending every single student in inner Winnipeg to university and college.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Prystanski, that's all the time we have for questions, and I thank you for coming out this evening to present to the committee.

We'll now move on to—the next presenter is Mr. Darrell Rankin from the Communist Party of Canada, Manitoba.

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

Mr. Darrell Rankin (Communist Party of Canada–Manitoba): No, just oral.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Rankin: Okay, the Communist Party is a party dedicated to establishing a socialist society in Canada. Since we were formed in 1921, other parties, such as yourself, have borrowed many of our planks in our platform, such as medicare, unemployment insurance, antifascism, legal recognition of trade unions and so on. You still haven't borrowed our socialist platform, but I don't think we're going to wait for that.

We are opposed to tuition as a hardship on workers. This is a bad law on—for all Manitobans. We support the universal free higher education. We want grants, not loans. We want free student housing for people who live in remote areas. We want affirmative action at—quotas to provide reparations for indigenous nations who have been oppressed for many years.

To us, tuition is, firstly, a tax, is a regressive tax, imposed without regard to ability to pay. Education is not an option in this highly developed society. It is punitive for the poor. It is no hindrance for the wealthy, is it—and secondly, it's an attack on science and knowledge.

Two hundred years ago, if we cast our minds back to that, it was only when merchant transformed into industrial capital that capitalism was able to overthrow the feudal aristocracy. The Industrial Revolution was only possible because of a revolution in science and technology. A scientific and technological revolution is even more important today. Countries that neglect access to education will fail, and so will this province. It's short-sighted and only in the interests of a quick profit that this bill is going forward.

Thirdly, tuition fees are a way to transfer wealth from one generation to the next. It promotes the stratification of society into classes. As socialists, for us, equality is not just measured in terms of relations between men and women, among nations and so on. It's also between classes, and for us, the abolition of classes means real equality. And for us, ending tuition fees is—will be a big step in that direction.

So pro free trade governments, like this one, you've very good at declaring various rights, but you're—you fail miserably at establishing the rights, actually fulfilling them. This goes not just for

education but for housing, the right to a job, education and so on.

This bill is reactionary. It's short-sighted. It represents the robbery of the working class of the right to an education. And for these reasons, to me, this government ought to be a one-term government.

You have a choice, I suppose, to me, that you can have—is to withdraw the bill or be defeated.

Working people, it seems to me, are less and less ready to be robbed peacefully as they have in recent years. The protests are certain to grow. Yesterday, it was security guards; today, it was bus drivers; tomorrow, it will be the students. One day, working people will be united and governments such as this will be history. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Rankin, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for your—bringing forward your rather unique point of view. I certainly appreciate that, and I also appreciate the fact that you're able to participate here in Manitoba in our democratic process.

Mr. Chairperson: Any additional questions from members of the committee?

* (19:50)

Mr. Wiebe: I just wanted to take an opportunity to thank you, Mr. Rankin. You, I know, are no stranger to this place and to presenting, and always appreciate your point of view and participating in this part of democracy.

I thought maybe I could just ask you what you thought of the young students who are here, who are standing up and exercising their right here in this committee, but also, as you said, coming to the Legislature tomorrow to rally, to express that in a vocal way. And I'm just wondering if you wanted to comment on what you see in the youth of today and the potential that they have.

Floor Comment: They need to be encouraged as much as possible—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, Mr. Rankin.

Mr. Rankin: Oh, thank you.

I'm very happy to—that they're here and they're participating and I—all power to them. It reminds me

of my years in university. I was at the founding convention of the Canadian Federation of Students at the University of Winnipeg in 1981 and participated in many protests in the province where I grew up, in Alberta. We had huge marches against the Legislature there. I think that's the future here, and I think that, no question, they're fighting for their rights and their future.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Are there additional questions from the committee?

Seeing none, I want to thank you, Mr. Rankin, for presenting to the committee, and we will now move to the next presenter on the list, which is Megan Linton.

Megan, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Megan Linton (Private Citizen): I don't, but I believe I was going to be set up with a seat so I didn't have to stand at this standing committee.

An Honourable Member: There, right behind you.

Ms. Linton: That's great.

Mr. Chairperson: Would you like a more comfortable chair, because the ones just around the corner might sit a little better.

Ms. Linton: Yes, let's do it.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

An Honourable Member: Move that chair around here, though, please. Adjust the mic.

Ms. Linton: Oh yes, sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll give you a minute to get settled, and whenever you're ready, you can proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Linton: I didn't know that standing committee was literal standing committee, so I apologize—

Mr. Chairperson: As long as the mic can pick up what you're saying, I think everybody else can be pretty happy with that, so—

Ms. Linton: It's okay, I'm the youngest of five, so I'm pretty used to being loud. I'm just—

Mr. Chairperson: All right. I'm the youngest of six, so you may now please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Linton: Cool.

Hi, thank you so much for having us here. This is a really interesting part of the democratic process. I am here today as a private citizen. I am also a member of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association, a student of the University of Winnipeg and the Canadian Mennonite University and a student with a disability.

I started university about five years ago, and on my second day of university, I remember very distinctly what I was wearing. It was a pair of blue jeans, a pink shirt and my favourite sneakers. And I was in Oklahoma at the time because I was on a full scholarship to the University of Oklahoma for rowing.

My parents briefed me on Title IX at a very young age, which meant that I could get a scholarship because I'm a woman, basically equitably to the male scholarships. So, on the second day of school, my education was paid for. My life was going very well. And I was sexually assaulted on my second day of university by my best friend. It was the hardest day of my life and to continue to be the hardest year of my life. I underwent a court case and a criminal proceeding along with an academic proceeding, which took up probably 25 hours of my time.

I was also an athlete and performing 35 hours a week and was studying over 12 hours a week. Outside of classes—well, I was studying 12 hours of classes and then over 20 hours outside of school. I don't do math very well anymore, but if you do it, that's a lot of hours. I was probably getting half an hour of sleep a night because every single night that I went to bed was in the same dorm that my perpetrator was.

And going to university, I had to walk the halls with my perpetrator every single day, and every single day in every single one of my classes, I had to sit across from him and see his face—the face that sexually assaulted me. And this was not an easy year of my life. This year of my life ended with me attempting suicide and getting serious nerve damage to the point that I have to use a cane from time to time.

I had to take a year of school off, and I was fortunate at that time that tuition would only be increased by 2 per cent a year. And now, if I took a year of school off, under Bill 31, that would threaten to increase my tuition by 7.5 per cent a year. So I don't—I'm very confused about how this government passed Bill 15, the sexual violence act, on

post-secondary campuses if they were going to pass Bill 31, because if we want to care for survivors, if we want to believe them, if we want to create a culture within our post-secondary institutions where survivors are believed and their lives are able to continue on, we have to let them continue. We have to be able to give them that time off.

It took me a year to heal, to undergo treatment, to get surgery, and to continue on, and that's—that's a short amount of time compared to how long it takes for others, and so I think, as the government and as mostly men in power right now, if you look around at your table, you need to really criticize what this bill is doing for women, for non-binary folks, for indigenous students, and for students with disabilities because those are the students who are most affected by sexual violence and those students deserve to feel free to take a year off to heal because walking the halls with our perpetrators is so difficult. Can you imagine that every single day, having to wake up and know that this is the only way you're going to get a job because I've been saying since I was two that I'm going to be a doctor?

And so, for a man to take that away from me, and then for the government to take that away from me again, by changing the bill so that we can increase tuition every year and deregulate my course fees.

And so now I'm doing a lot better. I go to therapy and it costs \$120 a session, and I take medication and it costs \$10 a bottle, despite our health-care system. And I ride public transit and sometimes I ride Handi-Transit, and it costs a lot of money. And, for me, being a full-time student legally is two classes, so with two classes that means I'm full time. With students without disabilities, three classes is full time.

And so the university has set a precedent that students with disabilities are going to take longer to complete our education, and so Bill 31 directly attacks the students who deserve and need often to take longer to finish their degree.

And so, while the provincial government is doing these really kind things in passing Bill 15 and passing the accessible Manitobans act, which I applaud and I'm so here for, I also question the validity of those bills if you're going to pass Bill 31, which directly attacks and marginalizes the people that you've been protecting in these other bills.

And so I come here tonight as a private citizen, and I ask you to think about not your daughters, but think about what it means to be a good person and what it means to really believe in the bills that you've already passed. You believe in them in some capacity. I don't know what capacity of your being you believed in Bill 15 and the accessible Manitobans act, but it's there, and so believe in that again. Have that compassion and that humanity and give me that 17- or 18-year-old girl who was sexually assaulted on her second day of school the chance to take the time off, so I can afford to go back, so I can heal, so I can recover, and so I can continue on.

And so I'm confused. I'm really confused about why you're continuing to do this and why you think this is a good idea. And I get money; it's scary and hard and you love talking about that, but you also have to think about who that money is attacking and how can we redirect those resources to care for survivors like you claim to and claim to care for people with disabilities. And right now we feel attacked as women, as survivors, and as persons with disabilities.

And so, yes, I really encourage us to move forward in a light where we meaningfully consult with survivors. I don't know if you've done that yet with this bill, and it might seem unnecessary because it's about money and not about humanity and not about humans or survivors; you already did that with Bill 15. But you need to meaningfully consult with us because we are the ones who are affected by this.

*(20:00)

Statistics say between one in five and one in three women are sexually assaulted at their time in university, and that number is drastically higher for students living with disabilities. It's up to 83 to 87 per cent of women with disabilities are sexually assaulted.

And so you can't take those numbers lightly and you can't take this bill lightly as just targeting the monetary side of our government. Public education is a right and needs to be a right for women, for survivors, for people who are further marginalized, for indigenous students, for students with disabilities and for all these intersections—intersecting identities.

I'm super lucky as an affluent white person to be able to have some of my education paid for by my parents, but I have to also take into consideration that other people who are affected by the same type of

trauma as me who can't afford to take that year off, who can't afford to heal, who can't afford to access therapy and access those systems that are supposed to make us better and strengthen us and give us equity.

And so I ask that we continue by meaningfully consulting and not bringing this bill further than it is. I ask that you consider me, age 18, second day of school and then me, two years later, here today being a student, having a great GPA, having really good options and really good community connections. I volunteer like 20 hours a week and I work two jobs and I'm in a class and it's great and I will do so much more for my community as someone who has accessed those resources and had that time off of school as opposed to the me who was broken and sick and depressed and not able to leave her dorm room or the police station, because those were my two options, was either spending time on my case or spending time trying to survive.

And so I ask that you let us survive and you let us access the institutions that you've said are equitable.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for sharing your story and with us.

I'd like to ask the members of the committee if they have questions for the presenter.

Ms. Janice Morley-Lecomte (Seine River): Thank you so much for sharing your story. Thank you for coming here this evening. It must have been difficult to come forward and speak for yourself, but we appreciate and are thankful that you're able to speak on behalf of—*[interjection]* I apologize.

Thank you for coming here and sharing your story and we really appreciate the openness with which you presented and thank you for the strength that you have to be able to speak on behalf of women and individuals who have had an unfortunate incident as that.

We are listening and we do appreciate what you've said, and we are thankful to hear that you have been able to heal and are able to continue to move forward with your studies. Thank you.

Ms. Flor Marcelino (Logan): I would like to echo my colleague's comments. We applaud your courage, your strength, the passion you've shown for the most vulnerable, underprivileged young people, women especially, those who are for some reason not as—really able to continue on because of challenges. One

of which is funding their education. So would you, with your experience, you have told us very clearly what we ought to act as legislators and as human beings. Would you think, having heard your story and many other stories similar to yours, do you think our government, our present government will heed these members of our community in their—as they—as you have spoken to amend or stop this bill? Do you think it's possible that that will happen?

Ms. Linton: Yes, I think a couple of things. One, I appreciate all of your congratulations on my strength, but I shouldn't have to be strong. I shouldn't have to be this strong and hard at 22, nor should I have to come here and be here on my Wednesday night.

But, yes, I think that survivors and non-binary folks and queer folks and indigenous folks and racialized peoples all need to have meaningful consultations on this process, just as was regulated and mandated with Bill 15. So that means student consultations on everything, and I think something affecting students as directly as this should have those meaningful consultations. And, while I do think it should be defeated, I think, just as with your other bills that have directly impacted students, you need to have those meaningful consultations. I don't think that's an option or a question.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Are there additional questions from the committee?

Okay, hearing none, thank you very much, Ms. Linton, for coming and speaking to us this evening.

We'll now move on to the next presenter that we have on the list, which is Laura Garinger from the University of Winnipeg Students' Association.

Ms. Garinger, am I saying your name right? *[interjection]* Okay, and do you have any written presentations to share?

Ms. Laura Garinger (University of Winnipeg Students' Association): I sure do.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good.

Ms. Garinger: Sorry. Not everyone gets a nice folder. I thought we only needed 10.

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

Ms. Garinger: Thank you. And thank you to the presenters who came before me and thank you to Ms. Nagra who already mentioned but I do want to

acknowledge again that we are on Treaty 1 territory, in the homeland of the Metis Nation.

My name is Laura Garinger and I'm here on behalf of the students of the University of Winnipeg, by virtue of being the president of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association. I was born and raised in Flin Flon. Minister Wishart, I think you met my father recently in your last visit.

