

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. 8 - 6 p.m., Thursday, April 15, 2021

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-Second Legislature

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

Thursday, April 15, 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:

Hon. Jon Gerrard, MLA for River Heights

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Bill 33 – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Ms. Shawna Peloquin, private citizen

Mr. Jim Clark, private citizen

Mr. Mark Gabbert, private citizen

Mr. Mike Moroz, private citizen

Ms. Whitney Hodgins, Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Dane Monkman, private citizen

Ms. Hannah Mihychuk Marshall, private citizen

Mr. Andrew Kohan, private citizen

Ms. Joe Curnow, private citizen

Ms. Elizabeth Shearer, private citizen

Mr. Zach Fleisher, private citizen

Ms. Jelynn Dela Cruz, private citizen

Mr. Kevin Rebeck, Manitoba Federation of Labour

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Bill 33 – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Rob Schmidt, private citizen

Eveline Milliken, private citizen

Katinka Stecina, private citizen

Michelle Faubert, private citizen

Othniel Harris, Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society

Tim Podolsky, private citizen

Tendai Dogo, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 33 – The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

Bill 34 – The University College of the North Amendment Act

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

The first item of business today is the election of a Chairperson.

Are there any nominations?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair for the temporary. I'd like to nominate MLA Reyes.

Clerk Assistant: Mr. Reyes has been nominated.

Are there any other nominations?

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

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

Mr. Ewasko: I nominate for the position of Vice-Chair for this evening Mr.–MLA–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 meeting has been called 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. A standing committee meeting to consider a bill must not sit past midnight to hear public presentations or to consider clause-by-clause of a bill, except by 'unasse' consent of the committee.

We have a number of presenters registered to speak tonight, as noted on the list of presenters before you. We will therefore continue from where we left off at the meeting on Tuesday, April 13th. Those who were called but were not present in the previous meeting appear at the end of the list.

A written submission has been received from Rob Schmidt, private citizen, on Bill 33. It has been distributed to all committee members.

Does the committee agree to have this document 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—for speaking in a committee. In accordance with our rules, a time limit of 10 minutes has been allotted for presentations, with another five minutes allowed for questions from committee members.

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 will be removed from the presenters' list.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is a 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 the committee members.

Bill 33—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

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

Ms. Peloquin, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Shawna Peloquin (Private Citizen): Good evening, members of the committee. My name is Shawna Peloquin. I am a member of the James Bay Cree Nation. And I am originally from unceded Anishinaabe land in northern Quebec. I am currently

a student with the University of Winnipeg, and I have been in Winnipeg since 2017.

Today, here, I will talk to you about barriers. I will talk to you about fears. And I will talk to you about what this bill means for me and for a lot of students, and also what the behaviour of this government has mean with the fear of students this year.

So before I start, I'd like to invite everyone to take a deep breath, to acknowledge all the breaths that have been taken away this year. We are still surviving a global pandemic and the reality of it is still weighting on all of us: students, children, youth, adults, people in positions of power, people in positions of governance and people who have the authority of passing the bill also. We also have—we're all in this together, right? So I think it's good to take the time to breathe and acknowledge that a lot of us don't have a breath to share anymore and that a lot of us may not have a breath to share in the next couple of weeks, and in the next months.

So, continuing, I want to talk about barriers, because barriers have defined my pathways as a student, as an Indigenous two-spirited person. I was raised in Quebec. And I've heard a lot about talking about how the tuition fees—we have the lowest tuition fees west of Quebec here in Manitoba. But I haven't heard about the barriers. And a reality for me in the barriers is I had to move two provinces away to find an education system that would allow me to learn and to grow, and that would allow me to resonate with my values and to choose a path that would help me belong.

And I chose Winnipeg because Winnipeg seemed to have the most to offer, community-wise and also initiative-wise. I made the decision in 2015 at the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission release, and I was really encouraged by all the initiatives that were community-led and activist-led and also university-led. Let's point out that the University of Winnipeg was one of two first universities in this country to make mandatory the—a mandatory requirement for an Indigenous course for their students, which is making it easier for me to feel like I belong in the university, where people are not taught that my past is shameful, that my past doesn't exist, that the legacy of my family is not something that's invisible anymore in the University of Winnipeg. And that's a really important cultural shift that has been taking place since 2015 in the University of Winnipeg.

Other change that has come my way since I moved here is that as soon as I moved here and I started my educational pathways, I've understood that barriers were being built, barriers that I've been trying to escape, barriers that are impacting the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. They're not impacting the children of our governance because our governance are privileged enough to be in those seats right now today and make those decisions. They're impacting the children of people that have been struggling to free themselves from the oppression of a settler-colonial system that we are all part of. And as me, myself being here, I am forced, still, to place myself in harm's way in front of you.

I want to talk about the fear of students, because the barriers have been stronger this year, a lot stronger, and the fear has been present. I've been hearing this government talking about fear mongering, and I think it's quite appropriate that it's coming from this government.

This year, I was in front of the Legislative Building in November when we had a tipi raised to protest when the government made the decision to remove over \$300 million that belonged to Indigenous children in care. Were they not vulnerable enough to have access to an education? Like, how do you think students—Indigenous students feel when they saw that decision coming from this government? How do you think they believe that their children after them, their nieces and nephews, the youth that are carrying them, their families and relatives that are struggling to take themselves out of the legacy of colonization, feel? We won't—they won't—they'll have even more barriers to access education than the ones that are currently in university, and that's shameful.

* (18:10)

I want to talk about the mental health of students. Mental health has been a big buzzword this year and it's been important even before the pandemic, but now we're all in the same boat.

Your government has passed a policy that allowed the option to [*inaudible*] easy when people who struggle with mental health don't see the end. That's also put a stress on student and a fear on students. What happen if one of their comrades has a crisis and this is an option that's not offered and available? What happen when you have youth that are struggling and fighting and trying to heal from suicidal ideas, having this offered as an other alternative by your government? How do you think this is not building up the fear of students?

I want to talk about students in education. Our students in education have heard in the past week your minister, your Premier (Mr. Pallister), said that once they graduate they'll have to pay out of pocket the supplies of their careers. How are they not to be afraid once they're going to graduate?

What this bill is doing, this bill is giving responsibility to the government to direct the university. It's giving—it's removing the responsibility from the people, from the community and from the communities of support that built those universities, and it's giving it to your provincial government.

Are you planning on being responsible with our education, because you haven't been responsible with the pandemic crisis and we've had to deal with that. And we hear that every day. We see the numbers rising up, and this is not fear mongering; this is reality. When is your government going to be able to look at the reality and address it?

We're hearing a lot about Bill 33 and how it's going to be better for students, but we wanted you to do something that's better for students before you promise those and you pass those as law because they don't—when I read that document, I had a sense of dread. I had a sense of understanding that people like me will not have space in university sectors once your government is finished to do what they—whatever they plan to do with this.

I read the skill and knowledge and talent document, and I was shocked to see that the only inclusion of Indigenous business in there are businesses that are actively involved in the extraction of our own lands. You want to build labour. You want to align in university in education with the market demands, but there's something you forget. It's about children. It's about dreams. It's about building a new world and a future world. It's about the leaders of tomorrow. As yesterday, you were the student, and tomorrow—the students of tomorrow are scared. They don't have institutions where they can depend themselves because they can't access those institutions right now. They have to wear a mask everywhere they go. And it's quite intriguing to see the privilege and the freedom to which this committee has been not wearing masks while we see you in your institution. This is not a privilege that students have been having this year at all.

What I want to see is action from this government to answer to the students' fears rather than add to the stress and to the anxiety and the inconsistency of this government and responsible answer to the pandemic.

I want to see you do real concrete action. And it seems that the only concrete action you've pushed us to the wall to do—today is to scrap that bill and tell students that you'll start listening to them and not force them to come at your table to just have a chance to be heard, because that's not responsible. We should be studying right now. We should be focused on saving our education, not in saving it from you.

I'm going to end my presentation here, but I would like to invite other committee members—I would like to ask me questions. Just be mindful of the space that you take; we don't need to hear your life story; we're still—we're so busy struggling and making sure ours is still possible.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): Thanks, Ms. Peloquin, for your presentation today, and your heartfelt presentation.

And, I guess, you know, not getting into my life story but at the same time wanting to share with you that I want to thank you for coming to Manitoba to do your post-secondary education, and I want to assure you that the consultations and that the collaboration will continue. I'm not going to name names but there's some other members of your association, because I'm not quite sure when your presidency finishes—I think at the end of April, but, at the same time—or maybe you've got another term. I'm not quite sure and I apologize for that, but I am—we are going to be setting up a meeting for your association and myself, and—so we can come and have a conversation. And I want you to know, also, that the collaboration and the meetings that we've had with various students groups over the past years—not just myself, but my predecessors—will definitely continue. I agree with you coming—you know, breaking down barriers.

And again, I know you don't want to hear what my past is and what I did before politics, so I will not share that with you today, but we want to make sure that our post-secondary education is affordable, but also that the institutions are sustainable. And I applaud you for coming to Manitoba because I think there's going to be more and more Quebecers coming to Manitoba for their education, as well as other Canadians as well. And that's our goal.

And you mentioned the skills, talent, knowledge strategy. I think that'll be the next set of questions that the opposition critic will eventually start to talk about. I think it's a great strategy. And it's about attracting people to Manitoba, because I know that once you get here, and if you can, you know, get through a hard winter and a summer with a few mosquitoes, you're going to fall in love with the place, and you're going to want to, you know, live out your life here, so, with that, thank you very much for your presentation and I look forward to meeting you and—in person, possibly—in the future, possibly and having a conversation.

Ms. Peloquin: I'd like to thank the minister for this comment. And also, just be truthful on this that I won't be able to tell the Quebecers to come here, because this—the options that were there before that invited me here, are not present anymore with this government. I'll have to tell them that if they want to come here with this current government, they'll have to put a cap on their dream, and that's not okay.

I also want to acknowledge that the minister has pointed out that I am the University of Winnipeg Students' Association's out-going president. And that in the four months of your term, I haven't heard anything from you.

So, I appreciate your comment again, thank you.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): Thank you so much for your presentation, Ms. Peloquin.

And thank you for, kind of, bringing us together, acknowledging the space that we're in and seeing the importance—stating the importance of education, of opportunities for people, and acknowledging the barriers that so many people like yourself face.

I think Bill 33 doesn't even scratch the surface when it comes to dealing with those barriers. And you know, I do hope that at some point the government brings forward and works with groups—students like yourself, and groups to come together and put forward legislation that will actually help improve the barriers and remove some of the barriers that you and so many students are facing.

I just want to get from your experience in—and the students that you deal with and work with—what is, you know, maybe the top one or two specific barriers you wish the government would address in the legislation?

Ms. Peloquin: In this legislation of Bill 33, I don't think he's addressing anything that students need. I think it's just a grab of power.

I want the minister to look at healthcare for an international student. I want the minister to look at freeing education services for students that need it the most, and at stopping creating barriers with this bill. But for that, you have to start looking at the barriers.

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

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

Mr. Clark, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Jim Clark (Private Citizen): Yes, I've been a resident of Manitoba since 1989 when I was appointed at the University of Winnipeg as a professor of psychology. It's just a coincidence—my father was actually born and raised in Manitoba, although I didn't know him well, since he died when I was quite young.

I'd like to think that the minister and probably everybody here has the best interests of students at heart, but we probably disagree with respect to how Bill 33—or, whether Bill 33 is going to help. Personally, I think that the advice that the minister and the government's been receiving from organizations like KPMG are misguided ones and I'll try to explain why, briefly.

* (18:20)

Oh, I should mention I did submit a written document, and, hopefully, that'll find its way to the committee in time.

Okay, so I think a main focus of discussion has been what is the purpose of Bill 33, and you cannot discern that, I think, from the document itself. So I've gone and looked at some of the other many documents that have been produced relevant to post-secondary education under this government, and I'll just share a couple of the quotes that I've selected.

It is expected that Manitoba's post-secondary institutions will become more agile and continuously make changes to their systems in order to be more responsive to the pace of labour market changes.

Or, from a letter to the University of Manitoba: Access to this funding will require your institution to submit a plan that articulates how this funding will be used to orient programs toward labour market needs.

So I think this bill is clearly part and parcel of that larger agenda and it provides the government with the

power to allocate funding in ways that steer students into certain programs.

And I think it's important to emphasize that the trust is not just in the minister, but it has to be in this government, as the former speaker mentioned. It'll be at the Cabinet table that this decision will be made under the guidance of Premier Pallister and with input from departments that do not have the best interests of students at heart. So the voice of the minister will only be one of those voices.

I looked at the KPMG report, and if you go to page 13 of the report, which is the only page, I think, the report actually needed, you'll see lots of statistics that demonstrate just how effective the current system is.

So it gave you some idea: 24- to 34-year-olds in the province are 11 per cent more likely to participate in the labour force than high school graduates, and that's compared to about half that, 6 and 7 per cent for colleges and the trades.

The annual salaries: the premium for high school graduates was over \$11,000 for universities, about \$5,000 for colleges and about almost \$6,000 for trades.

Employment rates three years after graduation are 94 per cent for universities and 92 per cent for colleges.

I'm not exactly sure what the problem is on the student and education side that it requires this particular bill or the intervention of the Pallister government into internal operations of autonomous institutions.

I should mention that there's many, many statistics that would confirm this. And, with all due respect to the minister, he's appealed several times to the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General did not seem to be aware that there is a huge amount of data available about the general benefits of post-secondary education, including specific programs and including information that's particular to Manitoba.

So it's not out—as though there is some vacuum out there that needs to be filled, presumably by an expensive apparatus that will have to do the job that Stats Canada is already doing.

Why KPMG went on and added many more pages is clearly because they had to focus on costs, completely ignoring the benefits that they could have easily calculated, I would imagine. You can take these salary differentials and figure out how much more

taxes university graduates pay than they would have paid if they were high school graduates. You could go through and figure out from employment statistics how much fewer social services were required throughout the life work—the working life of university graduates and well into retirement.

So the current system is working, I think, on balance. It probably more than pays for itself when you take a long-term perspective, which systems like a post-secondary system do take, as opposed to perhaps a shorter term perspective.

So, why does it work? It works because employment decisions are complicated. It's not just a matter of how much money one's going to earn, it also depends on the aptitudes and interests of students. The minister, at the last meeting, referred to sitting around the table with his kids and talking about education, where decisions should be made. And they shouldn't be overly influenced by a minister, you know, on Broadway street, who has decided that he wants—or she or they—want to influence students in ways towards certain occupations.

I don't think even employers benefit from students who are doing things because of the money. Employers want students who are interested and invested in their occupations, not people who are just there to take a paycheque and go home at whatever the hour is and put the job out of their minds.

The current system is also successful because students follow many diverse paths to employment. A lot of them, probably about 20 or 30 per cent, will actually go on to further education in professional and graduate programs. So the outcome for these students won't even be known for years into the future.

In my own case, I had four years of undergraduate and six years of Ph.D. How could the University of Western Ontario or the government in Ontario have monitored the effectiveness of the path that I had chosen?

A third reason that things work is because many of the competencies that universities help students develop are, in fact, generic ones. That's why they can go into so many occupations. And, again, look closely at page 13 of the KPMG report. University graduates in Manitoba score higher on literacy and numeracy than do college graduates, and they're higher than university graduates in Ontario and the other Western provinces.

I know we have difficulties here with achievement in education but it's not a problem with the

K-to-12 system that Minister Ewasko worked in, and it's not the problem of the system that I work in at universities. The problems are more fundamental than that and have to do with students who are simply unable to benefit from those systems for a variety of reasons.

Another theme that emerges from a lot of these documents is the need to adapt to workplace change in the future. Of course, universities are a large part of what those changes are going to be, both directly and indirectly, in terms of educating the entrepreneurs of the future, for example.

More directly, universities have already shown themselves as able to adapt to dramatic changes in society. Society has moved from an agricultural-based system, to a manufacturing system, to a service-based system and to who knows what in the future.

Throughout this whole process, universities have expanded in their contribution to society and in a highly successful way, as I mentioned just a moment ago.

Just to give you some idea of the magnitude of the change: Between 1992 and 2018 in Canada, the number of university graduates went from 169,000 to 318,000, an increase of 150,000 or so. There are now over 1.1 million students enrolled in university programs across the country.

And universities have accommodated these market changes, maintaining high positive outcomes for large, large numbers of students and with the relatively modest increase in the university faculty. So, between 1992 and 2018, for example, there was only a 23 per cent increase in the number of full-time faculty—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Clark, thank you for your presentation. The time allotted for your presentation is over.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Professor Clark, for your presentation tonight. Again, I thank you for sharing a little bit about your personal story right off the bat and I'm sorry to hear about that, for sure.

* (18:30)

In regards to the Auditor General's report—I mean, I'm not sure if you've had the opportunity to write the Auditor General and give them their—your feedback on the report, but I think as do everybody, everyone,

constructive criticism and—as you are, and myself, and many, many, many other people, we're all lifelong learners. So we look forward to hearing more about that.

I look—my door is always open, and I really strongly feel that, you know, working with students, student groups, faculty and post-secondary stakeholders here in the province, institutions, is very important and it's important to me. You've mentioned my background a little bit, and I've seen yours as well—again, open, open, open door is there.

Bill 33 is there to make sure that our students enjoy affordability, but at the same time, I mean, you're a professor at the University of Winnipeg, I want to make sure that, you know, we have great programming and that goes with great professors as well. And we need make sure that our post-secondary institutions are sustainable as well.

So, Bill 33, I do believe will be bringing a balanced approach to that, and when I do say shoulder check—and I know that there's many fans of mine out there that seem to want to quote my shoulder check thing, but basically is to have those conversations with post-secondary institutions and those that affect absolutely everybody that's involved and to make sure that, you know, the tuition and the student fees and that are at a rate, that, again, remains the lowest in western Canada, west of Quebec, but at the same time, strengthening and making sure that our programming is solid.

So, thanks again for your time tonight and your presentation.

Mr. Clark: I appreciate the comments from the minister. And again, as I mentioned earlier, it's not a matter of trust or consultation with the minister, the decision will be made at the Cabinet table where the interests of students are not going to be primary. And the minister and other Cabinet members will have other things on the agenda.

I would also point out that it's not necessary in order to ensure tuition does not increase or that it's affordable, and that the system is high quality for the minister to be able to, not only limit or lower, but also to raise tuitions for some programs. That's simply an undesirable feature of this particular legislation, irrespective of who is in power.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Clark, so much for your presentation. I think it was very informative and I appreciate the opinion that you brought to your words.

I want to ask you about the impacts you're talking about when it comes to different tuitions in classes and for a variety of programs, and especially when the minister talks about it meeting market needs. Very well said that, you know, most of—90-plus per cent of students are fully employed after they graduate.

And I want to talk about for you and specifically how would that impact having at difference classes, what do you think the long-term impact would that have on university institutions and on our communities as a whole if we down that road?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Clark, and if I can get you to answer just very briefly because your allotted time is going to be ending.

Very respectfully, Mr. Clark, continue.

Mr. Clark: I won't talk in specifics, but in general I worry about the unintended consequences of this kind of legislation. Imagine there's favoritism for STEM, for example, over non-STEM. Well, a higher percentage of STEM students are male and a higher percentage of non-STEM are female. How about favouring colleges over universities? Well, students in colleges, if they're male they make more money, but if they're female they don't make that much more money. It's the university education that's important for female students.

And another danger, I think, is flooding the job market. If you favour certain occupations, well, people stay in occupations for 30 or 40 years or more. How are you going to maintain or ensure that from the start of a program 'til five or six years later, the jobs are still going to be there and that you haven't already flooded the market.

