

First Session - Fortieth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Human Resources

Chairperson
Mr. Matt Wiebe
Constituency of Concordia

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Fortieth Legislature

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

Wednesday, June 6, 2012

TIME – 6 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Matt Wiebe (Concordia)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Mohinder Saran (The Maples)

ATTENDANCE – 11 QUORUM – 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Messrs. Kostyshyn, Robinson, Hon. Ms. Selby, Hon. Mr. Swan

Messrs. Ewasko, Nevakshonoff, Mrs. Rowat, Messrs. Saran, Schuler, Smook, Wiebe

APPEARING:

Hon. Jon Gerrard, MLA for River Heights

PUBLIC PRESENTERS:

Mr. Jack Zupko, private citizen

Ms. Jennifer Black, private citizen

Ms. Bilan Arte, University of Manitoba Students' Union

Mr. Zach Fleisher, private citizen

Mr. Allen Mills, private citizen

Mr. Nicolas Audette, Local 38, University of St. Boniface Student Association

Mr. Mohamed Ammoumou, Canadian Federation of Students Manitoba

Ms. Pamela McLeod, University of Winnipeg

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, private citizen

Mr. Tyler Blashko and Ms. Nawal Tajdin, private citizens

Ms. Sharon Alward, University of Manitoba Faculty Association

Mr. Matt McLean, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3909

Mr. Kwesi Bruce, private citizen

Ms. Kyra Wilson, private citizen

Ms. Ashley Shewchuk, private citizen

Ms. Wendy Josephson, private citizen

Mr. James Beddome, Green Party of Manitoba

Ms. Monica Igweagu, private citizen

Ms. Irene Fubara-Manuel, private citizen

Mr. Jordan Poitras, private citizen

Ms. Kahleigh Krochak, private citizen

Mr. Cameron Monkman, private citizen

Mr. Theodoros Messinezis Zegeye-Gebrehiwot, private citizen

Ms. Paula Ducharme, private citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Alexandra Dansen, private citizen

Lauren Bosc, University of Winnipeg Students' Association

Ericka Beaudry, private citizen

MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION:

Bill 2–The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act (Council on Post-Secondary Education Act Amended)

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Clerk Assistant (Mr. Andrea Signorelli): Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Human Resources please come to order.

Before the committee can proceed with the business before it, it must elect a new Chairperson. Are there any nominations for this position?

Hon. Andrew Swan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Yes, I nominate Mr. Wiebe.

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

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

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Swan: Yes. I nominate Mr. Saran.

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

Hearing no other nominations, Mr. Saran is the Vice-Chairperson.

This meeting has been called to consider the following bill: Bill 2, The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act (Council on Post-Secondary Education Act Amended).

Okay. I would like to inform all in attendance of the provisions in our rules regarding the hour of adjournment. Except by unanimous consent, a standing committee meeting to consider a bill in the evening must not sit past midnight to hear presentations unless fewer than 20 presenters are registered to speak to all bills being considered when the committee meets at 6 p.m.

As of 6 p.m. this evening, there were 23 persons registered to speak to these bills, as noted, on the list of presenters before you.

Therefore, in accordance to our rule—with our rules of this committee may not sit past midnight to hear presentations.

Considering this, what is the will of committee?

Mr. Swan: I would actually seek leave of this committee, given that we have everyone here tonight—23 presenters. We should be able to move through things. I'd actually ask for the unanimous consent of this committee in accordance with rule 92(5) to sit beyond midnight, if necessary, in order to complete the business of the committee.

Mr. Chairperson: Is that the will of committee? *[Agreed]*

On the topic of determining order of public presentations, I will note that we have one out-of-town presenter in attendance, marked with an asterisk on the list.

With this consideration in mind, what does the—what order does the committee wish to hear presentations?

Mr. Swan: Yes, it's certainly agreeable to letting our out-of-town presenter go first.

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: What is the will of committee? *[Agreed]*

Before we proceed with the presentations, we do have a number of other items and points of information to consider.

First of all, if there's anyone else 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. If you need help with photocopying, please ask our staff.

As well, I would like to inform presenters that 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.

Also, in accordance with our rules, if a presenter is not in attendance when their name is called, they will be dropped to the bottom of the list. If the presenter is not in attendance when their name is called a second time, they will be removed from the presenters' list.

The following written submissions on Bill 2 have been received and distributed to committee members from: Alexandra Dansen; Lauren Bosc, president of the united—University of Winnipeg Students' Association; and Ericka Beaudry.

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

Prior to proceeding with public presentations, I would like to advise members of the public regarding the process for speaking in committee.

The proceedings of our meetings are recorded in order to provide a verbatim transcript. Each time someone wishes to speak, whether it be an MLA or presenter, I first have to say the person's name. This is a signal for the Hansard recorder to turn the mikes on and off. Thank you for your patience. We will now proceed with public presentations.

Bill 2—The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act (Council on Post-Secondary Education Act Amended)

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, we do have two additional presenters that are not on the list, and I will call them at the end of the list as presenters 22 and 23.

I'd now like to call Jack Zupko, private citizen, to the mike. Good evening, Mr. Zupko. I see that you have written materials for the distribution to the committee.

Mr. Jack Zupko (Private Citizen): Yes. Just to clarify, I signed up—I'm Jack Zupko, RR 2, Ste. Anne, Manitoba. I signed up as a private citizen, but I'm also a philosophy professor, chair of the philosophy department, at the University of Winnipeg. In that capacity, I'm also speaking on behalf of the University of Winnipeg Faculty Association, and that explains the letter that is just—has just been sent around. This is a letter that we sent to our membership last week in connection with Bill 2. And so I'll be speaking both as a private citizen and also on behalf of the—of UWFA.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Zupko. Please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Zupko: I first just wanted to say a little bit about myself. I came here, that is, to the University of Winnipeg, in 2010 after two decades of teaching in the United States. I'm Canadian by birth, born and raised in Ontario, but, as a philosopher, when I finished graduate school there were very few jobs in Canada. So, to be a philosopher, I had to spend two decades teaching in the States.

In 2010, I was able to return to Canada. It's something that I always wanted to do. And I was especially attracted to the University of Winnipeg, and I was happy to be able to come here. I've spent two years here now, and I'm very committed and attracted to University of Winnipeg's vision of academic life, as involving teaching and research, and its commitment to serving the people of Manitoba, especially under-represented groups, which its urban setting uniquely enables it to do. As a faculty member, I firmly believe in the path that President Axworthy has put us on. It's sensitive to present and future funding realities in higher education. And I've seen many different situations with my two decades at several institutions in the United States. And we're still uncompromising about our mission, and that's to deliver a first-rate

undergraduate education to our students, future citizens, and the leaders of Manitoba.

My experience tells me that we do a lot of things right at the University of Winnipeg. One of the things we do right is small class sizes. I taught for six years at a large state university in southern California. I didn't—it was a good place in a lot of ways, but I did not like teaching Philosophy 101 to 300 students at a time. I didn't like giving F to people I didn't even know. At least in my classes at the University of Winnipeg, I know all of my students' names. And that's something really important; it's something that we have to preserve. That individual student attention is one of the reasons we've been so successful at the University of Winnipeg. I taught for 15 years at a large research university in Atlanta, Georgia. That was a great place to be if you were a graduate student working on a Ph.D., but I always felt very sorry for the undergraduates, because no one really paid attention to them, and what was worse was they were paying \$40,000 US a year for the privilege of going to this school. So this is an issue that matters a great deal to me personally as an educator. The bottom line for me, as a faculty member of the University of Winnipeg, is that the small class sizes are very important, and losses are significant, or will be significant, if we ever move to economies of scale. And I think that's something we have to be very careful about as we consider future funding realities.

*(18:10)

I co-authored the letter that's just been circulated to you regarding Bill 2, and I'll just very briefly touch on a few of its points. I think it's great that the bill insists that COPSE let universities know their operating grants for a three-year period. That is, you know, so that we can actually do some good academic planning. That said, I can tell you that, you know, academic planning at universities tends to work in five- and 10-year cycles, right. So our horizon is even a little further on than that, but this is better than the current situation.

But there's a worry here, and it's that the bill also gives COPSE the power to review whether a course fee increase reflects the university's costs. If the review finds it doesn't, COPSE would require the university to stop charging the higher fee and pay refunds to students.

My No. 1 worry about this is that it's a strike against the autonomy of our universities. Currently, our board of regents is entrusted with the legal

authority to set tuition, keeping this decision, in my mind, where it should be, which is with the university.

I'm a very big believer—and the longer I've taught in universities, the more I've felt this—I'm a very big believer in the principle of subsidiarity, or the notion that decision-making authority should rest with the lowest or least centralized body that is competent to handle it. In my experience in higher education, the worst policy decisions have been made by central authorities far removed from what's happening on the ground. This makes their decisions sometimes look arbitrary and indefensible.

Look, examples abound, but in California, I recall our administration there tried to deal with the 1993 revenue crisis in the state, which was severe—I got paid with an IOU in August of 1993, because there was no money—by closing down departments and programs. But if they'd asked us, talked to us, the people on the ground, the students and faculty could've given them dozens of examples of ways to eliminate waste and inefficiency, right, so that the cuts could've been made in a much better and more rational way. Again, decision making needs to be close to the ground.

My research is on the Middle Ages. I'm proud to say that universities are medieval institutions, and for the last 900 years, since their founding, right, and we've got a pretty good track record. I mean, we've survived, I mean, along with the British monarchy and the Catholic Church, right. I mean, we're the longest surviving institutions in the west, right. And one of the secrets to our survival, I think, is that we've always been autonomous and we've always had the right—that autonomy has included the right to set our own fees. It's why we've been successful.

To use a metaphor, our governance has always been flat and close to the ground, and that's one of the reasons we've been able to respond so quickly to changes in society and the economy, even much more quickly than governments can.

The other thing is, as an academic, I've always thought of myself as being in a profession. This entails, for me, exercising a public trust as well as an obligation on my part to serve the public good, which is why I want the autonomy to remain with my institution on setting fees. It's an important part of what we do, and it belongs, along with teaching and research, at the lowest level.

One final point to make: I don't quite understand the reason for this part of the legislation, because it's hardly the case that the board of regents at Manitoba universities have been derelict or careless in exercising their authority over tuition fees. So what is it that Bill 2 tries to fix by limiting tuition increases to the rate of inflation?

I can tell you that university tuitions in Manitoba are among the lowest in Canada. Our institutions are among the best values in higher education in Canada, and there's no sign that any of our boards of regents are chomping at the bit to crank tuition way, way up.

On the contrary, my sense is that our boards of regents have done their best to ensure that tuition fees remain affordable for our students. And that's why, I think, we need to keep tuition—the authority to set tuition fees with those who actually deliver the goods, right? That is, those of us at universities.

Am I out of time?

Mr. Chairperson: Two minutes.

Mr. Zupko: Two minutes, okay. We're okay. One final point, I think there is a real problem with funding in Manitoba universities, but it's not addressed by this bill. And it's the—for me, as I can see it and, again, I've taught here now for two years—it's the inequity and per-student funding amongst the different universities in Manitoba.

I've looked at those rules and I cannot, for the life of me, understand why those inequities still exist, even if there were historical reasons for their existence in the founding of the universities. I mean, university education is a great good and it's an expensive good, and if we're committed to it, I think—committed to it as a society, as Manitobans, I really think we need to fund it and make sure that it's funded equitably and make sure that each of our universities has sufficient funds to deliver the product to our students. Thank you.

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

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Hon. Erin Selby (Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy): No questions. I just wanted to thank Mr. or Dr. Zupko for his—

Floor Comment: Well, I'm doctor, but—

Ms. Selby: —Dr. Zupko for his presentation, and I appreciate your obvious commitment to the

university and your—I—and we can tell, passion for teaching. So thank you.

Mr. Wayne Ewasko (Lac du Bonnet): Myself, as well, Dr. Zupko. It's nice to hear that passion come through and for you sharing, as well, your past experience coming in to today as well. So thank you very much for your presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, once again, Mr. Zupko.

I will now call on Marakary Bayo, private citizen. Okay, Marakary Bayo will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

I now call on Jennifer Black, private citizen.

Ms. Jennifer Black (Private Citizen): Hi, thank you for having me here today.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Do you have any written materials for the committee?

Ms. Black: No, nothing to distribute; just a short thing to say.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Black, then proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Black: Okay. So my name is Jennifer, as you said. I'm a student at the University of Manitoba and I have been for five years. I'm also currently sitting as vice-president advocacy of the University of Manitoba's Students' Union and I serve as a women's commissioner for the provincial executive of the Canadian Federation of Students.

So I have a little bit of a personal story before I delve into my issues with the bill. But I do want to start off by saying that I think that the bill is very well intentioned and then there are a lot of really good qualities that it does have and that most of my issues that come out of the bill result around vague language and just some things that are unclear.

But I'm—so I've been a university student for five years. I'm enrolled in a four-year degree program. Every year that I register for classes I have to balance it very carefully. In order for me to not incur extra interest on my student line of credit I have to remain a full time student, which means taking at least three courses a term or 18 credit hours. And this is difficult because I've always had to work full-time to also support myself financially for just basic life necessities: food, rent. Every term I take the least

possible amount of credits just to qualify as a full-time student and I also work full-time. It'll take me six full years to take—to get my four-year honours degree.

Meanwhile, being a full-time student does not exempt me from all of the interest fees applied to my loans. I pay monthly interest on my line of credit which was maxed out at a limit of \$5,000. It only took me one year to max out that limit. I was only enrolled in three classes, but with the courses I was in and the textbooks I had to pay for, it maxed out that loan within one year, and that was a \$5,000 loan.

I come from a very poor family. My mother raised me and my two siblings as a single parent. For many years the four of us lived cramped together in a two-bedroom apartment—that's four people, three children, two-bedroom apartment, two teenage girls.

I've been working since I was 15 years old in order to afford basic necessities. I had to get special permission to work from my school principal and from my mother because I was so young. My mother's always been unable to help support me financially, so when I decided to role in university, I had to start saving up myself. Even after saving up for quite a while, with paying rent and making minimum wage, I was unable to secure enough money to enrol with a full course load or to stop working during the school term. I've worked as many as three jobs at one time while enrolled in a full-time term at university. It is very stressful. It makes making the grades to achieve a scholarship very difficult, and so you can see the Catch-22 many students are caught in.

