

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

Chairperson
Mr. James Teitsma
Constituency of Radisson

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Forty-First Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ALLUM, James	Fort Garry-Riverview	NDP
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	NDP
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YAKIMOSKI, Blair	Transcona	PC

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES

Thursday, October 26, 2017

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. James Teitsma (Radisson)

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

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Pedersen, Wishart

Messrs. Altemeyer, Bindle, Johnson, Mses. Lamoureux, Morley-Lecomte, Mrs. Smith, Messrs. Teitsma, Wiebe, Yakimoski

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Mr. Carlos Sosa, private citizen

Mr. Jakob Sanderson, private citizen

Ms. Natalie Cops, Manitoba Law Students' Association

Ms. Carlen Comegan-Ronke, private citizen

Ms. Janet Morrill, University of Manitoba Faculty Association

Mr. Robert Chernomas, Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations

Mr. Geoff Bergen, private citizen

Ms. Elizabeth Carlyle, private citizen

Mr. Chris Rigaux, private citizen

Ms. Mackenzie Peters, private citizen

Mr. Eric Schillberg, University of Manitoba Engineering Society

Mr. Taylor Daigneault, private citizen

Mr. Wesley Fallis, private citizen

Ms. Hilary Lockhart, private citizen

Mr. Mathew Scammell, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 31–The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act

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Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Human Resources please come to order.

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

As per an agreement between the House leaders, a set number of presenters were scheduled to present at these meeting–committee meetings tonight, so tonight we'll hear from the remaining presenters registered to speak on Bill 31, and you have the list of those presenters before you.

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

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

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Despite our usual practice of identifying out-of-town presenters and calling them first, my concern is that I'm not sure that our out-of-town presenters are in the room right–just now. And I may be wrong about that, but I am concerned that if we call them now and they get dropped to the bottom of the list, then it'll actually have the opposite effect that I think all committee members would like to have.

So I'm wondering if we could ask that the presenters be called–the out-of-town presenters be called first. However, if they do not–if they're not here and they're not able to present now, I'm wondering if they could remain in the order that they're on the page so that we could then go back to–through the numerical order.

Mr. Chairperson: Does the committee agree? *[Agreed]*

Then we will proceed in that order and that fashion.

But before we proceed with presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider. First of all, if there is anyone else in attendance in the audience who would like to make a presentation this evening, please register with the staff at the entrance of the room.

Also, for the information of all presenters, while written versions of presentations are not required, if you are going to accompany your presentation with written materials, we ask that you provide 20 copies, and if you need help with photocopying, please speak to—with our staff.

As well, 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, with the exception of what was agreed to by the committee. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

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

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

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would also like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee. The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or a presenter, I first have to say the person's name. That's the signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mics on and off.

Thank you for your patience.

**Bill 31—The Advanced Education
Administration Amendment Act**

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

So, first checking if the out-of-town presenters are present with us, I would like to call Breana Johnston. Breana Johnston? She doesn't appear to be here at this time.

And also, Eric Schillberg. Eric Schillberg?

Okay, so neither of them appear to be here, as was already suggested by Mr. Wiebe, and so we will leave them in the order that they appear on your paper.

And we'll now go to the top of the list and begin with Carlos Sosa.

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

Mr. Carlos Sosa (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

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

Mr. Sosa: I definitely want to thank the committee for allowing me the opportunity to share my views on Bill 31.

This evening I appear in front of you as a graduate of the University of Winnipeg who just recently completed a bachelor of arts, majoring in urban and inner-city studies.

I'm also a person living with a disability who has been involved in the disability community, and I'm here tonight in opposition to Bill 31, which will have a detrimental impact on potential students with disabilities who want to attend post-secondary education. Bill 31 allows for tuition increases of 5 per cent per year above inflation with a provision to allow unregulated additional fees on which would allow for a substantial tuition fee hike through the back door, again, which would have a detrimental impact on students with disabilities.

As a student with a disability, it took me longer to complete my degree because I had to work part time in order to pay for my education. I also did so at the same time I was able to live at home, receiving support from my family in order to do so, which is not true for the vast majority of students with disabilities.

And I will also say that, at the same time, I also had to replace two hearing aids at \$2,500 apiece. Again, I wouldn't have been able to do so and go to school at the same time.

I can remember going to school with a number of students with disabilities, including one person in a wheelchair who's now a law student. A person with a physical disability is limited in the jobs they can access in the labour market, which certainly applies to students generally with disabilities.

A significant proportion of persons with disabilities who do work, do so in the service sector with jobs that pay minimum wage. For many persons with disabilities, obtaining a post-secondary education can be a significant challenge. Persons with disabilities are less likely to obtain a post-secondary education due to social-economic characteristics.

According to the 2012 Canadian Survey on Disability, approximately 14 per cent of Canadians with disabilities have a university degree. In addition, almost 80 per cent of Canadians with disabilities between 25 to 64 do not even have a high school education.

So getting into post-secondary education or university is extremely challenging for persons with disabilities, with poverty being a major factor. There are also approximately 145,000 Manitobans with disabilities. In 2015-2016, Manitobans with disabilities made up a disproportionate amount of cases on employment and income assistance, at 20,575 cases, making up 53 per cent of the caseload out of 38,424.

*(18:10)

In 2010, the median income for a person with a disability in Canada was reported to be at \$20,000, significantly less than persons without disabilities.

In the election of 2010, the government made a promise that this would be the most improved province—the most improved province—and I reiterate again, that is the most improved province. And one of the biggest routes—and that includes the most improved province for persons with disabilities—one of the biggest routes out of poverty is an education.

The proposals contained within Bill 31 will pose a major barrier for persons with disabilities who want to succeed and make a major—and make a contribution to their community. And as a province we recently ratified The Accessibility for Manitobans Act, which addresses some of the barriers that persons with disabilities deal with on a daily basis. What this also means is that governments should also support the rights of Manitobans to obtain an affordable, accessible post-secondary education within their local communities, and Bill 31 does not do that.

As a student with a disability, it took me longer, as I said, to finish my coursework, and any hike in tuition would further complicate things for persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities

also have to worry about getting accommodation, such as tutoring, note-takers and technology accommodations, which can be very expensive, so that they are able to complete their education.

Persons with disabilities who have a mild-to-moderate disability and complete a post-secondary education, a university education, have similar employment rates to those without disabilities, ranging from 78 to—77 to 78 per cent in comparison to 83 per cent with those without disabilities. So a post-secondary education, especially university education, helps with obtaining employment.

Members of the government have talked about how they intend to put the needs of the most vulnerable first in their decision making. This bill does not address the needs of the most vulnerable and is certainly not disability-friendly.

The recent KPMG report recommends that interest rates be added on to student loans, which would have a detrimental impact on students with disabilities completing their post-secondary education. As a disability advocate, I do not recall the disability community being consulted by the experts who were hired that consulted the KPMG report. And as a person with a disability I find that completely concerning, and extremely concerning, I should say.

A government that is disability-friendly acknowledges the financial and social barriers that the disability community faces on an ongoing basis to participate in society and obtain a post-secondary education. A post-secondary education is an opportunity for people to participate in society and to make a meaningful contribution. People with disabilities want to make a meaningful contribution, especially in our new economy. Our new information economy requires for most jobs that people have a post-secondary education, and if we want to include people with disabilities within the workforce, we must do everything that we can to ensure that our education system is affordable and accessible for every Manitoban.

Bill 31 is an attack on the most vulnerable in our society who want to obtain an education as a means of getting out of poverty so that they are able to make a positive contribution to our society and our communities. I encourage all of you to vote against this short-sighted bill that does not consider the lived experiences of persons with disabilities.

And I can also say that as an uncle to a niece and a nephew I'm also standing here for them. I do not want to see them dealing with tuition in 20 years from now that is 50 or 60 thousand dollars per year. And that is completely unacceptable in a society where I think we should all believe that everyone and every Manitoban should collectively be responsible for supporting students and the most vulnerable in obtaining an education so that they are able to contribute meaningfully to our society.

So, again, I do encourage you to vote against this legislation. Thank you very much.

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

I would ask now if there's any questions from members of the committee.

Hon. Ian Wishart (Minister of Education and Training): I'd like to thank you, Mr. Sosa, for coming forward tonight. We certainly did hear yesterday from a couple of other people that expressed concern about disabilities and the impact of Bill 31 on them. So, certainly I appreciate your point of view.

Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia): Thank you, Mr. Sosa. I very much appreciate you taking the time to come down, to adding your unique perspective to this committee. As the minister just identified, you're not the first person to speak on behalf of students with a disability. I think it's an important perspective that the committee is learning more about. So I think that's a helpful perspective. You're not the—also not the only presenter to speak directly about The Accessibility for Manitobans Act and the ways in which this bill don't fit in line with meeting those objectives that are identified in that act as well. So I thank you for that perspective.

You talked a little bit about how tuition can be a barrier, especially for those who—for those students who have a disability and how, you know, getting a good education obviously is a path out of poverty for a lot of folks with a disability. You also mentioned the potential for interest to be coming off—or to be added back on to student loans. What you didn't mention was the tuition tax rebate, and when we're here talking about kind of all the impacts that students are feeling in terms of rising tuition and added costs, can you just talk about how the income tax, the student rebate, how that would impact somebody who has a disability in particular?

Mr. Sosa: I mean, it certainly would have a positive impact, the rebate; would say that, especially when you get employed. I mean, obviously, the facts are clear. If you have a post-secondary education, you are more likely to get employed. And so, therefore, that could help with some of the additional expenses that a person with a disability would have to deal with, such as technology accommodations. And, again, there are certain grants for that, but, again, it depends on whether you even qualify for that grant in the first place. And so that can be even difficult to apply for that grant if you don't even qualify.

So what I will say is that, yes, that certainly would be beneficial if we maintain that rebate. It would benefit our community. But I think we also need to look at is ensuring that tuition remains affordable in that we just not talk about affordable, but we talk about a vision of how do we completely eliminate tuition fees, because that would be the best method would be, is that we just need to eliminate tuition fees altogether, and that would help persons with disabilities, that would help indigenous people, that help—that would help single-parent families, that would help persons living in poverty altogether and would be a major benefit to our communities.

Ms. Cindy Lamoureux (Burrows): Thank you, Carlos, for coming out and your presentation. It was very good.

One thing that I really appreciated that you touched on was you talked about your nephew and niece. So much throughout this bill, we've been so focused on current students, and I agree, that is number one priority. We want every student in Manitoba who wants an education to be able to receive that education. But you're also thinking ahead, you're thinking about our future, and I commend you for that.

My question is, today in question period, our Education Minister talked about how this bill—any student who takes the time to read through this bill and thoroughly understand it will see that it is better than what we currently have. I am under the impression that you are well versed with the bill. Is it better than what is currently taking place?

* (18:20)

Mr. Sosa: I would say no, it's not, because the current bill, just—my understanding of the current system, it—just in inflation is my understanding, and, again, we also have to be very concerned about this proposed bill, that when we talk about allowing

ancillary fees and—with no regulations on ancillary fees and allowing those to be hiked up, that that's going to have a major impact. I mean, either that be on libraries—a great example. Libraries are an important part of our educational system. They help people—especially persons with disabilities—navigate around research resources. Even finding more scholarships and bursaries.

And, as—I will also say that my other concern here is that once we pass a bill like this, there is no turning back here. And it's going to have a detrimental impact. And I also—and I'll say this: I also did a placement at Opportunities for Employment working with marginalized people. And I could see the difference between those who had an education and those who did not. And those who had an education were able to find employment and those who did not have a post-secondary education were struggling to find employment.

Mr. Chairperson: Good, thank you, Mr. Sosa. The time for questions is over and I thank you very much for your presentation and for coming out to speak to the committee this evening.

I'll now call on the next presenter, which is Jakob Sanderson.

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

Mr. Jakob Sanderson (Private Citizen): Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Very good, the staff will assist you in that regard and whenever you're ready, you can proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Sanderson: Hello. I would first like to acknowledge that we are on Treaty 1 land, the original lands of the Anishinabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Metis nation.

My name is Jakob Sanderson. I am a fourth-year political studies student at the University of Manitoba, where I am also the arts student body president. But, before I talk about myself or the students I represent at the U of M, I want to start this speech by talking about my role model and the reason that I'm up here speaking today, who's my mother.

From a young age, my mom taught me that if I wanted something changed in the world, I had to go out and fight for that change. And as hard as that I ought to fight for myself, she taught me to fight twice as hard for everyone around me.

When she was younger, she was a brilliant student. Even skipped a grade. And she's a most—she's the smartest and most caring person that I know. She was almost through university at the University of Winnipeg, but like many students, the financial burdens became such that she had to make a choice between providing for her family or paying for her schooling, and she dropped out. But from that point forward, she wanted to make sure that one day, when she'd have children, they would always have every opportunity possible to achieve their dreams. She did that for me, from buying a math textbook at a garage sale when I was three to quizzing me and my stuffed animals on multiplication tables, to playing geography quiz games with me every day in the car when I'm sure I drove her insane.

But, if there's one area where she and my father couldn't provide everything for me, it was with money. They did what they could, but my mom's a postal worker and my dad's a librarian and my dream of being an environmental lawyer isn't cheap. So she made sure that I had every support I needed to get the kind of grades where I could hopefully get scholarships to help with my education. And, hopefully, with a mix of my parents' savings, some scholarships and a lot of my own money, I can use that education to get a job one day and make sure my kids never have to worry about money as much as my mom did or I do.

Everywhere around this province, there are mothers and fathers and students in the same situation as myself and my family, working to give their children a better chance than they had. And so for a government that speaks so often and so eloquently about their commitment to families, I think it's about time you started acting like one.

More and more high-paying jobs are requiring a post-secondary education, and there are children growing up right now that have the skills to flourish in university but either cannot get there because it is too expensive or, by the time they do get there, they're stuck working so much to pay for it that they don't perform as well as they could.

For these students, an accessible path to post-secondary education is the greatest equalizer to transform poor citizens in our society to affluent ones that can provide their children a better life than they had. And I'm calling on this government to learn from the actions of so many parents like mine and invest in our future: our youth that need an education.

I want to extend my gratitude to this government for the increases in scholarships to—and bursaries to students, but it only goes so far. Scholarships tend to go to those with the best academic standing, which are too often those who had a privileged upbringing and need them the least. Further, poor students with less active families are less likely to hear about bursary applications and they don't know how to apply or what to do.

This year, our Arts Student Body Council—I organized a funding day on the last day before bursary applications were due at U of M to help people fill out forms and answer any questions they had. I was astonished at how little people knew about these opportunities. And while we helped a lot of people that day, I know a lot more slipped through the cracks.

These funding opportunities are geared towards high-academic achievers and highly informed students who are often the profile of a student that is in less need of financial assistance. What I would like to see this government examine is how we can make a real, tangible and efficient investment in our future by reducing or eliminating tuition costs. This would rid much of the bureaucratic inefficiencies of the bursary process while being more likely to encourage students to attend post-secondary institutions. Under this system, success in and entrance to university would be based on the aptitude rather than the ability to pay. This would tighten our universities' academic standing and its accessibilities.

In Europe this is a reality. Germany, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Greece all offer post-secondary education for free to students within the European Union, while other major European countries, such as France, Belgium and Sweden, offer a bachelor's degree education for significantly lower than Canada does. Those countries offering entirely free tuition combine to have over 50 universities ranking within the top 400 universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education university world rankings. But the province of Manitoba, which needs a tuition increase, currently has zero.

The myth that tuition rates are responsible for university quality must cease to exist. In Canada alone, Quebec offers tuition to domestic students that is much lower than in Manitoba, yet McGill University is consistently ranked at or near the top of the U15, while the University of Manitoba languishes at or near the bottom.

And according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, nearly all of the countries I mentioned as allowing entirely free education have posted better debt-to-GDP ratios as of 2016 than Canada, while Finland was only 0.03 per cent worse.

The notion that an investment in free post-secondary tuition will bank up the country, or in this case the province, is empirically false. This simply must be a matter of prioritizing post-secondary education as a means of government investment. And I cannot think of any better way for a government to invest its money than in its future. There is economic value to be had in promoting accessible post-secondary education. A society that lends a hand to its most in-need citizens to climb up the ladder of our community will reap those benefits when each of those individuals that our society believed in believes in us in return. There is nothing I would rather invest in than people.

A post-secondary education can be a fundamental part of our lives, not just to give us the training we need to find employment or the knowledge we gain to enrich our minds, but the experiences of learning, organizing and bonding that are so intrinsic to the university experience. We have a moral responsibility to enrich the lives of our brothers and sisters in this community and to give them as many opportunities to succeed as we wish to have for ourselves and our families.

We also have a moral responsibility to seek guidance and advice from those in our community who will be affected by the decisions we make. That is why I'm so happy to get the chance to speak to you today. But I take that responsibility seriously within my own community as well.

I mentioned my role earlier as president of the Arts Student Body Council at the University of Manitoba, and I asked art students many questions through a faculty-wide-distributed survey regarding accessible education in this bill. What they told me has forged what I'm saying to you this evening, and I hope it will also have an effect on your thoughts.