The diversity of the present system is why it works so well. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Clark. Time for questioning is over.

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

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Gabbert, if you can please put your video on.

Floor Comment: Sorry, just a second.

Mr. Chairperson: We can hear also—hear somebody in the background there, so.

Floor Comment: Yes, I know; I don't understand why that's the case, but.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, there's your video; we see you now. So, please proceed with your presentation, Mr. Gabbert; continue.

Mr. Mark Gabbert (Private Citizen): Thank you very much. Just to be clear, I'm a private citizen but I am employed by the University of Manitoba as a member of the history department.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gabbert?

Mr. Gabbert: Yes?

Mr. Chairperson: If—I'm just getting some notification that you're also listening to the broadcast, and if you could turn that off because we can hear it in the background.

Mr. Gabbert: Yes, I know, but I don't understand why that's the case because—

Mr. Chairperson: Yes, we can hear that from your end; we're hearing an echo.

Mr. Gabbert: I know, it's true, but I can't—

Mr. Chairperson: Do you have a webpage open, Mr. Gabbert?

Mr. Gabbert: Just let me see whether I do.

Okay. So.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gabbert, I'm just going to get some instruction here from the clerk on how to proceed, because we're still hearing an echo.

I'm going to ask the committee if we can have leave for us to have another presenter, and then we'll come back to Mr. Gabbert once he has the technical issues on his side.

Mr. Gabbert: I do apologize. I—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gabbert, the moderator will be in touch with you, and we'll get back to you once we have leave from—correct. Yes.

All right, so leave has been granted to go on to the next presenter and we will get back to you, Mr. Gabbert. The moderator will contact you.

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

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Moroz, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Mike Moroz (Private Citizen): Hello, thank you. I want to begin my comments by thanking the

committee for the opportunity to be here tonight to be part of the conversation around this incredibly important legislation.

I also want to take a moment to commend the other speakers who have given up their time, either during the previous six hours of presentations or those who have and will speak tonight. Your passion for and commitment to protecting and improving post-secondary institutions and the educational experience they provide students is appreciated by Manitobans; I want to add my voice to their chorus of thanks.

I want to let members of this committee also know that I share the specific concerns of the speakers who preceded me. Like them, I am deeply troubled by what feels—at every level—to be a clear consolidating of power in the minister's office, giving it broad authority to arbitrarily adjust tuition and student fees without appropriate public oversight.

These changes will have the impact of eroding the autonomy of post-secondary institutions, and effectively strips them of their ability to chart their own course, free of government interference.

Equally concerning is the proposed ministerial power that has the potential to limit the ability of student unions to fully advocate for students and programs, or to be the energetic agents of social change we so desperately need them to continue to be.

Much of the social progress we've made during the course of my lifetime can trace its roots to young people on our campuses, and I believe it's there on those campuses that our greatest hopes for the future can yet be realized.

* (18:40)

Now, I'm aware that the minister has indicated that an amendment to address some of these concerns is forthcoming, but the devil is in the details, and I will remain concerned and vigilant until student organizations believe they have been fully protected by the amendment.

The lens I look at this legislation with is that of a long-time public school teacher. And I think it's critical that the committee consider these changes from this perspective. Over my career, I've been privileged to watch several thousands of students pass through my and colleagues' classrooms. And I then follow their progress as they find their place in the world.

The subtle differences between students is profound, deeply inspiring and impossible to truly

appreciate unless you've spent time as part of the daily life of a high school. These differences matter within the context of this discussion. Some students clearly understand the path they're meant to travel and attack it with incredible conviction. These students come from two distinctly different backgrounds.

The first have emotionally and financially supportive parents and typically come from homes that value higher education because there are others in the family who've benefitted from it. As their teacher, I'm concerned about these students, but I understand that this group will, given the deeper resource pools they have to draw on, generally find a way to work through the obstacles that bad public policy puts in front of them. Eventually, they'll get where they want to go.

The second group, equally determined and equally sure of the end goal, comes from families with more modest backgrounds, often without a family pattern of post-secondary success to encourage them or the financial wherewithal to help them cover the significant costs. I'm particularly concerned about this legislation in relation to these students.

When combined with this government's pattern of reduced financial support for post-secondary institutions, the removal of the tuition freeze, the proposed ministerial powers to arbitrarily adjust tuition puts this group of students at the greatest risk of being excluded from participation in higher education.

Their background makes these students fully aware of the obstacles that challenge their goal of becoming the doctor of lawyer or teacher they want to become and has clarified the sacrifices they'll be required to make along the way.

But these changes to the legislation and the increase in tuition these students will have to pay and the debt they'll have to shoulder to do so seriously jeopardizes their decision to even begin the journey.

I want to make a point of saying here—because I know it's something that will be raised by the minister when I'm done—that I, frankly, think is a bit of a disingenuous argument to suggest that the amount of available student loans has been increased during the time of this government and that somehow, as a result of that, students are better off.

But increasing student debt isn't a hand up from a society that understands how it benefits from a better educated population. It's an anchor that pulls too many students under. And students know it, and in the face

of them—of it, many of them will simply choose not to go at all.

There's a third kind of student that needs to be considered when examining this legislation, and that's those students who are nearing the end of their high school years but who don't yet know what their passion might be and who are still trying to determine if post-secondary education is part of their future. For them, it's even more important that the system be both accessible and comprehensive.

Participating in higher education has a transformational impact on students. It has the effect of opening them up to the full range of life's possibilities, and it helps make those uncertain paths clear. Countless students and teachers will validate this. Countless students then go on, not knowing where they were going to begin, to make incredible contributions to society, contributions they themselves didn't know they could make.

For these students, the additional danger in the proposed legislation is that it gives the minister the discretion to create classes of tuition that vary from course to course and program to program. Such discretion opens the door to some programs being more valued and having their tuition protected while others are simply 'tuitioned' out of existence because they don't themselves necessarily lead directly to employment. The programs most at risk are the very ones that these students enrol in to begin their voyage of discovery.

I've heard the minister describe this as simply a shoulder check, and frankly, my skepticism is rooted in a concern as to what it is exactly you're shoulder checking for. If it's to ensure the financial stability necessary to maintain a world-class, accessible system, the simplest way to do that is to fully fund it at the rate of inflation and growth.

You've chosen not to do that, which leads me to believe that what you're looking for is a sign from friends and industry about the kinds of employees they prefer. Your claim is that it's the former; your behaviour suggests it's probably the latter.

In conclusion, I've been in and around public policy development, social action, my entire adult life. I very much want to believe that this committee represents a critical step in a thoughtful and reflective legislative process, but to leave—believe that, I must first accept that this discussion and the concerns raised within it will become part of a meaningful process of

consultation that results in the fine-tuning of policy to ensure that it matches the needs of all stakeholders.

After listening to the discussion on Tuesday and the response of speakers so far, I'm disappointed to discover that this process is viewed as little more than a hoop that must be jumped through in order to pass legislation as it exists.

I encourage you to do better.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Moroz, for your presentation. And you started off talking about the fact on, you know, Manitoba's democracy and your rights, and then you finished that off as well talking about the ability and that this is part of the process.

That's why I think Manitoba is a great place to absolutely live, because you're able to come—I do believe we're the—probably the only legislative—Legislature in all of Canada that allows a committee stage where the public are able to come and voice their opinions, which I think is great. And I thank you for coming and exercising that right.

I do agree that the student unions' mandate and amendment—we are, if you stay up with us later tonight, we will be bringing forward an amendment to make sure that the clarity of the bill—all along the intent of the bill was to not interfere with student unions' or associations' fees that they vote on through their democratic processes.

But that wasn't clear to the student groups that I met with, so thanks to them for reaching out and having great consulted—'consultative'—apologize—meetings with myself, and we're bringing forward an amendment later tonight.

I also agree with you that a debt is not a good thing and should never be the No. 1 thing to go out and get loans or rack up credit cards, and I also agree with you that post-secondary institutions should be accessible and, of course, affordable.

So, thanks again for attending tonight and sharing your thoughts with us.

Mr. Moroz: Great. I appreciate all of that, but again, for this committee process to be—to have the value it ought to have, then amendments based on the concerns raised by people here at committee need to be considered, need to be made, and the legislation

needs to be adjusted to make sure it's balanced and covers all of those concerns.

And, as I say, I'm not certain, based on what I've heard so far, that that's very likely.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Moroz, for your time this evening and bringing forward your presentation.

You mentioned the concerns around differential tuition and the impacts that that might have on our community. I'm very interested in that, specifically because I think it'll have a really critical impact in Manitoba post-secondary. And I think the minister failed to address that when he responded to you and—asking a question about differential classes of tuition, and I'd like—you know, I'd prefer if the minister could take the opportunity to do that when he has the next available time to speak.

* (18:50)

But my questions for you, as someone who is an educator—and thank you for your time educating our kids in the K-to-12 system—for your students, and looking at their futures, what do you think, you know, the changing of tuition between different programs would have an impact on their choices and their future?

Mr. Moroz: It's a serious struggle for students, particularly those that don't know yet where they want to go, right?

Some of it is a bit of a voyage to discovery, and that's part of the role of post-secondary institutions is to allow people to discover the things that they can be passionate about and then make decisions based on where those passions might lead them.

The problem with some of the programs that will be targeted or could be targeted, is that they're the ones that are the entry-level ones. They're the introduction to psychology; they are the programs like that in a general arts program that draw people in and inspire them to go on. And raising fees on those because in the short term—or, they don't offer jobs automatically as an outcome then limits where those students can go afterwards when they make—then decide not to go at all.

Mr. Nello Altomare (Transcona): Thank you, Mr. Moroz, for your presentation tonight.

Mr. Moroz, as a private citizen, what do you want to see from this government to amend this particular legislation, and what direction would you want that to go in?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Moroz, I don't want to cut you off abruptly, but if you can just answer your question very briefly, as your time is running out.

So, go ahead.

Mr. Moroz: Yes, there've been a ton of excellent suggestions from speakers over the course of the two days. Everything from finding other ways to protect student fees to making sure that the legislation allows the institutions to make decisions on their own without government interference, to go where they believe is best for the students.

But a willingness to consider amendments—comprehensive amendments—where necessary, as your guests—as your presenters have offered—for me, that's what I want to see is a willingness to discuss what's best for the system as a whole. And as I say, so far I haven't seen that.

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

We will now call on Mr. Mark Gabbert and ask the moderator to invite them back into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Welcome back, Mr. Gabbert. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Gabbert: Sorry for the earlier noise.

As I said before, I'm appearing as a private citizen, but I'm a member of the department of history at the University of Manitoba.

In my view, this piece of legislation represents a major erosion of what remains of the autonomy of Manitoba's post-secondary institutions. In my comments, I'll refer mainly to the University of Manitoba, of course, but I think what I have to say applies generally.

Consider for a moment how much power the government currently has with respect to these institutions. At Manitoba, the government has oversight—appoints the majority of the board of governors. That board has oversight of the administration of the university and it has the power to approve most of the university senate's decisions on academic matters.

The government also has the power to determine what the university's annual operating grant will be. It has the power to determine the overall level of increase in tuition fees that the university may impose to make up for shortfalls in the grant—the grant which now is—it continues to decline—it constitutes just over

50 per cent of the university's operating budget. And, in fact, thanks to the government's control over the past four years, the grant has declined in value by about 13 per cent, with the result that the burden of tuition for students has increased significantly.

Until the passage of The Advanced Education Administration Act in 2014, the government's relations with the university were buffered by the existence of quasi-independent boards. These boards were created to protect the autonomy of the university against direct interventions from the minister over issues related to funding and programming which needed to be decided by academics.

The council on post-secondary education was the most recent of these bodies, which was abolished in 2014. Its predecessor was the more robust Universities Grants Commission, which had been known to go as far even as to approve program proposals that the government itself had resisted. The government appointed these commissions and provided a sum for the support of post-secondary education, but it was up to the intermediary bodies to deal directly with the universities on matters of programming and allocation of the grant.

Unfortunately, these arm's-length bodies are a thing of the past. Their functions have basically been handed over to the minister through provisions of The Advanced Education Administration Act, which is now—amendments to which are now before us here.

This act moves the intermediaries out of the way, giving the government of the day a much more direct influence in the development of the province's post-secondary education system. This increases the danger that decisions affecting the development of post-secondary education will be politicized and that academic and pedagogically oriented decisions will be side-tracked.

These days, rather than dealing with COPSE, for example, the university's vice-president for programs deals directly with officials of the relevant government department. There is no independent mediator to buffer ministerial power. And this is a standing threat to the academic integrity of the university and to the range of programs and courses that the university can provide to the people of Manitoba, not just the young people but—primarily them—but all Manitobans.

So if we look at the situation now, in addition to the control of our membership at the board, the level of the operating grant, tuition and so on, the minister has acquired a range of other powers, among them,

establishing directions and priorities, quote, for the funding given to the sector and where it deems necessary, imposing performance measures to ensure the proper use of the grant.

More importantly, the minister has also got the power now to approve or not approve both the introduction of new programs and the significant modification or closure of existing ones.

And, according to section 11.2(1) of the act, the exercise of these powers can be fine-tuned through the imposition of regulations without any parliamentary discussion.

These provisions, of course, themselves, infringed upon the powers of the board and the senate at the University of Manitoba, which were empowered through The University of Manitoba Act to the board, in the case of the board, the right to abolish or establish schools and faculties, and the university senate's right to establish the university's academic programs and to decide how to give credit to people who've studied elsewhere.

But for all that The Advanced Education Administration Act risks politicizing academic questions, the legislation still affirms the principles that the autonomy of the universities has to be respected. Thus, one of the roles of the minister is to promote a system of advanced education that, quote, "respects the appropriate autonomy of educational institutions and the recognized principles of academic freedom," end quote. This is emphasized again in section 2(6) of the current act where it is stipulated that, quote, "In carrying out his or her role and responsibilities, the minister must have regard for the respective autonomy of education institutions."

In light of this language, of course, the meaning of Bill 33, I think, becomes clearer. Remember, this bill is an act to amend The Advanced Education Administration Act. It does so in a way that both ignores and weakens the act's provisions recognizing the basic institutional autonomy of universities as a boundary that must not be crossed.

Instead, not satisfied with the considerable powers that it already enjoys, the government now plans to intervene directly in the allocation and setting of tuition levels among the various faculties and programs of the university. It knows that these interventions violate the current language and spirit of The Advanced Education Administration Act, so it now prepares to widen—or to weaken that language by amendments that would further erode the autonomy of

universities and to arrogate to itself, decisions that will have enormously important impacts on the universities' programming.

*(19:00)

Bill 33 permits the government to set whatever tuition fees it wants in a university program or across programs. Such intervention in the price charged to students for particular courses of study increases the government's power over the university programs and its academic priorities, inevitably.

It impacts the internal allocation of resources in unprecedented ways. And it will clearly have a big impact on the kind of—the range of choices that students can have. Why do this? Well, some of these possible reasons have already been mentioned. First, of course, if the government has a particular view that the labour market needs one particular field more than another, it might well decide to discourage enrolment in some fields and encourage it in others. And, of course, this is—will be a disincentive for students enrol and some cases, make it impossible.

The previous speaker spoke very eloquently about the range of ways in which students come to conclusions about how they want to spend the rest of their lives, by having access to a range of programs. So this is a very important aspect of the matter. And I think it needs to be said to this committee—since I'm a member of the University of Manitoba Senate, Planning and Priorities Committee, I can say that whenever the university considers significant program changes in any area, it always considers labour—the labour market situation. But along with that consideration goes a serious concern for the impact of any changes we're likely to make on the overall quality and diversity of the university's educational offerings.

One of the factors in that regard is a concern for providing to Manitobans of all ages with opportunities for learning in a wide range of fields relevant to the extraordinary range of purposes that learning serves. Such learning may be directly or indirectly relevant to a student's ultimate labour force participation, but what is certain is that the programs will have been carefully vetted by members of a community of academics who have a lot of experience and who, I can attest, are deeply committed to the public of Manitoba and to their students. It would simply not be appropriate to impose financial disincentives to these sorts of programs for political reasons.

But there's a further danger presented by the bill, and it's this: by permitting the government to regulate tuition fees of particular programs, the provision risks inviting government retaliation against programs that are critical of current accepted opinion or institutions, including, of course, the political views and priorities of whatever government might be in power.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gabbert, your 10 minutes are up for your presentation, so, thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Gabbert, for coming on tonight and giving us your presentation, and I more than appreciate your views on the topic. Of course, just to remind you that—and I know you know this, probably, but I'm just going to say it back on the record that COPSE and the change in legislation in 2014 was under a previous government.

And in regards to Bill 33, those conversations are going to be happening in regards to the tuition and the student fees. When you talk about the autonomy, as other presenters had done so, I believe that there's a tad bit—and I'm not saying you're intending to do this, but I think, unintended consequences of potentially, a little bit of fear-mongering on that fact—is I—we are going to have those conversations with those post-secondary institutions. And the post-secondary institutions are going to be bringing forward to my department those potential changes, whether it's an increase or a decrease to tuition and student fees, and at the end of the day, Mr. Gabbert, we are all accountable to the taxpayer.

And making sure that there's oversight, I don't think, is a bad thing. I think the status quo that has been going on within Manitoba for years and years and years, I think, has shown that there has been a bit of a detriment. And so I think some oversight, making sure that the student success is paramount, and that makes—that just means that our programming is strong but also affordable.

So thank you, again, for attending tonight, and bringing forward your presentation.

Mr. Gabbert: Nothing in the bill has anything clear about consultations, any obligation to consult or anything else, and in the end, you keep the hammer, even when you consult.

As for the taxpayers, of which I am one, they expect to get what they're paying for, not some kind

of hyped up job training that is, you know, based on some temporary or short-term considerations about what people really need. It's clear that, as the last speaker said, nobody's paying any attention to the serious criticisms that people are bringing to the floor here.

As for COPSE I know all about COPSE; we fought with the other government over COPSE. I'm not blaming you for everything that's happened; I'm blaming you for making it worse, and I'm telling you, you think you want to have a shoulder check. Wake up. You're going the wrong way on a one-way street. Shoulder checks do you no good.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Mr. Gabbert, for your presentation tonight.

I'm just going to get right to it. Do you see anything in this bill that will improve the student experience in Manitoba?

Mr. Gabbert: Absolutely not. It has nothing to do with what students might or might not want or profit from. It's obviously driven by something else. There's no fixing this bill. It needs to be junked. It undercuts anything that's good about the current Advanced Education Administration Act, and it's deliberately designed to do so.

And so all the loose talk about consultations and the rest and the taxpayers is really seriously wide of the mark, not to mention the references to traffic regulations.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, again, for your presentation. I think I really appreciate hearing your perspective, and the immediacy of some of the issues here I think is very evident by hearing you speak.

I want to ask—and again, I think the minister's failed to address it now. I think you're at least the third presenter tonight who has brought up the issues around differential classes of tuition, and I think this is an opportunity for the minister to really clarify. He claims fear mongering, but he has yet to clarify what that really means, what the impacts are going to be.

From your perspective, reading the bill, what do you think that section of the bill means, as it stands right now?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gabbert, if you can answer very briefly because you're running out of time. Mr. Gabbert, if you could just answer very briefly.

Thank you.

Mr. Gabbert: It's perfectly clear that the bill allows the government to make these kinds of differential fees. And everything that the previous person said about the problem with them is correct, and a lot more. It will destroy the program, an academic program, that has been carefully worked together over many, many years—very, very worrying, not fear mongering.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Gabbert, for your presentation. That completes Mr. Gabbert's presentation.