* (18:20)

There have been times where I put off buying textbooks until partway through the term or have resorted to borrowing classmates' textbooks throughout the entire year because I was unable to afford them, and I cannot emphasize enough how difficult that makes it to be a fully engaged student.

I will pay more for my degree than someone who can afford to pay their tuition up front. I am poor and I will pay more for my degree than a rich person. This is not only because I'm incurring interest fees on top of my loans, but also because each year I am enrolled I have to pay flat ancillary fees. I have to space out my degree over many years, which means I will pay these ancillaries more times, not using these services more than a student who gets

to do it all in one go, but I do have to pay more in the end.

I just want to say that my story of hardship, I think, is pretty mild compared to the hardship of many of my peers, not to mention the hardships of many of the people who don't even decide to go to university at all because it's so unaffordable.

While I feel this bill is good-intentioned, I think that it misses the mark in some specific regards.

Students need very specific regulations regarding ancillary fees, and those fees should have to be approved by COPSE before they are implemented, not after. I think it's incredibly problematic that they're not considered tuition fees in the first place. You are paying money towards the institution; it should be all balled together and it should be regulated strictly, just as strictly as tuition fees should be regulated.

There needs to be a hard cap, I think, as well on the amount which tuition fees can increase. Students need security in knowing that dramatic spikes in inflation will not end up seriously hurting their access to education, you know, so students won't have to drop out halfway through their degree and then re-enrol again, as I know many students have in order to complete that degree.

It is not enough for COPSE to put forward non-binding projections of annual funding for universities. The government should be the entity bound to increasing their funding for post-secondary each year, not students bound to paying more each year, and I think that those projections need to be each year and not just on three-year terms. That way universities will know well in advance what kind of funding they're going to be getting from the government.

As a student who believes that education is an essential component in every productive member of society's life, I am opposed to tuition fee increases entirely. I think that there is a fundamental problem with the way that our culture in Canada is viewing education today, as though it were a private investment that only works for and benefits the person who makes that investment and not a public good which serves the entire society. Education is a crux; it is a tool by which better—by which to better society and to the benefit of all. I think that it's time that we acknowledge that post-secondary schooling

is just as necessary to personal, social, and economic development as kindergarten and grade school.

I don't think that this legislation is powerful enough, because it doesn't make tuition fee freezes or decreases a possibility and it binds us to a future of user-fee-based funding for post-secondary education.

I think that, in the end, this bill does not protect access for students and it does not create access to the most marginalized and at-need communities.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. We'll now move on to questions.

Do members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Ms. Selby: I just wanted to thank you, Ms. Black, for sharing your story. It was very personal and very honest and I appreciate you for doing that.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Thanks so much, Jennifer.

Just—I mean, help me understand your situation a little bit, because, I mean, there should be reasonably available bursaries or scholarships for somebody like yourself. Tell us a little bit about whether or not this is available and how difficult it is or not to get.

Ms. Black: So the first two years that I was enrolled in university, I applied for government loans, I believe through the Manitoba student loan program, and was denied both times. The first time they said that I made too much money the year previously to qualify—not accounting for the fact that I had to pay rent, I imagine, or food—and then the second year I was denied again, and I stopped applying after that.

Mr. Ewasko: Ms. Black, I would just like to commend you for the—for your bravery and your story as well and for coming up here and sharing your views on this bill. And I'm sure that the minister has listened quite 'intently'. So thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, once again, for your presentation, Ms. Black.

I will now call on the next presenter, Ronnie Cruz, private citizen. Ronnie Cruz, private citizen? Okay, I will drop Ronnie Cruz to the bottom of the list and move on to the next presenter, Bilan Arte.

Thank you, Ms. Arte. Do you have a written presentation—written materials for distribution to the committee? Thank you very much, and—okay, those

will be distributed. Thank you very much, and you can proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Bilan Arte (University of Manitoba Students' Union): Thank you. So, good evening, members of the committee. My name is Bilan Arte, and I'm the president for the University of Manitoba Students' Union, Local 103 of the Canadian Federation of Students. I represent more than 23,000 undergraduate students at the University of Manitoba, and I come before you today to speak on Bill 2 to voice the concerns of our membership.

I know that everyone here is committed to maintaining an affordable and accessible post-secondary education. Over the past two decades, a post-secondary education has gone from an advantage to a requirement for today's young people, whether to have a successful career or to be engaged and—to be an engaged and informed citizen. Maintaining the accessibility of post-secondary education is done through many ways, but one of the most critical methods is through the regulation of tuition fees. It is one of the most direct and immediate ways the government can ensure accessibility and has been used to great success in the province during the past decade. However, there's still significant room for improvement. While Manitoba has the third lowest tuition fees in the country, there remain two other provinces with more accessible post-secondary education systems, and numerous countries either charge fees at far lower rates than we do, or, in many cases, essentially none at all.

Currently, student debt is somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20 to 23 billion dollars, including federal and provincial student loans, personal debt, credit card debt, family loans and other forms of debt incurred by students pursuing a post-secondary education. This has disastrous effects for students and graduate students across the country and is forcing a generation of students to adapt to being heavily indebted by sacrificing their goals in favour of immediate ways to pay for those crushing loans. Accessibility isn't just about who gets into university or college, it's also about what students are forced to do while in school and after they graduate in order to grapple with debt.

Now, to the bill itself, I think it's important to point out that the intent of the bill—behind the bill is worthwhile, and many of the objectives of this government in creating this bill should be applauded. Certainly, giving universities greater security in

terms of the funding they receive through funding projections, is a useful move; one that students support. And the idea of limiting tuition fees, not through an easy-to-change, unwritten government policy, but through hard and fast legislation, is also admirable.

Ultimately, however, we need to review any legislation, not in terms of what it sets out to do, but what it actually does. In this regard, Bill 2 is a crushing disappointment for the student movement in this province and around the country. Frankly, this bill before the committee does not accomplish what the New Democratic Party promised to do so in the last provincial election. The NDP was returned to office with the largest caucus in about eight decades, yet this was at least due in part to what they promised Manitobans. The political consensus in this province has developed into tuition fees no higher than inflation, yet the NDP stood out in promising to not just continue past practice, but to codify this promise of affordability in legislation, providing security to current and future students and their families.

The promise was made to provide a maximum amount the fees could increase by, yet what students received was a minimum amount that fees would increase by. Our research has shown that—based on the most reliable enrolment figures available province-wide, that over half of post-secondary students in the province would either be completely exempted from the inflation-based cap or at serious risk of exemption.

This is, to put it mildly, completely unacceptable. It betrays the entire purpose behind legislating tuition fees. If the goal is to simply continue current practice of promising security but ultimately leaving the window open for future increases, legislation is a waste of time.

What other legislation that provides fundamental rights to residents of this province, allows the provincial government to step in and diminish those rights as they see fit? Does the Human Rights Code allow the provincial—Province to step in and allow an organization to discriminate based on gender? Does The Labour Relations Act allow the provincial government to step in and allow an employer to refuse to recognize the wishes of a group of employees to unionize? Does the residential tenancy act allow the Province—government—the provincial government to step in and allow a landlord to evict a tenant, in violation of their rights, under the act? Of

course not. And it would be offensive and incredibly dangerous to provide any provincial government with that opportunity.

Universities in this province, particularly the University of Manitoba, but also other universities with professional programs, have been attempting—and sometimes succeeding for years—to circumvent the tuition fee policy of the time. We opposed such efforts then, and we continue to oppose any efforts to make professional programs less accessible. Unfortunately, Bill 2 continues this practice by allowing COPSE and the provincial government to allow universities to enact these divisive and massive tuition fee increases.

* (18:30)

The very idea that universities can apply to COPSE to be a professional program, and then apply to these professional programs to increase tuition, presents problems to students studying within those programs. Students enrolling in a program at risk of increases under Bill 2, like law, social work, or nursing, do so with the understanding of what fees would be charged.

Under Bill 2, these students could be charged thousands of dollars more than they budgeted for when they chose to enrol, with only a few months' notice. These students, in the middle of their studies, could be faced with figuring out how to pay for thousands of dollars more in tuition fees, when in the middle of their studies, causing many students to either drop out or incur significantly higher student debt as a consequence.

The unpredictability of tuition increases for students in professional programs is unprofessional and causes an unnecessary burden on the system and the students, one that could be fixed by amending Bill 2 to not have a special clause for professional programs. Many professional programs are ones that suffer from under-representation of marginalized groups such as women, racialized and Aboriginal people, low-income, and working-class people, and persons living with disabilities.

Research shows that high tuition fees in professional programs, particularly large and sudden increases, tend to keep students in these programs unrepresentative of the broader Manitoban population. In other words, the high fees that may come with Bill 2 will ensure that future cohorts of professional programs will continue to be overrepresented by students who are upper-income,

white, and able-bodied. If this government is serious about poverty reduction and income inequality, it needs to back that up with more than words and ensure that these kinds of programs are accessible as possible to all Manitobans.

And there's always an inherent danger with automatically linking government policy to economic indicator, such as inflation-based increases that sound affordable when inflation is at 1 per cent or 2 per cent, but in high-inflation situations, we would suddenly have the situation where some of the least—some of those that are least able to weather the serious economic disruption of high inflation would be asked to make—to make the biggest sacrifices.

For this reason, we believe the legislation needs a hard-and-fast tuition fee cap, irrespective of what inflation happens to be at. It is simply irresponsible and reckless to create legislation that not only permits universities to have tuition fee increases alongside high inflation, but seems to prohibit the provincial government from stepping in where their involvement would actually be necessary and maintaining post-secondary affordability.

There is no doubt a university administration would choose to go to the absolute maximum. At our institution, the board of governors recently budgeted for a 2.5 per cent increase in tuition fees, based on preliminary reports on what inflation would be. They balance their budget at that amount, yet when told by the provincial government that inflation was being measured at 2.8 per cent, on a phone call, the board of governors meeting where the budget was being discussed, they chose immediately to increase tuition fees by the maximum amount they were allowed to, in order to collect as much money as possible from students.

They did not need that additional money. The budget was balanced at 2.5. They didn't even really have a good explanation as to where that money would go when I asked. Under Bill 2, we know that university administrations, compromised mostly of government appointees anyways, would continue to budget for greed instead of need.

Even the system using Bill 2 to enforce compliance with a tuition fee cap is problematic. It claws back funding, dollar for dollar, with the amount that the university has gone over what has been allowed, which sounds like a graceful way to discourage universities from ignoring the cap but actually opens up to a host of other problems. It opens up the possibility for an institution to

essentially privatize itself and go fully funded by tuition fees, an option taken by at least one university program in Canada. It potentially increases a system where a university can suffer a one-year hit on their grants but positions themselves for drastically higher and permitted tuition fees in the future. And most damning, this ultimately makes students the ones who pay for the mistake or the poor decision on the part of the university administration.

The system used for ancillary fees within the legislation, while flawed in its own right, has a far more effective method of dealing with overcharges than we would like to see implemented for tuition fees, whereby a university that overcharges is simply required to pay each student back the amount that they overcharged.

International students continue to be discriminated under Bill 2. It is no secret that student unions oppose two-tier fees that see international students pay three and a half times what Canadian students pay, which is currently the situation at the University of Manitoba. It is also no secret that universities in Manitoba and across Canada generally use international students as a method of revenue generation. It was clear from the discussions with the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. Selby) that there was no interest on the part of the provincial government to stop discriminating against international students, but it still is 'gailling' to see students afforded less a protection under law, based on their national origin and citizenship status. At the very least, this bill could have been an opportunity to reintroduce some form of regulation for international student fees, even something as simple and as fair-minded as a commitment not to increase international student differential fees during the lifetime of a student's degree.

As I have discussed the long list of issues our members have with this legislation, and other representatives of students have, and will, talk about other concerns, I can thank the committee for their patience in hearing them. I want to stress the promise that—made by this bill can still be fulfilled. The Canadian Federation of Students-Manitoba has collectively proposed a series of recommendations to amend this bill, which you will hear from soon, and I believe a thusly amended Bill 2 would find far greater acceptance from students than its current vision.

The members of the Legislative Assembly collectively have an opportunity to enshrine for

decades to come a system where students and their families know that a university, college education is affordable, accessible, and within their reach. This is an opportunity to make a historic step towards creating a post-secondary system for this century. The 1990s were marked by drastic funding cuts and massive tuition fee increases. Let's find a different path for this generation of students, and set a positive example for the rest of Canada on how to do tuition fee legislations right. Economic uncertainty seems to be a global situation with austerity budgeting being pushed by governments around the world. This is an opportunity to decisively reject those efforts. So thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Ms. Arte, and thank you for speeding through it to stay under time. Very well done.

I will now move on to questions. Are there questions? Does the—are there—sorry, does the—do the members of the committee have questions for the presenter?

Ms. Selby: Thank you, Ms. Arte, for your presentation and your speedy talking. And, although I've had a chance to congratulate you in person, let me put on the record, congratulations on your newly elected position. And I look forward to us continuing our conversations on a very regular basis.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further—Mr. Ewasko.

Mr. Ewasko: As well, Ms. Arte, thank you very much for your presentation. A lot of very well made points. And again, I look forward to meeting with you in the near future. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: All right, thank you very much for your—oh, sorry, Mrs. Rowat.

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Riding Mountain): Wonderful presentation. You have a lot of points. You obviously know where the legislation could be enhanced.

Were you consulted as an organization with regard to Bill 2?

Ms. Arte: There was one consultation, and we did raise a lot of these concerns, especially with the inclusion of professional fee programs as well as the danger around the language of auxiliary fees and making sure that there is more accountability for universities so they don't privatize. We actually talked about how to—having a hard cap that wouldn't just leave students at the mercy, essentially, of inflation rates or whatever it happened to be. But

since then, we haven't seen any of those recommendations implemented. However, we're here to present, because we're hoping that we can working towards amendments collectively before the bill is passed.

Mrs. Rowat: One further question: Have you been told that there may be some possibilities to amendments based on your presentation? Is government favourable to some amendments?

Ms. Arte: I have not been told so, but I would certainly welcome that gesture.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you, once again, for your presentation.

I'd now like to call on Zach Fleisher, private citizen. Mr. Fleisher, do you have written materials for the distribution to the committee?