Here are some of the most significant statistics for me that we gleaned from the survey, and those questions are attached in your copies: 77 per cent of students in the faculty of arts oppose this bill, while only 7 per cent are in favour; only 18 per cent of students declared education as being currently easily affordable, while 33 per cent of art students said it is not affordable; only 6 per cent described an increase

in tuition between 5 and 7 per cent, such as in Bill 31, as manageable; a majority of students surveyed said they believe post-secondary education is a right and should be available at little or no cost; and 59 per cent of students described opposition to the passage of Bill 31 as an issue that is most important to them in ASBC's advocacy campaigns. So these students have spoken to me and I'm communicating that to you.

And here are a few anonymous quotes from those surveyed: Education should be a right to everyone. Raising tuition fees excludes individuals within society that need and deserve a good quality education. Raising tuition fees acts further as a social stratification that divides rich and poor. This is nonsense and an embarrassment on a nation that is supposed to welcome people of all races and walks of life, and also supposed to provide a good life for newcomers.

Another one: As a full-time student working two jobs to be able to get by, I truly think increasing tuition would be harmful to students working on their own to get an education. School is taxing enough without having to work. Adding jobs on top of it makes it very difficult. If one has to work 40 hours a week to pay for the schooling, how are they to find the time to study and maintain a high academic standing? It is extremely difficult to manage it all, and it comes at great sacrifice.

And lastly: Education is already not accessible to those who might benefit from it the most. By drastically increasing tuition further we'd be turning a pipedream into a sheer impossibility for many underprivileged youths, maintaining or further exacerbating a divide between haves and have-nots. I am completely and utterly opposed to the passage of Bill 31.

* (18:30)

And so, before I finish today, I also want to say that international students, who are not directly affected by this bill, continue to be ignored in the practices of this government. For too long governments of all political stripes in this province have continually abused international students, using them as an ATM while rarely having their institutions give them the supports they need and charging them triple the prices of domestic students. Of the international students surveyed, only 6 per cent described post-secondary education as currently easily affordable, while not one

international student said that a 5 to 7 per cent increase on their tuition would be manageable.

This government, with the passage of this bill, will be sending a message that it no longer prioritizes the path to accessible education for Manitoban students and will continue to ignore the needs of international students. Instead, we need to make education more accessible for students here at home and make a commitment to tie international tuition increases to the same rate as a domestic tuition increases to ensure that we are looking after our newest brothers and sisters in this province.

The government says that Bill 31 will put tuition costs in the hands of the people who know the situation best, the institutions. Well, there are a lot of smart people at these institutions, but I will not acknowledge that even the most sympathetic administrator knows the challenges of paying for post-secondary education in today's Manitoba like I do or like every student in this room does, or like every student that lined up in the freezing cold wind and snow this afternoon to make their voice heard does. They do not know what every student at the University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, Brandon University and the Université de Saint-Boniface knows. This government must listen to these students, and if they do, the answer will be clear. We do not support Bill 31, and we ask that you make a commitment to making post-secondary education accessible in this province for all students.

Thank you very much.

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

Do members of the committee have questions?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for coming out this evening to make a presentation, express your opinion. Certainly—you certainly are enjoying the democratic process as we offer it here in Manitoba. This is a fairly unique experience to be able to speak to bills like this, so I thank you for coming.

Mr. Rob Altemeyer (Wolseley): Thank you very much for what you brought here today. I want to thank you not just for what you said but the basis that you brought it here on, that as a—yourself as an elected representative you did a great job of talking to the people who elected you and saying, what do you want me to say, and then you did your very best to bring their voices here and I think you can go back to each and every one of them and look them straight in the eye and say you did a bang-up job.

And it is—it's so encouraging on several fronts for me to hear your presentation. When I was at the U of M, it was a little bit different political climate. We had Reagan, we had Thatcher and we had Mulroney, and the idea that the president of the arts student body would be doing anything other than organizing a stupid beer bash was unheard of, and to organize a bursary-awareness initiative like you did to help other people—as you described, your mom gave you that value from a very early age. It just speaks to how much progress has been made, even though it is not being reflected in the decisions of this government and that your voices to date have been completely ignored.

One final note, as a environmental activist myself, it's great that environmental law exists now for someone like you to be able to pour your passions into it. You will build on the mistakes of current and previous generations, I'm sure.

My question for you, quite simply, is: Does this bill make it easier or harder for people like you to pursue their passions? Does this bill make post-secondary education more or less accessible to the future of Manitoba?

Mr. Sanderson: Thank you so much for your question.

It certainly makes it less accessible and it makes it much harder. For most of my university life, I've been working on the council on various different volunteer initiatives while working two to three jobs and taking a full course load, and I can attest that I don't get a lot of sleep to add to that. It makes it very difficult, and there are students that face much more dire circumstances financially than I do or ever will and I cannot even imagine how much more difficult it would be for them. For some people, an extra two, three, \$400 isn't that much and it's quite affordable, but for some students it can mean the difference between getting through university and not even being able to have a chance to go.

Ms. Lamoureux: I'll ask a quick question. Thank you for coming out and presenting. You talk about the dire debts that students are accumulating. Do you think that those debts have an impact on their health? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, Mr. Sanderson.

Mr. Sanderson: I think that, certainly, those debts have a massive impact on students' mental health. When you have all of these different responsibilities and so many of those financial burdens that you're

trying to work through, it's all that you can think about. And to exit university, you like to throw your hat off into the air and walk into this new world and try to take on all the challenges it presents, but instead you're continually being dragged down by this burden of student debt that's in the millions nationwide. And so for students that are relying predominantly on student loans to get through this, it's a major burden and an anchor to carry around with them that will hurt their mental health, for sure.

Mrs. Bernadette Smith (Point Douglas): Thank you, Mr. Sanderson, for your presentation. First of all, I just want to say, you know, congratulations to your mom on working—and your dad—for working really hard, you know, to make sure that you can go to university, get the education that you need. I really hope that this government listens and understands that in order for people to get out of poverty, which, obviously, I got out of poverty through, you know, going to education.

Now my kids, you know, got educated, have some good jobs. I still have a 15-year-old at home that I am worried about, whether I'll be able to pay her education in the next three years with this continued, you know, inflation of tuition, especially for indigenous people. I mean, we don't always have access to computers. We don't always have access to, you know, filling out papers. You know, I commend you on being able to do that and organize people to get those bursaries filled out. But for our northern, you know, students, how do you think that's going to affect them?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Sanderson, the time has expired, but I will give you just a few seconds to respond to that.

Mr. Sanderson: I can really only imagine, not having a lot of experience with many northern students, but I would imagine that the further you deprive people of the resources with which it takes to complete university, the more adverse effects that it will have, and certainly that would be the case for a lot of people in our North.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Sanderson, for your presentation, and thanks for coming out in the adverse weather this evening.

I'd like to now proceed to the next presenter, Elizabeth Carlyle. Elizabeth Carlyle? No. We'll move her to the end of the list, then.

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

Ms. Natalie Copps (Manitoba Law Students' Association): I do not, no.

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

Ms. Copps: My name is Natalie Copps, and today I'm speaking to this bill as the chair of the Tuition Negotiation Committee of the Manitoba Law Students' Association. I'm currently a second-year law student, and I serve as the vice-chair on the Robson Hall Human Rights Collective. As well, I am an active member of the Manitoba law students–indigenous law students association.

So, last month, much like my colleague, Mr. Sanderson, the Manitoba Law Students' Association Tuition Negotiation Committee surveyed law students about how tuition impacts them, how it impacts their finances and how this bill will impact them. What we heard was pretty stark. Of law students surveyed, more than half state that they cannot afford even a \$500 increase in tuition or fees. We also asked for testimonials from law students, and I'd really like to start off my time by reading you some of them.

So, from one student, we heard that: I am maxed out on student loans and already in significant debt. If tuition is increased, I will have to borrow more money on a line of credit, which will result in more debt due to interest on the loan. All of this sets me back in starting my career and other aspirations like owning a home or starting a family.

From another student, we heard: A raise in tuition would mean that I would have to cut down on living expenses such as food, heating, hydro and other necessary things to live.

We heard also from mature students how this is going to be affecting them specifically. So, as a mature student, one told me that: I am not eligible for Student Aid because I have to work to pay my bills, and combined with my partner's income, we make too much money, but we barely make enough to get by. How am I supposed to pay inflated tuition without any additional support? This makes me very nervous.

* (18:40)

And from another mature student, they told me that: I am a mature student returning to school with a family. The cost of tuition is already a big burden and an obstacle in returning to school. Large

increases would make it unfeasible for me to continue on as a full-time student.

And finally, from another student, we heard that raising tuition would cripple me financially, especially if I need to quit my current employer. I have two children, and I'm a single mom. I struggle as it is. If tuition was raised, I could not afford it any longer.

And, I mean, that's just a few points from over 150 students that we heard from, and this echoes a lot of the concerns that we've been hearing from law students. And these comments serve as a real and a tangible reminder that while, perhaps to faculties, administrators and government officials, seemingly small increases of 5 or 7 per cent have a major effect on students. And it's not just the general faculty, it's not just the general undergrad students; it's professional programs as well.

So I would like to, then, spend the remainder of my time highlighting how raising tuition fees and deregulating regular fees will have specific impacts on law students. So the first is the reduction in the ability for students to volunteer in professional and community organizations. This is an essential part of being a law student. Often, when we apply for jobs, employers don't even look at marks, they're looking at who you know, who you've been in contact with, where you've been spending your time.

So I'll give you some examples of that. At the university, we have the legal help centre, the university law centre and we've also started volunteering with the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council, commonly known as Welcome Place. So law students in this case will be able to volunteer their time helping folks who don't qualify for Legal Aid but can't afford a lawyer. So law students are filling an essential gap that exists in the legal community. And it's, frankly, saving the government quite a lot of money. If tuition is raised—I've heard from many, many students that they would have to take on more work—part-time work. And also that would mean that they would have to reduce the time that they volunteer in these organizations.

As well, these individuals that we help in these organizations would, without a doubt, become self-represented litigants. I'm sure you've heard from your colleague, Minister Stefanson, that there is a major issue facing the bar right now and facing the legal community with self-represented litigants. It adds an incredible amount of cost and time to the legal system. And so, as law students, we are

providing a valuable service by offering our time to volunteer. So it's not only helping us and, you know, adding to our resume, it is a valuable service that is helping our community, and it's something that—we're filling a hole, and we're filling a gap. We won't be able to do that if tuition is increased.

As well, if tuition is increased, we're going to have to limit our time into—professional development programs, attending conferences and attending networking opportunities. As well, I've heard from students that they would be limiting their time in student organizations, which is in—another essential part for really securing a job, developing a network, developing community as a law student.

Another issue facing law students if tuition is raised is that we face very, very low entry pay as articling students and junior lawyers. I think that there is kind of a misconception that lawyers make a lot of money. Sure, there are some lawyers that do after a long career, particularly here in Manitoba. But, for articling students, our average entry pay is less than \$30,000. So, if we're having to go \$100,000 in debt for our law degree, I think you can do the math yourselves and realize that it's not easy and it's very, very difficult and very stressful for law students to have to face those odds. As well, even junior lawyers often make quite a lot less than lawyers in other jurisdictions. And I think that that rate of pay should be reflected in how much tuition we pay as Manitoba law students.

Another factor facing—another issue facing law students is that there are—there've been additional burdens placed by the government on law students. For example, the removal of the tuition tax rebate has been a major stress on current and recently graduated law students.

Me personally, it's—it means that I'm going to be facing, when I start articling, a tax increase of roughly \$2,000. This is not something that's feasible. It also means that if my tuition goes up, let's say another \$2,000—that's \$4,000 a year that I don't have budgeted for, and it is, frankly, pretty scary. As well, for Student Aid in particular, cost-of-living expenses aren't factored in when students apply for Student Aid and cost of living keeps on rising. So students are often faced—law students in particular, while we can secure lines of credit, we tend to have to use them quite a bit for covering additional costs of tuition, let alone cost of living.

And, finally, I touched on it in some of the testimonials, but mature students are some of the students that are going to be the hardest hit by this, and, frankly, they're the ones who are going to make some of the best lawyers. They are often unable to apply for Student Aid because they might have a spouse who works, they might own a home, and Student Aid considers that, oh, well, just sell your home and you can pay for law school. And that's something that's not realistic, and it's, frankly, very unfair for mature students, to ask them for that.

And, finally, for mature students, we have a strong bursary program and scholarship program at Robson Hall, but you have to apply for Student Aid in order to qualify for a bursary, and many of these mature students can't even qualify for Student Aid.

So these are all things that I would like the committee to be cognizant of when they are deliberating on this bill because there are many, many issues facing law students in particular, but I think everything that I've spoken to can be expanded to students across the province.

So I would just like to finish off by saying that this would also greatly narrow the diversity of the Manitoba Bar and the Manitoba legal profession. There's already major barriers for people to get into law school, and this would narrow the economic, social and racial diversity of the Manitoba legal profession.

You know, we aren't all 19-year-olds living at home with our parents paying our way, and even those families are struggling right now. We're mothers, we're fathers and we're parents. We work one or two or three part-time jobs to help cover the cost of our degree. We are community members who volunteer our time even when we don't have enough time as it is. We're people who want to have a good job and make a difference. We shouldn't have to sacrifice professional opportunities, time with our families, buying a home or paying the heating bill in order to go to school.

As law students, we strongly oppose this bill and urge the committee to reject the removal of tuition protection and affordability for students.

And I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you.

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

Do the members of the committee have questions for her?

Mr. Wishart: Just to thank you for coming out this evening and expressing your opinion. You've done a very thorough job of surveying your fellow students, and that provides certainly a lot more credibility to your comments. Thank you.

Mr. Wiebe: Ms. Copps, welcome back to the Legislature. Very cool to see you here in this way, participating now again in democracy here at this place.

I appreciate your perspective because we actually—I think you're the first law student that we've heard from, so—and it's important to have that perspective. As you may know, you know, the government has the ability to pass the legislation that it brings forward, and this is an example of that. However, as an opposition, we have a little bit of control in that process, and there's five bills that we can hold over in a legislative session. This is one of those bills that we chose to hold over, and that's why we're debating it now here in the fall rather than having this be passed in the spring.

And what that did was it actually postponed this legislation by enough to get it through this year in school. And so it actually made a difference. This is one of the times where opposition can make a difference, and we actually saved students that 7 per cent in this year.

We've talked a lot about what that impact would have on an average undergrad degree, but I actually don't know what a second-year law student might pay in tuition. Do you have any sense—7 per cent increase: can you give us a ballpark of what that dollar figure might be, if you feel comfortable doing it, or just in general, for a law student, and what kind of effect that would have, an increase of 7 per cent for your—the students that you represent in the—in law school?

*(18:50)

Ms. Copps: So there's a reason why I'm in law school and it's because I can't really do math, but I will try to—I'll try to answer questions as best that I can.

So right now we're paying just under \$12,000 and about \$1,200 in ancillary fees. So, for us, right now we're looking at roughly a 500- to 1000-dollar increase this year, but that's only for current students, and if I understand the Faculty of

Law has different regulations around it and they're able to increase it quite a bit more.

So, really we're looking at students who would be coming in would be facing major increases in tuition. The average law school tuition in the country is about \$16,000 and I think that in my role as a tuition negotiation committee chair that's been what I've been hearing, is that we're going to be looking at roughly 16 to 18 thousand dollars per year.

And something that I didn't touch on in my notes, but it's in the bill, is that when you deregulate fees that's where the university tends to make a lot more of its money, and so we already have \$1,200 in fees, so that's something else that we're worried about because, for us, like, if we can plan ahead of time, three—like, our full degree three years out, it makes much more financial sense to do that.

But, when we don't even—I don't even know what I'm going to be paying tuition next year, what I'm going to be paying, and that is a major, major crisis for a lot of students. It—like, I think about how I'm going to pay tuition every single day and I'm sure that every single other law student does, too.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Altemeyer, I will tell you just one minute for both question and response.

Mr. Altemeyer: Well, better not take up much time with a question, that's for sure.

Just wanted to thank you very much for your comments. It's déjà vu all over again. Last time Conservatives were in power I was in university. Tuition went up 132 per cent, and that was over a 10-year span.

What advice would you have for a government that is quite clearly so offside with young professionals such as yourself and students here tonight? Do you think this is a wise move for a government that wants to get re-elected to do?

Ms. Copps: Well, I think that my answer previously—like, I clearly don't think that this is the right approach and I think that, first and foremost, before introducing a bill on post-secondary education, talk to students. Don't have it be here at committee where I'm forced to come. I have three mid-terms and two papers on Monday. There are much better things that I'd rather be doing right now, but I took the time to represent my colleagues and my friends and people that I talk to every day and we are really, really, really worried, so thanks for listening to me tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Coppins. Our time is up. Thank you for coming and presenting this evening.

We'll now move to the next presenter, Audrey Mercado. Audrey Mercado? Okay, we'll move her to the end of the list.

Brayana Petti? Brayana Petti? Okay, we'll move her to the end of the list.

Brittney Thomas-Ljungberg? Brittney Thomas-Ljungberg? Okay, we'll move her to the end of the list.