I'm the daughter of two teachers and, as you may expect, education has always been a big part of my life. I knew from a young age that I would be pursuing a university degree. I worked from the age of 13 to save for university, and I ended up applying at the University of Winnipeg for its lower tuition, quality programming and in order to be closer to my family.

I've been involved in the student advocacy since my first year of studies. I was the women's commissioner at the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba, from 2015 to 2017, and part of the UWSA executive since 2016. These experiences connect me to a wide variety of students facing different struggles in their lives and reaffirmed to me the need for a more accessible, affordable and high-quality post-secondary education system, for all students in our province. It's no secret that most entry-level jobs require at least a bachelor's degree these days, which, in turn, requires a healthy post-secondary education system.

One of the UWSA's first outreach initiatives this year was to run a campus-wide survey called the Campus Poverty Report. The survey ran for two weeks at the end of September, and it was launched to better understand the costs associated with attending university. I'll be referencing this survey through my testimony, as well as resources from the U of Winnipeg institutional analysis, the Canadian University Survey Consortium's 2017 survey of our students and the KPMG report commissioned by your government.

While this government may think that tuition could stand to be higher in our province, I'm here to give a voice to the great number of current and prospective students for which this would result in an unmovable barrier to accessing post-secondary education in Manitoba. The current cost of one year of a full course load in the Faculty of Arts at the U of Winnipeg is \$4,200 for a domestic student. That would mean a student would need to work 455 hours at minimum wage in order to pay for a single year. An international student who is taking the same

course load is paying nearly four times that amount, \$16,566.

Raising tuition puts post-secondary education out of reach for many. And those who might wish me—sorry—puts post-secondary education out of reach for many Manitobans and those who might wish to be Manitobans in the future. Seventy per cent—77 per cent of our survey respondents only ranked the affordability of tuition at U of Winnipeg as average, poor or terrible. We did not ask the question whether students are in favour of tuition increases, but I would guess that this provincial government did not ask students that, either.

* (20:10)

Costs do not end at tuition. Textbooks, rent, groceries, utilities, transportation and other essential items all factor into students' budgets. The average cost of textbooks for a single term is around \$300. This varies based on program, course load and instructor preference, but the sentiment of students is clear: 55 per cent of our students consider the affordability of textbooks to be poor or terrible.

To avoid these costs, students resort to free texts either through legitimate or illegitimate channels or make a conscious decision to not seek out the material. This impacts their ability to engage in their courses solely because they are unable to afford this cost.

The results of our survey included an average of \$600 for rent, about \$200 in utilities, \$155 for groceries and \$140 for other essential items. That's a \$1,095 on average every month and it varies widely from student to student. This does not include the cost of transportation to campus, especially for those who live outside the city. An average cost of \$400 per child for child-care services as well as the cost of medical expenses not covered by our student health plan or our private insurance providers.

The fact that any of our students need to access food banks to meet basic food needs is terrible. Three per cent of our students surveyed said that they accessed food banks either on campus or in the community. Our neighbours at the University of Saskatchewan report that 28 per cent of their students surveyed experienced food insecurity.

This is a very concerning trend which will only be exacerbated further by increased tuition fees.

Consider the fact that 77 students report that they make less than \$20,000 annually. Any increase in tuition will mean that they will need to spread their personal budgets even thinner than they already are, leading to further food insecurity, unstable housing and serious impacts on their overall health and well-being.

About a quarter of our undergrad students are part time. While there is nothing inherently wrong with part-time studies, trends noted by the U Winnipeg's institutional analysis showed that this number is rising. Part-time students take longer to finish their degrees not only putting their futures on hold, but they also end up paying more money before they are able to obtain their degree.

We also know that more and more students are only carrying part-time studies because they need to work while they're in school. Sixty-nine per cent of our survey respondents showed that they are currently employed with 85 per cent of those people working part time.

When students have to work while they are in school, it diminishes the time that they're able to spend preparing for classes, doing assignments, studying for exams and succeeding in their programs. If their GPA is negatively impacted because of this, it could lead to failure to qualify in their academic programs or for important scholarships or bursaries.

It's incredibly worrisome to me that students are forced to split their time in order to keep their heads above water. Too many of our students are left with no other option but to go into personal debt to cover the cost of university by taking out student loans. Thirty-six per cent of U Winnipeg students report having any debt during their degree with 22 per cent of those respondents accruing an average of \$12,995 from government student loans, 10 per cent accruing an average of \$9,782 from financial institutions and 14 per cent accruing an average of \$4,840 from parents and family.

These are oppressive levels of debt for students to contend with after their graduation.

I must also address the alarming and regressive recommendation from KPMG to charge interest on Manitoba student loans. This would only compound barriers for students who do not have the ability to pay for tuition upfront. Any tuition increase would only perpetuate an unstable situation for students,

and, in my opinion, it will only increase the rates of delinquency on student loans.

I also have deep concerns about messaging from this government telling students to rely on bursaries to cover these two-proposed tuition increases. I know that there are existing issues with the bursary program. Having sat on a Senate committee for awarding scholarships and bursaries, I recognize the fact that there are several awards that go unused year after year and we do need to work on-work together to improve the use and outcomes of our bursary system.

However, there are still competitive awards which pit student against student. There are already students who rely on awards in order to cover their tuition costs. Increasing tuition puts those students at risk. For students whose GPA has disqualified them from bursaries, their status at U Winnipeg can also be in jeopardy. There is no average student at the U of Winnipeg or anywhere else for that matter. Our survey was used to get a better sense of what our students are facing and while we can show you an average, it's not just the average student that we need to be looking out for. It's the students who are struggling to make ends meet, who are sacrificing their well-beings and health in order to be at university. Students who want to be able to succeed in their lives.

It baffles me how much this government contradicts itself. They say they want to protect the future and then make cuts to social programming. They say they want students to stay in Manitoba and have higher graduation rates and subsequently cut the tuition tax rebate and advanced tuition rebate, maintain stagnant institutional funding and move to put interest rates back on student loans and, of course, why we're here tonight telling administrations to balance their budgets on the backs of their students.

I want to leave you tonight with this: We choose post-secondary education because we care about our futures. I am proud of where I'm from, and I'm proud of my degree, and I love and care about this province and the people who are in it. But I am embarrassed and ashamed by the actions of austerity that this government has taken at the expense of Manitobans. I worry about my prospects and the prospects of my peers to stay in Manitoba. I worry about the future of our province. And I vote-urge you to vote against Bill 31.

I'm sorry. It's been a very rough week.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Garinger, for making your presentation.

We will now proceed to questions. Do members of the committee have questions?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for your presentation this evening, Ms. Garinger, and I do remember meeting your dad—just a little over a week ago, actually, I'm thinking—not long.

Certainly appreciate the additional data that you have brought forward, and we'll take that under consideration.

Mr. Swan: Thank you very much for coming down and presenting to us. What I think is really, really informative in your presentation is to set out the number of hours the student has to work at minimum wage just to pay tuition—before, if they're moving in to the city without paying for transportation, for housing, or anything else. We know that under this PC government's term in office, they've frozen increases to minimum wage at the cost of living, yet tuition is allowed to rise by the cost of living, plus 5 per cent.

Can you comment on the fairness of that from your position?

Ms. Garinger: It's very concerning to me. Students are faced with either struggling to make ends meet while they're in school or taking out loans. If I could be completely blunt, I think that it is—it's a shifting of priorities where people in this government would rather see individuals take on personal debt than make education a priority and make Manitobans and our futures a priority. These are options that could be worked out if more time was put into them, in my opinion.

Mr. Swan: If we'd just ask another question, very similar to what I asked the woman here from the—from UMSU. Of course, University of Winnipeg does give out a lot of entrance scholarships which may provide \$500 or \$1,000 the first year. What can you tell us about the availability of those scholarships for students continuing on in their second and subsequent years?

Ms. Garinger: I think that we need more funding at both ends. The special entrance scholarships allow people to get the foot in the door; however, we also need the continued support throughout their degrees. I know for myself, the special entrance scholarship that I got at the University of Winnipeg was one of the reasons I decided to go there. And I think that

creating more bursaries that can be used by students—while it is a Band-Aid solution and it should not be relied on—is a great way for people who otherwise not—might not be choosing post-secondary to get in the door.

Ms. Marcelino: Thank you, Ms. Garinger, for sharing with us your presentation and for reminding us, especially for some of us here—or if there are some people here who, because of personal experience, are not aware or have not experienced being a student, and getting hungry because finances are very tight. I've been in that predicament and I have many friends who are in that predicament, and we believe in education as the—will be a level playing field for us, that if we obtain this education, we can contribute to society and better ourselves and our family. Thank you so much for sharing—for reinforcing that truth to us.

Mr. Chairperson: Would you like to respond? No?

* (20:20)

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I just wanted to thank you, Ms. Garinger, for your presentation. It's a powerful combination when you have the research, and the facts, and also the passion that you bring here tonight. So I just wanted to thank you.

I think you're doing an amazing job representing the students, and I know it's not easy to come here and present in this kind of format, so I just wanted to thank you so much for doing that tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, not seeing any other additional questions, I do want to thank you, Ms. Garinger, for appearing before the committee.

We'll now move on to our next presenter, which is Niall Harney.

Mr. Harney, do you have any written material to distribute to the committee?

Mr. Niall Harney (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

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

Mr. Niall Harney: Okay, thank you to the Chair and to the committee for being here. I thank you for your time and for having us in this space. I hope that those who speak tonight and tomorrow can begin to give a voice to the thousands of students who are unable to present here in this space. I personally present here as a Manitoban and as a University of Manitoba alumni.

I want to use my time tonight to give my own story about my experience with education.

I started at the University of Manitoba in the fall of 2012, straight out of high school. Attending university seemed a foregone conclusion for me. My teachers and family had always impressed upon me the value of post-secondary education, both as a means of securing gainful employment and to leading a richer life.

There were few things that could have deterred me from attending post-secondary. In fact, I likely fit the exact student profile this government imagined when designing Bill 31, one whose privileges of family and income would push them into university, regardless of financial barriers. But attending university was not a foregone conclusion—foregone conclusion throughout my life. My mother returned to Winnipeg in 1999, after 10 years of living abroad in the UK. Though she left as a wide-eyed 22-year-old, she returned with a much heavier responsibility on her shoulders, with two young kids to raise and no partner coming back with her.

She returned to Manitoba for two things: affordable housing and affordable education. She knew that here in Manitoba, she'd be able to provide a much higher quality of life for her two children and give them a foundation to prosper into their futures. As a child, my brother and I spent many evenings home alone while my mom attended evening classes at the University of Manitoba. She would come home, feed us, sometimes arrange evening activities and then head to school until 9 p.m. or later. She would spend weekends writing papers and finishing coursework. She made a huge sacrifice of precious time with my brother and I because she wanted to ensure that we were provided for, so that we would have every opportunity for success in our own lives.

And she was ultimately successful. My mom was financially able to provide a rich life for my brother and I to ensure we were offered every opportunity for success, and we are both attending university now.

None of this would have been possible without affordable, accessible public post-secondary education in Manitoba. She came to Manitoba because she knew that this province would offer opportunities for her children that few other locations could match. She chose to root her own life and the life of ourselves in this province because of affordable education.

This is my story but it's also a story I've heard over and over from students on campus. Many students arrive at university later in life because they know that they can't earn enough to provide for their children and families without a post-secondary education. Already, mature students and student-parents with children or mortgages take years to save for their educations, jump through hoop after hoop to secure student loans, and sacrifice their incomes so that they can secure a post-secondary education. They place themselves in hugely precarious positions, but they know that the risk is necessary to future financial security.

Bill 31 is closing the university door to those mothers, parents, mature students. While explaining the bill, this bill, to thousands of students over the last few months in my capacity as field worker with the Canadian Federation of Students, I have been met with looks of shock and horror from students raising children. Many of these parents are holding down full-time jobs while taking classes, forcing them to finish their degrees over a long period. They and their families will be hit even harder by Bill 31's tuition hikes.

In the face of all this, this government has had the audacity to claim that they're supporting low-income students through scholarships and bursaries. As we have seen, these scholarships and bursaries do not provide enough for students who require increased access to education.

In the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Arts, the majority of scholarships are awarded on the basis of economic merit. In my faculty, this scholarship money was, in large part, given to students whose families were already paying for their university tuition, in part or in full. Scholarships, in large part, are awards for the children of wealthy families.

Bill 31 puts this province behind by reducing access to education, especially among communities already marginalized by financial barriers, and taking away Manitoba's cost advantage, fewer Manitobans will have the means to build lives in this province and to plant roots.

In my capacity at the Canadian Federation of Students, I have spoken to thousands students—thousands of students on all four campuses this fall. I have encountered less than 10 students who are unwilling to sign postcards in opposition to Bill 31. These students are not future voters; they are current voters, and I invite this government to keep that in

mind while they choose to pass this bill or while they take the vote.

We all know that this policy is laying the groundwork for further reductions in post-secondary funding. We've seen this across the country and around the world. My colleagues will continue to talk about that in the future, but I want this government to know that they're pushing people out of this province. They're making it harder to build roots of—to lay roots here, and that this government will be hearing from students in the future.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Harney.