Mr. Zach Fleisher (Private Citizen): No. It's just an oral presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you very much. Well, please proceed with your presentation.

Mr. Fleisher: Can you hear me? Yes. So the first thing I'd like to do is I'd like to thank the members of the committee for convening on such short notice as well as the citizens of Manitoba who have showed up to speak passionately be it for or against such a bill on such a vital issue. And I think that this process is a key factor in maintaining the democratic spirit that Canadians so clearly cherish.

And so, it's clear that people are coming to speak for or against this bill for a variety of reasons. For me, there's a couple of things I'm going to go over. Bill 2—or, I guess, first a bit about myself. I'm a student at the University of Winnipeg. Currently, I'm in a position as the vice-president advocate for the University of Winnipeg Students' Association. And our president couldn't be here tonight, and I know she had registered to speak, but I'm here to echo some of the statements she might had and add some of my own. And, as a students' association, we represent over 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students attending the University of Winnipeg.

So Bill 2 has come forward in an official capacity as protecting affordability for university students. As a student representative at the University of Winnipeg, representing thousands of students through the University of Winnipeg Students' Association, I'm here to speak against this piece of legislation as I believe that such a bill could

potentially harm this province's post-secondary education institutions.

* (18:40)

So there are a couple of issues here, one being an issue that I'm going to talk about right now, is that Bill 2 ties tuition increases to inflation and, personally, I think that this is—it boggles my mind as to why we would do this because inflation is something that we can't control. We can't control the rate that the economy grows and this formula. So the students, I mean, I personally would—for myself, I would recommend that this government better set its own rate of tuition on a yearly basis based on the needs of students as opposed to the growth of the economy or, better yet, freeze and move to further reduce tuition fees.

As tuition fee increases occur it is possible that inflation will rise beyond a manageable number. It's quite possible that tuition could—or that inflation could grow by 10 or 15 per cent, and that would be ridiculous for students because it would mean that they would be priced out of their own education. And I'm shocked that this bill doesn't include any footnotes about that, at introducing a maximum rate by which tuition could rise. Furthermore, we could see a situation as we well—as we know in terms of how the global economy is going on right now. What if tuition—or what if inflation shrinks? If we go into recession, that could be an issue, and for me going over the bill, I didn't see any notes at all about that. And I think it's just a poorly constructed bill in that aspect in that it doesn't explain anything there. Such legislation is poorly written in the way that it addresses neither of these significant problems.

Another thing I'd like to talk about is how the current Canadian post-secondary environment is extremely dependent on international students. As it currently stands, international students are the third largest contributor or contributing group to the overall Canadian economy right now. This bill continues to plague and afflict international students with unsustainable, unrealistic and unfair tuition fees, often at two to three times the rate of domestic students. This has been going on for far too long. It's ridiculous. It's putting them into insane amounts of debt that can cripple their financial sustainability and—for a generation.

And I think it's the time for this government, especially, because we've been—the Province overall has been hurting international students for such a

long time. This is a chance for us to stop what we've been doing, to move towards a much more progressive system in terms of allowing international students to actually pay what domestic students pay. I know international students in my classes right now who pay two to three times what I'm paying for the same course, and they're getting the same experience, the same education. That's ridiculous. It has to stop. This is a chance for them to—for the government, especially, to start regulating this.

And the final point that I want to bring up stems from a note within the—kind of, the preamble of the bill. And the preamble states: If a university increases tuition fees by more than the increase in the rate of inflation, the council is required to deduct from the grants it makes to the university by which the increase exceeds the rate of inflation. So, essentially, the university can choose to increase tuition more than the rate of inflation. So it could increase tuition, say, this year by 5 per cent, and what would just happen was—what would happen is COPSE, the Council on Post-Secondary Education, would just deduct 3.2 per cent from their grant.

What this means, though, is that universities could start to move towards a private model of education, which is something that we don't want, especially coming from the students' association perspective. Right now, the more money that students are paying into their education via tuition, the more the system moves towards a stream of privatization, if you will. So this bill—I mean, within Manitoba and across Canada, we have long prided ourselves on maintaining our strong, public post-secondary institutions. This bill opens up the possibility of privatization of our universities by allowing our universities to raise tuition and simply accept the loss in public funding. That is moving to—towards a more private model.

What this does is not only move our universities out of the public sphere. It places the onus of funding on students, meaning that students are going to have to make up for this gap. Such a move further damages the accessibility for students across the province, especially those coming from lower-income backgrounds. I think the government should be moving towards a system where we ensure that our universities stay public and that they stay accessible. By inserting this clause into the bill, where it's ensuring or it's opening up the possibilities that our universities can move towards a more private model—and I don't think that anyone on this committee or in this government wants that.

It is for—and then the—and the one final thing I want to talk about is the funding discrepancy that we have, especially with the University of Winnipeg, where despite trying to amend and reform the education—the post-secondary education with—system within Manitoba, this government is still failing to address the funding disparities between the University of Manitoba and the university of Brandon versus the University of Winnipeg. I understand that people are going to present on that more later, but it's getting to the point where we're—on a per student basis—and I understand that the formula doesn't work out to be on a per student basis because, simply, there is no formula, but it's ridiculous when a student going to the University of Manitoba gets twice the funding per capita that a student going to the University of Winnipeg does. And this bill, coming from the University of Winnipeg, does nothing to address this.

So it is for these reasons that I mention that I believe that Bill 2 should not go further. I urge the government and this committee to reconsider this legislation and to re-examine it, have more consultation with students, have more consultation with university administration, because I think there—there's some parts of the bill, including the stable funding formula, that are a great addition to our post-secondary system, and I commend you, Minister Selby, for that aspect. But I think that there's certain issues within the bill that we need to go back and consider before it's brought forward for legislation.

So, in closing, such a bill would only lead to a potential deterioration in Manitoba's post-secondary education system. And I'd like to thank the committee again and everyone who came out to speak on the bill.

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

Are there questions from the committee?

Ms. Selby: I just wanted to thank you, Mr. Fleisher, for taking the time to come out and speak to the bill.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Fleisher, for your points well-taken, and thank you again.

Mr. Ron Schuler (St. Paul): Thank you very much, Zach, for coming out and spending some of your valuable time here at the Manitoba Legislature. It's a great place to hang out. We've got no air conditioning, no screens on the windows, so—nice place to spend an evening. It's almost like being outdoors.

From what I've heard, what would be your recommendation to members of the Legislature? Would it be to vote against this bill?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Fleisher?

Mr. Fleisher: Okay—

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, I need to recognize you before for the—just for the *Hansard* here, so—Mr. Fleisher?

Mr. Fleisher: I would recommend that the members of the Legislative Assembly vote against this bill in its current form, and I would be more than happy, along with the rest of the executive of the University of Winnipeg Students' Association and student leaders across the province, to work with Minister Selby to create a bill that actually represents the needs of students.

Mr. Ewasko: Mr. Fleisher, just a quick note on that last point you made. Was the University of Winnipeg Students' Association consulted in regards to the bringing-forward of this bill?

Mr. Fleisher: We were consulted on one meeting with Minister Selby.

Mrs. Rowat: In that consultation, did you provide your concerns? Were you familiar with what was going to be presented in the bill, and were you—did you provide—have an opportunity to provide feedback?

Mr. Fleisher: From my understanding, we provided a list of our concerns with the potential legislation and from there that's went down, kind of thing.

Mrs. Rowat: Were any of your recommendations put into the legislation?

Mr. Fleisher: That was before my term as an elected representative began, so I can't speak towards the full recommendations, but I understand that the bill, as it currently exists, does not meet what we would have expected out of such a legislation.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation, once again.

I will now call on the next presenter, Allen Mills, private citizen.

Mr. Mills, do you have written materials for the committee?

Mr. Allen Mills (Private Citizen): I don't. I just have a verbal presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. That's fine. Thank you very much, please proceed with your presentation when you're ready.

Mr. Mills: Thank you for the opportunity to make a short presentation to this august body. I speak as a professor who's taught at the University of Winnipeg for 40 years. I am happy to have made that contribution to the education, such as it is, of the University of Winnipeg and to the province of Manitoba.

* (18:50)

Let us recognize that Manitoba shares many institutions with what we might generally call the wider western world. It is that we have a market economy; it is that we have a political democracy; it is that we have a welfare state; it is, as well, that we have universities that are not state institutions. Isn't that interesting? There are, in some senses, if you'll forgive the word, private. They're not owned by the government, but interestingly they're mainly funded by the government. But the government, if it's true to its principles, recognizes the integrity and the independence of those institutions, and doesn't try to interfere with its various freedoms.

I believe and hold that universities are crucial to the civilized development of life in this province. They stand for independence, inquiry, truth and intellectual freedom, absolutely crucial to what we call a civil society and the universities are part of that civil society.

It is then that you as legislators and as members of a government have to be very, very careful about the use of the power of the purse. You don't want to use it to crush the independence of the institution you are mainly funding. And let me suggest that what there's been, then, around this issue of fees and fee limits and caps and freezes now, I think, since the '99 election, is a crucial interference with the autonomy of the universities. It is, then, that the one independent thing universities have which they have some direct control over is the levying of the levels of their fees. It is, interestingly, in your wisdom ladies and gentlemen, you have taken away that independence over the last 12 years or so.

Now, you've taken it away in the name of some principle of social justice. Now, let me challenge you on that. It's been argued and it's almost a kind of mantra, particularly of this government, that it is then

that fee freezes and fee limits are absolutely crucial to increasing participation and overcoming what are called under-representation. Let me tell you this, that as long as the reality of universities is that they mainly still cater to middle-class students, indeed, there's an under-representation. But insofar as they remain committed to educating mainly middle-class students, then what indeed a fee-free does is gives the highly subsidized education to middle-class students, mainly people who are living in the kind of riding that the minister represents. And it is, then, that the overall cost of the university, the main part which comes from government coffers which comes from general tax revenues, that is given to the university and to the government by parts of the society that don't typically send their children to university.

So, in fact, what fee freezes and the way in which we finance universities do is, in fact, engage in a kind of perverse kind of negative redistribution. The people that are poorer and who do pay taxes help subsidize the services given to those who are availing of the university's services.

Here's a point, if you want to take anything from what I'm going to say tonight it's this. If you're serious, and I am, by the way, about social justice and participation and overcoming under-representation, put your money into bursaries, not into fee freezes and fee caps. It's a political football.

Now, I understand why the NDP doesn't want to give it up because it's so politically advantageous. Middle-class students say, hey, look, you know, I'm going to get something less than what otherwise I might pay for.

Recognize as well that the relationship of fee freezes and fee levels with participation and an under-representation in universities in Canada is not a clear relationship. Alberta has high fees and high participation; Québec has low fees and low participation in universities. So if you're interested in the issue of justice, get away from the issue. Overcome your political instincts. Speak to the issue of bursaries and putting money where, indeed, it's needed.

Let me move on to another part of the legislation. It's a small point, maybe. And maybe it's a cavilling point, but let me make it. The government makes a commitment to a kind of three-year, rolling funding model for universities. I reckon that, politically, the calculation here is universities will swallow the limits on their ability to raise fees if it is

that we somehow guarantee them some sort of consistency or continuity of funding. Hmm, not a bad quid pro quo when you think about it, all right.

But let's recall that a week from now the Greeks are going to go the polls. Maybe two weeks from now, we hope sooner, Chancellor Merkel will make a decision about the fate of the euro, and we don't quite know where the economy of Manitoba will go in the next year or two. Is that three-year commitment solid, hard? And if it's, well, a solid, hard commitment, what are the sanctions, you guys and ladies? What are the sanctions if you don't meet it? Ministerial reductions of salaries, perhaps?

It seems to me this three-year commitment is, in some senses, politics, too. It sounds great; it sounds good. If I were a self-respecting, prudent university administrator, I would budget a year at a time. There you go.

A final point I'd like to make, with your indulgence, there's an elephant in this room. I don't know where it is. I haven't seen one, but let's assume it's there. It's a common phrase: there's an elephant in this room. Fee freezes and limiting fee increases is inordinately adverse to the predicament of the University of Winnipeg. The University of Winnipeg depends on student fees to a greater proportion than the other universities of this province. Equally, as well, an elephant in this room, if you like, it's an absent elephant, is there's no reference in this legislation to a funding formula for the universities of Manitoba. My university, bless it, has worked very, very hard at increasing the number of students that come to it. It gets no reward for that, damn it. It gets no reward at all because there is no funding formula perhaps tied to the issue of per-student enrolment and so forth.

So, all right, what we've got is this old-fashioned, long-established incrementalism that characterizes the way we fund universities in this province. You know, you get roughly 2 or 3 per cent, hmm, in a good year; 5 per cent, more than you got last year. But there's no sense of addressing, on the part of this government—I don't think, completely, anyway—the structural underfunding that has characterized its dealings with the University of Winnipeg. Here, I'm talking as a partisan of a particular university, rather than universities in general. Allow me that opportunity.

My point would be, then, this severely intrudes this legislation into the university's autonomy, the issue of dealing endlessly with the capping of fees

and the limiting of fees, takes us endlessly down a blind road that really doesn't address the issue of justice and participation in the universities in any substantial way.

My advice to this committee, if you would like it, is to simply get rid of it. Don't even go forward with it. I think, in some senses, it's posturing. It's posturing. And in some respects, it's, policy-wise, counterproductive and perverse, if I may say. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Mr. Mills.

I'll now move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you very much, Mr.—or perhaps Dr. Mills, I'm not sure—for your presentation, and I do hope that we can both at least agree that University of Winnipeg provides an excellent education, and I thank you for that.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. You've, you know, tackled one of the elephants here and suggested that the money should go into bursaries, and you provide, in other respects, you know, much greater freedom. What—I mean, is there a good example of how that works and how much money you would need to put into bursaries to make this? *[interjection]*

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry, Mr.—sorry, just to turn on the mikes. Mr. Mills?

Mr. Mills: Yes, I don't have a dollar figure. I don't have those figures at my fingertips. I mean, look, I want to work in a university and, indeed, it's one of the—been of the joys of being a university professor, for me, to have Aboriginal students, students from the North End, all sorts of what we call, sort of loosely, disadvantaged people. Maybe that's a sort of a slur. That's maybe—there's maybe a better way I could've put that—but people, then, from poorer backgrounds. And it's brilliant to see the way people use the advantage of the university to make progress in life and to use a professional basis to make advancement in their circumstances and helping their own people.

