

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

Chairperson
Mr. Jon Reyes
Constituency of Waverley

Vol. LXXV No. 6 - 6 p.m., Tuesday, April 13, 2021

ISSN 1708-6698

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ADAMS, Danielle	Thompson	NDP
ALTOMARE, Nello	Transcona	NDP
ASAGWARA, Uzoma	Union Station	NDP
BRAR, Diljeet	Burrows	NDP
BUSHIE, Ian	Keewatinook	NDP
CLARKE, Eileen, Hon.	Agassiz	PC
COX, Cathy, Hon.	Kildonan-River East	PC
CULLEN, Cliff, Hon.	Spruce Woods	PC
DRIEDGER, Myrna, Hon.	Roblin	PC
EICHLER, Ralph, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
EWASKO, Wayne, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
FIELDING, Scott, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
FONTAINE, Nahanni	St. Johns	NDP
FRIESEN, Cameron, Hon.	Morden-Winkler	PC
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
GORDON, Audrey, Hon.	Southdale	PC
GUENTER, Josh	Borderland	PC
GUILLEMARD, Sarah, Hon.	Fort Richmond	PC
HELWER, Reg, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
ISLEIFSON, Len	Brandon East	PC
JOHNSON, Derek, Hon.	Interlake-Gimli	PC
JOHNSTON, Scott	Assiniboia	PC
KINEW, Wab	Fort Rouge	NDP
LAGASSÉ, Bob	Dawson Trail	PC
LAGIMODIERE, Alan	Selkirk	PC
LAMONT, Dougald	St. Boniface	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Cindy	Tyndall Park	Lib.
LATHLIN, Amanda	The Pas-Kameesak	NDP
LINDSEY, Tom	Flin Flon	NDP
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MARCELINO, Malaya	Notre Dame	NDP
MARTIN, Shannon	McPhillips	PC
MICHALESKI, Brad	Dauphin	PC
MICKLEFIELD, Andrew	Rossmere	PC
MORLEY-LECOMTE, Janice	Seine River	PC
MOSES, Jamie	St. Vital	NDP
NAYLOR, Lisa	Woleseley	NDP
NESBITT, Greg	Riding Mountain	PC
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Fort Whyte	PC
PEDERSEN, Blaine, Hon.	Midland	PC
PIWNIUK, Doyle	Turtle Mountain	PC
REYES, Jon	Waverley	PC
SALA, Adrien	St. James	NDP
SANDHU, Mintu	The Maples	NDP
SCHULER, Ron, Hon.	Springfield-Ritchot	PC
SMITH, Andrew	Lagimodière	PC
SMITH, Bernadette	Point Douglas	NDP
SMOOK, Dennis	La Vérendrye	PC
SQUIRES, Rochelle, Hon.	Riel	PC
STEFANSON, Heather, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
TEITSMA, James	Radisson	PC
WASYLIW, Mark	Fort Garry	NDP
WHARTON, Jeff, Hon.	Red River North	PC
WIEBE, Matt	Concordia	NDP
WISHART, Ian	Portage la Prairie	PC
WOWCHUK, Rick	Swan River	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Jon Reyes (Waverley)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Doyle Piwniuk (Turtle Mountain)

ATTENDANCE – 6 QUORUM – 4

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Ewasko, Pedersen

Messrs. Altomare, Moses, Piwniuk, Reyes

APPEARING:

Mr. Wab Kinew, MLA for Fort Rouge

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux, MLA for Tyndall Park

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 33 – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Mr. Patrick Noël, private citizen

Ms. Jacqueline Pelland, private citizen

Ms. Marianne Hladun, Public Service Alliance of Canada

Ms. Sophia Adeleye, Brandon University Students' Union

Ms. Tanjit Nagra, private citizen

Ms. Brianne Goertzen, private citizen

Mr. Adam Pawlak, private citizen

Ms. Savannah Szocs, University of Manitoba Students' Union

Mr. Brendan Scott, private citizen

Ms. Kristin Smith, Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students

Mr. Jonathan Henderson, University of Winnipeg Students' Association

Mr. Michael Shaw, private citizen

Ms. Orvie Dingwall, private citizen

Mr. Peter Miller, private citizen

Mr. Julius Chester, private citizen

Mr. Riley Shannon, private citizen

Mr. Kiratveer Hayer, private citizen

Mr. Joshua Basman Monterrubio, University of Winnipeg Students' Association

Mr. Robert Chernomas, private citizen

Ms. Jennifer Adair, private citizen

Mr. Scott Forbes, Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations

Mr. Peter Ives, private citizen

Mr. Scott Grills, private citizen

Mr. Brenden Gali, Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba

Mr. Jonathan Northam, private citizen

Ms. Alannah McKay, Canadian Federation of Students

Mr. Matt McLean, Canadian Union of Public Employees

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Bill 33 – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

R.J. Leland, University of Manitoba

Joanne Parsons, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 33 – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Bill 34 – The University College of the North Amendment Act

* * *

Clerk Assistant (Mr. Tim Abbott): Good afternoon. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

Our first item of business is the election of a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): I'll nominate Jon Reyes.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Reyes has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

Hearing none, Mr. Reyes, please take the Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Social and Economic Development please come to order.

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

Are there any nominations?

Mr. Pedersen: I nominate Mr. Piwniuk.

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

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Piwniuk is elected Vice-Chairperson.

This committee has been called to order to consider the following bills: Bill 33, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act; Bill 34, The University College of the North Amendment Act.

I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. The 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.

Written submissions from the following people have been received and distributed to committee members: R.J. Leland, University of Manitoba, on Bill 33; Joanne Parsons, private citizen, on Bill 33.

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

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process of speaking in a committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members. If a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they'll be removed from the presenters' list.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Also, if any presenter has any written materials for distribution to the committee, please send the file by email to the moderator, who will distribute it all to committee members.

We have a presenter this evening who wishes to speak in French, Mr. Patrick Noël, who is No. 21 on the list before us. Our usual practice is to allow presenters speaking in French to go first.

Is it the will of the committee to allow Patrick Noël to present first? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

Thank you for your patience.

Bill 33—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with public presentations.

I will now call on Patrick Noël and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Floor Comment: Est-ce que vous m'entendez?

Translation

Can you hear me?

Mr. Chairperson: Oui, M. Noël. Tu peux continuer avec votre présentation. Et pour moi—*[interjection]*—M. Noël—

Translation

Yes, you can proceed with your presentation. And on my behalf—Mr. Noël

Mr. Patrick Noël (Private Citizen): Merci, M. Reyes—

Mr. Chairperson: Monsieur Noël—

Mr. Noël: —et merci au comité de me donner cette opportunité—

Translation

And thank you to the Committee for giving me this opportunity—

Mr. Chairperson: M. Noël—

Translation

Mr. Noël—

Mr. Noël: —de prendre parole sur le Projet de loi 33. Je remercie aussi cet honneur de donner la parole aux francophones en premier.

Mon intervention d'aujourd'hui a pour but de dénoncer le Projet de loi 33. Ma présentation va s'articuler autour de la lettre A, deux arguments autour de la lettre A qui concernent l'accessibilité et l'autonomie. Faut pas non plus—ne croyez surtout pas

que je donne la lettre A au Projet de loi 33. Le Projet de loi 33 mérite la lettre F sans aucun doute; je suis professeur, donc j'aime bien donner des lettres à ce qui est présenté devant moi.

Je reviens à mon propos: ce projet de loi doit être abandonné pour deux raisons. D'abord, pour la raison de l'accessibilité. Je me réjouis que le gouvernement conservateur, dans son plan stratégique, fait de l'accessibilité une priorité. Ça, j'ai pu le constater dans divers documents produits par le ministère de l'éducation supérieure. Cependant, avec ce Projet de loi 33, on est en train d'éliminer les barrières qui permettent de limiter l'augmentation des frais de scolarité, des droits de scolarité. D'ailleurs, cette année, les droits de scolarité ont augmenté à deux reprises; chose assez anormale. Alors en quoi augmenter les frais de scolarité est compatible avec l'accessibilité? Ça, c'est une première question que j'aimerais poser au comité; donc en quoi augmenter les frais de scolarité ou, à tout le moins, éliminer les mesures pour limiter l'augmentation des frais de scolarité va favoriser une quelconque accessibilité aux études supérieures? Les études scientifiques ont montré, depuis des années, que chaque augmentation de frais de scolarité—de droits de scolarité—diminue l'accessibilité aux études supérieures. Alors ça, c'est mon premier argument.

*(18:10)

Mon deuxième argument, qui débute toujours par la lettre A, concerne l'autonomie. La première condition d'existence de l'université, c'est son autonomie. Elle doit être autonome dans son fonctionnement. Pour avoir cette autonomie, elle a besoin d'être bien financée. Elle doit avoir un bon financement qui provient de l'État. J'ai pas à vous dire qu'est-ce qui se passe en Ontario du Nord présentement—une université qui est en train de se démolir parce qu'elle a été sous-financée pendant des années.

Avec le gouvernement Pallister, on observe une pente au niveau du financement public des universités. D'année en année, on coupe le financement des universités. En faisant ça, on est en train de miner l'autonomie des universités.

Je reviens au Projet de loi 33. Le Projet de loi 33 discute la possibilité d'instaurer des droits de scolarité variables en fonction des programmes. Ça, ça représente une interférence du politique dans la chose universitaire. Ce n'est pas au gouvernement de décider quel programme est plus important qu'un autre.

La loi sur les universités reconnaît que c'est uniquement le sénat de chacune des universités qui peut déterminer la programmation des universités. Donc, concevoir qu'on peut demander aux étudiants de payer plus pour un programme moins utile ou moins rentable pour le marché du travail—par exemple les sciences humaines, la philosophie—qu'un programme plus utile ou rentable—comme l'administration ou l'ingénierie—c'est porter atteinte à l'autonomie de l'université.

Comprenez-moi bien: on a besoin de comptables; on a besoin d'ingénieurs; on a besoin d'infirmières. Mais on a aussi besoin de gens qui étudient les disciplines fondamentales que sont les mathématiques, l'histoire, la philosophie, les sciences humaines.

Si on instaure un régime de frais de scolarité variable, on est en train de limiter le choix des étudiants de demain. Est-ce qu'on veut vraiment limiter le choix des étudiants?

Je reviens encore à cette idée d'autonomie. Ce n'est pas à l'État—ce n'est pas au gouvernement—de se mêler de la programmation des universités. Si vous augmentez les frais pour un programme, ça va avoir un effet direct sur la—le nombre de personnes qui vont vouloir étudier dans ce programme-là. Il faut maintenir des frais de scolarité égaux pour tous les programmes, et le Projet de loi 33 ouvre la porte à un mécanisme de frais de scolarité différentiel, ce qu'il faut absolument rejeter.

Donc, pour les raisons d'accessibilité; pour des raisons d'autonomie; il faut absolument que ce projet de loi soit éliminé car il mine l'enseignement postsecondaire, il mine les universités et croyez-moi, on n'est pas à l'abri de ce qui est arrivé à l'Université Laurentienne.

Je vous remercie pour le temps accordé.

Translation

—to talk about Bill 33. I also wish express my thanks to the Committee for letting Francophones speak first.

The goal of my comments today is to denounce Bill 33. The theme of my presentation here will be the letter A, with my two arguments starting with an A: Accessibility and Autonomy. Please do not think that I am giving an A to Bill 33. Bill 33 undoubtedly deserves an F. As a teacher, I like to assign letter grades to what is presented to me.

Coming back to my argument: this bill should be abandoned for two reasons. First, for accessibility

reasons. I am pleased that the Conservative government is making accessibility a priority in its strategic plan. I read this in various documents published by the department of post-secondary education. However, Bill 33 is eliminating checks that limit tuition fees hikes. In fact, tuitions this year have increased twice, which is rather unusual. So, how is increasing tuition fees compatible with accessibility? That is the first question I would like to ask this committee. How does increasing tuition fees, or eliminating measures designed to limit the increase of tuition fees, foster accessibility to post-secondary education? Studies have shown for years that each tuition fee hike decreases accessibility to post-secondary education. This is my first argument.

My second argument also starts with the letter A and deals with autonomy. The founding principle of a university is institutional autonomy. A university must be operationally autonomous, and to be autonomous, it must be well-funded. It must benefit from stable state-provided funding. I do not have to tell you what is happening in Northern Ontario right now—a university is being destroyed because of years of underfunding.

With the Pallister government, we are seeing a downward spiral in regards to public funding of universities. Year after year, funding is being cut, and this is undermining universities' institutional autonomy.

I would like to come back to Bill 33. This bill proposes the possibility of setting variable tuition fees based on programs. This is clearly political interference in the academic world. It is not up to the government to decide which programs may be more valuable.

University legislation recognizes that it is solely up to the senate of each university to establish its own courses of instruction. Thus, an outside authority being able to demand that a university's students pay more for a program that is less useful or profitable for labour market (like humanities programs, philosophy) than for a program considered more useful or more profitable (like business administration or engineering) undermines the authority of this university.

Please understand what I am saying: we need accountants, we need engineers, we need nurses. But we also need people who study such fundamental subjects as mathematics, history, philosophy and humanities.

If a variable tuition fee system is put in place, it will limit choices for tomorrow's students. Is that what we really want?

Circling back to the autonomy—the state, that is the government, has no business meddling with academic programming. Increasing a program's fees will have a direct impact on the number of people who will want to undertake that program. It is imperative that equal tuition fees be maintained for all programs, but Bill 33 opens the door to a differentiated tuition fee scheme, which we must reject.

Therefore, due to the accessibility issues and institutional autonomy issues it creates, this bill should be eliminated, because it severely undermines post-secondary education. And trust me, we are not immune to what happened at the Laurentian University.

Thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Merci, M. Noël.

Translation

Thank you, Mr. Noël

English

Are there any questions?

Est-ce qu'il y a des questions?

Translation

Are there any questions?

English

The honourable minister—le ministre honorable.

Monsieur Noël, vous pouvez nous entendre?

Merci.

Translation

The honourable minister.

Mr. Noël, can you hear us?

Thank you.

Mr. Noël: Très bien.

Translation

Very well.

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Merci [thank you], Mr. Noël, for your presentation. I'd like to first start off by—just, for you, acknowledging—I know that you're signed up as a private citizen, but in fact,

I do know that you're a professor at Université de Saint-Boniface and is—that's correct?

Mr. Noël: Yes. Oui? Vous m'entendez, oui?

Translation

Yes. Can you hear me? Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Oui. Je dois vous adresser avant que tu parles.

Translation

I have to address you before you speak.

English

Okay?

Mr. Noël: Oh. Okay.

Mr. Chairperson: Monsieur Noël, pour une réponse.

Translation

Mr. Noël, for the response.

Mr. Noël: Oui, alors j'apprécie la réponse de l'honorable ministre, sauf que lorsque vous coupez dans le financement provincial des universités, vous ne laissez pas d'autre choix—ou presque—aux administrations d'augmenter les frais de scolarité. Donc le problème, peut-être, il ne réside pas là. Il réside dans votre effort—pas dans votre effort—dans votre volonté qu'on observe depuis les dernières années de systématiquement diminuer la subvention provinciale aux universités.

Ça, ça n'aide pas les universités. Regardez ce qui est arrivé à la Laurentienne. Sa raison du sous-financement chronique des universités; les administrateurs n'ont pas le choix d'augmenter les frais de scolarité puisqu'il y a un manque à gagner.

Translation

Yes, I can appreciate the minister's response, except that you are cutting provincial funding for universities. You are not giving universities any other choice—practically speaking—but to raise tuition fees. This is not the issue, in effect. The issue is with your action—not your action, but with your drive of the last few years to systematically reduce provincial funding for universities.

This does not help universities. Look at what happened to Laurentian University. The reason is the chronic underfunding of universities. Administrators have no choice but to increase tuition fees in order to make up the funding shortfall.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Fort Rouge): Merci beaucoup. Et puis M. Noël, merci à toi pour votre discours. J'apprécie beaucoup ce que vous avez dit au sujet de l'accessibilité et puis aussi sur l'autonomie.

Et puis en venant de l'Université de Saint-Boniface, moi je voudrais vous demander au sujet des effets de ce projet de loi sur les langues minoritaires. Est-ce que c'est peut-être même plus—est-ce que ça crée même plus de défis emmêlés avec l'autonomie d'une institution comme l'Université de Saint-Boniface? Est-ce que c'est peut-être même—est-ce que ça met au défi la communauté franco-manitobaine, la Francophonie ici au Manitoba, quand on nuit à l'accessibilité d'une institution comme la vôtre?

Translation

Thank you very much, Mr. Noël. Thank you for your presentation. I really appreciate what you said about accessibility and institutional autonomy.

I myself am a product of the Université de Saint-Boniface, and I would like to ask you about the impact this bill will have on minority languages. Might it create even more challenges intertwined with the institutional autonomy of an institution such as the Université de Saint-Boniface? Does it create even more obstacles for the Franco-Manitoban community, which is Manitoba's Francophonie, when the accessibility to an institution like yours is undermined?

Mr. Noël: Merci pour la question. Les universités en situation minoritaire ont un rôle très important, différent des universités en milieu majoritaire. Sans l'Université, la communauté franco-manitobaine aura de la difficulté à survivre. Donc, si on compromet le fonctionnement de l'Université, c'est toute la communauté qui en sera perdante. Et le Projet de loi 33 va nous affecter, je dirais, de façon plus importante que les grandes universités. D'abord, parce que nos programmes, nous, sont centrés sur les arts et les humanités qui, aux yeux du gouvernement, ont pas une grande valeur marchande—c'est-à-dire on n'est pas lié directement au marché du travail, bien que dans les faits, les diplômés dans les programmes en arts et en humanités finissent toujours par avoir de bons emplois, mais ça se fait sur un plus long processus. Alors si on adopte le tarif par programme, on est—le tarif différentiel par programme—on risque d'être perdant. Et surtout, si on se dirige vers un modèle à la Tennessee, je pense que le bill—le Projet de loi 33—s'inscrit dans cette logique-là.

Si on demande aux universités d'être financées par leur outcome, par leur performance, l'Université de Saint-Boniface, selon moi, est menacée dans sa survie même.

Translation

Thank you for the question. Indeed, minority-language universities have a very important role, which is different from majority-language universities. Without the Université, the Franco-Manitoban community will have difficulties surviving. Compromising the operations of the Université will result in loss for the whole community. I would say Bill 33 is going to impact us even more significantly than it will impact big universities. First because our programs are centered around arts and humanities, which are not deemed very valuable market-wise in the eyes of the government—meaning they are not linked directly to the labour market. In reality however, our arts and humanities graduates always find work on the labour market, although it is a longer process. If the variable tuition fees scheme is adopted, meaning there will be different fees for different programs, we will lose out. Particularly if we are angling for a Tennessee-style model. I believe that Bill 33 is attempting that.

If universities' funding is based on outcome requirements—on performance—the very survival of the Université de Saint-Boniface is at stake, in my opinion.

Mr. Chairperson: Monsieur Noël, merci beaucoup pour votre présentation. Les cinq minutes sont passées et je voudrais juste dire merci aux traducteurs et le personnel technique, qui peuvent faire cette traduction possible.

Maintenant—

Translation

Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Noël. Your five minutes are up, and I would like to thank the interpreters as well as the technical staff who made it possible for us to hear the interpretation.

Now—

English

—we will now move on to the next presenter. I will now call on Jacqueline Pelland, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Pelland, please proceed with your presentation.

* (18:20)

Ms. Jacqueline Pelland (Private Citizen): Hello, bonjour, tansi. Jacqueline Pelland.

[Indigenous language spoken. Translation unavailable.]

Hello everyone, my name is Jacqueline Pelland, I'm from the Bear Clan, and I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Treaty 1 territory. I have tried to repeatedly to think of what I wished to say regarding this bill.

And, ultimately, maybe I should start with the fact that as soon as I heard about it, I felt an overwhelming sense of concern and fear regarding what potential there is in terms of the funding that is directed to universities and how that will directly impact post-secondary students like myself.

What I'm about to say next is my story. I'm not here to represent any other students, but my biggest concern lies with the fact that I look around and I see all of the ways in which the current government has failed this entire province.

I have very little faith in any bill that's proposed in which there is additional oversight granted to the government because there has been such an abhorrent precedent set in terms of other policies on top of the post-secondary defunding that Mr. Patrick succinctly outlined for all of you.

Ultimately, I am someone who was taught that a good government is one that takes into account the needs of everyone. They listen to the people, they work with humility and kindness and love.

And when I hear about laws that, frankly, undercut the efforts of young people such as myself to improve our lives, to bring a better future into existence, it's very difficult to want to, firstly, continue to pursue my education, and secondly, to want to remain in this province and work under a government that clearly has indicated repeatedly that it does not work for me.

I think that's all that I have to say. Merci.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Pelland, for your presentation, and thank you for attending tonight and voicing your concerns.

I can't tell you how to feel, so, again, I appreciate you for sharing how you feel. Our government—the

reason why we're bringing in Bill 33 is to make sure our education here in this great province of ours remains affordable.

And with that, you know, multiple meetings with students and—basically, they had asked for meetings and we had chatted in regards to Bill 33. They had wanted to see within Bill 33 some more clarity and later on—well, probably not later on tonight, on another committee evening, we'll be bringing forward an amendment to make sure that their hopes and dreams, in regards to the union fees not being affected, will be stated more clearly in the bill.

But in addition to that, I do want to say that our government has actually increased the level of accessibility here in Manitoba by creating \$30 million in scholarships and bursaries to the previous government was 5 or 6 million dollars. And in regards to Manitoba student loans, we're north of \$63 million to students. So we're actually making sure that the accessibility to our post-secondary students in the province is even easier for those members that want to carry on with their education after high school.

So, again, thank you, Ms. Pelland, for your presentation, and I want to assure you that by having Bill 33 pass and then, you know, go forward, it will just give more assurance to make sure that post-secondary institutions in the province have to shoulder check when they are looking at increasing their tuitions or—and/or fees. So, thank you again.

Ms. Pelland: Thank you for your response.

I just have such a hard time acknowledging this alleged increase in funding, especially given the fact that it seems like there has been continuous callbacks to other social policies that actually directly impact students, such as rent and everything that comes from that: so making sure that we have a roof over our heads while we're studying, making sure that we have reliable employment so that we can continue to pay for our education, which is only becoming more and more expensive every single year.

And also, within a pandemic, of all things, I think that was one of the—I understand that that's under the university's purview, but it's deeply concerning to me that there was just sort of this understanding that, well, you know, this is reality. This is what we can expect is just climbing rates of tuition no matter what happens. There is no kind of acknowledgment that there is a life beyond school and that there is a whole host of holistic issues that further exacerbate accessibility to university.

And I think and I know, not just feel, that there remains a huge concern and an informational gap when it comes to what this bill means, what it will look like, not just for the Conservative government, but for every government—Liberal, NDP, Green—because, as we all know, I don't think it's really been a point of contention that every single government has had a role to play in just not respecting Indigenous people like myself and our attempts at participating in society. And this is one of the ways that we are finally legally allowed to do after centuries of—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Pelland, your time for questioning actually is almost ending, but I'm going to give the opposition a chance.

So, Mr. Moses—*[interjection]* Go ahead.

Ms. Pelland, go ahead.

Ms. Pelland: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Very briefly, please.

Ms. Pelland: Yes. What I am just trying to convey is that this is not just about educational fees. This is about every single element of a student's life that needs to be accounted for. This is not just one policy. It is part of a constellation of laws that affect us.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Pelland.

Go ahead, Mr. Moses, just for the purpose of time. Thank you.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Thank you, Ms. Pelland, so much for your being here and the question that you've asked. And thank you for clearly articulating your thoughts and feelings on this bill and some of the impacts it has on the broader scope of your experience as a student.

I wonder and I hope maybe you can tell us just briefly about what it would mean for your program to have an increase in tuition—as this bill would allow the minister to freely increase tuition—what would it mean for you if your program that you're taking in school had a tuition increase?

* (18:30)

Ms. Pelland: It would be, I think for many students, it would be quite devastating because of the fact that, like I said before, we do not have the luxury of stable employment in order to pay for tuition. We have issues with accessing affordable housing. We have children that we need to take care of and who require a daycare that is affordable and accessible. We have language—minority language rights that need

attention. We have international students paying exorbitant amounts of educational fees, far and above what domestic students pay here.

And—

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Pelland, thank you for your presentation.

We will now move on to the next presenter. The next presenter will be Marianne Hladun of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. I'd ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Hladun, am I saying it correctly?

Ms. Marianne Hladun (Public Service Alliance of Canada): No, but it's okay. Very few people do.

Mr. Chairperson: How do you say it, respectfully?

Ms. Hladun: Hladun.

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

Ms. Hladun: So, my name is Marianne Hladun. I'm the regional executive vice-president for the Public Service Alliance of Canada Prairies.

We represent about 180,000 members across Canada in every province and territory and nearly 8,000 members in Manitoba. We take our responsibility to represent our members very seriously and strongly oppose Bill 33, as we believe it gives the government powers to override democratically established student fees and provides no ceiling for yearly tuition fee increases.

For what purpose would the minister give himself these powers? A student union or an association is a democratically structured and governed organization. All fees that apply to the organization have been decided through referendum with their membership.

As many are aware, a referendum is a democratic tool that gives all members the opportunity to have a direct say on whatever will affect them. This is the gold standard of democratic governance. Therefore, why the minister thinks that he has any right to interfere with or even override this democratic process is perplexing.

The power allocated to the minister in Bill 33 would be akin to the federal government being able to overrule our democratic provincial elections in Manitoba, or the Manitoba government interfering with democratically established and governed labour unions.

If the minister has no right to interfere in the gold standard of democratic governance, it begs the question, why is this legislation being put forward that would enable him to do just that? What does he plan to do with this power? What would be achieved by giving the minister this power?

The answer is quite obvious when Bill 33 is examined with those questions in mind.

The experience of students' unions under the Ford PC government in Ontario gives us a look at what can be accomplished through Bill 33: an authoritarian and unconstitutional move to defund student unions through the establishment of voluntary student unionism.

This is what the Ford PC government attempted to do with the Student Choice Initiative, a policy put forward in 2019, a policy deemed unlawful by the courts in Ontario this past year.

So, I ask, why would the Pallister PC government put forward legislation in lockstep with what was already deemed unlawful by the Ford PC government?

Unfortunately, Manitoba labour unions can answer this question all too easily based on the unconstitutional piece of legislation that the government tried to force upon Manitoba public sector unions—bill 28, the so-called Public Services Sustainability Act. This piece of legislation was also deemed unconstitutional just this past summer.

I hate to think how much public money was wasted fighting against the constitutionally protected right to collective bargaining.

Manitoba Labour unions know all too well the contempt of this government for democratically organized and governed labour unions, organizations that enable workers to use their collective strength to fight for better wages, benefits and safer working conditions.

Unfortunately, this contempt clearly exists for student unions as well. Why else would the minister give himself the power to override the amount or determine whether or not democratically established student fees are compulsory or not?

These fees include things like student services, health plans, food banks, community spaces, student clubs, daycares, student unions and student service organizations. According to the Canadian Federation of Students that represents over 45,000 members—students across the province, they've been told in

meetings verbally by both the minister currently responsible for post-secondary education, Minister Ewasko, and his predecessor, Minister Eichler, that the intent for Bill 33 is not to target student union fees and that these student fees will not be touched.

I ask again, why would the minister give himself the power to tamper with student fees if he does not intend to do so? Any reasonable person knows the answer to that question. Just ask students in Ontario who were promised the same thing by the Ford PC government.

So another aspect of Bill 33 that concerns PSAC Prairies as representatives of student workers is the unlimited tuition fee increases that can be forced upon universities by the minister. Currently, the PC government limits university and colleges' ability to increase tuition fees by 5 per cent plus inflation, so about 6.6 per cent per year. This is a dangerous and unsustainable yearly tuition fee increase where the affordability of Manitoba post-secondary institutions is concerned, but at least the decision to increase or decrease tuition remains with the administrations.

Just as an aside, as a union representing student workers, we make careful notes of yearly tuition fee increases and we bring that to the bargaining table. The idea that tuition fees can increase three to four times the rate of inflation every year without comparable wage increases shows a gross misunderstanding of the reality for students and workers, and I want to thank the previous speaker for having the courage to tell her personal story. Tuition fee increases are squeezing student workers' abilities to finish their degree and is threatening things like their food security and housing security.

And I should also note, again, as the previous speaker mentioned, that this is a major hardship for international students whose fees are disproportionately higher than in-province students, especially since international students are, No. 1, primarily racialized workers who are limited to working on-campus. They do not have options available like other students.

So what is concerning where tuition fees are concerned with Bill 33 is that this allows the minister to unilaterally set guidelines to increase or decrease tuition fees at his discretion. Based on the tuition fee increases inflicted on Manitoba students by this government, the idea that this government would use Bill 33 to decrease tuition fees is, frankly, laughable.