Jade DeFehr? Jade DeFehr? Okay, we'll move her to the end of the list.

Carlen Comegan-Ronke? Ms.—is it Comegan-Ronke or just Ms. Ronke?

Ms. Carlen Comegan-Ronke (Private Citizen): Yes, you got it.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, thanks so much for coming this evening. Do you have any written materials you'd like to share with the committee?

Ms. Comegan-Ronke: I do not.

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

Ms. Comegan-Ronke: Right on.

Donc, salut tout le monde. Je m'appelle Carlen Comegan-Ronke, et je suis la présidente de la Fédération canadienne des étudiantes et étudiants au Manitoba. So, hello, everyone. My name is Carlen Comegan-Ronke. I am the chairperson for the Canadian Federation of Students, Manitoba.

So today I felt the need to repeat myself in English as the Minister for Francophone Affairs doesn't speak French.

See, I mention this because did you know that we actually have the only francophone institution in western Canada and we also have the highest population of French-speaking people outside of Quebec.

So, to switch it up a little bit, I first got involved with helping students at my university as the First Nations, Metis and Inuit representative on my student council at Université de Saint-Boniface.

A little background as to why I ran for this position: growing up, I was subjected to a very passive form of racism. Being involved in my high school led certain teachers and students to feel comfortable around me, which would lead to them saying some racist comments without acknowledging what they were saying was necessarily bad.

For example, they would say comments like, oh, I don't want Natives wasting my money when they don't work hard and won't finish their degrees—to which they would look at me and say, oh, but not you. Not you? What does that even mean, not you? It means that I grew up in South St. Vital, and it appeared to them that I came from a place of privilege, which was not the case. I didn't come from money, and I'm very clearly racialized.

My school was able to offer me opportunities most schools don't. I played on the sports teams, was on the improvisation team, in band and worked on many committees. In high school, I didn't have time for myself. My school was also very white, from staff to students. You could count on two hands how many racialized students were at my school. I felt very out of place most of the time. I felt that because I was hearing these comments, that I had to do more to prove that I wasn't a lazy Native, because that was the narrative that I had to grow up with. I felt like I wasn't allowed to identify with my indigenous heritage, and so I tried to work away from it and away from the stigma.

Everything started to change in my last year of high school. I was asked to be part of a breakfast club where we would be taught the seven teachings. This was a game changer for indigenous students and other students as well. For students to learn indigenous teachings and history was a huge shock to me.

After high school, I continued to teach myself what colonization meant to my community. I learnt all about the negative effects on my people and myself. I learned that everything the society I had grown up in and taught me about indigenous people was wrong. I learned to be proud of the resilience of my people. I also learned that as indigenous students we are not simply wasting people's money by attending post-secondary education.

As an indigenous person, I was able to receive the Post-Secondary Student Support Program funding. I found out that that funding had not been increased in over 10 years. The money that I received was not livable, but I was able to sustain

myself by living in the city with my parents while attending school. However, I know many students that can't even pay rent with the money received. They also—sorry—I also learned that not every indigenous person, even with status, were able to get that funding.

In my second year of university, I was in a play, because I like acting, so I was able to create—we were able to create our own characters based on our views of the world. With this opportunity, I was able to teach the way our people envisioned how the world was created.

This inspired me to do more. And when a friend let me know about a newly created position with l'Association étudiante de l'Université de Saint-Boniface—the First Nations, Metis and Inuit representative—with my new position, I got the opportunity to connect with indigenous students from across the country. Shortly into my term, a friend of mine who was a Metis student requested a letter of apology from the institution in regards to colonization and residential schools, to only receive a full letter back explaining that the school never had issues with the indigenous people of Canada. That was completely false. Another friend of mine who works at the St. Boniface museum revealed that the university itself was a residential school.

You see, students face multiple barriers when—sorry—indigenous students face multiple barriers when it comes to accessing post-secondary education. We face racism problems with the PSSSP and ignorance of the administration about the history of my university.

* (19:00)

I am proud to say that I am a queer francophone and indigenous woman. I will not let minority students have their voices spoken over when it is so hard for students like me to even have the privilege to have the same opportunities that I have had.

My family was directly affected by residential schools. When the government was taking children away from my mother's community—her own brothers, sisters, cousins, and friends alike—she was able to escape because her father took her down to the United States. I think about that all the time. I think about the horror of having a child taken away from you. I think about how the last residential school closed in 1996, the year I was born. I think about how I could have grown up without the love—

sorry, without the love my mother provided with limited financial means.

I hear the stories of my neighbour, of when he attended residential school up north. I hear what non-racialized people say about the survivors of residential schools and their descendants. Why? Because these people grew up without love, without having their basic needs provided, and in a new colonial world set up to take them down.

If Bill 31 is passed, this will be yet another barrier that indigenous people cannot afford. As a matter of fact, it is not affordable for any student. I represent 45,000 students across the province and I will not stand for such a regressive policy, not when in my short term as chair, I have heard the horror stories of students not being able to afford rent, food, and tuition.

I care about our future as a province and all the wonderful diversity we have. I care about all students, future and current, and I want education for all.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

We'll now move to a question period. Do members of the committee have questions?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for your presentation and I know you feel very strongly. Certainly you're doing a good job of representing the students that you are designated to represent.

Certainly, our government does its best to be an inclusive government and we have a very strong process for consultation with First Nations and Metis across the province. And I know it's never perfect, but we do our best to be as inclusive as possible.

So thank you very much and certainly appreciate your comments.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much for the presentation.

As I think you know, you're not the first presenter that we've heard before this committee that's talked about barriers to indigenous peoples in particular as a focal point of the presentation, and obviously I know you represent all students and so you have a number of different perspectives, but I thought that was one that I was—it was very valuable to hear tonight, again, for this committee to understand just how many barriers there are for students who—from indigenous backgrounds.

I—we just heard the minister talk about consultation and listening. I'm just wondering, did the government in any way reach out to your organization, consult with you individually or with your members in any way? Can you just give me an idea of what that process was like in terms of consultation with students around Bill 31?

Ms. Comegan-Ronke: So from my knowledge and the students that I have spoken to across the province, including, like, all the locals out of Brandon, St. Boniface, U of M, U of W, we weren't consulted.

Students were not consulted. Indigenous students were not consulted.

Ms. Lamoureux: Thank you for—it's nice to see you again and I just really—it's more of a comment than anything. I just want to say that both you and Natalie who spoke before you, as a young woman in a profession, you guys are absolutely inspiring.

Thank you for coming out, for presenting and for making mention of the seven paths for healing. I hope that it's something that everyone in this room will truly explore. Thank you.

Mrs. Smith: Thank you so much for your presentation.

I just want to say as someone who worked with young people prior to coming to be an MLA, I know how important it is for identity—and for you to, you know, learn the seven teachings. Go out there, start to learn about your history. You know, I think that's important for this government to hear that that's a part of reconciliation. You know—and this, Bill 31, is directly against reconciliation.

So, if we're trying to move forward, you know, in our history, you know, this government is a regressive government that is not listening or not consulting with First Nations or students, as we've heard, you know, which is contrary to what we've heard from our minister.

So I just want to say thank you for coming tonight, and, you know, we stand with you. And education is the key out of poverty. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, then, Ms. Comegan-Ronke, I want to thank you for presenting this evening.

We'll now move to the next presenter, Janet Morrill.

Ms. Morrill, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee? Thank you very much for that. You can proceed with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Ms. Janet Morrill (University of Manitoba Faculty Association): Thank you very much for providing me with the opportunity to express my views on this bill. I'm Janet Morrill, I am the president of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association.

Bill 31 proposes that universities may increase tuition by the consumer price index plus 5 per cent. There is no question that this will impair the affordability and access to post-secondary education. To provide fewer opportunities for students from low-income families than students from higher income families perpetuates inequality. It depresses income growth, as debt-ridden graduates delay starting families, purchasing homes and setting up households. It deprives society of the talent and productivity that these young people could develop and contribute if they could pursue a post-secondary education.

To suggest that scholarships would fill the gap is simply unfair. Students from a low-income family would have to meet the quality hurdle required by the scholarship, whereas a student whose family can afford the tuition does not.

I'd also like to speak about other far-reaching, negative effects on post-secondary education when tuition is raised that may be a little bit less obvious. For example, as I said, I'm the president of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association. I represent the 1,200 professors. Most professors have 10 years of post-secondary education. My tuition was approximately \$600 a year. If we have something like this, we'd be looking at tuition of \$6,000 a year. That's 10 times that. And I would encourage everybody here to do that calculation in their head about—think about how much the tuition was that you paid, how much your tuition would be and the debt you would have when you graduate, and how that would have impacted your life.

My husband is also a professor. The two of us had 10 and 12 years of education. That would have been \$120,000 of debt that we would have had. At the time, we were 30 and 32 when we graduated. Luckily, we did not have debt because we did not have those kinds of tuition levels. We were able to buy a house right away, start a family right away. If we had been facing \$120,000 of debt, I don't know

how many years it would have taken us to buy a house. I'm not sure we would have ever had children.

Finally, so with those kinds of tuition levels, the question that we would have as a first question is: Will students today be interested in becoming professors if they're looking at 10 years of education at \$6,000 a year?

In addition to being a president of the University of Manitoba Faculty Association, I'm an accounting professor. And I've studied the finances of approximately 18 universities across Canada. I've co-authored reports on the financial results of these 18 different Canadian universities. I've co-authored a guide on analyzing university and college financial statements and an article on university accounting and disclosure practices. I would therefore also like to comment on the effects of increased tuition fees on university finances and operations.

Governments eventually inevitably couple tuition increases with decreased block funding to universities. Even if the overall level of funding is the same, the conversion from stable funding to precarious funding has terrible effects on university operations. Universities then need to chase a fixed number of donation dollars and a relatively fixed number of students to maintain their revenue levels. This leads to a huge administrative machine to deal with communications, recruiting, advertising, media relations and solicitation for donations.

* (19:10)

There seems to also be a tendency to invest scarce resources in cosmetically appealing capital projects to attract those dollars. This is based on reports from academics that these buildings are expensive, often not very functional, but figure prominently in the promotion materials for the universities.

Finally, the precariousness of funding makes administrations reluctant to invest in full-time, tenure-track or continuing positions for professors, instructors and librarians. Instead, they offer casual, term or sessional positions. This is transforming post-secondary education in disastrous ways. Overworked, underpaid professors cannot offer the same quality of education to their students. We are, again, unlikely to be able to encourage our best students to enter academia when they see a career ahead of them that does not include a stable job and an income where they can pay off student loans, much less buy a house or raise a family. Moreover,

because so many of the people teaching in universities have positions at risk, there's no real academic freedom, which is the cornerstone of the university.

So, in summary, I would ask that the members of the Legislative Assembly not only to vote down this bill but to increase funding post-secondary institutions. Thank you.

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

We'll now move to question period. Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for coming out today. I certainly appreciate your rather unique point of view. I mean, you're on both sides of the equation here, which certainly makes it a different point of view. So thank you for coming.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much for coming this evening to committee. Again, this is a perspective that we haven't heard thus far before the committee, so I think it's important that we do hear from faculty. In fact, I mean, the majority, as I would say, I would say every presenter before yourself has been a student and has been somebody who has brought that perspective—and, of course, that's very important for this committee to hear those experiences—but I think this is another important perspective. So I want to thank you for bringing that perspective.

I wanted to actually ask you the same question I just asked our—I think I asked our last presenter—and that was just about consultation. I'm—and maybe you don't know, but, you know, the full extent of the consultations that were undertaken, but I would imagine that hearing from faculty and understanding their perspective would be an important part of understanding the overall picture of the impact of a change like Bill 31 would have. I'm wondering, has—was there any consultation with yourself, with your organization? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morrill.

Ms. Morrill: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Now, you can respond to the question.

I have to give you the floor, so I'd say, Ms. Morrill, now you may respond to the question.

Ms. Morrill: Oh, okay. Oh, sorry, okay.

I am not aware of any consultant–consultations that we were involved in. And I think that that is unfortunate because not only do we have sort of that representing the viewpoint of professors and trying to find professors but–and trying to see how this would impact whether we would have new professors, but, of course, as well, we're also in the classrooms with our students. And, when I look at the students in front of me, I see, I think, a pretty rich blend of students, and I hear from students who are coming from underprivileged families, and I welcome their perspective and I am honoured to be, I think, part of the process that will give them a better life ahead than their parents had. And, you know, most of our students–of course, there are some exceptional students–but most of our students are just ordinary people, and I would hate to get to the point where the only ordinary students that I had were the ones that came from privileged families and I wasn't able to get those ordinary students from less privileged families because they weren't good enough to get the scholarships.

Mr. Wishart: Well, just for the record, we did meet with the faculty association; that was probably prior to your time as president. *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morrill. Sorry. Ms. Morrill?

Sorry, Ms. Morrill. Now you begin.

Ms. Morrill: Sorry.

I do remember meeting with you, Honourable Wishart, but that–yes, I believe that that was–I thought that that was attached to a different thing, but perhaps not. Okay.

Mrs. Smith: I want to thank you for your presentation. I also want to just express that I know that we need to invest in, you know, the universities and providing more money to the universities so that our students are receiving a higher–or a higher quality of education is super important, you know. So we need this government to be listening to not only our faculty members, but our students and all of Manitobans. You know, this is the way out of poverty. I've said this time and time again.

You know, I'm a product of poverty. I came from a single-parent family, went back to school, got an education, paid for my kids' education. Now my kids are, you know, working. They're probably going to be able to pay for their kids' education. So, you know, we have to invest in future generations.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Morrill, would you like to respond?

Ms. Morrill: I totally agree.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Altemeyer, just 35 seconds for your question and response.

Mr. Altemeyer: As the product of a university professor and someone else who also had time out there at the U of M, can you tell us a little bit more about the threats to academic freedom that can happen when a government does not properly fund its post-secondary institutions? What do they become vulnerable to?

Ms. Morrill: Well, it's interesting, because a lot of times I think we tend to think of academic freedom in terms of medical research or things like that. But, actually, academic freedom is important in all of our classes. And so, for example, in the accounting classes, which I teach, one of the things that we are always discussing are the various advantages and drawbacks of the accounting rules, the accounting standards and the way they can distort financial statements–highly critical. And the accounting profession is sometimes not all that happy about what we have to say. You have to feel comfortable–because they are an important donor to the business school, for example. And so this notion of academic freedom is intertwined in virtually every class that you teach. And if you do not know whether you're going to have your job the next term, there is no way that you are going to instruct in the same way if you're worried about someone hearing about what you said in your class that, generally speaking, is critical of the status quo in whatever subject area that you're in. And so, yes, a problem with academic freedom is a problem with post-secondary education.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Morrill, for your presentation. Our time for questions is up.

We'll now move on to the next presenter, Robert Chernomas.

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

Mr. Robert Chernomas (Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations): I've got a few copies, but not enough for everybody, so my mother said I probably shouldn't distribute it. We'll be launching a report fairly shortly, so the public will have access to this report that I'll be talking about momentarily.

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

Mr. Chernomas: I am a professor of economics at the University of Manitoba, and I am president of the Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations, representing the 1,600 faculty and librarians in the province of all the four universities.

We funded a tuition analysis, a research review of the tuition trends around the OECD. And I'm going to sort of selectively read from our report, which is much larger than 10 minutes could account for.

And so the Breakwater Group undertook a review of the existing literature, including academic journal articles, reports in other publications, compiled data from existing reports and synthesized the findings. Although the overall demand for a post-secondary education is relatively insensitive to price changes, what economists would call elasticity, in the countries surveyed, the vast majority of the literature reviewed concludes that increasing tuition fees has a negative impact on enrollment rates for low-income students. There appears to be a significant causal relation between student debt and career choice. So it's not simply access, but also the way it distorts the labour market, particularly in professional programs with higher tuition fees, such as medicine, dentistry and law.

Tuition fees in the OECD vary significantly, with several countries charging zero tuition for domestic students. There appears to be a negative relationship between average tuition fees and per student expenditure. In other words, the more the public provides in terms of funding, the less tuition is. And the reverse is true, as well. And so tuitions rise as public funding declines.

*(19:20)

There is also a corresponding strongly positive correlation between average tuition fees and the share of total expenditures on tertiary education covered directly by private households: tuition goes up, depends more and more on private households to pay for it. Countries with more students taking on loans have higher average loan amounts and, subsequently, larger per student debt at graduation. The number of students with loans and size of debt at graduation are positively associated with higher average tuition. None of this would be a surprise; other things might be.

Income 'tingent' loans do not appear to have a significant effect on university participation among low-income students. They're intimidated by high

debt. The relationship between teacher compensation and tuition fees appears to be weak and non-existent, with some indication that countries with higher tuition fees spend a smaller share of tertiary education expenditures on teaching staff compensation than those with zero tuition.

There's little evidence of correlation between student-teacher ratios and average tuition fees. Here we're talking about the compensation of professors and librarians and we're also talking about the quality of education insofar as it can be measured by student-teacher ratios.