* (19:00)

I mean, if we're serious about that, let's take the money that we presently give to middle-class students, in effect, and put it into a much more targeted kind of array of programs that deal with people that could genuinely make use of that kind of opportunity.

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

Mr. Ewasko: At this time, Professor Mills, I'd just like to thank you for your presentation, and if you would so oblige me, I'm just going to ask quickly, what do you teach at the U of W?

Mr. Mills: I teach politics.

Mr. Ewasko: Thanks again.

Floor Comment: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation.

I'll now call on the next presenter. Calling Nicolas Audette, President, Local 38, University of St. Boniface Student Association.

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

Mr. Nicolas Audette (Local 38, University of St. Boniface Student Association): No, I don't. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation, then, when you're ready.

Mr. Audette: I'd first like to thank the committee for having us all here. It's a pleasure to be here and be able to share our opinions and to help with implementing this bill.

My name is Nicolas Audette. I'm the president at the Association étudiante de l'Université de Saint-Boniface. I represent 1,400 students at the University of St. Boniface that study university classes and also collège classes at the École technique et professionnelle. I represent students that are university students and students that are college students, and I'd just like to—I guess, sorry, I'm going to take a second to explain my background.

I'm from a small French community in Manitoba outside of Winnipeg, and I moved into Winnipeg and decided that I would go straight into the workforce, because I wasn't too sure what I wanted to study in, and I was going to take a year break or take a couple of years to accumulate a bit of money to pay for my studies. I took a couple of years, but I realized that I wasn't making that much money and that I didn't put that much money aside for university, but I decided to just jump right in, and I'm now graduating in two weeks with a diploma in business administration and I've accumulated over \$12,000 in debt throughout

these years, not only in tuition fees, but with the cost of living with rent, food, phone bills, hydro, because I've had to move to the city. I've had to get an apartment. I've had to pay for my food because my parents could not pay for all of these expenses. I've had to pay for them myself, and I've had to work a job while going to school. I've also had to pick up a second job recently while going to school in order to be able to pay my rent and to pay my food.

What bothers me about Bill 2 is that it won't necessarily be capping tuition fees to the rate of inflation, because universities will still be able to raise the—their tuition fees more than the rate of inflation, and the techniques used to penalize universities for this is the clawback method which I don't agree with myself. And I think that there should be other means or other techniques to implement this law than the clawback method.

What this means is that students will, in the long term, be funding more of the universities' costs and the government will be funding less.

This law—another thing that bothers me is that it does not cover university—it does not cover college students. There are over 350 college students at the Université de Saint-Boniface. I myself have been a college student for two years now. Students that study at the École technique et professionnelle are considered students of the University of St. Boniface. They pay the same ancillary fees and they hold the same Université de Saint-Boniface student ID card, and they contribute to the student—the campus life as much as university students do. And I'm not comfortable with the fact that these students will not be covered under this law, and that they won't be covered under this law.

And also Université de Saint-Boniface is well-known for its high percentage or its many international students. There—there's over 20 per cent international students at Université de Saint-Boniface, which are happy to be here in Winnipeg and are thankful to be receiving the education that they have.

Since I've started my mandate at the association étudiante, I've had many international students come to us and ask us why they're paying twice—over twice the amount of fees that we are paying for the same education.

And I've recently been talking to staff at the Université de Saint-Boniface and I've seen students—I've heard of students last year that were kicked out

of the student residence and were sent—were taken away. Like, they couldn't be students at the Université de Saint-Boniface anymore, because they weren't paying their tuition fees, and they simply didn't have the money to pay for these tuition fees because they were so high.

Another thing that bothers me in this law, or this projet de loi, is the definition of a professional degree program. While reading this law, it clearly states that the definition of a professional degree program is something that COPSE—is a program that COPSE defines a professional degree program. So I think there's a lack of clarity there, and there's—it's not properly and clearly defined, and I would like to see it more clearly defined in the Bill 2.

I also think another problem I have with this bill is the language used while writing this bill. I find that, personally, the language used is a bit weak. For example, in the bill, when talking about the obligations of COPSE, they often use the word "may" or "might," but when talking about the obligations of universities, they always use the word "must," and I find that this is a bit—this worries me a bit.

And I also—another point that bothers me is the developing of a policy respecting the designation of a professional degree program. It states here that the COPSE will develop this policy in consultation with universities, but I also find that it would be great to develop it in consultation with students. And I'm sure that me and my fellow students here would be happy to contribute to developing this policy.

And another thing, it—I was reading this bill and something that stood out for me was the part that—it was titled applying for increases above permitted increases. I find it a bit silly that they're—that it's—that this law helps or points out how you can evade this law. It explains how a university can apply for a professional degree program and not have to—that the tuition fees of these students won't have to be capped to the rate of inflation, and I find it very—it worries me that Bill 2 clearly explains to universities how to evade the Bill 2 and guides them through the many loopholes in order to charge students more and, in the long term, move towards the privatization of our post-secondary education in Manitoba.

And that is all.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Audette, for the presentation.

Are there questions from committee members?

Ms. Selby: Merci, M. Audette. Mon français n'est pas bon, alors je veux « practise » maintenant. Alors, je veux dire seulement merci et félicitations pour ta convocation. Merci.

Translation

Thank you, Mr. Audette. My French is not good, so I want to take this opportunity to practise. So I simply want to say thank you and congratulations on your graduation. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Audette, for your presentation. I'm not going to wow you with my French.

I just have one quick question for you. When the—because you're the president now of the University of St. Boniface Student Association, what's your answer to the international students when they come ask you why they're paying two to three times the amount of fees?

Mr. Audette: I find it a very difficult question to answer to these students. I often explain to them that—well, I don't always have an explanation, and I invite them to join us in our protest in our student association and help with the—with talking to politicians and making sure that they are included in the legislation.

* (19:10)

Mr. Gerrard: Merci pour votre présentation. Vous êtes observant de voir la différence entre « must » et « may ». Et c'est important pour avoir le « fairness » pour tout, et pour avoir une loi qui est juste. Merci.

Translation

Thank you for your presentation. It is observant of you to see the difference between "must" and "may." And it is important to have fairness for all, and to have a statute that is just. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions? Thank you very much, Mr. Audette, for your time.

I'll now call on the next presenter, call on Mohamed Ammoumou.

Mr. Ammoumou, if you could—oh, sorry, from the Canadian Federation of Students Manitoba, and please correct me if my pronunciation of your last name is not spot on, and thank you for your indulgence.

And you have written materials, I see, so those will be distributed, and please proceed with your presentation when you're ready. Thank you.

Mr. Mohamed Ammoumou (Canadian Federation of Students Manitoba): Thank you very much for having us here today. I am speaking on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Students. So my name is Karim Ammoumou, and I'm the chairperson for the Canadian Federation of Students.

The current government was re-elected last fall with their strongest mandate in 80 years. Among their campaign's promises were plans to offer protection to post-secondary students for—from the rising costs of attending university or college. These plans included having a cap on tuition fee increases and providing stable and predictable funding to post-secondary institutions.

The Canadian Federation of Students campaigned to our members during this election, encouraging students to vote for educationally—education-friendly policies and parties. So when the most education-friendly party won, students expected government to help curb the costs associated with attending university or college, which runs from tuition and ancillary fees for forgone income while studying and rent.

Bill 2, The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act, is the government's response to the student-in-need. Unfortunately, the bill doesn't live up to its name. Bill 2 is being presented as legislation that will protect the affordability for universities. However, it will still allow for tuition fees to increase by inflation. Manitobans were promised tuition fee increases no higher than inflation but were given increases no lower than inflation.

We need only look across our country and find an example of government that values students and recognizes how they contribute to economy growth. The government of Newfoundland, for example, and Labrador has issued a series of tuition fee freezes and reductions to make the province a regional economy leader by not only keeping students there but also attracting students from neighbouring provinces with significantly high tuition fees.

Let's remember, it was this government that recognized the value of investing in students when, in 1999, it rolled back tuition fees by 10 per cent and froze them at those levels for students studying in Manitoba. This legislation will prevent this and

future governments from using low or truly frozen tuition fees to attract and retain students and improve the social, cultural, and economic growth of Manitoba.

Right now, students need to see included in this legislation a clearly defined process by which government can set tuition fee increases below inflation and a hard cap to fee increases to ensure students aren't hit by high inflation.

Aside from tuition increases, students can also expect increases in ancillary fees, fees for services that were traditionally covered by tuition. Ancillary fees are just another way to increase the cost of university and colleges without formally raising tuition fees. Bill 2 needs to strengthen protection for students by including any ancillary fees that funds teaching or research directly or indirectly at post-secondary institutions under the inflationary cap applied to tuition fees. As it stands, Bill 2 will offer mild protection to students while leaving enough loopholes for universities to increase fees by either applying for increases above inflation or increasing ancillary fees.

Bill 2 does not even offer this basic form of protection to all students. Colleges' students, for example, and international students are excluded from this legislation, while significant loopholes fail to protect undergraduates and graduate students in professional programs. Over 50 per cent of post-secondary students in the province will be left completely unprotected by this legislation. How can the government claim to be protecting students when so many are excluded? No programs and no students should be exempt from the same tuition fee protection outlined in this legislation. We risk continuing an exploitive two-tier system that discriminate between students receiving the same education based on their country and—of residence and program of study. And by exempting professional programs from the tuition fee increase cap, the end result of fee hikes in these programs, in the exclusion of low-income and other marginalized group from acting as the next generation of tradespeople and professionals—in the same message the government wants to be sending.

When Manitobans voted to support this government's tuition fee protection program, it was not on assumption that tens of thousands of students will be not covered—or won't be covered. While the intent of this legislation is good, it requires many changes before it can provide protection to students

and their families from the rising costs of post-secondary education. And by students we mean all students and not rejecting college, for example, international students.

We know the government wants to create effective legislation to protect the affordability of post-secondary education for students and their families, and there's still time to do this and fulfill the election promises made to Manitobans. We believe the legislation can become, with some critical amendments—of course, sometimes that Manitobans can really be hand in and make a part of the permanent political landscape in our province.

I spoke on behalf of the Canadian Federation of Students, but I'm also an international student. I came here about four years ago as an international student. I attended Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. À l'époque c'était Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface; now it's Université de Saint-Boniface. I took the same program as Nicolas did, and I graduated, he graduated. I paid three times as he did, and I—I've been asking the same question.

I guess Mr. Ewasko asked the question to Nicolas when international students come to you and ask you this question, actually I had this question in 2008. I didn't have an answer, and I still don't have a correct answer because every time I ask someone, they give me a vague answer. And, if someone has an answer or a solution, more than welcome. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Thank you very much for the presentation, Mr. Ammoumou.

Now I move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you, Mr. Ammoumou. I appreciate you coming in and presenting tonight. And I do look forward to continuing our conversations, discussions and debates as we always do in my office. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Gerrard: Yes. Thank you for your presentation.

I think you've outlined a number of critical changes that you see as essential for this bill. Just let me give you one more chance to put them in very brief point form. What are the essential changes you think must be made?

Mr. Ammoumou: The essential changes that we actually—we talk to our members and we actually talk to our members and the essential changes that we

want is regarding the tuition fees, for example. And we have a funding projection, for example, in which we are determined to make a three-year funding projection every year instead of a three of—of every three years.

Regarding tuition fees, for example, create an absolute cap on all kinds of fees in a given year. No students should face sudden and unsustainable increase on tuition fees, for example.

Ancillary fees. For example, to include ancillary fees—for ancillary fees regulation to be effective, you need to clearly prohibit the use of ancillary fees that actually make the tuition fees higher.

And protection of every student. We don't want to exclude some students and get those students into—I guess if we get the legislation to cover all the students, that would be a major achievement.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Karim, for your presentation. I'd also like to congratulate you on your new position. So, again, look forward to working with you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Mr. Ammoumou.

I'd like to call on the next presenter, Pamela McLeod, from the University of Winnipeg.

Ms. McLeod, do you have a written materials for the committee? Thank you. You may proceed when ready then.

* (19:20)

Ms. Pamela McLeod (University of Winnipeg): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and committee members. I'm grateful to be here this evening representing the University of Winnipeg board of regents. And in particular, I'm here today to represent the chair of the board of regents, Mr. Craig Lee.

At our meeting on the 28th of May, our board of regents unanimously opposed Bill 2, the protecting affordability for university of students act, in its current form, for the following reasons: To begin with, Bill 2 raises a number of concerns for the future of higher education in Manitoba and for the University of Winnipeg in particular. We are opposed for three main reasons: The first one is autonomy. Bill 2 gives the Council on Post-Secondary Education the power to review whether a course fee increase reflects the university's costs, and it requires the university's tuition increases to be no greater than the rate of inflation.

This bill effectively strips the University of Winnipeg's board of regents of the legal power to set tuition. The right to set tuition has always been a responsibility of the university. It's definitive our—of our autonomy and our academic freedom as an institution to operate without governmental, if you'll forgive me, interference.

Two: Bill 2 may compromise the ability of the board of regents to meet its fiduciary responsibilities in presenting a balanced budget. The bill proposes that COPSE could require the university to pay fee refunds to students. This would require the university to lose its capacity to manage operating budgets and cedes this power to COPSE, yet the board of regents remains responsible for board budget outcomes.

And three: The bill does not provide additional funding commitments to Manitoba universities, and this hurts the University of Winnipeg in particular. Our provincial grant in 2010 was the equivalent of \$6,500 per student. Brandon University and the University of Manitoba each received the equivalent of \$12,000 per student.

This is a discrepancy that goes back decades without good reason, in fact, without any reason that I've been able to discover. The discrepancy has been multiplied by the rapid growth of—in enrolment at the University of Winnipeg. Over the past decade, our enrolment has grown by 55 per cent. Unfortunately, the Manitoba government does not link operating grants to enrolment, unlike many other provinces. Therefore, the impact on the University of Winnipeg's 'finances' is substantial.

The university has been working with the provincial government to address the inequality for several years and we remain hopeful that we can reach a more equitable funding formula. However, Bill 2 could effectively entrench the discrepancy for years to come. The University of Winnipeg will keep falling farther and farther behind other Manitoba universities despite its success in attracting under-represented students from the inner city and giving them much needed post-secondary opportunities.