We'll now proceed to question period.

Do members of the committee have questions?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much, and I appreciate your point of view; certainly, this is consistent with what we've heard from Canadian Federation of Students.

You made a comment that most of the bursaries and scholarships that you have seen in the past were given out based on academic performance. So your recommendation would be that bursaries would be based on need?

Mr. Niall Harney: I would like to see that if the goal of scholarships and bursaries is to increase access, then yes, they should be provided on need. The other aspect of this is that—it should be noted that these tuition increases are reducing access to education, and—by creating financial barriers. And if you are trying to circumvent that through scholarships and bursaries, you do need to provide scholarships and bursaries to those in need.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I just wanted to thank you, Mr. Harney, for your presentation tonight. I think it adds another layer of perspective here for us tonight to consider, as you mentioned, the mature students and others who maybe haven't been talked about yet tonight.

I just wanted to continue to expand on this idea of bursaries and their availability for mature students or people who are not from the traditional, you know, route into post-secondary education. Can you talk about how some of the barriers that exist for people who are mature students, who are trying to re-enter the academic world, and what barriers they might face when trying to obtain some sort of bursary or scholarship.

Mr. Niall Harney: I think for that data, you would like to talk to Laura Garinger and her campus poverty report, and also perhaps talk to the UMSU president, Tanjit Nagra, who spoke earlier.

The—my comment was more to talk about how it's not—to say that scholarships and bursaries are—or, scholarships especially—are expanding access to education, is something that should be questioned and looked at more closely. In my experience on the University of Manitoba, a large proportion of scholarships are going to students who have no financial need for scholarships, and who are taking this money and using it for other purposes in their lives, but who don't actually need access to education.

So if the government is trying to play the line that scholarships and bursaries are increasing access to education, that's something that really needs to be questioned and looked at more closely.

Ms. Marcelino: It's not a question but more of a statement to thank you, Mr. Garinger, for your presentation. Every presentation—every presenter here has—every presenter has passionately raised the case or put the case to us, the elected representatives in Manitoba, and I believe my colleagues and the minister have heard them. And I believe in the—that they have a kind heart and they're mindful that education is the best investment, and that they will bring this presentation that we've heard to their caucus tomorrow and really re-evaluate Bill 31 and do away with it.

So thank you to you and to all the presenters.

* (20:30)

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Harney, for presenting.

We'll now move to the next presenter, and that is Ms. Brianne Goertzen.

Ms. Goertzen, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Ms. Brianne Goertzen (Private Citizen): It's just going to be oral this evening for you folks.

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

Ms. Goertzen: Okay. Before I start my actual written speech, I just want to acknowledge the very

powerful stories that have been shared here this evening from the presenters beforehand. I am proud to say that I do actually work alongside a great number of them, and I'm very proud to call them my colleagues.

Good evening. As some of you are aware, I do, in fact, work for the Canadian Federation of Students. And, yes, I am a duly elected school board trustee. And, yes, I am the vice-chair of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba. But I do not stand before you wearing any of these hats or with any of these titles. I stand before you as a mother, a mother who is missing yet another bedtime routine to stand before you tonight, a mother who works long days and most evenings to ensure my son does not experience the pains of poverty that I have in my life.

I am only able to provide for my son and my family because I went to university. And university did not come easy. In fact, it was damn near impossible to pursue. As I prepared for this evening, I pulled a piece I wrote last year. I wrote this piece out of frustration and fear as—that I had as a parent and what I thought may happen under this government. As I read it over, it occurred to me that this is a story that you need to hear.

Post-secondary education, just saying the words evokes many reactions from people from all walks of life. There are those who are able to afford to pursue it and who often take the privilege for granted, and there are those who cannot, the nameless, faceless youth who are all but forgotten when governments are looking to make cuts or raise tuition as our government just alluded to. They are the youth who struggle to gain access to post-secondary education. They are the students from low- and middle-income families who take on large amounts of debt—approximately \$20,000 now in Manitoba—to pursue post-secondary education here.

And, for youth born into poverty, those raised in working-poor households, debt aversion is the number one reason why they will not pursue post-secondary education. Why? Because they know, first-hand, the consequences of having no money, and it's hard to imagine surviving with the added debt.

I could spend the rest of my time listing study after study that demonstrates the socio-economic benefits of an educated society. I can spout stats that point to the labour market that demands post-secondary credentials for just an opportunity

to apply for a decent job. I can demonstrate the economic return on investment for an educated society, and I can even point to the ability of the often mischaracterized arts, social sciences and humanities graduates who actually demonstrate a solid earning potential.

But here's the thing. I know people will be reading this piece and listening here tonight, rolling their eyes, questioning the author of this piece. People who will assume that I'm a privileged student myself trying to justify my partying ways or looking for a free ride. Well, my friend, you are wrong.

I am a mother who has dedicated her life to social justice and grew up in a working-poor household, with a single mother. I worked and relentlessly pursued post-secondary education because I knew it was the only way for me to escape the same fate as my mother.

I excelled in my academics, and my mother knew that. Instead of being met with pride and praise for my success, she sat me down and said, with tears streaming from her eyes: I'm sorry. I can't pay for your education. I'm sorry, I wish I could. I wish things were different. I'm just so sorry.

She was proud of my accomplishments, but that pride was hindered by the reality she couldn't give me every possible opportunity, and it was up to me to take on debt or pursue that ever-elusive scholarship opportunity. Now here I am, gainfully employed and holding an honours bachelor of arts and a master of arts degree. And I am fighting every day for youth who come from similar walks of life as mine.

For any youth who is hindered by the implicit and explicit systemic barriers to access education, if legislation is eliminated that protects domestic students' tuition fees, and if this government decides to keep pace with the national average for tuition, I know I will have to sit my son down and tell him: I'm sorry. I can't pay for your education. I'm sorry. I wish I could, but I can't.

My husband and I live within our means and work very hard to provide for our son, but no matter how many more sacrifices we make, we will not be able to fund our son's education.

What is so startling about this piece is the fact that everything I was so fearful of is actually happening. It's happening in Bill 31. This legislation will slam the door of education for so many, students who come from similar backgrounds as my own.

Instead of fighting for our future, instead of being bold and truly investing in the people of this province, you hide behind your deficits and your rhetoric.

How many students did you talk to? Oh, wait. Let me rephrase that: How many students did your private consulting firm talk to? This government is clearly trying to dehumanize the impact of their regressive policy measures that is Bill 31. I have heard it before from this government: Oh, don't worry. We do care about students. We have the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative, but as we learned today, this government cares more about advertising about this ineffective program than they do about funding students.

The fact that you prioritize giving yourself sizable wage increases and increased political contribution limits your—to your funders really demonstrates who you really care about.

I will close with this: Education is a great equalizer in our world. It empowers and lifts people out of poverty. I know this, because it did it for me. Education saved my life. Education gave me opportunity. Education must remain a public good.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Goertzen, for that presentation.

I'll ask if there's any questions from the members this—members of the committee.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, I wanted to thank you, Ms. Goertzen, for the passion that you bring here today. And I think the part of your presentation, frankly, that touched me the closest to home, it was talking about—thinking to—about the future, about your children being able to attend post-secondary—get their post-secondary education. And as somebody with two little ones at home, that's certainly something that I've been thinking about as well.

And I guess I'm—wanted to ask you, you know, because I'm struggling with this myself, is trying to understand, you know, the current path that we're on in terms of increases to tuition. What sort of tuition, you know, would—do you think, that your children would have to pay if we were on this sort of path?

And I guess, you know, to bring it more close to home, you know, as a parent, how do you save? How do you put that money away? How do you start thinking about that in a real way that, you know, that will allow that to happen in the future?

Ms. Goertzen: Yes, for sure. Thank you for the question. I think that's the great struggle as a parent in today's economy, right? You're sitting there, trying to make ends meet. I don't take on credit. We pay for what we have. If it ain't broke, don't fix it—mentality in my household.

How do you save for your child's education when everything is going up? All your bills are going up and your wages are remaining stagnant. Tell me how that is possible without making more sacrifices? Is it the food on the table? Is it the roof over the head? Is it the gas in the car that gets you to the job that pays for the roof over your head?

And then by the time you get to the fact that your child right now—my child is a young child of the tender age of three and thinking, well, maybe I have time, maybe I have time to bank away some money. But, every month, it's a great orchestration to make sure enough money is coming in to cover the expenses that are going out.

And how am I going to cover the expense of approximately—within 10 years, if this legislation is passed, you're looking at a close to a \$50,000 in tuition for the life of a—of just an undergraduate degree. So, by the time he's 18—and God only knows where I'll be sitting at at that point in time.

* (20:40)

The other piece of this that nobody wants to talk about is the fact that households are carrying more debt than ever before. It's a dirty little secret in the Canadian economy that nobody wants to point out, and we're also straddling the next generation with debt before they even get out of the gate. That's not right. That's not fair. Education is the very foundation in which we build our future. It's the foundation in which we build our citizens of tomorrow. By denying them the opportunity to pursue education because of the family they were born into, that's not the government I want of Manitoba. That's not the Manitoban way, and I think that this is a shameful, shameful measure.

Ms. Marcelino: Thank you, Ms. Goertzen, for your presentation. I was—I became emotional because your presentation, as well as the rest, brought back memories of my student days. They say birds of the same feather flock together. I have many, many friends as poor as I am and we go hungry many a time. There was even one of our friends—they're dirt poor—but she persisted in finishing university. She became a certified public accountant, and several

instances she went hungry. If there's rice and salt, that's quite a feast for her. Yet, she persisted, and because of hard work and intelligence, she achieved her dream.

So our government, if only they will consider that there are many people struggling, yet, if given the chance, given the resources, the assistance, they will be productive citizens in—no matter what was their social background. They can still be really an—education will be an investment, and, if they're given the chance to be educated, the province that we're in will be far better. Our economy will be even sturdier than before.

So thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Marcelino, and that is all the time we have for question period. Thank you, Ms. Goertzen, for presenting.

We'll now move to the next presenter, and that's Mr. Matt McLean. Mr. McLean, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee?

Mr. Matt McLean (Private Citizen): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: And I think I can thank you for letting me know on Twitter that you were going to be here tonight. So I appreciate the heads-up. But, in any case, you can proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Mr. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, before I started, I'm kind of feeling a sense of déjà vu, because I remember when this legislation was originally brought in. I'm currently a staff person with CUPE and I'm here on that capacity. But then—when this legislation originally came in, in June of 2012, I was elected president of CUPE 3909 at the University of Manitoba, and I spoke and I was, you know, just reminding myself looking at the Hansard record of what I had to say at that time, and reminding myself that I came in very critical of the legislation, because I thought that there was enough holes you could drive a truck through. And now I'm here again, and I'm afraid those holes that before you could drive a truck through, now we're talking about a semi-trailer.

So, you know, I guess it's no surprise here that I am here to speak against this legislation, and I've submitted the brief today on behalf of the Canadian Union of Public Employees of Manitoba outlining our opposition to the proposed legislation.

CUPE, as you may know, is Canada's largest union with 650,000 members across the

country, including 26,000 here in Manitoba. CUPE represents workers in many fields: health care, school divisions, municipal services, social services, child care, public utilities, libraries, family emergency services and post-secondary education. In fact, post-secondary education is one of CUPE's largest areas of representation. We represent over 68,000 post-secondary education workers across Canada, mostly in universities, and we represent a large number of academic, technical, and support workers in the sector. And here in Manitoba, we represent academic, technical, and support workers at the University of Manitoba.

And we have serious concerns with Bill 31, and ask that the government reject the proposed legislation. CUPE believes strongly in the access to publicly provided higher education. We believe it is a human right. We echo the United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which calls on governments to progressively eliminate tuition fees altogether.

Building and maintaining a quality post-secondary education system should be a high and urgent government priority, because higher education plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals and in our economic, social, and cultural development.

Post-secondary education is an invaluable public good; it's important to everyone. The PSE sector makes a significant contribution to advancing Manitoba's social, cultural, and economic well-being, as well as its ability to innovate, respond to change, and maintain a vibrant and stable democracy.

Accessible higher education, provided by public institutions and supported by public funds, has great potential to lessen social and economic disparities, and to increase economic activity and growth in the province. Like many Manitobans, CUPE members have a direct interest in post-secondary education. Some have children attending university or college or will, someday. Others have partners, friends, and family members who are studying at a post-secondary institution.

Many of our members are themselves enrolled in post-secondary programs, and increased tuition fees will make post-secondary education less attainable for poor and working-class Manitobans, including by CUPE members and their families. And those who do attend will be saddled with ever-growing levels of debt that upon graduation, may prevent or delay students from buying homes, from getting married,

from having families, holding critical, if low-paying, jobs in the not-for-profit sector, and for some, it may prevent them from starting a business.

As such, CUPE is strongly opposed to the passage of Bill 31. We do not believe that raising tuition fees at the rate of 5 per cent plus inflation each year is the best interests of students, their families, and Manitobans. Nor do we support the deregulation of course-related fees. Course fees can create additional barriers for students to access post-secondary education. Under this government's plan, tuition costs could rise by 30 per cent or more over the time of a 4-year degree.