Based on our research, the government of Manitoba's recent legislative proposal permitting annual tuition increases of 5 per cent plus the rate of inflation will have a negative impact on university participation of low-income students unless countervailing measures are introduced.

Overall, these conclusions suggest a changing—sort of summarizing the more of the OECD data. Overall, these conclusions suggest a changing socioeconomic composition with post-secondary education students in OECD countries as a result of rising tuition fees in recent years. The trend is even more pronounced than professions. We talked about that already, medicine, dentistry and law. As discussed below, lower income students tend to view education costs as a debt rather than an investment, more than their higher income peers.

Casual relationship between student debt and career choice. And one of the things we discover is tuition goes up and debt goes up, it has an effect on what kind of employment people will pursue. Based on the literature, primarily North American cases, there appears to be a significant causal relationship between student debt and career choice, once again medicine, dentistry and law.

A study done at NYU some years ago where tuition grew dramatically, found that up-front subsidies were associated with higher rates of public interest law than were financial equivalent lower payments. So what happened in law school is, if there was tuition subsidies, it had an effect on what kind of law practice people—they were going to much more likely to follow public interest law as opposed to private, for-profit law.

In Canada, the Canadian Medical Association did a study on why there might be a shortage of family physicians, and the conclusion was rising debt among medical students in Canada led more and

more students to specialties which would not have been their first choice. But, when you have \$100,000 of debt you begin to think about higher, more lucrative practice in medicine rather than less lucrative and, of course, we know one of the problems we've had in Canada for a number of reasons is a shortage of family physicians.

Similar results can be found in places like Ontario. Between '97 and 2000 medical tuition fees in Ontario doubled on average. Ed Evans [*phonetic*] suggested medical students are increasingly coming from affluent families. So they choose what they wouldn't have chosen before, which is more lucrative professions where we may not need them nearly as much, and what we found is rich kids became rich doctors. They came from rich families as opposed to what education is supposed to be, which provides some upward mobility if people are motivated and talented.

We have a table, 3.1, tuition and tertiary education regimes, and we look at zero tuition, mid-range tuition and high tuition regimes in various parts of the world, and what we discover is that the countries with both zero tuition and high, broad-based public support—because tuition is enough often to get kids into university. It requires other supports as well, and if you look at the countries which have both zero tuition and high, broad-based public support, they also happen to be the countries that often dominate the World Economic Forum competitiveness report.

World Economic Forum, if you don't know who they are, they do a review of the most competitive countries in the world and, in year in and year out, the Nordic model seems to dominate. These are high-spending, high-tax, high-regulated economies that have the best growth, the least debt—look at the CIA debt tables, or anybody else's, and you'll see these high-spending, high-tax countries, because they get growth and they have the best research and development in the world, and they're world leaders based on the world—this is not the labour unions or anybody else. This is the business community making these assessments. It's a very different way of approaching how to run an economy.

Teacher compensation. We talked about that briefly. There seems to be very little correlation between compensation and tuition, teacher-student ratios. One of the hypotheses is that higher tuition may generate additional resources for educational institutions and thereby facilitate greater investments

in teaching positions. OECD 2016 contains data on the ratio of students to teaching staff in tertiary education institutions and the data basically tells us there appears to be no correlation between the two variables, and actually the best ratio were in places like Norway where there's zero tuition, and much worse in other places. Conclusion, I'm not sure how much time I have, but I'm getting close.

Amongst OECD countries, there are substantial variations with respect to the average rate of tuition charged to domestic students with various identifiable regimes, including zero and high levels of public support in the Nordics. High tuition and high public support in anglophone countries, high tuition and lower levels of student support in Pacific Rim countries and continental Europe.

While tuition appears to be a significant barrier to low-income students, it is likely that zero tuition regimes alone will not equalize participation rates among socioeconomic classes. Well-designed financial aid programs in the form of need-based grants will be required to compensate for the non-tuition costs associated with the partial withdrawal from the labour market required. So kids who are poor have to work in the labour market, and if they're not compensated in other ways they won't be able to afford the opportunity costs of going to university. And that's what the Nordic countries do, the most competitive countries in the world, they provide those kinds of extra supports.

Based on our research, the anticipated growth in university tuition fees in Manitoba due to the provincial government's legislative propose permitting annual tuition increases, 5 per cent plus the rate of inflation will have a negative impact on the participation of low-income students in advanced education. And I would add, bias the labour market away from public interest jobs, away from family physicians, and I would argue, based on the OEC evidence unrelated to a competitor provincial economy, tuition does not serve any of those purposes. Thank you.

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

We will now move to question period. Do members of the committee have questions?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Chernomas. And I would be very interested in seeing—you said you were about to publish data or you had data to go with the conclusions you have reached?

Mr. Chernomas: Last time I didn't wait for you to—trying to be a good boy.

I have a copy of—about five copies and we will be launching the report sometime in a short period for the public to see, everyone in the public to see it if they choose to. And so I have the report. We have a report with the data.

Mr. Chairperson: That's a yes. Honourable Minister Wishart.

Mr. Wishart: Of data and studies to support the conclusions, then? Because you've listed a bunch of conclusions without any data here.

Mr. Chernomas: Do you expect me in 10 minutes to provide all the data? I have a report with the data.

An Honourable Member: With the data included?

Floor Comment: Yes.

Mr. Wiebe: First of all, Dr. Chernomas, that was incredible. It brought me back to second-year class with you, and the reason that I took economics as a major was because of—partly because of the classes that you taught.

Maybe I'm just going to ask leave for the committee—I'm wondering if we could ask leave that the report, even though there's not copies for everybody, would that be included in the Hansard in addition to Mr.—Dr. Chernomas's presentation?

I'm just looking to the Clerk here because I'm doing this on the fly, and whether this is something we can make happen.

Mr. Chairperson: If I can ask, how large is the report that you have? How many pages?

Mr. Chernomas: What I have is a 25-page version of the report, which I'm happy to give to the Clerk to put in the Hansard. We also have other data to back this up. But I can certainly give you that.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chernomas.

I'm going to suggest, with the agreement of the committee, that you at least make a copy available to the Minister of Education and the critic for Education, both of whom are present here. That doesn't get it in the Hansard, however, but it does make it available to the members of the committee who are, perhaps, most interested in that material.

Would that be agreeable to the committee?
[Agreed]

Okay, so if you can provide us with two copies, then, after the question period will be fine.

Mr. Wiebe: I did have an additional question.

I'm wondering if you did, in the analysis, whether in this report or otherwise, that you can speak of about the effect that the tuition freeze has had in Manitoba, you know, from 1999 until 2010 I think it was, and then there was an increase tied to inflation. Have you done any studies on the effects of participation and sort of—I liked where you were going with, you know, understanding exactly who is participating not just how many, but who is participating and the careers that they chose. Have you done any of that analysis that you could share with us?

* (19:30)

Mr. Chernomas: We have not. I have colleagues who are working on that kind of research. We did here—is a review of existing literature. There's no econometric studies, but the report that some of my colleagues are working on will have—they're attempting to do the effects of tuition freeze, et cetera, on—but that's not available.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you very much, Dr. Chernomas, for bringing us—fascinating to watch that dialogue between yourself and the minister. I mean, I don't know how many times in my life I have watched a good, solid, well-researched, progressive argument be brought forward and then either have it summarily dismissed by right-wingers who don't get it, or in this case, they say, well, do you have any data? That's like—has he ever gone to a university and taken a course? Like, you're a university professor. You have to provide data before you can publish a peer-reviewed article.

I mean, I hope he reads it, but what does it tell you that after the very articulate argument you just provided, if this government doesn't follow the evidence you're going to provide? What does that say to you as a member of the public about how well this government's listening to the wishes of Manitobans?

Mr. Chernomas: Well, I guess I haven't been asked yet whether I've been consulted, and I've produced a number of pieces in the Free Press, so I haven't been hiding on this topic and others. And of course I agree democracy's important, and I'm hoping that a hearing like this will convince the public that maybe this government is not doing the kind of thing we need to do to promote competitiveness and access to university education. That's why I'm here.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Dr. Chernomas. Time for questions is up.

If you can please submit the two copies of the report to the minister and the—or the page, actually, will get two copies of the report from you to—for distribution, and then we'll proceed to the next presenter, Breana Johnston.

Breana Johnston? Okay, we'll put her to the end of the list. *[interjection]*

She was called as an out-of-towner, but because of the agreement that we had, I think it's reasonable to call her one more time.

Basia Sokal? Basia Sokal? We will move her to the end of the list.

Geoff Bergen? Geoff Bergen? We'll move him to the end of the list—*[interjection]*

Oh, here you are. Oh, I'm sorry—*[interjection]*

All right, well, there's a lot of motion in my field of vision there. I apologize for that, Mr. Bergen. So, thank you for appearing before the committee. Do you have any written materials for distribution this evening?

Mr. Geoff Bergen (Private Citizen): No, I do not.

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

Mr. Bergen: I just want to say good evening and thanks for letting me take the time to speak. As the minister said, this is a very unique opportunity to address MLAs when discussing bills such as Bill 31. There have been quite a few eloquent speakers tonight with way better points than I'll have for you this evening. But I am here this evening to speak out against Bill 31, the advanced education administration act.

I'm standing here as a union member in solidarity with my sisters and brothers in the Canadian Federation of Students. I'm here as a staff rep for the United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 832, supporting our members who are also students. Our union has some of the youngest membership in the province. And finally, I'm here as a U of M alumni.

I was lucky enough to attend university largely out of privilege. My parents were able to financially support me when I attended university years ago. The deal was as long as I got higher than a C+, you know, they'd split the course with me—less than a C+,

I was paying for the whole class. Because of the support that they gave me, I was able to focus on school—which I didn't always do—and instead of working constantly in between my classes to afford tuition, could work part-time, spend nights at the library and devote some time to my studies.

How privileged I was to attend post-secondary education wasn't immediately clear to me. Now that I work for a union that supports workers, I see what struggling families and individuals have to go through to put themselves or their children through school—through post-secondary education.

By increasing tuition 5 per cent and deregulating course-related fees, it's an attack on the working class. It's putting a further burden on those who struggle to make a good income. It puts up barriers to those seeking post-secondary education by making it even more unaffordable, and it places an unfair debt burden on those graduating.

The result is whatever pay those graduates are receiving will go to paying down their debt instead of putting it into the Manitoba economy, if they even stay here, as the student rebate has been eliminated, something else I was lucky to receive that current students will not be getting.

I hear you; I see you looking at me. You're thinking, this guy wants to decrease tuition while providing students with the best education. He knows money doesn't grow on trees, right. Of that fact I am keenly aware. But we are a wealthy society and in the future we will be judged on how that wealth was used and distributed. When the history books show, we didn't prioritize our caregivers or halls of education, I feel those reading our history will hang their heads and think, for shame.

Thank you, and good evening.

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

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: We'd like to thank you for coming out this evening and participating in this democratic process. We are unique in many ways to have this, and so certainly I applaud you for having taking advantage of it.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you, Mr. Bergen. I have to admit that I was in the back speaking with other presenters, so I missed the majority of your presentation; however, I did manage to catch the end.

And I think your conclusion is very important for us to think about as a committee, and I think we've heard multiple times now from presenters about the value of the investment in education and how that can have an impact on—not only on individuals, but on a society.

So I just wanted to thank you for coming out, for sharing those perspectives.

Mr. Altemeyer: Two things: One, I want to commend you for your recognition and your discussion of the whole concept of privilege. That was something when, you know, I was in university, we didn't have that language to work with. We sure could have used it. I think we'd be lot farther along today if that had existed and, you know, acknowledging the privilege that you come from, that I come from, probably very similar, I think, is really commendable, so good for you.

I wondered also, if you might care to comment a little bit about, you know, another aspect of this government's policy has been to at first freeze wages, and, as a union rep, you'd be very familiar with the impact of that, and now their legislation says that minimum wage in Manitoba is only allowed to go up at the rate of inflation, which basically legislates minimum-wage earners into a life of poverty.

How does that also play into the increased burden of higher tuition?

Mr. Bergen: Well, excellent question, and thank you for asking it.

When the tuition is only—oh, sorry—when the minimum wage is only going raise the minimal rate that it goes at inflation, what it does is it puts the students, those working to pay for this or pay it down, puts them back, right. If we're going to increase tuition at inflation plus the 5 per cent, you know there's no way that'll match the minimum wage or even the small wages if an employee is lucky enough to make over minimum wage or find themselves unionized and get the boost that, you know, a union tries to provide to be over minimum wage.

So, put together, it's a burden and it's a struggle and it makes those already struggling further behind in my opinion.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions from the members of the committee, then, I thank you for

your time, Mr. Bergen, and thanks very much for coming out and presenting.

I did receive a note that one of the presenters that we skipped over because she was not here at the time that we called her name is here and is uncertain that she'll be able to stay until the very end of the proceedings.

Do I have agreement from the committee to call her at this time? *[Agreed]*

Elizabeth Carlyle. Ms. Carlyle, do you have any written materials that you would like to share with the committee?

Ms. Elizabeth Carlyle (Private Citizen): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: The staff will assist you in that regard. Whenever you're ready, you may now proceed with your presentation.

* (19:40)

Ms. Carlyle: As you said, my name is Liz Carlyle. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the committee this evening. I'm here in opposition to Bill 31.

I'm concerned about the bill because it creates a policy landscape in which significant annual tuition fee increases are the norm. I oppose legislation that increases financial barriers to accessing education, and I support keeping any existing tuition fee protections in place.

I know how hard it is to afford post-secondary education. Most Canadians don't have significant savings but do have significant debt. Most new jobs require some post-secondary education. Deregulated tuition fees and tuition fee increases do harm. We know what to expect when we allow them to increase: more debt, 'lecs'—less access, lower quality of education overall. Government has a responsibility to prevent tuition fee increases and to gradually reduce tuition fees. It is a worthwhile investment.

That's why I worked so hard in the 1990s to advocate for lower user fees. When I was involved in the University of Winnipeg Students' Association and the Canadian Federation of Students, the debates were very similar. The issues really come down to priorities.

We knew then and know now that increasing tuition simply privatizes more of the costs of post-secondary education and the institutions' budgets. It is not the case that allows—that allowing tuition fees to rise will improve the quality of

education overall. That's not the case. And it won't make students appreciate their education more, either.

Students and their families simply struggle or are priced out of the post-secondary education system when we allow tuition fees to rise. We know that improving access to, and success in, post-secondary education for students with middle and low incomes requires low or no tuition fees. Wealthy families can afford to buy their children's education directly, but most of us can't. We pay taxes and trust government to invest in the right things.

Now I have three daughters who will all too soon be making decisions about their education and jobs. They're keen to learn and enjoy school. They know that we can now afford, for the first time since they were born, to set aside a little money for their education, but it will only be enough to cover a small portion of their fees and expenses in university or college. They also know that any reduction in our family income would mean that we can no longer keep adding to that small amount. I want my kids to have a great education and to be able to make choices based on their interest, abilities and hard work.

I have less than five years before my elder two girls are done grade 12. In our house, we teach our kids that we have a social contract. We pay taxes and elect governments to ensure that we have the necessities of life that are best provided collectively by governments. I have explained to them that we are able to help them a bit with their post-secondary education but that we were counting on those tax dollars to cover roads, public transit, health care, libraries, schools and access to college and university.

Legislating significant tuition fee increases when there is no demonstrated fiscal need to take this drastic action is a breach of the social contract, and it will cost the government more in the long run by reinforcing socio-economic disparity and through missed opportunities for jobs, innovation and well-rounded Manitobans. Five per cent a year is more than 20 per cent over the course of a four-year degree. That does not even account for inflationary increases. It puts a lot of options out of reach, especially if we consider past tuition fee and ancillary increases that have come before. I really don't want to have to tell my kids that our provincial government is planning to put their hopes for

post-secondary education, with all the good that that would bring, in jeopardy.

We know that systems created to identify high-need students can be tempting as a way to justify allowing tuition fees to rise, but it often lets people slip through the cracks. A universal approach built on public funding; reducing, not increasing, tuition fees; and fair, progressive taxation alongside grants, making sure the curriculum is relevant and campus and community supports, is the best way to go.

I urge this provincial government to withdraw or vote down Bill 31.

Thank you.

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

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Ms. Carlyle, for coming in today. I understand you have several children to put through post-secondary—or, hopefully put through post-secondary sometime in the not-too-distant future, and I appreciate your point of view.

Mr. Wiebe: Well, good to see you, Ms. Carlyle. Thanks for coming out, for sharing your perspective.

My kids are quite a bit younger, just entering school, so it's a long ways off. But what struck me with your presentation, and maybe you could shed some light on this, is that, you know, as a parent, as somebody who's now entering this new world and this new perspective and thinking about my children and what we're going to be paying for tuition, you know, I started to put some money away through an RESP and started to save a few dollars. Obviously, that math has changed for me. I'm wondering how it's changed for you. Have you started to look at the affordability of tuition, and have you started to change what you're able to put away? And what impact—maybe I could put it this way—what impact do you think that an increased tuition of 7 per cent, minimum, per year, might have on the average family who's trying to save a few dollars to put their kids through university?

Ms. Carlyle: That's a good question. I appreciate that.