University tuition in Manitoba is among the lowest in Canada. The University of Winnipeg has always made tuition fees affordable. As things stand now, the university must justify its tuition to its students and their families. With this bill, the responsibility to explain unto—unpopular tuition changes, hikes, would shift to the government. And that day will come.

The University of Winnipeg board of regents unanimously believes the best and most effective way to run the university is to allow those closest to the operations to retain its responsibilities, and so we respectfully ask that you withdraw Bill 2 and initiate meaningful consultations on the future of post-secondary funding in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Ms. McLeod.

Questions from the committee?

Ms. Selby: I just want to thank you, Ms. McLeod, for coming out tonight and for your obvious commitment to the University of Winnipeg. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: I, too, as well, Ms. McLeod, thank you for bringing words on, also, behalf of Mr. Craig and thank you for your presentation, again.

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, for your presentation.

The—one of the things that any attempt to do this would need to do, would be to have—change the funding formula so that the University of Winnipeg is reasonably funded, it would seem to me, and the second part of my question or comment would be, were—was the University of Winnipeg board of regents consulted in any way before this legislation was brought in?

Ms. McLeod: No.

Ms. Selby: I would just like to point out that the University of Winnipeg was consulted on November 9th. COPSE and the University of Winnipeg did meet to discuss this bill.

Mr. Chairperson: Any further questions from the committee? Thank you very much, Ms. McLeod, for your presentation.

I'll now call on the next presenter. I call on Lloyd Axworthy, private citizen. Good evening, Dr. Axworthy. Do you have any written materials for the committee?

Okay, thank you, then. You may proceed when you are ready.

Mr. Lloyd Axworthy (Private Citizen): Let me thank you all for your attendance and for opening up a—what I think has been a interesting discussion and dialogue about higher education in the Legislative Assembly, and I come to it with a clear, sort of, partiality.

I was a student at the University of Winnipeg before there was a University of Winnipeg; it used to be called United College. I was on the faculty and I, some of you know, took a fairly long sabbatical, some of which was spent in this room in hot summer nights, which I really try to block out on my better days, and for the last eight years I've been privileged to be the president and vice-chancellor of the university.

So I come to you not in a professional sense, but I think, really, as a citizen of the community, and first to underline what you've heard now from several speakers in a very eloquent fashion about the principle of the autonomy of a university, the right to make decisions, to make choices, to make those choices in a balanced way.

One thing that has not been heard often tonight is that, in addition to looking at affordability and access, you also have to look at quality, at the level of education, the ability of an institution to respond to the changes going on in its community, to offer the kind of curriculum that really makes sense for a society that is facing very dramatic transformations in a wide variety of fields, to be able to offer the best of intellectual content, good teaching, equipment, facilities.

When you link a fee increase to a CPI, somehow or other it—you know, the basket that makes up a CPI calculation of so much for bread and gas and heating fuel doesn't quite equate to the fact that you have to buy an MRI scanner for a million and a half dollars so that your scientists can do serious research on epilepsy, brain concussion and dementia. And yet that's part of the role that we play, that—being able to provide that kind of innovation for this province and for the community as a whole. Those kinds of considerations are not given a weight or calculation.

So the point about autonomy is not just a abstract principle. It's a question of giving to the governance system of a university—the senate, board of governors, board of regents—the ability to make decisions, I think as Ms. McLeod said, close to the front line. You're there every day; you know what's going on; you have to balance out the competing interests. We—you hear from students. You've heard from many of them tonight calling for a freeze.

Let me give you one comment. When I became president of the university in 2004, because I had grown up in the North End and I came to United College as a working-class kid and had always been genuinely sort of grateful for the education that I got

so that it could lead me into other areas—some of you may not agree those areas were worth getting into, but nevertheless—I was surprised when we did a survey of the population in low-income, high-risk areas city of Winnipeg. After a 10-year tuition freeze, the level of participation had not changed. There was not a question of the doors being wide open.

And after setting up a fairly serious task force to look into the issue—of faculty members, students, community people—through their consultations, we discovered that there are many other barriers than simply a tuition fee. There's simply lack of income—period—housing, food. I can tell you the number of students in our model school program at the university who come to the university hungry until we've been able to develop a food program for them through one of our alumni donors.

* (19:30)

There's also barriers that start much earlier than you even begin to think about tuition fees. In several schools, many schools—and I think Minister Swan will know this because he represents from there—there's a 50 per cent dropout rate at grade 9. There's a lot of young children who never get to the starting line, because they just haven't been able to connect into the system. We took on, as a university, the responsibility of trying to do something about that. We didn't ask for government money, although I would give credit to the government, who gave us a start-up grant for our Opportunity Fund, but let me tell you, right now, we have been able to provide access for 900 low-income students from this province over the last five years, and, therefore, substantially changed their opportunity base. It wasn't done by tuition; it was done by, in many cases, direct support; providing for transition; in some cases, providing housing for their families. So when we built a student residence, it just wasn't a room for existing students; it was a room for families, for single-parent families, so their kids could live in a good environment and atmosphere.

So, when you look at the question of access, I think it is one that involves a much broader basket of issues and concerns, which I take seriously, because we are a taxpayer-based institution. We receive money from the public purse to do these things, but it means to say that I can't rest easy simply by assuming that what are the traditional or conventional metrics of measures, which is how much that you charge to get in, is really going to

affect that all that much. In fact, I can give you pretty strong evidence that it doesn't. And that's where I think the point that has been made now by three or four speakers is that principle of subsidiarity—make decisions closest to where they have an impact, and make sure that those who have an impact are participating in those decisions at the same time. And that doesn't happen under this legislation, because it removes the level of decision making from where it really, sort of, is at the cutting edge—right at the front line.

The other side of the issue is the question of maintaining good institutions in this province. I mean, I'm very proud of this province, as you are. I think everybody in the room is, because it grew up out of a series of traditions and cultures, from our First Nations and Métis through hardscrabble pioneering work. This has never been a province of pomposity or presumption; people work hard here. As a result of that, I think that there has to be institutions that really enable and allow people to make choices to get into those issues, and that means that you have to be able to provide fair and responsive competition. We don't live in a small little isolated piece of prairie patch anymore. I have some of my best professors being sort of lured away by salaries \$20,000 more than I can afford to pay by institutions from around the world. We, simply, are now in that competitive marketplace. And in order to do it, you have to be able to pay for it. You have to be able to have the funds available to be able to match the kinds of equipment.

I've listened about concern raised by the CFS students and student associations about ancillary fees, and I take some concern that they talk about it as a money grab. It's not really. Let me give you an example: In today's education learning society, we have to, virtually every six months, make a major transformation of our digital information-based systems of learning. Students are walking in with these and iPads, and moving and everybody is using them and they're on our servers and we simply have to get more bandwidth and pay for more service to enable it to happen, to make it—and I welcome that. I think it's an exciting part of education—being able to sort of connect and reach and link up with people around the world, to have our students be able to touch into some of the best learning around the world, but it does take money. And if I raise the—you know, the facility fee by \$7 or \$8 in order that a student at the University of Winnipeg can be able to get access to all the incredible treasure trove of

information and ideas that's out there, I think that's a good investment. But somebody has to make the investment. But, if you've become locked into a system, which doesn't allow for that kind of flexibility to make those kinds of choices between objectives and goals—and sometimes it's, do you put money into your information system? Do you put money into improving the health care for students on campus? Do you put money into allowing sort of a new kind of program to emerge that will focus, as many of our business students do, on sort of co-op education and things that provide those issues?

That is why the autonomy issue is so crucial and why I think that my recommendation would be to the members of this committee. I have no objections to a government trying to protect affordability for students, but I would say let's amend the bill to also say, how do we promote excellence in education and make sure there's enough flexibility and governance available within that bill so that the—those people who are given the authority and legitimacy to make those decisions, can exercise them fully without interference?

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Dr. Axworthy.

We'll now move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you, Dr. Axworthy, for your presentation, and although at times, you and a—you and I may disagree, I know that we do share our belief in the power of higher education to be able to change people's lives. Also think that we have done some great work together as a government along with your vision. With a capital commitment of about \$134 million we've seen incredible work, and I know that you have led the way of the changes in things like the Richardson institution for the environment, the Buhler Centre, McFeetors Hall, the annex project and, of course, the new field house that's on its way that we're all looking forward to, the connection between the university and the community, and that's been a fantastic addition to our downtown.

I also think that we both share that commitment to excellence, which is why our government has increased the grants to the University of Winnipeg by 110.5 per cent, because we know how important the institution is, and as much as we want affordability and accessibility, of course, we want to see continued excellence at our universities as well.

And I think, also, that we have been able to work together to address different needs as they arise. For instance, with the Richardson institute, when the university came to us and required some additional money for that and we were able to provide last year the one-time grant of \$1.8 million to assist in the moving and the operating. And, then, this year, we have been able to approve an additional \$1.4-million addition to the baseline to the university to continue with the great work that's going to be done, that's being done at the Richardson centre and that will continue to be done.

So all this just to say that tonight has been about a lot of discussion and, as I said to the students, we will often debate and have great discussion, but I think that all of us are on the same page of wanting to see the continued excellence, and I thank you for your vision at the university.

Mr. Axworthy: Minister Selby, thank you for your comments, and you're right. I think that we have, in many ways, benefited by the investments made by the government, by the provincial Legislature. But there is one flaw; as there is in any perfectly made Arabian rug, there's always a flaw. And I think the flaw that we have here right now is that under the present funding formula there is no consideration given to success in terms of growth and access. And, as a result, over the last several years the amount of money per student at the University of Winnipeg has stayed around \$6,000; University of Manitoba, it's around \$12,500; and the University of Brandon, \$13,000. To me, that's an inequity and it makes it tough for us to maintain the kinds of qualities that we want to maintain without having to resort to other kinds of means.

You know, I'm with the students. I would love to see free tuition. The question is, who would pay for it? And in a time when the public, sort of, weal, the public good, is under so much stress and strain, the resort to me has to be to find the right balance between that. And that's why, you know, tuition is an important vehicle that needs to be looked at and flexibly administered by the governing board of regents in consultation with students and with others in order to allow us to continue to invest in the very things that you talked about.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd just like to say, thank you, Dr. Axworthy, for your presentation. Over the last eight years as being a high school guidance counsellor, I spent every fall and then, as well, spring session, I guess, or the break, coming and touring the

University of Winnipeg. And it is amazing on the additions that have been done at the campus, and it does—it's quite the complex.

So again, I'd just like to thank you for your presentation and taking the time this evening.

* (19:40)

Mr. Axworthy: I was just responding that I wish I had listened to my own guidance counsellor in high school. I might have ended up in totally different, far more comfortable, circumstances.

Mr. Gerrard: Thanks so much for your clear presentation. You've done remarkably in getting children—young people in poor circumstances—in difficult circumstances into the university, and, just to sort of echo but to try and capture one of the essence of what I hear you trying to say is that one of the things that is really—if we're going to make progress in getting students who are less advantaged into universities, you have to build into the COPSE formula—or whatever funding formula—an approach which rewards universities and institutions which reach out and bring in those students who are disadvantaged.

Mr. Chairperson: If I could, just before I allow Dr. Axworthy to respond, we've come to the time limit for our questions. Is there leave of the committee to allow Dr. Axworthy to respond? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Axworthy: I appreciate the courtesy of the committee.

Mr. Gerrard, first of all, I want to make it clear that what we're trying to do at the university is really a broad-based effort by people in and throughout the university, because I think we believe and because we're in that very specific part of the city, part of the province, and because of our history as a home of the social gospel, if you like, that this is part of the ethos of, I think, who we are and where we want to be.

It's also—if I can go back to the point I made at the start, and, Mr. Chairman, I won't take more of your time—about the autonomy-independence issue. I firmly believe that, as Professor Mills said, that one of the great sort of geniuses of our civil society is that institutions like a university or a college has some responsibility themselves. I don't think that we should be asking government to be carrying all the weight—all the freight in this kind of area. I think it's up to we at the university to see how we can bring down barriers, open up doors, provide for incentives.

We've just offered a new program, that Mr. Selby and I've talked about, of providing a tuition waiver for youth in care—one of the most serious issues, I think, we face. We're experimenting with—your colleague Mr. Chief is part of the development of that idea.

So here we are able to do something as an institution, and we're not coming back to government to say, you know, here's a good idea; go ahead and do it. We want to try it and make it happen.

And that is one of the benefits of having independent institutions that they can help develop those kinds of ideas and make them work and mobilize resources and go to the private sector or go to our alumni, go to donors and say we can make it work. That is why I think that members of the committee should take a look at the bill to make sure that that very precious element of university's in terms of its ability to respond and to be responsive, isn't too greatly sort of shrunken or limited. That is really my plea tonight.

Thank you very much for the—more time.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Dr. Axworthy.

Before moving on to the next presenter, there's been a request for the next presenter, No. 12, as well as presenter 14, to make a joint presentation. Is there leave of the committee to allow them to combine their presentation? *[Agreed]*

I'd like to then call on presenters, Tyler Blashko and Nawal Tajdin, and thank you very much. Do you have any written materials for the committee?

Mr. Tyler Blashko and Nawal Tajdin (Private Citizens): No, we don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, and I'd like to remind you that, despite the two of you being presenting, it's one presentation, and your time limit will remain 10 minutes.

Mr. Blashko and Ms. Tajdin: For sure. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, and you may proceed when you're ready.

Mr. Blashko and Ms. Tajdin: Thanks. We appreciate, of course, the opportunity to speak to all of you about our concerns regarding the bill, that it—as it is presented. As students, we were excited that the NDP government took the positive step to cap tuition increases to inflation, several years after the tuition fee freeze was lifted. When—while Bill 2, the

protecting affordability for student—for university students act, may be well intentioned, we feel that this bill is neither as inclusive or as strong as we'd like to see from this government.

Regarding the funding projections, we acknowledge the value and importance of funding projections for universities and appreciate their inclusion in this bill. While three-year projections are productive, we feel that for universities to maintain an informed budgeting process, an up-to-date three-year forecast is necessary and not simply a projection provided by the provincial government every three years.

Also, as it stands, these are simply projections that the government is not bound to in any way. For these projections to have relevance, they need to be guaranteed, and government must be obliged to meet these projections.