In fact, the minister has told us outright what he plans to do. He stated in the second reading of the bill that the PC government plans to bring tuition fees in line with other western provinces. So, for the record, average tuition fees in Manitoba are \$4,740 a year; in Alberta, \$5,744; in BC, \$5,898; and in Saskatchewan, a whopping \$7,770 a year.

If Bill 33 is passed, tuition fees are only going up. This, coupled with the operational and funding cuts that Manitoba post-secondary institutions have seen over the last five provincial budgets, including the most recent provincial budget, it is clear that Bill 33 will further weaken the capacity of our already underfunded post-secondary institutions to deliver high-quality education that Manitobans and all students deserve.

In a letter from Minister Fielding to post-secondary institutions, dated March 8th, 2021: Despite having lost a constitutional challenge on legislating government bargaining mandates to post-secondary institutions, this government, once again, is mandating two years of zeroes.

That paired with Bill 33's mandate to legislate the minister's interference is a gross overreach to underfund public service—post-secondary institutions on the backs of our members and all students across this province.

As a union that currently represents over 700 student workers in this province and, pre-COVID, represented twice that amount, I have a duty to challenge this bill and stand up for what's in the best interest of our membership.

*(18:40)

Bill 33 provides no benefit for student workers, or Manitoba's post-secondary institutions for that matter, and PSAC Prairies echoes the call from the Canadian Federation of Students and labour unions across this province to scrap Bill 33 altogether. And I will provide a copy of my written presentation to the Clerk later.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Hladun, for coming and giving your presentation to us tonight.

I did want to say to you, in regards to the legislation in the Ontario—in the province of Ontario, that

is a piece of legislation that is allowing students to opt out of previously mandated student fees, which Bill 33 is actually not doing. Bill 33's going to make sure that our students here in Manitoba, and also a lot of students, are going to choose Manitoba as their post-secondary institution destination and then, hopefully, choose to grow roots and live here.

We're going to maintain that our education—post-secondary education here in Manitoba is, at the very most, third lowest in Canada, lowest in—west of Quebec. And in regards to your international students comment, actually, here in Manitoba our international students benefit from the—actually, the cheapest—the lowest tuition fees in all of Canada. So I'm glad that you're providing us with your presentation because I will look it over again. Hopefully your email is in there as well, so that I can get you some factual information on Bill 33.

Thanks again.

Ms. Hladun: Thank you for your comments.

You know, to me, it's all about the words, and I heard previously that there's going to be some amendments coming. I'll tell you this: as an elected union leader who's often at a bargaining table, it's one thing for the employer to tell us and for us to come to an agreement on something, but when we see it in writing and your 'spidey' senses start tingling, that means that there's something else.

So I don't know what amendments are being considered and, quite frankly, until we see it in writing and have the time to evaluate it, it's still very concerning.

You know, overall, what we saw earlier this year when the provincial government tried to get post-secondary to cut their budgets by 10, 20 and 30 per cent—that was a clear signal to me as someone who represents—*[interjection]* Yes, every institution was told by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) to come forward with plans to cut 10, 20 and 30 per cent. And that was a clear indication that, you know, it was said that it was because we have to save money for health care for COVID. This was early last year.

We fight this at the bargaining table every time. These are the lowest paid workers that are there trying to do their studies, trying to pay their rent. And all they want to do is get a decent wage. And tuition is going up and the government is mandating zero. How are they supposed to be able to put anything more than noodles on their table, if they can even do that? And heaven forbid they have a family to support.

So, you know, I really do believe that I'm open to more discussion, but there's got to be a closer look at the welfare of the students.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Hladun.

Mr. Moses: Ms. Hladun, thank you so much for your presentation and breaking down some of the important issues that arise from Bill 33, specifically on student unions, specifically around tuition fees and the potential increase of tuition fees and the worry about them being in line with our higher western Canadian provinces.

Now, I want to ask you specifically about, you know, some of your members who are students, or even some of the members of PSAC who might become members who are students now, or prospective members of PSAC.

What would higher tuition fees mean on them? Maybe the fact that it's making university a little bit less accessible. What would that mean for PSAC members and maybe even future members of PSAC?

Ms. Hladun: Yes, so, it's interesting question because today in discussion with some of our staff reps who've been in communication, you know, one of our members has said that she's basically doubling up on her classes to be able to get in and get out because she cannot afford another year of tuition, especially with the significant increase.

And, you know, the other piece that we're seeing as representatives of student workers on campus is the abuse of student workers. Their hours are being cut. You know, some of them are being told, you can have three hours a week, but yet they're expected to work 10 with no pay. So we already fight against that. We—

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Thank you, Ms. Hladun. Your time for questioning has gone to five minutes.

And now we'll call on the next presenter, the next presenter being Sophia Adeleye of Brandon University Students' Union, if the moderator can invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Adeleye, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Sophia Adeleye (Brandon University Students' Union): Thank you. Can you hear me?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, we can hear you. Please proceed.

Ms. Adeleye: Okay. Good evening, my name is Olufunke Sophia Adeleye, I'm the president of Brandon University Students' Union, and today I'll be presenting my union's concerns regarding Bill 33.

And the concerns I wish to address are in threefold: (1) the risk to the existence and self-governance of our union, as well as the protections we ensure for our members. The second threat is threat to university funding that would impact not just the quality of academic opportunities and education available to students but also the very relationship we have built with our institution. The third one will be the autonomy of academic learning and student organizations and the politicization of post-secondary education in Manitoba.

I would like to use my time tonight to explain these concerns in greater detail, the first being self-governance of our student unions. The proposals of the amendment of the advanced education and—sorry—The Advanced Education Administration Act that are included in Bill 33 have been justified as a means to, in quote: enable the minister to issue guidelines concerning tuition fees and student fees charged by universities. The guidelines or regulations may limit a fee increase or require a fee to be decreased and may also prohibit compulsory student fees. That's from the explanatory notes.

While not problematic at first, we consider the term student fees to lack adequate definition. Such a broad use of student fees risks exposing our own student union fees to unprotected regulations, meaning it can be increased, decreased or completely removed by government ministers at their own discretion. This threatens the very existence of student unions, as these fees are regulated based on individual and union needs and the constituent student community.

If regulations of these fees become subject to government intervention, these powers could potentially be used to defund student unions at the whim of political entity. Without secure funding, we would be incapable of providing students with significant services.

If this were to happen to the Brandon University Students' Union, our student members would lose access to services such as advocacy or health and dental coverage or the food bank, but also the campus community groups that are sustained through the funding by the university.

Even if impacts to student unions are not an intention of this government, there must be protections set in place to protect our existence in the future. If Bill 33 were to receive assent in its current state, there's nothing in place to prevent abuses by future administrations. The considerable powers afforded to the minister by this bill leaves our existence to the whim of an individual that may not always respect our rights of student communities to govern, organize and represent their own interests.

This is not a hyperbole. One may only look at Ontario to see the risks a similar body of legislation can pose to the health of student unions. There's a real example where student unions were institutionally devastated by the actions of an unfriendly administration and are required to fight just to secure their right to exist; all the while students are left with diminished representation and vital services and, secondly, a threat to university funding.

Yet this is not the only fundamental problem we have with this bill. There may be consequences to the follow to—for the following—to allow the following to proceed, sorry.

In quote: if the minister is satisfied that a university has charged a student an amount that exceeds the amount provided for in the guidelines, the minister must direct the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding) to deduct an amount equivalent to the excess from any grant 'quisitioned' for the university. That's from section 2.2, I think; 3 as well.

*(18:50)

It is unfortunate—it is an unfortunate truth that the current administration has demonstrated a yearly pattern of reducing funding to universities across Manitoba. In 2017, we had minus 1.8 per cent; in 2018, we had minus 4.8 per cent; in 2019, it was minus 7.3 per cent; in 2020, minus 10.7 per cent; and in 2021, minus 13.1 per cent.

This section of the bill essentially means that should an institution wish to raise fees to address underfunding or cuts to funding, Bill 33 will allow the minister to direct the Minister of Finance to deduct the difference of the fees from their operating grant. This deduction in grants will be detrimental, not just to the student unions, but to the universities themselves. These funds usually goes towards research or operations from which students also benefit.

At Brandon University, one of our major accomplishments is in research, where the university's

increasingly been recognized nationally for its value and importance. In fact, in 2017, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada awarded discovery and discovery development grants totaling \$360,000 of support to three projects led by Brandon University faculty members.

Any threat to funding would negatively affect the quality and sustainability of future research, leading to the diminishment of Manitoba's presence and standing in national academia. If our universities cannot succeed, then students also cannot succeed. This is but one example of how this bill wreaks long-term damage to students and universities alike. The potential to deprive the university of vital funding could lead to a reluctance to support student endeavours, where in France, it's seen as a scarce resource to be protected and students are viewed as competition.

This will do nothing but negatively impact the relationship between student unions and university administrations.

We at BUSU—the Brandon University Students' Union—enjoy a good working relationship with the administration at Brandon University and have concerns about anything that could change that.

The last I will be speaking on is the autonomy of academic learning. This bill also threatens your autonomy of higher institutions. While universities are partially funded by the government, they are not to be beholden to the government. They are autonomous institutions and their founding legislation defines this autonomy.

The previous points can also help illustrate how a government minister should not be empowered with the ability to directly impact an institution's operations. Yet, the following passage raises further concerns. This is from section 2.2(7)(c), in quotes: A guideline or regulation may exempt a tuition fee or student fee or a class of them and may impose terms and conditions on such an exemption.

This 'techmang' could be interpreted as discriminatory in nature. This is because it could potentially highlight or tag different universities, students, unions, or even courses, categorize them into classes, and determine who is exempt from the minister's guidelines, while highlighting those who would be governed by those guidelines.

The criteria for choosing classes is not known at this time, but from the original legislature, the bill would allow the minister to set fees on a per program

basis. For example, the government could declare that they wanted fewer students in the arts and the humanities and more in agriculture. The minister could then triple the fees for arts and halve the fees for agriculture to influence and redirect students into programs that have the support of the current government.

This is a very drastic example, yet one that would be entirely within the powers granted by the bill in its current draft. This represents a real risk for political interference in university programming. Legislation mandates that academic programming at a university is governed slowly by the university senate, not the minister of advanced education. Yet, the effects of Bill 33 is the politicization of academic programming at universities. It would allow a minister to influence and impact programs and/or institutions as are set to go to the governing agenda. This intrusion of government into the internal affairs of universities undermines the very concept of a university, as the courts have ruled, and the essential principle of academic freedom.

Moving forward, we call on the government to address our concerns and draft a legislation in a way that protects students and academic freedoms. To this end, we specifically recommend the following changes: (1) withdraw section 2.2(1) of the bill—the minister may issue guidelines in respect to a tuition fee or a student fee set by a university board, and (2) to amend the definition of student fee as provided to us by legal counsel. In quotes: student fee means a fee set by a board and is payable by a student to a university or college but does not include any fee set by a student union 'president' or to any student union legislation, including University of Manitoba Students' Union Act.

We would also appreciate and request that the minister's office relay any and all 'objects' through the draft legislation to the Brandon University Students' Union via pres@bucu.ca. We wish to be aware of proposed amendments that your office has drafted and how Bill 33 will read. We are aware of and we appreciate the public support given by the minister to implementing amendments to the legislation that will protect our student unions.

I know he mentioned it earlier that the amendment will come, but 'til today we still haven't seen those. And because we haven't, it's also a growing cause for concern. Having the proposed amendment in advance of the committee hearing would have been helpful. But, again, we will wait for any updates.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this committee hearing. My name, again, is Olufunke Sophia Adeleye, president of Brandon University Students' Union.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Ms. Adeleye. I appreciate you coming forward today and bringing forward your presentation. And much like—it has been reported and you've repeated it, which is great, is the fact that multiple different mediums here in the province of Manitoba—I have said, and, you know, after having a few meetings with various student groups as well, that we're going to make sure that there brings—there's more clarity in the bill.

And so, sometime this evening or in another evening of committee, because we have quite a few passionate presenters coming forward today, we are going to actually make sure that the amendment reads something like this, and it's going to be brought forward in the upcoming couple days.

But, basically, we are doing exactly what you just said: fees set by student unions and associations are not included in this bill, as they are approved by students in a democratic process. I stand by my word.

I, as well as many of my colleagues, are all about listening, partnering and collaborating, and that means working with post-secondary institution partners, that means students, student groups, faculties, absolutely all the above, Mrs. Adeleye. So I appreciate you coming for committee today.

One last tidbit. You mentioned the Ontario legislation, and Bill 33 is nothing like the Ontario legislation. So, once again, I'll put that on the record. And I think—thank you for taking the time tonight. And I look forward to meeting you.

Ms. Adeleye: Thank you for your comment. I appreciate it.

Again, I would wait for the amendment. As you said, it will be coming and it would show some of these concerns. So I will wait for that. Hopefully, we have enough time to get legal counsel on to see actually what it could potentially be as well. But I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. Moses: Thanks so much for your presentation. I think it was very thoughtful and broke down some of

the important concerns around this bill, specifically for Brandon students and the student unions, the effects that it would have on the student services.

And I really appreciate you talking about the autonomy and how, you know, you're not beholden to the government because of funding.

I'm really hoping that you could talk a little bit about what the funding for different programs would mean and having differential tuitions for different programs would mean to students in Brandon. I know that many young people in the 'wesbranmes'—Westman area attend Brandon University, and so I want to know what impacts having a different—differential class of tuition and different programs might mean for students who attend Brandon University.

Ms. Adeleye: I appreciate that question.

Yes, having differential classes of how much tuition you're going to pay—personally, it's already affecting me. I'm an international student. When I came in 2018—beginning 2019, I think, I went from paying \$8,000 in tuition to right now I'm paying to—\$18,000. So that's a wide difference in just two years.

So, right now, I'm already feeling like, okay, I feel like I'm just being—this tuition is just going to increase. Next year, it's going to be \$21,000. And I'm studying nursing. It just—it's just going to keep on increasing, so it's—right now, I'm already feeling the pain from it, because I know the first year I had to find ways to basically cover up the expenses because I didn't plan—my parents didn't plan to have, okay, now you're paying \$18,000 in tuition. Where's the rest supposed to come from?

Like, it really affected my GPA. It really affected my school, affected my mental health. So these different classes of, oh, yes, you get a tuition decrease or you get an increase, it's already affecting me now. I can deal with it now, but I know a lot of students who can't. And I know how difficult it was when it initially started. So this, it will not work well for Brandon University at all.

* (19:00)

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Well, thank you, Ms. Adeleye.

I just want to get right to the point here. How much listening, partnering and collaboration took place between Brandon student union and this government in coming up with this bill?

Ms. Adeleye: Zero. None. Zero.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, and thank you for your presentation. The questioning for your time limit has gone over—or has surpassed.

I will now call on Tanjit Nagra, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Nagra, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Tanjit Nagra (Private Citizen): Well, though we're meeting virtually, I would like to start off by acknowledging that we're located on Treaty 1 land, the original lands of the Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples and, of course, the homeland of the Métis nation. And, Mr. Chair, committee members, thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

I know the public hearings is not necessarily a part of the process in every province and territory, and I appreciate that it is in Manitoba, and I hope it's something that's upheld and appreciate everyone coming together and co-ordinating these committees to be online and virtual. And I would argue it's probably more accessible. I know countless of times I've sat in a committee room waiting for my turn to speak, so I like the fact that I'm in the privacy of my own home and can do other things as waiting for my turn as well as listening to the other presenters in front of you today.

So, a bit about me: I'm an alumni—or, alumnus from the University of Manitoba. I have a bachelor of arts degree. As well, I'm a recent graduate from the master of business administration program through the Asper School of Business. And I'm also a former University of Manitoba Students' Union president; I served from 2016 to '18.

My original intention today was to speak on the importance of excluding student union and association fees and making that clear separation in the bill because, when I first read it, my first thought went towards the fees that are set by the student organizations. And I appreciate the sentiments that have been shared publicly and also the intention more recently to actually formalize it within an amendment. I think that's really important. I also—myself and former colleagues wrote to the minister; appreciate the timely response and the importance of that. I think clarifying the two will be really, really important.

So I figured I'd use my time today to kind of speak about some of the other concerns I had with the bill in front of us today. And first concern is over the removing of the sentiment that ensures that we still have the lowest tuition in western Canada and—or, the most affordable tuition in western Canada. I know when this bill was originally introduced in 2017, at the time, MLA Wishart was in—overseeing this portfolio, and I know several times I heard the intention, though they were removing the cap that was set by the former government at the time, the intention was to still ensure that that sentiment of making it—make sure it's still the most affordable and lowest fee in western Canada was upheld. I'm just wondering what the removal there—if that's still the intention to uphold that or if there's other plans.

And also, my next concern is over the—just the overall autonomy of what this bill might entail and the importance of ensuring that though public—though they're publicly funded, institutions such as post-secondary institutions have that autonomy to make decisions and do best for students, for faculty, for the wider community. I think that's really important, and I think that—I just worry about the ability to long-term plan with these stipulations. And also, I worry about just the history of what we've seen in terms of government interference with public institutions like the University of Manitoba, for example, and others. You know, thinking back to 2016, there was involvement in the—illegal involvement, actually, in the labour negotiations with the faculty. There was the cut in 2018 to international student health care, which has created many other barriers to education. And also, overall, there's been many cuts to incentives and rebates that students, domestic students included, has—had offered to them if they were to stay in Manitoba post graduation.

So I worry about that as well, as a young person and for my—for fellow, you know, soon-to-be graduates as well and what that might look like in our workforce and whether or not people will choose to stay in Manitoba.

So some of those concerns, you know, come to mind. Ultimately, I would hope that the intention behind these changes is to ensure that tuition and education is affordable and equitable. If that is the intention, great; but if not, I do have some concerns about the bill and what it entails, and I'm open to hearing that. I do think the amendments coming forward are going to be important, and I am in full support, and I appreciate, you know, that the intention was not there from the get-go, but I think that further

clarifying it will be important as, of course, many laws and things like that are up to interpretation of those in power, and I think it's important to make that clear line to ensure that, you know, folks don't get it confused with what happened in Ontario with student organization fees and things like that.

So I'm in full support of an amendment, and, overall, I would, yes, I would—I once again just urge the committee members, I would urge the government to ensure that tuition remains affordable and accessible to students, to young people. And, personally, I believe that investing in education is one of the best investments we can make into our future. And, you know, further to that, investing in young people, I think, is along the same lines.

I'll leave it at that. I'm open to further questions, comments and things like that.

Thank you so much for the opportunity.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Ms. Nagra, for sharing your presentation and time with us tonight.

Yes, absolutely, the intent of the bill is to continue with the strong programming, affordability and accessibility and making sure that our tuition here in Manitoba is the lowest in western Canada, so, definitely, west of Quebec, making sure that those fees are low.

I think you know this because you've been involved at the university for quite some time, and since I've been elected in 2011, I've prided myself with meeting with various student groups, whether I was in opposition or in government now, and making sure that their voices are being heard, and that you're going to see with the amendments coming forward.

It was definitely loud and clear that some of the—even though the intent, even as you mentioned, is not—wasn't there to affect union fees whatsoever, the students said it could be clearer in the bill. And so that's why, you know, in many, many medians in the province, I have said—and in regard to letters, as well, sent to the student groups, that we're going to be bringing forward an amendment that clearly spells out the fact that this bill is—it's not my intention nor the bill's capability to be able to mess around with any student fees set by unions or associations because—you know this, coming from your background—that those fees and various different things set by student unions

and associations and are voted on and either accepted or denied through a democratic process.

So, again, I want to thank you for coming and presenting tonight, and I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Ms. Nagra: Thank you for the comments.

Yes, I would just say that, well, it—further in line with that, you know, when I was at the students' union, we also amended the University of Manitoba Students' Union act which, actually, I would argue, made it more democratic for student—or, fees set by the student organizations, you know, to actually be in line with what students want. So there's that.

And also, yes, I think the importance of the amendment—I mean, when I first read the bill, I will say, my concern was over the fact that, though it does stipulate its in relation to fees that are approved by the board of governors currently, at least at the University of Manitoba, the student union fees are consented by the board of governors. So my concern was over the interpretation and whether or not that would stand with governments to come.

* (19:10)

So I think the importance of having that clear line between the two will be really important.

Thank you.

Mr. Moses: Thank you very much for your presentation and your words. And thank you for all your work with the student union. You mentioned you are a recent grad, so congratulations on that. I think you said, very appropriately, the importance of investing in education and the impact that it has on young people. So, thank you for that.

I want to ask a little bit about your perspective on the tuition side, having been someone who's graduated from university. You know, with the goal of keeping tuition low, what would have meant—what would higher tuition have meant for your career through university? What would that have meant if tuition was higher or—and how did you appreciate having the lower tuition here in Manitoba?

Ms. Nagra: Thank you for the question. I definitely think it added to my decision to stay in Manitoba for education. I mean, mind you, that was thinking more of the undergraduate level. The MBA program at the U of M is probably on par with other MBA programs across Canada. It is probably one of the most expensive graduate programs. But, that being said, the

affordability of especially the undergraduate level was so vital.

I think if you look at the workforce now, looking at what the requirements are of jobs, more and more require some sort of post-secondary degree or accreditation of some sort. And I think it's important to, you know, keep that affordable.

I mean, you can look at other countries that have free education. I think that's something to aspire to do. That'd be fantastic. I also think there's other things that come along with free education, and I think it becomes more competitive. And there's that—and so there's a caveat to it, as well. But, that being said, I think that it's really important to ensure that it is equitable and it is accessible for vulnerable communities and underrepresented communities.

And education is a powerful tool, so let's ensure that we, you know, maintain the affordability of education. And that being said, I'm speaking as a privileged domestic student. My international student colleagues would probably disagree with what I'm saying because their tuition is triple what I pay and they're also paying tax members, right?

So I think looking at, not only do we want to make sure students stay in Manitoba after graduation, but we want to make Manitoba a destination for new immigrants, for young people to come to study, to prosper within our community, to add to our economy. So, I would leave it at that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over for this speaker.

I will now call on Ms. Brienne Goertzen, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Goertzen, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Brienne Goertzen (Private Citizen): Good evening. I would like to acknowledge I am on Treaty 1 territory, the traditional territory of the Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene people and the homeland of the Métis nation.

Thank you to the members of the standing committee for having me and providing this opportunity to speak on this bill.

As you said, my name is Brienne Goertzen and I am presenting as a private citizen tonight. I hold both an honours BA and a master's degree.

I would like to take my time today to highlight some concerns regarding the proposed legislation. I had the privilege to work as the former Manitoba organizer for the Canadian Federation of Students for many years, up to 2018. Throughout my time with the federation, I had the opportunity to work with some incredible people throughout the post-secondary educational community.

I also had a front-row seat to the impact that student unions and the work of the federation had on current students in the next generation. The impact of programs and services offered through student unions directly impact the well-being of students and have actually saved lives, whether we are talking about mental health supports or providing child-care services or ensuring students have access to food.

It is with this I concur with the recommendations put forth by the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba to amend the definition of student fee to read: student fee means a fee set by a board that is payable by a student to a university or college but does not include any fee set by a student union, pursuant to any student union legislation, including the University of Manitoba Students' Union act. However, with that said, this bill really just needs to go.

What I find interesting about the introduction of this bill is it is clearly part of a plan that started when the Progressive Conservatives first took office in 2016. I worked for the federation during the changeover of government from an NDP government to the current Progressive Conservative one.

From the moment they tabled their first budget 'til I left the federation, the attacks on post-secondary education were relentless. Their regressive and detrimental decisions made over my time with the federation adversely impacted students and prospective students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from pursuing post-secondary education.

Here are just a few examples of what post-secondary endured during my time: successive operational budget cuts to post-secondary institutions; elimination of the tuition fee income tax rebate and rebate advance; stagnant Manitoba bursary funding; elimination of health care for international students; opening the door wider for private funding through the MSBI; and the introduction and passage of Bill 31, which allowed tuition to increase to 5 per cent plus inflation year over year and deregulated course-related fees. And now, here we are today dealing with a piece of legislation that strips students of their

democratic decisions, centralizes power and shreds universities' autonomy.

It wasn't so long ago in Manitoba that it was the Progressive Conservatives who feared the centralization of power here on Broadway, but this proposed bill ensures all roads lead to Broadway, right up to the minister's desk. This is wrong and disregards the importance of autonomy in post-secondary education.

Universities are a public good. They prepare people for employment, but this is not the sole purpose of universities; they foster knowledge, curiosity, critical thinking and community.

When all roads lead to the minister's office, it clearly disregards what universities are intended to do and ensures little resistance in their quest to lessen their funding obligations and shape universities into an assembly line factory that will crank out workers according to employability determined by private industry while, at the same time, making it harder and harder for students to access education through skyrocketing tuition.

When you grow up with nothing, when you experience the pains of poverty, when you have no safety net, when you have no one, education is a lifeline. And trust me, from experience, it is a whole lot harder to pursue post-secondary from this vantage point.

I'm not ashamed to say I grew up poor. My mother struggled, working multiple jobs to ensure we had food on the table and a roof over our heads. There were no trust funds, education savings plan or inheritances to rely on. I grew up faster than most and knew the value of a dollar just as fast.

It was the value of education that was instilled upon me as a way out, a way to do better to support myself and potentially my family one day. In fact, I was able to pursue my graduate studies here in Manitoba because of the affordable tuition, and it was the amazing professors and staff from the department of sociology at the University of Manitoba who gave me a chance to thrive in a new province and really gave my husband and I confidence to build our life and start our family together here.

I am here before you, gainfully employed, married, a homeowner, taxpayer and a duly elected school board trustee and—my most important role—mother. All of these titles, including being a mom, is because I was able to pursue post-secondary education. It is the foundation in which I have built my life. And I fear that these changes will only

intensify until post-secondary institutions are publicly assisted, as we see in Ontario, or fully privatized. Education is a public good and it must remain as such.

Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for this presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Ms. Goertzen, for coming tonight and giving us your presentation. It's nice to see you again.

* (19:20)

You talked about affordability and various tuitions. And I know that you know this, because you and I have met in the past, that Manitoba is the lowest tuition rate—has the lowest tuition west of Quebec. And I have said on many, many occasions, as my predecessors, that we are going to remain the lowest tuition rates west of Quebec. And in regards to accessibility, which I'm glad you actually brought that up, because it was actually the voice of students that had us make the change in regards to making sure that our post-secondary institutions remain—not remain—actually become more accessible to those people that want to carry on with their post-secondary education here in this great province of ours. And it's great to hear, and congratulations on your family circumstances in that, as well.

But—so what have we done? We've increased the scholarships and bursaries to \$30 million from the previous NDP's state of about \$6 million. And you would know this, that Manitoba student loans, you know, we're north of \$60 million. And so as far as accessibility goes, you know, besides the fact that we've got an absolutely beautiful province to live, work and play, you know, including tonight as the snow is falling like crazy—we've got the added benefit of having it to be very, very affordable.

And for those that, as you said, have a—had a—you know, grew up poor, you know, maybe didn't have some trust funds, various different things—parents didn't—maybe didn't put aside some money for savings for post-secondary education, that's where we're—we've come up with the, you know, scholarships and bursaries, you know, record amounts of scholarships and bursaries. And then, of course, this—the Manitoba student loans which, as you know, is interest free.

So with that, I again thank you very much for your presentation tonight and I wish you all the best in the—

maybe the upcoming federal election as the NDP candidate for the south.

Ms. Goertzen: Respectfully, I would point the minister to the actual research that bears out that debt aversion is one of the No. 1 reasons why students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds do not pursue post-secondary education. Additionally, the funding that this government has said they promised to post-secondary education has actually not bore fruit.

So, quite frankly, I would also appreciate if the minister would treat me as the private citizen I am, as I've appeared before you at this committee.

Thank you.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Ms. Goertzen.

The question I have for you is: What advice would you give the minister to make this bill more favourable for students of post-secondary here in Manitoba?

Ms. Goertzen: Get rid of the bill; actually ensure that there's a cap on tuition. Year in and year over increases in tuition make it less accessible. We've heard from a number of speakers, both personal experiences and otherwise, that demonstrate why this piece of legislation will lead to further inaccessibility of education.

We look—need to look no further than the other neighbouring provinces that they seem to be touting as things—as points of reference. Quite frankly, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are the ones we should be capturing right now to stay here and work here in Manitoba and really ensure that they have a foothold here, not to propose legislation that centralizes power and makes it easier for this government to take control and reduce their responsibility to fund post-secondary education.

Mr. Wab Kinew (Leader of the Official Opposition): Thank you, Ms. Goertzen, for your presentation.

I just wanted to put on the record that, judging from his last comments, I think that the minister has you confused with Elizabeth Shearer. So I just wanted to clarify the record there, and, again, all in the purposes of making sure that we've properly appreciate the importance of your presentation.

I also wanted to give you the opportunity to maybe—to correct the record, because some of what the minister is saying, I think does a disservice, because initiatives that they've taken—there's no

guarantee that those will actually go to help needy students and, actually, when you look at moves that the PCs have done, like cutting the ACCESS Programs, it's moving in precisely the opposite direction.