For a parent of a young child today who hopes to one day pay for their child's university education, this government's plan could literally triple the cost of tuition by the time their child reaches 18. And any increase to low-income bursaries and grants will be devalued dollar-for-dollar by tuition fee hikes. So we believe the most equitable approach to tuition fees is reductions for everyone and increased low-income support for those who need extra help.

It seems to us that while this government is very interested in raising Manitoba's tuition levels to match those found in other western provinces, it equally appears—at least, according to the KPMG report—to not have any interest in raising government investments in post-secondary education to match that of Saskatchewan or Alberta.

Indeed, the recent KPMG report makes it clear that a 5 per cent inflation tuition hike could be used as a balance against, quote, zero increases to historical provincial grants. While the government likes to call this balancing the cost curve, Manitobans know that this is actually about shifting the costs of post-secondary education away from the government, and onto already struggling students and their families.

This government's approach is not about balancing the budget; it is an ideological approach to how universities and colleges are funded and who has access to them. This is an agenda the Progressive Conservatives have pushed in the past, regardless of whether or not the economic circumstances have been good or bad.

So, in conclusion, we ask this government to reject this anti-student, anti-public education bill, and instead seek ways to improve access to education for all Manitobans.

Thank you. I'm more than willing to answer any questions you have.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. McLean, for your presentation.

I'll turn it over now to question period.

Do members of the committee have questions at all?

* (20:50)

Mr. Swan: Mr. McLean, thank you for coming down and presenting. I'll put the same question to you I did to another presenter. This PC government has capped any increases to the minimum wage with the cost of living, yet at the same time they're going to allow tuition to increase by the cost of living plus 5 per cent, not to mention, then, uncapping other fees.

What does that say to you about the priorities of this government?

Mr. McLean: It says to me that the priorities of this government are not in line with the priorities of hard-working Manitoba families, that their priorities are about shifting the burdens of paying for public services, like post-secondary education, on to individuals and away from the collective means of doing so through the taxation system. And yes, I think it's not in line with Manitobans' values and not an agenda that Manitobans support.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Any further questions from the committee?

Hearing none, I want to thank you very much, Mr. McLean, for coming out and presenting this evening.

We'll now proceed to the next presenter, which is Sadie-Phoenix Lavoie. And I hope I said that right.

Is it Ms. Lavoie or Ms. Lavoie?

Ms. Sadie-Phoenix Lavoie (Private Citizen): It depends on you if you're French or not.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. Well, Lavoie.

Do you have any written materials for distribution?

Ms. Lavoie: No, it's an oral report.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you very much.

Ms. Lavoie: I can also send it off to the committee as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed with your presentation, Ms. Lavoie.

Ms. Lavoie: Good evening.

Ojibwe spoken. Translation unavailable.

My name is Sadie-Phoenix Lavoie. I'm 23 years old, from Sagkeeng Anishinabe Nation, located in Treaty 1 Territory. I am a recent graduate at the University of Winnipeg.

I have been involved in the student movement for many years, as some of you may have seen me around, starting with the University of Winnipeg's Aboriginal Student Council; the Aboriginal Student Commissioner with the Canadian Federation of Students Manitoba; former president of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association; and the current national representative of the Circle of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Students—obviously, with the Canadian Federation of Students, national, the largest student union in Canada.

I know student issues better than this government claims. I know the issues surrounding lack of access to post-secondary, the lack of funding from the federal government and the lack of funding from this provincial government.

I have listened to domestic students, international students, students who are parents, indigenous students, low-income students, graduate students and even high school students. This government has not spoken to these students or, at least, doesn't absorb what is really being said by these students time and time again.

We formally hold a National Day of Action, on November 2nd, across Canada last year—and this government has not listened to the thousands of students that have shouted on the streets of Winnipeg; the students have spoken to their families, needing more help to pay the bills; the students who have starved in order to make debt payments; to the professors that have wondered why student marks have declined due to the fact that they were working multiple, precarious jobs to make those debt payments; to the students that come to Winnipeg to gain access to post-secondary, international and rural; to the students who have had to quit university due to lack of access to scholarships and bursaries that are solely based on financial need—nor have they listened to the student leaders who have countless communicated to them in this Legislative Assembly.

Currently, students pay, obviously, around \$20,000 in debt, as you've heard the statistics, on top

of books and supplies, who can take over a decade to pay off. This delays our abilities to be financially capable to raise a family and buy a house and care for our children's futures; hence, why I don't have a family, I don't have a house and I don't have any plan to do so.

International students pay more than double and/or triple that amount. Indigenous students get—don't get the supports that they get—need from the Province, especially low-income student housing, because this government is slashing operating grants for universities and colleges.

Seventy per cent of jobs need post-secondary education. Eighteen other countries offer little to no tuition fees. We treat post-secondary like we do health care—maybe not the health care of this province—or we should treat post-secondary like we do health care, but maybe not the health care of this Province does.

But Stats Canada reported that the national household debt in Manitoba rose by 247 per cent from 1999 to 2012. Manitoba student debt in Manitoba rose almost \$200 million over the same time period.

Things have negatively changed since this government was in—things have negatively changed since this government has been in power. I refuse to accept their experiences as valid to reflect the lives of students in—today. In my public opinion poll in Manitoba by the Canadian Association of University Teachers and the Canadian Federation of Students between November 7th to November 18th in 2012, found that over 75 per cent of students that are working negatively affects academic performance. Eighty per cent of Manitobans oppose tuition fee increases; 68 per cent of people in Manitoba think young people take on too much debt today, and the most important thing for government to do for post-secondary education is to lower tuition fees and address student debt.

This government does not care about us. Simple as that. You all probably been numb hearing all the stories and all this stuff, but I want you to know it, and I want you to feel it. They know that when the government decides to slash funding to post-secondary, they took away our tax—tuition tax rebate. They are planning to take away our funding to succeed in this economy. They want to take away our dignity to learn and work in this province. You are taking away our ability to make ends meet and

pay for our children, our future children, and at times, even our parents and siblings.

We are not rich cash cows. We are human beings with a purpose and a passion to learn; they are taking that from us. And we want to say, it will—we will say, not under our watch. My mom always told me, education is the key. Always learn, no matter what, and whatever your education is, no one will take that away from you. But what we see with this bill is that's exactly what this government is doing. It is taking away education—taking away. They can try and label us as apathetic, not driven to work, but look at the students that are yelling in these halls to demand to be taken seriously as taxpayers as well, as drivers of the economy, as true leaders of this province in all sectors of society.

We will teach you—them, the government, society—that we aren't the young people that will allow for this ignorance by government to continue. We want what is owed to us. We do not want an increase in tuition, and we've been saying this for years and years and years and years and years and years. We've been saying it in this room for hours and hours and hours. And are you actually going to do anything about it? Are you just going to hear it and numb yourself out and pretend that you have no humanity?

We want increased funding for post-secondary institutions. We want bursaries that don't tokenize marginalized students. We want funding for accessibility supports, mental health, daycare for students, regulation of international student fees, grants, grants and grants. The lack of accountability on this government to fund post-secondary education is embarrassing—embarrassing.

We need real investments by this government and not cuts to our futures. We are the future of this province, the future of the Manitoba economy. Why is this government not supportive of that? I see through their—your political rhetoric as does students. We are not pawns of this government to balance its books. The time to play games with our future needs to stop. Scrap Bill 31; address the systemic issues of post-secondary education, because we didn't ask for this. You didn't even talk to us. We will not accept this as progressive as you claim yourselves, PCs. We will not accept this as an investment as you claim it to be. We will not accept this as moving forward together, because it's simply not. You're leaving us behind.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Lavoie, for your presentation.

We will now proceed with question period. Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Swan: Thank you, Ms. Lavoie, for coming down and presenting to us this evening and for sharing your passion. I know there are still some Canadians and Manitobans—there might even be some members of the government caucus who just assume that any indigenous student has their university for free. Can you enlighten the committee on the reality that faces indigenous students, and enlighten everybody about some of the particular challenges for indigenous students.

Ms. Lavoie: For sure, and I'll try to keep it short. I am a survivor of genocide, and that has a cost. Simple as that. I did go to university and I did get sponsored by the PSSSP by the federal government, but raising tuition still increases our—increases our inaccessibility to attend post-secondary because more and more students are being denied by the federal program.

* (21:00)

We've been lobbying, as a Canadian Federation of Students, on the federal government in that regard, but because students are being denied access to post-secondary education through PSSSP, they then have to rely on paying it for themselves. To assume that we're getting this for free as indigenous survivors is disrespectful on this land of Treaty 1—as simple as that.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): You've been pretty passionate, thank you. Maybe you can help us with what we can do in terms of improving the number of indigenous students who get to post-secondary and who complete their degree.

Ms. Lavoie: Yes, for sure. I just want to caution in terms of tokenizing me as an indigenous student. I represent a lot of students within the Canadian Federation of Students. I talk a lot in terms of all students that are affected by post-secondary education but, also, in regard to indigenous students.

You know, I grew up on a First Nations reserve. I have dealing with intergenerational trauma of residential schools. I can go on about the fact that I've dealt with rape on campuses. I can talk about the fact that I'm dealing with discrimination as being a two-spirited woman. I can go on and on and on, you

know, but the fact that I am here today is to show that I have a responsibility to not only indigenous students across Canada, but all students. I am here—I've defied the odds that have built up barriers by this government, by the federal government, and I'm telling you that I'm pissed off, and it's unacceptable in any way to raise anything that creates a barrier for students, all students.

And, also, the fact that, you know, we talk about, oh, education is free for indigenous students, what is so wrong with free tuition? Eighteen other countries do it. Somehow Canada just can't be on board but calls itself progressive and calls itself developed. That doesn't sound like developing to me. Let's give free education to all students.

Let's start there.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Lavoie.

Is there any other questions from the members of the committee?

Seeing none, then I want to thank you for coming out this evening to make your presentation.

We'll move to next presenter, which is Mr. Kevin Settee. Mr. Kevin Settee? Okay, we will move him to the bottom of the list.

Next presenter is Peyton Veitch. *[interjection]* Thanks. Mr. Veitch, did I say your last name right?

Mr. Peyton Veitch (Private Citizen): You did. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks for the whisper, whoever gave me that.

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

Mr. Veitch: No, I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. You can proceed with your presentation, whenever you are ready.

Mr. Veitch: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and I truly appreciate the opportunity to speak to the committee this evening. And like many others, I want to acknowledge the very personal and, at times, heart-rending contributions of fellow students, which represents a small sample of the thousands of personal stories of students in this province and represents just a small sample of students who will be disadvantaged and harmed in the event that Bill 31 is passed.

I'm speaking tonight against Bill 31 as a Winnipegger, a University of Winnipeg alumnus and former student association president and the national treasurer of the Canadian Federation of Students, Canada's oldest and largest student organization representing 650,000 college and university students across the country, including 44,000 in institutions across Manitoba.

When I think about Bill 31 and the impact it will have on students, my mind's eye pictures the food bank at the University of Winnipeg. It may interest members of the committee to know that prior to 1991 there wasn't a single campus food bank in existence in the entire country. However, with the federal funding retrenchment and corresponding increase in tuition fees in the mid-1990s, we have now arrived at a place where virtually every university in the country has one.

The cause of this problem is not complex. As tuition fees increase faster than the cost of food, transportation, rent and other essentials, many students struggle to feed themselves.

In 2016, Meal Exchange Canada surveyed 4,500 students, at five different campuses, across Canada and found that 39 per cent, two in five students, are food insecure, meaning that they're going to classes without nutritious food. We cannot normalize the fact that thousands of students are attending class on empty stomachs, simply to access a post-secondary education that's required for 70 per cent of all new jobs.

As an executive at the UWSA, it was impossible to avoid this reality. Every Friday, students and community members streamed into the Bulman Student Centre to receive food parcels from our food bank. I invite members of the committee to visit the UWSA food bank or one at any other institution across the province and ask the students who utilize it how they'll manage a 5 per cent, plus inflation, tuition fee hike.

For the avoidance of doubt, let me be abundantly clear: More students will be going to class hungry if Bill 31 is passed. Some will be forced to drop out of studies entirely, but many others will struggle and scrape by because of the aforementioned necessity of post-secondary qualifications to succeed in today's labour market. It's not a coincidence that prior to the 1990s campus food banks were unheard of. This was a time when tuition fees were low, public funding made up over 80 per cent of institutions' budgets and

minimum wages were proportionally higher when the cost of living is taken into account.

Food insecurity and the exacerbation of it is not the only threat posed by Bill 31. For a government that's obsessed with reducing the Province's debt obligations, they're remarkably sanguine about the accumulation of consumer debt. Canada is currently the most indebted country in the G7 on a per capita basis, with a debt-to-income ratio of 171 per cent.

For every dollar a Canadian earns, they owe \$1.71 to creditors. This ever-expanding bubble is ticking time bomb for our economy and a massive liability for families who are already barely keeping their heads barely above water.

We know this rampant indebtedness is not the result of people living above their means. It's the fault of stagnant wages, a lack of affordable housing and rising tuition fees.

Collectively, over \$28 billion in public student debt is owed by Canadians to all levels of government, which doesn't even account for the private lines of credit obtained by those who fall through the cracks of the student aid system.