Before we move on to the next presenter, I just want to let you know that we've also received written submissions from the following people on Bill 33. The moderator will—has distributed an electronic copy to all virtual committee members and a hard copy will be provided to all members present in the committee room. From Eveline Milliken, private citizen; Katinka Stecina, private citizen; Michelle Faubert, private citizen; Othniel Harris from the Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society; Tim Podolsky, private citizen; and Tendai Dogo, private citizen.

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

We will now move on to the next presenter, Shirley Thompson, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Thompson will be dropped to the bottom of the list for now, and we will now call on Whitney Hodgins, chair of Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Hodgkins *[phonetic]*, please proceed with your presentation.

* (19:10)

Ms. Whitney Hodgins (Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities): So, hello, everyone. As the Chair had mentioned, my name is Whitney Hodgins, and I am the chairperson for MLPD. I'm also an alumni of Brandon University in the class of 2020, coming to you live from Treaty 2 territory in Brandon, Manitoba.

In my past, I was a student from 2012 to 2020, so, a long time as a student. Over that time, I was an active member on the Brandon University Students' Union, Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba, and I was last in Legislature speaking against Bill 31 in 2017.

Brandon University, however, became my second home away from home, where I have shared my proudest of accomplishments, such as becoming the first BU student in the school's history to win the prestigious Future Leaders of Manitoba award.

The accomplishments I had while being a student at BU was what shaped me into the individual I am today. But this would not have been possible without the supports and services offered by the university and the students' union.

But these are the things that are also the very things that are being put at risk with Bill 33. Although I commend the government for stating publicly and in this committee they intend on making an amendment that would make student unions and associations exempt from this bill's structure, we have not seen the language of this amendment, and so it makes it hard to provide input on the amendment being a good thing for students.

But services offered by the institutions themselves are not safe from this bill. It will be placing services that students depend on at risk, and these services are life-saving for those who need them. I know this because I was both a student living in poverty and a person living with a disability that depended on those services to be there when I needed them.

Services that are provided to students through this department include mental health supports, disability services, tutoring, writing centres, library, career and academic planning services and much more. These are financially sustained either through the provincial funding they are given each year, student fees or a combination of the two; and this also varies from institution to institution.

It's these services specifically which stand to be significantly impacted if the—this bill were to be passed because we have already seen cuts happen over the last five years to institutional budgets; tuition raised by 20 per cent in the last four years to make up the difference on the backs of students such as myself, and there have been changes behind the scenes that me, as a young leader, that I—made this a primary issue for me today when addressing Bill 33.

Furthermore, this bill is also aiming to centralize the power of how fees and tuition is decided by the minister. And although the minister had said last committee meeting that they're a man of their word, I worry about the fact that he will not be minister forever and the next minister may have an entirely

different attitude and bias with regards to post-secondary education.

And nowhere in this bill does it state where the line gets drawn. It's centralized power but it's also incredibly high-risk and places universities even further at the mercy of the government than they were before this bill was introduced, and it's these gaps that are way too many and way too far in between that can be simply ignored.

It's this reality that will, most certainly, push accessibility for post-secondary student–post-secondary education away from persons with disabilities. This is because students living with disabilities require these services to thrive in the post-secondary environments, complete their studies and enter the workforce. Additionally, those services are vital, now more than ever, in the middle of this pandemic when unemployment runs rampant.

We are in an economy that increasingly is requiring post-secondary education in order to enter the workforce. It's becoming clear, now more than ever, that education is no longer a luxury. In fact, it's a necessity.

It's already difficult enough to have to go through university living with a disability because, disproportionately, many have financial barriers or struggles when accessing it. It's even harder to stay in institutions if they cannot support students with disabilities that have equitable access to services, such as those that are currently provided by institutions and student unions.

If these services didn't exist, the result could lead to a student living with a disability dropping out, transferring to a school that supports them outside the province or giving them—or giving up on the pursuit entirely because the costs are too high to continue. Although these are realistic examples of what is happening before Bill 33, this bill, combined with the pandemic, could increase the odds of these situations happening more, even frequently.

When we say that we are trying to save students money and trying to make education accessible, it comes at the significant cost of people who are underprivileged.

And I sat for six hours last time, and the message from the government that they wished to tell us over and over is that this bill will make universities accessible and affordable. But it also calls into question this clear misunderstanding between affordability and accessibility.

Accessibility is not the same as affordability. Accessibility is levelling the playing field so that everyone can access resources and services to live their best lives and achieve their full potential, while affordability is having a product in—or service at the best price.

One thing about affordability, though, is that the lower the cost of the product—it doesn't always mean that it's the best quality or even that it's accessible. There comes a line where less costs also decreases accessibility, and when we aim for affordability and use it as a reason to argue for accessibility, it hinders accessibility for students living with disabilities.

If we are to have legislation like The Accessibility for Manitobans Act in place that addresses these issues on paper, we need to also make investments in places that support those who wish to get themselves out of poverty and into the workforce.

That starts with having good investments in our publicly funded institutions, like Brandon University. There are many people living with disabilities today who would love the opportunity to access college or university, but they're never given the opportunity to do so because of how many barriers are in their way today, and Bill 33 could potentially just be another barrier to add to the rest of the barriers that exist in deterring people from accessing post-secondary education.

If you could—if you would like one success story of someone pulling themselves out of poverty, going back to school, going into the workforce on the front line of this pandemic and also attempting to go back to school in the middle of a pandemic, look no further than at me. I'm one of those people.

As I said before, I would not have been successful had it not been for the supports and services provided by both my union and my university. Nor would I have been successful if people and systems in place didn't give me a chance and see me as more than just a label.

But when you support bills such as those as Bill 33, you are supporting the ideology that people living with disabilities don't deserve access to supports that would make them successful, nor do you support those who make it their mission and their goal to make it a possibility, which is also known as systemic ableism today.

This government and its minister claims that we are accountable to our province's taxpayers. However,

I would counter with saying that you should also invest in your future taxpayers, as well.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my presentation, and I will take any questions that you might have at this time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Hodgins, for your presentation. I took copious amounts of notes even though I know that we're going to get Hansard in the next few days here, as well.

As you've said earlier, that I have said publicly in regards to bringing forward the amendment later tonight, as far as the—to release the exact verbiage on that amendment would be out of scope for the process for the bill, so that's why it hasn't been before tonight, but I can assure you that it will be protecting any type of student fees set by unions and association that vote on their student fees by—through their own democratic process.

I did want to also thank and also agree with you in regards to education is absolutely the key for a better future for all—not only Manitobans, but for all—for every human being as far as I'm concerned, as well. And I agree and I don't want to over—I didn't ever want to—*[interjection]*—oversimplify, holy smokes, the fact on the accessibility and the affordability. And I appreciate your feedback on that, but that is definitely the goals of not only Bill 33, but of our government.

So thank you very much for your presentation, and I'll turn it over to my colleague, the critic, Mr. Moses.

* (19:20)

Ms. Hodgins: Thank you for your feedback, Minister Ewasko, but I would also say that, as much as you have mentioned that you do plan on making an amendment, you still do not protect the services that the university themselves offer students.

So it's great that you're protecting student associations and student unions, but I'm also saying right now that the services offered by our institutions outside of that are not protected either, and that is also a huge concern of mine because people with disabilities and mental illnesses—those are the services that those institutions are providing, not the student unions.

Mr. Moses: Ms. Hodgins, thank you so much for your presentation. It's wonderful to hear such an articulation about the issues and especially representing, you know, your experience at Brandon University.

Thinking about Brandon University and the impacts that this bill would have on, you know, BU, which is, you know, smaller than U of M and U of W, and thinking about the potential of tuition increasing higher on arts programs, which I know is very popular at BU, what do you think that would do for enrollment?

Do you think that would have a major impact on students who attend BU and, you know, students who are looking to get post-secondary education in the Westman area?

Ms. Hodgins: I would answer that most definitely it would impact enrollment for sure in those specific programs because I, myself, have looked at enrollment numbers. In fact, our university deans used to make a competition out of how high their enrollment numbers are between science and arts.

And one of the things that I come—for me personally, I come from a small department with very few majors in it, as a double major with two small departments, actually, and I feel like that's a—with this bill being introduced, those departments could be very likely extinguished because it's not in line with educational outcomes, as it were.

Mr. Altomare: And thank you, Ms. Hodgins, for your presentation this evening. It's certainly great to get a western Manitoba perspective on post-secondary education in Manitoba.

I'll get right into it again with you, is what's being put at risk here by Bill 33?

Ms. Hodgins: I would say there's a lot being put at risk here with Bill 33.

Even though there has been a proposal for amendment, that language, as I said before, hasn't been produced yet, so I can't really provide comment on it. But when I talk about services, those are things that, to me, are probably the biggest impact because those are the services that students go to when they need help in addition to what is provided by student unions—in addition to that.

When I was a student at BU, I wasn't using one side or the other; I was using them holistically, and so when you take one to protect one and not the other, well, you've literally taken people who use crutches

and you've taken one crutch away. And what's the person going to do? They're going to fall down because they're not balanced.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Hodgins, thank you for your presentation. This concludes your time for questioning.

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

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Monkman, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Dane Monkman (Private Citizen): *Ojibwe spoken. Translation unavailable.*

My name is Dane Monkman and I'm a graduate student at the University of Manitoba and—studying political studies. My studies focus on Canadian government relations with Indigenous peoples, constitutional matters and treaties.

I would like to begin my time today by stating that I am here to speak against The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act. I would also like to address first some false statements that have been made by the minister in his responses to speakers in committee presentations.

There are a number of ways which Bill 33 is actually similar to the Student Choice Initiative in Ontario, which has gone on to be challenged in the courts. These similarities include the addition of a student fee definition, the ability of the minister to prohibit compulsory student fees, the ability of the minister to issue guidelines in respect to student fees, the ability of the minister to set a student fee at a specific amount, and the ability of the minister to deduct any amount of student fees paid in excess of the guidelines from the grants provided to the university or college.

I would also like to address the fact that the minister has continually claimed to have consulted students on these matters. As an Indigenous person and as a student of governmental affairs, I would like to remind the committee that consultation is certainly not equal to consent. Regardless of what minister Ewasko's claims and responses may have implied, the supposed consultations that took place in regards to Bill 33 are not even adequate to claim that students have been consulted.

I cannot say for certain, as I was not a part of the consultations that may or may not have taken place at the University of Manitoba, but perhaps it is worthy to remind that consulting with the University of Manitoba Campus Conservatives group is certainly not enough to claim adequate consultation.

I am here to say today that regardless of the consultations that have taken place, students who have presented to this committee during the end of term crunch and during a pandemic have shown that there is a great deal wrong with this bill.

The amendment that you have continually brought up is still not enough. For the good of current students and future students in Manitoba, I urge you to please scrap this bill. And if you feel the need to further legislate on this matter, hold broad and accessible consultation with students and universities in a substantive way.

I would also like to say that the strategy that the government has put out in regards to post-secondary education is truly worrying. We have seen the statistics and the effects of austerity on the outcomes of education, and the strategy that this government has committed to, as well as the legislation in regards to education on all levels, cannot be described as anything other than deeply damaging.

I know that many MLAs have received their education and directly benefitted as a result from our post-secondary education system in Manitoba. It cannot be described as anything other than an attack on current and future students to further defund and offload the costs of education onto individuals who seek to better themselves and their society through a higher education.

This legislation is best understood through the analogy of legislators kicking away a ladder of education that they have climbed to their own success. After they have achieved their personal goals, they are then making it harder or impossible for later students to climb that same ladder.

I am also an Indigenous student, as I have mentioned, and one who has benefitted in the past from the funding provided to me through my band. A direct result of the changes that this legislation proposes and the previous removal of the tuition freeze has been that Indigenous peoples will see fewer and fewer enrolments in post-secondary education. Even those who've been—benefit from band funding will lack access to post-secondary education in this province.

This does not sound like an effective way to address the province's role in achieving the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission regarding educational gaps faced by Indigenous students.

I am also a graduate student, as I have mentioned. And this is also where I see a large flaw in Bill 33 and the province's strategy on post-secondary education. Bill 33 creates different classes of fees, which would allow for favouritism in the funding of post-secondary programs. When combined with the provincial post-secondary education strategy, this will harm graduate students who have continually fought for better funding to programs and students.

Students will have to pay more, and their programs will not grow or offer more supports. Funding is not getting easier for students to access, but harder. And this is only from the perspective of domestic students. International students, who are more represented in graduate programs, pay around four times the amount that domestic students do in ancillary fees, have less access to program funding and cannot access all of the same supports that domestic students do, such as health care.

* (19:30)

This strategy of attempting to predict labour market demands is not only a near impossible task, as this pandemic has shown, but is also unequally detrimental to graduate students, as graduate programs are not often aligned with what this government has deemed as essential for the labour market. This is not only bad for students but is bad for the academic freedom of universities.

Ultimately, I am here tonight to speak to my experience, but in doing so I cannot help but also advocate for others who are not able to be here during a pandemic and at the end of an academic term.

I must address my own position in this issue, as well, as I did not come from a background of great wealth. My family did not have a fund for me or my older sister to access post-secondary education. My mother died of cancer when I was 13, and because of that it became harder for me—myself and my older sister to attend university. It is, happily, something we were able to do, but it was not something that came to us easily or accessibly.

As I did receive band funding in my undergraduate degree, I can be grateful to no extent to the band for this this fund, but because of the cost of graduate studies I was not able to receive the same

funding. The band would much rather, and reasonably, provide it to more students who would be able to access at least some level of academic—or post-secondary studies or academic success.

I would also say that being a student, especially a grad student, is not easy. It is an uphill battle and we do not need further hindrance to the educational outcomes that this government is continually showing.

I would also say that in regards to the shoulder checks that the minister has continually brought up during these meetings and presentations, I certainly do not see it as a shoulder check but instead, a bodycheck, one that you would see in a hockey game between the government and students and universities. And it is not a forward-thinking action but, instead an action that seeks to harm and further cut funding towards universities and students.

I'd like to thank you for my time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Monkman, for attending tonight, having your voice heard here and giving us your presentation. And I also want to thank you very much for sharing your personal story. I know it's tough at times to be able to do that, but I think we all are better people when we understand where certain people are coming from.

A couple of comments just quickly. I agree with you, as far as making sure that our post-secondary institutions remain accessible and affordable. You know, much like you mentioned, that it's more difficult to access post-secondary education.

I know with working within the school system myself for quite a few years and working with students, being a guidance counsellor and, you know, one way or another, what their options were after secondary school, is the fact that our government actually has been listening to students and took that money from after you graduate to actually putting it to the forefront. And, you know, we've got roughly \$30 million in scholarships and bursaries.

I know one of the previous presenters weren't happy when I mentioned the over \$64 million on Manitoba student loans, which are interest free. But I hear you. I mean, at times, it's tough to access those funds. So, depending on the type of occupation you get after completing your post-secondary, I think the

repayment plan here in Manitoba is actually second to none in regards to Manitoba student loans, and the ability to access those funds I think have actually become easier over the last five years for sure.

With that, again, I want to thank you for doing the presentation. As far as the student groups that I've had the pleasure of meeting with, and then, making some adjustments to the bill through working with them, and—I mean, I guess, you know, MAPSS represents well over, you know, 60,000 students and CFS Manitoba tells me that they represent over 45,000 students. So, to me, I mean, they're voices of quite a few students here in the province of Manitoba.

But I also want to state that, you know, those consultations don't stop there, and they have to continue. So again, thank you very much for attending and good luck with your graduate studies.

Mr. Monkman: I would like to thank you for your well wishes in my graduate studies, but I would also say that as previous presenters have mentioned, I think that it is, sort of, inadequate to say that the loans that have been offered to students are adequate in providing funding, as many people have said before me, and many will say afterwards, that loans are actually another barrier to entry. Many students do not get past the actual taking of a loan to access that education.

I would also say that on your consultations with MAPSS, this organization that, as a student of the University of Manitoba, I have not heard of; and with CFS, of which, actually, I have previously worked with and currently work with, we have not felt that you have consulted us on these matters but, instead, dictated to us the changes that you are planning to make, regardless of our voice.

I think that that's all I can really say. I know that everyone else on the provincial executive of the Canadian Federation of Students would agree with me that your consultations are inadequate.

Mr. Moses: Thank you so much, Mr. Monkman, for your presentation, taking time out of your busy schedule here at the end of your school year, and your dedication to our democratic process.

You mentioned, again, kind of a little bit, about the differential tuition that could be faced as a result of Bill 33—which I think the minister again, I think, for the fourth time tonight, the speaker has brought that up and the minister has failed to address or comment exactly what that means. So I think—I hope the

minister sincerely takes that opportunity—the next opportunity.

Also, I just wanted to point out and correct the minister—or at least ask for clarity from the minister: He did mention \$30 million in scholarships. I really want the minister to clarify if that's all public money or if what percentage or what portion of that is corporate-sponsored scholarships, as opposed to public dollars. So, just a little clarification, if the minister has a chance.

But Mr. Monkman, I did want to ask you—to get your own story about your own personal journey and what the accessibility of post-secondary means to you—talk a little bit about your band funding. And I'm wondering that if tuition increases, as it looks like—as we've seen over the past few years—as it likely will, as a result of Bill 33, what that would mean for accessibility for you and other people that you know who are looking at going to university or college.

Mr. Chairperson: So, Mr. Monkman, we've actually run out of time for you to reply. But I'm going to get you to reply, very briefly. Go ahead, Mr. Monkman.

Mr. Monkman: Thank you. In regards to the sort of increase in tuition and the effects on, say, band funding, every time that tuition goes up, say with inflation or whatever amount that is set by the province, 5 per cent, for example, because of the way the funding works from the federal government to bands to send students to post-secondary school, there will be, say, a 5 per cent increase in tuition, and a 5 per cent decrease in the amount of students who can enrol from that same amount of funds. It's as simple as that.

And in my previous mentions to previous ministers of education, there has been no sort of acknowledgement that this is directly harming the amount of Indigenous students that can be enrolled in Manitoba.

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

I will now call on Hanna Mihychuk Marshall, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Floor Comment: Hello, everyone.

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening, Ms. Marshall, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Hannah Mihychuk Marshall (Private Citizen):

All right, so firstly, I would like to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 1 territory, original land of the Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and homeland of the Métis Nation.

* (19:40)

So, before I begin, I do hope that the minister will actually listen to what I say and not accuse me of spreading misinformation as he had done with many of my fellow speakers, with students, with advocacy groups, pretty much anyone that opposes this bill.

So, saying that, I am a university student in Manitoba yet I have taken hours to join you here at committee. That is time away from my studies and I'm here to demand that you scrap this bill in entirety. This bill is an egregious overreach of power. It is borderline abusive to Manitoba post-secondary institutions and, by extension, their students.

Post-secondary institutions are autonomous. While they are partially funded by the province, they are not at the whim of this government.

The main problem with this bill is it could only be benign, if not still paternalistic, if it was in the hands of the right people. This government has proven themselves over and over again to not be those people. I say that because this government has been constantly waging a relentless attack on education on every level.

Take Bill 64, for example, except with 33 you're stripping universities of their control and with Bill 64 you're doing that to elected school boards. The outcome of both is the same: Manitoba students suffer.

As some of my fellow speakers have mentioned, if the minister does so choose he could raise tuition for certain programs such as the arts or social sciences. Those are faculties overwhelmingly dominated by female students. This would hurt them and it is not out of the realm of possibility because the minister has said that he will prioritize job-creating programs. That is something that the minister himself has suggested, and it has been tried in other places. This has been tried in Australia, and guess what? It was bad. This clearly shows that the minister does not see the value of education in onto itself, but rather only as far as it serves the economic interests of this province.