While the bill addresses tuition fees for some students, it doesn't address growing ancillary fees for any students. Ancillary fees should be understood to be fees for services beyond the academic sphere of the university, such as parking or gym memberships. They have continually been used by university administrations to circumvent provincial tuition policies. They have been applied to services integral to students' university experience and are applied as fees, such as technology and library fees, which Dr. Axworthy acknowledged that technology is a vital aspect of education.

Fees associated with these core aspects of academic life should be considered part of tuition fees and are covered—and covered under this legislation.

We support provincial oversight of tuition, but this piece of legislation also allows no room for tuition fees to decrease or even increase at a rate below inflation.

As we have seen this year, CPI in Manitoba will increase tuition by 2.8 per cent. When we speak of inflation, we often automatically jump to the 1 per cent figure, but sudden increases such as the 2.8 per cent can put students in a vulnerable position financially.

Good evening. Can you hear me?

I would like to reiterate our appreciation for allowing us to address the committee on an issue that affects the lives of every university student. I'll be

directly addressing the exclusion of international students from this legislation.

I am an international student, and this bill does not protect me, which is ironic because this legislation is aimed at protecting the affordability of post-secondary access to education for university students. As it stands, international students pay triple the amount of Canadian students for tuition. If Bill 2 is passed, this will only increase further, jeopardizing our ability to sustain our education in the long run.

We come prepared with a fixed budget for our tuition, but because we're not protected by law, we are vulnerable to tuition fluctuations that are quite exploitative.

The main incentive that attracts international students to Manitoba is the affordability of its post-secondary institutions. If this bill is passed and tuition fees continue to rise, Manitoba, as a province, runs the risk of losing out on prospective international students, and if we were to expand this further, also prospective skilled workers that contribute directly to the province's economy.

Earlier this year, we were happy, if not ecstatic, to be included under the Manitoba Health program, and view this as a step in the right direction where the voices of international students were being considered.

We would like to continue to be progressive on international student issues and see the opportunities to include us in this legislation as being a big part of that.

I—I've been in Manitoba for two years now. I'm doing my four-year degree in International Development Studies at the University of Winnipeg. I'm proud to be an international student at the University of Winnipeg, and I'm happy to be in an environment where students' voices do matter and we can have conversations with government representatives about issues that affect us. And I'm hoping that this can continue, and that our needs are basically put into perspective and are heard. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your—oh, sorry.

Mr. Blashko and Ms. Tajdin: I just wanted to continue—yes, I'm sorry.

I also wanted to touch on two other groups that were excluded from this legislation: college students

which Nicolas touched on quite a bit, and also professional degrees.

We worry about the language around the application for administrations and faculties to apply to be considered professional programs. The criteria isn't necessarily as it's laid out in legislation required to be met. So it's possible that the criteria is not even met and still be approved by COPSE to be considered a professional program.

So we come bearing gifts in the form of recommendations. First, we think it's important that funding projections are provided annually with the release of the provincial budget. As well, they should be legally binding to ensure that universities can have a truly informed budgeting process. Secondly, ancillary fees should be clearly defined as truly incidental

* (19:50)

Secondly, ancillary fees should be clearly defined as truly incidental costs, unrelated to the core aspects of a university student's academic experience.

Thirdly, this piece of legislation needs a mechanism that would allow the government to increase, freeze or decrease tuition fees below the rate of inflation.

Lastly, in order for this piece of legislation to truly protect the affordability for students, it needs to include more than 50 per cent of students under its coverage. Students and colleges, professional programs and international students all deserve the same types of protection from increases, in order to be able to properly plan for their academic careers. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Blashko, Ms. Tajdin.

Move on to questions now.

Ms. Selby: I want to thank you both for coming out tonight. And I appreciate your presenting and also just to let you know that, of course, I will continue with the commitment that I've made to students to meet regularly. We're not meeting as regularly as we like to while we're in session. But, hopefully, we can get back to our biweekly meetings in the summertime. And maybe we'll move some of them outside, as well. So I look forward to that. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: I would just like to say, Mr. Blashko and Ms. Tajdin, thank you very much for your presentation and taking the time under this short notice, coming out today and giving your presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, once again, for your presentation.

Now call on the next presenter, Sharon Alward, University of Manitoba Faculty Association.

Ms. Alward, do you have any written materials for distribution?

Ms. Sharon Alward (University of Manitoba Faculty Association): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: The Clerk will help you with that and feel free to start your presentation when you're ready.

Ms. Alward: Thank you very much for allowing the University of Manitoba Faculty Association to be here this evening to speak to Bill 2.

The University of Manitoba Faculty Association represents 1,200 full-time academics at the university. By way of background, the objectives of the association are: to promote the interests of teachers, researchers and librarians at the University of Manitoba; to advance the standards of their professions; and to improve the quality of higher education in Canada; and to bargain collectively on behalf of these members of the bargaining unit, represented by the association, as defined from time to time by the Manitoba Labour Board; and to represent all members of the bargaining unit in employer-employee relationships, with respect to such matters as salaries, pensions, working conditions, leaves, promotions, job security, and grievances.

We want to state at the outset that we believe the accessibility to a post-secondary education and, in particular, a university education needs to be a high priority in this province. And that the public monies supporting universities must be such that there is not an overreliance on tuition fees and a need to depend on private-sector donations.

Tuition fees should be gradually decreased, with the gap being made up in public funding. We believe that this government has made a positive step in announcing the increases in the operating grant over a three-year period, because it allows the university to plan over a longer period of time. And we think it

would be even more helpful if it were a rolling three-year period.

That being said, we have serious concerns about the content of Bill 2, which is now before the Legislative Assembly. The University of Manitoba Act established the autonomy of the university and section 16(1)(c) makes clear that the board of governors has the authority and responsibility to fix and determine all fees paid to the university.

This government is now proposing to remove the right of the university to set tuition and other fees. This government has, in the past number of years, told the universities in this province that the operating grant could be reduced if tuition fees are increased beyond a certain amount, that salaries are to be kept at a certain level and that there must be a vote on the administration's final offer to academics at the University of Brandon.

With respect to the tuition and other student fees, this will now be codified in legislation. There is an emerging pattern of intervention in the university's affairs. We believe that this should stop and that this bill should be withdrawn.

As well as setting a formula for the permitted general tuition fee increase, the bill allows COPSE to, after consideration of a number of factors, recommend to the minister whether certain programs should be designated as professional programs and what exceptional increase in fees to those programs should be permitted and whether a charge for services or material may be made. This gives COPSE new powers.

With respect to the exception for professional programs, the increase in allowable tuition fees to students in faculties such as law, dentistry, medicine, creates barriers, not only to under-represented groups, but to those who do not have access to bursaries and/or scholarships, and whose families do not have the financial resources to cover the costs of tuition, books and lab fees.

Potential students are intimidated by the amount of debt that they will have to incur to complete these programs of study, particularly since these programs, for all intents and purposes, require a previous degree. There is the creation of a two-tier system, whereby some programs will be able to apply for a greater increase than that specified in 25.7(1) and some won't. Further, 25.11(1)(h) states that COPSE must consider whether students currently enrolled in the program support paying the higher tuition costs

without specifying a mechanism by which this should occur, or whether the increase would apply to the current students or to future students.

The allowable increase in tuition fees is derived from a formula based on the annual inflation rate, and so provides some predictability as to what the increase would be. Should circumstances arise where the university might deem it necessary to increase general tuition fees above this level, there is no mechanism in the legislation whereby the university could apply for such an increase.

With respect to the operating grant, there's only a requirement that COPSE must provide a three-year forecast in the 2014-15 fiscal year and then every third fiscal year after that. There is no guarantee of any increase at all and nothing that prevents a decrease in the operating grant. This government may have good intentions regarding the annual operating grant, but there are no guarantees about future governments. Should future governments decide to decrease the operating grant and maintain tuition fees as per the proposed legislation, the university will have fewer options than it now has with respect to its budget.

We thank you for the opportunity to present to you on this matter and trust that you will take our concerns seriously. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Alward.

We'll move to questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you very much, Ms.—or Dr. Alward—I'm not sure which of the title—

Floor Comment: It's Professor.

Ms. Selby: Professor—appreciate your presentation and I understand I think there's a meeting being set up between us in the next coming weeks, so I look forward to that.

Floor Comment: The 19th, thank you. Looking forward to it also.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Professor Alward, for your presentation, and if you can just also pass that along to the rest of your—the University of Manitoba Faculty Association as well. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Professor Alward, for your presentation.

I will now call on the next presenter, Martha Terffa, private citizen. Martha Terffa? No? Okay. Martha Terffa will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Next presenter, Matt McLean, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3909.

Thank you very much, Mr. McLean. Do you have written materials for the committee?

Mr. Matt McLean (Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 3909): I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, and you may proceed with your presentation when ready.

Mr. McLean: Thank you. Yes. As you mentioned, I'm here on behalf of CUPE Local 3909. We represent all contract, faculty and student academic workers at the University of Manitoba. We have over 1,800 student academic workers or members. Approximately one-third of those work in areas that could be termed professional faculties. And I'm here to present today to try and convince this committee of the necessity to amend Bill 2 as it stands to ensure that this legislation protects the affordability and accessibility of post-secondary education for students and their families now and well into the future.

We at CUPE 3909 welcome the regulation of fees as the issue of tuition is simply too important of a public policy to be left up to the discretion of universities. However, we feel the legislation, as it stands, does not effectively regulate fees, nor does it provide adequate protections for both our members and all Manitoba students.

To be clear, we as a union do not support increases in tuition fees. We believe in a strong and public post-secondary system, one that should be universal and accessible just as K to 12 education is and just as health care is, and it should be available equally to all residents of Manitoba.

* (20:00)

However, we recognize that this government received a mandate in the last election to proceed with tuition fee increases by no more than inflation. We found the idea of legislated protection against tuition fees popular amongst our members in the last election and amongst students in general at the University of Manitoba when we talked about these issues last fall.

While this proposal, though, was sold in the last election as a universal program, what we are finding

now is that some students are being left behind. Students in professional programs, international students, college students, all find themselves at risk of greater than inflationary tuition increases. Our allies with the Canadian Federation of Students Manitoba have recently released their own analysis of B2 and concluded that over 50 per cent of post-secondary students in Manitoba are at risk of greater-than-inflation increases. Manitobans were promised tuition fee increases no higher than inflation, but what this legislation actually guarantees is that tuition will never rise by less than inflation, and these are very different matters.

One of the most frustrating parts of this new legislation is the issue of professional faculty exemptions. The professional faculty exemptions policy that is in place over the last 13 years of the NDP government has not been successful. We'd hoped that this legislation would finally end the system of professional faculty exemptions, a system which divided faculties and students, a system which encouraged creeping privatization of faculties, a system which created divisive and damaging confrontations on campus between students during some infamous tuition fee referenda. And, worst of all, this program of professional faculty exemptions encourage our most marginalized students to avoid educational paths that tend to leading—that tend to lead to high paying jobs. We are greatly saddened and frustrated to learn that not only does Bill 2 continue this policy but it actually weakened the current process that was in place and makes it easier to push through exemptions.

Instead of a series of criteria that need to be met, as was the previous case, we now have a system—or a series of things that need to be considered. We opposed the original procedure for increasing fees during the freeze and during the post-Levin Commission period, and we strongly oppose this regressive proposal to weaken the tuition fee protections in professional programs.

We were also informed a few weeks ago when we had the opportunity to meet with the minister of post-secondary education that professional exemptions may start to be applied to some graduate programs, something which hasn't been the case in the freeze and post-Levin Commission years, and, given the low wages and poor financial support graduate students receive at the University of Manitoba, we strongly reject any legislation which could result in large tuition increases, especially for

graduate students in programs like engineering, social work, education and nursing.

One of the ways that universities have gone around tuition fee freezes policies and subsequent regulations in the past has been through ancillary fees. It took several years of work on the behalf of students and workers at the universities before the government started cracking down on ancillary fees, and we oppose a return to the old system of fee increases through the back door. Now, while we support COPSE's involvement in the investigation and action on ancillary fees, we feel the legislation's written backwards. Ancillary needs—COPSE needs to be able to look at ancillary fees, just like it has the ability to look at professional fees to determine in advance of whether or not they're appropriate and whether—and their appropriateness should depend on whether or not they're covering costs that are outside of the core educational functions of the university. As been mentioned before, issues like parking, issues like gym memberships are fine for ancillary fees, but when we start talking about core issues like equipment in laboratories or books in libraries, these are fundamental things you can't teach, and those need to be covered by the Province's funding to the universities and by tuition fees.

We're also disappointed with the exclusion of international student fees from this legislation. Though it's impossible to know with certainty, I would estimate that greater than one-third of my local's members are international students. As you know, tuition fees are completely unregulated and universities regularly, over the past decade, have implemented drastic increases to tuition fees for international students. It wasn't that many years ago, when I was a graduate student, that my international brothers and sisters were paying the same fees as me. A few years later now, they're paying 350 per cent. It's been a huge increase, and it's affected them deeply. And we need for this to change.

Our position is that international differential fees must be regulated. First, they're already excessive, and second, without regulation, students are not protected from massive increases during the course of their studies. International students come to Canada with a budget for their education and living expenses, and when their fees are increased unexpectedly, it creates incredible hardship. International students come to Canada with a budget for their education, living expenses, and when their fees are increased 'unexpectedly', it creates incredible hardship. Because many international

students do not have a permit to work off campus—or in the case of graduate students, are in the 'conflictual' position of having to ask their advisor, who is often relying on them to provide work in their labs, for permission to work off campus—they're often forced to take money out of their basic necessities to make their tuition costs.

And finally, I'd like to say that it's hard to describe our province as being a welcoming place for immigrants and newcomers when they face, as taxpayers—and all of my members are taxpayers—when they face a two-tier public services Manitoba, they—these international students are part of our community and they contribute greatly to the economy of Manitoba. International students tend to be already highly educated when they come to Manitoba, and from my experience, especially at the graduate level, most of them stay after completing their studies.

As such, the position of our local and of CUPE Manitoba is to oppose international student differential fees on principle and to support any attempt to regulate these fees at present.

Additionally, I would like to offer my disappointment with this government for excluding college students in this legislation. I was reminded this past weekend of what the great trade unionist, J.S. Woodsworth once said, was: That which we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.