You know, because tuition fees—tuition fee policy has not been as consistent as it should've been, one of the factors that comes into play is uncertainty,

and for any financial planning, regardless of what it is, in—uncertainty is very detrimental. It doesn't allow families to plan for the future adequately, and it creates a whole set of dynamics that cause stress and make it difficult to make the right choices. And so I would appreciate if the Province had a consistent policy to keep tuition fees lower, and I think that—so, on the one hand, this bill creates uncertainty for the future because you can't control for inflation. I think that that's something that creates a lot of uncertainty that's damaging for the financial planning you're talking about. But I think, more importantly, most families already can't afford to save. And so this just adds to the list of things they can't afford to do, and it's really detrimental because it means that people have to make tough choices.

It's only, you know—I mentioned in my presentation that I'm only now able to save a little bit for my children's education. It's a very minimal amount and it—I know that it's sort of somewhat futile in a way because I can't afford to cover all the costs of their education but, on the other hand, when I was a single parent with twins, back a few years ago, I just—I had no option; I couldn't save that kind of money. I had to make choices between groceries and fixing things, and so I just, you know, that wasn't an option for me. Now that it is, this adding this kind of uncertainty, again, just adds to it.

It's not a good way to go, and I think that it's really important to think of the future, and I appreciate that question. Thank you.

Mr. Altemeyer: Let me begin just by saying not only thanks very much for adding your very articulate presentation to a great evening already, but to thank you for your tireless efforts over many, many years on this particular issue. I don't know that there are many people in Manitoba who have worked as long and as hard on accessibility education issues as you have. You have done a real service for all of Manitobans, and you deserve a great deal of thanks for that. And I don't just say that because you're my constituent and technically I work for you, but it doesn't hurt.

I want to just pick out on one beautiful word of many in your presentation, and that was priorities. What are the priorities of a government which brings in legislation like this? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Carlyle.

Ms. Carlyle: Oh, sorry.

I'm glad you picked up on that word because for me it was really the most important concept that I wanted to bring forward this evening. I understand there are always pressures on government. I get that. I know that there are tough choices to make, but I—you know, this bill, Bill 31, it's the wrong priority. It just simply chooses the wrong priority. Instead of investing in things that—from a personal point of view, help people in their life—I mean how many people do you know whose lives were transformed by education? Many, right? It's one of the transformative things that governments can do, they can do reliably, that is cost-effective.

And so it's really horrible that this bill is coming forward because what it does is it says that government doesn't prioritize investing in people and if our government can't do that, then it causes us to ask a lot of questions about what the government stands for. And, again, you know, we have tough discussions at home with our kids all the time and it's hard to tell them that sometimes the government makes bad choices. But I think this is one of them, and I really hope that before this becomes a bad choice, it's rethought and re-evaluated and that we turn in a different direction.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Carlyle. That's all the time we have for question period, and appreciate you coming out to make your presentation. I'm glad we could accommodate you.

We'll now move back down the list to the next presenter that we have, which is Chris Rigaux.

Mr. Rigaux, am I saying your last name right?

* (19:50)

Mr. Chris Rigaux (Private Citizen): You're saying it correctly, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. And do you have any written materials that you wish to share with the committee? Okay, you can go ahead with your presentation whenever you're ready.

Mr. Rigaux: Well good evening, members of the committee. Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this evening on an important piece of legislation, Bill 31.

Many other members of the public have spoken and will speak on this bill, including many students, and I encourage this committee to consider their words carefully. While I have not been a university student myself in the better part of a decade—or, well over a decade, I should say, I recall the difficulties I

encountered in financing my education and the struggles that my family faced over repayment of what was relatively modest student loans. And despite now being in the position of—despite that, now being in the position of paying the taxes that make that system work, I continue to strongly believe that students' voices have to be central in any question of affordability and access to post-secondary education.

My comments tonight stem from the simple belief that education is a right of all peoples. While creating a fair and just society requires, you know, more than just the right to an education, it is a major cornerstone of any society that works towards those goals. I also believe it is important—or, sorry, it is impossible to separate this right to education from affordability. Education has to be sufficiently affordable—that it is universally accessible to all Manitobans of all backgrounds.

Virtually none of the major issues that are facing our province and our world today can be solved without a strong educational system, whether it's economic justice and inequality, whether it's reconciliation with indigenous peoples, whether it's reversing the ongoing climate catastrophe that we're all facing right now—they all require a strong education system, and you can't have a strong education system that's not accessible.

Manitoba has—I should not say luckily, because it's not just luck, it's a lot of hard work from a lot of people here and around the province—has one of the most affordable education systems in the country. But I should say, with Canada so far behind the other industrialized countries on this front, we can't rest on our laurels. We have to keep pushing this forward.

Our 'neighbels' to the south are presently grappling with similar questions as they push for a truly universal public health-care system, and that fight comes the closest it ever has to come to fruition. We should listen to those key lessons that they're learning right now in their fight, which is that universality in social programs is incredibly key to having an effective program. It's key to ensuring that those programs have broad, universal support in the public and that they can remain functional, despite what has resulted in an ongoing push from certain corners of society to hack and slash our government budgets into some kind of libertarian dystopia.

Since this legislation is really just another salvo in the ongoing fight over tuition fees in this province and the access to education, I've probably made my

point as effectively as I could at this point. But I'd like to take a few minutes to touch on a few of the specific issues that are within the bill itself.

So first I'll touch on the course-related fees issue. So the elimination of regulations on course-related fees will be damaging to the students and their families. Most of my direct familiarity—coming from several years in the trenches of the student movement—taught me an important lesson. When it comes to fees in university administration, is that when given an inch, they take a mile. It's—what that means is that university administrations are not full of inherently bad people or unethical people or anything like that. But when they deal with the tight budgets of—and, you know, budget pressures of running a multi-million—hundreds of millions, half a billion dollar-organization, they inevitably find ways to shift costs downwards onto students. We saw that during the dearly departed tuition fee freeze, when the university administrations were very creative as they found lots of ways to attach additional fees to students' fee statements, or to ratchet up the massive differential fees that international students face.

While students successfully fought back against some of these, it's inaccurate to look at affordability in this province and ignore that the fees face above and beyond what's strictly considered a tuition fee. Eliminating what regulations do currently exist for those extra fees or course-related fees encourages that approach, especially as this province rolls out what is effectively a near-freeze on university operating grants and continues to play bully with collective bargaining on campus.

Of course, with the attendance-slashing of the core tuition fee regulations in the AA act, post-secondary institutions will likely have less of a reason to squeeze through those, you know, sneaky fees on the side, as they'll now be able to force through increases of, you know, 6, 7 plus per cent, depending on the CPI.

This government has clearly learned from the excesses of its predecessor in the 1990s and understands that Manitobans will not accept double-digit fee increases. However, it takes a little bit of math but not too much, annual increases of 5 per cent plus CPI year after year adds up very quickly. Even during this government's term in office, even at just 5 per cent annually, leaving aside inflation altogether, students are facing increases of nearly 28 per cent over five years and about 48 per cent over eight years, on top of whatever

inflation adds into that, and that's, of course, all compounded as well.

So I'd like to just quickly touch on one final bit before I wrap this up. I'd like to quickly underline what I see is the absurdity of 2.2(3) of the amendments, which would allow the minister to limit fees to the average of the western Canadian—limit them to the average of western Canadian provinces. I'm sure it's not lost on the minister that the three provinces he has included here have suffered under conservative governments, and as a result have some of the highest fees in Canada, so it—hitting that average is a pretty easy target to hit. Even if the recent changes in government in Alberta and British Columbia and, hopefully, soon in Saskatchewan, may alter how our tuition fees relate to theirs, it's a neat bit of political theatre and has no real effect on this government or this minister.

In closing, I believe that most Manitobans would find themselves largely in agreement with what I'm saying here tonight. Manitobans, I think, value fairness. They value—they understand the value of affordability and they don't want to see students foot the bill for Tory budgets. I strongly encourage this government to withdraw Bill 31 and commit to sitting down with representatives of students and other affected groups and work on legislation that would improve and not weaken the accessibility and universality of our post-secondary system here in Manitoba.

Thank you.

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

We'll now move to question period. Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wiebe: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Rigaux. A great presentation, well thought out and well presented. It's almost like you've done this before, so welcome here and thanks for your input.

You mentioned it right at the very end and so I just wondered if you might have a few ideas for the committee—so we're talking about legislation that, obviously, you and many other presenters believe will put up barriers to accessibility. Can you think of ways that the government could take down barriers, ways that they could make university more accessible for people? Maybe just some thoughts for the committee would be helpful.

Mr. Rigaux: Yes, I think there's—I mean there's no shortage of options out there, a lot of, you know, tools in the toolbox, as it were. I think, you know, I think what the previous presenters said in terms of predictability is a key part of it. We've seen, unfortunately, the system of fees and the structure of fees in a bit of state of flux over the last 15, 20 years, and I think students would appreciate predictability, for sure.

I think that regulating international student fees would make a huge step towards making the system as a whole more affordable. They are currently, basically, completely unregulated, which is unfortunate.

I think that the professional programs in this province are unfortunately faced with a different set of ground rules, in some respects, than the regular undergraduate programs would be, and that's—in some ways it may be more problematic because you'll see that the folks that graduate from those programs that go into those professions tend to be selected from a different class of society than you would get when you're talking about—when you have high fees, when you have high barriers.

And those are exactly the professions that we need more diversity in, that we need more, you know, people of lower socioeconomic standing, different ethnic backgrounds, you know, indigenous persons, whatever the case is. We need broader diversity in the medical profession, law profession, so on and so forth.

I mean, I think, you know, I think that what a lot of options have done or a lot of other jurisdictions have done on this issue, we can learn from the lessons that they've gone down the road of and we can avoid that, right. So, you know, I think that sudden shocks to the tuition fees are a disaster.

I mean, you look at the United Kingdom for example. They used to have a free system, then suddenly it's £3,000, suddenly it's £9,000. You've got wide discrepancies between different institutions and, frankly, you probably have a government incoming that will be pushing it back in the other direction in the next six months to 12 months, and I think we should learn a lesson from that and head in that direction as well.

Mrs. Smith: I want to thank you for coming. I also just want to apologize that, you know, you come here to give a presentation, you get no response from our Education Minister. You know, you've taken the

time, you've done your research, you know that this changes lives and, you know, we agree that this bill should be scrapped, that it doesn't make sense.

Can you tell me if you feel like you've been listened to or if this government, you feel, is listening to Manitobans?

*(20:00)

Mr. Rigaux: Well, actually, I have to say it's an improvement from the last time I presented at a legislative committee, when the minister for that particular bill said, thank you, then got up and walked out. So, I'll take what I can get.

I will say that—kidding aside—I mean, I think that the proof is in the pudding. I think that—should the minister come in, listen to what I have to say and then go out and do it? Well, I'm not Manitoba, right? I'm one person amongst many. I can only give my two cents as a university graduate, someone who's been involved in this sort of stuff and has a perspective on it. But I think that, like I said, Manitobans want to see an affordable, accessible system. They want to see it—they want to see their kids go to that system; they want to see their neighbours, their friends' kids go to that system; they want to go to that system—go through that system themselves.

If this government chooses—and that's what this is, a choice—if this government chooses to restrict that system or make it more difficult to access, they'll get what's coming to them, right? They'll feel that at the next election.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Altemeyer, you have 20 seconds for a question and response.

Mr. Altemeyer: All right. What does it say about Conservative parties everywhere that, despite all the evidence to the contrary, they keep doing stupid things like this bill?

Mr. Rigaux: That's not a question I can answer in 20 seconds, but I think that—I think the trend is going in a certain direction, and it's not in the direction that this bill is going.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. The time for question period is over. Thank you very much for coming out and making your presentation this evening.

We'll now move to the next presenter, Mackenzie Peters. Ms. Peters, do you have any written materials for distribution to the committee this evening?

Ms. Mackenzie Peters (Private Citizen): No, I don't.

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

Ms. Peters: Okay. Thank you.

Good evening, everyone. I'd like to address all the honourable members on the standing committee of Human Resources here and just want to say thank you for hearing me out. This is my first time ever doing anything like this, so I really appreciate you guys, like, hear me on this sort of thing.

Yes, so, my name's Mackenzie Peters. I'm a second-year, full-time student with a part-time job, studying at the University of Manitoba, and I just joined the arts student council, so this is kind of new for me. And I would like to briefly share with you some of the reasons of how the passing of this bill would negatively affect myself and thousands of other students like me pursuing post-secondary education here in Manitoba.

Okay, so, some of the reasons that I have are that it's hard for students who work and have to pay for tuition and university to try and avoid the burden of debt. I am someone who pays entirely for my education by myself. I have no external support to help pay for different fees, whether it be textbooks or the tuition itself, and I know first-hand, just as many other students, just how difficult it is to pay tuition without having to take out a student loan and remain debt free.

This also—another reason I have is that this also prevents students from wanting to start post-secondary education and discourages the ones who are already in it to continue due to how expensive tuition will be. I have a friend who planned to pursue post-secondary education without taking out a student loan. Like, she didn't want to take out a student loan or start her future with debt. And she decided not to go to university due to the price of tuition as it is right now. So, if the current price of tuition is unattainable for some people to afford currently, without taking a student loan, how will they ever begin to imagine paying tuition that is even more expensive? If this bill were to go through, situations such as the one she is in will heavily increase.

I know that for myself, it would make it extremely difficult for me to even think about pursuing the third year of my degree as I am certain

that I will not be able to pay for the price of tuition. If this is the case for me, I know that it is also the case for hundreds if not thousands of other students wanting to attend university or currently in university.

If the price of tuition gets raised, we will then miss hidden talent out there that could benefit society, as a higher education will not be an option for many people anymore. It then cannot be surprising to our society, to our province, that students here aren't doing as well. Their choices are driven by financial concerns, and they'll spend more time working, going getting a job, doing anything else than going to university and trying to pursue a higher education. University fees should be reasonable so that education and individual talent comes together for success in the workplace.

In closing, I'm opposed to the bill of—Bill 31. Opposed to the bill. Universities should make it their number one priority for students and those wanting to attend university to have a good experience where the option to attend and have a good experience—with the option to attend and get a higher education is affordable for everyone.

We need a society that has the most current, forward and progressive talent in order to allow society and our province and people to have the accessibility to the best life that each person deserves. If this bill were to pass, it would not be the case. As well, with low tuition fees, it makes our province even more attractive, and so more people will want to come and come to our university, which is really great.

I would also like to leave off with this: if Bill 31 were to pass, the universities would not be interested in the accountability to students' wallets as much as they're interested in the accessibility to students' wallets.

Thank you for your time.

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

We'll now proceed to questions. Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Ms. Peters, for coming out this—tonight and taking advantage of our democratic process. Certainly, you've done a very good job of making your presentation, and I appreciate that you have taken the time to do so.

Mr. Wiebe: Ms. Peters—sorry, it looks like my colleagues also want to ask questions, so you know I'm just going to keep it super brief.

Incredible presentation. It really was. And I really appreciated your perspective as, you know, somebody who—as you said, you're putting yourself through school, you're putting everything into this and taking the time yet to come out here and present. It really does take a lot of courage, and I thought your presentation was great. I thought the perspective as a young person who's talking about, you know, having other people want to come to this province and live in this province and build their futures here is an important perspective for us all to all consider.

So I'll leave it there, but thank you so much for coming.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Peters, would you like to respond?

Ms. Peters: Yes. I'd like to thank you very much. It's very kind.

Mrs. Smith: So, first of all, I just want to thank you for your presentation. I want to say, you know, it's unfortunate when we hear stories of, you know, young people coming and saying they might not be able to continue their education because of this bill. And, you know, I really hope that this government is listening to our young people and that they understand the impacts that this is going to have, you know, on people going on to EIA, living in poverty, you know, becoming homeless, because that's the reality of what this bill is going to do.

Can you tell us a little bit about, you know, some of the students that you're going to school with and some of the struggles that they're facing now without even this tuition increase?

Ms. Peters: Thank you for your question.

Yes, I have a good amount of friends who are just like me who pay entirely for everything themselves. I have some students that live on campus and they pay for that, as well as tuition fees themselves. And it's really hard—it's hard to maintain. Like, you can't get a car, you can't—you only work, you don't really have—like, you can't really have a social life other than school, which is totally okay for some people. But, for the most part, you should be able to like maintain a balance. But there's just like too much of a stress put on myself and lots of my

friends who go to university with these types of struggles, so—

Mr. Altemeyer: Yes, Mackenzie, that was a great presentation. I mean, you really brought home for the committee your personal story. And nobody can deny your own personal experience.

And I'm going to ask you a favour, and I won't be a bit surprised if you say no. I won't be insulted at all. But I'm wondering if, for the benefit of the committee, you could walk us through what a typical day in your life is like. Trying to put yourself through school, going to school, the jobs you probably have to work in addition to school, the things you would like to do that you can't do, things that probably members of this committee take for granted—maybe have forgotten because it was so long ago and they may have been in university.

What is life like in your shoes? Walk us through a day. When you get up, what do you have to get through?

*(20:10)

Ms. Peters: Thank you for your question.