Minister, you have suggested that the goal of this legislation is to keep post-secondary education accessible and affordable and to keep tuition fees low.

Why would we ever believe you when your own government removed the safeguard that was already in place to do that? What happened then? Tuition skyrocketed by 18 per cent because of course it did.

Not only that, but you have actively cut provincial funding to post-secondary institutions in every one of your budgets by a cumulative total of 13 per cent. What would possibly make you think that a university would not need to compensate with tuition hikes? And if you won't pay, then of course it'll be Manitoba students that have to pick up the cheque.

It is absolutely ridiculous for a minister to decide how much money a university needs to properly operate and support its students. The people already working in that field know a lot better than this government.

This austerity-driven government cannot be trusted because they are only interested in cost savings, and that is not what makes the most sense for the operation of a university. This bill is grossly paternalistic, and not only dictating what a post-secondary institution needs but actually punishing it for disagreeing. If a university has the audacity to charge the student fees it needs to operate and properly support those students, the provincial government can then claw back funding from them.

You have cut funding to post-secondary institutions; you have raised tuition fees and you have stripped international students of their health care. And you have scrapped the tuition rebate. You have no intention of making post-secondary education more accessible and affordable when your actions say otherwise.

And, even though it just irks the minister to have this legislation compared to Doug Ford's Student Choice Initiative, the similarities are undeniable. Both of them are gross government overreaches into the post-secondary field. Both aim to strip universities and colleges of their autonomy by interfering with student fees. And I was actually a student in university in Ontario when Doug Ford did this, and it was a disaster.

Your bill gives you that same power to make student fees optional, but we shouldn't quibble about how dissimilar or similar the pieces are. Instead, let's look at why the courts ruled against Doug Ford—it was because provincial governments do not have the right or the authority to interfere with autonomous institutions, which is exactly what a university and a college is—they are autonomous.

This government's ideas on how education should work in this province come from (1) a far-right bill mill, the American legislative exchange commission; and (2) Doug Ford. Save us the time, money, energy, and frankly, the embarrassment and scrap this bill right now.

You have touted several times that you have been listening to students. You say you had meetings with students and stakeholders and offered them technical briefings, but that was after the fact. As far as I can see, students are telling you that they were not consulted and that that is unacceptable.

It is absolutely absurd to brag about that since the meetings came after you tabled this legislation without consulting them at all. Just the fact that they demanded you clarify which student fees you are attacking here shows that this legislation was so poorly thought-out that that wasn't made clear from the get-go.

Additionally, bragging—like some of my other speakers have brought up—bragging about how your government has provided \$60 million of loans to post-secondary students is not the flex you think it is.

You have put \$60 million—\$60 million worth of debt—on the backs of Manitoba students because of your own actions; because you made tuition more expensive, because you cut the rebate, because you made it impossible for them not to have—to go further and further into debt.

So, to reiterate my earlier point, the only way that these enormous overreaching powers could possibly be benign, would be if they were in the hands of the right people; if they were in the hands of people that actually wanted to keep tuition low, which you have demonstrated you do not; and if it was actually reasonable in any way to try to dictate what kind of programs would be favourable to the economy.

I value education based on its own merit. I do not go to university to serve your economy. And so, I just—I cannot stress enough how unacceptable it is to try to grant yourself these kinds of powers. and then also to try to convince us that you won't use them to do the exact same things that you have been doing since this—since the Conservative government got elected in 2016, it has been consistent. I do not believe you.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Mihychuk Marshall. And I'd like to thank you for your presentation, of course, and demonstrating your democratic right here in Manitoba to come forward and do a presentation tonight.

* (19:50)

I know that—you know, I'll just start off by—again, I've thanked you—but at the same time, you're inaccurate when you talk about the Ontario policy in comparing Bill 33. So I'll leave it at that. I've stated that quite a few times previous to this. And I would just like to say that here in Manitoba—and by the way, that doesn't overly irk me, the comparison between Ottawa and Bill 33—it's just a fact that they are different pieces of legislation.

Also, I just did want to quickly mention in regards to the affordability of our tuition here in Manitoba, as you may or may not know, we are the lowest tuition west of Quebec. And actually, Ontario's tuition—for anyone that possibly wants to go to Ontario to go to post-secondary—is actually on average \$3,000 cheaper than Ontario's.

So with that, I thank you for taking the time tonight and listening, and later on we'll be seeing an amendment coming forward. And that amendment is coming forward because of the consultations and the meetings that I've had with students.

And I'd like to say also that the post-secondary institutions—the relationships between the department and those institutions, I feel, are strong and they're going to continue to be strong because we're a listening government, unlike the previous NDP.

And of course, you know, you mentioned debt. I'm not a big fan of the debt either but, at times, to make the availability of the money, it just so happens that the Manitoba student loans is, you know, interest-free. I don't strongly encourage, but if students need to use it, they need to use it and it's there for the use.

To answer my critic's question from the previous speaker, the money in regards to scholarships and bursaries, it is actually a matching, and—but he knows that because there's been multiple news releases in that. But I just figured I would put that on the record as well. So, total of about \$30 million in scholarships and bursaries.

And so again, Ms. Mihychuk Marshall, I thank you for your presentation.

Ms. Mihychuk Marshall: Well, I will respond to—you said it doesn't irk you but, it clearly does, again,

because you're responding to it—but it is a gross government overreach into post-secondary institutions regarding student fees.

Baseline, that is undeniable. That is similar to Doug Ford's student initiative. That is not misinformation; you cannot continue to say that people who criticize this bill for good reason, we—it's not like we don't know what we're talking about, it's insulting to infer that we don't. Of course we do; we see the similarities even if you can't. And if you can't, that's a problem.

And, for your point about that we are the lowest tuition in the west—not for long, if your government continues down this road.

Finally, your comment—you just had to have a little political jab in there, of course, but—that you are a listening government. I will remind you that I brought attention to those consultations because they came after this bill was already tabled. That is not consultation; that is trying to rectify—trying to fix what you had already done wrong.

That is not a consultation. People have told you they haven't been consulted, they haven't been listened to. And you don't listen to them when you tell them that they haven't been listened to.

And finally, yes, I don't think—I do enjoy your point that you're not 100 per cent, you know, debt isn't your first choice; but in that they should use it if they have to, and I will tell you that they do because of your government's action.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Marshall, thank you.

Mr. Moses, go ahead. And I ask both of you if you could be very brief because, yes, the time limit actually has exceeded, but I'm giving you—courtesy to the opposition critic and yourself, Ms. Marshall.

Mr. Moses: Thank you so much, Ms. Mihychuk Marshall. I really appreciate your words talking about the impacts that removing the tuition cap had, the fact that in Bill 33, the minister now has no limit on what the tuition increases could be so we could see that drastically increase, given the bill, and speaking so passionately about the government overreach in this bill.

And I just want to ask you briefly to talk about, you know—knowing what's in this bill and knowing the impact that it could have on the broad scale—I just want to ask you personally, from your experience, what a higher tuition would mean for students in Manitoba.

Ms. Mihychuk Marshall: Well, I can guarantee that these—the potential for damage in this bill is exponential. Essentially, he could do whatever he wants. Any minister going forward could do whatever they want. And the people that would be the—that would be hurt the most are low-income people, people with disabilities, Indigenous people.

The potential for harm is exponential. It's hard to even imagine.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Marshall, thank you for your presentation. This concludes questioning.

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

Floor Comment: So, I'm going to apologize because it's a little—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Mohan [*phonetic*], Mr. Mohan [*phonetic*], please proceed with your—

Mr. Andrew Kohan (Private Citizen): Just a second, I'll be right with you.

I'm sorry—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Rohan [*phonetic*], one second.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Kohan, do you need us to just take a pause and we'll call you back in another presenter or two?

What would you prefer?

Floor Comment: No, my partner can take him for now. I just wasn't ready at that second, sorry. But I'm ready now.

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

Mr. Kohan: All right. So, I'd like to start by thanking all of you for making this possible for community members to speak, especially during these COVID times with this Zoom platform.

I hope that this kind of thing can be perpetuated in the future. I think it makes these kinds of things very accessible to many people who couldn't take this kind of time, these many hours over these two nights to be with you.

I want to speak to Bill 33 from the perspective of a parent. I am here because my child—who you just saw—is three months old, and I hope that they still have a university system in Manitoba when they become of age to use it. I think Bill 33 is a dangerous step in

making that less likely and making that system a lot weaker to look forward to.

So, my family moved to Manitoba a couple years ago, and one of the things that I was most excited about was our low cost of post-secondary education here in Manitoba. I have heard the minister multiple times over the last—this night and then the previous night talk about how we are the lowest cost of tuition in western Canada, and I think that's laudable. I appreciate that greatly.

But the problem with that is that while we're promising that that would remain under your leadership, I don't know that the law guarantees that that would be the case. And I have great concerns about the changes that Bill 33 makes that make that dangerously less likely for my child and for other children in this province.

I am concerned that changing the structure of education—financing—or changing the structure of oversight such that many more things go through the minister's office removes significant independence that the university has to deal with its own affairs.

This gives me great pause as someone who received conservative values from my parents and grandparents, who talked about the value of looking to institutions that have succeeded and respecting the ways in which they are structured and how they succeed through that structure.

*(20:00)

I think that Bill 33 dangerously takes power away from those who are closest to the institution—the university, its professors and administrators, and takes some more power and puts it through a centralised government office.

I think whatever the intent of the minister today, whether that's around tuition or around the specific programs, making that accessible, making those programs continue to exist—it threatens us when future governments, which may have different priorities, are given those same powers.

And so I'm concerned about this approach and I question whether it is, indeed, a conservative approach to post-secondary education.

And then the other piece, which I think several others have raised over these nights, that I'm concerned about as a parent and as a community member, is that if we think about education and the price of education as something that can be offset by bursaries and scholarships, that requires that students

have quite a bit of skill or awareness in order to secure those bursaries and scholarships.

I've had the great opportunity, through my years in Manitoba, to work with a variety of community members, both on public engagement around city budgets and other community activities, and there's many great young people that I've run into who are very skilled and I know contribute quite a bit to our province over the years but who don't have the wherewithal to navigate these kind of systems; who view a scholarship or bursary as something not for them because they've never had a positive experience in their education about awards going to them or about people valuing their performance.

And I know that they can, if they are given the opportunity to attend post-secondary education, excel. They have the intelligence; they have the skill; they have the drive. But if you don't view this as a place for you, if you're a first-generation student, especially the folks I know who are aging out of care and don't have any sort of direct family experience with post-secondary education, I question whether they have the ability to navigate a bursary system or a scholarship system rather than just having a low cost of attendance, and what I would hope would be we can move towards a no-cost model for public education.

I think that education in the primary and secondary levels, this is a great gift that we give to our children and all of society benefits from what we give in this way. But I think that this Bill 33 points towards an approach that views post-secondary education as a plus or as something that you would pay for, maybe with debt, and then pay off through work, and that this whole model of valuing different kinds of education in different ways, charging different levels for different kinds of programs, I think it really doesn't respect how post-secondary education is a valuable thing, especially at the university level, where a broad variety of different programs and different kinds of classes that people can take can yield the kind of society that we want to build together.

If my father was still alive, he would talk about how important it was to him that he had done his work through his university years to pay off his cost of attendance. And he was working in a grocery store over the summers, mostly, to do that. I think, even though we have one of the lowest costs of attendance in western Canada, I don't know any young people who are paying off their school fees entirely by summer work.

Certainly, if they're working the kind of jobs that most young people I know are able to get, they're not anywhere close to that, especially with the costs of housing if they've moved here from other parts of the province in order to attend a university or college. And I think that we are losing something that we used to guarantee for young people, which is a shot at life, and I worry about the next generation and what we're giving them.

So that's why I'm here to speak about Bill 33. I really valued a lot of the other presenters and their expertise, but, as a parent, I would like to share these concerns with you and I think a number of other parents of young children have expressed to me their concern about the direction of post-secondary education.

And when we hear things like a Tennessee model, I think we ask, has anyone ever looked at Tennessee as a model for public education or for post-secondary education? I don't think it's a place that we want to be modelling ourselves on. I think students there take on quite a bit of debt in order to get those degrees, and if that's what the province sees as the future of higher education here, I think we're headed for disaster.

So, anyway, those are all my points as a parent. Thank you for listening and I hope to be able to answer any questions you have about my viewpoint.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Kohan, and congratulations on your entry into parenthood that—it's quite exciting and it's quite a few years ago since I was able to carry my boys around like that.

So, when you talk about scholarships and bursaries and navigation, absolutely. I know that you—as you've said, you've come to Manitoba only a couple years ago, but I can tell you from my past experience, the absolute craziness—I do have better words for it—but craziness under the previous government on trying to access those scholarships and bursaries and trying to help and guide students to—through that system was a monstrous—you could probably hang a shingle up and create a business on just advocacy on helping those students get to those different scholarships and bursaries.

And now what we've done is we've actually taken the scholarships and bursaries and put it in a nice one-stop shop type of thing. And so accessing those

scholarships and bursaries and being able to navigate the system has tremendously improved over the last few years for sure.

I agree with you. We need to make sure that our post-secondary education is there for students today, tomorrow and into the future and especially for your little one there. And that's what I'm aiming to do, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is also making sure that Manitoba is attractive to other Canadians and people from around the world.

So, again, that goes with some of the, you know, tax—the decreases in some of our taxes that we've been doing as a government in the last five years, and I think that's going to make it more attractive for individuals to come and our ability to train and retain people right here in this great province of ours.

So thank you again for your presentation. I've seen some of your work, and you're quite talented.

Thanks again.

Mr. Kohan: Thank you. I think, respectfully, I would respond to a few things. The bursaries being wrapped into an easier package is great, but it is much easier for young students to look at the sticker price of education and see that it's not for them, rather than dig deep and see that there are, in fact, options available to them. So I would encourage you that those bursaries, while they're great, don't match the kind of accessibility as a lower cost of tuition would.

I think, also, as for people moving to this province, I didn't look at the tax rate when I moved to Manitoba, which I think a lot of other professionals really aren't looking at that kind of thing. They're looking at whether there are the kinds of services and amenities and solid education systems for their children. And if those things aren't there, there's no way—there's no—I would never move to someplace that had a zero per cent tax rate and no education system. It would be a non-starter.

And so I think that if we are looking at tax rate as something that's going to be a draw for Manitobans in various industries, like, I've done a lot of work in the tax sector. I know that kind of work has people who are really looking for ways that their children can follow in their footsteps in higher education.

And also, like, I didn't study tech. I studied political science, but I was able to take other courses through that program and then do work in app development that was possible because I took a broad course at the university experiences and could draw

on different things other than my, like, tech expertise to build work that was not just, like, tech focused. I think we need this kind of broad educational system.

And I worry that the sort of technocratic focus that this Bill 33 and this government is approaching higher education with weeds out some of the kind of squishier parts that make the university system work. And I encourage you to make sure that you're listening to those presenters who have raised those concerns, because those have really resonated for me from that kind of work that I've done.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Mr. Kohan, for your presentation, especially that parent perspective, one that is quite important for us to get a grip on.

* (20:10)

And what are your fears as a parent with Bill 33, and what makes you question whether or not this bill reflects what you said is a conservative approach?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Kohan, if you can answer very briefly, as we are running out of time.

Thank you.

Mr. Kohan: Okay, I'll be very brief. I think universities as an institution are, you know, centuries old and they reflect a kind of idea about how you build kind of an intellectual exercise and the search for truth. And I think that these things are—like, to take that kind of institution and to run it through the kind of fine-tooth budgetary comb through a minister's office risks the kind of—risks putting some ideas that are hard to figure out how they have direct financial benefit immediately to the Province. It risks losing those pieces which make the entire institution work.

I think—my grandparents talked a lot about how we try to mess with things and try to centralize our control of things at our peril. Especially when something has worked, you don't—when something is working, you don't break it, you don't try to fiddle with things for small momentary gains and lose out on the sort of heritage and long-term contributions that an institution has produced for society. And so that's what I mean when I question whether this is a conservative approach.

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

We will now move on to the next presenter, Joe Curnow, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ms. Curnow, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Joe Curnow (Private Citizen): Thank you to the committee for your time. I know it's late and you've been doing this for two days.

My name is Dr. Joe Curnow. I am a faculty member at the University of Manitoba. I teach in the department of education. And so I—you've heard so many compelling arguments from so many people who are telling you that this bill is a mistake, and so I'm going to try not to relitigate those because they've been, I think, far more eloquent than I will be. But I want to stress a few things from my expertise and from my perspective.

So first, as an educational researcher, I want to say that this bill will not achieve equity outcomes. I teach equity in schools to teacher candidates in the faculty of ed, and what the research shows is very similar to what students have already come before you and said again and again: this bill will not advance equity.

We know that for a number of reasons. You've already talked extensively about debt and the way that debt deters students, both because of the very real perceived barriers to accessing bursaries and the ways that people, for different reasons, will look at the kinds of costs that are associated with this and the rising tuition in Manitoba over the last years and say, like, this isn't for me, this isn't an investment that I can make.

And I think that that is a real and serious concern that we need to think about. Who are we serving with this legislation? And I don't think students are it, and certainly not Black and Indigenous students, students of colour and disabled students. I'll leave it at that and I'm happy to talk about some of that research if you would like.

I also want to speak as a faculty member. As a relatively new, young faculty member, I have real concerns about the way that this bill threatens university autonomy. University autonomy has, for a very long time, been a core tenet of higher education, and this really threatens that, making the current government's wills very easy to impress upon the university and to do lasting damage. It really—this bill really threatens the long-term sustainability of the university.

I think that this is a bad direction not only because of the threat to academic freedom but also because it proposes to replace the expertise of the faculty, the

vast research capacity that we have, with an appointed board that serves—or has at least the risk of really supporting cronyism at its worst and doesn't really serve the interests of the university at its best.

As Dr. Gabbert attested earlier, there are so many bodies in place, from the board of governors to the senate and to others, that take this role really seriously of making decisions about the future programs and making sure that they are the highest quality possible and making sure that they are running efficiently and effectively.

And—but I also have other questions about how this will impact the university when I think about recruitment. So my faculty and others at U of M have had a hard time recruiting top talent to our university for a lot of reasons, and this is one of them: I think when junior faculty and young professors and graduating—grad students look at these kinds of threats, it makes them reconsider applying to universities in our system.

People come to U of M despite the support that we have, not because of it, right? So, we do not have competitive salaries. We do not have competitive research funding and support, and that makes it really hard for a young faculty person to say yes, like, I want to go to U of M; I can be successful there for a career and I can partner with the businesses and the communities in Manitoba to do some innovative research.

We really are missing out on a lot of, like, the most innovative researchers because we are not adequately investing in our university. In fact, pulling resources back more and more and asking faculty members to do more with less every year.

That also has real financial implications for the University in that we are less competitive for getting SSHRC and NSERC and CIHR funding. So, this tri-council funding is one of the key ways that the federal government gets funding into the province through education. That's where—how we do training and how we fund graduate students. And when I can't get a course release, that means that I can't do that work competitively.

That also has repercussions for the kind of innovation that's coming out of our universities. If I want to do good partnership with community members and with industry, it's increasingly difficult for me to do that because there's not adequate support from the provincial government. And that is kind of like a spiraling problem where the less resources put

in and the less autonomy the university has to make decisions about where resources go, the harder it is to do this. And then it spirals iteratively.

I think this has—this raises real questions from me about the long-term sustainability of the university because we want to be doing that innovative research. That innovative research is what helps the university to increase its status and its notoriety. It also helps us to, like, make Manitoba competitive, economically and socially. It also is just one of these main engines of growth and investment for the province, but it's not treated like that.