In Manitoba, this—the average student debt upon graduation is an already-considerable \$20,000. By allowing tuition fees to rise by upwards of 30 per cent over the next few years and deregulating ancillary fees, as has been mentioned, this is an average that will balloon.

What is the impact of student debt on the people of Manitoba? It delays major life decisions, including buying a house, a car, starting a family or taking on entrepreneurial risk and establishing a business. It impacts the career choices of individuals, leading many to take jobs that may not align with their skills but will help pay down their debt in the most expedient way. And it will dissuade people from pursuing post-secondary education all together, particularly from debt-averse communities, including indigenous people and new Canadians.

By freezing funding to universities and colleges, eliminating the tuition tax rebate and now proposing a 5 per cent, plus inflation, tuition fee hike annually, this government appears intent on dragging us backwards to a time before the Second World War when post-secondary institutions were finishing schools for the rich and the privileged. A million dollars here or there for scholarships and bursaries is nothing to crow about when this government cut \$55 million out of the post-secondary—out of

post-secondary spending by axing the tuition tax rebate.

Fifty-five million dollars is enough to eliminate tuition fees for every single college and vocation student in this province. Instead, students are being asked to fend for crumbs.

* (21:10)

Before I conclude, I'd like to read from a report that, while authored 45 years ago, rings just as true today, and it's as follows: Faced with the imperative need of education for survival, universal access to higher education should seem not a benevolent dream but a categorical necessity. These words come from none other than a report commissioned in 1972 by the Ontario Progressive Conservative government of William Davis. How far this current government is straying from the conservatism of Bill Davis and Duff Roblin, that recognized the social ties that bind each of us to one another, that recognized the obligation those with means have to support those with none to a KPMG conservatism that understands the price of everything and the value of nothing.

My message to the government members of this committee is this: Turn away from this morally empty vision. Withdraw Bill 31 and work with students to bring about a universally accessible system of post-secondary education where all students, not just those from wealthy and well-connected families, can study and build their futures here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Veitch, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Well thank you very much, Mr. Veitch. That was a well-thought-out, powerfully delivered presentation, very much appreciated by this committee.

You'd touched on it—I think, a little bit—you talked about debt and the impacts that has on not only students but our larger society. I think you mentioned it briefly, that the KPMG report recommends the removal of the interest-free portion of the student debt.

I'm just wondering if you can make the connection there, between this increase to tuition that students will be facing, and not just facing in

their first year but their second year, third year, fourth year and throughout their academic careers, and potentially losing that tax-free—or sorry, that interest-free portion of the student loan that they might have to take out to access post-secondary.

Mr. Veitch: Thank you for the question.

Well, in fact, I did not specifically reference the proposal to reintroduce interest rates onto Manitoba student loans, but I'm glad you've given me the opportunity to address this in some detail. British Columbia is about to become the fifth province to eliminate interest rates on provincial student loans. And students here in Manitoba—in fact, a number of presenters in this room—were involved in a campaign to eliminate interest rates on Manitoba student loans back in 2014. That involved thousands of postcards being signed, being delivered to the then-minister of Education, and highlighting the fact that interest rates on student loans actually result in those who cannot afford to pay for the full cost of their tuition up front, actually paying more for the same education.

It is an entirely regressive measure that forces those from working- and middle-class families to pay more for the same education than those who have, you know, the opportunity or the privilege to pay for their education up front. And I think it's particularly interesting that in a time when the federal government can provide interest-free loans to a company like Bombardier, that KPMG is contemplating reintroducing interest rates on some of the most marginalized people in our society.

And I think the point that I want to make about debt is that it's all about putting the risk and the burden onto the individual. I think we're much better off pooling that risk, adequately publicly funding our post-secondary institutions, so that students don't have to worry about, you know, mortgage interest rates, and student loan debt obligations, and car loans, and all of the other things that contribute to such a significant burden after they graduate.

People shouldn't have to take on mortgage-sized debt levels just to pursue a post-secondary education, which isn't a luxury but's a necessity for success in today's economy.

Mr. Gerrard: I'd like to ask about the government's—it's not in this bill, but it's related to funding of education—the government's decision to eliminate the tuition rebate and how, when you cumulatively look at the various things that this

government's done, that they're adding up to creating a much greater burden for students. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry. That got to the question quicker than I thought he would.

Mr. Veitch.

Mr. Veitch: And thank you for the question, and I didn't have a chance to address the portion of the previous member's question about the tuition rebate. I think that the worst element of the decision to cut the tuition rebate is not even the fact that rebate program itself will cease to exist, although it is a program that helped many students stay in Manitoba and also defray the cost of studying post-secondary education, but the fact that \$55 million that was previously being spent on post-secondary education has not been reinvested in any meaningful way towards supporting students. If that \$55 million had been reallocated towards creating a state-of-the-art upfront public bursary program, as Newfoundland has done, for example, where they've actually, dollar for dollar, eliminated provincial student loans in favour of nonrepayable student grants; if it was put towards, you know, eliminating tuition fees for college and vocational students; if it was put towards a global tuition fee freeze and reduction, I think that would be a much more justifiable elimination of the tuition rebate. But as it stands, students are being faced with funding cuts to their institutions, they're being faced with funding cuts to back-end forms of financial assistance that they can't access part of during their studies as well, and now they're being faced with, you know, massive tuition fee increases and ancillary fee increases as well. So it really is an onslaught, and we really need to stop this bill.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Veitch. Time for question period is over. And I want to thank you for coming in and presenting this evening.

The next presenter we have is Coty Zachariah from the Canadian Federation of Students.

Mr. Zachariah, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee this evening?

Mr. Coty Zachariah (Canadian Federation of Students): Just an oral presentation.

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

Mr. Zachariah: Aniin. Hello. Bonjour. I also want to acknowledge that we're on Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Metis nation.

[Mohawk spoken]

I was just speaking Mohawk, for those of you who don't speak Mohawk, and I said: Hello, everyone. He speaks in the wind is my Mohawk name. My roots come from North Preston, Nova Scotia and from the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte, also known as Tyendinaga territory.

I am from the Turtle clan, and part of our communal role is wisdom keeping and leadership. My name is Coty Zachariah, and I am the first Afro-indigenous student to be elected national chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students. I'm a second-year student at Trent University, member Local 71 of the federation.

As you can guess, I'm a student in—from Ontario, where we have the largest tuition crisis in the country. I represent over 650,000 students, 44,000 here in Manitoba, and, as you've heard today, some of these stories, very personal, some of them very statistical, but all of them very much from the heart.

I'm trying to 'prevett'—trying to prevent the same debt reality from happening here in Manitoba as we have in Ontario. I'm here to say that this government must scrap Bill 31. These hikes are an attack not only on students on—in this province, but their families, as well, that jointly bear the burden of unnecessary student debt.

These cuts and these tuition fee increases won't have the same impact on everyone. For students and families with the means to pay for their education up front and in full, deregulated course fees may not seem like it's a huge difference. But it is for those students and families for whom these increases could mean greater food insecurity, forgoing future plans to own a home or start a business, start a family and questioning 'rether'—whether attending post-secondary education is something they can even pursue at all.

It is to those students and to those families that I speak to first and foremost. We are here for those students and families, and we will oppose these restrictions to access to education. But I also speak to those students and families who may have greater means to pay for education, despite these massive increases.

Increased access to education for all benefits all. Just as we have previously prioritized basic health care in elementary and secondary school as public goods worthy of public investment, in an economy

where seven out of 10 jobs now require some form of post-secondary education, this level of education must also be worthy of public investment, not cuts.

And as an aside, students are united with families, teachers and nurses who are also seeing cuts to their public institutions. I want to apply myself to succeed in my education. I want to contribute to our economy. I want to be part of building a more just and inclusive society. And my ability to do this is helped by public investment, not cuts.

*(21:20)

I come from one of those families who could not afford to save up to send me to post-secondary school. My family was prioritizing putting food on the table. In fact, I'm the first in my family to attend college and university. If not for public assistance programs like the PSSSP program, which helps indigenous learners access federal funds needed to attend post-secondary institutions, I may never have gone to college and realized my full potential and purpose.

I am happy that this program exists, but because of the 2 per cent cap on the program since 1996, the funds allocated are not sufficient enough to keep up with the rejuvenating indigenous population.

I have several family members who were denied access to those same funds because the pot was not big enough to go around. I am sure that it is no secret or shock to this government or people in this room that indigenous populations are the fastest growing demographic in the country.

Again, it is great that programs like the PSSSP exist, but with tuition hikes like Bill 31, that impact will be that even less funds will be available to support indigenous learners as a result of increasing fees.

Last year, I was honoured to become a father to a beautiful little girl. I had to drop down to being a part-time student, take on a full-time job load to support my family, because tuition and text books, like family, is expensive. I had to make that decision to be there for my family, and I do not regret that one bit. But I wish that I did not have to lengthen my pursuit of higher education to start a family or question if I could even afford that decision of bringing life into this world while trying to better myself.

My daughter was born prematurely and has been fighting for her life since day one. I do not want her

to have to stand here in 18 years to have to fight the same fights for education access that myself and my colleagues are here for today. That is unacceptable to me and part of the reason that I am further committed to reducing the barriers to education.

Education is a right; it's not a privilege. Investing in students is investing in the economy and investing in Canada. I do not have the time to include the stats to prove that, but I would be more than willing to happy—or—more than willing and happy to provide those stats to any member in this room as a follow-up.

As someone who is considering moving to this province of Manitoba for my grad studies because tuition is lower than my home province of Ontario, I am now reconsidering, because allowing Bill 31 to pass is setting a dangerous precedent of regressive policy making in Manitoba. I am not the only student or potential student that is reconsidering coming to this province to pursue higher education. A financial attack on students like Bill 31 is a financial attack on students across the country. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Zachariah.

I'll now begin the question period. Do members of the committee have questions?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Zachariah, for coming, obviously, a considerable distance to express your opinion.

Certainly, we follow with some interest what happens in Ontario, because they have had some tuition issues as well, as have many other provinces. So I appreciate your insight as to what's happening there, and we'll take that under consideration.

Mr. Swan: Mr. Zachariah, I want to welcome you to Manitoba. It's an honour to have you here to speak to us.

Can you expand a little bit more for Manitobans who are concerned about rising tuitions what has been the Ontario experience? And what have been the biggest challenges for people who want to pursue post-secondary education in Ontario?

Mr. Zachariah: Thank you for the question.

I've been here for the past two months talking to students in Manitoba about what these cuts could mean, and it means the same thing that it does in Ontario: increased usage of food banks, students having to decide whether they can put food on the

table or buy a text book that's needed to pass the course which they're already spending thousands of dollars for.

Tuition problems are the same across the country. The rates may be different, but it's all about access. Access to education is a huge—it's an investment in people. It's an investment in Manitoba, as well as in Ontario, as well as in Nova Scotia, as well as in BC. So that's the same message that I've been—or that I've been hearing from—like, from my time in Ontario and my time here.

As you know, in Ontario, there's a new program that came out this year. People call it free tuition. It's not free tuition; it is a grant, a needs-based grant for families that could not afford it. Students in Ontario lobbied that for years, and we saw that as a victory to increasing that access to education for families like mine who could not afford to send people to school.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, as I asked the last presenter, we had a tuition rebate program here which seemed to be pretty successful as part of the overall package of supports for students.

I don't know what is happening across the country and whether you've got any comments as that as a part of the package of supports that's needed for students. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Zachariah. Thank you.

Mr. Zachariah: Thank you for the question.

I think, you know, these piecemeal kind of band-aid solutions to education that—to supporting education aren't the answer; you know, they're maybe a short-term fix, but the long-term problem is it's still very expensive to go to school. It's still not accessible. It's still a problem, you know. Time after time, we're seeing these little grants programs that are introduced for a few amount of years, and they may service a few, but they're still not fully accessible. There are still barriers for people to accessing those, so it's still not working.

The ultimate—we need to start thinking about a grander vision of free education. And I'm sure that that makes some people uneasy, but that—if it's possible in 18 other countries, if it's possible in the State of New York, if it's possible in state—like, I think San Francisco is not a state, but a city—why isn't it possible here? You know, we say that we're a progressive country. We can do better. We can definitely do better. We can be a leading force in North America.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Zachariah. If there's no further questions from the committee, then I thank you for your presentation.

We're going to proceed to the next member on my list. I have Devin Woodbury. Is Devin Woodbury here? Okay, we'll move him to the end of the list.

Next is Brendan Gali. Brendan Gali? We will move him to the end of the list, as well.

And then next is Annie Beach.

Ms. Beach, do you have any written materials to share with the committee this evening?

Ms. Annie Beach (Private Citizen): Nope.

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

Ms. Beach: All right. Well, first of all, thank you to the committee for allowing me to share my story this evening on tuition increases and Bill 31 as a whole and how it affects me, my family and families like my own.

I am currently attending the University of Manitoba. I am in my third year in the fine arts program. I am lucky enough to be studying something that I'm skilled at and also something I'm very passionate about. And I value my three years at the University of Manitoba, and I have learned lots—many things that I can carry with me in my future career and life.

I also realize how lucky I am to have made it as far as I have in my education. I am the first of my immediate family to attend a post-secondary education. I'm also the first of my family to be on my way to achieving a degree with honours. And, in addition, I help students on campus to better their experience in the university.