Okay, so a day for me would be waking up and—waking up early to catch the bus because I haven't been able to buy a car because I need the money to pay for tuition. And it's really hard because, like, on the times where you need a car just for like social outings or anything that you need to get to, like, the bus schedule doesn't always run at the times you need and it's not always convenient. So, yes, I'm always taking the bus in the morning, and then I get to school and I do my school work and everything, and then usually I go from the school to my house and get ready for work. And then I work the evening shifts, because I can't work during the day. I only can work part-time but they're long part-time shifts. Like, sometimes I don't get off until 11:30, 12.

And then I wake up the next day at 8:30 to go to my class again and it's just a cycle that continues. And the amount of extra money lying around, like, there isn't much. Like, it's just me paying for my fees. And, thankfully, my parents have been so gracious and they don't make me have to pay for rent, as long as I go to university but university is expensive, yes, as it is. So, yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you very much, Ms. Peters, for coming out to committee this evening and making a presentation.

We'll now move to the next presenter, Eric Schillberg.

Mr. Schillberg, welcome to the Legislature. Or perhaps I should say welcome back, if I understand correctly.

Do you have any written materials to share with the committee at this time?

Mr. Eric Schillberg (University of Manitoba Engineering Society): I do.

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

Mr. Schillberg: Thank you very much.

Hello, honourable members. My name is Eric Schillberg and I'm the vice-stick, operations, with the University of Manitoba Engineering Society, UMES.

UMES is the governing society for undergraduate students within the faculty of engineering, representing approximately 1,800 students. As an executive within our society, my portfolio oversees the management of our society's governing documents and external government relations.

I am here this evening to present on Bill 31 to provide you with the opinion of the undergraduate students within engineering at the University of Manitoba.

To begin, the University of Manitoba Engineering Society has adopted the following official stance as of Wednesday, October 25th, in relation to Bill 31: The University of Manitoba Engineering Society does not oppose increases to undergraduate tuition so long as proper justification is provided to spend funds responsibly and appropriately with sufficient transparency and accountability to directly improve the quality and quantity of undergraduate student education and resources.

Our statement is clear in communicating the opinion of undergraduate engineering students in two aspects. First, increases in tuition to undergraduate engineering programs at the University of Manitoba will be tolerated by UMES provided appropriate use of funds with clear transparency and accountability.

Second, increases in tuition to undergraduate engineering programs at the University of Manitoba will not be tolerated by UMES if student tuition fees are not used to directly improve the quality and quantity of undergraduate education—engineering education and resources.

As engineering students, we recognize the paramount importance that quality education plays in

our ability to become future professional engineers. University provides us with the technical skills and abilities to improve upon our knowledge base, problem analysis, design implementation and project management. It teaches us the importance of effective teamwork to strive for high standards, adhere to proper ethics and professionalism and the impact we can have on society as engineers.

An engineering education provides undergraduate students with exposure to each of these elements in an innovative, challenging and supportive environment. In short, our education helps us to improve upon our weaknesses and embolden our strengths now so that in the future we can make technically supportive decisions to solve the tough issues facing society. However, without the support of our faculty, fellow students and support staff, it will be a daunting task to ensure all engineering students receive the level of education they require to succeed.

One of the problems with ensuring the continued success of our faculty is cost. The cost associated with providing high-quality educational services does not go unseen by our society. We understand the control that funding has over our education and access to students resources. If UMES can contribute to achieving a higher quality of education, we are more than willing to assist in whatever capacity possible, including raising tuition.

For example, engineering students willingly increased their own undergraduate tuition in 2016. The Faculty of Engineering had received support and funding to construct a new engineering building. We noted the benefit this building would bring to address the growing concern of depleting study and lounge space, research labs, student group spaces, and team workshops.

Thus UMES put forward a referendum to approve a 5 per cent increase to the Engineering Endowment Fund credit hour fee and an up-front cost of \$37.50 per semester for three years for building costs to be paid to and distributed by the Engineering Endowment Fund.

It is critical to understand that undergraduate engineering students approved this referendum because the funding model was responsible, it was communicated transparently, and it improved the quality and quantity of engineering education and resources.

Correspondingly, it is acceptable to expect a university to increase tuition fees to sustain their

ability to provide services and to grow enrollment. With the current tuition capped at the rate of inflation, the number of students receiving an engineering education will increase far too slowly, perhaps decline, and the direct entry grade requirements will remain staggeringly high.

An increase in tuition within the Faculty of Engineering will allow for the placement of additional professors, teaching assistants, and support staff which will translate into more classes, labs, and tutorials for more students.

The larger enrollment will benefit the students by necessitating a lower direct-entry grade requirement, as many students who are turned away from engineering are academically capable of succeeding in the program but did not meet the minimum requirement.

Additionally, an increase in tuition will see a growth in faculty-provided bursaries, allowing students who rely on financial aid to complete their degrees. At the moment an allotted proportion of engineering tuition is put aside to provide students with financial assistance.

The understanding and opinion towards an increase in tuition is unique within engineering, as we rely heavily on laboratories, engineering tools, new technological advances, innovative designs, professional teachers and teaching assistants. Other faculties may not receive as much of a benefit given a tuition increase as they do not rely as heavily as engineering does on its faculty services.

As provided on the University of Manitoba website, engineering has one of the highest average tuitions for a first degree program at \$6,500 per year. Despite having a high relative tuition at the University of Manitoba, we are not opposed to increases in tuition provided they coincide with our official statement.

In keeping with the words accountability and transparency, we are pleased to hear about the new budget model being implemented at the University of Manitoba. The new budget model will allow for tuition fees to proceed directly to the faculty to distribute as needed. Based on 85 per cent towards the faculty offering the course and 15 per cent towards the faculty the student belongs to.

This will allow for undergraduate engineering students to provide comments and concerns and receive answers in a more timely and clear manner regarding the use of their tuition costs.

Furthermore, UMES is pleased to hear that this bill introduces the constraint to keep average tuition prices below those of our fellow western universities. It is an amendment that tells students that despite having the new tuition cap, university costs will not increase above the next western competitive average.

This will ensure that costs stay comparatively low and affordable while the engineering faculty receives required funds to grow our program.

A frequent comment heard from other engineering universities during competitions and conferences is that Manitoba has a competitively low tuition rate for engineering. In some cases, it is one of the sole reasons to receive an engineering degree in Manitoba. If tuition fees remained the lowest among our fellow western universities, this will continue to be a reason to stay or migrate to Manitoba for post-secondary education.

To conclude, introducing new legislation and creating amendments that increase student costs will always be met with resistance. However, there is a clear difference between increasing tuition unnecessarily to buffer operating costs, and increasing tuition to ensure that student services are not cut and quality education continues to be provided.

It is our hope that the intent of Bill 31 is of the latter and that increases in tuition will be spent appropriately and responsibly to ensure a higher degree of engineering education is provided to a greater number of current and potential engineering students.

Thank you.

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

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much, Mr. Schillberg, for coming out this evening. I certainly appreciate that point of view of Manitoba's engineering students. I understand you are very familiar with the process we're having here this evening, so welcome back to the Legislature and I appreciate the very good comments you have brought forward.

* (20:20)

Mr. Wiebe: Well I thank you, as well, Mr. Schillberg. I think I remember days when you would call me Mr. Wiebe and you would get coffee

or drinks for us—one of our former pages here, so, Mr. Schillberg, it's amazing to see you back here in this capacity to represent students and to express your voice in this way, and I think it speaks highly of the page program and of your commitment to students.

I'm just—in terms of your presentation and specifically with the following—sorry, the official stance of the engineering students in particular with regards to sufficient—quote, "sufficient transparency and accountability to directly improve the quality and quantity of undergraduate student education and resources."

I'm wondering, would it surprise you to know that grants to universities have been frozen for this year and that capital spending in universities has been withdrawn and many projects that were already planned for the university won't go forward? Would it surprise you to know that as tuition goes up grants to universities have been frozen and capital projects withdrawn? Would that—does that fit with your faculty's or your group's statement, do you believe?

Mr. Schillberg: My statement is on behalf of the University of Manitoba Engineering Society, and I cannot represent the other students behind me. The university of engineering is quite specific in that it receives a large amount of its donations from outside donors. I am not surprised to hear that the operating grant was frozen. I'm well aware of that, but there is a much different analysis of the budget that comes into Engineering than what goes towards other faculties at the university.

Mr. Altemeyer: Thank you for your presentation. Good to see you again, and I appreciate you're here not as an individual but representing your society.

Many of the presentations that we've heard tonight, of course, have been raising concerns about what such high tuition increases will do for accessibility, particularly for lower-income students. I note you referenced, and I thank you for doing so because I hadn't been aware of this, a new budget model at your post-secondary institution with 85 per cent of the money going to faculty and 15 towards the faculty—like, the professors 85 per cent, 15 per cent to the faculty to which they belong. Is none of the new money that would be raised through increased tuition going to be allocated to help keep the program affordable through, you know, additional supports for people from a lower socio-economic background?

Mr. Schillberg: I would like to reference you to one of my paragraphs in my speech. It specifically talks about the allocation of bursary money based on engineering tuition. So a proportion of all engineering tuition based on percentage, not on—based on capital amount is dedicated towards bursaries and scholarships. So, with an increase in tuition, that amount also increases, and with the new budget model it allows us to take our concerns directly to the dean and the dean is amazing for our faculty. I can't say enough positive words about him. So, when we bring these concerns to him, he takes them quite seriously. And I can definitely speak for—on behalf of our society to say that we believe that those bursaries and scholarships will remain the way they are, and they will also increase with a higher tuition.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Altemeyer, just one minute remaining for question and answer.

Mr. Altemeyer: Great, thank you very much.

How many of the other professional faculties are—that you may be aware of—do they have a similar policy in place and similar support from their academic leads?

Mr. Schillberg: I am not aware of other faculties, and that is why I specifically referenced the fact that Engineering has a unique perspective on this. So I cannot speak on behalf of other faculties.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, I want to thank you, Mr. Schillberg, for your presentation to the committee, and I wish you well the remainder of the evening.

We'll now move to our next presenter, Mathew Scammell. Mathew Scammell? We'll move him to the bottom of the list.

Jennifer Butler? Jennifer Butler. We'll move her to the end of the list.

Taylor Daigneault. Mr. Daigneault, am I saying that approximately correct?

Mr. Taylor Daigneault (Private Citizen): Approximately correct.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, I apologize. *Mon français, ce n'est pas bon. [My French, it isn't good.]*

Mr. Daigneault, if you—do you have a written presentation to share with the committee?

Mr. Daigneault: Sorry?

Mr. Chairperson: Do you have written materials to share with the committee?

Mr. Daigneault: Yes, a spreadsheet is being passed out.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Daigneault. You may proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Daigneault: All right. Thank you.

So, my name is Taylor Daigneault. I'm an education student at the University of Winnipeg. I'm the education director for the University of Winnipeg Students' Association and also the president of the Education Students' Association there, but today I'm here as a private citizen. I'm talking about myself and my family.

And it's come to our attention that the education—The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act in its current form will allow universities in Manitoba to raise tuition by 5 per cent on top of the rate of inflation. Now, as the first person in my direct ancestry to complete a degree, that's terrifying. It's absolutely unacceptable, and I will go as far as to say that it's cruel.

I'm in the integrated education program at the University of Winnipeg. Last year, I finished a bachelor of arts, and next year will be the final year of courses and practicum placements before I'm a certified teacher. Obviously, therefore, I'm very passionate about well-funded education programs and, above all else, programs that are accessible and meet the needs of its learners. And I'm going to repeat that again: programs that are accessible.

Now, my family cannot afford to send me to university. My father's bankrupt, and he's responsible for supporting my two teenage daughters—or, sisters—*[interjection]*

Yes—his teenage daughters—and also his four-year-old daughter, my half-sister. Now, my mother is receiving disability payments, and she's unable to work. And even if she were working, she spent the past five years as a single parent and has been the official caregiver of my two sisters. And over the course of nearly a decade, she has done everything in her power to save up money for me to go to school. By the time I was 20, she had raised \$2,000, and it's sitting in limbo right now because we can't—I can't take that from her.

My tuition has been paid for through scholarships and bursaries, nearly half of which have come from the Manitoba Metis Federation. Now, members of the committee will note that the Metis

don't have any treaties with the Canadian government, so it's a little surprising that my provincial—the provincial government of my nation is putting more effort into making education accessible for me than the provincial government of my state, a state that prints money.

What my provincial government seems to be doing is trying to lock me out and lock out my family as well. My tuition this year was \$3,333.56 before fees. With the fees included, it came to \$5,551.98. That's more than I made working this summer as a research assistant for the university that I attend.

Now, Statistics Canada placed the inflation rate for Manitoba's consumer price index at 1.3 per cent in 2016. With the exception of 2015, that's the lowest it's been in five years, maybe more; I couldn't find statistics before 2011.

So, assuming the 2016 average rate of inflation is going to be the norm for the coming year, which is unlikely—we have a Liberal government—next year, I'll be paying around \$3,543.57. Plus course fees, that once unregulated by Bill 31, will dramatically impact my ability to stay out of debt. It may change my life plans. I'm planning on moving out and moving in with my partner of nine years this summer if we can afford it.

Now, even worse, these increases are not a one-time concern. Once I graduate, my sister will begin her post-secondary experience. And using the tuition fee table from the University of Winnipeg's website and the 2016 inflation rate of 1.3 per cent, we can assume that her tuition will be around \$4,767.93—or, 39 cents plus the rate of inflation if she attends the University of Winnipeg for a three-year degree in science. I've included her; that's Sarah at the bottom of the tables. If we look at Raina, we can assume that her tuition will be even higher.

Now, I'm going to skip over some of this because you have the numbers in front of you. I've been able to prepare this, and I don't really—I know as a math teacher that when I talk about numbers, everyone's eyes will glaze over. This is something that I assume, that as the people looking at this bill, you have already looked over. You have looked at how the fees are going to impact students over the next 20 years, and you have looked at the cost of a three-year degree in arts and sciences and education for those students. If you haven't, now would be a good time to start consulting those tables. Before

this bill hit the table would have been a good time to start consulting those tables.

* (20:30)

Now, earlier I described the contents of Bill 31 as terrifying and unacceptable. And I think I've demonstrated why my family is watching to see who's ethically opposed to preventing access to education in a public system, but I do have one final example. I'm going to talk about my half-sister.

She's four years old. She's brilliant. She is curious about the world and she's so creative. And when she graduates high school in 2031, judging by the shades of grey in the room, a lot of the people here will be retired. But I will be the same age as my dad when she was born. Her first year of post-secondary education, assuming a very low inflation rate of 1.3 that holds over 16 years, will cost over \$9,335.70 plus 13 years of unregulated fee increases. A three-year degree will cost her \$29,808.59. That's unacceptable.

It's unlikely that—if she could start saving now as a four year old—that she'd would be able to afford her degree by the time she graduates. I could only imagine the costs that my children will be expected to pay.

So thank you for taking the time to hear my concerns, and I understand that you're tasked with a very difficult job. And it's the job of hearing, and truly listening and empathizing with the people who come here today and their various concerns.

So to make this easier for you, I've condensed my main points into three very basic things: Bill 31 is terrifying, it is unacceptable, and it is cruel.

Are there any questions?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Daigneault, for your presentation. We'll now ask if members of the committee have questions for the presenter.

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for coming out this evening. Obviously you have a very busy life, so I appreciate you taking the time to come and express your opinion.

As you probably have read the bill, you would note that there is a cap as comparing our tuition fees to other jurisdictions. So it is not an open-ended number. But I appreciate what you have put forward.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Daigneault, would you like to respond?

Mr. Daigneault: I'm sorry, I couldn't hear him. I—could—would the minister be willing to repeat himself a little louder?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you. I did appreciate you coming out this evening. I hope you caught that comment—and especially on your busy life.

I'm sure you have read the bill, and as such, you would probably appreciate the fact that there is a limiting factor in terms of how we compare with other jurisdictions. So it is not an open-ended rise in tuition, and I do hope you appreciate that.

Mr. Daigneault: So recognizing that the cost of tuition is going to be tied to other prairie provinces, I believe, was the—yes. That's still not a great safety harness, because prairie provinces—and all of the provinces—are actively increasing tuition from what I understand. So it—that's great, but it's still going to increase.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions from the committee?

Mrs. Smith: So I just want to thank you for your presentation. I, too, am a first generation of a graduate from a university.

When I look at my grandchildren, I'm hoping that they'll also be graduates of a university, but I'm really afraid of, you know, what this bill is going to mean for future generations. And you talked about your children. I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about, you know, what that's going to mean for you moving out—or, potentially moving out, having children, and finishing your degree.

Mr. Daigneault: So what I'm looking at right now in the immediate future is somehow finding another at least \$250 to cover the costs of the tuition increase, somehow finding a way to plan for a—the increase in fees, which are going to happen but that I cannot control, because they'll be completely unregulated.

I'm hoping that I'm going to be financially stable. I'm hoping that I'm not going to be going into debt, but my partner is also a university student. We're going to be balancing our different budgets with our tuition fees, with the cost of food, with the cost of rent. And it's going to be a little bit more difficult now trying to make those plans.