So, finally, I have a lot of concerns about this legislation as a community member. The minister's told Dr. Gabbert earlier that ultimately you are accountable to the taxpayers. And I want to intervene here. I want to say that you are accountable to citizens and to the community. And yes, we also pay taxes but that is not our primary role.

I would like you to think about how investing in higher education and really not trying to, like, exert political control over higher education is a practice of building democracy and making sure that the democracy is healthy and that we are—that the university is a key tool and a key partner in making sure that the—our democracy can function well and that our society can function well.

And that that is your role, not in only keeping an eye on the pocketbook. And that is a piece of your role but, like, truly, truly, if all you are interested in is us as taxpayers then we are really doing this—something wrong, because higher education has so much to offer in terms of building a robust citizenry where people can care for each other and care about each other and think critically.

And many of those programs are not the most viable economically perhaps, and that does not mean that they are not valuable.

One of the earlier speakers spoke about how the requirement to have an—excuse me, an Indigenous studies course was really meaningful to her and yet it is hard to quantify how that is financially the most viable thing. That doesn't mean that there's not a responsibility for settlers to be engaging in education around treaty and reconciliation and decolonization.

And so I think there's so many things about this legislation that really put the health and vibrancy of our democracy at risk. They put the health and vibrancy of our university at risk. And I really

encourage you to just withdraw this bill. I don't think it's bringing a lot of value.

* (20:20)

And I'm happy to speak more about the different research bodies in education that speak to that, but I think that this isn't—this hasn't been an evidence-informed process so far.

And so I hope that you will go back to the drawing board. There's ample evidence from other institutions, from other states in the US, who've gone through similar processes and who had it—who've seen legislation like this have devastating repercussions for their institutions and for their states. And I want us to avoid all of that.

So, thank you for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks, Ms. Curnow, for your presentation tonight.

I, as well as you, I truly believe we both value education, and education is absolutely the key to betterment of individuals, not only here in Manitoba but across the country and throughout the world. And the goal of Bill 33 is to make sure that the post-secondary institutions and our education here in the province of Manitoba remains affordable and also sustainable. And with that, you know, we need to make sure that we've got top 'dotch' programming, but at the same time making sure that we strike that balance so that students can access post-secondary education here in Manitoba.

So, with that, I thank you again for your presentation.

Ms. Curnow: If the goal is affordability and sustainability, then I think that the better strategy is for us to be looking at universal free education. That is a program and a policy that has much better outcomes in terms of actually making sure that people can access university. It makes sure that people don't have to jump through the hoops of applying for—to take on debt that they may or may not be able to ever pay off; applying for bursaries which they may or may not get, and which they often don't know how to get.

It has a much better outcome in terms of driving engagement with the university and—driving engagement with the university, not just for credentialing but for actual learning and engagement and participation

in community. And we see in places where there is free education, especially states that have, like, free education for seniors, you see really robust engagement, where people want to take classes and want to participate and want to be bringing what they're learning in the classroom into their work-places, in all of these ways that they wouldn't when they have to pay for it.

And so I am interested in strategies that look at how do we make university free. How do we make university courses more available? And that is also a strategy for sustainability, because if you're investing significant resources—which this bill does not do and which this government, unfortunately, has not done—into university, then I think we see a really different commitment to making the university one of the crown jewels of the province. And I've heard you say it again and again that you want to make Manitoba really attractive to people.

Having universal education, K-12 that's deeply invested in, as well as post-secondary, is a key strategy for doing that but there hasn't been moves toward that. All of the moves that we've seen from this government have been to divest from and to exert control over higher education in ways that are really deeply antithetical to that project.

And so, while I appreciate the lip service, I would like to see actual policy and legislation that reflects those goals of making the university sustainable and making it affordable and making it so that all of our community members can participate and can be part of university education in really meaningful ways.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Dr. Curnow, for your very knowledgeable, informative presentation. I thank you for your time and being here this evening.

I want to ask you two parts that I'm so happy that you actually brought up, which was the equity outcomes and equitable outcomes that will result as a result of Bill 33 and—as well as the impact of Bill 33 on research, attracting faculty individuals to do research and its impact on innovation in our province. I think that aspect is one maybe—very serious, unintended consequence of Bill 33.

So I wanted to get your thoughts on those two issues.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Curnow, you have just under one minute to reply. Thank you.

Ms. Curnow: Okay. So, the equity question's I think very big and I think other people have spoken to it

pretty significantly, in terms of how Indigenous students, in particular, will be impacted and how folks with disabilities will be impacted, and so I'll let that stand.

I'm going to speak to the attracting faculty and innovation. We do so much partnership with industry, with community members, with non-profit organizations, with for-profit organizations at the university.

And I feel like a lot of this legislation kind of ignores that. It's like, we're going—as the government in power, we're going to make decisions about what is valuable. We're not going to look to what the research says, or what the expertise of our faculty help us to understand. We're going to decide for them.

And that, I think, is going to have really long-term repercussions, because what would get funded in education potentially from a Conservative government, might not be what the research is telling us in education is going to be the most effective teaching model. And it certainly wouldn't reflect the most innovative things that are coming down the horizon because those often haven't percolated through a, like, a public discourse.

And so what I might recommend for directions in the faculty of education, for example, in terms of how we should be teaching students and how we should be really trying to build for equity in schools, is not necessarily what a particular government in power would think to prioritize in the curriculum.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Curnow, thank you for your presentation. The time for questioning is over.

I will now call on Norson Harris of the Canada Sierra friendship society, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

We will move Norson Harris to the bottom of the list.

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

Ms. Shearer, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Elizabeth Shearer (Private Citizen): Thank you, Chair. Hi everyone, and thanks to all the members of the committee for being present here for the second evening to hear the community's concerns with Bill 33.

So tonight I'm going to cover three main topics: tuition fees, some of the future of workforce development here in Manitoba, and the possible amendment that is coming forward tonight.

So, right off the top though, I need to take a minute. So, as part of my presentation to address some of the comments made by Minister Ewasko on Tuesday night and also tonight, towards women and their political affiliations.

So I just want to recommend in future committee sessions, you actually question—you actually ask the questions during the Q and A portion, instead of making statements about a presenter's affiliation. I assure you that if you have a staff person on payroll with access to Google, it's not as impressive as you might think it is.

Please refrain from any more condescending remarks that imply women, for some reason, should be discredited because they're involved politically and as an engaged citizen. Please resist the urge to make these intimidation tactics tonight and throughout the remainder of your time in elected office when you try and discredit any future young women who might one day, quite honestly, be coming for your job.

I remember, or I remember other women standing up for this kind of misogyny and I empower all women listening and reading on the record to, you know, call this out if you feel safe to do so. So, I had to do that off the top. And I will move on.

So, I'm making my presentation today to the committee with a clear ask, I do want to see Bill 33 withdrawn and I'm asking the committee to scrap it. So for all the reasons that people have already brought to the committee, and especially now as we're still putting ourselves back together as a society a year-and-a-half into a global pandemic.

As a graduate student and a staff person working with the student movement in Manitoba, I am alarmed by the process in which students, faculty and admin seem to only be asked their input on legislation after it's signed, sealed and delivered to the Legislature. This is, of course, why so many of us have come through today and I really think we can do better.

The first subject on tuition that I wanted to talk about is that we know that tuition is the largest barrier to accessing post-secondary education. Why does this government insist on raising tuition each year, while claiming some sort of commitment to affordability? Who is saving money in these scenarios you keep pitching and who is this legislation for? It's clearly not

for students. It's clearly not for faculty and not for admin.

* (20:30)

So who are you governing for, if not for these people? These are the people who actually breathe life and make the important work of universities and colleges work.

The minister has said he wants to bring tuition in line with other western provinces. Does this mean matching Alberta, which on average has 1,000 more—where students pay on average \$1,000 more tuition than Manitoba? Or maybe he meant British Columbia or Saskatchewan, which is even higher than that.

This commitment to increase tuition, paired with the consistent decrease in funding year after year to our universities and colleges in Manitoba, leave me with little faith that this government can be trusted to balance both quality of education with affordability for students. And honestly, we shouldn't have to.

Bill 33 exhibits a complete overreach of power, and post-secondary institutions should remain autonomous in their decision making on ancillary fees, plain and simple. Last time I shoulder checked, the government should not be permitted to use folksy anecdotes instead of explaining its agenda.

If you really want to make post-secondary accessible for students, increase grants. Bring back the tuition tax credit. Restore international student health care. Students are out here making the case for free education, and your government is debating how to market a higher price tag.

Next, I want to speak about how the future of workforce development looks to be shaping up with this bill. I'm concerned that market-led priorities proposed by this government will further offload industry's training costs onto students and turn our institutions more into work training centres.

And, of course, opportunities for employment after university or college is a large reason why students attend post-secondary. Believe me, we know better than anyone, because 80 per cent of jobs in this country require some kind of post-sec education.

I worry that if we try to set up our post-secondary system to be places to only meet current market needs or to serve business as usual, we'll continue to lose out on—we'll continue to close important doors on so many new, innovative ways forward out of the crisis we're currently in, and the climate change reality we have been barreling toward for decades.

It's also false for the government to claim to know what the future of our education system should look like more than the institutions that run them. As if anyone has access to a crystal ball.

Lastly, I do want to talk about student unions and the possible amendment coming forward tonight. Obviously, we haven't seen that piece of legislation.

The minister has cited reasons being that it doesn't fall into the process of this committee structure. Obviously, I want you to follow due process within this committee, but I really urge you to actually pitch language towards your constituents and the community that's asking for it in advance of bringing forward legislation. That's largely the reason why we're all here tonight—because this amendment is coming in at the last—at the 11th hour.

So, students are at risk with this piece of legislation. Bill 33, as it's currently written, would obviously allow the minister responsible for post-secondary to determine whether or not democratically student—democratically-elected student fees are compulsory or not.

And I know that the minister has said repeatedly the SCI is nothing like Bill 33—I know there are several speakers already today and on Tuesday that really explained how similar they are, and honestly, I mean no disrespect, but I think you need to refer back to your notes on SCI. And I challenge whoever is providing you with your notes to give you a refresh into what the Student Choice Initiative actually was.

The language, the definitions that it has added—you really must refer to the piece of policy that was put forward by the Ford government to make those kind of statements again.

So, if you want to undermine the autonomy of student unions, I don't think you can any more, because the—you are committing to passing an amendment that we have yet to see. But I would want to echo the definition put forward by the Canadian Federation of Students, which defines student fee.

So, student fee means a fee set by a board that's 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 UMSU act.

So, I really urge you to be using language that explicitly protects student unions and student union legislation in your amendment.

On that note, the minister—you have claimed that you are simply amending to add clarity to the bill, implying that it—that how it's written currently wouldn't allow you to determine student fees, but I really call this into question.

Clearly, you're trying to pass an amendment to strengthen this bill that—and students have come together united to speak this truth to you, and you were forced to walk back your agenda of defunding funding their student unions.

And I'll also offer a bit of a reflection here that we've seen the PC caucus and its staff have engaged with students' concerns on Bill 33 publicly in a really problematic way. So, on social media and in talking with the press, even in this committee, students have been called pawns, accused of spreading misinformation, gaslit when our concerns were noted and then pandered to, only if we spoke in a way deemed appropriate by the minister and his office.

This has inhibited some pretty intense tone policing towards students, and I have to say, it's been pretty horrible to see this behaviour exhibited by an office of the Legislature.

I will close on some of my statements tonight by asking if the Honourable Minister Ewasko would like to apologize for their comments made towards students in his attempt to discredit them. Certainly, now that an amendment's on the table, you'd want to apologize for attempting to silence student voices that brought these important issues to the fore.

Because which is it? Are students spreading misinformation or did you try to pass this broken piece of legislation? It would seem the latter because you're making an amendment, and I don't think you can have it both ways.

So I really welcome this apology to occur in our Q and A or after my presentation or, you know, on Twitter, whatever you want to do. But, in closing, I do urge you to scrap Bill 33 and go back to the drawing board.

I've seen this government try to pit students against students, student unions against each other, unions against faculty, faculty against admin, and I just want to extend just such a wide net to all of those actors that are listening here or reading, that it—our solidarity and our work together is so crucial in challenging this agenda, and I'm looking forward to it.

So, host proper consultation with students, with faculty and with admin and honestly with families.

They're going to be the ones burdened with your decision for years to come.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. Your allotted time for 10 minutes is over.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

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

Just for the record and for clarity, it was actually the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Kinew) of the NDP that brought up your name and the fact that you ran as an NDP candidate for Winnipeg South Centre. As far as—and I applaud you for that and I applaud all women for choosing to put their name on a ballot. I have many former students and friends who are women who are either elected officials or working in high-profile occupations. And so, unfortunately, Ms. Shearer, I absolutely take offence to some of your assertions tonight.

But that being said, I thanked your organization for the congratulatory letter when I was first appointed. In that letter, asked for a meeting with myself, and so I forded that meeting and then throughout that meeting, we—it was clear to me, even though I had said that within the bill, the bill does not affect student fees, brought forward by student unions or associations, your organization wanted to see some clarity. So I actually offered up a technical briefing with non-partisan departmental staff. You accepted to that and you came in, into my office, actually, and had that technical briefing with non-partisan departmental staff, which they made very clear to you and your organization that the bill had no effect on student unions or association student fees.

Of course, voted on through your own democratic process, and then shortly thereafter, we received a note from the Manitoba Alliance for Post-Secondary Students asking for an amendment to make it even more clear. So then we actually wrote to both the MAPSS organization and CFS, Manitoba organization and said that we are going to consider an amendment to bring more clarity to that part of the bill. So we've done that, and later tonight that's what we're going to be passing.

* (20:40)

I did receive from your organization some time this past Friday of your intent, many weeks after to one came from MAPSS in regards to the amendment, but I thank you for that correspondence and shortly

we'll be going through and hopefully passing an amendment to the bill to bring further clarity. And that comes from multiple times of meeting with your organization and other organizations, including other meetings that your organization has had with my predecessors as well.

So, thanks again, Ms. Shearer, and I—all the best to you in your future endeavours.

Thank you.

Ms. Shearer: Yes, thank you. I don't think any of that was a question or an apology, but I will clarify some of the points that I think were made to try and discredit me further.

You brought up the affiliation for multiple presenters over the course of Tuesday evening and this evening who were signed up as private citizens to speak from that perspective. I myself was included under that designation, and you still refer to me as an organization that has already presented on the behalf of students—over 40,000 students that it represents.

So I don't really think that you have a case, like, to discredit me here, and I'm really grateful that this is on the record, because I do encourage you to go and review that, your comments, and learn about not making those types of mistakes in the future.

So I don't really have a lot more for you than that. And as regards to my professional work with the Canadian Federation of Students, I'm really proud of the work that we do to unite so many students, and was really proud of the showing of so many of them to raise this issue with you on Bill 33 and how problematic it was, and do really appreciate that they are exercising their full democratic practice here by presenting to this committee.

Mr. Moses: Ms. Shearer, thank you for your presentation.

I just want to begin by saying that, you know, I think it's unfortunate what you've experienced and what you've outlined here. I want all people and all Manitobans—particularly women, who are under-represented in politics—to feel welcome and invited to engage with their politicians during this process.

So I apologize that you feel this way and other presenters during this session of two days have felt that way. It's very unfortunate, and I hope that all MLAs can be held to a higher standard in that regard, as you have quite rightly mentioned.

And I do want to ask you, though, about your thoughts on—since they're not addressed in this bill, Ms. Shearer, what are some things that students would actually like—the students that you speak with would actually like to see to make their educational experiences better?

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Shearer, the time for answering the questions is actually over, but I'm going to give you some time, very briefly.

Thank you.

Ms. Shearer: I mean, this multi-evening format, I think, in response to this bill demonstrates that students have a lot to say and want to help shape the future of post-secondary in our province. So, any way that we can increase participation and consultation to the full definition of what consultation means would be a great place to start and refer back to any way—anywhere that we get lost in this process, because we're all going to make mistakes.

And I'm not the type of person to do some finger wagging and neither are students. Students are keen on finding solutions, and I think they're the right group to do it, so I would encourage that perspective to be consulted more thoroughly and—in advance of creating legislation that directly affects them.

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

We will now move on to Zach Fleisher, private citizen, and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Floor Comment: Hello.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Fleisher, am I saying that correctly?

Floor Comment: Yes.

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

Mr. Zach Fleisher (Private Citizen): So I just wanted to quickly just speak on a bit of a point of order. You know, I'm a cisgendered white man, here, and tradition—like, you know, I just want to speak directly to the minister on this. If a woman is telling you that the way that you're conducting yourself is coming across as sexist or demeaning, it's not up to you to argue the points that they're bringing forward. It's for you to listen and to understand and be a better man, essentially. So I'm going to leave it at that.

I see a smirk from the minister, as well—Mr. Pedersen.

So, good evening, I just want to first thank the committee for the opportunity to present some of my views on Bill 33. My viewpoints on this matter are my own, as a private citizen, not of any political party or persuasion. I do, however, recognize the influence that previous speakers on this matter have brought forward. In particular, many of our academic and student leaders who took time out of their busy schedules—it is exam and end-of-term time—to speak against this bill.

Also, I think that this government relies a lot on public engagement, so I just want to state for the record that of the 45 speakers or so that were registered to speak, only one spoke in favour of this bill. And based on how they've conducted themselves over their COVID response, that should be an indicator enough to walk this bill back immediately, based on the number of people who have showed up and said that this is not sufficient.

My goal here is not to reiterate or attempt to rehash many of the points that were heard loud and clear by the government, and rather, I want to use my time to tell two short personal stories and anecdotes. And I also wanted to seek clarification on the continued use of the term shoulder check by the minister tonight and on previous nights. You know, I'm not often driving these days because, you know, we're staying home as much as possible, but when I use a shoulder check, it's an indication that I'm going to change lanes. So, from that inference, I have to assume that the minister is embarking on a path and roadway to change for our post-secondary system.

Mr. Chairperson, I've known the current minister, the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, for a number of years, dating back to my time as a student leader, years ago, as a staffer in this smart and marvellous building that we find ourselves in today. And I want to share a story about an individual I met from his constituency.

A few years back I was canoeing in the Manigotagan area. It's an area that's deep and true to my heart, and I sincerely hope that the government refrains from continued mining and permanent explorations in the area as well.

And we had enlisted the services of a guide, a Métis elder. He offers a shuttle service. Mr. Charlie Simard. And Simard, of course, he started talking politics on the 45 minute a side drive that we had to put our boats in for a 5-day jaunt down the river. And

he said that he had found out that Manitoba Hydro was spraying pesticides on his traditional area that he gathered his medicine from. And he had no success asking them to stop.

And he wrote to his MLA at the time—the boundary changes have affected that, Mr. Ewasko, and the minister—he got action. He spoke truth to power. He heard a reasoned case to tell the government to stop doing something and he got action. He achieved that for Mr. Simard. And Mr. Simard, you know, I don't think he—I don't—I'm not sure if he voted for the minister or not, but he tells me that if the minister can hear a reasoned case, and he can speak truth to power, that he would act. And I hope that this is the case tonight.

I want to share another quick story. It comes from a quote from a few years back that I want to read into the record. This is from a few years back.

But looking at the Bill 63 and listening to the presentations today, it seems that there were no consultations in regards to Bill 63, that is—that was supposed to be happening in regards to taking the council of post-secondary and moving it right into the department. It seems that there were various clauses within the bill that is giving the minister quite the degree of power over said post-secondary institutions in the province, in regards to programs and various other courses that are taught throughout the province.