So, given the fact that you are engaged with this, I wondered if maybe you could talk about how, in spite of the rhetoric, a lot of the assistance for those in greatest need are being damaged by the current government.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Goertzen, for the purpose of time, very briefly, with all due respect. Thank you.

Ms. Goertzen: Yes, for sure.

So, actually, we saw a freeze to the Manitoba Bursary Program, which targets actually low- to middle-income students who don't have the funds to be able to cover their tuition. Additionally, the elimination of the ACCESS program, the fact that they've jacked tuition and also eliminated the tuition fee rebate, which actually ensured that students didn't out-migrate from Manitoba and ensured they stayed within the province.

Additionally, I would also say that this government has pretty much presented a smoke-and-mirrors, in regards to the supports of providing students and, in fact, aren't providing supports to students. And the biggest percentage of loan recipients in Manitoba are actually women. So, I would also say this is a gendered attack on women, and this continues to be the trend with this particular government.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on Mr. Kevin Rebeck of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Rebeck is not present, so we will drop him to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on Mr. Adam Pawlak, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Floor Comment: Hello. I'm not sure if everyone can hear me or not. I cannot hear you, Mr. Reyes.

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

Mr. Adam Pawlak (Private Citizen): Good evening to members of this committee.

So, my name is Adam Pawlak. I'm a graduate from the University of Manitoba. I'm the former vice-president, internal—which is now called the vice-president, finance and operations—of the students—University of Manitoba Students' Union, and I'm currently the chairperson of the University of Manitoba Students' Union board of trustees, which is the governing body for the union's endowment fund.

So I'm here today to—

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, Mr. Pawlak, please proceed with your presentation—or, you can start over again.

We can't hear you, Mr. Pawlak. It appears you are on mute. It's show—

Mr. Pawlak: Sorry about that. Sorry. Did you guys hear anything or should I restart?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave for him to restart?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave has been granted.

Please proceed with your presentation from from the start. Thank you.

Mr. Pawlak: Okay, thank you very much, members of the committee.

So, my name is Adam Pawlak. I'm a graduate from the University of Manitoba. I'm the former vice-president the students' union at the University of Manitoba. I was vice-present, internal—now called vice-president, finance and operations—and I'm also currently the chairperson of the University of Manitoba Students' Union Board of Trustees—endowment fund. And I'm here this evening to speak in favour of the legislation, Bill 33.

I want to add some context to discussion on this piece of legislation; related topics like tuition, et cetera, that I felt is necessary, given the public interest in this, to offer my perspective based on my first-hand experience being at the front line of students for my year that I was there.

During my time as executive in the students' union at the University of Manitoba, a focus of mine and our executive team was the affordability of tuition and other fees students incur. And I must say, as my experience as the vice-president of the union—or, one of the vice-presidents, affordability was one of the No. 1 themes that I dealt with in the organization.

You know, I dealt with the revenues and expenditures of the organization and worked a lot the university on setting those fees. And I heard countless, countless number of times from students—their major concerns over the number of fees they're paying, and there's tons of scrutiny, tons of misunderstanding. My emails were flooded every day over the outrage of number of fees, largely due to unawareness of why these fees are even there.

The year I was there, for example, was the year the U-Pass was introduced, and you can imagine the outpour of the thousands of students which had no idea of this fee because they didn't vote on it. I think the vote turnout was, oh, 30, 40 per cent. So they were completely shocked by having this major fee in there and I had to deal with it there, right and try to find the balance. And, you know, I'm not saying these fees aren't worthy causes, but more so that students deeply care about their affordability and they look at the fees they pay for—many again, which are not—unaware of it.

* (19:30)

At the high level, I see this legislation as a means of protecting students from the various additional student fees charged by universities and colleges, which is, to be clear, and rightly so, different from the student union fees or student fees charged by the union that every undergraduate member—undergraduate student is a member of.

So, rather, this—I see this legislation as protecting students from the variety of ancillary fees that the University of Manitoba can find loopholes in. You know, even when the tuition was capped, at the University of Manitoba, and I'm sure other institutions, found ways around the cap—lab fees, program fees, library fees, technology fees, studio fees, clinical fees—all approved by the board of governors, that existed as loopholes even though tuition was capped.

So I'm excited to see the minister's office have listened to students, have addressed these concerns to close the loopholes and make sure there's no incentive to universities to try to operate outside existing rules.

Students were concerned about specific language, which, you know, the wording around student fees, and I feel that initial criticism [*inaudible*].

So the amendment that was—I was able to understand that Bill 33 would never have impacted UMSU fees, whether it could be health and dental or their other organizational fees, because student fees—

the bill defines student fees as ones defined—set by the university board of governors.

And I know when we amended the UMSU act, that the board of governors approves the fees but doesn't set the fees. The students set the fees, right. So the board of governors approves the fees set by the union, and this bill never talked about the fees set by the union, more so the fees set by the board of governors.

However, I knew this because of my previous position and, you know, a lot of different people, they may not know that, but I feel like a lot of several groups jump to conclusions and began spreading things that are more negative about this piece of legislation.

But clarity is always a good thing, so I think the amendment is great; credit to UMSU and MAPS and all the organizations for their advocacy and congratulate them for that. I'm impressed by their work and kudos to them. And it's refreshing to see a minister put in writing that these fees are exempt—the student union fees, I should say.

Furthermore, I honestly think that this is an opportunity for the ministry and the government to collaborate with the union closer. You know, my experience is that the more direct the parties can be in knowing what's actually happening at the ground then the better it is for everyone. That's for all students, right, so I really recommend that the minister and his office work closer and closer with student unions and really know what the challenges are that students are facing on a daily basis.

Yes, so just to wrap up, again, students care about affordability, and if this legislation can help halt the university's workarounds and loopholes, and I think most students would agree to this common sense approach.

And one last thing. You know, again, I appreciate the time from this committee. I know there's great work being done, and, yes, so that's all I really got. I didn't really write anything. I have a few notes here, but, again, I do think that there's a lot of students that, you know, care about affordability, care about certain issues. And if this legislation can help affordability, then why not support it.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Pawlak, for taking some time out of your evening and coming forward and doing a bit of a presentation and giving some other perspective to the bill.

As you know, and as I've said multiple times, we—myself, my ministry and my colleagues—are working very hard to make sure that we have the open door policy and we're collaborating and listening with various different stakeholders in regards to post-secondary education here in the province, because the main goal is to make sure that we have strong programs here in the province backed with affordability and accessibility to our students.

You know, I've said on multiple occasions we want to, you know, train and retain our Manitoba students. But at the same time what we want to do is make sure that the rest of Canada and the rest of the world knows how great, great, great of a province this is. And, unfortunately, as you've mentioned and I've—as I've seen multiple times, whether it's the opposition critic or other members or other associations within the province, are putting misinformation out there and absolutely fear mongering not only students but future students, which is sad, because, coming from the background that I've had working in the education field for many, many years, it is sad to see that, because education is the key, and we want to make sure that, again, the education in this province remains affordable.

So I'd like to thank you, Mr. Pawlak, but I would like to correct the record, that the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) is actually incorrect when he puts on the record—I've actually met with Ms. Shearer. She's part of the Canadian federation for students, and so I absolutely know who she is. And the—Ms. Goertzen, who did a presentation just prior, she actually ran for the NDP. But why would I expect the Leader of the NDP party to actually know that of anybody in the province.

So, with that, thank you, Mr. Pawlak. Sorry to take a bit of a sidestep there, but I needed to set the record straight. So thanks again for your time.

Mr. Pawlak: Yes. No. Thank you, minister. I really appreciate your comments, and [*inaudible*] been talked about [*inaudible*] that assuring it will remain the lowest. We are still the lowest west of Quebec, and I appreciate your promise to remain the lowest.

It's also important to note that the educational outcomes weren't the greatest. So there's many reasons, you know, and it's—as—I came here tonight to

add context and speak on behalf of, I think, a lot of people that just want affordability and want things done correctly and just care about, you know, getting by.

So, thank you.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Pawlak, for your presentation and your words and your perspective on the bill. And thank you for what you've worked during your time at UMSU, as you described.

You know, knowing the past few years under this government, you know, and the drastic increases that they've seen in tuition, specifically at U of M, you know, nearing, you know, 18, 19 per cent increase over the last four years, and seeing in Bill 33 around the ability the minister has to increase tuition as he sees fit, regardless of what U of M sees, I'm concerned about tuition and the increased affordability for folks.

He's mentioned that's something that is important. I'm wondering whether you think that that's something you're concerned with or what your thoughts are on that aspect of Bill 33.

Mr. Pawlak: Yes. I mean, again, like, obviously, I mean, no one wants to see tuition increased. I think that's a fair point for every single person. But again, we've got to be a little bit realistic of the situation at hand. We were capped for a long time, and—but then, that being said, the University of Manitoba weren't funded properly, so they had to find other means of revenue and workarounds and government at the time overpromising and couldn't deliver.

So, you know, there's many reasons why those universities were in that financial situation, and, you know, this government wants to take a different approach and allow more—some flexibility, even staying within the lowest threshold of tuition in this country.

But, yes. I mean, it is concerning it's going up, but I also like the fact that, you know, scholarship and bursaries for students are going up according to the minister, increases in student loans, you know. So there is counterbalancing things, initiatives happening with tuition increases and—but, yes. I know—I hope—I'm not sure if I answered your question, but I just added some perspective to your questions, I guess.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

The time for questioning is over. I will now call on our next speaker, Savannah Szocs, of the University of Manitoba Students' Union. If the

moderator can just invite them into the meeting, and please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Savannah Szocs (University of Manitoba Students' Union): So, hello, everyone. Thank you for having me today.

My name is Savannah Szocs and I am the current and re-elect vice-president, student life, with the University of Manitoba Students' Union.

While I feel I have vulnerable experience and knowledge to offer from my experience within this position, I would also like to voice my opinion on Bill 33 as a concerned student.

So, firstly, some background on my role within the students' union that pertains directly to the topics being discussed within Bill 33. As the vice-president, student life, I am quite immersed in the services and resources provided to students by the union, and even external to the union within the university.

A large part of my portfolio is to oversee the over 206 student clubs and 30-plus student associations at the University of Manitoba, so I am very grateful for the amendment that is being made to Bill 33 to exempt student clubs and associations from the impact this bill will have.

* (19:40)

However, to touch on the issues still being considered, I speak from experience when I say that I truly believe the fees students are currently paying are all very valuable and necessary in order to provide all students with accessible and critical aspects of their education. If this were not the case, you would be seeing advocates from UMSU arguing against these fees, but instead you're witnessing us arguing for them. As representatives elected by the student body and entrusted by students to uplift their voices and advocate for affordable services in education on their behalf, we are emphasizing the importance of these fees for students.

To disagree with Mr. Pawlak, who spoke before me, I think if students were presented with a clear-cut image of what this bill would be truly impacting, they would completely oppose the implementation of this bill and students and alumni of the U of M, who have already spoken before me and will speak after me, have already voiced their opinion and their opposition to this as it absolutely is not a common-sense approach.

As a student, I also understand the importance of these fees to my educational experience and the quality of education I am able to receive. Firstly, by paying library fees, I am able to access textbooks and resources through libraries that wouldn't otherwise—that I wouldn't otherwise be able to use. Something that I know many science students use is the sample exam booklets that the library has, as well as tutoring materials and textbooks; they are extremely valuable, not to mention that some students are unable to afford textbooks to begin with, but by paying these lesser fees to the libraries, they're able to access and borrow textbooks as study materials from the library at a much more affordable cost.

We are actively working towards the increase of open educational resources, and libraries will become increasingly valuable and play a key role in this new resource for students.

I'm also a science student at the University of Manitoba, so the lab fees I pay as part of my account summary are extremely important to the quality of education I receive, and I believe this to be true for all science students and any students from outside the faculty of science who might be taking science courses. These lab fees are remarkably low considering the high-end equipment and resources that are made available to us in a lab setting. I have seen what a science course without—with less of a lab component looks like this year through the online environment, and I strongly believe the tactile learning environment accompanied by the extremely expensive equipment we normally have access to, plays an immense role in the quality of learning that we receive.

The argument can be made that re-evaluating these fees could save students money, but will not save them enough money in order to replace the resources these fees provide to them. Two primary examples of this would be textbooks available through libraries and other written materials as well as the technology fees that allow students to access computers and other vital technologies that they might not have access to at home or otherwise be able to afford.

I am always on board for saving students money, especially being a student myself. However, reducing fees in an effort to save students money but at the cost of valuable resources and education will not amount to an overall positive impact on student education and will likely be detrimental. We should exist to increase

and expand student resources and services, not limit them.

I acknowledge my position of privilege in the University of Manitoba environment, and I am fortunate and grateful to have resources I need to succeed academically at my fingertips. However, I have been humbled through my work as vice-president, Student Life, to be made aware of just how many students on our campuses are in far different situations and are far less fortunate. I administer the UMSU Hardship Fund, a small but significant budget allocated by UMSU to support the needs of post-secondary students who might be struggling with regard to basic living necessities such as rent, groceries, child care, textbooks and other costs.

I have been overwhelmed with requests for access to the UMSU Hardship Fund this year and have been heartbroken by the stories I've heard from students who are struggling to pay their costs of living let alone provide themselves with all the tools they need to receive a proper education. If we decrease essential fees, such as technology and library fees, we are not putting money back into their pockets, as what is being presented to students through this bill. We are instead forcing them to pay more money than what these fees originally demanded to replace the resources that paying these fees ultimately provided.

We should be aiming to decrease the struggles for less fortunate students with regard to accessing their education, not increasing their hardship. And what I find to be most disturbing with regard to this bill, is that it's being presented as though it will be helping students and saving them money, when, in reality, it will be doing the exact opposite.

I want to say I appreciate the open dialogue that is being created through the discussion surrounding this bill, but I believe that these crucial decisions with regard to student fees will inevitably alter the quality of student education and should be made by informed committees of individuals at the University of Manitoba. Administration and consultation with faculty and students know what is best with regard to these fees, not the minister. At the university level of decision making that has been followed for many years, this practice involves an extremely informed approach that involves students in the decision-making process as it is absolutely necessary and it absolutely should and since students are the ones who will be directly affected by these decisions.

The minister ultimately does not have stakes in this decision making; therefore, will not be influenced

into making decisions that take into account the needs of students. As a student leader and representative who was elected twice to represent over 24,000 students at Manitoba but, more importantly, as a student myself, I stand in strong opposition of Bill 33 and strongly urge the provincial government to reconsider the implementation of this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Ms. Szocs, for attending tonight and your presentation and also thank you for what you do on campus. I know that your role in regards to the portfolio as far as student life, it's not an easy one at times, and I couldn't imagine that this past year, dealing through the pandemic, has made it any easier for you. It has been a tough go.

You know, much like you've said in regards to accessibility in that, you know, over the last few years since we've formed government, we have actually increased that ability for people—for students to access post-secondary education here in the province. And you know this, I mean, because you've mentioned a little bit in regards to the fact that we are the lowest tuition west of Quebec.

But we have taken our scholarships and bursaries and increased it all the way to \$30 million, and the student loans—Manitoba student loans is, you know, over \$60 million.

You mentioned lab fees and you mentioned various different fees that are brought down from the post-secondary institutions themselves. I mean, under the former NDP government we saw the deterioration of those exact labs that you're talking about and the libraries.

And so what we're doing now is we're making sure—even though it's not all that sexy, I mean, it's not the whole ribbon cuttings that the NDP would go and do over, you know, a stop sign they would take the opportunity to take a picture over.

But for us, Ms. Szocs, what we feel is that some of that deferred maintenance costs to the post-secondary institutions has to be covered by the provincial government, and that's what we're doing. We're putting actually more money into that deferred maintenance, which is going to make sure that those labs and those library—the library that you speak of is

there for not only you today, but for the students into the future.

So, again, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your presentation, and I look forward to having more conversations as we move forward with you over the—throughout the next year.

Ms. Szocs: Well, thank you for your remarks, but I would like to point out that the reason that the costs are so low is because of years and years of tuition freeze. And since this government took office, operating grants have not kept up with inflation, including this most recent budget with an almost \$9-million cut to post-secondary education, and it's resulted in an 18 per cent increase to tuition for students at the U of M. And this has made higher education far less accessible which, in turn, has put a greater burden on students who are struggling. So I would just urge you to definitely consider that as well.

But thank you so much.

Mr. Moses: Thank you so much, Ms. Szocs, for your presentation. I am so happy about the work that you're doing. Thanks for sharing that and thank you for participating in this process tonight and being active in our democracy here in Manitoba.

I'm very, you know, very happy to hear about the different aspects of this bill that you were looking into, namely library fees and lab fees, and those are the types of student fees that won't be affected if this minister does bring in any sort of amendment because they don't fit under the student union type of student fee.

So I want to know from you, your perspective, why should the minister have control over library fees and lab fees?

Ms. Szocs: I actually—I disagree. I don't think that the minister should have control over lab fees and library fees. I was actually arguing in the opposite direction.

I think that those types of fees should be decided and determined by bodies within the University of Manitoba because they consult students directly on these issues and the students are ultimately the ones who are being directly affected by this and the ones who are paying those fees. So I think that that's incredibly important.

* (19:50)

Mr. Ewasko: Ms. Szocs, thank you for your comments. And again, I just want to assure you that it's actually the post-secondary institutions that will be

talking about those tuition—the various tuitions and the fees attached to them and basically the position of the bill is so that—to keep tuition affordable for students and making sure that our programs are second to none in the country, that it is just a little bit of a shoulder check with the post-secondary institutions because I'm sure that you've read, Ms. Szocs, the fact that the Auditor General is making, you know—because we're all taxpayers in this great province of ours, the Auditor General is saying that, our post-secondary institutions in this province, there needs to be a little bit more oversight.

So, it's actually collaborating and working with those post-secondary institutions, and that's to you as well. So, working with students.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning's actually over.

I will now call on Mr. Brendan Scott and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Scott, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Brendan Scott (Private Citizen): Awesome. Good evening. While I am here today speaking—while I'm registered as a private citizen, I do have to acknowledge that I am the vice-president of finance operations, UMSU, as well as the president-elect.

And I'll be brief about this because I know there'll be my fellow co-workers speaking later, but I'd like to say I appreciate the amendment that is being proposed. It's essential to have our student unions and associations operate to the fullest potential, and this can only occur if they are able to operate autonomously, and I hope to see that amendment adopted.

While I personally oppose Bill 33, I have to acknowledge that it most likely will pass, and I'm just here to state that I hope consultation and extensive research is done before any decisions on student fees are made. While putting money back into students' pockets, on the surface, seems like a great thing, there can be many unforeseen consequences. Cutting services that are essential to students' education, like lab fees, like library fees, leads to the quality of those services being diminished and to diminish of the potential of that student's education.

I think that those service fees should remain in the hands of the universities, as they are best able to gauge

the amount of funding each service needs. Again, this bill will most likely pass, and I have to acknowledge that will affect students such as myself and all the students I will be representing in three weeks' time. I just hope that I don't have to explain to a U of M student that their student accessibility centre or Active Living Centre is being understaffed because the minister thought it made sense to cut their fees.

Once again, I am just here asking that extensive research and consultation is done before any decisions are made with the power that this bill gives, and that's really all I have to say, you know.

I'm open to any remarks but, again, I just want to be brief and let my voice be heard.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Scott, for taking the time tonight. And I look forward to working with you in the upcoming months. As you've mentioned, you're letting your name stand, and I wish you all the best in that.

So, again, I look forward to working with you, much like what has happened in the last, I guess, just over three months since I've been appointed Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration. So I've already shown that the department and myself are more than willing to have those conversations, and working with you and—but not only just working with superficially, much like the previous government would do with student groups, but actually working with, listening and taking their concerns forward and actually making some changes and amendments.

So I appreciate your comments. We're going to definitely take those to heart, and, again, I look forward to working with you in the upcoming—within the upcoming year.

Thanks, Mr. Scott.

Mr. Scott: I'd just say the feeling's mutual, and I understood, as you mentioned to my co-worker, Ms. Szocs, you know, this is a shoulder check for universities. I, again, yes, I hope it's more of a collaborative effort rather than, you know, you making the decision. But I appreciate your time and hope you all have a great evening.

Mr. Altomare: I would like to ask you, Mr. Scott, you talked about consultation, extensive research, but then

you also mentioned that you're concerned about some unforeseen circumstances.

Can you describe what some of those unforeseen circumstances that you're concerned about?

Mr. Scott: Yes, appreciate it.

I would say those consequences come from not consulted—not consulting, you know, thinking that the gym fee should be lowered and having then the service not being up to par, or, like, an accessibility centre, same thing.

If there's not consultation to find out what is needed, then—and it's just being determined by one person without consultation, then we're going to see a drop in that service and it directly affects students, even at—even though at the service level, it appears, oh, it was a good thing to do, we saved students money, when in fact, it's detrimental to individuals and their education.

Mr. Moses: Thank you so much for your presentation, Scott, and putting the few words on the record about Bill 33.

And I just wanted to know that, you know, if you had been consulted on this bill beforehand, what sort of things would you have wanted to tell the minister and share with him before drafting of Bill 33?

Mr. Scott: I would—yes, I would honestly—I would like to see this bill not even have existed. I guess I can't really speak about amendments, I—except for the one amendment that, you know, student unions will not be affected by this.

But I do have to realize, you know, the reality of it is that this bill most likely will pass, and I'm here to just give my comments to make sure that, okay, if it's passing, at least it's going to not be—you know, mitigate the effects and make sure that it's not detrimental to students.

So I guess to—in that sense, I would just like to see this bill have not been proposed.

Mr. Altomare: So, Mr. Scott, just to further, you know, ask about what you just said there: so you're saying the status quo is better than what this bill is proposing?

Mr. Scott: I would go on the record and say yes, that is correct.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions from the floor? Seeing none, we will now move on to the next presenter.

I will now call on Ms. Kristin Smith of the Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Smith, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Kristin Smith (Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students): Good evening, committee members, fellow speakers and members of the community. My name is Kristin Smith, and I'm the current vice-president advocacy at the University of Manitoba Student's Union as well as a founding member of the Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students, who I am honoured to be delivering remarks on behalf of today.

I would like to begin my address by fully acknowledging that on April 9th, we experienced an incredibly important day in the province of Manitoba for student advocacy and government relations. Minister Ewasko has committed in an official capacity through a Manitoba government news release to bring forward an amendment to better protect student organizations from having their fees made non-compulsory or otherwise reduced as part of the bill's future use.

I'd just like to comment that we are incredibly relieved that we will not be faced with student choice initiative like my colleagues in Ontario are sort of continuing to face uncertainty surrounding to this day, and that student associations will be able to continue to provide our members with everything from representation in academic disciplinary cases to government advocacy, which was instrumental in bringing this sort of amendment forward, to tutoring, hardship funding, travel grants, work-integrated learning and so much more.

And more than anything, that amendment recognizes the special autonomy that student unions have in an otherwise really complicated post-secondary ecosystem and for that, we are incredibly thankful.

But I'd sort of like to continue my comments on by pointing out that, sort of, make no mistake, we do remain really hesitant about some aspects of Bill 33. And while the amendment is welcomed and necessary and celebrated, the bill would still be able to regulate certain student services fees charged by our institutions as opposed to charged by student unions, who would be protected under the amendment.

And that is a situation which does continue to leave many students feeling uneasy, and I think that we've heard those comments from Savannah, from Brendan and from a couple of others who've spoken before me.

But you might be wondering, you know, why is that? Isn't a government shoulder-check a good thing? And I mean, I'm not certain if I'm allowed to, sort of, name people by name, but I know that previous speakers, I think, Adam would say yes, a government shoulder-check is a fantastic thing.

And by and large, he correctly outlines a couple student frustrations with fees. But what I would say is it needs to be a shoulder-check with a healthy dose of consultation, and I believe, Minister Ewasko, you've committed to that practice after multiple addresses tonight but, sort of, to make the point more salient, I will proceed in highlighting the concerns of students I've heard as we've continued to develop our strategy around Bill 33 and have understood some of those unintended consequences.

* (20:00)

So look: savings are great; they're needed now more than ever, but not at the cost of measures that facilitate student success, retention and completion—which I know this government values incredibly highly—and I value it incredibly highly for that matter. And, if these sort of savings are created but there are unintended consequences, we may inadvertently create difficulties for students through a poorly applied Bill 33.

So know, Minister Ewasko, you've noted that Bill 33 would seek to protect students from overly large increases and ensure that education remains accessible and affordable, and I do sincerely hope that is how the bill is going to be used. But in order for that to happen, we would like to point out that the minister needs to have plentiful consultation and consistent dialogue with our administrations to fully understand the impacts, sort of, of each order to decrease a particular fee.

And I really appreciate the opportunity, maybe, to illustrate a little more clearly what it is that I mean. So, let's maybe take the library fee as one example. I believe the minister has named this as one fee that would fall under the legislation, would require further examination, so I'm sort of just picking on it for that reason. And it may look like a fee that would be attractive to reduce or otherwise make non-compulsory. So, what might that mean?

Well, the library fee is used in part to improve access to open-source material for students, particularly open educational resources. So, sort of the more open-source material available to students. Fewer and fewer students need to purchase textbooks for, you know, \$300 at piece. And that provides universal and instant savings to thousands of students. But without a library fee—or with significantly reduced library fee—the university couldn't necessarily continue to pursue this project in a manner that is needed to create meaningful savings for students.

And sort of another ancillary sort of consequence of this is that the university may need to implement new processes to monitor that only those paying the full fee are accessing library spaces and services, in an event that the fee is made, like, entirely non-compulsory.

But, importantly, these sort of impacts are not only isolated to something like a library fee. This year, the Student Accessibility Services centre added two additional co-ordinators to assist students with disabilities, and without an adequate student services fee, I'm not certain that would be possible.

So, what we see is that we also limit our ability to improve existing services when the impacts of Bill 33 are not fully explored before implementation.

So, I think it's clear, when using correctly and at the sole discretion of the minister, though the—sort of, the intentions are really well-placed, we sort of see two risks that arise, and the first is that cuts to fees that are used to implement services which foster student success may lead those services to disappear altogether or remain stagnant in their operations, not improving service quality, remaining sub-par. Or, sort of, the second risk we see is increased internal inefficiency or administrative burdens placed on our university if they seek to monitor these implementations.

So, the takeaway is really that good intentions can have unintended consequences. I urge the 'minister's' team to consult thoroughly with the university before making determinations on which fees would be compulsory, non-compulsory or otherwise reduced.

And I think—I'll sort of end my address today by noting that a wise man once said that the most terrifying words in the English language are, I'm from the government and I'm here to help. So Minister Ewasko, please do consult our institutions, listen to senior leadership and faculty voice.

We at MAPSS currently operate in incredibly high regard for your office and we are thankful for the amendment that will be brought forward, and we ask that you demonstrate a certain degree of good faith in how this legislation is applied moving forward to ensure that these good intentions materialize in the way that someone like Adam might have conceptualized and that we don't see those negative, unintended consequences.

Thank you very much for the time, and I'm open to any questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Ms. Smith for attending and giving us your presentation this evening.

I do want to commend you and your organization and, of course, the other student groups as well for basically—you know what, I'm going to say that, right off the bat when I was appointed minister, I received some very nice congratulatory letters from your organization, but also the others as well, and had asked for a meet-and-greet.

And we did talk about, you know, of course Bill 33 came up and I made sure that—I could see, right off the bat, that some of the language within the bill was not clear, so then we offered up a technical briefing to your organization and CFS as well. We had the technical briefing and then you wanted to make sure that it was explicit in the bill, written, to make sure that those student union fees were democratically voted upon, were not going to be impacted in this bill.

So, I look forward, you know, probably not tonight, but the next time the committee sits, to bring forward that amendment. I thank you for your hard work and your work on the consultations and collaborating and working with myself and my ministry. I look forward to future discussions, working on anything in regards to Bill 33. That shoulder check with extensive consultation is definitely going to be happening, working with those post-secondary institutions, as well as the students and faculty. And that is definitely high on the list.

So thank you very much.

Ms. Smith: Yes. Minister Ewasko, I wanted to say thank you sincerely for those comments. It was a really pleasant experience working with your office. And I felt it was done all in good faith. And it's very

exciting to see—like I said, it was a very exciting moment in student advocacy in the province just last week, Thursday or Friday.

So, thank you sincerely. We at MAPSS are a non-partisan organization, but we do give credit where credit is due, and this is an incredible amendment and victory for students in the province, and we thank you for your commitment to consultation not only with us, but with our institutions as well.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you for your presentation, Ms. Smith. I did certainly learn a lot from your perspective.

And I know one of the things that you talked about is some of the unprecedented power that's going to be placed in the minister's hands and in the minister's office.

I want to ask you, what would be an effective antidote that can be added to Bill 33 to mitigate that circumstance?