Mr. Altemeyer: Terrifying, unacceptable and cruel are pretty good ways to summarize this proposed legislation. I thank you for bringing that perspective forward. Also want to thank you for laying out for the committee the long-term implications of this type

of a drastic right-wing policy shift when it comes to the central question of how accessible do we want post-secondary education to be.

And you did a very good job of rebutting the minister's point as well. There is no guarantee for you or anyone else who has presented here tonight, that the so-called cap included in here is going to amount to a hill of beans. Why on earth should your tuition be set based on who people in Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC vote for at the provincial election. You know, it makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

I'm wondering if you might also be able to share with the committee what's the impact on you and your partner of this government's cancellation of the post-graduate tax credit.

That, of course, allowed—would've allowed you both to be able to get up to 10 per cent of your total tuition back in a tax credit every year for a number of years afterward. So what is that going to do for your ability to pay off any debts you might have and begin your professional career without a big cloud of debt hanging over your head.

Mr. Daigneault: I have been a student for five years now; it'll be six when I graduate. My partner has been a student for, I believe, also five years and likely has one or two more to go unless she somehow takes a double course load next year. So looking at the way that we can plan our finances once we actually start making enough money to be paying taxes, hopefully, in the coming years, that's—it's another small thing that's going to impact us along the—in the long run.

And that's really what I've been trying to focus on with talking about my family, with talking about my sister's debt. This bill is not a won-and-done situation; this bill is a long-term—it has long-term implications for its citizens in Manitoba, for the students that I am working with right now and for the students that I'll be working with for most of my life.

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

We'll now move to the next presenter. That's Edmund Machona. Edmund Machona? Okay, we'll move him to the end of the list.

Wesley Fallis.

Mr. Fallis, do you have any written materials you'd like to distribute to the committee this evening?

Mr. Wesley Fallis (Private Citizen): I do not.

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

Mr. Fallis: Good evening, and thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. My name's Wesley Fallis. I'm from St-Pierre-Jolys, a small francophone community south of the city. Like other small towns, our community is much larger than just the town. It's comprised of the surrounding farm area in the municipality of De Salaberry. We are a very tight-knit community that tries our best to help each other out.

Many of the folks I grew up are farmers. I even spent my high school years working on various dairy farms. Coming from a family that has no post-secondary education isn't uncommon in my community. Many come from homes with only one parent who worked. Oftentimes this person was a—often the sole income earner was a tradesperson. I had friends that helped their parents pay bills like hydro. These—for these people, post-secondary education is seen as an institution for a privileged class, and so do I, which is why I took three years before I decided to go to school. I did not think it was feasible. I'm actually a journeyman cladder. I install exteriors. I quickly became a foreman; I'm very good at my trade. I'm—I would've been working at the Keeyask hydro dam, as we speak, making six figures this year, but I decided to go to school because I want to make a difference in people's lives.

* (20:40)

For those who decide to attend post-secondary education, for—that's who live in rural communities, we are faced additional barriers than our counterparts who live in the city. Commuting takes time and money, two scarce resources that students just don't have enough of. Finding employment that works around a student's schedule and travelling back and forth to the city and to our towns is difficult. University education is already quite taxing. What goes into our courses goes well beyond the classroom.

Raising the price of tuition forces young people to work more during the school year and—which means less time to study and complete assignments. I live in St-Pierre. It's a 60-minute drive to the University of Winnipeg each day, every day. I ask you: what can you accomplish in two hours? How much money can you make in two hours? This puts us at a disadvantage when it comes to earning

income and managing our course load, and for those of us living in the country that—we make this trip multiple times a year. This is times that we aren't—this is time that we are taking that we aren't making money, we aren't studying—two of the things that students worry about the most.

Now, like I said, I used to milk cows. Waking up at the crack of dawn, working hard until the sun goes down. While I was in high school, I would milk cows before school and after school, and I spent every weekend on the farm. These men and women, our Manitoba dairy farmers, are the hardest-working people I know. It's this work-ethic that has kept me sane while—the past few months while I try and juggle student life and keeping my bills paid.

You see, for family farmers, members of the community—or, members of their family are very important to their economic well-being. Having one or two or three members of the family attending post-secondary education has a huge effect on what they are able to accomplish in a given day. Therefore, they have less money coming in. And this government wants to raise the money coming out of their pockets. How is this doing Manitobans a service? Is this government willing to gamble the economic future of this province on whether Manitobans can pay—to afford to go to school?

Now, there's many who did attend university where I come from, and the majority of them working in health-care industry, the education system or other government agencies. Every one of these sectors is under attack by the current administration. These are mothers, fathers, brother, sisters, our hockey coaches, our baseball 'coachers'. So, again, the government is reducing the money that Manitoba households are earning and—reducing the money entering Manitoba's households and raising the money exiting it.

There's an old adage: it takes a village to raise a child. And, in my childhood, this is true. The actions this government is taking is very personal to me. You're affecting the livelihood of the people I care dearly. We don't lock our doors. I knock on my friend's door and go in at any moment. We often gather around other people's tables to talk about anything and everything—the hockey game or what's happening in our local community. We as a community, I would consider us a family.

The reality is there's a large percentage of Manitobans that work in the public sector. Education

is one of the best ways to shrink the wealth gap. There is a wealth gap between rural—people who—living in rural communities, and those living in the city centre. Bill 31 will make shrinking that gap much more difficult. The price of education is one of the number one selling factors for Manitoba use—universities. Are you willing to put that at risk? What will happen when the costs of education in Manitoba's the same at the University of Toronto? Who will want to come here? Why would anybody want to stay?

Not only does this attract people, but it keeps people in Manitoba. And, when people study here and live here, they stay here. Also, wasn't the frugality, the—how cheap Manitoba is one of the key selling points to gain the Amazon second head office? Raising tuition doesn't help Manitoban students or the Manitoba economy. At the end of the day, if Manitobans have less money in their pockets, they're spending less and contributing less to the economy.

Okay, I'm also—I'm from St-Pierre, but I'm also part of the LGBT community. I was lucky enough to grow up in a loving and accepting family. This was not a case for many of my friends. Even though my parents accepted me for who I was, there wasn't very much queer visibility in rural Manitoba. University gave me a place where there was visibility, and who I was was normalized, so a safe haven. It opened my eyes to an entire community, to a set of people, organizations, and a world that, where I come from, it's just not talked about and it's unheard of.

These institutions and groups [*inaudible*] and the programs they hold are extremely important to the people—to the kids and the people who didn't have the support I had. For those who don't have accepting families, places like the University of Winnipeg's LGBT centre are literal lifesavers. I have friends—you know, those close friends you have that you consider them family and no longer friends? I have friends that aren't—weren't only not accepted by their family, but were kicked out, which is why access to these post-secondary education is so important.

You see, I have friends that were living on the street at 15 and 16 doing whatever they could to get by because their family did not believe who they were was acceptable under their roof. You wouldn't imagine what a 15- and 16-year-old will do to get by. And, honestly, I don't blame them because most of

the time three hots and a cot is more—is better than a squeaky clean criminal record.

I was informed that the Education Minister, Mr. Wishart, you were present at Prairie Pride in Portage la Prairie. Were you—are you aware of the counter-protesters—the counter-protesters that were handing out flyers with nooses on them that saying homosexuals should die?

This is a reality that rural people face. This is still—people still hold these values and these ideas in our society. This is why having access to post-secondary education where free thought and diversity is accepted and even considered as a positive is so important. For these marginalized groups, access to university is the difference between life and death.

This administration has said raising tuition—has said that they are raising for the best interests of students. However, I have friends in the—I have queer friends in the Hanover School Division. Where was the government when my friends needed your help?

Those students need this government to support them and make Manitoba schools more inclusive. Why do I have to wait to university to feel this sense of belonging? It's insane.

This government wasn't there when those students needed them. Why would I believe that the government has their best interests in mind now?

Post-secondary education as an institution is the best way for people to better their lives. Whether you want to get ag degree to improve your family business or study social sciences to make the world a better place, Bill 31 doesn't make education more accessible.

If this government truly wants the betterment for Manitobans, they would make education more accessible and not less.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Fallis. Am I saying that name right? Fallis?

Mr. Fallis: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: We'll now move to questions. Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Mr. Wishart: Thank you, Mr. Fallis, for coming out this evening and making your presentation. We are

an inclusive province and I certainly was pleased to participate in the Pride Parade, and I was very much aware of the protesters there.

They have the right to protest, as do the people that were on the front steps earlier today. I would like to recognize your trade accreditation, in particular, and it's an accomplishment to become a journeyman in any trade, and so congratulations on that, and I appreciate your point of view.

Coming from a rural area I know that there are many additional costs that go with living rural and remote and trying to have a post-secondary education that are related to. Thank you.

Mr. Fallis: Thank you for your time.

Mr. Altemeyer: You packed a lot into your presentation. It took a lot of thought and a lot of courage to do that. I want to thank you for your efforts and, even from the brief moment we've had to learn a little bit about your life, this is not new territory for you, quite clearly. So you are treading some really important ground and I applaud your efforts.

* (20:50)

It saddens me, actually, that, you know, as much as some progress has been made, and I think back to when I was on campus I was in the environment group. Right next door was the Womyn's Centre, and next door to that was the Rainbow Resource Centre. And, you know, the students all got attracted to different things, but we do lots of stuff together, and there were so many students back then saying exactly the same thing that you're saying now, that the university was their first haven, their first safe space where they could be validated, where they could feel safe just being who you are and the beautiful people that you are.

And I'm—I will express some disappointment with the minister's answer to your question about the protesters in Portage la Prairie. I believe the minister's had a long, hard evening. And he actually spoke, if I read his quote in the paper at the time, much more definitively when that protest took place. There needs to always be a distinction made, in my opinion—and university helps us learn these things—that the right to protest is one thing, but to call for physical harm to others under the guise of protest is not acceptable. And I didn't hear the minister correctly articulate that position, so if you wanted to take an opportunity to offer your thoughts on that front, I would invite you to do so.

Mr. Fallis: Well, personally, I've been in physical altercations because people disagreed with who I am, but that's not common in our society, at least not in my experience, but still, the rhetoric coming out of society, the rhetoric coming out of high office, the rhetoric coming out of influential institutions like the church, have a huge impact on how young people see themselves.

Young people have a lot going on in general with—in their entire lives, so accessing university and having one of those big burdens on their back lifted, where they can just feel more comfortable and concentrate on the task at hand, is crucial to these young people.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, seeing no further questions from the committee, I do want to thank you, Mr. Fallis, for your presentation this evening and wish you an enjoyable remainder to your evening.

We have one more presenter on the list before us, which is Hilary Lockhart.

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

Ms. Hilary Lockhart (Private Citizen): I do not.

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

Ms. Lockhart: I just want to thank the committee for allowing me the opportunity to voice my opinion tonight.

I'm an Aboriginal student attending the University of Manitoba obtaining my undergraduate degree majoring in English literature, minor in history. With plans to attend law school, I have wanted to be a lawyer from the time I was five years old, now with the new Bill 31, I may not get the chance to do that because I won't be able to afford it.

I just moved here recently a couple months ago from Ontario because Manitoba tuition is cheaper than what it is in Ontario, and going to school in Ontario was not an option for me because of the expense. I can barely afford school now. I'm a student that has several disabilities including post-traumatic stress, borderline personality disorder, chronic depression and stage 4 endometriosis.

After my health plan, I'm stuck paying over \$300 for medication. If tuition is to go up, I will not be able to afford my medication, and if I can't take my medication, I won't be able to function properly.

With endometriosis, as you may or may not know, it's a very painful disorder that—sometimes I'm bedridden for weeks at a time. This medication saves my life. It allows me to have a normal, functional life. As—due to my disabilities I'm unable to work so, if tuition goes up, how am I supposed to make ends meet to—and afford to pay my bills plus tuition and books on top of that?

I rely on the Ontario Student Assistance Program solely. The Ontario Student Assistance Program caps out at \$16,180, so when I start law school, if tuition is to go up, I'll have what? Maybe three, four thousand dollars to live off of for the whole year?

My father, who is a lawyer, has always encouraged me to follow my dreams; that has led me to also being a lawyer. But if the tuition goes up, the government of Manitoba will be ripping that dream away from me.

I'm a hard-working student with a 4.0 GPA. If this bill passes, I'm going to have to drop out and move home, because I will not be able to afford it, due to my low income. A student of law pays over \$11,000. Now can you imagine how much that that's going to be with the tuition hike two, three years from now when I'm a first-year?

I moved here to Manitoba to obtain the education that I deserved and I wanted. My generation are the leaders of tomorrow. How is the Manitoba government supposed to 'subtain' a good economy if students can't even afford to go to school?

In order for students to get out of poverty they need a good education. But with inflated tuition fees, that will bring more stress and more burden on students. This bill will make it more difficult for students to obtain an education that they deserve and that they want. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for your presentation. I certainly appreciate your point of view. Welcome to Manitoba. Certainly, we'll take into consideration what you've had to say this evening.

Mr. Wiebe: I wanted to thank you, Ms. Lockhart, for your presentation.

You've hit on a number of key points that I think others have pointed out as well and, you know, I think you've talked a little bit about the barriers that

are already there for accessing post-secondary education and how you see that this is just one more of those barriers. So I think the personal stories, as I think my colleague from Wolseley has said earlier this evening, these personal stories are really what I think affects the committee members. So thank you for bringing that perspective.

I just wanted to be clear, so you've come to Manitoba, you've decided to be here to get your education in Manitoba. Are you saying that because of this tuition increase there's a very real possibility that you might have to leave this province, not build your future here if tuition does, in fact, increase as much as being proposed by the government?

Ms. Lockhart: Yes, that is exactly what I'm saying because, like, it—when I start law school if this tuition—if this bill passes and the tuition goes up that much, I'll have maybe three to four thousand dollars for the year to live off of. That pays for rent, that pays for groceries, that pays for bills.

Mr. Altemeyer: I'm really struck by your story as I've been struck by many of the stories, and I don't want to gloss over the courage that it takes to come forward and speak about your daily reality and the strength of spirit that it takes just for you to be able to do what you've done so far. And I'm sure you feel incredibly proud of what you've accomplished, as do your family. But I just wanted to say that you have every right to feel that way, and so do they.

It also strikes me that when you look at, you know, the traditional Conservative myth, you should be their poster child. I mean look at your shirt, right? Dreams don't work unless you do. Here you are, you're facing every imaginable barrier, alright, you're conquering each one with your own individual effort, putting your best foot forward, trying to build a better life for yourself and yet it's a Conservative government that is on the cusp tonight of yanking that out of your hands.

What does that tell you about this government's capacity to listen to the stories that we've heard here tonight?

* (21:00)

Ms. Lockhart: Honestly, that tells me that this government just doesn't care about what the students need, what the students deserve as an education, what they want for an education.

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

Seeing none, then I want to thank you, Ms. Lockhart, for your presentation this evening.

Now, that does take us to the bottom of the original list of presenters. I will now go through the presenters who were not able to speak to see if any of them are here at this time. Or should I call for additional, first? We're going to finish the—all right. Well, I'm the chair. I'm just going to do it this way, all right?

Audrey Mercado. Audrey Mercado.

Brayana Petti. Brayana Petti.

Brittney Thomas-Ljungberg. Brittney Thomas-Ljungberg.

Jade DeFehr. Jade DeFehr.

So all four of those presenters will be dropped from the list.

Continuing on: Breana Johnston. Breana Johnston. She'll be dropped from the list.

Basia Sokal. Basia Sokal will be dropped from the list.

Mathew Scamdell. *[phonetic]* Mathew Scammell. I said that wrong, I—I'm told there's a typo there.

All right, Mathew, welcome to the committee. Do you have any written materials that you'd like to share?

Mr. Mathew Scammell (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. Well then, you can go ahead with your presentation, Mr. Scammell, whenever you're ready.

Mr. Scammell: Okay. Good evening, thanks for having the public—giving the opportunity to actually kind of voice our opinions and everything like that.

Just to kind of give you a background of myself, I'm in my final year of environmental science at the University of Manitoba, so I'm currently kind of nearing the end of it. As I hope a few of you know—I'm assuming that a few of you have gone to some sort of post-secondary education, so that's awesome that you can kind of hopefully relate to what we're talking about.

The reason I got into environmental science was because I went to University 1 and kind of took a whole bunch of random courses. I had no idea what I was doing going into it, and that—the only reason I

could actually do that was because I don't require student loans or anything like that.

Like, I'm not paying my own tuition. My parents do pay for that, and so I'm not actually—they made the responsible decision to kind of help out all of—myself and all my siblings back when they were starting to save money and everything like that. So I just wanted to kind of give you that disclosure, that these tuition fees will not only be indirectly affecting me, but it will be affecting my parents, as well.

I still have a younger brother who's not here tonight, obviously, but he's in the middle of an engineering degree, and so I can sympathize with him as well. I have tons of friends at the university and I know lots of people in their first and second year, in their third years, as well. I don't think they would be very appreciative of having their tuition all of a sudden be hiked, as well.