And I don't believe that taking some of those grassroots-initiated programs the powers, those experts, in those fields, taking them out of the loop, is appropriate. And I think I heard very loud and clear that there are—is many, many amendments that have been proposed by those institutions that again, did not necessarily get a voice, that they're being affected directly. So with that, I'm hoping that the minister is going to listen to those bodies or those people that showed up today to give presentations to the committee tonight. And I look forward to accepting the amendments that I bring forward.

That speaker, in June 2014, Mr. Chairperson, was none other than the current minister. The member, Mr. Ewasko, had identified serious concerns with the collapse of COPSE. He identified that the centralization of power in the minister's office in the decision-making process of advanced education was a bad thing.

* (20:50)

Mr. Ewasko had stated that there was no proactive consultation with faculty associations, with students.

He was concerned that there was only a technical briefing offered to these students and faculty associations.

Mr. Ewasko, I know—or Minister Ewasko, rather—I know that you put together a great critique of the former government on this issue. I know that you raised successfully the lack of proactive consultation on this bill back in the day, consultation that did not occur before the bill was even drafted. That's the way you should do consultation. You nailed it. You've made the point entirely and I appreciate that so much because it helped me research what was wrong with this current bill. I was thinking I would have to draft everything on my own but it turns out that you had written everything I needed to see. And you don't even have to take my word for it. It's in Hansard.

Mr. Minister, as a curler, you'd know very well that it's not helpful to curl from behind the glass. Imagine this, the curling rink of Manitoba's post-secondary institutions. On the ice you've got students, faculty, staff at the institutions working together as a team, getting—pushing those rocks, working towards a draw. And your role as a minister is to ensure that the ice is prepared, that they have enough funding for the ice, that it's kept cool enough, that it's going to be an appropriate venue. But your job is not to tell them what colour shirts to wear or, you know, how to throw their rocks at the end of the night.

And so, on the ice right now, you've got some of the best and brightest minds in Manitoba doing a great job helping to grow and assist our students and our community. And so let's give them the chance to do so.

I will close by asking, and if you can explain to me and Manitobans, Mr. Minister, what changed for you? Was there a turning point from 2014 to the current day that changed your mind about the increasing role, and the inappropriate role of a minister to make decisions for faculty and for post-secondary institutions?

And I'm just curious, just to state on the record. I'm not interested in having, you know, barbed personal attacks go back and forth because I'm using your words here. And so I just want to know, what was the turning point for you?

Thank you very much for your time and I'll—I'm happy to take any questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Fleisher, for coming on today and bringing forward some—your presentation and also some blasts from the past. And just in regards to transparency, I'm glad you brought some of this up because, you know, just to be fair as well, I remember a couple of meetings that you and I had back when you were the president of the Canadian Federation for Students and then shortly thereafter, I believed, you know, you worked as a staffer for the then premier Selinger of the time.

And then, of course, 2016, you ran as an NDP candidate, which again, I applaud everybody who has the courage and the conviction to put their names on a ballot. And so, again, I just want to make sure that this is clear. This is not a dig. This is not talking down to anybody.

I know personally how difficult and how hard—the amount of work it takes for an individual to put their names on the ballot and so with that, I don't only commend you, I commend absolutely everybody, no matter what gender they are, for putting their names on the ballot and looking to seek office for whichever political party that they see fit.

In regards to Bill 33, I look forward to again working with post-secondary institutions and as you've stated a few of them but I will repeat: post-secondary institutions, students, student groups, faculty, staff; working with them on making sure that our post-secondary education here in the great province of Manitoba remains affordable, accessible and sustainable.

So, thanks, Mr. Fleisher, again for your presentation.

Mr. Fleisher: I wish I could say I appreciated the McCarthyist attack on political affiliations that we've seen over the past two or three days. I don't think it's appropriate for a minister of the Crown to be engaging in and I'd like to put that on the record. I certainly wouldn't attempt to do that. Should you know, your party lose government the next time and you find yourself presenting to a committee, I would certainly—would not encourage anyone to engage in that manner.

I would also like to just say that you have not answered the question about what changed for you when you identified successfully the issues of increasing control within the minister's office. I take it, at this point, you will not answer it and we'll be happy to continue to press you to answer it in the

coming days. And I'm sure Manitobans who are watching this and citizens who are reading this in Hansard in the coming days will want to seek answers on that as well.

Mr. Altomare: Thank you, Mr. Fleisher, for your presentation this evening. Again, lots of information being presented and lots of really good perspective on what this bill is all about.

So, just to continue on down that line, do you—who do you believe this legislation was written for? And do you see any particular value in Bill 33?

Mr. Fleisher: Yes. I'll cut to the chase on it. I think this legislation was written so that the minister could pick winners and losers out of departments. I think that they're setting themselves up to cut more and more. I find it ironic that he continues to say that he believes in an affordable and well-funded post-secondary system when the cuts keep coming.

And so I believe that this is hampering the ability of institutions to raise fees to respond to the cuts of the government. And so it's an effort to move them closer to the 30 per cent mark—margin and target that was put forward in April of last year. We're fast approaching the first anniversary of that. It's a sad, dour anniversary, but I think the government was not pleased that they could get that in a short period of time, so they're playing the long game at this point.

Mr. Moses: Thank you very much for your presentation. I think it's very informative to know about the minister's words and the, you know—that he—fact that he understands the process but he wasn't able to follow it with Bill 33.

I think consultation is key. Is—do you think it's possible, you know, to amend this bill so that consultation could be part of it? He's mentioned how he's very open; he has an open-door policy. Do you think adding an amendment to add consultation as part of this bill would in any way enhance it?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Fleisher, very briefly, as your time is running out.

Mr. Fleisher: I suspect that the bill is past the point of consultation and resolution, and I would encourage the minister to scrap the bill, start from square one, get a fresh set of eyes out there and work from there.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation. This concludes questioning for this presenter.

I will now call on 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, please proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Jelynn Dela Cruz (Private Citizen): Thank you to the committee evermore, thank you to all of the presenters thus far for speaking. To avoid redundancy, I won't be repeating much of what they've already mentioned so eloquently, although I will be sharing with you my experience with university governance and elaborating on the potential impact of Bill 33 on both administrators and the everyday student.

As introduced, my name is Jelynn Dela Cruz and I am the president of the University of Manitoba Students' Union as well as a co-founding member of the Manitoba Alliance of Post-Secondary Students.

Within the institution, I also serve as a senator and a voting member of our university's board of governors. In the community, I also hold titles with organizations such as Manitobans for Human Rights and the Philippine cultural centre of Manitoba.

With that out of the way, while I am presenting to you today wearing many hats, I want to make it clear that my stance and opinions on Bill 33, the advanced administration amendment act, are a direct reflection of my intersecting experiences both throughout and apart from the student advocacy that I have been heavily involved in this year. These opinions are not to be invalidated; in fact, they are empowered by my previous work.

Minister Ewasko, as a former guidance counsellor with nearly two decades of experience which precede your time within the Legislature, I appreciate the patience and the consideration that you bring to the table, as well as the commitments to, for example, MSBI.

With regards to Bill 33, not only have you openly invited student organizations into dialogue during your time this year, you've also been able to show that you are listening by committing to an amendment which explicitly safeguards student organizations, although we have yet to see it, including our provision of services, programming and advocacy.

* (21:00)

With that in mind, I hope that you will continue to lend your ear and that this time, you'll go a step further to truly take what we have to say to heart.

During my time as a student advocate, I have seen tuition rise twice during a global pandemic, an influx of international students applying for hardship grants as a result of increasing fees and health costs, successive threats to operating grants, interference in bargaining affairs nearly resulting in a pandemic strike and not only students but administrators, faculty and staff crying out for help.

This year, the university community has been met with crisis after crisis, all while providing essential resources in the fight against COVID-19. It is truly miraculous that, under these conditions, the hard-working folks who our institutions who are able to keep the ship—the hard-working folks running our institution, rather, are able to keep the ship afloat time and time again.

While admin won't be the one to tell you this, Minister Ewasko, the province has caused immense frustration in the ways of which they have chosen to use the power that they already have. Although—it's difficult to imagine how much longer folks like them will be able to run this marathon with their limited resources and with this lack of trust between the institution and the province. What is keeping them going is the hope that their largest body of stakeholders, the students—the students whose stories, struggles and triumphs are shared directly with and—directly witnessed and internalized with them. This is something that the government, any person in a position outside of the institution, would not be able to duplicate. It's incredibly valid that the university community needs to see more from the province in order to build up that trust and, certainly, Bill 33 is not the answer.

Over the past few days, I have been reflecting on the words of those who have spoken before me and the responses that have been provided to their remarks. We've heard stories shared about equity, student services and Manitoba's national reputation. One specific theme couldn't help but catch my attention: the shoulder check analogy. So, please humour me for a moment, committee.

A shoulder check, to me, is something which the individual in the driver's seat typically conducts. Said individual, the driver of that vehicle, will typically know what their surroundings look like, how their passengers are doing and whether that vehicle is in need of maintenance.

Minister Ewasko, if this is a shoulder check, to me, that is problematic because, with all due respect, the minister is not in the driver's seat—grassroots

university leaders are. Furthermore, the minister cannot possibly see how its passengers are doing when they're flying so far overhead the university is merely a speck.

Committee members, Minister Ewasko, my story and the stories of dozens of thousands of other students is one of resilience. This resilience isn't solely ours but it's the community as a whole. After my two years of serving in the UMSU executive, we have sat in dozens of meetings, and two with yourself.

While my formal time at the student's union is coming to an end, what I don't want to see is our future executives continuing to pour themselves into passionate, research-driven advocacy only to see what the previous team once thought was friendly is now their greatest challenge.

Minister Ewasko, I know that you are not the individual who first championed this bill. I know that you've acknowledged our plea for a definition to explicitly safeguard democratic student unions and associations. I know that, since you've taken up this role, you have met with students and listened to what we have to say.

However, Minister Ewasko, there is no shame in deciding differently from the past and reassessing what is currently in front of you. It is a loud statement to me that the majority of speakers here tonight and last Tuesday are in opposition of this bill and its threat to the university autonomy.

I do want to note, since partisanship is on the table tonight, the one individual who I recognized who spoke against—or, in favour, rather, of this bill, is a former staffer of the PC government, and a volunteer at that. If the minister is truly accountable to taxpayers, this panel of citizens sharing their perspectives over these last few days should be more than enough.

Without the appropriate accountability measures in place for the minister, we are not confident that this bill will be used for the purposes that have been shared with us. This bill should not pass without full consultation with not only students but universities and colleges and their stakeholders, to allow for a sound structure to be set in place.

With my—while my colleagues spoke on the basis of our gratitude for the amendment, the explicit nature that we expect to see safeguarding student organizations in said amendment to be presented tonight is the same explicit nature that Manitobans deserve to see, that administrators deserve to see in the

accountability measures for the minister in light of Bill 33.

Committee members, this is not about partisan politics. This is about the people of post-secondary building a relationship of trust that has been eroded over time, and doing the right thing.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Dela Cruz, for your presentation. And as I've stated before and I'll state again tonight that the commitment that I've made and our government has made, as well, in regards to transparency and having that collaborative approach remains, for sure.

Talk about post-secondary institutions—I mean that partnering will continue moving forward, for sure. You know, in regards to talking about tuition fees and student fees and that, those discussions will be had.

And, again, you know, I appreciate your comments on my shoulder check comment or words that I've been using for past few weeks or whatever else, but it truly is that. It's to make sure that we're proceeding safely and making sure that student success is paramount.

And with student success, what do we need? We need strong programming and we also need to make sure that that programming here in Manitoba is affordable.

And so, in a combination with those discussions and making sure the scholarships and bursaries, you know—for the record—continue to remain the highest that they ever have in this province. The student loans have been higher than it ever has. Why is that? Because we've got more and more people attending post-secondary institutions in this great province of ours.

And, you know, I have heard your story as well, and I commend you for all of the hard work that you have done over the years and you will continue to do. And you are definitely a leader in the community, and I commend you for that. And I just want to leave on this note, that consultations will continue. Those discussions will continue.

I've heard your presentation today and I look forward to the amendment coming forward relatively shortly.

So thanks again, Ms. Dela Cruz.

Ms. Dela Cruz: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and Minister Ewasko. I appreciate your comments.

I would like to say, as well, that while we're keeping in mind affordability and access and the amount of loans and grants and financial assistance being accessed, it's important as well to think about the talent that we're attracting and the headlines that folks who are applying for the University of Manitoba, not only as students but as faculty members and potential lead administrators, are seeing, prior to them deciding to make the move over here.

Although, thank you again.

Mr. Moses: Thank you so much, Ms. Dela Cruz, for your words and telling your story and really sharing what, you know, your post-secondary experience has been a little bit about.

Thank you also for helping us to focus on this bill. I know there's been a lot of rhetoric, so I think it's important that we shift the focus, again, back onto what's going to be important for students—ensuring there's low tuition, accessibility.

And I want to, you know, of course, remind the minister that with, you know, his bursary programs, the ACCESS program is gone, so that is something that makes life a little bit more inaccessible for students.

But I want to ask you about, from your perspective, what that low tuition—what doors has that low tuition opened for you? And knowing that we've seen steady increases, what does that mean, having that increase to your tuition over the past few years?

Ms. Dela Cruz: I believe that the answer to that question is multi-pronged. Thank you, Jamie, for asking that.

I think that, in addition to the low tuition and my own personal journey in post-secondary, when I came to a crossroads in high school, my senior year, I did really have to make a clear decision about whether I wanted to stay in the province, like many folks—whether I wanted to stay in the province or leave and study elsewhere.

* (21:10)

And the low tuition rate here did convince me to stay, not only because it was affordable, but because it was something that was also coupled with, at the time, what I believed was collaborative, was accessible and was certain, although as soon as I entered in 2017, that's pretty much when the news started circulating about tuition going up. And from that point forward, I was kind of stuck where I am now. Although, I guess, furthermore to your question, I think there's one thing to have low tuition but there's also another to see how much exactly the government is investing in post-secondary themselves.

And year after year, students are seeing that they have to pay out of pocket for what the government is choosing to keep within their own, and I think that's definitely an important aspect to maintain over the next few discussions on Bill 33.

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

I will now call on Kevin Rebeck of the Manitoba Federation of—

An Honourable Member: Mr. Chair, I have a question and we're not at 15 minutes yet.

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, Mr. Gerrard, actually the time for questioning is over, so we will now move on.

An Honourable Member: Usually, the questions go for 15 minutes and I don't think we've had 15 minutes.

Mr. Chairperson: No, it's actually five minutes, Mr. Gerrard.

An Honourable Member: Usually, it's a total of 15 minutes—

Mr. Chairperson: Fifteen minutes in total with the questions, the presentation and then the questioning.

So is there—So, Mr. Gerrard, just let me just clarify this. I'll say—I'll just repeat this again. It's 10 minutes for the—up to 10 minutes for the presentation and up to five minutes for the questioning. We have—

An Honourable Member: I've been at many committees before where people have extended it to 15 minutes, if the presentation was short.

Mr. Chairperson: Go ahead, Mr. Gerrard. Mr. Gerrard, please go ahead.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thank you.

Jelynn, thank you for your presentation. I'm interested—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gerrard.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. Yes. Can I proceed?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gerrard.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes?

Mr. Chairperson: I'm just—one second.

Mr. Gerrard.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: I just want to let you know that I was explaining to you the procedure—the current present procedure and I'll repeat that again. Questions are up to 10 minutes. Sorry, the presentation is up to 10 minutes and the questions are up to 10 minutes—sorry, five minutes and if you'd like to ask a question, you would have to ask myself, the committee, for leave to ask a question, because the question period has already ended.

Would you like to ask for leave?

Mr. Gerrard: I'd like to ask for leave to ask a question.

Mr. Chairperson: Would you like to request leave, Mr. Gerrard?

Mr. Gerrard: Yes.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Gerrard has asked for leave to ask a question. Is the will—

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: —of the committee to—I hear a no.

We will now move on to the next presenter, Mr. Kevin Rebeck. And ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Mr. Rebeck, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Rebeck, if you can unmute.

Mr. Rebeck?

Mr. Kevin Rebeck (Manitoba Federation of Labour): Can you hear me now?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes. Go ahead, Mr. Rebeck, with your presentation.

Mr. Rebeck: Sorry for that. Good evening, Chair, committee members, fellow speakers and staff. I'm here to speak on Bill 33.

Kevin Rebeck, president of Manitoba Federation of Labour, Manitoba's central labour body, representing the interests of more than 100,000 unionized workers in our province. We're pleased to have a strong working relationship with Manitoba's student movement and faculty associations.

Strong post-secondary institutions and engaged students are vital to our province's future. I'm pleased that this government has listened to the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba, and student unions, and has committed to changing this bill to exclude fees set by student unions or associations.

We would appreciate if this willingness to change direction happened more often with this government, as there's been a tendency to forge ahead with decisions that stakeholders have advised against. I think specifically of this government's planned changes to The Labour Relations Act in Bill 16, changes that have been opposed in writing by both labour and employers.

By working with, instead of against, the people who will live with the decisions you make, government can create better rules and laws that meet the realities we face as a province. We appreciate that this government is acknowledging that at least one aspect of this bill requires revision.

However, this bill still provides for the undermining of the autonomy of post-secondary institutions by allowing the minister to pick and choose tuition fees and, in effect, pick and choose what programs will be resourced and how. These decisions should be left up to post-secondary institutions and their governance structures.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of Manitoba's post-secondary students and those who ensure a high quality of education for them. We encourage this government to better support our post-secondary institutions with needed funding, while keeping tuition fees low for working families.

Years of freezes and cuts to post-secondary funding are having extremely negative consequences for students and staff alike. We encourage the government to post- to put post-secondary education at the heart of Manitoba's economic recovery strategy.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Rebeck, for taking the time tonight and coming and putting a few words on the record and your presentation towards the support of post-secondary education here in this great province of ours.

I've made a commitment and our government's made a commitment to make sure that, through Bill 33, we're making sure that post-secondary institutions—and this is a recommendation from the Auditor General—that we provide a little more oversight over post-secondary institutions.

And just to be clear to everyone—and there's been—and I've stated this a few times throughout the last couple evenings—is that we are working with our partners, our post-secondary institutions, and when they talk about student tuition and student fees, we want to make sure that they are having that robust discussion within their institutions. And then, that being said, then coming and we're going to have a conversation about the rationale for whether the fees and tuition are increasing or decreasing. And that's where my shoulder check terminology has come in for now a few weeks.

And so it's basically to have an additional conversation, and that, after Bill 33 hopefully passes, will continue. I have had an open-door policy. Today is actually—I'm just quickly looking at my watch—today is actually my hundredth day that I've been—that I was told today that, as Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration, and that open-door policy will not change. I'm open to talking to all our stakeholders and partners within post-secondary institutions and that includes, of course, students, student groups and faculty and staff.

* (21:20)

And so, you know what, I just want to say thank you for your role in what you do on a day-to-day basis as well, and thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Moses.

My apologies—Mr. Altomare.

Oh.

Mr. Rebeck: And thank you, Minister, and I'm glad to hear you say you have an open door and that you're engaged in consultation. I just wish the consultation would occur in front of legislation.

This legislation is seeing some amendments, and I appreciate that that's happening, but it would be better if this legislation was designed in partnership

with faculty, with stakeholders, with students in advance of it being there.

And you are giving yourself the hammer that, yes, there will be conversations and I'm glad that will happen, but you're passing laws that allow you to be punitive to institutions if they don't agree with you picking winners and losers on tuition fees and rates, and that's problematic.

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

I think it's, again, very important that you've highlighted the differential classes of tuition that's mentioned in this bill, and I think that is—I still don't think the minister's clearly explained what that means in terms of what programs are going to get higher or not. And he's mentioned these conversations, but I think at this point, its clear definition really needs—a clear explanation really needs to be provided because it's come up again and again this evening.