I'm the indigenous student rep on the School of Fine Arts Students Association, I'm also the fine arts rep for the University of Manitoba Aboriginal Students Association, and I'm also the Aboriginal students' commissioner with CFS-Manitoba. And I realize my privileges and I use that privilege to help my fellow students and those who may not be—have—be as fortunate as myself. And that is why I'm here today, to help be a voice for students of all, including myself.

As I previously said, I'm the first of my immediate family to attend post-secondary. I grew up fortunate enough to have the support of both of my parents, despite them separating when I was

very young. I had the best—had their best interests in mind and always put—they always put me and my siblings ahead of themselves. They encouraged me to do best—do my best in grade school. They taught me to value the opportunity to receive an education, and they constantly reminded me of the importance of attending post-secondary education and that receiving a post-secondary education is a necessity.

Both of my parents struggle to make ends meet, both being single parents, my mother raising my older brother and sister, and my dad raising me and my younger brother. They struggled as single parents, as low-income earners, because they lack post-secondary education. They both knew that first-hand how difficult it was to survive, to provide, and without an education, without a well-paying job. They wanted to ensure that I knew how necessary it is to attend post-secondary, to get a degree and to live a better quality of life than they did.

My parents had to overcome a lot and it was in no way their fault for not attending post-secondary. My mother and her family are status Cree from Peguis First Nation. My great-grandmother Ida [*phonetic*] and my grandmother Nancy [*phonetic*] both attended residential schools, and the trauma and intergenerational trauma took a toll on my mom and her family. My mom and her brothers and sisters were living a life of poverty and drugs. My mother met my dad and she luckily escaped the circle of—cycle of poverty. She got a job as a cashier at a grocery store and she slowly bettered her life. She still struggled, however. My mom was a single parent raising my older brother and sister on her own, while also paying rent, groceries and for her bus pass to get to and from work. She was doing this all with having just only part-time hours. I have witnessed her scrounge and save to afford the luxury of a jar of peanut butter and sleeping on the couch in the living room of her apartment so that my brother and sister could have their own bedrooms.

My mother has been working for 17 years at her job, and only in April was she finally offered a full-time position with a living wage. It took 16 and a half years of hard work and sacrifice for my mom to receive work and a wage that she can comfortably live off of.

My father's great grandparents were first generation Ukrainian immigrants. My father and his brother grew up with very little. My dad—my dad tells me stories of his grandmother teaching them

how to not be wasteful. Him and his family could not afford to be wasteful. My dad worked as a teenager while attending high school, pumping gas so he could afford basic things that his parents struggled to provide him. He eventually started working full time at a courier company. The hours were long and he would start early and end work late. The work was strenuous and physically demanding. He had to raise my younger brother and I on his own, but due to his long hours he saw very little of us as kids and we spent most of our time with our babysitters. In addition to that, he would have to make dinner, clean the house and help us with school work when he had the time to see us.

My parents sacrificed for me and all that they wanted is the best for me, and for me to live a good quality life. I feel like all Manitobans can relate. If you're a Manitoban parent, aunt, uncle, brother, sister, you can relate to wanting the best for your children, your nieces and nephews, your brothers and sisters. Manitoban parents can relate to wanting what is best for their children. They want their children to live a better life than they did, they want them to provide a better opportunity for their children, opportunities they weren't fortunate enough to have themselves growing up. That includes encouraging their children to attend post-secondary, get a degree, and get a job that pays a living wage. This is something all Manitoba parents can relate to.

It isn't just parents feeling obligated that their children receive an education. It is a fact. University Canada says that 70 per cent of new jobs require a degree. If Manitobans want the best for their children, their nieces and nephews, their brothers and sisters, then this provincial government must invest in post-secondary education for future Manitobans to have a good quality life free from poverty. Post-secondary education is the answer.

Indigenous students face a lot of obstacles from attending post-secondary institutions. Like my mother, we often suffer from intergeneration trauma, and we suffer from the cultural genocide limiting us from achieving a better quality life.

As an indigenous student, I receive support from my band to post-secondary. Believe me, I realize how tremendous that financial help is in helping me attend university, but it is at the cost of losing my language, culture and traditions. Not all indigenous students have the luxury and benefits of having their band support them through university—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Beach, just, sorry, the time allotted for your presentation is over, but if it's the will of the committee, I think we can use some of the question period to allow you to finish up.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Beach: I guess I'll wrap up saying overall the provincial government needs to invest in post-secondary education. The provincial government needs to keep post-secondary education accessible as post-secondary education is a right and the key to avoiding a life in poverty. Basically, the opportunity to have the option for—to attend university if Bill 31 is to be passed, it will create a barrier and increase tuition fees for those who struggle and whose parents have struggled alongside them and must remain struggling, remain in a life of poverty with less opportunity barely making it by with strenuous work, long hours, being paid on the wage that they can't support a family.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Beach, for your presentation.

We'll continue now with the question period. Is there anyone from the committee that wishes to ask a question?

Mr. Wishart: I would like to thank you for your presentation, certainly you managed to demonstrate with your own personal experience the value of a good education, and we all know that. Certainly I appreciate the time.

Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, Annie, for the presentation. I love your energy. And when you've come to the Legislature to express yourself, I think that really comes through, and your passion for what you're doing which I think is, you know, is especially powerful when you talk about, you know, your circumstances that you've come from, the sacrifices that your parents made to allow you to pursue that, and where you come to now.

* (21:30)

So, you know, again, a question that I've asked other presenters, but I think it might be helpful to have your perspective on is what the impact of, you know, again, we talked about, you know, over \$300 this year, but increasing over the degree, you know, maybe as high as 30 per cent of higher. What that

increase would mean to, you know, to allowing somebody like yourself to access post-secondary education, follow your dream and, you know, make a better life for yourself. How would that impact your ability to access this post-secondary education?

Ms. Beach: I guess I just—I think about my little brother. He's only a few years younger than me, and he's struggling to just graduate high school. With all the support that he has with—from his family and whatnot, it's still hard for him. If he were to one day graduate high school and then want to attend post-second education, that could be in a few years' time, and tuition could raise 30 per cent more in that time, and that would probably be out of the question by that point.

And so, for him to already struggle with just graduating high school to maybe potentially go to university and having this barrier of increasing tuition of however much it would raise in that many years, that it would be just out of the question completely, which is unfortunate to think that the opportunities I have, my brother might not have in a few years.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes, thanks so much. I love your enthusiasm, and let's turn it around in terms of this—what this government's doing is creating barriers. If we thought about it the other way, what would you do to help enable your brother to go to post-secondary education?

Ms. Beach: I guess if you're to reverse it and take away the barriers, then it would mean that my brother would have the same opportunities that I do and that maybe him and I one day would have—be able to provide education for our children one day without having to worry about how much it will cost, and, hopefully, them having a better life in addition to not only us, my brother and I, but in the future, possibly our kids having even better opportunities here in Manitoba for education.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Beach.

Are there any other questions from the members of the committee?

Seeing none, I want to thank you very much for your presentation this evening.

We're going to now move to the next presenter or at least one who's hopefully here, Joseph Wasylycia-Leis. Joseph Wasylycia-Leis? We'll move him to the end of the list.

Laura Cameron. Laura Cameron? We'll leave her to the end of the list.

Lauren Webster? Ms. Webster, do you have any written materials to share with the committee this evening?

Ms. Lauren Webster (Private Citizen): I do not.

Mr. Chairperson: No? Then you can proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Ms. Webster: Hi. Thank you for allowing me to come here. My name's Lauren Webster, and I am a second-year student at university of Webster—University of Winnipeg. I'm a little nervous, so please forgive me—never spoken in front of a committee.

I am studying psychology and urban and inner-city studies at U of Winnipeg, and I've always wanted to study psychology, and I've been unable to afford to be able to do that until I immigrated here.

I actually immigrated from the United States, and if you've paid any attention to the United States, we treat secondary education as a business, and that's how it's run. The rate that you have to pay for secondary education has gone up 167 per cent within the last generation. In 1997, it was \$6,408 per year to attend a four-year university, and now it is \$20,000 for one year. And that's what we're looking at for one generation—one generation—not to be able to afford post-secondary education with this bill.

* (21:40)

You're not looking ahead. You're not thinking about the next generation, and that's not fair. Bill 31 does not take in account what happens next. You're letting other people dictate who can have and who cannot have a secondary education. I waited 40 years to be able to get an education, to be able to study what I wanted to study. I changed countries to be able to get my education, and now you're telling me that I can't have that.

Right now, I'm lucky because I can work part-time as a tutor at the student university. I'm a peer tutor. It's a fantastic job and I'm exceedingly lucky. Most of my fellow students are not that lucky. They work full time. These grants and bursaries that you all like to trot out, that's all based on your academic performance. How do you propose that we get the 4.0 that we need to get these scholarships and these bursaries if we're working full time? It's a struggle for me to do that doing part time. You're putting unfair restrictions on students by Bill 31. If I

have to, with Bill 31, I'm looking at not being able to start my career until I'm 50 because I will have to go to full-time work. I'll have to stop a term, do full-time work to be able to afford it.

College is not a business. It is for the public good. I've come from a place where college is a business and that's how it's run. They're rated and they're ranked and most of the people who do go to college take out loans and those loans—you get them from a lovely place called Sallie Mae—sounds like an aunt that gives you cookies, sounds lovely. If you don't pay Sallie Mae back, Sallie Mae can take your house. Is that what we want here in Manitoba? A company that can take your house, because those interest rates increase every year. The jobs are not there to pay for the interest rates.

You're thinking short term, and one thing I don't understand about this bill is that you're saying, well, we have to keep up with the other provinces. Why? Do we let other provinces dictate the laws we pass? Do we send our infrastructure budget to Quebec to see if they approve it before we do? What does it matter what other provinces are doing? We're our own province, are we not? Do we let other provinces dictate our laws? Do we let auditors dictate our laws? Because that's what we're doing so far. Bill 31 is letting a bunch of auditors tell you what to do. Why? Because they said so?

Bill 31 puts undue hardship onto students. I don't think I should have to wait 'til I'm 50 to start my career, and Bill 31 is going to do that. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Webster, for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for Ms. Webster?

Mr. Swan: Ms. Webster, thank you, and, you know, listening to everybody presenting tonight, it is a reason why it is so valuable to have this democratic process, because we're hearing everybody opposed to the bill but with a lot of different reasons and different nuances and I really want to thank you for coming and sharing your perspective, which is just a little bit different, and I hope will give the government caucus members reason to think and to withdraw Bill 31.

So you're a second-year student. Best-case scenario, how many years of school do you expect that you have left to get to where you want to go, and then worst-case scenario, Bill 31 passes, how long do you see that path becoming?

Ms. Webster: Right now, with the two years I already have in, I'm looking at another five years and, worst-case scenario, I'm looking probably into my 50s being able to graduate with a master's in psychology and with a bachelor of arts in urban and inner-city studies, probably 52ish. Right now, I'm 43—so, seven, eight years.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for your presentation and for sharing your story. You are in the right place to be studying psychology because we've got a shortage of psychologists so we need people.

I'm curious as to why you chose Manitoba, but I also comment that not only do we need psychologists, but they're—play a critical role in helping deal with mental and brain health issues and we recognize that in my party, the Liberal party. We've been promoting actually putting many psychological services under Medicare so that they could be better funded and better supported. So, yes.

What would you do the opposite of what this government is doing to enable you to get through quicker?

Ms. Webster: That was a two-part question. I married a Manitoban and so I immigrated here and, to help me get through, (a) don't pass Bill 31; and (2) I would lower tuition rates.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there any additional questions coming from the committee?

Seeing none, I want to thank you, Ms. Webster, for your presentation, and we'll now proceed to the next presenter.

I'll now call on Wesley Fallis. Wesley Fallis? We'll add him to the end of the list.

And then the next presenter is Ayla Hamilton. Ms. Hamilton, do you have any written materials you'd like to share with the committee this evening?

Ms. Ayla Hamilton (Private Citizen): I don't, sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. You can proceed with your presentation, whenever you're ready.

Ms. Hamilton: Thank you for your time today. I want to start by expressing my immense amount of respect for our current government, as well as the opposition.

I personally know members from both caucuses and have come to learn what an 'arguous' process the government is and that choosing to serve in our Legislature is not an endeavour for the faint-hearted.

I have a generous amount of respect for all who choose to do so.

As you all know, each decision made, each bill passed, must be done with great care and the process must, at all times, have the best interest of Manitobans at the focus throughout the whole, entire process. I hope to help you understand how Bill 31 will have a profound long-term negative effect on Manitobans.

I come from a single-parent household that has spent 18 years saving for my post-secondary education. I'm not—I'm telling you that because we are not a wealthy family but because my mother is a painfully principled person who, in spite of working 70 hours a week and pinching pennies to give us all that we have, she believes that if she can afford to pay for extra-curricular activities, that my brother and I should not ask for government assistance for our education.

She is sold on the conviction that because we, personally, know dozens of families who need the assistance to educate their talented and hard-working children, Bill 31 would have a profound effect on many Manitoban families, including mine, and it would be the beginning of the erosion of the foundation of security that we stand upon.

Now you all know fully well that education is one of the foundations on which our society is built upon. The advancement and privileges we enjoy as Manitobans has education as one of its founding pillars. Education continues to create a foundation for students' lives and for future Manitobans.