So essentially, I'm coming here today as a concerned citizen, an engaged constituent. I vote all—every single chance I get. I voice my opinions to others, I talk about politics. I'm, you know, that person that doesn't like to—you know, people don't like to be around, or anything like that. And I'm also coming here as a bit of an angry student.

You know, I—put yourselves in our shoes. I'm sure you've been there before. I don't know—I hope—I'm not going to ask for a show of hands or anything, but I hope some of you have gone to school before. I know you have, Mr. Wishart. I think you did agriculture. So that's awesome. But when you're in school, when any of you might have been in school, you probably—maybe the provincial government had been announcing something like that.

I don't know what kind of thoughts you might have had, but I'm sure you can somewhat put yourselves in our shoes. Kind of have a bit of empathy and just think about how you would feel if you were in our position and kind of, you know—we're facing the possibility of increased tuition, which a lot of people need to pay for. They have to, you know, take out student loans and everything like that, or a line of credit. And so I want you to just kind of keep that in mind when you actually are considering putting this bill forward.

I understand why the government—why you guys are doing this. You know, you need to balance the budget. You have to fulfil your promises. You know, fiscal responsibility, everything like that. I totally get it. I'm not saying that shouldn't be done. We—I'm not

saying we should be in the red year after year. I don't think overspending is a great idea either, but one thing to—one thing that I would like to add on top of that is that, you know, we're not asking to reduce tuition or to get rid of tuition fees at all; we just want them to stay the rate of inflation. It's hard enough kind of paying for your own post-secondary education as it is. Inflation's—I don't know what the actual percentage is, but, you know, it's a lot to kind of increase every year as well, and then allowing institutions to kind of increase even more, I think, is irresponsible. It's almost certain that they will. So, even though it might not be yourselves doing it inherently, you know that you're giving them that power.

So this kind of brings me to the scholarships and bursaries program that you've been touting, raising it from, I think, \$9 million to \$20 million, two thirds of which will now be funded by the private investment. I would like to outline that I don't support that kind of position, specifically because the—we're relying more on the private sector to actually fund schooling, post-secondary education for students in Manitoba, kind of across the board. I—you know, if it was possible, then maybe it's not such a bad idea, but everybody kind of knows thus far it hasn't been going as well as you'd hope. I'm not going to say that that's an indication of what's going to actually end because, obviously, we still have 'til the end of the fiscal year, so I'm not going to push that any further.

Another point I'd like to kind of highlight is that not everyone will benefit from the scholarships and bursaries program. Yes, there will be maybe, I think it was 1,000 more applications being accepted and everything. But there's 25,000 students at the University of Manitoba itself. That's kind of a drop in the bucket. The tuition hikes themselves will affect everybody everywhere if the institutions choose to actually act on that. And so I think there's a bit of a disparity between the costs and benefits, specifically just because everybody will be, you know, negatively affected but not everybody will actually benefit from the programs that you're proposing to somewhat replace them.

There—I'm not sure how many—I'm assuming all of you were aware that there was a rally outside today. There was a lot of students. There was some people who were present as well, kind of marching with us. There was members of the opposition, obviously, the official opposition and the Liberal Party as well, and I got to talking with a few of them, and I was just remarking at how it's great to see how

it's kind of—there's non-partisan kind of opposition to this kind of bill. We also had all of the student union leaders from all the major universities outside, speaking as well—from the U of M, the St. Boniface university, Brandon and then the U of W as well.

So I—it's pretty unanimous across the board where students are in opposition to the possibility of tuition fees going up, that which kind of brings me to a question about, were any students consulted with this? Did you actually go to any universities and talk with any of them? Did you see any students that were, maybe, I don't know, maybe working as interns or something like that? Did you get their opinions on it about the pros and cons of, you know, the Bill 31 predominantly but also the scholarships and bursaries program that you're promoting?

So I just—I don't think any of the students that are currently in school and even maybe a couple of generations ahead of us as well, will really support this because they understand how hard it is to actually deal with these kinds of costs, and maybe it was a little bit different back whenever you guys went to school. I'm not sure. I didn't grow up in that era, so I can't speak to that.

* (21:10)

But I also attended question period after that just to kind of see what the rhetoric would be inside the Legislature. I knew exactly what it was like outside. The people weren't very happy with it. I was kind of happy to see that there were some questions brought up, but the kind of continuous tone was basically just kind of no; no, we're not going to scrap it; we're not going to consider any changes to it; we're just going to push along with what we've been doing.

I didn't get a chance to see many of the presentations here because I did have a council meeting at 6 o'clock and so that's why I'm late and I missed the first round—or maybe two rounds.

But I just want to kind of leave you with a question of what's the point of listening to people or having people show up to the Legislature en masse if the kind of resounding tone or response from the government who—I agree, it's a majority; you earned it—but what's the point of paying attention, having these consultations, if nothing's going to be done, or no—nothing's going to be even considered? Any kind of changes?

So thank you, and I look forward to any questions.

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

Mr. Wishart: Thank you very much for making the effort to turn out this evening. Obviously, you had to make an additional effort and we appreciate that.

Certainly you've—in your presentation, you touched on a number of issues that were certainly part of our thought process in introducing this bill, so I appreciate that you appreciate some of the problems that we are faced with and we certainly have done our best to take into consideration all options. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Scammell, did you want to respond to the minister's comments?

Mr. Scammell: Sure. I wanted to ask you if any of the other members other than the opposition committee members had any opinion other than the minister here.

Mr. Kelly Bindle (Thompson): Address your question whether we went to university, I attended university. I'm a civil engineer. I own my own business as an engineer. I worked for a mining company. I went around the world. I worked in Indonesia for three and a half years. I attended Red River College.

I went back to work, and then I attended Lakehead University in Thunder Bay. And I paid it—for it myself. I got student loans. I paid it off after I worked, and it was not easy. I'm from Thompson, and I had to live—and do all my own laundry, do all my own cooking, and attend school and pay for it—coming to Winnipeg and Thunder Bay. And my colleagues also went to university.

Mr. Scammell: So you can somewhat understand and kind of sympathize, I suppose.

Ms. Lamoureux: I liked the question or the thought, put yourself in your shoes and other students' shoes, and I like how you are very transparent in the sense that your parents paid for your education and continue to pay for it because it shows another perspective. It's not all about the money. Money is the biggest issue, but you see it from a different perspective. You see how it's affecting students all around you.

I know for myself, for my undergrad, I worked almost full-time throughout my entire undergrad and just got by without a student loan. I had to pay for all my post-secondary. A lot of times—maybe it's the government, others don't recognize—is education isn't

just tuition; it's books, it's time; time is valuable; it's transportation to and from your education. And now I know—I'm taking my masters and I can only go part-time because I can't afford it and I don't have the time for it, but education is expensive. It truly is.

And so I guess my question is: We know that money is a huge motivator, but what really pushed you to come to the committee tonight and present?

Mr. Scammell: I've been kind of taking increasing responsibilities at the university as well. I've been volunteering a lot, mostly just in the kind of third and fourth year of my education. For the first two, I was kind of just the typical student, you know, go to class, don't talk to anybody sitting beside you, kind of go home, don't really meet anybody, don't get involved or anything like that.

But after I started getting involved in student groups, and even participating in kind of student council business—which was my earlier meeting—I started to kind of just connect with other people. And I started meeting people from all over the world, a lot of international students who are also very concerned about the potential to increase—well, it's—international students aren't regulated, anyways.

But they—I just basically met a ton of people, just kind of opened my mind. And then I was able to actually empathize with a lot more people, specifically just because I knew them, they knew me and then, all of a sudden, they were my friend and they were part of my life. And so that's why I was able to kind of think of them, as well.

Like, I'm only in my last year, so these fee hikes might not even affect the end of my graduation, but on behalf of a lot of people who either don't know these consultations are going on or they just couldn't be bothered to come, it's still going to affect everybody across the board. And so I feel like I have to step up and speak out at a time when it's—when appropriate.

Thanks.

Mr. Wiebe: Yes, I don't have a question, Mr. Scammell, I simply want to thank you. You did an amazing job of summarizing a lot of the concerns that we've heard throughout this committee process and you did it in a way that was—can I, you know, I don't want to be presumptuous, but to say, unassuming, and held our feet to the fire as committee members, but in a very gentle way, or a way that was—had the right tone here in the committee.

So I just wanted to thank you. I think you really summed up a lot of the feelings that folks have had. You gave a great summary and a snapshot of where students are at and the concerns that they had. And it was a really great cap to the presentations this evening. So thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Scammell. The time for questions is over and I appreciate you taking the time to come and present to us this evening.

I'm going to continue calling the presenters for their second time.

Jennifer Butler? Jennifer Butler? She'll be removed from the list.

Edmund Machona? Edmund Machona? He'll be removed from the list.

That concludes the list of presenters that I have before me.

Are there any other persons in attendance who wish to make a presentation? Seeing none, that concludes public presentations.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: We will now proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

During the consideration of a bill, the preamble, the enacting clause and the title are postponed until all other clauses have been properly—have been considered in their proper order. Also, if there is 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]*

We will now proceed with Bill 31.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 31 have an opening statement?

Mr. Wishart: I do.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I certainly would like to thank all of the presenters that have come and—in—both this evening and previous evenings to speak to Bill 31, The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act.

Manitoba's post-secondary education system is a key driver for our economy and provides the students with the opportunity for achieving their personal and

professional goals. Our universities need greater capacity and greater flexibility to ensure that this system is sustainable and competitive now and into the future. The existing legislation has constrained funding for university programs, restricting them from making vital investments on campus to support the excellent quality education Manitobans expect.

This bill introduces a more flexible formula to determine increases to university tuition while still ensuring that Manitoba's average tuition is the lowest of western Canadian provinces. It offers red tape reduction by eliminating unnecessary processes to review course-related fees, a feature that had shown in the previous five years to have never changed any fees and had no demonstrated value. The amendments will limit the increase in tuition to a rate of no more than 5 per cent plus the consumer price index. In addition, these amendments will enable the Manitoba government to deduct a portion of the grants to universities if the average tuition fee in Manitoba is not the lowest amongst the western Canadian provinces.

* (21:20)

Mr. Chairman, our government is committed to supporting a high-quality post-secondary education system for the benefit of all Manitobans. It is for this reason that these amendments have been designed as part of a broader strategy for post-secondary education.

Our strategy focuses on enhance financial support for those who need it when they need it. This strategy includes changes to Manitoba Bursary Program to provide up to \$2,000 in upfront grants to students with financial needs. Funds are now provided to low-income and indigenous students while they are in school rather than applied to their loans after they have completed the studies.

I am pleased to note that this change has already demonstrated some success. To date, the new Manitoba Bursary has reached over 1,000 more students than the old program and it is still open. So we hope that that'll increase in the future, including a doubling of the number of indigenous recipients. When combined with the complementary federal program, low-income post-secondary students in Manitoba can 'assek'—access, sorry, up to \$5,000 each year in non-repayable grants to support their studies.

As part of this post-secondary education strategy, our government has significantly expanded

the Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative to leverage more private-sector funding for student awards than ever before.

Taken together, these changes will enhance the affordability of post-secondary education for people with financial barriers while also providing universities the tuition flexibility to invest in quality programming, supports and facilities to meet the needs of the students.

Our government values the perspectives of all Manitobans, and I have been very pleased to listen intently to the presentations in the last two days. And I am very happy to have had as many turn out to speak regarding this important bill and to be part of our legislative process. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

Mr. Wiebe: I wanted to start this evening by thanking the presenters who have come to committee. We've heard from an amazingly diverse group of students and folks who are concerned about the future of post-secondary education in this province. And, as I go through my notes of folks that we heard from it—as I said, is an incredibly diverse and broad range of people.

We heard from student leaders, of course. We heard from undergraduates. We heard from graduate program students. We heard from alumni. We heard from professional students. We heard from indigenous students. We heard from students who struggle with disabilities. We heard from racialized students, low-income. We heard from students identified their privilege but were concerned about others. We heard from experts who provided the committee, I think, with some valuable insights. We heard from mothers. We heard from daughters. We heard from future mothers, and we heard from so many who either faced barriers themselves or understood intrinsically that—the barriers that exist for students.

You know, as has been mentioned a few times throughout this process, this is unique in Canada. I think we are the only jurisdiction that allows for public hearings in this particular manner. But what we heard, I think, in these presentations was beyond the normal, you know, presentations and viewpoints that we often hear at committees like this. This place in itself is a barrier. This place in itself presents a barrier to many people, and for students to come here

to overcome that barrier, to overcome their—some of the things that keep them out of this place, and to present honestly and thoughtfully and to give their perspectives, I think, has been incredibly powerful and it's been an incredibly important part of this process.

So I just—I want to thank the students that are still here and for those that had come before and will no doubt hear about the appreciation from the members of this committee for their presentations.

I also wanted to just take a moment to thank the student leaders who organized rallies today—let's just see if we can remember last week, last month. It seems like every week—to bring down students again to this building to let their voices be heard. And we heard, again, a unified voice from students that these tuition fees will be damaging to them and to their colleagues.

You know, I think one of the presenters tonight put it very, very succinctly, and I wanted to—and there's one word that stood out. And it was the member for Wolseley (Mr. Altemeyer) who identified it: priorities—priorities of this government. And I think that's the key.

You know, we're debating a bill that came directly from an outside consultant's report—by KPMG—that the government is now following almost to the letter about the future of education in this province. They're not listening to students; they're not listening to the voices that are coming in, unified; they're listening to this particular report.

And we know that their overall goal has been to balance the books at all costs.

Well in this case, those costs are being borne directly by students. And so when we say that the budget is being balanced on the backs of students, it's clearly laid out in this legislation, and so that's why we stand so strongly against it.

You know, the minister talked about restrained funding for universities. Well, the only restrained funding that is in place right now is in protecting those tuition fees. In other words, the choices that this government makes could increase funding to universities. And we heard it time and time again that investment in education is a fantastic way—it has a fantastic return—a fantastic way to build our province. And yet this government has decided to do the opposite.

So at a time when we're debating Bill 31, when supports to students have been removed, when the

tax rebate has been removed, when interest on student loans is being contemplated, all the while students are facing pressures like minimum wage being frozen, utility costs going up, transportation costs for students are going up, Rent Assist—there's a number of ways that students are feeling these pressures.

What I'm concerned about is that despite all of this information, despite all of the unified voices that we've heard, that the government isn't listening and doesn't care. And that's my concern. Now, we do have an opportunity in this committee to stop this bill. I think we have an opportunity in the House to stop this bill. This bill can be removed. It does not need to go forward. We have done everything we can as an opposition to hold it up until this point. It is now in the government's hands to stop this bill.

And so I join with students and my colleagues here at the table to say, to ask, to beg, to plead, that the government stop this, to consult with students, to see education as a true investment in this province, and stop Bill 31 in its tracks.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

We'll now proceed to going through the clauses.

Clauses 1 and 2—pass;

Shall clause 3 pass?

Oh, no? Sorry? Okay, Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: As we review the bill, I do want to take an opportunity, you know, to have the committee take one more look at the specific clauses and the impact that they'll have.

* (21:30)

Once again, students have been very clear that an increase to tuition is a barrier to their education. It is the first number that they see when contemplating their ability to enter post-secondary education. It has a huge impact on their decision to pursue that post-secondary education. We know this from the research. We know it from the personal stories that we've heard here today, and this particular clause allows tuition to rise by 5 per cent, not including the rate of inflation. And what we've heard again from students has been absolutely crystal clear that this is unacceptable, it's a barrier, and we certainly do not support this clause.

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any further comments?

Shall clause 3 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of clause 3, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

Mr. Chairperson: All those 'opplo'—opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Clause 3 is accordingly passed.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Shall clauses 4 through 9 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Wiebe.

Mr. Wiebe: Once again, in clause 5 we see this as the section that deals specifically with ancillary fees. This is a part of the bill that, you know, maybe if you talk to the average person on the street they wouldn't quite understand the impact that fees have on the cost of tuition and the cost of education in this province. I can guarantee you that every single student in this room and every single student across the province knows the impact of fees on—adding to the costs of their university education.

This is the sort of unknown part of the legislation that I guess maybe should worry us more than anything because, as some presenters have pointed out, it really adds an element of uncertainty when we're talking about the impact that this legislation will have on what the future costs will be. It's actually hard to tell. It's hard to calculate because we don't know what the fees will ultimately rise to.

Also, as pointed out by a number of presenters here tonight, in the past, when fees have been allowed to rise without any kind of regulation, what the minister, I think, called red tape, what we might call protection for the costs of—the burden on students, when they've been allowed to rise, the university has taken every opportunity to rise—to raise them as much as possible.

So it's very concerning that this is part of the legislation. Any increases to tuition or fees are worrisome, especially this one where the regulations are completely removed and the uncertainty that students will face is very real.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Are there any more comments on that question?

I shall ask again: Shall clauses 4 through 9 pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I hear a no.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of clauses 4 through 9, please say aye.

Some Honourable Members: Aye.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Clauses 4 through 9 are accordingly passed.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Enacting clause—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

This concludes the business before this committee.

The hour being 9:35 p.m., what is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 9:35 p.m.

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