Ms. Smith: That's a fantastic question.

I think that, by and large, the amendment that was implemented for student unions is a great step in the right direction. I'll point out that I'm not a legislator, so I don't have all the answers, but I think that if there is room to provide additional clarity or requirements for consultation, we would celebrate those, but I don't have a particular wording or answer in mind, just that greater accountability might be necessary.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions from the floor?

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Ms. Smith, for your presentation.

I just really wanted to just take a moment to say thank you, and your organization, for the advocacy work that you did on behalf of students to push this government to work on creating an amendment for this bill.

So thank you to you and all the people in your organization.

Ms. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Moses. I appreciate that sincerely.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions?

Seeing none, we will now move on to the next presenter. I will now call on Jonathan Henderson of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association, VP of external affairs, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Henderson, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Jonathan Henderson (University of Winnipeg Students' Association): Good evening. Thank you for this opportunity to speak here tonight in front of this committee in regards to Bill 33.

My name is Jonathan Henderson. I'm the vice-president of external affairs for the University of Winnipeg Students' Association. I am a four-year Indigenous student, and I have my BA in Indigenous studies as well as conflict resolution studies. And I'm in hopes of—well, I'm actually currently pursuing my masters in conflict resolution.

I'm here tonight to speak in regards—or, on behalf of the University of Winnipeg students and to voice some of their concerns regarding this bill. And three of the biggest concerns that we have right now is—something that's been reiterated over this evening—is the lack of proper and meaningful consultation.

Number 2, too, what we want to—what I want to raise as well is the lack of transparency regarding the amendment to Bill 33. And also, even with this amendment, there's still concern over the overreaching of power and control when it comes to tuition fees.

So, firstly, the UWSA strongly opposes the bill's current wording that gives the government new and absolute power over control of tuition and student fees. This bill opens the door to increased tuition and other fees without participation or consent from students.

* (20:10)

The current reading of the bill could drastically affect budgets of student fees that fund essential student services like health care, transit, daycares, food banks, academic advocacy, campus media and more. Services are even more in demand during the pandemic. This leaves me to your amendment, and a question is—right now is: why haven't we not seen this—anything from this amendment yet? Why leave students feeling added stress and anxiety over their futures and education, especially during a pandemic right now that has already caused stress, anxiety and more uncertainty about moving forward with our futures?

So with that, it's—again, it's—again, not to overstep, but what I'm saying here is—again, we didn't have meaningful consultations as the University of

Winnipeg. We reached out and we're—unfortunately were unable to connect with those meetings, so we would've loved to have been part of that process. That's what we feel is what is, again, is very wrong of this bill is there hasn't been that consultation; we should've been consulted with as students right from the start when this bill was first introduced or even when it was in the thought process; we should've been part of that process right from the start. And for—to be left out has been very—again, very disappointing.

And, again, why leave us under this cloud of uncertainty with this—with the amendment to this bill? Until we see something concrete—you know, there has been a lack of trust now from this government by the students because we haven't been consulted with. And then also, why leave this bill amendment right to the last moment when, you know, it probably could've been probably brought forward before tonight at the last minute when maybe that would've alleviated some of the concerns for a lot of the presentations that are being brought forth tonight, by having that amendment in place and also shared with already?

So again, that's the concern with the transparency of that amendment, and, you know, maybe it'll be—is what we hope for as student unions, is that that amendment, again, will be leaving student fees alone. But again, there's still that overreach in power of tuition fees, and why does this government feel that they need to have that power without involving us student unions in the discussions regarding tuition fees?

And also, just speaking as an Indigenous student, overcoming a lot of our obstacles in life is very difficult, and overcoming a lot of those legacies that we overcome—those negative legacies—is through education. Education is so important, and for those of us that rely on these essential services that these student unions provide, such as the food banks, the affordable transit, child care, all of these things there, these are very important and has added a lot of stress to a lot of students thinking that these things are going to affect them and, does that mean that I can't further my education? Does that mean I have to quit and find jobs right now? And then, yes, those are even—for those that have to work, you know, some school is even more stressful too.

It's very tough to see students going through the stress and especially during this pandemic. It's—unfortunately this has happened to us students. And, yes, it's—why put us through that anxiety and stress during this time and—is a big concern.

And, yes, again, the only thing that—as a student leader, speaking on behalf of the students, even with this amendment, we still have to call on the minister to scrap Bill 33, because without consultation, there is no consent. So we call on the minister to establish meaningful dialogue and consultation with student unions—all student unions—and include them at the start of any process when setting directions and priorities for post-secondary education.

And, again, I just want to say thank you for all of those that have spoken before me and as well as those that are going to be presenting later on tonight as well too. And miigwech for this platform and thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Henderson, for bringing forward your presentation.

And I guess the biggest thing—you mentioned transparency and consultation. As I've said for the past few months now for sure over Bill 33, you know, met with student groups, given them technical briefings.

Also the wording in the bill now, in regards to actually being able to show you the exact amendment, that actually goes outside the scope of the process for legislation because this doesn't happen a whole lot of times where there's an amendment being brought forward.

I mean, hats off to the great work of the student groups that I've had the pleasure of meeting. I mean, they reached out, they asked for meetings, I accommodated that. They asked for more clarity, so I'm just, you know, giving you my word today as well—and so this is on the public record, of course—that shortly I'll be reaching out to you and your organization to have a sit-down with, for sure, and we can definitely talk about various things moving forward.

And as I've assured other students that definitely the consultations will continue, you know, making sure that—as I've said in various media throughout the province—the fees set by student unions and associations are not included in this bill, as they are approved by students in a democratic process. I've said that many, many, many times. I've shared that with not only MAPSS, but CFS.

And I know that you've got representatives from the University of Winnipeg on those two groups. And

I strongly encourage, if there is some miscommunication, I need you to work with those groups to make sure that your body is also getting those communications.

But, that being said, I'm making sure that we—your organization and my office is definitely going to have a meeting in the—within the next couple weeks, for sure.

So, thank you, Mr. Henderson, for your presentation, and I look forward to not only meeting you in person, but also working with you as the time goes on.

Mr. Henderson: I appreciate your comments there, Minister.

And again, yes, just I want to meet you on behalf—not just under the entire umbrella of CFS because each student union—we have our own unique concerns. And that's why it's very important that we all have our voices heard and have that chance to be heard as well, and because we are all unique. And that's what should be celebrated is those unique concerns. And, yes, that's why it's very important that we all be heard.

And, again, I look forward to meeting with you. And, yes, I appreciate that you're going to—going on record to say that you'll meet with us, and I appreciate it and I look forward to those discussions.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Kinew? Mr. Kinew, you're on mute.

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks for pointing that out.

I also want to thank Mr. Henderson for his presentation. And I'm not too sure if those are Maple Leafs logos that I see behind you there, but also just—I want to say an official go Jets go for the record. Let Hansard record that I put that on the record, too. But always room for constructive disagreement; we don't have to agree on all things, as long as we do so respectfully.

You know, I just wanted to maybe ask you more on a personal level: you talked a bit about working with Indigenous students; you shared a bit about your journey there. I'm just wondering maybe if you could relate, like, how does the affordability piece, like, from your own personal experience, how much of a barrier, how much of a hurdle is that, how much does that factor in both from, like, your own perspective but also some of the students you're working with?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Henderson—[interjection]—Mr. Henderson, for the purpose of time, if you could

just be very brief with this because we'll be running out of time once you finish your answer. So very respectfully, continue.

Mr. Henderson: Okay. Yes, the affordability piece is very huge because as you know, First Nations people that—we already face a lot of struggles, and for education to become unaffordable is just another barrier.

* (20:20)

And again, for myself, I'm speaking as a person that has—both parents overcame the residential school system. And to overcome that legacy—for me to overcome that legacy and fall into those negative impacts of that legacy was through education. And I was able to do that because it was affordable education, and that's how I've been able to rise over that and become the leader that I am in this position that I am right now.

But with that, the affordability—if that's in question and that's the—doesn't become a reality for those other Indigenous students that are moving up, those future leaders, you know, that—yes, it's going to be very tough for them that—where they have to choose if it's affordable or not. And that's a reality for a lot of our people.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

The time for questioning for this speaker's over, so I will now call on Mr. Ethan Burnell, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

I understand Ethan is not here, so we'll move him to the bottom of the list.

I will now call on Mr. Tino Dogo, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Dogo is also not present, so we will move on to Mr. Michael Shaw—we'll move Mr. Dogo to the bottom of the list

So we'll move on to Mr. Michael Shaw, and I'll ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Shaw, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Michael Shaw (Private Citizen): Thank you very much, committee members.

And I'm, you know, I'm a member of the biological department at the University of Manitoba, and I just want to say right off the hop that the fact that you folks are choosing to not wear masks in that space is so disrespectful to this province, but I'm going to move on now to Bill 33.

If you share the data about swirling air in that old building, the fact that you folks aren't wearing masks is so disrespectful to the almost 1,000 Manitobans who have died, and my anger level is through the roof on that particular issue. You have hard-working staffers behind you who are breathing your air, Mr. Minister, and it is unbelievably disrespectful.

Now, let's get into Bill 33, shall we? I've been a professor of biology at the University of Manitoba for 27 years now, and you've made it clear tonight that this bill is not about controlling the students, so it must only be about overreach into the autonomy at the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg and Brandon University. The fact that you've allowed cuts of up to 13 per cent after inflation in the last five years and a rise in tuition of 20 per cent after inflation in the last five years indicates that you have no desire to make this province more affordable, you have no desire to make education more accessible to students. This is merely an exercise in control.

You have, right now, at your disposal, article 16 of The University of Manitoba Act that says that the board of governors at the University of Manitoba gets to set the fees. So why do you need this particular bill?

It is only because you want the ability to reach into the autonomy at the University of Manitoba, as you've done through your bargaining mandates of the last four years, which have now been shown by the Court of Queen's Bench to be unconstitutional. Yes, you're wasting the—much more of our money to appeal those particular decisions, but you continue to do that. So, overreach into the operations of Manitoba Hydro, all of your overreaches, and this is just another example of overreaching into universities and universities here in the province of Manitoba; they're doing a great job with dwindling resources.

When you look at the data right now before you get into your whole Tennessee model—which I imagine is the bill will be coming shortly—when we look at that Tennessee model, we, right now, through this pandemic, have seen people who have finished a bachelor's degree are better here in Manitoba, have had the lowest unemployment rate. We are doing a good job at these institutions with our autonomy, decisions made by senates, decisions made by board

of governors to do what is in the best interests of these students, every single decision.

You talk about a shoulder check. When we go to increase a lab fee in faculty of science, the level of consultation with students, whether it's with the Science Students' Association or UMSU in general, and then we have to go through various other regulatory things within the university structure before we actually end up with a recommendation before the board of governors.

And I will remind you, Mr. Minister, that that is a board of governors that the vast majority have been appointed through the Legislature; it's been appointed by members of your office. Now, your office has changed a bunch. I know—I think we're on the third minister of Advanced Education in the last 12 months or so, but those are where those appointments to the board of governors have occurred from.

You have that level of control through article 16 of The University of Manitoba Act, and you've made it clear tonight, and I'm glad to hear that, that you're not planning on using this to control student fees and university students unions, but then for—it must only be because you're going to continue to interfere in the autonomy of Manitoba's post-secondary education system, which I will tell you right now, is second to none, particularly on the prairies.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Shaw, for attending tonight and giving us your presentation. I look forward to—I'm sure we've got your email address. I'll make sure you get some factual information on Bill 33. So, thank you, sir.

Mr. Shaw: Please wear a mask. We're in this together, as your boss says.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Shaw, for your presentation. I think it's very insightful, the impacts that it would have on you and other faculty members. It's—I think, you know, I think it's very important to see the impacts that higher tuition has on enrolment, in the accessibility that the universities have, but also the fact that the continued funding decreases for post-secondary has that squeeze; it raises tuition and it also forces a squeeze on faculty and tuition—faculty and their work.

Can you please describe, from your perspective, the pressure that you might face and feel as a faculty member who is facing, maybe, you know, decreased support from administration while knowing that your students are paying higher and higher tuition?

Mr. Shaw: Well, we know, and the faculty of science and other faculties, that we are losing out on excellent candidates. We're on job search committees; we find great candidates; we say, here's our pay scale at the University of Manitoba, and they choose to go to Regina; they choose to go to Saskatchewan; they choose to go to Guelph. They're making these sorts of choices on a daily basis.

And we also know that we are losing great faculty members. There are faculty members here at the University of Manitoba who have decided, you know what? I'm going to go take that UBC job; I'm going to take that UVic job, and this continues to hurt. The interference in the autonomy of the University of Manitoba by this government over the last five years has seriously impeded the task that the University of Manitoba has in front of it, which is to create great graduates that are going to contribute to the University of Manitoba; they're going to contribute to the province of Manitoba, and they're actually going to contribute all around the globe.

Our graduates, our alumnae, have important roles all around the world. They leave this province or they stay in this province, and they do great things because of the education we're providing. And our ability to do that is being interfered with and overridden by this government for the last five years.

Mr. Altomare: Mr. Shaw, thank you for your presentation this evening. Again, it brought to light many of the same concerns that we have, especially around retention of professional staff.

I have a question: How can this bill be amended to ensure that we make university more accessible for students that come from backgrounds that aren't as supported as some of the—some of our regular kids?

Mr. Shaw: Well, this is kind of going to be a Kristin Smith sort of an answer. I don't think there is a way that you can modify this bill that makes it so that it will achieve those particular goals. All this does—the minister's been very clear tonight that this is not about interfering in students. Therefore, it must only be about interfering in the autonomy of the university, and I don't think that's fixable.

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

I just wanted to pick your brain while we have the benefit of you at committee here. What needs to happen so that our province can better support the research function of universities, if you could just expound on that for a few seconds.

Mr. Shaw: Well, I didn't even get into the most recent cuts to Manitoba research that continue to undermine the great work that's done in this province.

* (20:30)

When we see the cuts that occurred at the research—and I can't remember the name of it, but the one that's been assisting with the pea protein process in Portage la Prairie, the cuts that just recently occurred to that—this is a Province, this is a provincial government, that is hampering the great work that's done at the University of Manitoba, whether it's the funding cuts in general to the U of M or funding cuts to Research Manitoba or it's those very targeted funding cuts that occurred—and I'm sorry, I can't remember the place in the Portage la Prairie, but it was doing great work on pea protein research and had—actually, we got investment from France and other places because we have the ability to do great things with our farmers that can advance protein.

And just to cut that out from underneath us is just foolish.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions for the floor?

Mr. Kinew: It might have been the Food Development Centre that you were touching on there. And, you know, just on that vein, because universities—they do serve many functions, you know, research, instruction but that field of knowledge mobilization.

You know, if we have that pathway of students coming up that's going to be impacted by a bill like Bill 33, how's that going to impact the research function down the road and then even the knowledge mobilization piece that you're talking about, where we can either commercialize or bring research out to the public in other ways, how does a bill like this interrupt that or affect it in other ways?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Shaw, very briefly because your time has surpassed. So, very briefly, thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Shaw: So just—I'll be as fast as I can, but one of—some of the better things about the recent skills and knowledge report for the post-secondary sector talked about maximizing that opportunity to get student

entrepreneurs with good scientific backgrounds out into that field, and yet the continuing cuts to the post-secondary system here in Manitoba is making those students, who are going to come up with the next canola, they've gone to Guelph, they've gone to University of Saskatchewan, they've gone to U of A, they've gone to UBC and we're missing out on them.

We're going to miss the next canola with this government in power.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on Mr. Rob Schmidt of Winnipeg Campus Community Radio Society and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

I understand Mr. Schmidt is not present, so we'll move him to the bottom of the list.

We'll now call on Orvie Dingwall, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Dingwall, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Orvie Dingwall (Private Citizen): Thank you to the members of the committee for having me here tonight. I am a health sciences librarian at the University of Manitoba, but I'm here tonight as a private citizen, as a mother and as an incredibly concerned community member.

Everyone, as has been stated tonight, wants to make education here in Manitoba more accessible for Manitobans, but the intent from the amendments to this bill are anything but making education more accessible. Nothing within these amendments will actually accomplish that. And these amendments have been brought forward not by the initiative of students and their families, university administrators, faculty nor community members. Instead, in the middle of a pandemic, at the end of winter term, students are forced to advocate on behalf of university autonomy and their role as student groups and student unions within those universities.

So where have these proposed amendments come from or why have they appeared? It's because of this government's continued meddling: meddling in education, all the way from kindergarten through post-secondary; meddling in collective bargaining at universities, which hampers the ability to hire and adequately pay the employees at post-secondary institutions here in Manitoba.

We heard earlier tonight from a very incredibly concerned and fearful student and her concerns and fears are ones that I share. Bursaries, while well-intentioned, do not—they are not accessible across the board and they still have an incredible barrier. They create an incredible barrier to students. Unlike when tuition is lowered or frozen, when—which makes it a constant and a steady.

There's too much risk when you put all the eggs into the bursary basket. There's too much risk that a student might not be successful in getting that bursary and instead of taking that risk, they choose not to enrol in our universities, particularly during pandemic times when many families have by—families have been significantly impacted financially or they're concerned that they will be significantly impacted.

University is already an incredibly stressful time for students, but particularly during pandemic, when they are—have been incredibly isolated; they can't interact with fellow students, with faculty or the greater university community.

If the No. 1 goal of these amendments is student success, then why are we not ensuring to keep tuition at its low rate? Why are we not celebrating that our tuition is currently the lowest west of Quebec, and why, instead, are we permitting it to be increased? I want it to be protected from increasing by even one penny. I had the great fortune of being the first in my family to be able to attend university. My dad grew up in rural Manitoba from a immigrant family, and they did not have the means or the resources to send him to university, though he would've been an absolutely incredible student and he would have gone on to excel.

Instead, he joined the workforce. He worked very hard, and he ensured that my brother and I were able to come to university. I'm now in a position where I will be able to help my children come through university, but I think of the other students, particularly those from immigrant families, those who are at a lower socio-economic status, and those, also, who don't come from families who have also been to university. I think about them.

I also think about my commitment to reconciliation and to being able to open the doors to post-secondary to Indigenous and Métis students who already have tremendous barriers throughout the education system and throughout their historical—the historical barriers that have been put in their place—I want to be able to welcome them. And the

amendments to this act do not provide open and welcoming doors.

So I urge the committee to withdraw these amendments; withdraw the meddling to post-secondary; to withdraw the meddling to education and to keep universities autonomous from the government. That autonomy is something that by design is put in there so that universities can run themselves and students can absolutely benefit from education.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Ms. Dingwall, for your presentation and your comments, and thanks for reiterating the fact that Manitoba has the lowest tuition rates west of Quebec. And I have said on multiple occasions that we are committing to making sure that that remains the fact, moving forward, as well as making sure that our programs are second-to-none in this great country of ours, and at the same time keeping the education—post-secondary education—here in the province very affordable.

I know that, you know, you being part of the association that you're also part of, which you failed to bring up—I look forward to, you know, a potential meeting request, moving forward. And as far as autonomy of post-secondary institutions, you being, you know, a representative of the, you know, federal Liberals, I guess, also are—should be attuned to the fact on taxpayers' dollars.

And I want to make sure that, moving forward, that we are having those consultations with our post-secondary partners. And that includes students, student groups, faculty, post-secondary institutions, presidents, and making sure that, moving forward, that we are having those discussions about tuition increases or decreases, fee increases, decreases.

And as far as, you know, you're mentioning plural to the amendment; we're just bringing one amendment forward, and that will be done within the next couple days here. And, basically, that amendment is protecting the rights of student unions and associations to—through a democratic process, you know, voting on their fees. So, if you're against that amendment, as I heard you say you wanted the amendment withdrawn, I think definitely you should reach out to some of your—some of the student groups and voice your concerns on behalf of your association.

* (20:40)

So, thank you very much for your presentation tonight. I look forward to corresponding later.

Ms. Dingwall: Respectfully to the minister, I'm here tonight as a private citizen, and I do reiterate my request, that these amendments be withdrawn.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Ms. Dingwall, for your comments and your story—sharing your own story about your personal journey to get educated and what that meant to you.

You know, you obviously—it seems like there's a worry and stress level when it comes to higher tuition. I'm hoping that you can explain, even as a parent, as you described, what it would look like to have higher tuition in our province, when the prospect of maybe helping your kids attain advanced education in Manitoba.

Ms. Dingwall: Thanks so much for the question.

I think, as we've heard from many of the students tonight, that tuition is not the only cost associated with attending post-secondary. There is also costs for child care, costs for learning materials, costs for transportation; for those who don't currently live in Winnipeg, there is the cost to move here and to have residence here.

It's very expensive and so anytime that we can help to alleviate those costs or break down that barrier—tuition is a prime and key example—and it's also the type of example that we've got students that they are so thrifty and they are—they know how to keep their costs low, how to—but tuition is one that is set for them.

They can't control that and if we can lower that and make that less of a barrier for them, it provides them the opportunity to either keep their costs down, keep their debt low so that they're coming out without tremendous debt. Or it allows them to maybe buy some additional textbooks so that they don't have to share, or so that they can really invest in other technologies or high-speed Internet or all of the other things that can make—can keep the barriers down, so that they can really focus and invest in their studies.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over for this speaker.

I will now call on Mr. Peter Miller, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Miller, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Peter Miller (Private Citizen): Thanks very much to the committee members. I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak tonight.

My name is—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Miller? Mr. Miller, we can't hear you. If you could just speak a bit louder, we'll also adjust on our end, too, as well.

Mr. Miller: How's that?

Mr. Chairperson: That's perfect. Thank you.

Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Miller: So, thanks again for inviting me to—or, for having this meeting and opportunity to speak tonight.

My name is Peter Miller. I'm a resident of downtown Winnipeg. I'm a father, a relatively new arrival to Manitoba. My family moved here in 2016. And I'm an associate professor and chair of the department of classics at the University of Winnipeg.

I'm a first-generation university graduate, like Orvie. My parents, who are working-class immigrants from Liverpool, did not attend university, though they recognized its value and encouraged my brothers and I to attend. My brothers and I graduated as the first members of our family with university degrees and I graduated as the first member of my family with a graduate degree, along with \$57,000 in student debt accrued in Ontario and British Columbia. So, I have a good knowledge of university and I have a good knowledge of the cost of university education.

I've attended post-secondary institutions in two provinces and have held positions as an instructor or professor in three provinces and in one state, that state being Texas. So I have considerable comparative experience as an educator in jurisdictions with different—and I'll tell you, in the case of Texas, drastically different—approaches to the funding of post-secondary education.

Since 2014 when I graduated with my Ph.D., I've taught almost 1,500 students. Since becoming chair of classics in January, 2020—right before the pandemic—the classics department has taught over 2,200 students. So, I have considerable experience professionally with student mentoring, teaching, administration, outreach, all the aspects that make up the profession of a faculty member.

My point in outlining my biography before I begin is to offer my expertise and experience as a context for my deep concerns with the language and

aims of Bill 33, as well as the way that post-secondary education has been managed under the Conservative government.

University education is transformative and valuable. I believe in the enduring mission of a university to be the gateway to knowledge for students and a space where people of diverse backgrounds interact and learn from one another across disciplines and areas of knowledge. Universities, I think, are precious. They're gifts to us from earlier generations who founded and nurtured them, and we hold them in trust for future generations who will learn and enrich their lives and their communities. This is a sacred trust and one that I hold very dearly.

Manitoba universities are, I might say, really, really good at the tasks that have been bequeathed to them by past generations. I'm sure committee members are familiar with some of these numbers, but in the context of this bill they bear repeating.

Graduates are employed at incredibly high rates. Over 96 per cent of bachelor of arts holders in Manitoba over the age of 25 were employed in 2019, over 93 per cent, even with the pandemic, in 2020. Very recent grads, those in the 15 to 24 age group, still have very low unemployment rates compared with non-degree holders. Manitoba university graduates outperform the Canadian average when it comes to employment, so our universities, in terms of economic development and employment outcomes, are doing very, very well.

There's always room for improvement in any sphere of public or private service, I admit, but let's consider what's worked for Manitoba: low tuition, accessible institutions rooted in their communities, strong and diverse programs that encourage Manitobans to find their areas of interest and study at home in Manitoba and that encourage out-of-province students and international students to come to Manitoba. At the University of Winnipeg, with which I'm very familiar, students study everything. Part of the transformative education of university is that transformation that comes from graduating high school, moving to university and realizing how many options for study there are, then discovering what you excel in, the faculty and student community that nurtures you and inspires you.

Fully one third of UWinnipeg students study in the arts, 13 per cent in business, 17 per cent in education and nearly 20 per cent in science. That's the vision of a university dedicated to a diverse array of programs that are equally accessible and equally

affordable because they are equally vital to the mission of a university. You'll forgive a classicist, but that's what the word tells us. Universities are universal. They're for everyone.

While statistics give us a general overview, I think specific stories make these come to life. And my extensive alumni listing classics has demonstrated to me that majors lead to any type of career, and therefore diverse programs need to be supported. Providing students with equal opportunity to study what they want inevitably leads to the social and economic outcomes we want—we all want. Students are best suited to decide what programs will help them achieve their goals. Faculty and staff are best suited to help facilitate that. And governments are best suited to support these goals, from a distance, that respects university autonomy.

In classics, if you'll indulge me, we started a new feature to reconnect with alumni this past year, considering the isolated way we're all living, teaching and learning. And I was astonished to hear of so many diverse career paths that, although distant in content from classics, were intricately connected in the minds, memories and skills of these graduates with their studies. I'll give you some examples: a high school teacher who compared the challenge of Greek and Latin with organic chemistry and extolls the work habits, organization and ability to learn that classics courses gave him; a full-time instructor in business administration at a trades school who thoroughly documented for me the myriad skills she learned in classics and credits classics with making her the person she is today; a Métis woman and aspiring archaeologist who studies now in Ireland, but who has been inspired by her own access to classics, her own affordable, equal access to university to push for more diverse representation in the field and in the stories we tell about the past.

These individual stories bring to life the statistics. Accessible, affordable, diverse and equal programming is essential to the mission of Manitoba universities. We're very good at this already. We help students navigate university, find their area of interest, excel, leverage their skills for employment and to become ambassadors for our programs, schools and province.

I repeated the words accessible and affordable, and we've heard them many times tonight already. And now we come to the specifics of Bill 33. I've spent time on the strengths of Manitoba's universities and my personal experience with students because

they provide the context, to my mind, for why this bill is leading us the wrong way in Manitoba.

* (20:50)

I'll say it at the outset, nobody wants high tuition. Since I arrived in Manitoba in 2016 and the aftermath of the election of the PC government, tuition has increased and university funding has dropped. As this committee, the minister, the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and the public know, universities cost money and they're not full of fat that can be cut. UWinnipeg, for example, is lean. Austerity measures across multiple governments have trimmed whatever fat there was to the bone. Administration costs are low. Non-teaching staff are minimal. And even front-line tenured and tenure-track faculty have remained stable; there's the same number of full-time faculty in 2016 as today.

Revenues are cut, as they have been year over year since I arrived, with further implicit cuts because of inflation, to a cumulative effect of 13 per cent, as highlighted by Sophia, Savannah, Brianna and other speakers. The costs remain the same or grow.

No one wants to simply raise tuition. The minister's press secretary Jamie Hofing said on Twitter that Bill 33 was, and I quote: to prevent—capital letters—post-secondary institutions from unreasonably hiking tuition.

But where's the evidence of this? Post-secondary institution tuition raises in Manitoba since 2016 have been in response to cuts to grants. There are, as we all know, two sources of funding and fixed or rising costs. To keep accessible, affordable, diverse and equal programming available, costs must be met. This week alone, right across Canada, we've seen the danger of underfunded public education in the debacle that's happening at Laurentian that could've been prevented by another Conservative government. So funding is essential.

The current Advanced Education Administration Act already prevents unreasonable tuition raises, as we've already heard.

This proposed act, by repealing or replacing section 2.2, removes the language surrounding the cap, as others have pointed out—removes the language concerning compare—comparative clause—excuse me—that ensures Manitoba tuition is similar to other western provinces. In their place, guidelines on fees are completely within the minister's power. And while the narrative surrounding this bill is about preventing tuition raises, the bill, in fact, reinforces and expands the authority of the minister to control tuition.

Finally, also of concern to me is the provision in 2.27(a) to (c) that permits these guidelines to be general or specific. I'll reiterate: students are best suited to determine their program of study in consultation with faculty and staff.

Centralizing tuition rates in the person of the minister, regardless of the party in power, allowing for different tuition increase and decreases to possibly be mandated by program or area of study and removing the checks on tuition increases will not make universities better at their mission.

This bill will not help attract more students. It will not help increase student employment rates. It will not enhance program offerings. It will not encourage international students.

So, as a faculty member, a father of a future university student—maybe at U of W, maybe at U of M, who knows—and a resident of Manitoba concerned with the social and economic development of the province, I would call on the government to withdraw section 2.21 of this bill or, perhaps better, just withdraw it altogether, and to instead fully fund and support Manitoba's universities as one of the drivers of our post-pandemic recovery.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Miller, for attending tonight and giving us your presentation and a little bit of background to who you are.