We understand the need to trim a budget and we understand that prudent financial management is crucial in sustaining healthy, vibrant province that we live in. Us, as students, understand that fully and we appreciate the government's efforts to do so.

That said, we still feel that any further cuts to post-secondary educational assistance is a slippery slope that none of us want to lose our footing on.

Already in Manitoba there are so many students who can't afford to further their education for reasons they personally have no power over. They have simply been born into a position that prevents them from achieving their full potential.

* (21:50)

If we consider what we could accomplish if every single Manitoban could achieve their personal full potential—now I know that's a utopia dream, but

to dismiss the whole effort and endeavour to provide opportunities for people with less privilege simply because we will never achieve a utopia is taking us back to 16th-century France.

Now, I'm not saying that we're going to have a revolution if we cut assistance to post-secondary education—maybe close to it—but it smacks of the privileged class, the let-them-eat-cake thinking, and sends a strong message to decent, salt-of-the-earth, hard-working Manitoban families. It's saying that we care not for the struggles of those born into less privilege. We send a message that education is reserved for the rich and privileged class.

I could have been there. As I mentioned earlier, I come from a single-parent household. My father is simply not capable of contributing financially. His struggles are the by-product of the cycle caused by residential schools and the whole bag of issues that was handed to Canada's indigenous people. He struggles with depression, alcoholism, anxiety, and there are many who say that my brother and I should receive assistance because of that. But because we were raised in an environment of social justice, my mom, due to her unyielding principles, would never apply for assistance because she sees too many people who, in her words, really need it. Instead, she gifted us with a 18-year-long dinner-table study on how hidden poverty is in Manitoba and how profoundly education can change that.

There were times when our single-income family had to sacrifice in order to survive and acquire the basics. But one line my mom never cut from was the budget for saving for post-secondary education. It was amazing where we could find fat to trim from the family budget so that we didn't have to cut saving for school. We also looked at ways to increase my mom's income, and often that meant that we had to help more at home so that she could work more. And we would do it together. My mother included us, as children, in real-life problem solving, and I wonder if our government would be willing to do the same: involving Manitobans in the problem solving. I swear I'm actually going somewhere with this.

I would be willing to give my word that I could endeavour to find a group of students who'd be willing to assist in researching areas to assist government in finding an alternative to cutting assistance to higher education. We could assist in researching alternative areas to cut fat from the budget or alternative solutions to economic

development and perhaps even create a model for how post-secondary students can help in that creatively.

You see, students are much more driven than you give us credit for. We want to excel, and we want to be a part of this society. Typically, post-secondary students tend to take their citizenship pretty seriously. We're there getting higher education because we want to excel in areas we are passionate about, and for the majority of us, this education will create a basis of knowledge that we hope will contribute to the 'vitality' of Manitoba's future, so why not engage us in the process now?

I want to hold up new Manitobans in the group of people that we will risk alienating with Bill C-31. Due to the fund my brother and I created to assist in the cost of reuniting new Manitobans with their children back at home in the Philippines and Jamaica, I am very close to new Manitoban families. These families work very hard to contribute a great deal to Manitoba businesses and communities, and I've seen the benefit of their immigration to our small community first-hand.

I also know that many of these families are working lower paying jobs, yet many of their children are at the top of their class in school, but university and college is not accessible to them outside of high school. These are the kinds of people who can make a \$1,000 contribution go extremely far. They have the concept of stretching each penny down to a science, and I've watched them take minimum wage and use it to pay expenses here in Canada and a family of four back home in the Philippines. They are masters of stretching dollars, and any government assistance towards their education would be made to go very far. If you want to get value of our tax dollar contributions, give it to someone who can really understand the value of making every dollar count.

Another point is that we have a shortage of nurses and health-care professionals in rural areas, where I come from. And these new immigrants are people who have the potential to solve that problem for us because they would be proud to do so. But they need assistance. The education required to work in those positions is simply not a reality for them for one reason only: lack of money because of the fate of the situation that they were born into.

And one final thought to support our argument that cutting assistance to higher education would be the erosion of our society as a whole is that we are

living in a world that is inundated with garbage: psychological warfare in the form of advertising and social media. And, in a short span of time, we are seeing the ugliness of what it can manifest. It produces emotions that we can find in pills and at the bottoms of glasses, and to the degrading ideals planted in our entertainment, that without higher thought and education, my generation is being—to find these thoughts acceptable and okay. The ideals of violence in the entertainment, sexism, the idea that we need to be pretty to be happy and need to have surgery to feel valued. Women are objectified and men are dumbed down—to told that they—their only thought process is restricted to sports, sex and food.

These horrible lies and ideals are swallowing my generation. Yet, education can alter that. Teaching the principles that are acquired through higher thought and learning can stimulate and cultivate our minds so that we can think on a higher level. And we open our minds to explore solutions that can change our century-old ways of thinking. Together, we can stimulate the imagination and cultivate the new ways of thinking and alter the landslide of morality that is coming from social media.

We need to act on this in a big, immediate way. Our energy, our time, our thoughts and our tax dollars need to be contributing to this. And the time is definitely of the essence on this one because Bill 31 leaves students' future education through the sinister hands of an iPhone and social media.

So please reconsider having Manitoba lead the way to higher thinking and a population whose self-esteem and confidence is founded on education that produces principled thinking, which we all know builds greater and more vital society. The only way to be more powerful is to educate our society.

So I'd like to thank you again for your time and consideration.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Hamilton.

We'll now move into question period.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Ms. Hamilton, for your presentation. You, in your presentation, covered many of the same issues that we struggle with every day and some of the thought that went into this bill, and the challenges that we all face because we cannot leave a legacy to the next generation that is debt only. They have to have access to services, as well.

So we're all looking for the balance that gives us sustainability, and I appreciate your comments.

Mr. Wiebe: I wanted to thank you for your presentation. It was awesome. It was really great, especially at this hour, that you were able to bring such a positive but hard-hitting presentation. I think that really struck a chord here at the committee.

You touched on it a little bit—we've heard it over and over again, actually, I think, in a number of presentations, but I haven't had a chance to ask specifically. You talked about consultation and about the—reaching out to students to actually hear from them to get their ideas.

Can you just take a minute or two to expand on that, on how you think that this government could reach out to students and get their feedback?

Ms. Hamilton: Yes, thank you. I know for a fact that there are many students just in Winnipeg that would be willing to come together to probably find a smaller committee within ourselves before we come to you and propose ideas. And then you can give us feedback. But there are also a lot of people in post-secondary education in other parts like Brandon where, maybe, we could then use technology to connect each other and to create a committee of sorts that could maybe come to you and propose ideas that we as students think would be a better alternative to then—Bill 31.

Ms. Marcelino: Thank you, Ms. Hamilton.

With your proposal, you're offering the government very valuable assistance because they don't need to hire expensive consultants and they can even count on real, sensible advice. Not that the other consultants don't have that, but you being—you're living the life of the students already, you can best give the best advice to the government.

* (22:00)

And you made me so—you're so impressive when you were a young girl, and you're even more impressive now. At a very young age, we already saw your strength, the way you spoke from the heart, and also your compassion for other people, and it still shows now.

I hope you consider running for public office. We need women, people like you, with a heart to serve and a bright mind as well.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Hamilton, would you like to react?

Ms. Hamilton: Thank you very much. I'm honoured and humbled that you would say that about me, and I know that there are many people sitting behind me that have brighter minds, that I've just been kind of living under for the last little while, and I'm honoured to be in their company as well as yours. Thank you.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you for coming and staying 'til this hour and sharing your ideas and being here. I think there's many of us who reject the bill as it is now and are really searching for alternative ways that would actually improve access to education and, you know, I—what would be your first thing that you would do if you were looking to improve access instead of reduce it?

Ms. Hamilton: At this hour, I can think of no better place to be. I'm honoured that you folks stayed this late.

But if I was wanting to make changes to how the government is approaching post-secondary education is—rather than cutting the funding and preventing students from being able—preventing students that are already at a marginalized standard from reaching education is finding other places where we can take money from by maybe proposing new models to, say, economic development or finding new ways where we can save money and put it into education until we can find a sustainable model that could maybe create something. A lot of the people behind me alluded to free education or post-secondary education or very low cost. I think that it's honourable how Manitoba is one of the lowest, and I think that it draws a lot of people here and then they—in Manitoba they find how amazing, for lack of a better word, the education can be at such a low cost and—even though it is still extremely high, but—you get what I mean. Sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: That's okay. Thank you, Ms. Hamilton, for your presentation. That's all the time we have for questions.

So we'll move on to our next presenter and that is Ms. Allison Kilgour. Ms. Kilgour, do you have any written materials you'd like to distribute to the committee this evening?

Ms. Allison Kilgour (University of Manitoba Students' Union): I do not, but thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, you can proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Ms. Kilgour: Hello everyone. Thank you so much for allowing me to speak here today. My name is Allison Kilgour. I'm a fifth-year student at the University of Manitoba. I'm studying politics and sociology, and ultimately my end goal is to get into law at some point, particularly human rights law.

I also want to acknowledge that in my position I also carry quite a bit of privilege that others do not have the same opportunity. I come from a good home with a stable income, enough to provide me with help here and there when I need it. I pay for my own tuition, but I've been lucky enough to utilize scholarships and bursaries along the way. I'm able to live at home, meaning I do not have to pay living expenses, and I have the emotional support of my family along with me. I can pay for my tuition, at least for my undergrad, debt-free, and it's something that I'm extremely thankful for.

However, I am aware that many students do not have the same privileges that I do. Not only do they pay for their tuition, but they pay for living expenses, transportation costs. Often they have to move far away from their homes and try to balance full-time work with school. Further, many are faced with additional barriers on top of the already hard to overcome financial burden that they are faced with.

Young people today are more likely than any previous generation to struggle with mental illness. In any given year, one in five students will struggle with their mental health. Youth ages 15 to 24 are more likely than any other age group to experience mental illness, and the worst stat of all of those is suicide is the leading health-related cause of death for many young people today. I also want to point out that young people aged 15 to 23, those of—the ones who are struggling with mental health, that one in five, three out of four of those do not get the support that they need.

So how about access to resources, because we all know that without taking care of your mental health and well-being you cannot even begin to think about academic success. Wait times are extensive for subsidized services, and in order to get in quickly, you're faced with high costs that come with psychological treatment. We heard earlier a comment about how much we're in need of psychiatrists in this province. So not only do we have a student population in which many are struggling to be able to pay their tuition and have a place to live and food on the table to eat, but we're also seeing the 'stame' student population struggle from a mental health

crisis—and it is a crisis, I want to stress that—because the chances of them getting the help that they need without having to wait for months on end or pay out of their already empty wallets are slim.

Mental health isn't the only other barrier to our education either. It's one of the many intersecting, overlapping barriers that our young people are faced with every day: a rising cost of living and an unstable job market adds to the financial insecurity that students face; the rising rates of mental illness, systemic racism and lack of supports for our indigenous students and our international students—all of these combine and make post-secondary education out of reach for so many.

I myself have had the unique opportunity and privilege of working with students at the University of Manitoba through my role with the University of Manitoba Students' Union. And many of these students are facing the very problems that I'm mentioning. Every day I have students come into my office, send me emails or send me—or call me on the phone with questions about what to do in their current situations. I have met with students who do not qualify for scholarships because of their part-time status or because of the lack of awards in their programs. Many of them have taken out and exhausted student loans, but are still struggling to get by. In some of these cases, I have met students who have been forced to choose between paying their tuition and maintaining their essential human needs. Some have sacrificed medication that is essential to their health. Others have risked losing their homes by paying their rent late for the third or fourth time. And others have cut their meals down from two to one a day.

These are conversations that I have far too frequently, and they never get easier to have. And it's not a small number of people who are struggling. We have seen our counselling centre at the University of Manitoba fill up with students to the point where many don't bother going anymore because they know that they're going to have to wait extensive times. Their loan options are tapped out. They don't have the ability to ask their families or friends to help them out for the month. And these are students that I see every day, and I can assure you that this issue is rising and will rise even higher if tuition is increased.

These students will not be able to pay 5 to 6 per cent more in tuition. At the University of Manitoba, the emergency loan options that we have available are only accessible to students if your

financial situation is clear and your tuition is paid off. And that's often what these students need help with.

The additions to scholarships and bursaries will help a few, but the majority will not be aided by these. Our students need more support from our government and we need major investments in mental health care and student supports, both on and off campuses. We need to tell students that their health and well-being should always be their top priority.

As a student and as a person who lives with a mental illness and probably will for the rest of my life, I can attest to the fact that you cannot even begin to think about the ways that you're going to afford your tuition and be able to succeed in your academics until you can take care of your health. And, yes, it's—we need to ensure that education is accessible and equitable. This means giving students the financial means they need to succeed, as well as giving them supports necessary to take care of themselves.

Students should not have to forgo post-secondary education because of the barriers they face. It's not fair to tell students that we should all have to work hard to achieve an education when some of us have been set up for success a lot more than others. Our province is not a level playing field, and we are failing those who need our support. As someone who has seen these struggles first-hand, who has spent hours and hours trying to find solutions for these problems that, frankly, should not be problems, only to find that the support needed just isn't there, I'm telling you that this bill is just not beneficial. I urge you to think about this and to think about how we as a province are going to face our youth having failed to provide them with the tools needed to succeed.