And it—I think it would be wrong of me to stand here and advocate for my members when so many college students are being missed as well. And I think the government needs to seriously look at amending this legislation to include college students as well. They shouldn't be discriminated based on the fact that they've chosen to take a different line of education, which is as valuable and deserves the same level of support as university students do.

Pervasively, though, one of the few things that this legislation does very well, is prevent the government from mandating tuition fee increases below the rate of inflation. As has already been talked about by many people, what's the government going to do if we go into a high inflationary period? Is this government going to sit on its laurels while tuition is going up 15, 16, 17 per cent?

Mr. Chairperson: Sorry to interrupt, Mr. McLean. The time for the presentation has concluded. Can I ask leave of the committee to allow Mr. McLean to finish his—to wrap up his presentation? *[Agreed]*

Mr. McLean: Thank you.

So I'll just say that I think that this government needs to seriously look at ways in which to amend the legislation, so that in times of high inflation, or for policy reasons, that tuition might increase at rates less than inflation.

In conclusion, I would say that because there—of these various exemptions, we find these extremely troubling. The exemptions found within ball two—within Bill 2 will allow for drastic tuition fee or ancillary fee increases without amending a single clause of the COPSE act, essentially making this bill all but useless in preserving the affordability of post-secondary education in the future if a government's elected that does not share the goals and aspirations of affordability and 'accessibility' in education. We believe this legislation needs to be amended to reflect the universal program which was promised in the last election.

Finally, I'd just like to say that when legislations intended to protect the rights of Manitobans, whether they be their human rights, labour rights or other civil rights, including the right to affordable and accessible education, we shouldn't allow for governments to bypass the spirit of this legislation without amending the legislation.

It's important that when governments wish to change these fundamental rights, that the opportunity for discussion and debate takes place. It's part of a healthy, civil society.

And we believe, though, that we can still maintain this legislation. This legislation can be saved with proper amendments. And though I obviously don't have time to go into them, our submission contains some suggestions for amendments which I believe student stakeholders would share with us.

With that, I'll conclude and thank you for your patience.

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

We'll move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: And I just want to thank you, Mr. McLean, for coming in and speaking so passionately on behalf of your members. Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: I, too, Mr. McLean, thank you for making it out tonight and giving your presentation.

And we'll definitely be going over your amendments towards the bill, taking a good look at them.

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

Now I'll call on the next presenter, Kwesi Bruce, private citizen.

Mr. Bruce, do you have a written submission for the committee?

Mr. Kwesi Bruce (Private Citizen): I'm just oral.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, please proceed with your presentation when ready. Thank you.

* (20:10)

Mr. Bruce: I come from a background that begins in the western region of continental Africa and due to Canadian scholarship funding, my parents were able to arrive in this country, which I have called home, since birth. I am a son of Manitoba. My colleagues and I aspire to excel in our academics and achieve a level of financial stability in our future.

I aspire to become a dental surgeon in my near future. My passion for that profession far exceeds any other benefits that may come with the territory. Bill 2 makes it hard for me to believe that my ongoing efforts as a student, as well as that of my parents, will be sufficient enough to take me through my academic journey without incurring a great level of 'uncalculable' debt.

The fact that international students and all students in any degree program, that COPSE and the provincial government deems professional, is excluded from the regulation of tuition fee increases close to or at the rate of inflation, does not cater to the whole post-secondary education of student body and, in turn, does not protect students in Manitoba overall.

Our economy is forcing parents and post-secondary education students to leave their household, to work a lot more hours just to merely get by, after they find out that tuition and ancillary fees have risen and at very least by the rate of inflation. I project that the future of Manitoba's post-secondary education is going to revolve around high-income earning degrees in the fields of business, dentistry, medicine, law, engineering and computer sciences.

Due to the demanding costs of living and the low level of post-secondary education funding, relative to the increase in student fees, not exceeding the fact—

not excluding the fact that this is—that this bill does not protect professional degree program students from hikes in their year-to-year tuition fees. I do not feel comfortable that I can tell you all today I will be able to look my daughter in her eyes and say she will be able to afford the cost involved for her to become the heart surgeon that she may so wilfully desire.

I do not approve the exclusion of international students and professional degree programs from the regulation of tuition fee increases up to the rate of inflation. This regulation should, at very least, be a universal proposal for all post-secondary education students that find themselves studying within our province of Manitoba.

If this bill passes as is, affordable education, in my eyes, will soon become extinct and as I know it to be, education is a right to all Canadian citizens, not a privilege. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Bruce, for your presentation.

We'll now move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: I, too, would just like to thank you, Mr. Bruce, for sharing your personal story and to wish you luck in your studies. Dental surgery sounds like an intensive program, and I wish you luck in that.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Bruce, for coming today and giving your oral presentation. And I, too, wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Bruce.

I'd now like to call on the next presenter, Kyra Wilson, private citizen.

Ms. Wilson, do you have written submission for the committee?

Ms. Kyra Wilson (Private Citizen): No, I do not. It's just an oral presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Well, you may proceed with your presentation on—

Ms. Wilson: Do you mind if I get some water here quickly, actually. Thank you. I'm very thirsty.

Mr. Chairperson: Absolutely. Take your time.

Ms. Wilson: All right. So my name's Kyra Wilson. I just wanted to thank everyone for giving me the opportunity to speak here today.

I'm a student at the University of Manitoba. I am the—sorry, I'm a little bit nervous right now. Bear

with me. I'm a part of, actually, the Aboriginal student association at the U of M. I'm also the UMSU Aboriginal representative, and I also hold the provincial Aboriginal commissioner position. So I'm very involved with Aboriginal issues and also issues pertaining to education that involve Aboriginal students. I wanted to come here to represent all students, but I wanted to specifically focus on Aboriginal students as well.

I am an Aboriginal student. I am actually funded from Long Plain First Nation. And I just want to be very brief because you've all heard everyone's statements and I think we have the same message is that we want to basically set a hard cap on tuition fees regardless of inflation. And we don't feel that there should be any exemptions, such as international students, professional programs within universities, whether that be undergraduate or graduate students, and also any other post-secondary institutions that are not universities, so colleges or trade schools. We want to have more accessibility for students. We want post-secondary to be affordable for everyone.

And I wanted to mention that Aboriginal students are under-represented in post-secondary, that being Inuit, Métis status and non-status. And I think with—or I feel with a tuition increase, band-funded students will receive less access due to funding limitations—and, sorry, I'm just missing a point here. So with the increased fees, bands that are already underfunded will have to lessen the number of Aboriginal people sent to post-secondary. I feel that with Aboriginal people, we need to educate Aboriginal communities and—by increasing fees that will probably give, I guess, Aboriginal students less access to post-secondary if the tuition is increased due to funding limitations.

We do need to regulate the tuition fees. We do want to see—we want students to have expectations for specific tuition fees. We don't want to have any surprises when it comes to post-secondary, and I'm sorry if I'm repeating myself, but when looking at this bill I just want you to basically look to the future and see what sort of consequences may come from passing this bill.

And I think that's everything for my presentation. Hopefully, I summed it all up. I mean, I am nervous, so hopefully I got all my points across and I'll leave it to you.

Mr. Chairperson: Great. Thank you very much for the presentation, Ms. Wilson.

Now move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you very much, Ms. Wilson. I thought you did a brilliant job and I thought you were very concise, and on this warm evening to have the patience to take the time to come out and wait in this hot room is much appreciated, so thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Wilson, for your presentation, and also just I commend you for the amount of hats that you're bringing to this presentation today that you wear. So thank you again.

Mr. Gerrard: Thanks for coming this evening.

I suspect you've had your own series of challenges getting to where you are in post-secondary education. Congratulations.

I think that, you know, it's really important that we increase the number of Aboriginal students going to secondary–post-secondary education, and thank you for speaking on behalf of Aboriginal students in the province.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): First of all, Ms. Wilson, thank you very much for being here. Just listening to you made me feel very proud of our people, and Long Plain is, indeed, a nice place; I've been there many times.

I was especially interested in some of the things that you had to say about funding limitations, and I think I have a good idea of what you're talking about. Many First Nations control their own finances.

I think you suggested that with this particular bill there's a possibility that there could be some limits placed on the number of Aboriginal people enrolled in post-secondary institutions. Now I just wanted to elaborate a little bit on that statement you made.

Ms. Wilson: So, when it comes to Aboriginal students being sent to post-secondary institutions, there are certain funding agreements with the federal government. And it goes, I guess, according to the number of band members per reserve. And so there are some reserves that don't have the same amount as other reserves, and so with each community you may not necessarily be able to send the amount of students that you want, and students are constantly fighting for the education that I feel should be accessible to every Aboriginal person, whether they're younger or older. And I feel that the competition is unfair. So, with a tuition increase, that

will have more of a competition for post-secondary institution, and I find it unfair, actually. And I'm very lucky to be here in front of you and actually attending the U of M, and it's unfortunate that a lot of people don't get that same sort of opportunity. So I just don't want to see those opportunities lessen with certain bills or legislation.

* (20:20)

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

Now I'd like to call on the next presenter, Ashley Shewchuk, private citizen.

Ms. Shewchuk, do you have a written submission for the committee?

Ms. Ashley Shewchuk (Private Citizen): I do not, no.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. You may proceed with your presentation when ready. Thank you.

Ms. Shewchuk: Thank you. I'm getting over a cold, so if I have to cough I will try and aim away, I apologize. So, good evening. I would like to start by thanking you for having me and all my colleagues speak. I'm a student at the University of Winnipeg, and I'm also the CFS liaison director with the UWSA.

So I'd like to start by stating that the title "Protecting Affordability for University Students Act" is a fallacious statement. Although well-intended, Bill 2 will still allow for tuition fees to increase by inflation, as well as allow universities to continue using ancillary fees to fund core teaching and research activities.

In addition to legislating tuition fee increases, the so-called protection does not cover all students. College students and international students are all together excluded from this legislation, while significant loopholes fail to protect undergraduate and graduate students in professional programs.

In the past 15 years, tuition fees in Canada have grown to become the single largest expense for most university and college students. The dramatic tuition fee increases during this period were the direct results of cuts to public funding for post-secondary education. Public funding currently accounts for an average of approximately 58 per cent of university and college operating funding, down from just 80 just two decades ago. During the same period, tuition fees have grown from 14 per cent of operating

funding to over 35 per cent. This constitutes a rapid reorientation of Canada's post-secondary education system, away from a public—publicly funded model and towards a privatized user-fee system.

Rapidly increasing tuition fees have caused post-secondary education to become unaffordable for many low- and middle-income Canadians. Bill 2 promises to affect—protect affordability for university students, yet tuition fees will increase each year if this bill is passed. In addition, this minor form of protection does—as I had mentioned, does not cover all students. International students, college students and students in professional programs will face legislative fee increases. This legislation would leave out approximately 52.7 per cent of post-secondary students in our province; that's over half. How is this protection when so many students are excluded?

International students pay the highest amount in tuition fees. Average tuition fees for international undergraduate students were more than three times the already high fees paid by Canadian citizens. At some universities, international students pay up to \$20,000 a year in tuition fees. High differential fees are an unfair burden and a barrier to post-secondary education for international students. Ultimately, such fees could threaten Canada's ability to attract and retain foreign scholars.

Now, I have heard the argument been made that increasing tuition fees does not deter students from attending university. This statement is a myth. Recent studies reveal the effects of high tuition fees on access to post-secondary education for students from low- and middle-income backgrounds. Statistics Canada reports that students from low-income families are less than half as likely to participate in university than those from high-income families. Also, Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey tallied the reasons cited by high school graduates who did not participate in post-secondary education. By an overwhelming margin, the most frequently reported barrier to university and college for these students were financial reasons.

University of British Columbia researcher Lori McElroy found that students with little or no debt were more than twice as likely to finish their degree than with high levels of debt. The completion rate for students with under \$1,000 of debt was 71 per cent while the completion rate for those with over \$10,000 was 34 per cent.

This legislation, as it stands, does not achieve its intent. Although students are fundamentally against

any tuition fee increases, for all of the reasons listed above, I urge the committee to at least implement a hard cap on tuition fee increases without any exceptions for international students, college students and graduate students, offering stability and security for students and being able to reasonably expect the cost of their post-secondary education while continuously providing funding to institutions that allow it to remain public. This would be a step in the right direction towards an eventual fully funded public education system that includes post-secondary and eliminating any and all financial barriers of access.

In conclusion, post-secondary education is a necessity for individuals and Manitoba at large. An educated population is correlated with a reduced crime rate, decreased health-care expenditures, and a greater civic engagement. A university or college education is virtually a prerequisite for meaningful participation in today's economy. By increasing the financial barriers to post-secondary education, policy makers are taking great risks with the future prosperity of Canadians. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Shewchuk.

Move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you very much, Ms. Shewchuk, for your presentation, and particularly appreciate that, despite not feeling very well tonight, you've shown your commitment to students by being here, so thank you.

Floor Comment: Thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Shewchuk, for your presentation.

You're one of a—quite a few of the presentations who mention the 52.7 per cent of students who are not recognized in this bill. Do you have any comments about that, or has your association met with the minister and talked about that specific number of students who are omitted from this bill?

Ms. Shewchuk: This bill was, for me quite personally, kind of frustrating when it first came out to begin with, and then seeing the amount of number, given that it's more than half of students that, like, the protection won't help, was even more infuriating. So, yes.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Shewchuk, for your presentation, and I hope you kick the cold.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Shewchuk.

I'd like to now call on the next presenter, Wendy Josephson, private citizen.

Ms. Josephson, do you have a written submission for the committee?

Ms. Wendy Josephson (Private Citizen): No, just an oral presentation, and I will try to be quick.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, and you may proceed when you're ready, then. Thank you.

Ms. Josephson: As a citizen, as a parent, and as a previous student myself—I got three degrees at universities in this province—I really know the value of a high quality education. And I worry that, despite all of the good intentions obviously commented upon and recognizable in this bill, that the impact of Bill 2, if times become financially tough, will be to lower the quality of education.

Why do I think that? Well, the main payers for post-secondary education, as we've been saying over and over again, are really well represented in this room. Sitting at the table are the representatives of the taxpayers of Manitoba, the provincial government, and sitting here and speaking so eloquently are the students. The resources that go into post-secondary education have to pretty much come from those sources.