So, welcome to Manitoba. I know you've been here for a few years now and also as a faculty member at the University of Winnipeg. And again, I thank you for your two cents on the issue, for sure, today.

I also want to point out how you sort of mentioned the—not only accessibility but also the affordability of education. And here in Manitoba, we are fairly fortunate. And what I mean by that is that we're going to, you know, make sure that we keep our tuition here in Manitoba at post-secondary institutions the lowest in western Canada, so basically west of Quebec.

And as you mentioned, you went to Ontario and BC and also in Texas. So, I mean, it's almost too bad that we couldn't have reeled you in here to Manitoba to take some post-secondary education for yourself earlier on. But that being said, I'm glad that you're here

in the province and growing roots with your family and just being here.

In regards to post-secondary options and autonomy, I guess, back to that topic: the whole piece behind Bill 33 is making sure that we are going to be having that consultation with our post-secondary partners, with our students, with our faculty, like yourself, and making sure that those conversations are happening because we want to make sure that—of course—that we remain, you know, the tuition west of Quebec but at the same time making sure that our programs are second to none.

I mean, you're a classics professor. I mean, you want to make sure that we've got the qualified staff that's there, and that comes—of course—with dollars and cents and we know that. And as a taxpayer of Manitoba, taxpayers appreciate that. The Auditor General basically put it out there that post-secondary institutions need to have a little bit more of an oversight, and so that's why this bill's coming forward.

Myself, or anyone after me in this wonderful position—you know—is going to be looking to have those consultations and asking why and how come with the post-secondary institutions and making sure that—again—our programs here in Manitoba are second to none, affordable, student success is No. 1, and I know that you would concur with that.

So thank you very much for your presentation tonight, Mr. Miller.

Mr. Miller: Thanks very much for those remarks.

So, we definitely agree that student success, research capability of a university is No. 1. And I heard you say several times tonight—it's true the main goal is strong programs, second to none, et cetera. I'm sure the minister and other members of this committee would agree that to be second to none means to invest in post-secondary education in a way that is second to none. And the fact of the matter is that, since coming into office in 2016, cumulative cuts including those—including inflation—have threatened this sort of ability to be second to none, right?

Universities cost money, my colleague at U of M spoke, right; universities require us to have the ability to get staff, right? You mentioned about what I want in the classics department, well that's a huge topic, but I can tell you one thing I would like to be able to do, is hire more full-time faculty, right? Get rid of this way we rely on precarious faculty who are paid very little money on per term contracts; one of the reasons we can't do that and—you know—encourage people to

come to Manitoba, become faculty members and engage fully in the research, outreach, teaching and all community-based stuff we do, is because we just don't have the money to hire those people, and budget cuts are part of that.

So I definitely agree: affordability is key, being second to none is key, but we know—and I know, I'm a Manitoba taxpayer, right—I know that this requires us to pay money. I'm happy to pay for it because I know that university graduation pays social and economic dividends. The facts are clear and it's worth the money we invest in them.

So I really hope, if you want them to be second to none, that you'll be investing as a government more in universities than you have done in the last five years.

Thank you.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Mr. Miller. I'm very happy to ask you a question.

I'm also a U of W grad, I have two degrees: one in late '80s and one in the early '90s. So I won't age myself too much and I'll get right to it.

Mr. Miller, can you tell us: how has your research capability been hampered by the cuts that you've experienced in these past five years that you've been in Manitoba?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Miller, for the purpose of time, your questioning period will be over pretty soon so if you could answer very briefly. Thank you.

Mr. Miller: Sure. I'll just reiterate what I just said.

Research at the University of Winnipeg, as at other universities, is done by full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members and we have been hampered in our ability to hire and retain and replace faculty members who leave. That's who we need to do research in every field, whether it's science, classics, English, business, whatever it is.

So more investment equals more full-time faculty, better instruction, more capable research, better outreach to the community. So that's what I would say has been hampered for us.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over for this speaker.

I would now call on Mr. Julius Chester, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Floor Comment: Hi there.

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

Mr. Julius Chester (Private Citizen): Awesome, all right.

Good evening, honourable members of the committee. I would like to first acknowledge that I'm presenting to you all today on Treaty 1 territory.

My name is Julius Chester, a U of M alumnus, former president of my faculty students' association and former board member of the University of Manitoba Students' Union during my undergraduate studies. I'm here before you all today to voice my opposition to Bill 33, a bill that would rob university faculties and student associations of their autonomy.

* (21:00)

During my time at the University of Manitoba—six years in total—I have seen just how this current government's approach to post-secondary education has left and continues to leave university students worse off, by paying more for their education but seeing no increase in quality.

In six years, I've seen the tuition freeze scrapped, operational funding for universities have been cut, class fees have been deregulated, the removal of the tuition income tax rebate and the revoking of international student health care, to name a few.

Time and time again, this government has implemented policies that have reduced the affordability and accessibility of post-secondary education and Bill 33 is no different, except this time, the government intends to have direct and unilateral control over the future of advanced learning in our province.

My concerns are twofold: the government's path towards performance-based funding and the threat it poses to student advocacy.

Bill 33 demonstrates the complete disregard that this government has for post-secondary institutions by giving itself the authority to set guidelines for tuition fees. This is an unprecedented attempt to seize control over universities and colleges in Manitoba that disregard academic autonomy and further commodifies the education of post-secondary students.

As a faculty of arts graduate, it is my fear that this government, especially in the last two years of its remaining administration, will directly implement varying tuition fees on whatever courses they so choose. Given the context of the PC government's

recent report called Manitoba's Skills, Talent and Knowledge Strategy it is clear that the Premier (Mr. Pallister) and minister plan to use education funding to favour particular industries and private sectors over others.

It has been explicitly stated that this government would, and I quote, implement an outcomes-based funding model for colleges and universities to promote industry needs—in other words, performance-based funding. If Bill 33 passes as it is now, then it would give this government the tools to devalue the arts, humanities and social sciences by intentionally setting the tuition fees at inaccessible amount for new, prospective university students.

Australia is an example of how governments giving themselves the power to set tuition fees is disastrous to post-secondary education. There, tuition fees for humanities and social sciences saw dramatic increase of 113 per cent to dissuade students from pursuing a bachelor's degree in arts and reduced STEM-related courses to incentivize students into job-guaranteed industries.

To some, this seemed like a fair arrangement but this is far from the case. This performance-based funding model only shifted existing funding for universities that followed its guidelines. Universities saw no increase in funding. In fact, it shifted the costs onto arts students who received less funding and now pay more.

This is a huge burden placed on students, when evidence suggests that performance-based funding has little positive effects on job-ready outcomes. If anything, this would discourage students who don't have a strong in math—who don't have a strong math and science background from ever attending university, as performance-based models—which I'm sure will be brought out in full force if Bill 33 passes as is—does nothing to ensure equitable and fair access to courses and only threatens to entrench the inequalities in post-secondary education that this government has helped to manufacture.

I worry if the government were to have its way, and if this bill passes as is, then we would see tuition fees for some students rise to unprecedented levels of unaffordability, while those programs who already do well enough will receive more funding, with no guarantee of—with no guarantee in increases to government spending. This total disregard for the humanities and social sciences is not lost on anyone and, given the government's track record, I wouldn't

be surprised if they wanted arts students to pay more for their education.

This is exceptionally outrageous, given that so many Manitoba students face growing debt in order to pay for their studies. In 2015, almost half of students in Manitoba graduated with an average of \$29,000 in student debt. Evidently, these are modest and dated numbers which can be found at the—found on the Government of Canada website but we are in a time where students need stability and reliability the most in their education and this bill does nothing to ensure that. It doesn't mention student debt, it doesn't ensure affordability and it certainly doesn't address issues of accessibility.

So, when these needs are not addressed by the government, then we look to our student leaders. Advocacy is an integral part of student governance and ensures that when student voices are not being heard at the university administration or at levels of government, we can rely on our associations and unions to advocate on these issues that are important to us when we cannot ourselves, due to full class sizes—full class schedules, or having to work part-time on top of being a student.

It is these organized efforts that has made sure that we are heard, that we are mobile and that we—and have helped make our university campuses more inclusive spaces.

It is my understanding that the minister has put forward an amendment that would exclude student union fees. Finally, a step in the right direction. But why did it take so long? Why was it after weeks of outcry from student leaders before the first—and—before and after the first reading?

It goes to show how little regard this government has for students when they have had every opportunity to consult students and faculty. But, instead, they put out a bill nobody asked for with you telling them how they're going—with you telling them how you are going to change things, not guaranteeing what they actually need.

But my gripe with Bill 33 is as it reads now, and it potentially puts advocacy efforts and initiatives at risk. If the minister has the capacity to determine what students fees and—should and should not be applicable, then what would stop the government of the day from interfering with said fees when students become vocal about key post-secondary issues?

Are we just to take the minister's word—or in this case, his tweets—for it and just trust him? The current

government has done little to build trust with students thus far. If anything, this bill, at its core, is a form of political interference. Like the Ford government's attempt to classify some student fees [*inaudible*] and would allow students to opt out.

This attempt at silencing student unions and associations is no different from what the Manitoba government [*inaudible*] 33. And that's trying to silence the government's largest attractors in their mission to impose austerity measures on post-secondary education and—sorry, and to allow private factors to determine what people should learn in our province.

But, of course, anyone who follows post-secondary issues can tell you that, in Ontario, Divisional Court overruled the Ford government's decision. So it's a shame that Ontario wasted money fighting this fight.

With Bill 33 as it reads now, it puts post-secondary education at risk of being subject to the whim of the government of the day, when students need reliability and stability now more than ever. Bill 33 does nothing to ensure accountability and accessibility for students.

If this government's deregulation of course fees weren't a concern, why not repeal it? If affordability is the intention of this bill, then why did they let tuition rise twice in a pandemic? If it's ensuring that students have easier access to post-secondary learning, then why not implement accessibility measures like providing better funding for Winnipeg Transit or increase the bursaries and scholarships that were reduced, and not just shift numbers around?

More could have been done to address the issues and help students who are struggling in the midst of a global pandemic, but no. Of all the governmental tools at the Premier's (Mr. Pallister) and minister's disposal, they picked the ones that gave them a disproportionate amount of power.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chester, for taking the time tonight and bringing forward your presentation.

A couple things that you mentioned, though, I am going to try to correct the record here a little bit. So you mentioned that the amendment came from an

outcry from students. Actually, the amendment came from working with, collaborating and listening to students in regards to having meetings, collaborating, listening, as I said. They basically said that the bill was unclear when it came to student union and association fees. So we're making that amendment. And so sometime in the next couple days that amendment will come forward.

Also, you mentioned in regards to tuition, actually, Bill 33 will again do that shoulder check and basically, it's, again, that respect for post-secondary institutions, students and faculty that I and my government—our government has to make sure that we're collaborating and working with those partners for post-secondary institutions and making sure that when they see a change in tuition and fees at this—that they deem necessary, that it comes back into the department so that we can have that conversation and again shoulder check to say, okay, what are the students thinking? What is the faculty thinking? What is the post-secondary institution thinking? And let's have that conversation.

Because, as you said, we need to make sure that education here in Manitoba remains affordable, second to none. We want to make sure that the programming is second to none and we want to make sure that it remains affordable. Lowest tuition west of Quebec, we're going to make sure that that happens.

You mentioned scholarships and bursaries; so what you put on the record, Mr. Chester, is incorrect. Scholarships and bursaries actually have ballooned to \$30 million. Under the previous NDP, it was around \$6 million. And our student loans, Manitoba student loans, is north of \$60 million, which is actually interest-free when it does come to—but I do appreciate you putting on the record that in 2015 some of the largest debt carriers was post-secondary students.

* (21:10)

And so, Mr. Chester, we're trying to change that and try to continue to make sure that our tuition is affordable for students, and also that our programming is strong. And also that a lot of the maintenance that is happening on those great buildings of ours on the campuses are maintained as well, because we know that under the former NDP government, they'd rather have photo ops in front of balloons as opposed to the buildings because they were crumbling around them.

So thank you, Mr. Chester, for your presentation.

Mr. Chester: Respectfully, to the committee, I would say that rather than release [*inaudible*] bringing people to the table, it is not the way to go about it. You bring people to the table first and consult with them and then bring a bill that is fair for everybody.

And I do want to point out that before you did mention that—you say that we are the lowest tuition—correct. But you also mentioned earlier this evening that you do want to bring us at par with other western provinces. So \$1,000 below what Alberta students have to pay still isn't a lot of savings.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Chester. I always like hearing a student perspective, those people that are close, have their ear to the ground, are actually experiencing what has been going on in this province in the past five years.

So I want to ask you, you talk about trust. So, tell us, from your perspective, what can this government do to help re-establish trust with post-secondary students in this province?

Mr. Chester: I think maybe a first good step—maybe get rid of this bill and then actually go to the table with open eyes and with new perspectives on—maybe asking what students and faculty actually need during a global pandemic.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other questions from the floor?

Mr. Moses: Thank you very much for your presentation and sharing your story as a student from your perspective.

So, you listed several issues that students face on a daily basis, growing debt, affordability, accessibility for university. What sort of changes would you like to see in our system to make those things a reality? It's clear that they're not in Bill 33, so what sort of things would you suggest to the minister?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Chester, if you can answer very briefly, as your time is up.

Mr. Chester: I would suggest restoring proper operational funding. We've seen that students, like—again, tuition has rise—risen twice during this global pandemic. And I think the government should pursue ways to mitigate that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for the questioning is over for this speaker.

I'll now call upon Riley Shannon, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Thank you, Mr. Shannon. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Riley Shannon (Private Citizen): Thank you to the committee for hearing these presentations tonight.

Before I would begin, I would like to recognize that we are on Treaty 1 territory and the homeland of the Métis nation.

My name is Riley Shannon. I am here as a private citizen, but I am also a science student at the University of Manitoba and I also serve on the University of Manitoba Students' Union board of directors, representing the over 5,000 members of the Science Students' Association.

I am here to urge committee members to oppose Bill 33. My first semester of university was actually in the fall of 2016, which at the University of Manitoba, we saw a month-long labour dispute in an UMFA strike.

This was a direct result of this government's interference into post-secondary education and their unfair labour practices of the university through their unconstitutional public service sustainability act, as it became to be known.

Of course, this all came full circle when this past year and this past semester, yet again, we saw the government interfering with post-secondary education, almost causing another job action.

Obviously, there's been no lessons learned. And throughout my time in university, public higher education has been under constant attack from this government.

Operational funding cuts in every single budget—almost \$9 million. In the latest budget they threatened even deeper cuts in the spring, at the start of the pandemic, as more students than ever were considering heading back to school and retraining.

These year-over-year operational cuts have gutted our post-secondary institutions.

One of your former predecessors used the form of Bill 31 to remove the tuition freeze, resulting in tuition increases at the University of Manitoba of 7 per cent over the pandemic and 18 per cent since you took government, as students lost or couldn't find jobs, as nursing and med students went to the front lines to help their strained health-care system and were rewarded by this government with increased tuition.

You've touted numerous times in this committee the lowest tuition rates in western Canada. Well, that

was the result of a previous government that was committed to accessible and affordable higher education. It was a result of a tuition freeze that kept those rates low, and raising these tuition fees in line with those of other institutions in western Canada could cost students as much as another thousand dollars in tuition.

I don't know how we can trust this government with the power that is given to them through Bill 33 to keep education costs low, as their actions have consistently told a different story.

You've also mentioned that there's record funding to bursaries. However, we've seen programs like ACCESS be cut and the most—the students most in need struggling to get that help.

And that doesn't end—that's not the end of this government's attacks. About three years ago, during a budget press conference, student leaders learned that international students would be losing their health coverage, costing the U of M to immediately cover that for the next year—\$450,000.

These differential tuition fees that this bill gives you the power to use, could be used to discourage students from pursuing their passions. It could discourage students from pursuing important programs that benefit our communities. Our higher institutions are not merely tools for economic growth but places where learning should take place, free of government interference.

Now, I appreciate that you will be introducing an amendment to clarify language and exclude student union fees, but this is simply too little, too late. After not consulting with students from the beginning, you put forth this bill and increased the anxiety of student leaders across the province.

This bill needs to be scrapped and not amended. But this Bill 33 shows a pattern with this government. We see it with Bill 64 and the education review. But you want to concentrate power at the Cabinet table and not listen to stakeholders, like students and faculty associations.

Students want affordable, accessible post-secondary education, independent from this government's consistent interference.

If this government and this minister actually talked with students, they would hear that students want tuition freezes; they want debt forgiveness; they want international health-care coverage, and they

want the preservation of institutional and student union autonomy. They do not want nor need Bill 33.

Tonight we've listened to faculty, staff, students and they've all called on you to withdraw this legislation, to stop this. Maybe it's time, like you actually start listening to these stakeholders.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Shannon, for your presentation, and I hear you. You're talking about affordability, accessibility, making sure that students, faculty, post-secondary partners all have a say in the future of our post-secondary education here in this great province of ours.

* (21:20)

It's exactly what we're doing. We're trying to, again, make sure that we're moving forward and making sure that students' success is paramount.

Affordability; you said yourself, you know, lowest tuition west of Quebec. I've said that multiple times today. Making sure that accessibility is there. Making sure that our \$30 million in scholarships and bursaries is there.

We want to also make sure that that \$60 million-plus is there for student loans which, you know, isn't quite forgivable but in some cases they are. They're interest free.

And, you know, this year, again, we're spending over a billion dollars on direct and indirect funding to post-secondary institutions. So I'm with you on keeping it accessible and affordable and at the same time making sure that that programming is second to none.

So I just want to say thank you for you taking the time and presenting to the committee today. And I have made some notes, so I appreciate it.

Mr. Shannon: Minister, respectfully: actions speak louder than words. And what the actions we've seen from this government are successive operational cut-grant cuts to universities that have resulted in a 6.6 per cent tuition increase, and then three years of 3.75 per cent at the University of Manitoba. That doesn't seem to be making education accessible or affordable. And Bill 33 does nothing to address those issues.

There is no limit or freeze on tuition within Bill 33. That is something that would be enjoyed by students but we don't see it in this bill.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Riley Shannon, for your presentation this evening. It certainly has generally-generated a lot of questions in my mind. And I'll just ask: you talked about differential tuition fees. What is your main concern with that?

And talk to us: how has the removal of the ACCESS Program impacted students at the University of Manitoba?

Mr. Shannon: Of course, thank you for the question. My worry with differential tuition fees is we see through this government's plan to implement performance-based funding that they will target programs within fine arts, within music, maybe within the faculty of arts, that don't necessarily produce the economic outputs that they are looking for. So they will disproportionately raise tuition on those programs to discourage students from entering those programs to begin with.

At the end of the day, our universities and colleges are places of higher learning. That's what should be taking place. They are not just mere economic tools for this government to use.

And then when it comes to ACCESS funding, right, this is a program meant to help the students most in need, the folks most in need and who will benefit the most from gaining a higher education. And what that's done is that just closes the door on those kids and those students from going to higher education, often the first in their family to do so.

And it's really disappointing to see that there isn't any consideration for those students.

Mr. Moses: Thank you for your presentation and your words.

I think it's quite clear the impact that Bill 33 would have negatively on your student life and it doesn't solve a lot of the problems in terms of affordability that you've addressed, in terms of avoiding some of the faculty strikes, in terms of opening up access to university for other folks.

Are there ways that you see from your experience as a student that the government could actually go to increasing accessibility for other people and making university more affordable?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Shannon, if you could answer very quickly as your time will be over. So, please go ahead.

Mr. Shannon: Well, first, I would implore this government to listen to the presenters tonight and withdraw this bill. Other steps that they could take is actually freezing tuition and ensuring that there are operational grants that keep up with enrolment and inflation at our post-secondary institutions. Those are just a few steps that they could take now.

They could re-provide health-care coverage for international students so they aren't resorted to paying high premiums for private insurers for health insurance that they need to be here in Canada and to be studying here in Canada.

Those are just a few ways that this government could make education more accessible and affordable, all of which aren't found in Bill 33.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

The time for questioning is over for this speaker.

I'll now move on to Kiratveer Hayer, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Hayer, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Kiratveer Hayer (Private Citizen): Yes. Good evening, committee. I'm a student at the University of Winnipeg, and I'm here to oppose Bill 33, as I think that this bill has the potential to harm student interests.

I'm particularly worried about the effect that this bill will have on low-income students and international students who are already in such vulnerable positions.

Bill 33 is *[inaudible]* help students, but students were not consulted during the creation and development of this bill. If this bill was really intended to help students, the government should've come first to the students to get their input and start with the consent and consultation of student leaders. Instead, the government decided to create this bill on their own without consultation from the students. For this reason, I'm wary of this bill. Many students oppose this bill, but it has still managed to move through to the standing committee.

Furthermore, this bill gives the minister complete control over tuition. What has the minister done to make students trust him with such power? Why does

the government need complete control over student fees? This bill has already caused students great worry and uncertainty in a particularly worrying and uncertain time.

Instead of focusing on helping students and providing services to students during this time of a global pandemic, student leaders have been forced to put their time and energy into dealing with this bill. I do not think that the government having this much control over student fees is appropriate, and the prevailing feeling of students is that the government has not earned enough trust with us for us to give the government this much power. The government has already lifted the tuition freeze hike, and every year tuition has gone up. This government has already cut health care for international students, and for these reasons, we are wary of trusting this government with this much power.

The students should be able to decide the matter of student fees through their democratic processes, and I strongly oppose this overreach of power by the provincial government, especially for the outlook for international students who already pay such high tuition.

I would like to see this bill scrapped, but regardless, I understand that this bill is likely to pass. I want to show appreciation to the minister for the amendment protecting student union fees, and I would urge this government to work with the consultation of student leaders, going forward, in order to mitigate any unintended consequences.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Hayer, for being here tonight and taking part in this different type of committee. You know, as we've had committees here at the Leg. for many, many, many, many, many years, and as you know, our democratic process here in Manitoba allows us to come forward as private citizens and put your 2 cents on the record in regards to any kind of legislation that's moving forward.

I appreciate your words on the amendment, of course, that we're bringing forward. That's come with that consultation with students, and there was a— I'm not—I think the list is out there, so you know who the presenters are, or have been, today. But there was a member who spoke earlier from your association

that I have committed to sitting down with your association within the next few weeks and having further chats in regards to Bill 33 and making sure that, again, I hear you loud and clear.

You want to hear—you want to see accessibility and you want to see affordability. At the same time, though, we also need to make sure that our programs are strong. And at the same time, we need to make sure that our buildings, our infrastructure, are there for not only you but for then my kids coming up, hopefully my grandkids, great-grandkids, and who knows? What the pandemic has shown how this virtual new world is impacting all of us, some good, some bad, of course.

* (21:30)

But with that, Mr. Hayer, I look forward to future meetings with you and your organization. And, again, I thank you very much for the presentation tonight.

Mr. Hayer: For sure, thank you very much and I hope you guys have a wonderful evening.

And I would still strongly urge you to scrap this bill but, yes, thanks anyway. Have a good one.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Hayer, for your insightful thoughts and your experiences.

You know, you talk about the tuition increases that you've seen and what you've seen over the last few years. And you talk about the trusts that, you know, you're lacking from the minister and the government, in terms of their actions on post-secondary education, you know, and the lack of consultation that we've really seen with Bill 33.

So, what I want to ask you, Mr. Hayer, is would it restore your trust in the government to scrap Bill 33, go back to the drawing board, do proper consultation with students and student groups and bring forward a new legislation that would better respect what's actually important to you?

Mr. Hayer: Yes, that's exactly what I would like to see and what should have been done from the get-go and if that could happen, that would be great.

Mr. Moses: Thank you for sharing that perspective. I think it's great to know first-hand from students that they're, you know, displeased with this bill. They want to do proper—hear proper consultation, something that's actually going to benefit their lives as a student.

And I want to talk about you personally, in terms of these tuition increases. How has that affected your

journey in schooling, having this tuition increased so drastically over the last four years?

Mr. Hayer: It's definitely been detrimental for me, and I'm kind of in a better position than a lot of the students, but especially for international students. I mean, they come here with a certain plan, expecting to pay certain fees and then, all of a sudden, they're increased and I feel really bad for the international students.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Tyndall Park): It's nice to have the opportunity to get a few words on record and I want to thank you, Mr. Hayer, for your presentation, as well.

I did just want to ask, I had a couple of questions, one being, do you feel if there's anything in these amendments or the legislation that would actually benefit students and improve their likelihood for success, as well as, do you feel if this government is interfering with the autonomy of post-secondary institutions?

Mr. Hayer: I'm not too sure. I mean, there are certain—I do kind of agree that there are—that maybe post-secondary could be better aligned with the job market but the main concern that I have is that students were not consulted and it affects the most vulnerable.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on the next speaker, Jelynn Dela Cruz, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Dela Cruz is not present so we'll move her to the bottom of the list.

We'll now proceed on to Joshua Dasman [*phonetic*], University of Winnipeg students' union, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Dasman [*phonetic*], please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Joshua Basman Monterrubio (University of Winnipeg Students' Association): [*inaudible*] Hello, member of the committee, fellow civilian speakers and everyone listening in. One, reporting from Winnipeg, built on beautiful Treaty 1 territory. Two, feeling very frustrated because I've had to come to advocate around this important issue in the middle of my exams period.

If you know what the work of the fields require to study abstract and contemporary algebra, introduction to mathematical analysis and axiomatic set theory, I welcome your sympathies with the huge task I have ahead of me.

So, my name is Joshua Acatzin [*phonetic*] Basman Monterrubio. I was born and raised in Mexico and came to Winnipeg in 2015 to start my universities at the University of Winnipeg. It has been a bumpy ride since then. Only now do I see me graduating—graduation happening anywhere from one to two years, depending on how things go.

The amount of growth and thriving belonging to a university community has given me has been great. When I started at the University of Winnipeg, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I am an eclectic individual and have diverse interests in all sorts of things.

I settled for one program or another for some time but, in the middle of my program, my father passed away and I felt like my entire world had crumbled. I did my best to keep myself together, but ultimately had to drop out indeterminately to deal with that.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

Years later, I was able to restore myself into my education path, declared a major in mathematics and benefitted deeply from the efforts of my student union, faculty and the different service providers at the University of Winnipeg.

Since then, I've learned, of course, how important these services are and how our universities are important to people my age. I've come to the—I've taken the commitment to heart to share with all students that I meet about the different services that helped me thrive, so it could help them thrive as well.

I've oriented fellow students to counselling services, international student services, food banks and even services covered by our extended health-care plan. I went as far as working as a mentor for our International, Immigrant and Refugee Student Services where I was matched with new international students and was compensated for spending time with them, showing them around campus, around the city, how to do groceries and get a phone bank—get a phone or access a bank account in Canada, finding houses; all these things that are so basic yet so fundamental, you know, to just getting your foot on the ground when you come in, first thing.

And I was proud to be able to show them around all the different services they could access, thanks to

university elements such as our student union, accessibility services on campus, et cetera. I helped them access tutoring for STEM or for academic writing, student groups to build community, all these things which I strongly believe increase—or impact—the impact of our university.

And this year, I've served for the University of Winnipeg math and stats student association, helping provide students in STEM with opportunities to learn math and stats, access research and work opportunities. Our outreach has had a positive impact in our STEM community, so much so that I can certainly say that we've inspired some incoming directors of our student union to not only stick with the programming of services that we have, but to be innovative and implement new services that could benefit even more students and benefit them further.

On a similar scope of initiatives and being innovative, in this last school year during the pandemic, some fellow students put out a campaign, identifying physical doors on campus as inaccessible for wheelchair users and disabled students. That's something that would need to be changed immediately, and right now would be the most ideal to get that task out of the way, with in-person classes on hold.

However, there is such little flexibility in the funding and the budgets to deal with this issue at such an opportune, albeit late, moment. And I say late because we must recognize that as a society we have failed to make accessibility in buildings the default rather than the alternative.

So, yes, I care deeply about my university's autonomy to seek and identify gaps in the delivery of its services to students. I believe the power to determine the costs and where the funding should lie with principal key stakeholders such as students, faculty, administration and university staff.

Our university's populations partition into self-aware communities who have direct experience and access to the knowledge and expertise around the incredibly complex issues that surround us in our respective institutions.

So, what I find to be a fundamental shortcoming of Bill 33, is that it assumes the antecedent that the cost of running a university should rest more and more on the backs of students. If our discussion is about moving the responsibility of raising tuition from administration to government, and fees and things like that, and not asking, why are there tuition fees at all,

I'm consistently met with a very disgusting, cynical smirk and even suggest—whenever I suggest the concept of free education: but let's be realistic, I hear, oh, so often.

But let me be realistic and with everyone here today, we either have running universities or we don't. Universities which educate the members of our society into becoming successful individuals, who are able to improve themselves, their families and their communities.