My suggestions for you are the following: I want you to think about your children, and if you don't have children, I want you to think about your nieces and your nephews, your younger siblings, your friends' children, and I guarantee you that a lot of you are already imagining what they're going to be when they grow up. Many of you might be putting money away for their university or their college tuition, and a lot of you are probably hiring tutors or investing in extracurriculars to ensure that they're going to be well-prepared to succeed. Now I want you to think about the children whose parents couldn't put money away for them, couldn't afford to

get them extra help or pay for extracurriculars. Think about the young people who have not come from privileged homes who have had to move away from their loved ones to try to get an education and are suddenly faced with an onslaught of barriers that many of their peers just do not face.

I think that we can all agree that neither one of these groups of children has any more of a right to their future and to education than the other. So instead of raising the cap on our tuition without any addition to other essential services, think about what we can do to put these young people on a level playing field. Think about investing into mental health supports and increasing these on campuses in Manitoba. Think about housing and living costs and subsidies that can be given to the students to have a place to live while they study. Think about scholarships and bursaries that right now are helping some but not all, and how we can invest more into these. And think about our indigenous students, our international students and the barriers that they face merely getting here.

Tackle these problems first. Consider these issues and find a way to make post-secondary education equal for all of our young people to access. We deserve it and the next generation deserves it, and raising tuition is not going to fix the problem; it's just going to make it worse. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Kilgour, for your presentation.

We'll now move to time for questions.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Ms. Kilgour, for your presentation, and it's very well thought out, and I certainly appreciate your comments about the mental health crisis on campus. We know that it is growing and that it is a very visible part of the issues that we need to deal with. We had done a part of Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet—an inventory of professional services for psychologists, psychiatrists in the province, and were appalled to discover that we are, frankly, a fraction of the national average in terms of percentage of people that we have to do this. So it is clearly some area that we need to pay particular attention to. And I appreciate your emphasizing that.

Mr. Swan: Thank you for presenting and for being very open about your own situation.

You've heard people speaking a little bit tonight about consultants that have been hired by this government, KPMG. We found out this week this

government has hired an outside consultant that has already issued reports in Ontario and Nova Scotia about cutting mental health services rather than increasing health services. I can't think of anything worse for students at the same time as this government wants to increase tuition.

Can you talk a little bit more about the impact that a tuition increase of 6 or 7 or 8 per cent would have on the mental health of students out at the University of Manitoba?

Ms. Kilgour: I actually had not heard of that recent update, and I'm very sad to hear it.

Like I said, I service the Vice President Advocacy at the U of M Students Union, so I work one on one with a lot of students who are facing mental health crises. The stats are appalling and the number of students who are coming into our counselling centre—they had to cut one-on-one services a while ago because there were too many students and all they could offer was group sessions, which in many cases are beneficial. But that just goes to show that we are struggling to have ample support for our students.

And a lot of the reason that students face these stresses, and it grows and it grows, because you have added stresses when you're facing having to pay for your tuition, especially—we've heard a lot about international students tonight and how they are not protected in this bill that when they are facing not being able to finish their degree and going home and disappointing their families, the suicide rates and the rates of depression and mental illness for these students who come abroad are extremely overwhelming. And I know first-hand how many students just cannot get the support they need. The fact that that three-in-four stat is a legitimate statistic is really upsetting to me.

So I think that in order to tackle this issue of accessible education in general, not only do we need to look at it from a financial standpoint, but look at all of the other barriers that are placed on the students and how those intersect. So we need to kind of work on all of those together to kind of fix this problem.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you. I've spent a lot of time working on trying to figure out how we do better preventing mental health problems and it's pretty important that you're putting a real focus on that.

With your first-hand experience, what would you suggest in terms of putting in place better

supports for students to decrease problems with mental health?

Ms. Kilgour: First of all, I just—I think it's really important to stress the fact that the financial situations that students are facing and the mental health crisis that we're experiencing go hand in hand. They're not completely separate. They very much are interconnected.

I think that when we are looking at raising the tuition rates, especially when we have not taken the steps to fix those other barriers that are currently in place, we—I appreciated Minister Wishart's comments on the need to do more for mental health, but we just have not seen that happen yet and we don't have those resources in place.

So, with this added tuition increase, the student stress rates are going to go even higher than they already are and I can assure you those are very extreme and I personally think that before we can even talk about tuition as an issue, we need to be focusing on ending these other barriers that are currently present on our campuses.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions from the committee, I want to thank you, Ms. Kilgour, for your presentation and answering the questions this evening.

For those of you who have been following along on the list of presenters, that's the—that was the end of the printed list, however, one additional speaker has registered during this evening, so if it's okay with the committee, we'll proceed with that presenter. Patrick Harney.

Welcome, Mr. Harney. Do you have any written materials you'd like to distribute to the committee this evening?

Mr. Patrick Harney (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

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

Mr. Patrick Harney: Thank you to the committee for facilitating this important process.

My name is Patrick Harney. I'm a second-year arts student at the University of Winnipeg, and I believe in Manitoba. Many people have talked to you today about the tuition increases. While those are concerning, I'd like to bring up another less talked about issue, one on a provincial level.

The tuition tax rebate was a key feature of Manitoba's post-secondary education plan. On a personal level, it was the reason for my own family coming to Manitoba. Contrary to what the Premier (Mr. Pallister) thinks, the rebate makes a difference. It is the first step in a new life for graduates. For my single mom, knowing that she could get a jump start in Manitoba was what convinced her to stay. She stayed because she knew my brother and I would be able to access an affordable education in a vibrant city with a deep sense of community. Young people want to stay in Manitoba. In the past five years, we've been part of a cultural renaissance stirred by affordable housing, a stable economy and accessible jobs.

We believe in this province, but the government won't let us stay here to build Manitoba into the province they deserve. The Premier and the ministers standing in front of the students' education path and saying, why don't you go somewhere better instead? Why don't you go to Toronto? Why don't you go to Vancouver? I don't want to go to somewhere better. I want to stay in Manitoba. I believe in Manitoba. But Bill 31 makes it clear this minister doesn't believe in Manitoba enough to think that students want to stay here after graduation, build a home or start a family. Well, I want to be here. I want to work hard every day in my classes, stay up late writing papers, study hard so that I can stay in Manitoba and contribute to my hometown. Finishing post-secondary education in this province is key to weighing my own roots down in Manitoba.

I've worked hard the past few months to spread the word about the minister's regressive plan for Manitoba's education. I've asked for—I've asked students to sign thousands of postcards calling on the minister to stop Bill 31. In all that time, I haven't heard one single student tell me that they support this.

The bill—the people this bill affects are not future voters; they're current voters. In 2020, they will hopefully be young professionals. They will be leaders of our province and they will not vote for this minister. I urge the minister to think ahead; stop Bill 31 while he still can. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Harney, for your presentation. We'll now move to a question period.

Are there any members of the committee who wish to ask a question?

Mr. Gerrard: I raised the issue of the tuition rebate and that cancelling it is one of the big problems at the moment earlier on and I see that it has made a big difference to a lot of people in staying. Maybe you can share a little bit more of your story and why you see this also as tremendously important.

Mr. Patrick Harney: Yes, as—my brother was up here speaking as well and our mom moved here and she moved back knowing that there'd be affordable education for her kids and she could get it herself while being able to fund her children and I think that was just crucial to our upbringing and crucial to us wanting to stay in Manitoba and wanting to be members of this province.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you very much, Mr. Harney, for sticking around to present to us tonight. I think you added another dimension that, as you mentioned, was talked about a few times, but really wasn't delved into, and that is the tuition rebate program, which I think does make a big difference, and certainly your experience bears that out.

Just with regards to that tuition rebate, and coupled with the increase in tuition, you know, it's often talked about, and I think even you talked about it as a, you know, a helpful step for graduates, but can you talk about how it can impact a person's decision, whether they will actually, you know, undertake to start post-secondary education, whether they will decide to do that here in Manitoba and then, as you said, whether they decide to stay here afterwards, do you think that the tuition rebate makes a difference for those students who are just trying to make that decision about whether they want to start their post-secondary career here?

Mr. Patrick Harney: I think it's, you know, very important. I think students are—university's an important time where they're laying their roots, they're laying the groundwork, they're meeting, they're—you know, an important component of university is not just learning, it's making a community and finding people who are like-minded and wanting to learn the same things and join you in your career path, and knowing that you can have a future with them is important for whether or not you want to decide to begin school in a certain province.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Harney. Are there any additional questions from the committee?

Hearing none, then I want to thank you for making it out this evening and presenting.

I'm now going to call the members who were previously called but were not present at that time, just to see if they've arrived in the meantime.

So, Kevin Settee? Kevin Settee? Devin Woodbury? [*interjection*] He'll be removed from the list, I'm supposed to say, about Kevin Settee. Thank you, Madam Clerk.

Devin Woodbury? Devin Woodbury? We'll remove him from the speakers' list.

Brendan Gali? Brendan Gali? We will remove him from the list.

Joseph Wasylycia-Leis? Joseph Wasylycia-Leis? We will remove him from the list.

Laura Cameron? Laura Cameron? We'll remove her from the list.

Wesley Fallis? Wesley Fallis? We'll remove him from the list.

This concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

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

Seeing none, that concludes public presentations for this evening. Thank you to all of you who came out tonight.

Before we rise, it would be appreciated if members would leave behind copies of the bill so that they may be collected and reused at tomorrow night's meeting.

The hour being 10:23, committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10:23 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 31

Good afternoon. My name is Krystal Kayne and I am a Brandon University student currently taking the Master of Rural Development. I am against the hike in the tuition fees though I understand that our Manitoba universities are in need of more funding. I do believe that Manitoba should not try to follow other Canadian universities and should take a leadership role to make tuition free for its residents. Research shows that countries who have free tuition for their citizens are not only happier but more productive and generous members in their communities. Bill 31 hinders growth rather than

allowing our students can finish school faster with less stress and invest back into our communities (purchasing homes and businesses, etc) instead of struggling to payback student loans. This is my dream.

I am proud to say that I am a mature student, a single mom and active social justice advocate in the City of Brandon. None of this would have been possible had I not first moved to Brandon to attend Brandon University in the Fall of 2009. As I was on disability and being a single mom of a child that has Asperger's Syndrome, I picked Brandon University as a result of the lower tuition and because it is a smaller class sizes. I have since completed my undergrad, found my voice and actively involved in my community with my next dream to purchase my first home here in Brandon. However, as I have a \$50,000+ student loan that must be paid back in the next 10 years after completing my master degree, the idea of saving for a down payment is a dream that was far but still a distant reach. Now if Bill 31 goes through, I and others may never be able to purchase our own homes, which would bring in more taxes etc. to our community and allow us to invest privately to our universities instead. Please abolish Bill 31 and not our dreams...

Thank you for your time and consideration. I wish I was able to speak directly with you, but due to circumstances am not able to get to Winnipeg. I respectfully request this letter be submitted. My contact information is below for your convenience.

Yours in education,

Krystal Kayne

Re: Bill 31

Dear Committee Members,

The act of hearing from the public as part of deliberations on legislation is unique to Manitoba and is a valuable part of the democratic process in our province. Thank you for the opportunity to express my concern about Bill 31. Unfortunately, I am unable to travel to Winnipeg and present to the committee in person.

I have completed two degrees at Brandon University, a Bachelor of Arts and a Masters of Rural Development. I was fortunate that all but one year of

my post-secondary education occurred during a time when tuition was reduced by 10% and frozen at that level or had increases limited to the rate of inflation. As a student that grew up in a single-parent household and that had to move from my rural hometown of Wawanesa to Brandon to attend BU, I faced a number of financial challenges in addition to covering my tuition and books. Rent, food, utilities, and travel to and from home to see family were all additional expenses that had to be covered while I was studying. Provincial government policy that kept tuition affordable was a main factor in keeping my undergraduate student debt load manageable to the point where I could pay it off fairly quickly, save up to put a down payment on my house, and maintain mortgage payments while working on my Masters. I would be remiss if I did not mention that government grants and bursaries also played an important role in keeping my student debt down.

Passing Bill 31 will undermine the ability of current and future university students to access their desired education in the first place. It will also make it more difficult for them to manage accumulated student debt upon graduation. Allowing tuition to increase by 5% plus the rate of inflation will make obtaining a post-secondary education less affordable for many

Manitoba families, causing some to take on significant debt and becoming completely out of reach for others.

Our provincial economy as a whole benefits when we have more, not less, educated people living in our communities and participating in our workforce. Financial investment in Manitoba's post-secondary education system should be supported by the people of Manitoba through provincial government operating and capital grants, not forced on the pocketbooks of individual students through significant annual tuition increases. Students today are the engineers, nurses, teachers, architects, biologists (and so on) that Manitoba's private and public sectors need tomorrow. I am asking Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba to vote against Bill 31 and, instead, support increased funding for our province's post-secondary education system through the provincial budget.

I appreciate your time and consideration. Thank you for your dedication to representing the people of Manitoba.

Lonnie Patterson
Brandon, Manitoba

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/hansard.html>