I'm so glad that you are—spoke with us during the presentation this evening because I know you represent workers. And, you know, the minister talked about making sure that our graduates and our students are ready to become workers. So I want to hear from your perspective, as someone who know workers and their interests. What sort of things are you looking for from our post-secondary institution to make sure that our workers are ready for Manitoba labour force?

Mr. Rebeck: Yes, I think many young people pursue a post-secondary career, they're interested in advancing their education. And institutions are well-placed to find ways to have fair tuition levels that aren't skewed by any government's perception of market needs that may mean that their costs will go up for certain areas as a disincentive which could put education out of reach of students who are struggling to get by.

So I'm concerned with what this legislation will do that may have an impact on people's dreams of their future, of their pursuit of post-secondary education and what the cost to them will be.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

We will now—I will now call on Mr. Ethan Burnell, private citizen and ask the moderator to invite them to the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn yourself—turn your video on.

Mr. Ethan is not present. Sorry—Mr. Ethan Burnell is not present, so we'll move him to the bottom of the list.

The next presenter was Mr. Tino [*phonetic*] Dogo, but the individual gave me a written submission, so we'll forego Mr. Tino [*phonetic*] Dogo.

And we will now—I will now call on those who did not—who were not present the first time when I had called their name.

Shirley Thompson? Shirley Thompson is now—is the next speaker and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting.

Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Shirley Thompson is not present. She'll—will be struck from the list.

So now, we'll be moving on to Norson Harris of the Canada Sierra friendship society and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Norson Harris is not present and will be deleted from the list.

I will call on Ethan Burnell, private citizen and ask the moderator to invite them into the meeting. Please unmute yourself and turn your video on.

Ethan Burnell is not present and will be deleted from the list.

That concludes the list of presenters I have before me.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: In what order does the committee wish to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of these bills?

Mr. Ewasko: In order.

Mr. Chairperson: The minister suggests in numerical order. Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

**Bill 33—The Advanced Education
Administration Amendment Act
(Continued)**

Mr. Chairperson: We will begin by—Bill 33.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 33 have an opening statement?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Please proceed.

Mr. Ewasko: Yes, I would like to put a few comments on the record. And first of all, I would like to thank

everyone that had contributed presentations on this bill over the last two evenings.

Bill 33 enables the development of a more flexible and responsive tuition and student fee policy that will provide oversight to universities and colleges alike. The changes consider the balance between student affordability, institutional sustainability and fiscal responsibility. I appreciate the opportunity to hear viewpoints on this legislation from across Manitoba, including student unions and associations, labour union representatives and other campus representatives we have, over the last two evenings.

As part of our commitment to meaningful consultation, we will be submitting an amendment to this bill today, to provide additional clarity to the definition of student fees.

Legally, the definition excludes fees set by student unions and associations and are run—that are run independently from the institution. However, to address student's concerns regarding the scope of guidelines on student fees, the amendment—amended definition will clearly state that fees set by student unions and associations are not included.

I would also like to note that the feedback provided to us over the last couple evenings will assist us with the development of tuition and student fee policies moving forward and again, to reiterate, that that policy, after the passing of Bill 33, will be consulted on. As many people have said, the details are in the policy and we will make sure that that policy—the building of that policy will definitely be consulted on.

So, I'd like to once again thank you, Mr. Chairperson, thank you to the staff and all—again, all the people who took their time to present to us over the last two evenings.

So thanks again.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Moses.

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I want to thank everyone for being here tonight, speaking towards this legislation that was tabled by the government. We know that you've been navigating this new normal during the pandemic and we want to make sure that—recognizing those efforts over the year.

I want to, of course, just—you know, in this bill regarding advanced education, I want to start by remarking about the situation at Laurentian University in Ontario, where hundreds of faculty have been fired and dozens of programs have been discontinued. You know, that's a little bit of a parallel with the Conservative government in Ontario and, you know, unfortunately, we're concerned about that being the future direction of education here in Manitoba.

With regards to specific issues in Bill 33: we know that this bill creates barriers for folks accessing post-secondary education. We know the minister has said the bill will increase affordability and—for education, yet their track record is that they've cut post-secondary funding, year after year, and tuition goes up, year after year.

And Bill 33 will allow the minister to issue his own guidelines concerning tuition fees and student fees charged at universities. For colleges, these fees may be set by regulation. The guidelines within the regulation within Bill 33 may limit a fee increase or require a fee to be decreased, and the government may also prohibit compulsory student fees.

Some of these fees support essential services for students, and the minister has said he's going to shortly announce an amendment, but the way it's written and introduced is it talks—these fees could affect things like, you know, health plans and food banks and student union fees.

We hope this amendment truly does eliminate issues for student unions. We've raised these concerns for many weeks and we truly hope that this amendment will eliminate those issues for student unions and the fees that they control.

* (21:30)

We've continually heard from folks about Bill 33 and the negative impact it will have on our post-secondary students, faculty, staff, administration, but also very much the families that are involved in post-secondary education.

We have concerns about continuous increase in tuition and the stress that that puts on their families. We've heard continuous concerns around this bill narrowing the window and the opportunity for people to enter university, making it less accessible. We hear concerns about the differential classes of tuition to allow one program to be charged far higher, far greater tuition than others. And we continually hear issues about autonomy and how this bill can weaken independence and autonomy of institutions, decisions

made both by student groups and by faculty and administration.

And, of course, I think almost every presenter has made it clear that they would wish consultation had been done on this bill so much earlier, at the beginning stage, when this bill was created, so that could have been done in a way that works collaboratively with students, faculty and staff to actually represent their interests and provide something that will actually benefit student life on our post-secondary institutions.

I know that this mirrors some of the language in the Student Choice Initiative in Ontario—was struck down in the courts—and it's concerning just because we don't want another legal headache like that in Manitoba. We stand firmly in opposition of this bill today, and we sincerely hope that the minister takes your comments and your words seriously and hears your insights into not only looking at how this bill can actually be better, but for all other future bills in post-secondary education.

I want to thank everyone who's registered to speak to committee over the last two days for taking the time to present. Your insights are valued, especially many of you who are studying and are faculty and working on the year-end work, who are working within post-secondary or advocating for better success. We appreciate that you, better than anyone, understand what students need to success in education.

My colleagues and I understand that from speaking with folks within post-secondary that this bill ought to be scrapped. And so we do hope that this minister and his colleagues withdraw this legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

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

Is that agreed? [*Agreed*]

Shall clauses 1 and 2 pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Shall clause 1 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

An Honourable Member: Pass.

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Clause 1 is accordingly passed.

Shall clause 2 pass?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Ewasko: I move

That clause 2(b) of the bill be amended in the proposed section (1) of The Advanced Education Administration Act to strike out the period at the end of the current bill definition of—in—

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, I'm going to restart, if you don't mind.

Mr. Chairperson: Go ahead, Mr. Minister. Go ahead.

Mr. Ewasko: I move

THAT Clause 2(b) of the Bill be amended in the proposed definition "student fee" by adding ", but does not include a fee set by or payable in respect of the student union or student association of a university or college" at the end.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chairperson: The amendment is in order. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Moses: I'm wondering if this—the amendment should be in regards to referencing any particular student union act or language that might have been provided in terms of previous legislation on student unions.

Mr. Ewasko: I like—I thank the—my opposition critic for the question.

No, because technically, legally, the bill in its—the way it was written originally was legally not including student union fees put forth by student unions or associations. And so, this amendment clarifies that sentiment in writing.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Chairperson: The question for the committee is as follows:

THAT Clause 2(b) of the Bill be amended—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Chairperson: Dispense.

Amendment—pass; clause 2 as amended—pass.

Shall clauses 3 and 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. The floor is open for questions—shall clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Moses: I want to ask about just adding that word, sustainability—does it have any implication in regard to the fact that any institutions may be currently unsustainable, and adding the unsustainable to the bill may have any connotation—whether there are some that are sustainable or not?

Mr. Ewasko: Can I ask the member for a little bit of clarification as to what he's asking?

Mr. Moses: The current bill describes—I have a moment to find it—describes the section here where it's adding the word sustainable onto sustainable coordinated service, basically, provided at universities.

Sustainable wasn't in the bill before. Does that imply that, by adding sustainability, the minister is concerned about sustainability of our post-secondary institutions and needs to add the word 'sustainability' into legislation to ensure that they are sustainable?

Mr. Ewasko: No, we are not concerned.

Mr. Moses: Okay. And I just also wanted to see if I can clarify the—just, small detail, but I just wanted to clarify the minister's thought process on how he would define the term sustainable.

Does he mean sustainable as in he's worried about overdue costs and may therefore look at sustainability as a way to reduce funding to ensure that they're sustainable?

Mr. Ewasko: It's all about making sure that they're being responsible, which they always have been, in regards to balanced budgets and that.

Mr. Moses: Sustainability is ensuring that they'll sustainably have balanced budget in all our post-secondary institutions? That kind of—just, did I get a sense?

* (21:40)

Mr. Ewasko: So basically, yes; operating properly, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing as there are no other questions, clause 3—pass.

Shall clause 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no. The floor is open for questions.

Mr. Moses: Thank you. I've got a few questions. First on section guidelines. The minister may issue guidelines in respect to—this is section 2.2(1)—minister may issue guidelines with respect to tuition fees or students fees.

Is there a restriction on guidelines, as in terms of time frame? Is this an annual guideline process?

Mr. Ewasko: I thank my colleague for the question. This is part of the consultation.

Mr. Moses: Thanks for that clarification. I'm glad you mentioned consultation. And you've—you also mentioned that, as we've been speaking over the last two days with presenters, and a consultation in terms of the guidelines. I'm wondering if the minister is—has considered including consultation in the legislation, since it's something that he's very amenable to. I want to ensure that private consultation is done. So I'm wondering if that's something the minister is open to, considering in this section of bill—of clause 4.

Mr. Ewasko: I believe it's clear, so, that'd be a no.

Mr. Moses: I don't really think it is clear. It doesn't say consultation in this section of clause 4. It doesn't say consultation in any other section of the bill, either. So you mentioned that you've been very open to it, which I'm actually genuinely happy about, because I think consultation's essential. And so I want to ensure that that's going to be here and that the guidelines are going to be done in good faith with students and faculty.

So I just want to know if you're open to having that as part of this section of clause 4.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and in developing the policy in regards to the guidelines to tuition fees and student fees and that, the consultations will be happening, so it does not need to be written in statute.

Mr. Moses: Okay, I'm glad that they will be happening. That makes me happy. I would be far more reassured, and I think a lot of the presenters who we've heard over the last—tonight, and previously, the last two nights, would be very much more assured if it was written down here in the legislation, same way they were reassured once they knew the actual text of the amendment. So I just want to put that to the minister, if he's considering ways to strengthen this bill, as he did such—as he just did with the amendment.

My next question is on section 2.2(2), in regards to guidelines that may specify the amount of student fee that the university makes compulsory. Students pay—is an amount that exceeds the guidelines. So, essentially, student fees should—or tuition fees shouldn't—sorry, student fees shouldn't exceed the guidelines.

I'm wondering, again, will these student fees be in consultation with students, because they're the ones who are essentially paying for them, and will that section be in direct consultation with students. Again, could that be put in the bill?

Mr. Ewasko: And the details of the various policy will definitely be on—will be consulted on, and that will include the groups that I have mentioned for a few weeks already in regards to student groups and faculty and, of course, the post-secondary institutions themselves.

Mr. Moses: Thanks for that. I—again, I just want to reiterate the fact that in the amendment you referenced student fee—the student union and student associations—so they're going to be existing in this bill, and I wonder if that—those student unions and associations could be also be referenced in this section as groups to which the minister must consult with before guidelines are set, as in this section, clause 4, 2.2(2).

Mr. Ewasko: So, the question that the member is asking is actually covered in the amendment and so then it does not need to be included in this clause.

Mr. Moses: I recognize that the amendment excludes student union fees. However, the other student fees that are included in this bill—such as lab fees or library

fees—ought to have consultation with students, the ones who are going to be paying them.

So I thought an appropriate group to consult with would be student unions or student associations. Since they would already be mentioned in this bill, I thought that there would make logical sense that they could also be mentioned in another spot in this bill in the section where it talks about compulsory student fees.

Mr. Ewasko: And the policy that is going to be developed for student—for tuition and those student fees are going to be consulted on with students, student groups, such as unions and associations and faculty groups, as well as post-secondary institutions themselves.

Mr. Moses: Thank you so much, Minister, for clarifying that. You're willing to say that you'll consult but you're not actually willing to put it in writing in the legislation. So thanks for that confirmation.

I want to ask now about section 2.2(3) which regards—which talks about the guidelines the minister must direct the Minister of Finance to deduct. Previous, in the current section of—the current section of this section in the current legislation, it references being not above the average of western Canadian tuition and that language in the current bill ensures that—ensures some limit in terms of what the tuition increase would be. Now, this obviously removed in this bill which means that there's no limit to the increase in tuition.

I'm wondering, first of all, if that can be added back in to protect students from drastic increases in tuition. First of all, that would be my first question.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you to my colleague for that question in regards to the policy that will be stated within the policy with consultations with students, student groups, faculty and the post-secondary institutions themselves. We've made a commitment to make sure that our tuition here in Manitoba is the lowest west of Quebec.

Mr. Moses: Thank you for that—making that commitment. I think that's important to have low tuition. It still doesn't ensure that our increases in tuition won't increase dramatically. The previous language, having it not higher than the average of western Canadian provinces, ensured that we wouldn't see a dramatic increase in tuition.

For example, the next closest western Canadian province is over \$1,000 in average tuition more than Manitoba. This legislation means that the minister

could increase tuition \$1,000 on average in one year with—and that would be legal. I'm not saying it's going to happen; I'm saying that's what the legislation could allow.

My question is, is the minister okay with that sort of drastic increase in tuition as the bill is currently stated, or could he refine it to protect students by adding in some of the old language?

Mr. Ewasko: So, within that policy, when we devise that policy and consult on a policy, that will be—that protection will be put into that policy at that time.

Mr. Moses: Why is it being moved from legislation into a policy?

* (21:50)

Mr. Ewasko: I thank the member for the question. It comes down to flexibility. And so if we put it right in the statute, then that way you've got to then open up the bill. And in this way, if it's written in policy, and again, consulted on, that will be covered within the policy.

Point of Order

Hon. Blaine Pedersen (Minister of Agriculture and Resource Development): Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: The Honourable Minister Pedersen, on a point of order.

Mr. Pedersen: The purpose of questions on the bill is—the actual verbiage in the question—in the clauses. It is not about debating the bill. The member from St. Vital is now debating the bill. And we have time to do that in third reading. If he has problems with a specific language of the clause, that's what he should be asking about, not debating the bill.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Moses, on the same point of order.

Mr. Moses: Thank you, Mr. Chair, for allowing me to speak to this point of order. I think it's—the questions that I'm bringing up, I think, are very pertinent and very important. What I'm asking is to clarify the language and the meaning of the words in the bill. For example, my first question was around—one of my first questions was around the word sustainability and what that really meant in terms of impact on this bill. I just act—asked why it's being taken out. Some language is being removed from the current bill and replaced with different language. And that language has a specific impact on the bill and how it affects students.

And so I feel, in my opinion, that the questions I'm asking are not debate. It is specifically around clarification of language in the bill and its impacts on students and our post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Chairperson: So this is not a point of order. It is a dispute of facts. Which relates to the question of the specifics to the clause, but it is not a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further questions?

Mr. Moses: Sorry, I think we got cut off. I just want to clarify your last response, about it being—regulation was around flexibility. Is that what you're saying around the flexibility of it being not in the legislation and in the regulation? Is that correct?

Mr. Ewasko: And yes, that's correct. And that's why we're putting it into policy so it's more flexible. And as you may or may not know, policy here in Manitoba can definitely be consulted upon, opened up, discussed, yes, multiple times, as opposed to having to go and open up the legislation.

Mr. Moses: And I'm glad that that's brought. And I see that in that section where it refers to those guidelines, and the minister directing those guidelines, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fielding), that since they're not in there, that must mean, that with that flexibility, the minister is open to not, at least, being in line with the western Canadian average of tuition. He's at least open to that possibility. He's says he's flexible. So it means that he's considering that it might be at least a bit higher than the western Canadian average of tuitions, this change of that legislation. I'm just saying, that's kind of inferred, I assume, by your last response.

Mr. Ewasko: No, unfortunately, the member is incorrect. We're making a commitment to make sure that our post-secondary institutions here in Manitoba remain affordable and that—and which all post-secondary institutions have the strong programming. So with that we're making sure that our student fees and student tuition will remain third lowest in all of Canada, the lowest in—lowest west of Quebec.

Mr. Moses: I just want to go back to section 2.2 (2) again, the compulsory student fee. I just want to ask about the nature of the word compulsory. That mean that all students—student fees that might be compulsory, like a lab fee or a library fee, may change from being compulsory for all students to only being optional for some students?

Mr. Ewasko: So, in clause 2, when it says that the amount of a student fee that the university makes

compulsory for a student to pay is an amount that exceeds the guidelines—so that is where a university, if they make a compulsory fee and it is exceeding the guidelines, then, basically, that's not going to be allowed.

Mr. Moses: Then I'll move over to section 2.2 (5) where it says, "The minister may make regulations respecting tuition fees or student fees set by the board of a college, including regulations prohibiting a student fee from being compulsory."

So I'll ask my question again: Does this mean that a student fee or tuition fee that is deemed compulsory will be made non-compulsory or optional by the minister?

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister. Would you like him to repeat the question?

Mr. Ewasko: I appreciate the member for the question. In regard to post-secondary institutions making fees compulsory, this is something that came from the former NDP government where even though they had capped tuition, they actually didn't put any guidelines or rules in regards to student fees. And so this will prohibit post-secondary institutions from making new compulsory student fees and overreaching outside of those guidelines that we would have discussed within the policy.

Mr. Moses: So, if I'm understanding this correctly, the minister is saying that student fees that are currently compulsory may change to non-compulsory under this bill. Are you saying that there was an issue with student fees possibly becoming too high, so they may be reviewed by the minister and become non-compulsory?

* (22:00)

Mr. Ewasko: So, in regards to the situation that the member had brought up, in fact, with tuition fees and with student fees, there could be a potential for something like that to happen, so that's why we need to make sure that when we are developing the policy and having those consultations with those different stakeholders, that that's why that that policy is written, to make sure that we're protecting students moving forward.

Mr. Moses: I just want to clarify one more time: current student fees—library fees, lab fees that are compulsory now, could be non-compulsory, could be optional in the future after this bill passes?

Mr. Ewasko: Technically, yes. But again, that will depend on the outcome of our consultations in developing that policy.

Mr. Moses: Thank you for that clarification. I understand now. It's a big concern, but I digress.

I will go on to section 2.2(7), guideline and regulation. Section (b) says establish different classes of tuition fees or student fees may apply to different—differently to different classes.

I'd like the minister to define—first of all, define classes and what classes of tuition are.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you to the—to my colleague, again, for the question. That, as well, will be part of that consultative process on developing the policy.

Mr. Moses: So the minister can't define what a class of tuition is? Is it a block of tuition that's determined by a program or a faculty? Or—what is a class of tuition?

Mr. Ewasko: So, to clarify, in the past it was in the legislation so that if a professional program wanted to come and technically raise their fees for whatever reason, it would be them coming to me and having—or, my department and having those discussions, as far as that would be an allowable piece. But again, this is something that would be written in the policy, and that policy would be consulted on with all those stakeholders that I've previously mentioned many times.