* (21:40)

We can ascertain that educated individuals contribute to make our society more prosperous, end inequality and injustice. The education of people starts a chain reaction of initiatives which are wise, well-informed and determined to improve the situation of the respective communities. Whether they are from an inner-city neighbourhood seeking to improve the community development and community economic development, whether they are STEM students like myself, looking to empower and increase students who are STEM-literate and can contribute to the development of science and technology, whether we look to work in government or unions or trades or service or anywhere, education makes us better and inspires us to be innovative and design improvements on our respective environments, our economy and our society.

It is beyond any doubt that education is the epicenter of a prosperous, just society that is vibrant, works in truth for the better of everyone. So why is that not our priority in budgeting? Why are we talking about who should be allowed to define and raise tuition fees?

Tuition fees make education inaccessible; that's it. I've heard it over and over by advocates of our current trajectory of increasing tuitions that we should be proud that we have the cheapest tuition west of Quebec. What's the point of having the cheapest if our goal is to have it a nickel ninety-five less than the rest? Having the lowest tuitions around is not enough; they have to be low enough—or I should say—null.

Increasing tuition is ridiculous and leaves us students vulnerable to the most absurd things. For example, our universities are raising tuition more than ever during a pandemic where the students—us, the students—have sacrificed so much to help social-distancing measures; we moved our schooling online, isolated ourselves in support our fight against COVID-19, regardless of the consequences it has had

to our education experience, our mental and physical health, et cetera. Why are we paying more to keep the university afloat in a pandemic when it's government who had such a pitiful reaction to the pandemic?

And I'll digress. I keep hearing: education's affordable in Manitoba. And if that's the case, why doesn't the government pay for it? I know, I know, I'm kidding—but only sort of. In all honesty, if education is this important, what would be the shortcoming in making such an investment? I've heard it before, that we can't just pour all the money on education and post-secondary institutions; we can't just turn budgets overnight. But we could afford it—if we wanted to—as an investment. You could all save yourselves your record-winning grant and bursary expenses, save yourselves the incommensurable task of creating legislation which works as a framework for whatever we're trying to do tonight, including these voices and these opinions and those things—just: the university runs, and that's it.

I think of it in all—of this as analogous to my most recent experience with my financial institution, trying to create a savings plan which will allow me to afford a house a few years down the road. I can't just buy the house now, but I could start making sure that, in time, I can guarantee a home for myself if I make the right decisions. We could meet the funding needs for universities completely to provide a diverse program and access to education for all, but nowhere in our horizons are we seeing a plan or the desire to see this through. And I think anything, other than a step in the direction of making education free and accessible to everyone, is fundamentally wrong.

I wish to see this bill scrapped altogether and instead see it substituted with a comprehensive, clever strategy to make university free and strengthen university institutions to have diverse programming which allows for the formation of individuals who have a full and rich understanding of a particular field or trade, who can better access opportunities to improve themselves, their families and their communities.

Thank you.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Dasman [*phonetic*].

Now we'll go on to questions and we'll have the honourable minister for the first question.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Dasman [*phonetic*] for your presentation and your passion. I—even though there's certain pieces to it

that I can't say I hundred per cent agree with, I did make some notes and definitely, again, see your passion on the fact of advocating not only for yourself but for the students and for the students that you're helping.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I want to definitely pass along my condolences to you on the loss of your father; I lost my dad about six years ago now and it is—it's tough. Much like I'm sure your dad, I know my dad was very, very proud to see me be the first graduate of our family, of a university, and come out with a degree. I'm a teacher by profession, couple degrees, grew up in Manitoba, went to the University of Manitoba, alumnus of the University of Manitoba.

You're bang on. Education is the key. And when you talk about affordability and accessibility, I've—I'm not going to mention their names, but a few of your colleagues from your association at the U of W, I've committed to them earlier today to have a meeting within the next few weeks with your association. And I look forward to having those discussions with you because I do see a lot of what—the energy that you're bringing, not only to tonight but to what you obviously do on a day-to-day basis.

With that, I'm—pass along to you I'm a bit of a math geek myself and—not saying you're a geek, I'm just saying you're majoring in math—and so with that, absolutely, I think back to my university days, and all due respect to you and good luck with studying on your exams. I don't a hundred per cent miss those days.

But I do look forward to meeting you in the next few weeks, Dasman [*phonetic*], and thanks again for your presentation.

Mr. Basman Monterrubio: Absolutely, yes. It's a shame that we can't meet eye to eye around free education, because that's truly what will make this problem so much easier, to just say, okay, the universities are running and they're providing the service and, yes, it's costing us money, but hey, in the long run, we have amazing citizens who can do amazing contributions to our society and we don't have to spend so many nights arguing whether—who should raise the tuition, because there's no tuition at all.

We just have the universities and the universities run. And our communities are stronger than ever and they don't have to worry about barriers; about oh, now

I have to take a loan; oh, now I have to apply for grants; oh, now I have to do all these things.

It's just taken care of and—you know, like, everybody's going to graduate out of a university, has the insight and the growth and the development personally and around their communities to become contributing members of society, to become tax-payers, to make universities affordable, free, to those who came after them.

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, Mr. Basman Monterrubio, for your presentation.

Certainly, I like the display of the math textbooks and also the energy and everything you brought to your presentation, a lot of thought and preparation. So I just want to acknowledge all that.

You know, you kind of touched on this a little bit in talking about some of the—maybe we could call it outreach you've done with other students on campus. And I guess what I'm asking is, I know there are also other barriers beyond just the cost of attending university that get in the way of students.

So when we're talking about accessibility, I'm just wondering if you can talk about some of those challenges that you see students facing, you know, currently, right now in Manitoba, in addition to the question of affordability and the question of cost, that is maybe making post-secondary education inaccessible to some people.

Mr. Basman Monterrubio: Thank you, Wab.

I would reiterate that the tuition is the fundamental barrier. That's sort of the key point to take away from what I've been sharing tonight. Although I do appreciate that you want to bring in my sort of experiences with, you know, who I've been connecting with the most.

And in this last year, a lot of math literacy has become a big issue for me, because it is sort of a gateway to accessing, you know, to your opportunities in STEM, which, you know, if we're thinking about equality in general, that's something that we also should have equality on and have access to is accessibility to STEM.

So math literacy is an important one. And we do sort of have a very struggling situation with math literacy for new students who are coming in, particularly coming from Manitoba high schools, who don't have the preparation.

* (21:50)

And our introductory calculus courses have—more than 50 per cent of the students who register either fail or drop out because they don't have the backgrounds to continue it. And that's the thing about math: if you don't get it, you think you're stupid, and then you're just going to not even bother with it; it's going to make you feel down. And it shouldn't, but there's a lot that needs to be changed in math literacy.

And I find programs like WISE Math who advocate for how we can improve our math education from the beginning, you know, from the early grades all throughout high school so that, you know, when people are challenged with math, you know, as an entry to STEM in general, they're not put off by it, thinking they're stupid, but rather that it's just something that they can overcome.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Dasman [*phonetic*], thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on Mr. Robert Chernomas, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Chernomas, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Robert Chernomas (Private Citizen): Yes, I'm here as a private citizen. I'm a professor of economics at the University of Manitoba. I've got two questions for the minister and then some comments.

I have a question for the minister: one, he keeps reminding us that he's provided \$30 million in additional student bursaries and scholarships. Can the minister tell us how much the tuition increases have cost the students of the province since the PC-mandated tuition increases began, so we can see how much they and their families—students and their families—have actually paid for the \$30-million gift?

My second question is I'll be speaking to Bill 33 as it actually exists, not how it might be amended. Will the minister promise to keep hands off differential faculty tuitions? It was hard to follow his discussion earlier. He seemed to suggest that he will only veto the university decisions to increase tuition in some different faculties. That is not what the language in the bill says. He can choose to triple the tuition in the faculty of arts or his own former faculty of education.

Will the minister amend this part of Bill 33 to ensure that we can't misrepresent the PC government, as he keeps accusing others of doing? Will he promise

not to take control over differential tuition fees in different faculties?

Since taking office, the Pallister government has cut funding to post-secondary education by 13 per cent in real dollars and made access to our universities more unequal by eliminating the tuition freeze, ironically, while providing less support. They are now threatening to interfere in the university programming in the most parochial way to the detriment of our students and the future of the economy.

If passed, Bill 33 as it now exists, would allow the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration (Mr. Ewasko) the authority to set guidelines for tuition charged by university. Bill 33 represents a further attempt by the PC government to interfere in the internal governance and academic programming of our universities.

What are they trying to fix, based on what information or expertise, that doesn't exist in the university community provincially, nationally or globally, which essentially sets the standards for what happens at our universities.

The effect of Bill 33 is a politicization of academic programming at university and allows the minister to pick and choose which programs are politically acceptable. This intrusion of government into the internal affairs of university undermines the very concept of university, as the courts have ruled, and the essential principle of academic freedom.

Critics of the PC autocratic approach have noted that universities are already delivering labour market skills. Manitoba universities follow and contribute to the standards established by the national and international university community and professional certifying organizations so that their students can enter graduate programs and qualify for jobs around the world. Manitoba universities train the vast majority of the province's professionals in health sciences, agriculture, engineering, science, social work, business and education.

The Pallister PC policy suggests that an inappropriately narrow function for universities in a number of ways. They would appear to focus predominantly on the requirements of the private for-profit enterprises. This bias towards the private for-profit sector ignores the public sector and the not-for-profit sector which provides an enormous array of vital services, which, regrettably, are taken much for granted by the government.

It is only in times of crisis, such as the financial meltdown of 2008, the flood of 2011, and now COVID-19 that some individuals and businesses recognize the importance of the public sector as their only source of critical aid as the private sector collapses.

Last, but by no means least, university independence from the interests of business is crucial. Learning and research that benefit democratic societies sometimes have little direct commercial application. Indeed, they can, in some cases, run counter to short-term business interests. For example, the policy solutions that are required to combat the environmental crisis and inequality have been opposed by many businesses. The skills necessary to evaluate policies that will effectively combat climate change and the broader economic impact of these policies are not narrow labour market skills. I'll be talking more about this below.

The underfunding and narrowing of purpose of Manitoba universities will damage their ability to deliver high quality education, harming their reputation and therefore the ability of their graduates to find employment. A Free Press editorial argued, Pallister, quote, could cripple academic programs and the future education of students.

Bill 33 is just part of an overall austerity-driven approach to how to run an economy. The question I've got to ask is what are the standards—best practice on how to run an economy? What's emerging out of COVID, in particular? What's good for an economy and what isn't?

The world economics fund—foundation, founded by the—funded by the thousand largest corporations in the world, produces a competitiveness report—this is the top corporations; this isn't labour unions or environmental groups—where the top 10 countries, year in and year out, are dominated, by their own assessment, by high tax-and-spend countries with world-class universities and who often have free tuition.

Chief economist Augusto Lopez of the World Economic Forum, talking about why the high tax-and-spend countries are successful, as opposed to the austerity ones, and I quote: Integrity and efficiency in the use of public resources means there is money for investing in education, public health, state-of-the-art infrastructure, all of which contributes to boost productivity. Highly trained labour forces in turn adopt new technologies with enthusiasm or, as it often happens in the Nordics, are themselves in the forefront

of technological innovations. In many ways, the Nordics have entered a virtuous circle where various factors reinforce each other to make them among the most competitive economies in the world, with world-class institutions and some of the highest level of per capita income in the world.

One more comment: For those who can't handle listening to the World Economic Forum laud the virtues of Sweden and Finland, I'm going to turn to the hotbed of socialism, the United States, and Moody's Analytics to discover what this for-profit business, paid for private sector company that assesses economic policy has to say about high-tax-and-spend and high-spending economic policy versus austerity with tax cuts, which is exactly what this PC government represents, the worst combination: austerity and tax cuts.

The macroeconomic consequences, Trump vs. Biden, Moody's Analytics analyzes the pros and cons of different policy regimes, and here's the conclusion they came to, looking at things like economists call multipliers. In this analysis, we assess the macroeconomic consequences the economic policy proposed by the presidential candidates. The economic outlook is strongest under the scenario in which Biden and the Democrats sweep Congress and fully adapt their economic agenda.

In this scenario, during Biden's presidency, the average American household's real after-tax income increases by \$4,800, and the home ownership rate and housing price increase would be modest. Stock prices will also rise, but the gains are limited. This is because the limited prospects for near-term gains and a pedestrian growth in corporate profits under Biden's policies as more of the benefits for the stronger economy under his policy go to workers. Interesting that it's—the word workers is used by—not middle class, by Moody's Analytics.

Long-term growth under Biden's policies are also stronger because an expanding the supply of the—supply side of the economy, the quantity and quality of labour and capital needed to produce goods and services. His plan to increase spending on the nation's physical and social infrastructure also boost business competitiveness and productivity. His paid family leave and elder-care plans would increase labour force participation while increased spending on higher education or early childhood education would raise the educational attainment of work. These benefits to longer-term growth will more than offset the

economic costs from the higher marginal corporate and personal tax rates under his plan.

The Pallister government is on the wrong side of history. Bill 33 is part of an economic policy strategy that will fail the citizens of Manitoba in their quest for prosperity and democracy whose effects will be felt for decades to come.

Thank you for listening.

* (22:00)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chernomas, for your presentation—to just, sort of, clear the record here a little bit and put some facts on the record, as well.

I agree with you; universities and colleges absolutely are going to play a major, major role in the post-pandemic era. This past year has been challenging, not only for us here in Manitoba but for—across the country and around the world, and we have to be prepared to make sure that we're ready to see what this new world is going to bring us, both within education and the economy and working with our, you know, students and all stakeholders.

So, Bill 33, when you talk about tuition and fees and that, which is incorporated in Bill 33, it stems around consultation. And it's going to be those consultations between all stakeholders in regards to our post-secondary education.

And so, that goes with the post-secondary institutions themselves, students, student groups, faculty; and at the same time, knowing that it was actually the Auditor General that brought forward the concern that post-secondary institutions need a little bit more of an oversight.

And so, I think this bill brings in a good balance to that, where the post-secondary institutions are going to bring forward their changes as far as what they'd like to see, and that goes with the consultations that they'll have with their faculty and students and that and I'll be also having those conversations.

You mention the highly trained labour force as well, and I mean, I think you've heard—and I know you have—that, on more than one occasion, I talk about that—our students—Manitobans, taxpayers—we need them to be highly trained; the right people with the right skills at the right time. And we need that now more than ever.

So, I want to thank you for taking the time tonight and giving us your presentation, and I look forward to hearing any further questions.

Mr. Chernomas: Yes. I'm taking from the minister's comments that he is not willing to commit the fact that his government might very well decide to change tuition in faculties to shape the economy and the universities the way he sees fit, as opposed to with the international community. And I have to say, while the Auditor General did call for oversight in universities, nothing like Bill 33 comes out of what the Auditor General has to say.

And so, I've got thousands of colleagues in universities who are listening very carefully to your answer, and your answer seems to me obfuscation. And so, you keep saying that people have misrepresented the government; I'd like you to tell me right now if I'm misrepresenting the government—that you're holding on to the possibility of tripling the tuition in some faculties and lowering it in others in order to—you to determine what the university sector will look like.

Mr. Moses: Thank you very much, Mr. Chernomas, for your presentation. I know the minister failed to—kind of—clearly answer a couple of the questions you had.

First of all, tuition increased over the last four years—over \$1,000 per student. That easily wipes out any entrance scholarships there. In terms of the class differentials for tuition, it's clear by the minister's non-answer his true intentions because he's not willing to clearly explain them here in front of yourself and the other people who are attending and watching tonight.

I do want to ask, Mr. Chernomas, about a slightly different subject, given your expertise, on the research and the impact that Bill 33 and changes and cuts to government grants and also on tuition would have on your ability to conduct research. We all know what research has a huge positive benefit in our economy, so I want to know what impacts Bill 33 would have on your ability to conduct research?

Mr. Chernomas: Yes. Well, we know increased tuition and cutting funding of the government, of course, hurts every aspect of the university; our ability to do research, our ability to, you know, have students of lower income and, you know, enter the university. And so, across the board, cutting funding and rising tuition hurts the university's commitment to the economy of the province.

I don't have enough time to talk about the details because I'm going to be shut off in a moment. Sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on the next speaker, Jennifer Adair, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Adair, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Jennifer Adair (Private Citizen): Thank you very much. Good evening, my name is Jennifer Adair and I am here as a private citizen. I am also a member of the MOFA executive and an instructional associate at Brandon University in the department of psychiatric nursing at the Winnipeg campus.

Thank you for listening to my presentation. I also want to thank the presenters that have gone before me and those that will present after me.

I grew up in a small town in southern Manitoba called Manitou; more of a village, actually, with around 900 people at the time that I lived there. To paint you a picture, my high school graduating class had less than 20 people. It's a lovely place, but I—once I graduated, I could not wait to get out.

I knew that my only way out was to go to university in the city. So that's what I did. I did really well in school, and I liked math, and I'm a pragmatic person, so I applied to a degree program that I thought would get me the best salary and the best job after I graduated.

I was so happy when I was accepted into the U of M commerce faculty, now called the I.H. Asper School of Business. I know I dated myself just now; please don't do the math.

Maybe some of you can guess where this story is going. I started taking courses and I absolutely hated it. I was miserable. I almost flunked accounting. Thank goodness my dad was able to help me study and I was able to pull off a C.

The only class I liked was marketing. And I realized it was because it dealt with psychology and how people think. I switched to the faculty of arts, and the relief I felt was immense. I can't even describe the difference to you right now. I had found where I belonged and it was amazing.

Now, imagine if I was attending the U of M during the reign of Bill 33 as it currently reads. Imagine that the minister chooses to use the vast

power to set fees on a per-program basis and that arts was seen as an unfavourable degree that did not align with current industry interests.

To make arts less desirable to students, the minister has increased its tuition threefold while halving tuition for the school of business. This amounts to political interference in university programming.

While the minister has denied this will happen, the effect of Bill 33 is to politicize academic programs at universities. Universities are autonomous institutions for a reason, and this autonomy needs to be protected.

Speaking as a student, I don't want the government shoulder checking my decisions. The government of the day does not know what is best for me and my future. Universities already have a robust system of consulting with students and other stakeholders.

I ask the question: if the intention of Bill 33 is to keep tuition low, why not freeze tuition fees as past governments have done? Or alternatively, why not adjust the current formula that sets caps on tuition fees?

Why does the minister need the power to shoulder check tuition fees when a system is already in place to do just that?

As Orvie so eloquently mentioned, bursaries create a barrier and a risk that low tuition does not. I would also like to know from the minister what dollar amount of scholarships and bursaries go unawarded?

If past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour, the PC government has a history of cutting funds to universities, promising—but not spending—money to help students and others and has repeatedly interfered in various unions' rights to collective bargaining.

I call on the government to withdraw Bill 33 in its entirety.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Adair, for your presentation tonight. I also thank you for stating the fact that you are a representative of MOFA as well. But at the same time, Nellie McClung Collegiate.

Many fond memories of Manitou, as I have relatives from that neck of the woods.

* (22:10)

So, I grew up in a small town, and I wanted to leave for a little bit, I guess, and get my post-secondary education, but at the same time, come back and serve the people that I actually grew up with. And I'm proud of that.

You mentioned multiple pathways for students. Absolutely. Many, many, many stories I've heard much like yours. Down a certain path and then it changed gears or whatever else. In my career before politics, spent many years talking with students in regards to—you know, much like what I'm doing now, you know, listening to students, collaborating, having those conversations about different pathways, different things that they have for choices.

We know that any student graduating from high school now, you know, they've got choices. They've got the apprenticeship, they've got a college, they've got university, they've got private vocational institutions and yes, they can go and get a job. We know that 22 per cent, roughly, of students graduating high school are going into post-secondary education.

We do need to make some changes here in the province because we've seen, under former governments, the lack of that change and the lack of any kind of will to make some change. And that comes with consulting and that's why I've prided myself, since I've become the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, to have that open-door policy and have those meetings with various stakeholder groups, especially in regards to post-secondary institutions.

So post-secondary institutions themselves, students, student groups, faculty members, you know, businesses—I mean, what do we all need? We talk about the—Bill 33. Well, that's going to take collaboration, meeting and chatting and having those conversations about tuition fees and various other student fees.

I think that's the way to go. I think that Bill 33 strikes the balance. And within the next couple days, we're going to bring forward an amendment to bring some added clarity that, through collaboration and consulting, the students have basically brought forward. And I'm acting on that and I appreciate you for your presentation and I look forward to chatting with you, I'm sure, in the future.

Ms. Adair: Thank you, minister. I would like to point out that the normal route for consultation is before the first reading of a bill, not after.

Mr. Kinew: Thanks to you, Ms. Adair, for your presentation.

I wanted to just ask if you would be able to reflect on the program that you're a part of and what the experience has been there, under the current government, and then if you can just kind of, like, draw out from that or extrapolate or just draw any conclusions from what you've been seeing these past five years in terms of how you expect the implementation of Bill 33 to impact the program that you're a part of.

Ms. Adair: Well, I have seen tuition rise in my program, in psychiatric nursing in particular, which has had a definite effect on the type of students that we get. We want to have a diverse student body, especially in psychiatric nursing where we deal with all types of populations. We want to have all those populations represented. I have seen that diversity go down since tuition has gone up.

I have seen us not be able to hire into open positions. Since I have started at the university, within the past few years, all positions from retirements or people leaving have to go back to the central pool and we have to argue to get those positions back. So we are constantly short-staffed within the department.

I don't know if that actually answers your question or not.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members—excuse me, thank you for your presentation.

The time for questioning is actually over.

So I will now call on Mr. Scott Forbes, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Forbes, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Scott Forbes (Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations): Thank you. I'm Dr. Scott Forbes, professor of biology at the University of Winnipeg and president of the Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations.

Students and faculty represent the academic core of a university. Together they shape the academic programming. It has been that way since the modern

university was established nearly a millennia ago in 1088. Which programs to take is the free choice of students. This underpins the fundamental concept of academic freedom that is essential to a university. Without academic freedom, you don't have a university. Bill 33 interferes substantially with this fundamental principle.

This bill is much more than a shoulder check on tuition and student fees, as Minister Ewasko claims. That narrow goal is laudable. But Bill 33 represents a far-reaching interference with internal university autonomy. It gives the minister unlimited power to set tuition fees for any course or any program. Now, that may not be what the minister intends, but that is exactly what the bill allows the minister to do.

I don't doubt for a moment the minister's sincerity, but he cannot speak for every person and every government to follow who may use the legislation in that way.

The architects of the original Advanced Education Administration Act recognized this fundamental principle. It states the minister is not to interfere with university autonomy. Bill 33 renders the entire act incoherent. Specifically the amended clause 2.2(7)—applications of guidelines and regulations, is in direct conflict with clause 2(6)—considerations and limitations. That specifies that the minister may not interfere with the basic right of a university or college to formulate academic policies and standards.

There is no question that a minister setting differential program fees for the purpose of aligning university programming with the economic objectives of the Province would represent direct interference with academic programming. It is universities, and specifically the university Senate, that governs which programs are on offer.

If the minister is setting punitive tuition fees to discourage enrolment in some programs and dropping fees in other programs to encourage enrolment, that is direct interference in academic programming.

That, of course, is the example of the Australian government, where differential tuition fees have been used to direct students into programs that the government wants filled. The Australian experience with differential program fees is instructive. Like the Pallister government, the government of Scott Morrison stated that it wanted more job-ready graduates and wanted to align university education with government economic priorities.

So it raised tuition fees in law and humanities up to 113 per cent; it dropped fees in STEM subjects and nursing 20 per cent or more; fees in agriculture were dropped more than 60 per cent. These differential program fees were introduced alongside funding cuts to universities.

What are the effects? Well, it's still early days, but it appears not to be what the government intended. The funding cuts and lower tuition mean the programs in STEM subjects now hemorrhage money, forcing universities to reduce program size. So we get fewer STEM graduates, not more.

The arts and humanities are now highly profitable, encouraging universities to expand in enrolment there, but the big effect is to drive away students from low income backgrounds from the arts and humanities. So it's become the private domain of the wealthy, decreasing diversity in those disciplines. Interestingly, two thirds of Australian MPs had degrees in the arts and humanities, much like the current Conservative caucus. So there might be fewer of those.

This is all direct interference with academic programming that is forbidden by the Advanced Education Administration Act. Like many of the Pallister government bills, this is destined to be struck down by the courts.

* (22:20)

Indeed, the courts have already ruled on this. Most recently in Ontario, when the Canadian students federation challenged the Ford government's Student Choice Initiative—which is not, by the way, legislation, but, in fact, a Cabinet directive—that court decision relied upon an earlier Supreme Court decision rule that legislation guarantees universities substantial internal autonomy, especially over academic programming, stating that universities are private, autonomous, self-governing institutions; they are publicly assisted but not publicly owned or operated.

And the court goes on to state universities are private, not-for-profit corporations that receive government funding and—this is the important part—they are not part of government.

And the court went on to state the separation of university governance and operations from partisan political control is a core feature of university governance and has played a central role in allowing universities to fulfill their mission.

That mission, taking language from The University of Manitoba Act, includes: to give instruction and training in all branches of knowledge and learning, and the prosecution of original research in every branch of knowledge and learning.

It is up to universities, not the Minister of Advanced Education, to decide what that shall be. A minister who sets program fees with the intention of driving students away from programs they consider not aligned with the economic interests of the Manitoba government and toward those that meet with the minister's political approval, is interfering directly with the academic mission of the university, full stop.

It is an interference with academic matters that is forbidden by The Advanced Education Administration Act. If you force this issue to go to the courts, the courts will rule that it is an unconstitutional interference with university autonomy.

This legislation will not withstand a court challenge, so MOFA urges in the strongest possible language that Bill 33 be withdrawn to save everyone, including Manitoba taxpayers, the time and expense of a court challenge, the outcome of which is already known.

I thank you for your attention.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for this presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Dr. Forbes. Since I've become minister early January, I've had, multiple times, stakeholders within the post-secondary world reach out and request meetings with myself and my ministry.

As evidence of Bill 33, had multiple meetings with student organizations. They've come forward. We've had some great discussions. They've spoken to me, shown that some of the clarity in the bill is not clear enough for them. We had a technical briefing with them, with non-partisan departmental staff. They went away and then we had another discussion in regards to bringing forward an amendment. That amendment is going to be brought forward within the next couple days, Dr. Forbes.

I am a little disappointed in the fact that you yourself and your association has put forward baseless, non-factual information out there in the public's eye. I think that you're trying to fear monger

not only Manitoba students but absolutely cloud the issues.

My door is open, as far as having those conversations about moving anything forward.

In regards to the Ontario legislation, Dr. Forbes, I encourage you to do your homework because Bill 33 is nothing like the Ontario legislation.

I thank you for your presentation today.

Mr. Forbes: Well, first, I would correct the fact that it's not legislation in Ontario; it was a Cabinet directive.

Second, I'm glad that you have met with students, but I think the time for consultation is before you present a bill which involves a major restructuring of how universities operate. And it was your responsibility to reach out to the core groups within universities, which include both students and faculty, before a bill is presented to us. We're not going to respond kindly after the fact. And I take your words that you wish consultation genuinely, and I encourage that dialogue.

Third, ad hominem attacks get us nowhere. So if you want to deal with specific issues, fine. But let's leave the political insults to the side.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Dr. Forbes, for your very informative, factual presentation. I think there was a lot of good points that you put on the record, specifically around the autonomy of institutions and the role that that plays on tuition differential, tuition based on class and type of program. I think that'll have a significant impact on what post-secondaries look like in the future.

And it's very noteworthy that the minister managed to not really provide any additional clarity on what that actually means—will there be changes in terms of programs and liberal arts versus sciences or math wasn't quite clear. And I—so I thank you for highlighting that very important issue.

I do want to ask, from your perspective as a professor, what do you think that would—role would play for you in terms of how you teach your workload as a faculty member and how that would affect your job working on campus.

Mr. Forbes: Well, if we go with the worst case scenario, where we basically lower tuitions for STEM subjects, it turns out that science is more expensive to offer and so that would wreck the internal university economy.

What we've seen elsewhere is that this sinks university budgets when you cut tuitions for the more expensive programs to draw students in. So that would have inimical effects on university finance. It would likely mean that we would restrict enrolment to those programs which are highly desirable.

Mr. Altomare: Well, thank you for your presentation, Mr. Forbes. It was really informative, and the part that I found particularly informative is the piece where we're going to get into the selecting of certain faculties that we're going to favour.

Can you explain further the Australian experience and how that impacted their ability to offer programming that was receptive to students?

Mr. Chairperson: Dr. Forbes, if I could just ask you to briefly answer this, because your time is actually up. So, go ahead.

Mr. Forbes: It's had a disastrous effect for students because the differential program fees were actually used to cover deep cuts to university financing, and so it resulted in substantial increases overall to the proportion of the budget that students pay in tuition fees while the university—or the Australian government dropped their contribution to universities. So it's been bad all around for students.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on Peter Ives, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Ives, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Peter Ives (Private Citizen): Hello, my name is Peter Ives. I am here as a private citizen. I am the father of a 21-year-old and a 17-year-old, so I am very deeply concerned with universities and colleges in Manitoba for that reason.

I have also been teaching at the University of Winnipeg in the department of political science as a professor since 2000, and since 2019 I have been the chair of the philosophy department.

So, it is from, you know, that background that I was quite concerned when I first saw Bill 33. I was very pleased to see that the students have communicated with the minister and that there will be an amendment. I—you know, it is—it's almost 10:30 and so far all but one of the speakers tonight has been in opposition to this bill and see huge problems there. So

I think that this proposed amendment is clearly not enough to make it a suitable bill.

* (22:30)

There's been lots of discussion and lots of excellent points, and I would really like to thank all of the presenters beforehand and the committee members. I know it's getting late. I would also like to point out how fabulous the students that we produce, with the evidence from tonight, because there are some excellent students out there.

Many of the things that I want to focus on have been said, so I do want to just point out that the language of the bill is quite clear; 2.2(1), the minister may issue guidelines in respect of a tuition fee or student fee set by a university board. So even though the minister will say he's just trying to provide a shoulder check and wants to keep tuition low, as other people have pointed out, that says nothing about keeping tuition low. It actually replaces the previous cap that this government had raised, right, so that there was a cap, there's no longer a cap at 5 per cent plus inflation. As we know and have heard, the effects of tuition going up and up and up, and that does not help accessibility or any of the purported goals that this government is saying that they have.

So, you know, the next two points in the bill do talk about if the tuition raises that the board of governors or board of regents, in the case at the University of Winnipeg, agree upon—if they exceed them, then—and it sort of does talk about excess so there is that in the bill. But the key part of the bill is, as people have pointed out, is it is not a cap.

If—it seems like it's obvious that if the government wanted to succeed in the goals that it sets out in terms of accessibility, keeping tuition rates low, that they could easily rewrite the bill. So, if you're amending the bill, maybe—I mean, I think you should scrap it, everybody seems to be opposed to it—but at very least, do a deeper amendment to the bill and make it very clear in section 2.2(1) that it's not that the minister is issuing guidelines but that the minister is concerned about those tuition fees going too high.

But I also wanted to talk a bit about the other part of it. So, the minister has said that he met with students and that there were some misunderstandings and so there'll be this amendment and the language that we've been told about that is that the fees set by democratic processes are exempt.

So—and, obviously, everybody else then tonight has been very concerned about the ones that aren't

exempt. And who are they set by? Well, they're set by the board of governors and the board of regents, in the case of the University of Winnipeg, a good chunk of which, in the case of Brandon—University of Brandon and University of Manitoba, reach almost 50 per cent of the board.

So, this is the board that the minister feels he needs to be able to override. And we've heard a lot tonight about, well, language of consultation, conversations, shoulder checking—I'm not sure what the metaphor's going on there, who's checking who. I think we need—maybe that's my fundamental question, what metaphors are you using?

But more than that, the words consultation and conversations don't appear in the bill and I think the minister knows full well that he can have conversations all the time. The government sets, you know, the fundamental funding allotment for universities; I hope conversations are happening all the time.

He doesn't need Bill 33 to have a conversation. He doesn't need Bill 33 for his—I hope not—for his government to interact with university administrations and, before their budgets, and decide upon the budget final. So I'm not so sure how this bill is doing what he's saying it's supposed to be doing.

So those are my big questions. I do—I wonder—what this government is saying the board of regents and the board of governors of the universities in this province with this clause that basically allows the minister to override them and it's a pretty—I mean, you know, even the mechanics of the bill are not the sense of conversation.

If the universities don't do what the—don't follow these guidelines, then the minister is to inform the Finance minister that the funds will be deducted from the universities. So that does not sound very consultative.

You know, so those are the things that, in the detail of the bill, make me worry exactly like the, you know, over 20 other presenters who've been here tonight, who worry about the autonomy of universities, see autonomy as a central part of a university. Universities are not there at the whim of the government of the day.

When I think about my 17-year-old thinking about universities, he's already a bit frustrated about, you know, things changing all the time and how does he plan out his life. Well, this bill, you know, is set up for those types of changes.

Of course, universities need to be preparing students for a changing workforce, a changing world. We see that so often, but as has been said, who is best situated to decide what their interested in and what they will succeed at—certainly not the government.

It seems very odd for a government that calls itself a Progressive Conservative government to keep on putting these policies out which are big government policies. It's micro-managing.

And, I mean, it's not related but sort of related. It's the context. As the chair of the philosophy department, in the middle of the summer when I was supposed to be spending all my time—and it took a lot of time—to prepare for the online learning—we actually had lots of summer courses that had moved very quickly online, lots was going on, I was working twice as hard as normal not getting any research done, and what does this government do? But tells us that we have to prepare budgets with 30 per cent cuts, 20 per cent cuts and 10 per cent cuts.

So here I am spending hours and hours presenting—preparing three different types of budgets in the middle of a pandemic, when I have spring courses with wait-lists, much actually like this year; I have tons of courses that are—the wait-lists are longer than can actually fit in the classes. So students are needing and very eager to have courses, and we're having these cuts of—luckily none of those cuts came across, and it was only a three per cent cut, and then some of it was given back. This does not seem like a very efficient—this seems to me like the epitome of micro-managing and it doesn't work. It doesn't work for intellectual reasons and the high principles that we've heard from the previous speakers in terms of university autonomy, it also doesn't work at a practical level.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Mr. Ives, for your presentation and, you know, your children are the exact same age as mine: 21 and 17. But in our house we have quite a few discussions over what the post-secondary education options are, and we try to—of course—from rural Manitoba there are many challenges in regards to post-secondary education, of course, and accessibility and affordability here in the province—as you mentioned earlier as well.

We are in a good spot here in Manitoba. Could we be better? Absolutely, couldn't we all be better. Lowest tuition rates west of Quebec, \$30 million in scholarships and bursaries, student–Manitoba student loans over \$60 million, so when I hear conversations about our PC team, our PC government—we're actually making post-secondary actually more accessible and more affordable for individuals throughout this province. We want to train and we want to retain our Manitoba students. We want to train and retain your kids. We want them to, you know, grow roots here, but if they decide to go elsewhere throughout the world and spread their wings so to speak, that's their option.

I love the province of Manitoba; absolutely. North, south, east and west. We've got great partners here in Manitoba in regards to post-secondary education. We've got many options for students. I've got a lot of faith in our post-secondary education, our professors as well, teachers. You mentioned tuition and you mentioned regulations and that—I mean, tuition has been regulated here in the province since the early 2000s. So with Bill 33, and I know you don't really like my metaphor as far as shoulder check, but really it's the Auditor General saying that, you know, government, you know, post-secondary institutions are being funded by taxpayers' dollars, and we need to just have a little bit of oversight.

* (22:40)

And so I think Bill 33 brings a really good balance to that. The consultations, collaboration and listening practices will continue, moving forward, when we start talking about those things. The tuition and fees are still going to be developed by the post-secondary institutions themselves. They're just going to come to me and I'm going to make sure that, again, our programs don't suffer and our affordability to students remains the same, if not better.

So I just want to thank you very much for your presentation. I know it's, you know, almost quarter to 11-ish, but again, thank you very much for what you do on a day-to-day basis as well.

Mr. Ives: Thanks for your comments. I guess I'm still very confused as to how the previous version, which sets a tuition cap—it was higher than had previously, right; it was 5 per cent, which is a lot, which is what we've been hearing tonight about all the students—that if your goal really is accessibility, then you would think about the cap.

But the idea of removing the cap altogether and then asking everybody to trust you because you're not trying to do what in, you know—and then your larger policy documents about performance-based funding, together, they very much seem like micromanaging universities and not increasing accessibility.

I think other speakers have spoken very eloquently that you can increase bursaries but if you're increasing tuition, No. 1, there's a shift there, and then No. 2, the question is who those bursaries are going to. And I think the students associations have been very clear that they would rather lower tuitions.

So, in a certain sense, yes, I agree with you in spirit and I appreciate your words there. I just don't see the connection between that and this bill that you're defending that everybody else here seems to be critical of, especially the students and other faculty. Thanks.

Mr. Chairperson: Gentlemen, we are running out of time, but one last question for Mr. Kinew.

Go ahead, Mr. Kinew.

Mr. Kinew: Thank you, Mr. Ives. You know, talking to a lot of people who look forward to the knowledge economy, people in the tech sector, not only do they say we're going to need people from the STEM fields, they say we're going to need people from the humanities: people with philosophy degrees, people who can think critically, collaborate, work with, you know, complex ideas and come up with creative solutions, et cetera.

So, when we look ahead to the potential, you know, differential tuition rates across different programs and having that power rest with the government, who's probably out of touch and ideologically driven, and taking that power away from the institutions who actually work with the researchers and the students directly, I was wondering if you could maybe talk a bit about, you know, are you concerned that we might have some really bad mismatches if you have all the power on Broadway and it's not actually responding to the needs on the ground of where, you know, the knowledge economy is taking us?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Ives, respectfully, if you could be very brief with your answer, thank you.

Mr. Ives: Yes, thanks for the question. I—that is exactly what I'm worried about—or one of the several things I'm worried about.

You know, study after study, you know, op-ed piece by, you know, prominent thinker after, you know—so often comes along and says, we need people who can think. And it's precisely because of the changing economy that we can't plan to build the workers of tomorrow, in terms of just their raw skills; we need people who can think and innovate, and that comes from the arts—as well as the sciences and everything, but it's—that's the key piece.

And I think you're totally correct that there's a huge danger with the government thinking that they know best and trying to align and micromanage universities, and then we miss both individuals—as we heard from Jennifer Adair, her story, but even—and then just the generalities of the, you know, the next occupations that might make Manitoba fabulous, we don't even know what they are yet, so how can we train for them?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on Scott Grills, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Grills, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Scott Grills (Private Citizen): Good evening. Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here.

I'm speaking to you as a professor of sociology at Brandon University and as a former dean of arts and vice-president, academic and research, at that institution and, of course, as a member of my faculty association.

I've had an opportunity to listen to many of the presentations this evening and to listen to the stated goals of these amendments, which focus on affordability of PSE, attention to tuition levels in western Canada and an ongoing interest in Manitoba's tuition competitiveness.

However, when I look at the legislation and I compare it with the rhetoric I'm hearing, personally, I hear a disjunction and I read a disjunction between what's being said and the words of—that are written within the proposed amendments. So, rather than placing legislative limits on tuition increases or proposing a complete—a clear statement on proportionality—that is what percentage of the cost of post-secondary education might be borne via tuition by students—even if that were zero, there's an emphasis here on ministerial discretion and, as I've learned this evening listening to the presentations, potentially

some notion of veto power on proposals brought forward by institutions.

What I would respectfully suggest, though, is that there is a very real potential in this proposal to expose universities to unwelcome distortions. And here I'm speaking of what necessarily is part of the human enterprise together, that is our—the challenges that we have collectively of it ending and the unintended consequences of lines of behaviour that we undertake. And I want to speak briefly—and I'm mindful of the time of the evening—to three of these potential distortions and unintended ones.

The first of these, for me, is distortions arising from strategic differentiation. And universities are century-old institutions and we do many things well. And one of the things we do well is we develop new knowledge, but rather importantly, we also preserve knowledge that falls in and out of fad and fashion. Universities, we're in it for the long game. We're in it for knowledge and for our students. And governments, well, by their very nature, they're very different kinds of entities.

So governments were investing in homing pigeons when universities were inventing in wireless communication. And it's very dangerous in terms of the development of key knowledge sectors to have governments picking winter-winners when we know that there's an uncertainty in all of this. And so I'm concerned about the possibility within this legislation of governmental interference in the fundamental core activities of universities.

There are also distortions arising from the unintended consequences of action. And here I'm concerned about the impact, system-wide, of the possibility of differential tuition at the program level. This, for example, places professional programs at an uneven footing. Do professional-program tuitions, as we've seen recently in Alberta, increase by 40 per cent? Or do they double in light of market demand relative to the perceived personal value with credential? Is tuition used as a policy measure defunding students seeking programs of study that are out of favour with whoever the government of the day is?

We're uncertain as to how these will play themselves out, but one thing I'm sure of is that if we see this rolling out, they will have system-wide impacts, as students move relative to government policy as it's applied to differential tuition. And we've seen this in other provinces and it's actually placed the survivability of some institutions at risk, as

government policy influences program viability and institutions respond to those changes.

* (22:50)

Lastly, I talk—well, I'd like to speak to distortions arising from suppressed innovation. One of the potentialities in the legislation attends to—or the amendment, rather—attends to fee structures utilized by universities. And while I may be incorrect, it appears that there's an intent here to restrict universities' ability to address shortfalls arising from government funding by using fees.

And, of course, this problem dissipates if universities are adequately funded. But I wish to stress that these barriers themselves are also a barrier to innovation.

Because if you look at the Canadian post-secondary context, universities have used targeted fees to enhance international student experiences, to launch major technological innovations that support student learning, facilities—expanded library resources, expanded student services and accessibility initiatives.

And by undermining the autonomy of universities and their ability to be innovative in ways that may be very much welcome by students is an unwelcome constraint, from my perspective.

So the issues before the committee aren't new. Governments of various stripes have sought to exercise control of universities, either—who are by their very design not a part of government. And their independence is crucial to their mission.

At the very same time, the people of Manitoba are major funders of their universities. And these amendments, however, exceed what I would suggest is the reasonable reach of the ministry. Section 2.2(1), where the minister may issue guidelines, is an—and it's an extension which I think is highly problematic.

So I would applaud all who wish to ensure that Manitobans have access to high-quality, affordable university system, and—but, however, this set of amendments, from my perspective, don't accomplish the stated goals and hold considerable risks to the system to produce unwelcome distortions within it.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Grills. Thank you very much for your comments and your presentation tonight.

You talk about funding and you talk about distortions and various different things in your presentation, and I do—I've taken some notes, as I have with, well, almost all the presenters tonight.

I guess the one thing that seems to be—I've seen a bit of a pattern coming from some of our professors and educators of our youth in our post-secondary institutions, and that is the fact that—they're stuck on the—you're stuck on the fact, a little bit, about the tuition fees and the student fees, having those consultations, those discussions with post-secondary institutions about what they need.

Under the former government, we've seen the fact that the bricks and mortar—and I mean, where you teach and educate our youth—I mean, you see the problems we've had with the deferred maintenance not being kept up. I have an obligation, not only to you and not only to students, but absolutely to all taxpayers.

And the Auditor General has basically said we need a little bit more oversight. And I don't think that that's necessarily a bad thing. And I know that some of our previous presenters don't like the word shoulder check, but it is.

It's basically having those discussions about what the post-secondary institutions need to move forward, to No. 1—and just like you just almost ended your presentation on, making sure that we have high-quality programming and making sure that it remains affordable. That is the absolute key to success here in Manitoba. And we're committing to that.

And so, I think, at the same time, you as a—as an instructor, professor of our youth—and I applaud you for that—you want to make sure that we have success in our sector of post-secondary education as well. And with that, I'm going to leave it at that.

And don't ever apologize for the time of day because that's the beauty of being here in Manitoba, is we've got the—we're able to show our democratic right to come to committee and present, doesn't matter what time of the night it is.

So, Mr. Grills, I thank you again for your presentation.

Mr. Grills: Thank you very much for your comments.

I think I will use the brief moment I have to very much agree with you about issues pertaining to deferred maintenance on our campuses. And the next time you're in Brandon, I'd invite you to tour our science building and to—and assess whether it is up to standard.

Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Just quickly, Mr. Grills, then I'm going to turn it over to my colleague from the opposition. But I was just in Brandon and I did tour the science building, and it was—we'll leave it at that.

We will have an opportunity for sure to touch base with one another, I'm sure.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Grills, for your presentation and providing your concerns around the issues that might be distorted as a result of Bill 33.

I do want to just, you know, point out a couple things that the minister mentioned around, you know, deferred maintenance. You know, it's—you're not going to solve deferred maintenance issues by continued budget cuts from post-secondary, as we're seeing \$8.7 million cut from this year's budget for post-secondary. It's hard to solve those problems with that.

Second on—in terms of this matter of shoulder checks with this bill and what the minister wants to do, I think that you have to remember, if we're going with your analogy, minister, that when you do a shoulder check you take your eye off your main goal. You're taking your eye off the road in front of you. You're taking an eye off of keeping university affordable and accessible. And I think that's what we ought to be focused on.

In terms of some of the issues that you brought forward, Mr. Grills, I think—I did want to just touch—weigh on your opinion on the differential tuition by class. I think that's a very important issue that would affect Brandon University substantially. And I want to get your take on what impact this might have on the choices students make in terms of which programs they're going into, specifically around the programs that you are looking after.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Grills, your time actually has exceeded for questioning, but I will allow you to answer the questions very briefly for Mr. Moses. So go ahead.

Mr. Grills: At Brandon University we have three professional faculties and arts and science. If market differential tuition was put in place, it would affect

student accessibility and, importantly, for students who are place-bound learners. And I think that perhaps is a theme that has not been adequately addressed but I would like to highlight for the committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

We ask those who are presenting to stay on. As for right now we will be taking a five-minute recess for technical adjustments. So those who are presenting, please stay on the Zoom call. We will be taking a five-minute reset—recess right now.

Thank you.

The committee recessed at 10:58 p.m.

The committee resumed at 11:04 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I will now bring the standing committee back to order. I can see that we have a number of presenters still before us. As we are approaching midnight, I would like to remind all attendants of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment.

The committee cannot sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause by clause of a bill except by unanimous consent. For the information of the committee and those, particularly, virtually, I want to explain what happens if we get to the hour of adjournment and the committee rises but we still have presenters yet to speak.

At some point the Government House Leader (Mr. Goertzen) will announce another standing committee meeting to consider Bill 33. At that point, the committee clerks will contact any remaining presenters by email, notifying them of the date and time.

Thank you for your patience. I will now continue with public presentations and call on Brenden Gali of the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba. I'd ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Gali, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Brenden Gali (Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba): All right. So I had some thoughts written down but I think I might sort of jump around a little bit. Some of the conversation tonight has had my brain sort of jumping around a little bit but, yes, hello.

Good evening, members of the committee. My name is Brenden Gali and today I'm here representing the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba, and speaking against Bill 33, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

Just a few moments ago, I think it was two speakers earlier, the minister had made a comment around oversight around post-secondary education system and how these are taxpayers' dollars that are used to fund universities and colleges. And so oversight is necessary because that is what funds universities and colleges. I just want to remind the minister that that is one half of the funding towards universities and colleges; that there are also student dollars and—which is paid in tuition—that funds the other half of that.

And so, when we're talking about oversight of universities and colleges and we're trying to tie that directly to funding, students don't feel like we have much say in how these institutions are organized or how they're run in direct service to students. So I would just sort of refute that notion that that's a rational reason why oversight is necessary, just because it's funding an institution.

And so I have a feeling that the response of that point might be that the minister will consult with students with that oversight that Bill 33 gives them, but we've done that twice now between our organization and the minister's office. And in those meetings, kind of went a lot like it did tonight, with the promise that future conversations will be had.

But we're here today, now, and so I hope you're listening and not trying to defend the bill, but, rather, receiving this information and making the appropriate changes that we need.

We've heard from the opinions of so many different areas of the community tonight, you know, over hundreds of points of concern from faculties, students, committee members, staff, labour, but we seem to be only be getting the same three responses this evening from the minister.

I don't really know what else I have to say that will produce a different response from the minister, but here I go.

So, my role with the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba is chairperson, which I've been fortunate to hold for the past two years, and previous to that I spent two years with the University of Winnipeg Students' Association. Between these two organizations, where I draw from my experience

from, both mine and the students that I've served, in those four years I've witnessed and experienced the disparity in services provided to students in post-secondary institutions based on decisions made by this government.

I'll not spend too much time this evening addressing the potential amendment of excluding student union fees from the—sorry, excluding student union fees from the student fees that can be determined compulsory or optional by the minister as, currently, we have not received the amendment in writing. So I'm just waiting for that before we actually give a formal response to that.

But I do want to address the goals and outcomes the minister states is the purpose of this bill. So, the minister is on record, stating, to keep education affordable for students. We agree with this statement, although what we have yet to hear from this minister is how he will simultaneously ensure a high-quality delivery of education and services to students—I repeat—how that will be done.

The Canadian Federation of Students and student unions alike are tasked with the work of supporting students while completing their education. And specifically around Bill 33, we speak here today not only to protect student unions but to protect students in general. If it is true that student union fees won't be meddled with by the minister, then we must address the other component of Bill 33 that creates guidelines for tuitions by the minister.

Since this government had held its power, year after year we have seen cuts to operating budgets for universities and colleges, cutting the tuition rebate program, cutting the funding towards international student primary health-care coverage, legislation for the allowance of increased tuition of 5 per cent plus inflation—just some examples that have—of decisions made by this government over the years that have negatively impacted students.

So I want to describe the implications that has sort of put us on this path forward and what has been laid out for us. When those cuts were made in these past few years by this government, it was students who felt it most, but also it was the student unions who came to the aid of them under immense obstacles placed by those decisions made.

In the direction we are headed, facing continuous significant cuts to post-secondary education, student unions will be the ones tasked with supporting

students with a multitude of barriers that will arise from this bill and consistent budget cuts.

* (23:10)

And while the minister states that he wishes to keep tuition affordable, what we understand through the decades-long work within these educational institutions is that staff and services will weaken and the burden of overworked and underresourced services on campus will again be most felt by students.

This will lead directly to a weakening of student unions, as these organizations will attempt to try to satisfy the needs of students with an overwhelmingly—overwhelming rise in barriers they face, we will see increased usership in food banks, desperation for spots in campus daycares, overworked student representatives and academic advocacy cases and dismal bursary distribution provided by student unions that will have little impact because higher a volume of application—applicants will rise.

And I mention these things because, you know, we're protecting student union fees, which, again, we celebrate and we're proud that that can potentially happen, but student unions and student associations only serve one component of campus life, and if all those other services and departments that are designed to support students are the ones suffering under these budget cuts, the burden and the weight of that labour will be held and—on student unions' shoulders.

So, post-secondary educational institutions—what I'm going to say here is, post-secondary educational institutions, they can and will survive a shoulder check. Students who are studying here that are either international; Indigenous students grappling with intergenerational trauma and the implications behind them; student parents working two jobs, struggling to pay bills, living with disabilities, facing housing issues; students who come from the foster-care system or students who struggle with poverty—all these students walk a tightrope as is. This shoulder check you keep mentioning, the universities and colleges will survive. But these students will fall and we will all fail.

Under this bill, students with the most barriers will suffer the consequences. This bill is a disruption in the mechanisms designed not only around affordability but also operationally and how students should be supported.

You continue to reiterate that student union fees won't be touched. That's great. But now we have so

many other questions around so many other pieces of this bill. Having been involved in these conversations during the drafting of this bill, all could have this been—all this could have been avoided.

Because the truth is, the minister does not know the operations of post-secondary education. We've met twice with this minister in two meetings that, you know, we would consider consultation, and in the first meeting, we actually did have to explain to the minister how student union fees are voted on through referendum and democratically agreed upon.

In the second meeting, we had to explain that fees determined by the minister to be optional or compulsory—and if it's outside of student union fees, that leaves a too-narrow window between student registration and classes beginning in the fall for revenue security to ensure proper administering of services and resources.

Those are two points in two meetings. I actually have a huge list of questions I would actually wish to—that I would like to ask tonight.

Under the guidelines that the minister will draft for tuition and student fees, does this include both international and domestic students, as it isn't overtly stated? With the new amendment, how will student unions be defined? Which student union fees will be accepted?

Student union collect fees for campus radio, newspapers, U-Pass, health plan—these fees aren't overtly student union fees but depending on the service can be administered by the student unions themselves.

Which fees is the minister looking at with respect to determining which fees are optional or compulsory? We keep having this conversation that student union fees are excluded, so which ones, again, are we looking at?

How does the minister plan to correct the welfare of international students with the unreasonable rising cost of education in this province under this bill? The government already controls the provincial grant distributed to post-secondary institutions. What motivates the minister grab—to grab power over regulating tuition as well?

Why the need to control the two primary streams of revenue of our institutions when the Province already appoints seats on the board of regents and board of governors boards that represent the government? They have a say on those fees at those levels.

You know, in this year's budget, again, we saw the significant cuts to provincial grants to post-secondary education, with the control over *[inaudible]* with this bill. How can the minister ensure that the university and colleges are both affordable for students, but that the programs students are enrolled in are also well-supported?

This list kind of goes on, so I won't just—I won't say all those things. I can send that along after this presentation.

I guess I just want to finish off by saying it's the opinion of myself and this organization that Bill 33, as it is written, be scrapped. And if this bill does pass, I look around and see all the people of the community that have come to speak during a snow-storm, in the pandemic—I want to remind the minister that we are not here in opposition to Bill 33, but here in the support for the protection of education in Manitoba.

So as long as students, faculty, staff and community within the university and colleges feel as though we are not being heard or decisions aren't being made in the best interests of education, we will continue to hold the minister accountable.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: And thank you, Mr. Gali. I know we were more on a first-name basis when we met, but that's okay. We'll go Mr. Gali today.

Thank you for your presentation. As you've mentioned in your presentation the request for a meeting was there from you and your organization. I had accepted, open door. Then some discussion had happened, and then we ended up asking—you were asking for some clarity to the bill and so we basically had a technical briefing by non-partisan departmental staff.

So, when I say that something is going to happen, I've got a proven track record with you, your organization, and others, that I follow through.

I heard loud and clear that clarity around the bill in regards to student union fees was unclear and what those affected and I knew that the student union fees are voted on through your democratic process at the various different post-secondary institutions.

I thank you very much for the presentation. We will continue to collaborate and listen and I know that your term is ending soon, but, with that, to your successor—well, first of all, to you, I wish you all the best, Brenden, in your future endeavours. And, at the same time, to your successor, I look forward to the ongoing consultations and, as you've stated as well, there's been many meetings with even my predecessors on Bill 33.

So, I thank you again and all the best. Thanks, Brenden.

Mr. Gali: Thank you for your comments, Minister Ewasko. Yes, while my term is ending, you know, mid-May, I think, is possibly one of my last days, I still do have many strong relationships with many students and student leaders within Manitoba, and I guess what I'm trying to say is that my role within the community, come May, will not end, and so I'm always here for my community. I take my role in leadership very seriously.

These words, actually, I presented to you this evening, aren't really mine; these are just things that I've heard from students over the years. And so as long as these ideas are being felt year after year I will still continue to show up and support.

And so I do look forward to seeing you at future committee meetings and other meetings as well, so I'm glad we were able to touch base this year and I'm sure it's going to be, you know, a great long relationship. We'll have continuous dialogue with one another, you know, over the next, you know, decade or whatever.

So thank you so much.

Mr. Altomare: I just want to, you know, in the interest of brevity and making sure that, you know, I'm hearing Mr. Gali properly.

Mr. Gali, I notice that you talked about student voice, so how do we ensure that we have student voice when we're talking about making post-secondary in this province accessible and affordable for students?

Mr. Gali: Yes. It's been tricky, I think, with this government over the past year because it was, you know, I think, a pretty constant turnaround of ministers responsible for post-secondary education. So I actually do feel bad for Minister Ewasko because when this bill was first introduced it was under Mr. Eichler's office, and so I'm sure there was just a lot of homework that needed to be done around what was first initially established around this bill and its

proposed amendments. And so, like, here we are today.

So, for student voices to be heard, there needs to be some security in terms of who is actually representing students at that post-secondary education level. *[inaudible]* when I first heard it, it was the minister *[inaudible]* post-secondary happening around that time, we were working with a new minister—I think it was Minister Goertzen or possibly someone else—but since *[inaudible]* had been responsible for education. We need some security, I think, at the provincial level.

* (23:20)

Oh, am I breaking up?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gali? Mr. Gali?

Mr. Gali: Am I—

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, you are breaking—oh. Mr. Gali, you were breaking up.

Mr. Gali: Can you hear me?

Mr. Chairperson: I can hear you, yes. You're just trying to find a good signal, I guess. First-world problems.

Mr. Gali: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. All right. *[interjection]* So, I'll—*[interjection]*—I'll give you—*[interjection]*

Okay, Mr. Gali, I'll give you a minute to answer Mr. Altomare's question. Go ahead.

Mr. Gali: Sure. So, what I was trying to explain, I guess, initially, was that for student voices to be heard, I think what we're looking for is consistency and security at a provincial level from the minister responsible for post-secondary education.

And since the beginning of my career in student organizing, we've been having to—sorry, we've had to correspond with four different ministers for post-secondary education, beginning with Minister Wishart; I think following, it might've been Minister Goertzen—I might be mistaken there—after that was Minister Eichler; and now we've been in conversation with Minister Eichler.