Mr. Moses: Thank you for that.

I'm just trying to better understand this just so that I can speak accurately about it. So you said it's a professional program that might come to you and suggest—I—is it like a—is that like a—okay, so I honestly want to understand this. Is this like a faculty that might come to you?

Or—what are you referring to?

Mr. Ewasko: I did use the word professional as an example, but definitely it could be a program, it could be a faculty, it could be a professional program, and that would all be written in that policy and consulted on before that.

And this would be them doing what they're sort of doing in the legislation now where they would have to then come to discuss those things. But this would be written in the policy.

Mr. Moses: So, a class of tuition—so, like, a faculty, for example, might come and say that—to you, or you might go to them, say that tuition ought to be this

amount, in consultation, then it would increase or decrease or whatever it sees fit in consultation.

Am I getting that clear?

Mr. Ewasko: Correct. Post-secondary institutions would have those discussions within their group or institution with their stakeholders within and then determine what they're sort of asking for, and then that's where that would be written in the policy and then have, you know, additional consultation on.

Mr. Moses: Again, I want to just clarify on the classes of tuition, when it talks about that.

Like you mentioned, that could be a faculty, for example. Is that a faculty that would, for example—that faculty and its mirroring contemporaries at other institutions? So, for example, the faculty of arts at U of W and U of M and Brandon, would they all have similar—or would they be separate institutions?

So, the increase might happen higher at U of M and then lower at U of W and then higher in Brandon, or?

Mr. Ewasko: So, some of the questions that—the member, I know, is well intended, as far as the questions. Some of these are hypothetical questions right now, but that being said, the post-secondary institutions are the ones who will be setting their tuition fees and their student fees, and then we will be having that discussion when we're writing it into policy and consultation with those various different groups.

Mr. Moses: So, I just wanted to clarify again, you can have different classes of tuition, possibly within one department?

For example, you know, faculty of environment might have something for geography versus environmental sciences. They're all within the same faculty, but different programs might have different increases in tuition?

* (22:10)

Mr. Ewasko: So, again, the legislation is put into place so that the policy that's going to be consulted on and discussed is flexible for those post-secondary institutions. So, again, little bit of a hypothetical situation that the member is bringing up, but in reference to a situation like that—and I'm hoping the member doesn't continue to come up with other hypothetical situations—but those will be written policy, and those policies, before they're written, so-called in stone, will be collaborated and consulted on.

Mr. Moses: I don't intend to come up with hypothetical situations. I want to know, honestly, about the definition of class, because that could have a big impact on whether it is one program or an entire faculty or department. You know, the faculty of arts has a huge variety of programs within it. You know, music, science—it's a huge variety of programs, and if class is defined as the broad or as defined as the narrow within this legislation, it makes a huge difference in terms of the impact and the differential tuition increases.

So I just wanted to get as much clarity on this before it becomes law, so that everyone knows—everyone who's impacted knows the impact of it—how the minister defines class in terms of this legislation.

Mr. Ewasko: And I thank the opposition critic for a little bit of patience as well on this.

So, basically, with this piece of legislation, we're bringing forward the opportunity for post-secondary institutions to have some flexibility in—I know the type of question that he's asking and I know that his intent is absolutely genuine—I guess it's so that if situations arise two, four, five—ten years from now, it's to make sure that the post-secondary institutions have that flexibility to put into policy different things that they may see after consulting. And having those discussions within their own institutions, they might see that they need some—the flexibility to make some changes within those various different programs or faculties or whatever they see fit.

But then this is going to have them come back and be able to have that discussion with my department as to the rationale for why. And so that they're having those discussions; they're, you know, asking for these changes to be made. And the reason why it's going to be into policy is so that they have the utmost flexibility for years to come because, of course, nobody has a crystal ball. And so that they're able to do that, and then they would have to come back with fairly decent justification. And that would all be done with extensive consultations with all those groups that I've mentioned before. And I'll repeat it, just for the record: students, student groups, faculty and the institutions themselves.

Mr. Moses: Thank you for the answer. I appreciate that.

I did want to just say that I don't think a clear, very precise definition of class was provided, which perhaps is intentional so that it's a little bit vague to provide some flexibility, I suppose, as the minister

was alluding to in terms of future uses for this section of legislation.

So a little bit of vagueness in the bill, yes, I guess that's, yes, the way it is. I suppose many people will like to have a little bit more clarity about what it is, since it is a new section. There's a lot of concern about what the impact of that might be.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any other—

An Honourable Member: Oh, can—I asked that as a question.

Mr. Ewasko: So, the member is—I'm not sure if the word accurate is the right word, but the fact is that we want to make sure that there's flexibility so that—if every hypothetical situation would be technically dealt with in that policy—because I think if you tried to write it into a piece of legislation, you couldn't do it.

So that's why we're allowing this to go into policy, to have those consultations with the various different groups and stakeholders to make sure that there's clear direction and a clear, clear position moving forward, whether that's various different classes, programs or faculties. But that would be done in consultation with all those stakeholders within those post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Moses: On clause (c) of that 2.2(7), it just says exempts—that guideline or regulation may be exempt, exempted tuition fee or student fee or a class of them from this application of this section.

Can I ask how that becomes determined, what gets exempted?

Mr. Ewasko: Actually, that as well, if you read subsection C, it actually states fairly clearly. And that will, as well, be written in that policy because, as you had heard, many—and I probably shouldn't elaborate on this but I'm going to anyways—some students during the presentations over the last couple days, they made it fairly clear that certain student fees that are compulsory which are put forward by post-secondary institutions, actually, some of the students that spoke at the presentations actually don't want to see those fees decreased at all.

So, again, that will be written into that policy.

Mr. Moses: Okay, I think I understand that section in 'redards' to some classes of tuition fees being exempt.

I'm also wondering—and sorry if I'm confusing this again. Please provide some clarity about the exemption of tuition and student fees in relation to section 2.2(5), where you said they may not—they may

be optional in some cases. I'm wondering if that optional is similar to being exempt from the tuition fees. I'm just wondering how those—because exemption is similar to kind of opting out in some cases.

I'm wondering if the tuition and student fees 'optionability' in section 2.2(5) conflicts or combines with section 2.2(7)(c).

Mr. Vice-Chairperson in the Chair

* (22:20)

Mr. Ewasko: So, this legislation is written to the point where this gives the institution and the department the ability to go forward and produce and consult on that said policy.

Mr. Moses: Thank you. And you—when you said the institution and the department, you meant the department of advanced ed, or, like, the faculty department?

Mr. Ewasko: So this gives the ability, again, as stated before—the flexibility to be able to—for the institutions to be able to work within themselves to come up with, through the consultative process, to come up with the policy so that, again, when it comes back, the students are first in mind—to protect students.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Any further questions? No?

Shall clause 4 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: All those in favour of clause 4, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Recorded Vote

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: The honour—Mr. Moses, on a recorded vote.

Mr. Moses: A recorded vote, please.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: A recorded vote has been declared. A recorded vote has been requested.

For the information of all members of the committee, recorded votes will take place in a similar way to those in the Chamber.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 2, Nays 2.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: In the event that—a tied vote, presiding officers are guided by the principles of the voting to maintain a status quo. As Bosch [phonetic] and Gagnon notes on page 238–328, this entails voting the following fashion: whenever possible leaving a matter of—open for the future consideration and allowing the—further discussions by the House. Whenever there—more further discussions is possible, preserving the possibility that the—that might—matter might somehow be brought back in the future, and we decide by a majority of the House and leaving the bill is—in its existing form, rather than causing it to be amended.

In this case, the status quo in the original clause in the bill, I must therefore vote in favour of the clause now before this committee.

Clause 1—clause 4 is accordingly passed.

Shall clauses 5 through 9 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Moses: I'd like, shall clause 5 pass.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Shall clause 5 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear a no.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: On division? Clause 5 has passed, on division.

Shall clause 6 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear a no.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: On division? Clause 6 is passed, on division.

Shall clause 7 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Moses: On division.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: On division? Clause 7 is passed, on division.

Shall clause 8 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Moses: On division.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: On division? Clause 8 is accordingly passed, on division.

Shall clause 9 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Moses: On division.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: On division? Clause 9 is accordingly passed, on division.

Shall the enacting clause pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear no.

Mr. Moses: On division.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: On division? The enacting clause is accordingly passed, on division.

Shall the title pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: I hear a no.

Mr. Moses: On division.

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: On division? The title is passed, on division.

Bill, as amended, be reported.

**Bill 34—The University College of the North
Amendment Act**

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: So now we'll go on to Bill 34.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Chairperson: We will now continue on with Bill 34 clause by clause.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 34 have an opening statement?

Hon. Wayne Ewasko (Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Immigration): I do. I thank you to the committee and those in attendance today, including all our staff that have stayed here late again. Thank you very much. I'd also like to thank everyone for being here with us on the proposed changes to Bill 34, The University College of the North Amendment Act.

The bill grants the University College of the North governing council the authority to manage parking on the institution's property through bylaws. Examples of parking bylaws include parameters on hours of parking, signage, fees and charges and a removal of vehicles found in contravention.

These changes provide the University College of the North with greater autonomy over parking in a way that is consistent with other publicly funded post-secondary institutions.

I am also appreciative of input received from the University College of the North that prompted the development of the bill and look forward to its speedy passage.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

Mr. Jamie Moses (St. Vital): I do. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to briefly say that, you know, I think it's essential that we continue to invest in University College of the North. Growing our northern economy through education is a key part and ought to be a key part of our strategy for economic development in the North.

I know that so many people are struggling across our economy, and education is a way that they're looking in doing that. That's even more amplified in northern Manitoba.

In consultation with the people I've reached out to in UCN and with our northern MLAs that I've talked to as part of our caucus, they've all stressed the importance of UCN. So I do think that that's a really important part of our economic growth and our education strategy for northern Manitoba, and I am looking forward to the day I can actually visit their campus because I haven't been able to do that yet—just, travel restrictions, I've been staying close to home. But, I look forward to that.

And again, I want to thank not only all the people who are interested in Bill 34 but all the people who have stayed through all of Bill 33's discussion over the past two days—all the staff, all the people who've watched online and all the people who have voiced their concerns over the last few days. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

During the consideration of a bill, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been considered in their proper order.

Clause 1—pass; clause 2—pass; clause 3—pass; enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

The hour being 10:31, what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Committee rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 10:31 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 33

CKUW 95.9 FM is a provincially incorporated, federally regulated, non-profit community radio station based at the University of Winnipeg. Established by student David Shilliday in 1963 we are primarily funded by a student fee approved by a democratic referendum of University of Winnipeg students.

CKUW exists to offer students an opportunity to broaden horizons and develop new skills as a compliment to their studies. We broadcast 24/7 at 95.9 FM and are found online at ckuw.ca. We reach thousands of listeners every day and boast more than seventy local programs created by over one hundred volunteers. Several station alumni have made an impact locally and nationally as broadcasters (Joe Aiello, Allan Cross, Andrea Collins, Bradford How) and many more alumni have used what they learned at CKUW to enhance their resume and find employment in other fields. Our non-student volunteers make up two thirds of our programmers and

come from the diverse community outside of campus, as far North as Churchill MB and range in age from 7–80+.

We were shocked to learn of Bill 33 and the potential for this legislation to enable governments to meddle with the core funding of our station. While about 20% of our revenue comes from listener donations, we do not rely on advertising and student fees represent the majority of our income.

These fees largely go towards staffing the station including providing part time jobs for students and recent graduates. As a small non-profit with many fixed operational expenses, any cuts to our funding would likely be accommodated through layoffs of these part time student positions. When the Ontario government took similar measures to control student fees, community radio stations in the province saw a drop in income of 10%-15% at CKUW this would represent at least two part time staff positions.

While the Ontario measures were eventually struck down by court the impact on those stations is still being felt. We have been proud to maintain our employees during the pandemic, which would not have been possible without the relatively stable funding from our student levy.

I am encouraged to hear that an amendment is forthcoming which would possibly exclude the fees that support places like CKUW but I have not seen the wording and remain concerned. It is unfortunate that this government has not been able to clearly communicate the reason for this bill or respond to student leaders concerns at an earlier date. My volunteers have become upset and many hours of staff and volunteer time have been spent responding to this distracting issue.

In summary I want to be clear, the provincial government controlling the fees democratically agreed to and charged by a separate organization is a gross overreach. In this case it would be an attack on the autonomy of a media institution and if cuts or freezes were imposed, result in job losses, silenced voices and reduced opportunities for students and our community.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer my comments;

Rob Schmidt
Station Manager
CKUW 95.9 FM/ckuw.ca

Re: Bill 33

This bill undermines the autonomy of universities.

As the grandchild of immigrants who came to Morden Manitoba for a better life for their children I oppose Bill 33. My grandparents were staunch supporters of government not interfering with the business of others- especially universities. They came to Canada to be able to afford university education for their children and grandchildren, as they held education as a high value. My grandfather used to drive in to get farming advice from faculty members in the Department of Agriculture at UM.

The public already has a means of maintaining accountability in post-secondary institutions: UM Board of Governors. The academic senates at UM also ensure that programming is current and effective. Government should respect the autonomy of universities and the role given to Boards and Senates.

Withdraw Bill 33,

Eveline J. Milliken

Re: Bill 33

I would like to make a submission to the legislative committee conducting public hearings on Bill 33.

In short, I would like to ask for the withdrawal of Bill 33. As an employee of the University of Manitoba, and an active higher education teacher and researcher, I would like to express why this bill is negatively influencing the future- inside and outside the university or any classroom.

While universities are funded by the government, they—just as other institutions—need to be autonomous from the government. This must be preserved. Given the control a government could gain based on bill 33—keeping such an autonomy would be infringed.

I respect all people working with/for the government. However, the work they do is different than thinking about "what is best for education our children/adults". Governments, in general, have a poor record of picking winners and losers and should leave the management of the universities to governing bodies of the universities.

Especially true in our province lately, that this government has a record of reducing funding to universities. This increases labour-strife on campus, increases workloads, decreases accessibility, and reduces not only the effectiveness of our public Universities but also creates a false sense of "low value of education". There are numerous other countries and societies in the world proving that if we want to fight mental health issues, poverty and inequity- education is one of the best tools to make a difference. Both societal and economic values are positively influenced by investing in education, giving our adults/children a chance to change, grow, learn and to improve who they are-how we are-as a society. By putting an emphasis on supporting education-is how our (this) government should react in the face of the extra pressure topped by the pandemic of this era.

Based on the above arguments, I would like to ask respectfully again, please, withdraw Bill 33.

Sincerely,

Katinka Stecina Ph.D.
Associate Professor, University of Manitoba
Department of Physiology and Pathophysiology,
Max Rady College of Medicine

Re: Bill 33

Dear Minister Ewasko,

I am writing to you today as a Professor of English Literature in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Manitoba; I am asking you to please withdraw Bill 33.

This bill will undermine the autonomy of the University, autonomy that must be maintained not only to preserve academic freedom-the mark of a strong academic community in a democratic society-but also because the members of the University know best what the University needs to do to succeed and serve the members of our community. We are accountable to our Board of Governors and the Senate, the former of which is composed partly of non-academics; this structure ensures that we do not fall victim to "ivory-tower" thinking. If we allow the University to be run by the government, then it risks becoming a tool of propaganda for that government, and its scholarly credentials will be questioned by other universities, provinces, and international bodies, thereby undermining the University of Manitoba's reputation and that of Manitoba as a whole (as we are the provincial University) as a place of intellectual rigour and excellence.

For these and other reasons, I humbly request that you withdraw Bill 33.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michelle Faubert
Professor, University of Manitoba
Visiting Fellow, Northumbria University
Dept. of English, Theatre, Film & Media

Re: Bill 33

Good Day Members of the Standing Committee and to the Manitoba Community at large,

I represent the Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society and appreciate this public and democratic process to express views or concerns about Bill #33.

The Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society is in favour of the legislation.

Education is the key to alleviating poverty, and trust in an elected governing body is important in any future development of Manitoba, particularly in our case, those persons living in Manitoba from Sierra Leone.

Our proposed Cultural Exchange programs between Port Loko in Sierra Leone and Manitoba, Canada will benefit from the stability of Provincial governance as it relates to fees, the Curriculum and oversight.

We do echo similar sentiments to that of Ms. K. Smith in her presentation of April 13, 2021 and believe that there should be continued consultations prior to any fee adjustments.

Also, there should be improved mechanisms of accountability should the Minister fail to keep his "word" or deviate from the letter of Bill #33.

Thank You,

Othniel Harris
for Canada Sierra Leone Friendship Society

Re: Bill 33

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing this e-mail to register my opposition to Bill 33. When it comes to the important topic of

Education, during the last provincial election the Conservative government promised to build 13 new schools, create a Bachelor of Midwifery program, and create a new funding program for childcare. It is not a very long list, but now it is also becoming abundantly clear that there was a hidden agenda all along. A provincial government is elected to serve the people of Manitoba, and this government is eroding the trust of voters by moving forward on a number of bills that were never part of their original platform and that undermine the integrity of post-secondary education in the province. Bill 33 comes as a surprise to many, and there has been limited consultation with students or faculty members on its overall purpose.

It is problematic because:

- it undermines the overall autonomy of universities;
- it threatens to increase tuition fees;
- it will reduce accessibility for students;
- it will negatively impact the ability of universities to determine their own programming; and
- it lacks overall clarity.

I personally don't understand the urgent need for this type of legislation, and I call for the withdrawal of Bill 33.

Sincerely,

Tim Podolsky

Re: Bill 33

Thank you for reviewing my submission.

I read a headline the other day so clickbait-y it stood out from all the other clickbait titles. I still remember it. The headline read something like "the scientist behind the Covid-19 vaccine" . . . as if it was that simple. As if there aren't several different vaccines, each of which with a dedicated team behind them. Perhaps the scientist written about was at the head of one of those teams?

Even if the headline had read "the scientist at the head of the team behind one of the Covid-19 vaccines" that still would not have been the full picture. Science is cumulative. Discoveries and innovations build upon the work of others before them. The most accurate title might read "the scientist who led the team behind the Covid-19 vaccine that was created with technologies enabled by the cumulative effort of

scientific research." But that's not a very good headline.

The vaccines based on mRNA technology were remarkable in how they seemed to be developed overnight. This achievement, seemingly a miracle, was based on technologies and research decades in the making, much of which was funded by public universities. This work was done with the goal of advancing science and our collective knowledge. Innovation comes from discoveries based on accidents and curious people.

If you're wondering: what do clickbait titles, Covid-19 vaccines, and scientific discoveries have to do with this bill-33? I don't blame you.

In fact, I started with this anecdote to emphasize my point: we usually cannot see how things will connect and where it will lead us until after we are there.

My point is important in the context of Bill-33 and the approach to education in Manitoba. The lesson we learn from science, that we cannot always predict the outcomes of our actions, is being ignored.

The intention to influence tuition prices to prepare the future workforce is based on the mistaken assumption that it's possible to know what the future needs. It may also draw students away from the pure scientific disciplines from which our most important discoveries and innovations are born.

Right now, we are all facing tough and complex problems at a global scale. The public health crises of the pandemic, the inevitable economic downturn, and the impacts of climate change. These are problems that require interdisciplinary approaches to solve. We need innovative solutions which can only come from an active ecosystem of creation and discovery. You can't have that when you allocate funds by trying to predict what the future needs. This bill introduces systems that compromise the ecosystem of knowledge in Manitoba. As a student myself, I hope to see the testimonies given by passionate stakeholders strongly considered when the bill is taken back to legislators.

Thanks again.

Best regards,

Tendai Tinotenda Dogo
Biology Student at the U of M and
UMSU VP Community Engagement

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>