So the student message and the student voice, you know, it changes a little bit but for the most part it stays pretty consistent. It's not necessarily our—the message that we're trying to relay that's getting lost in communication. I think it's those who are receiving it who are maybe unable to pass that message across

consistently. And so we're having to repeat ourselves often and we're not really developing new ideas around our message because we're just having to explain ourselves and start from square one year after year.

So, thank you for your question.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. Your time for questioning is over.

So now I will call on Jonathan Northam, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Northam, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Jonathan Northam (Private Citizen): Okay, thank you very much. I would like to start off by saying that I endorse and support and encourage the minister to adopt the amendment put forward by the Canadian Federation of Students, the UWSA, PSAC, among others. I think it's well written, it references the UMSU act and it creates clarity across legislation. And I would like to see that in Bill 33.

It's absolutely correct for the minister to be concerned about how onerous fees are on students. Unfortunately, though, this is a crisis that was partially manufactured by the elimination of the tuition freeze and a deregulation of course fees in 2017.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Northam, I have to interrupt. Can you please remove the sign behind you on your door? It could be seen as inflammatory. Yes, thank you.

Go ahead. Please continue.

Mr. Northam: It's important if your concern about affordability is in good faith, that you understand why students pay so much fees in the first place. And from history, it's clear that the only effective way of keeping post-secondary affordable is by lowering and freezing fees, something Bill 33 will give the minister the sole responsibility to do. However, this can only be effective at keeping education affordable if it comes alongside sufficient funding from the Province, and we know this from recent history.

So I'd like to put on the record in context as to why these students pay such high ancillary fees and tuition fees and why they exist in the first place.

So, starting in the 1980s, when I might imagine many MLAs would have been in university or college, tuition fees were roughly a quarter of what they pay today and students at that time benefited from substantial public investment in higher learning.

Domestic fees began rising in 1989 when Mulroney froze the Established Programs Financing initiative; that's a federal transfer for post-secondary. They cut the program by 1 per cent and then announced \$2 billion in cuts over three years.

The Chrétien government reduced transfers to the provincial governments, as well, when they came into power by \$7 billion and bundled the transfers together, no longer earmarking them for specific reasons.

Post-secondary was targeted in many provinces as a way to make up for these cuts. The tactic began here of downloading the responsibility for funding higher learning onto individual students and their families. The result for domestic tuition was that Canadian undergraduate and graduate tuition almost doubled in—from 1989 to 1999. This led to widespread public anger and, in 2000, the provincial government lowered tuition fees 10 per cent and instituted a tuition freeze that was coupled with yearly increases in funding for the institutions: 7 per cent every year.

The tuition freeze was a very popular policy. Six years in, two thirds of Manitobans supported it. In 2012, three years after it was lifted, 80 per cent of Manitobans opposed the new increases. And it was effective; enrolment rates went up 30 per cent across colleges and universities; this is evidence that enrolment rates are affected by the cost of tuition. And regardless of this fact, though, administrations lobbied strongly in favour of removing the freeze by claiming they were desperate for funds, and—this was a manufactured crisis; their budgets had just increased 33 per cent from 2000 to 2005, and that was more than enough to make up for the loss of tuition fees that could have been increasing throughout the freeze.

As a way of finding sources for revenue other than domestic undergraduate tuition, administrations went after three unregulated sources to find—to fund their special projects and to increase the size of their administrations as well as the salary of many top executives. They went after international students, who now pay four times the amount as their domestic colleagues and in Manitoba are currently paying out-of-pocket for private health care during a pandemic, which is shameful; they went after professional and graduate programs, whose tuition fees continued to

skyrocket throughout the undergraduate freeze; and importantly for Bill 33, they created and drastically increased ancillary fees. Starting in 2005, Manitoba institutions increased ancillary fees by upwards of \$500 a year through tech fees, higher application fees, equipment fees and course fees.

The admin created a false choice of either cutting funding for academic programs or drastically increasing ancillary fees; there was no exploration of any alternative other than downloading costs onto individual students and their families.

That brings me to Bill 33. These fees must be lowered and frozen, but if this comes alongside budget cuts like we've seen every budget, including 2021's, we know that it will result in either higher fees, diminished quality of programming, or both. The solution is lower fees and higher public investment, and so far your government has failed on both fronts. This is why we do not trust you taking these powers.

We know that from the 2000s, that when faced with the funding crisis—whether it was real or manufactured—administrations utilized whatever demographic they could to make up the difference. This is why many are concerned that without the ability to set their own fees, in combination with annual funding cuts from the Province, administrations will resort to cutting academic programming and services, both reducing the quality of education and accessibility for students who face the most barriers.

The powers granted in Bill 33 combined with upcoming performance-based funding models will give the minister every tool they need to unilaterally reduce the budgets of institutions, something we know is the goal of the current government, as demonstrated a year ago, when 30 per cent budget cuts were threatened at the start of a pandemic and an economic collapse, which many conservative economists would tell you is the opposite thing that you do in such an economic crisis.

The fact is that it's hard to trust the intentions of the government who, since taking office, has cut funding every budget, cumulatively totally 13 per cent. They revoked the tuition rebate program—which by the way took thousands of dollars off of my kitchen table, as someone living alone, a rural transplant in Winnipeg. A government who kicked international students off public health care, who deregulated course fees that now they're concerned about. They removed the tuition freeze and, as multiple ministers have been quoted as saying, they

intend to raise fees in line with other western provinces.

It's important to note that you could raise tuition fees over a thousand dollars a year and you would still have this arbitrary title of most affordable west of Quebec. It's a race to the bottom and it doesn't matter if we get there first or last, every tuition increase and funding cut is a step towards the bottom—which in this case is privatization.

I just want to note that today in Alberta, the province with the second-lowest tuition in western Canada, they announced massive tuition increases ranging 17 per cent and 104 per cent depending on the program. So the ceiling for increasing tuition while being the cheapest in the west just went up even more.

Also, the reason Manitoba has the lowest tuition in western Canada is because we had the tuition freeze; this isn't something that the PC government gets to take credit for.

Bill 33 centralizes the control of fees into the minister's office. That means that if you ignore the calls of students and faculty to scrap this bill, this will solely be your responsibility and you'll be responsible for what happens next. We won't be able to deflect responsibility onto past governments or the administrations any more.

* (23:30)

You could try and rebrand this as a soft shoulder check, but you've included an enforcement clause in Bill 33 that requires the Finance Minister to deduct any amount that goes over your guidelines. As well, the fact is, administrations are incentivized to toe the line if they want to maintain provincial funding.

At the end of the day, you will own these fee increases. You'll be responsible for the negative consequences. That'll be your legacy as the minister. And we will not let you forget it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Mr. Northam, for your presentation tonight.

As you know, you've heard from many of your—many other presenters today, including many of your, you know, formerly—association, the Canadian federation for students. I do believe that we've had the opportunity to meet in the past.

And much like with Mr. Gali and the present Canadian federation for students in regards—and as well as the Manitoba alliance for post-secondary students, my door is open. And this goes to any type of consultations moving forward on post-secondary education.

The student groups had written, basically had requested a meeting, and then at that meeting—and I'm sure you know all of this—but they asked for some clarity in regards to Bill 33. Gave them a technical briefing, and then, of course, from there, bringing forward an amendment in regards to Bill 33.

My main goal and our government's main goal is to make sure that our programming, again, for post-secondary students here in Manitoba remains second to none and our affordability, as you've said, lowest in western Canada, west of Quebec.

And, you know, when you talk about fees and you talk about tuition freezes and those types of things, you mentioned yourself in the 2000s on how the tuition—or on the student fees went up exponentially.

And so, whether it's a soft shoulder check or a hard shoulder into the corner, however you want to swing it, the fact is is that we need some oversight. And that's not taking away from any kind of boards or any kind of post-secondary institutions, it's basically to have that conversation with them and what are they needing moving forward. And that goes with students; that goes with faculty; that goes with post-secondary institutions themselves.

So with that, I appreciate your presentation today, and, again, I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Mr. Northam: Yes. I mean, you're absolutely right that there should be oversight over these fees. Like, they are out of control. But it is your own quote that you plan to raise them in line with western provinces. That means at least \$1,000 more a year.

You have admitted you plan to increase them and you have cut the budget just recently, so at the end of the day, that translates onto the responsibility for funding higher learning being downloaded onto individuals and their families.

And that is something where, right now, you can see in Canada there's \$36 billion of publicly held student debt. That doesn't count lines of credit, Visa cards, any private loans they've got; \$36 billion. That's a crisis in the making. And bragging about increasing student loans, that's not a solution to affordability.

You're just offsetting that debt onto a longer period of time.

And many students default on those loans, because it has just become unstable, untenable. We're one of the most expensive countries in the OECD for higher learning. This is something that needs to be addressed and that will be addressed through increasing public funding and lowering fees. And I hope that you use your powers to do that.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Northam, for your presentation. It's very excellent to hear your perspective, and thank you for putting those words on the record.

I'm interested to hear a little bit more about the—what you described as downloading costs onto students, because that's a huge issue. That goes right to the core of the issue, making university and colleges more affordable, more accessible for people.

So I'd like to hear what impact that has on you and other students you know, on those additional costs that come into play with being a student and the real effects that it has on your ability to get an education, and other students that you interact with, their ability to get and even enter into education.

Mr. Northam: Yes, like, let's put it this way. Like, consider the fact that students are chipping in money together to fund a food bank so that—because students can't afford food in one of the richest countries on earth. If that's not a failure of government, then I don't know what is.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on Matt McLean of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

My apologies. I was out of order there.

I would like to now call on Alannah McKay of the Canadian Federation of Students, national, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. McKay, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Alannah McKay (Canadian Federation of Students): Aaniin, boozhoo, [*Hello,*] miigwech, Mr. Chair, and miigwech to the committee for having the Canadian Federation of Students speak on this issue.

To share a bit of context, the federation is the oldest and largest student organization in Canada. We represent over 530,000 students across the country and our membership includes both domestic and international students at the college, undergraduate and graduate levels, including full-time and part-time students.

A little about myself. My name is Alannah McKay and I'm an Anishinew woman from Berens River, Manitoba, raised here in Treaty 1 territory in the inner city. I'm also a student at the University of Manitoba and I'm currently the national treasurer and incoming chairperson of the federation. I was also the former co-president of the University of Manitoba Indigenous Students' Association and Indigenous community representative for the University of Manitoba Students' Union.

I carry a pride and joy in who I am and where I come from as an Anishinew woman, and with that comes responsibilities to my community, not only as an Indigenous person but also as a student. Some of my responsibilities are breaking generational curses and breaking down barriers as a first generation university student. Navigating these systems has not been an easy journey because I've been met with barriers every step of the way.

Being the first of anything is never easy because with that comes with challenges, and accessing post-secondary education was one of them. For me and many other students who share the same experience and the same community, it is not a safe place for us, and for me to be speaking here today proves a lot. We have to fight to make sure we are receiving the same access to a quality education in an environment that is supposed to be creating the next generation of leaders, educators, health-care workers and so on.

I know my experiences are just one example which the way student-led initiatives are the well-being and success of students. If it wasn't for the services offered on campus in places like Migizii Agamik, the Indigenous Student Centre at the University of Manitoba, I would not be here today advocating for students; if not for the endless work of staff and faculty, who dedicate their time to ensure my success as an Indigenous student. I am really thankful for the staff and faculty on my campus who go above and beyond to ensure students like myself have the time and make space for our voices to be heard and dedicate so much time to ensure our potential is met.

This bill, if made into legislation, won't support students like myself or the next generation of learners.

I am just one of the countless students who rely on the ACCESS services currently offered on campus that help me on my educational journey. These services are vital for academic achievement and support through graduation. By taking away or adding additional expenses to already struggling students, it would limit those who are able to attend and graduate from university.

With that said, I want to return our attention to today's discussion on Bill 33. The current language of this bill serves to jeopardize the very supports, resources, that I so desperately relied on myself. While we are encouraged by mister—Minister Ewasko's sentiments that student association fees will not be included within Bill 33's provisions, we need this protection of student fees to be written in policy before being presented.

This lack of commitment has forced student leaders to dedicate significant time and energy over the past year defending their rights to exist; time that could have been spent on further supporting Manitoban students 'admiss' the pandemic.

* (23:40)

We need more action and less talk from our elected officials. Even with the necessary amendments to Bill 33 to explicitly exclude student union fees, we are still wary of all the overall repercussions of this legislation.

This proposal has been brought to the legislation without consultation from stakeholders and post-secondary sectors such as students, faculty and workers. Students don't need the government to decide what colleges and universities need; students need more funding to post-secondary education sector.

The Laurentian University insolvency in Ontario is a clear example of what happens when colleges and universities are underfunded. We need to ensure that this will never happen in Manitoba, and that starts by redrafting bill 3—Bill 33 after proper consultation, not technical briefings, with post-secondary education students, faculty and staff.

We've been met with numerous—we've met with numerous members of provincial legislator and federal members of parliament who continue to express the importance of Manitoba's colleges and universities. We're calling on the same members today to take proactive steps to ensure we have adequate policy that will improve rather than diminish Manitoba's post-secondary education system.

I want to emphasize how proud I am of the student and labour advocates who have been tirelessly lobbying and fighting for students and workers on this initiative over the past year.

This pandemic has proven to be a struggle across sectors. However, we continue to see students experiencing some of the greatest financial challenges, and so we are extremely disappointed by the 2021 budget dropped last week to see that once again, students would be picking up the tab for the continued lack of public funding.

This lack of support for the post-secondary education sector is a clear signal that the government is not prioritizing the needs of students and graduates. Following the increases in 2016, 2017 and the 2020 and 2021 tuition in Manitoba has clear—has increased by nearly 20 per cent. I'm personally seeing a 3.75 tuition increase as a student at the University of Manitoba. This is not what students need right now.

Our province needs to invest in the future of the students to secure a collective future and economy. We need to see the protection of the entire post-secondary education sector, including workers, faculty and students.

These decisions need to be make—be made by working with individuals who are on the backbone of Manitoba's colleges and universities to ensure that we have the resources needed to provide a highly quality education system for all—not to be shoulder checked by the government.

This is not a game; it's students' livelihood. There has never been a greater need in Manitoba for compassionate and forward-thinking leadership.

Overall, this pandemic has taken too much. We appreciate being here today and engaging in these important conversation, and it is critical that we keep this momentum going, including—by including students and worker representation amongst the post-secondary decision-making as we work together to build—rebuild Canada.

The federation appreciates being part of this consultation to address these needs and I look forward to your questions. *Kitchi miigwech. [Thank you very much.]*

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. McKay, for staying up with us and giving us your presentation tonight on behalf of the CFS Canada. And I'd like to thank you, as well, for sharing your journey with us tonight, as well.

So, when we talk about accessibility and affordability, I can't agree with you more. I mean, I think we definitely need to make sure that these opportunities are there for our students, whether they're, you know, born here in Manitoba or they're from other parts of Canada or from other parts of the world.

I know that, in regards to our bursaries and our students loans and, you know, various other forms of dollars and cents that go to students to help fund post-secondary education, I know that it actually was the voice of students that helped talk about the fact that they needed the dollars up front.

And that's why we as a PC government put those dollars up front. And that's that \$30 million in scholarships and bursaries, and there's also other agencies within the province that help with those different funds as well. We look at the Manitoba student loans; are student loans fantastic? Maybe, maybe not. But when we talk about interest-free loans to get people in the door to post-secondary education, I think it's a good move.

Bill 33 strikes a balance in making sure that post-secondary institutions—you know, you're talking about tuition increases—I'm talking about funding post-secondary institutions to well over a billion dollars of direct and indirect funding this year again. You talk about operating grant; I also—with operating grant, I also talk about the deferred maintenance side.

You as well as I know that we need that bricks and mortar to remain standing, but now things are changing, right? We've all experienced some major changes within the world over this last year, and we are—we're doing things more virtually. The amount of snowfall that fell today, I mean this gives the opportunity to people to chime in virtually, which I think is a definite positive to what is happening during this COVID time. We're changing, we're adapting to the new norm.

So I just want to say thank you very much for being part of our democratic process tonight and sharing your voice, and I look forward to working with CFS Canada as well as CFS Manitoba and other students moving forward on many, many initiatives going forward.

Thank you.

Ms. McKay: Thank you for that.

So, when it comes to students and things like this, you say we—having all this money and over what, a billion for how long? When we ask for one thing you take something else away and replace it with something else we didn't ask for. Bill 33 is very apparent with that.

I as a student managing a full-time job and taking courses as well, I shouldn't be having to advocate for faculty and staff as well amongst all my responsibilities to myself, my community and the students I represent. I shouldn't have to be fighting for them to have bigger wages so—and have—because these faculty are overworked on campuses, especially at the University of Manitoba. I—my—that shouldn't be my responsibility as a student.

And, like, you say there's all this money, but is there? Like, no. Like, I see courses within my major being taken away and more—less and less every single year.

That's going back to what I said: when we ask for one thing, something and 10 other things ended up being taken away from that. I feel like that is not okay when it comes to education, because I talked about breaking barriers. I have nieces entering post-secondary institutions this year and it makes me sad that they aren't able to do everything that they can do because things and funding are being taken away.

And you keep saying that there's money there but, like, in reality, how much of that is actually being given to these universities and how much of money of these bursaries are actually being applied for and how much is being left unapplied for?

So, that's what I worry about, is about the next generation. And you mentioned having kids, like, this—we don't have as—like, our education has been getting better, but—yes—but also things—when things are being added, things are being taken away, and we don't need that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. McKay.

Mr. Altomare, and I just want to just let you know that questioning actually has been—time's expired, but we're going to allow this, so go ahead with your question, Mr. Altomare.

Mr. Altomare: Miigwech, Alannah McKay, for your presentation, miigwech for your courage being here tonight and miigwech for sharing your stories.

You talk about barriers; can you tell us how this bill will hinder student success in Manitoba?

Ms. McKay: Yes, for sure.

The first thing I thought of is being—also, being an Indigenous student and the University of Manitoba is thus far seeing—talking with a lot of Indigenous students across the—Canada—U of M has, like, the highest self-identified Indigenous student enrolment.

I think about the students of band funding. So, if our tuition keeps getting raised, more students aren't going—more Indigenous students aren't going to be allowed within these bands to be sponsored going into university.

* (23:50)

I think about how Wab Kinew brought up how ACCESS programs are being cut and how thinking, like, just how the other year, programs are starting to merge; like fine arts and the faculty of arts are now under one being.

Things like that shouldn't be happening. We need more resources. I am someone who very much relies on the services offered, academic services offered within the University of Manitoba, things like that. Like, we need more people in that, not more people being taken away.

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

As we are getting close to midnight, I'm going to ask the committee if there are any suggestions on how we want to proceed.

Mr. Ewasko: I believe we will definitely listen to one more presenter and then we'll wait to see what happens with the committee following this.

Mr. Chairperson: It's been suggested by the honourable minister that we will have one more presenter and then we'll revisit if we—is it the will of the committee? Agreed? *[Agreed]*

So I'll now call on Mr. Matt McLean of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. McLean, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Matt McLean (Canadian Union of Public Employees): Thank you to the committee for agreeing to hear one more presentation.

My name is Matt McLean. I'm here tonight on behalf of the Canadian Union of Public Employees to provide feedback on Bill 33, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

For those not familiar with CUPE, we are Canada's largest union with over 700,000 members from coast to coast. CUPE is also Manitoba's largest union with over 30,000 members here in Manitoba. We represent workers throughout Manitoba in health-care facilities, personal-care homes, school divisions, municipal services, social services, child-care centres, public utilities, family emergency services and in post-secondary education.

Amongst our 700,000 members across Canada are 75,000 workers in post-secondary education. We represent post-secondary education workers in all sorts of roles from academic staff to food services to clerical staff and building operators.

Here in Manitoba, CUPE is very proud to represent sessional instructors and student academic workers at the University of Manitoba, as well as administrative and technical staff in the U of M's department of engineering.

Our members in Manitoba and elsewhere have seen first-hand the negative consequences of privatization and budget cuts in the post-secondary sector and have seen the negative impact on the quality of education as well as negative impacts on the health and safety of students and workers.

In addition, our members, like so many of their fellow Canadians, struggle with helping their own children to pay for college and university. We are well aware that in Canada there are two real paths out of poverty: one is a union card and the other is a post-secondary education. As will come as no surprise to those on the committee, CUPE supports both, preferably simultaneously.

Fundamentally, CUPE supports an affordable, accessible, high-quality, publicly funded post-secondary education system. Given this, you will not be surprised to learn that CUPE does not support the proposed legislation. We believe that this legislation erodes the independence of our universities and colleges by providing the minister with powers to override institutional decision making regarding programming through the setting of tuition fees.

There are already examples in Manitoba where this government's austerity policy has impacted programs, such as at the Red River College where students studying to become health-care aides are now

required to pay the full tuition costs for the program with no funding coming from government.

Now, if health-care aide training can be considered unworthy of government financial support, it's hard to fathom any program being off-limits for radical tuition hikes in the future.

But this issue goes beyond just picking winners and losers. CUPE worries that this government or governments in the future will use the powers in this legislation to further deepen a commitment to shifting the costs of education away from the collective through government and on the backs—and onto the backs of individual students and their families.

Since 2017, this government has raised tuition fees at the University of Manitoba by over 20 per cent while simultaneously opposing a cumulative inflation-adjusted cut of over 13 per cent over the same period.

Budget 2021 has once again cut funding to post-secondary education, while colleges and universities again raise tuition fees. Post-secondary education is becoming increasingly unaffordable, pricing too many poor and working-class young people out of education.

We also know that as funding to post-secondary education is cut, institutions increasingly rely on precarious contract positions, privatization and contracting out of services on campuses. The workers who provide these services generally receive lower wages, no paid sick days, few benefits, never mind a pension. And the government—this government's ideological commitment to tax cuts are being paid by the poor and working-class students and the workers who deliver public services.

Now, on the issue of student fees, it should be noted that CUPE supports the rights of students to organize and form unions and associations on their campuses, to act collectively to advocate for their needs, to democratically set mandatory student union fees and to approve various service fees.

At the U of M, hundreds of CUPE members, who are both students and university employees, enjoy significant benefits from their membership in their student unions through the type of advocacy we've seen here tonight, through on-campus services, through health and dental programs, discounted transit passes and other programs that have been established by the student unions. And CUPE would oppose any effort to undermine the rights of students to organize.

With that said, we know that this government has said they intend to amend the legislation to protect student unions from ministerial overreach into the internal affairs of student unions. And while we will, of course, wait to see the actual amendment itself, we do recognize that this is a positive development.

But despite this promised amendment, CUPE still cannot support the legislation. We would recommend the government abandon this legislation and instead pursue the following agenda: first, restore all funding to Manitoba's colleges and universities that have been cut since 2016; second, abandon plans to raise tuition fees and instead develop a plan to reduce and eventually eliminate tuition fees in Manitoba's post-secondary education system, recognizing that this will require greater public investment to replace tuition fees; third, treat international students with dignity and fairness by restoring the rights of these students to public health care, and finally, commit to a policy of non-interference in college and university labour relations so that the unfair labour practices occurred during the UMFA and U of M bargaining are not repeated.

And thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. McLean, for staying online with us tonight and exercising your democratic right. And, as you know, many other provinces do not afford the public the ability to do what we're doing tonight.

So, with that, there's a few points within your presentation that I absolutely agree with. Education is the key. Main goal is to make sure that we're—making sure that our education is of top quality, sustainable and affordable. And that's where Bill 33 is actually going to bring that balance.

* (00:00)

And so it's got the oversight, making sure that we're accountable to the public. The Auditor General stated the fact that—needed to see a little bit more oversight to our post-secondary institutions. And the post-secondary institutions welcome this, Mr. McLean.

Those consultations and conversations are ongoing, and they will continue to be ongoing. And that's with students, student groups, faculty and—open-door policy. Having those conversations; moving

forward; making sure that our students have success; and again, showcasing our great province of ours and at the same time, keeping our tuition rates lowest west of Canada.

So, thanks again for your presentation and have a great day today.

Mr. McLean: Yes. Thank you for those comments, Mr. Minister, and especially thank you for staying up this late and allowing me to present. I'm well aware that you could have ended the meeting, and I do appreciate it.

I mean, the only comment I would make is that I'm glad to hear that this government believes that affordability is important. I would say that the 20 per cent tuition increases since 2016 doesn't match that commitment, and I would urge this government to rethink, you know, the policies that have allowed that to take place if you truly are committed to affordable education in Manitoba.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Matt, for your presentation, and thank you for staying with us 'til—right 'til this late hour. And I appreciate the words you were able to put on the record and what the impacts would have for yourself and for CUPE and their—and all members.

I did want to just address a couple of things that the minister said, you know, about whether this bill brings proper balance. I mean, I don't think I heard any—an issue from any student about whether there was an issue with balance before Bill 33 was brought in. Students weren't saying, we need our education seem—education system to be more balanced. So, I don't think that really is a problem that was—that needed to be addressed, and it certainly isn't really truly addressed in Bill 33.

But I think that the real message of—from yourself, Matt, and I think many other speakers, has been the lack of consultation, that affordability needs to be an issue, that it's very critical for students that accessibility is an issue for institutions.

And so, I know that you have explained many of those issues in your presentation. And so I just wanted to ask from all the members that you represent in CUPE and work with—you know, what is the one thing that you would wish the minister would really take away and learn and be able to actually act on and change in Bill 33?

Mr. McLean: Yes. Thank you. I mean, I—and I know I'm disagreeing with anything you've said there and I appreciate you putting that on the record as well.

One thing I would say, on the issue of affordability and accessibility, you know, for our members, it's not just an issue for students; it's also an issue for their families. A lot of Manitobans have been, you know, struggling during the pandemic—and pre-pandemic—you know, these haven't exactly been great years in terms of wage increases in Manitoba for those in the public sector, you know, which is very significant in Manitoba. Most have gone without any sort of raise for three or four years. And if you're supporting, you know, a child or two going through university or college right now and you're seeing, you know, that going up 20 per cent over a couple years—you know, that's taking a lot of money off the kitchen table.

In terms of this bill itself, you know, I couldn't offer any solid suggestions for how to amend this. I think the issue isn't this legislation it's—that it's written as itself, it's the direction that the government is going, and I would urge them to move away from a direction of—which seems to be of transferring the cost of education away from the provincial government and onto students and their families, and instead moving the opposite direction—find ways to make college and university more affordable for students and their families, even if that means that the government of Manitoba needs to take on more of that burden.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

As previously agreed by the committee, we have heard one more presentation and are now revisiting.

What is the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Committee adjourn.

An Honourable Member: Rise.

Mr. Chairperson: I ask the members of the committee to leave behind the copies of the bills and the Hansard headsets.

I just want to thank all the staff, all the presenters.

Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 12:06 a.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 33

Dear members of the legislature,

I write to oppose passage of Bill 33, the Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

I would urge you not to turn decisions concerning tuition and fees to a government minister. These decisions are better handled by people closer to the ground, and governments have a poor track record of intervening with university policies in this way.

In particular, it would be wrong to empower a the minister of advanced education, who may know very little about particular academic programs or student services, to set differential tuition for different courses of study (as §2.2(7) suggests) or to control student fees (§2.2(1)). This decision could lead to meddling with the University that has significant costs, including damaging important programs in the University based on a minister's non-expert judgment about which programs are most valuable, and reducing vital student services like childcare or mental health support.

More generally, it isn't appropriate for the government to intervene in these areas of university administration. These are matters belonging the internal and independent governance of universities. And the principle of retaining a University system that is independent from direct government control is vital for our democracy and for the health of the University.

RJ Leland
Associate Professor of Philosophy
University of Manitoba

Re: Bill 33

Dear Committee,

I am writing to express my concerns with Bill 33. First of all, this government did not follow good democratic processes by withholding the contents of the Bill for

months, which prevented the public from being informed and able to enter into healthy debate. This practice should not be done again.

One implication Bill 33 is that the Minister will have control over tuition and fees that colleges and universities can charge; but at the same time, this government controls the overall amount of public funding provided to post-secondary institutions. This leaves colleges and universities with no ability to manage their own affairs and make up revenue where they need to, in order to fill in for cuts from this government, which seem to be the norm. Post-secondary education is meant to be arms length from the government, and run autonomously for the betterment of the public and society as a whole. It is not a political tool.

The other implication is huge for students. A large number of student services depend on student fees to run, and those services (and their associated fees) should be set by the students themselves with no interference from this government. They know best what they need and how they will fund it; not an elected politician.

I suspect the end game with this government is to just defund post-secondary education in general, so that fewer people can afford to further their education and training, leading to a less-educated public who is more likely to vote conservative. This premier, and each MLA, need to listen to their constituents—the people who voted them in—and stop Bill 33 from being passed into legislation. The government works for the people, not the other way around.

Joanne Parsons
Southdale Constituent

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

<http://www.manitoba.ca/legislature/hansard/hansard.html>