Whether we're talking about provincial governments or individual students and their families, we know that the money we spend on post-secondary education is an investment in the future. Let's make sure that we don't enshrine something in law that threatens to turn that investment into the equivalent of buying junk bonds.

* (20:30)

With the powers—well, I just want to back up and say that I don't think it's a good thing for students to pay more in tuition. As Dr. Axworthy pointed out, it would be a good thing if students didn't have to pay tuition at all. However, this bill, when it reduces the commitments that can be expected of one set of payers, the students, does not make provision for the other main payer to pay more. And so if less and less is being put forward—and I'm not suggesting that that's your plan, I'm just saying the day may come, that leaves the universities not knowing, not really with a way to maintain the high quality.

I have a particular perspective on this because I work—I'm an employee at the University of Winnipeg, and although the board of regents is our employer and we have full and frank discussions and robust debates about all sorts of things, I have to say, I empathize with their situation. Imagine the situation: no control over your main source of funding; no rainy day fund if things go badly in a particular year; no ability to run a deficit; what can you do? Well, you could raise tuition. Hopefully, you won't have to because we've just heard how bad that can be for the people who would be paying that tuition. But what do you do if you don't do that? Do you cut and cut and cut your programs and the people that you hire to the point where when students graduate after paying those fees, they're not getting what they needed and what they came for.

And I want to assure you that there's not a lot of fat for them to cut. They've faced difficult situations for a long time. At the University of Winnipeg we watched that. You've seen that there's a funding disparity that makes our situation a little bit worse, well, a lot worse, actually, than at the other universities.

We see them, our administrators and our board of regents, and they are driven and they are inventive and they are downright cheap. They nickel-and-dime us to the extent possible to try and make that money go as far as it can, but they can't really cut much more and still maintain the quality.

And so I am asking you to pay attention not just to the affordability, although we've seen many reasons why we have to do that. And students speak very well for themselves. Affordability is important, but let's not let the quality of that education that they are paying for go down to the point where it's not a very good deal, not worth paying for anymore and—that's all.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Josephson.

We'll now move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: And, thank you, as well, Ms. Josephson, for your presentation and for your patience to wait for the number of speakers, and I appreciate you doing that. Thank you.

Ms. Josephson: You're welcome.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, again, Ms. Josephson for your time that you put into the presentation, and you

spoke passionately about your message. So thanks again.

Floor Comment: You're welcome.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

I will now call on the next presenter, James Beddome, Leader of the Green Party of Manitoba.

Mr. Beddome, do you have a written submission for the committee?

Mr. James Beddome (Green Party of Manitoba): I wish I did, but 24 hours' notice makes it kind of hard.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you may proceed with your presentation, then, when ready.

Mr. Beddome: All right, perfect. Well, I definitely appreciate you guys having me here today.

I'm just going to open with a little bit of process which—it goes to my earlier comment—which is I understand that, according to the rules of the Legislature, there is no way of knowing how far in advance a committee meeting will be scheduled. However, two days' notice must be given in the House for the first meeting of a standing or special committee considering the bill if presenters are registered to speak when a meeting is set.

My point being, you guys called this meeting yesterday. I would like to see you guys change your rules of proceeding and give people two days in or—preferably a week even. I'll tell you, I checked the Legislative site on Monday night, okay. I'm a little bit of a political geek as you guys all know. I like to check the Legislative site and it wasn't called, and it's not just—it's respect for the presenters that are here today, but it's also respect for your staff that have to work really hard to get the meeting together, you know, some of them which are wonderful people who have been pulled away from our poor universities that maybe can't afford them.

Anyway, so, you know, I—to get to the bill, because that needed to be put on the record, and I hope that this government will actually take that serious and will consider amending the rule so that we have better process, because this is a really special process that's unique, that's—private citizens can come talk to bills. But, to talk to the bill at hand, I'm against it, wearing my red lapel here, because I'm also a student. And, so, I'm a student at Robson Hall Law School, so this isn't going to protect my tuition

fees, and it's going to allow tuition fees to increase. We've heard many people comment on this, okay. But I'm not naive. I get it. Universities need money, right? We're going to have a quality education, we need quality education and that doesn't mean just new buildings and new, fancy technology. You know what really counts? People, the brains of the teacher. Some of my favourite professors came out with a scattered pile of papers and a piece of chalk, and they could do better than someone who had a video projector any day of the week.

So, we need money. Fine. I get that. There—I'm, as you'll see, I'm going to come and offer you guys a solution.

So, to be fair, the province has been funding education. They fund nearly half the costs of education. Your government loves to brag. I have—picked up one, at one time at a debate, one of your pamphlets. It said, an 80 per cent increase in funding for Manitoba colleges and universities since 1999, while the consumer price index rose 22 per cent.

What it doesn't look at is enrolment increased 35 per cent. So there's a problem there. You know, you can already see there's need and one of the big problems is the feds cut money in the 1990s. Let's be honest; it's not just the province. However, according to your own report you guys commissioned, by Dr. Levin, he takes a look at one of the things and one of the things he notes, I'm going to read from it, page 32 here, tax credits were a relatively minor form of support for post-secondary education until about a decade ago, but have since grown dramatically. Evidence suggests that the tax credits are not effective in encouraging enrolment in higher education. Students from higher income families are the main beneficiaries of tax credits; for students of modest means, the credits are not helpful because the money does not arrive when it is needed. Cash at the start of the year is much more important than the promise of a refund or credit in the future. About two-thirds of the value of credits claimed in Canada each year is not used by the students in the year earned. Instead, these amounts are transferred to a parent, or carried forward to a future year. This means that most of the benefit already indirect is not available even within a year of the expense being incurred. Accordingly, accessibility would be improved if funds were used for direct assistance to students rather than for tax credits.

So now a lot of these tax credits are federal, so I understand that, and, you know, you're going to have

to lobby the feds to give a better deal, and to end-roll all these tax credits. But I'm going to hone in on one tax credit that I think is particularly foolish: and it is the tuition fee rebate.

According to the Dr. Levin report, it's going to be worth \$90 million per year, when that program is fully in effect. Okay? Students are paying—I'm sorry, because I only had 24 hours; I had to use year-old numbers, didn't have time to go back into them—but students are paying roughly \$220 million in tuition, and universities spend roughly \$1.2 billion. So, \$90 million is nothing to scoff at; there's money there for the universities, there's money there to lower tuition for students.

It doesn't—I'm a law student. You guys are going to give me \$25,000 back for what? You know what? I love Manitoba. I'm not staying here for any reason, except that I love this province. So all you're doing is giving me a free tax credit. You know what? When I'm working as a lawyer, you can charge me 46.4 per cent tax. I don't mind paying back in the system, and that's on record today, so you can hold me to that.

But, you know, when I'm a student, that's when I need it. That's when I need it; I need the money now. So, I'd rather have you guys invest that money into there.

And, now, let's look at it. Is it a retention program? Because that's maybe the stated aim of it. Well, I would say this: Best retention program we could come up with is investing in our universities, because we bring young people here. They fall in love with a Manitoban and they decide to stay. You know, it brings people in. I'd like to see us lower tuition; I'd like to see us work towards free tuition, and it is not impossible. Brazil, China, Scotland, Finland, Norway, all countries that have done it. Why? Because it's a public good and there's a bunch of broad benefits. I'm not saying we can do it overnight, but we can start by eliminating tax credits, so that money can go back to the students and back to the institutions.

So I stand here as a student today. These are some red lapels that I put on the table, and I put them on as a challenge for any one of you as an MLA to put them on your lapel to stand with students and to stand with a lot of the professional faculty that have spoke against this and vote down this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Mr. Beddome.

We will now move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you, Mr. Beddome, for being here tonight, to speaking so passionately and to adding your voice to democracy.

Floor Comment: Beddome—just for correction.

Ms. Selby: Oh, sorry. My apologies, Beddome.

* (20:40)

Mr. Chairperson: *[interjection]* And—sorry, Mr. Beddome?

Mr. Beddome: Oh, Sorry. I do appreciate that. I hope you will take—yes, thank you. My process was off. I—there's—of course, the honourable member for Springfield has to give me a jive and tease me a bit. But I do thank you for appreciating the comments. I hope you will take them to heart and actually consider reversing the tuition fee rebate so there's \$90 million available for our post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Beddome, and I apologize of mispronunciation of your name.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Beddome, for the—for your energy and your presentation as well, and I didn't mind the intro either. Thank you.

Mr. Schuler: Yes. Thank you very much, and I don't know who this Mr. Beddome guy is; I know James. And, by the way, thank you very much.

You know what? You bring a really clear and definite argument and you do it with great passion. Now, I'm—I tend to be one of the less passionate people in this Legislature, so, you know, I always enjoy passion when I see it, and my colleagues across the way can attest to that. No, I really appreciate the fact that, you know, you—and I think you embody a lot of the presenters that have been here this evening. And, you know, I don't know if I agree with everything, but then we'd have nothing to debate about if I agreed with you on everything, and so, I, you know, really appreciate the individuals that have come forward from different perspectives and you do give us pause to reflect. I mean, we do get sort of caught up in the culture of this building and you get caught up in what's going on here, and to have, you know, you and other students come forward and put on different perspectives, it's very healthy for us.

And always great to see you, and not just at committee, but, particularly, tonight. Appreciate your comments and the passion and the—and, clearly, you believe in what you're saying and that is really good for this committee, and great to see you again.

Mr. Chairperson: *[interjection]* Mr. Beddome, in response?

Mr. Beddome: Ah, process again. I appreciate—I always get that wrong. I appreciate your comments, thank you very much, Mr. Schuler.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We will now move on to the next presenter. Monica Igweagu, private citizen. Ms. Igweagu? And I hope I've got your name somewhat right.

Ms. Monica Igweagu (Private Citizen): No, no.

Mr. Chairperson: Please correct me, if you would.

Ms. Igweagu: Igweagu.

Mr. Chairperson: Igweagu. Okay, thank you very much.

Ms. Igweagu: Still not right, but don't worry.

Mr. Chairperson: Igweagu?

Ms. Igweagu: Don't worry about it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Do you have a written submission for the committee?

Ms. Igweagu: No, I don't.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you. May proceed when ready, then.

Ms. Igweagu: Okay. Thank you.

I will start with a background information about myself. My name is Monica Igweagu, and I am the international student representative for the students at the University of Manitoba. We are working with UMSU. And I just wanted to start by letting you know I came here to Canada hope—with lots and lots of hopes and dreams and many, many—looking forward to many experiences, but all of a sudden, it seems like my dreams are being flushed down the toilet because of the continuous increments in fees.

While I was in high school, back home in Nigeria, I used to boast to my friends that my parents were—half of my family was from Canada, without even knowing where Canada was. I remember my friend once confronted me and asked me where is Canada, and I said it was in South America. I didn't

know anything about Canada then. But, all of a sudden, my sister got admission into the University of Manitoba and then it was like a shocker to me that I knew that I was going to come to Canada, of course, and I was so happy. I started googling maps, googling history about Canada and everything I will need to know, and the only place I actually knew was Toronto and Hudson Bay. That was all I knew about Canada then.

And I actually graduated high school at 16, and I already laid down my life that at 20 I would have graduated university and everything would be okay and I'll take a year off school and rest. I'm 21 this year and I'm still in my third year. I graduated high school at 16 and I had to take two years off for my parents to save up enough money for me to come to Canada to school, because my mom is a single mother raising four children and she's the only one paying our tuition fees. And now it just—it's just going wrong for us, because retention fees, increasing continuously, she can't just keep—keeping up with it. Since I landed in Canada, I've been working from the first day. I've been babysitting for my church members and different people and it's still not working out for my parents.

The relative value of the amount of school fees I pay, \$15,000 a year, is approximately \$3 million there, which relates as—who's relative value in Canada here is about \$150,000, and this—and every year my mom asks me, when I move to Canada. We had a good house; a fenced house. My mom had two cars and was planning on buying a third one. But today, my mom lives in an apartment and she has only one car, which she has been driving for five years. And that's really, really sad, because I feel so bad that I'm taking so much privileges away from my mother who is raising four children.

I just wanted to talk about this bill, which has no regards whatever for international students. And I feel so sad that the Canadian government is looking at international students as nothing more than a source of revenue, knowing that international students are the third largest revenue generators for Canada, that is, next to oil and mining. And it's preposterous, because we're pretty much not seen as humans anymore, if we're being compared to mining and oil.

In regards to this bill, according to section 25.6(1), a fee being increased every three months—oh, sorry, being a fee increase that is scheduled to be presented three months prior to the resumption of the

next school year, it's not being put in consideration of international students who are coming into the country. In my country, if you want to come to Canada, you have to apply for your visa three months prior, and you're not even sure if you're going to be coming. And if your parents have already set down your school fees, which they are going to be paying for your—for that particular school session, it means they have no information whatsoever if this fee is—which the amounts are—if the amounts of money that they've put down is actually going to be enough to afford the fees for that full, long year. And that means if you're going to be paying—if you thought you were going to be paying \$15,000 for the coming semester, you might end up paying probably \$16,000, \$17,000 depending on the faculty which you are going to. I'm an arts student, so I'm talking based on my school fees. My brother is a sciences student. And right now, I don't even see any hope for him, because my parent—my mom was really looking forward to my sister and I helping out to pay his school fees, but that—I don't see that happening any time soon. So he will probably be going back to the country as soon I graduate.

This bill is not putting in consideration the exchange rates, because if \$15,000 is converted, and the extra thousands of dollars that are being added is converted, this means students will have to give up so many things for their self—privileges—just to afford their school fees and help out their families.

Putting in consideration an average student's consumer price index baskets, according to point 25.5(1), even a course-related fee can be absorbed to a tuition fee without even the students knowing about this. Why should this be right? Because if I am coming from my country, and I see the differential—the fees, who I—which I have to pay, and I see services, which are offered by my school, some of these services are actually not something that I need; I don't want them. And if they want to change course-related fees to be part of my tuition fees—take, for instance, being in school, I have never used a locker even once. And my school offers lockers to students, but I don't need it, so I don't get it. And it's a—and if it's put in as a course-related fee, and it's absorbed into my tuition, this means that I'm paying for something that I don't even want, which is not right either.

I would like to say, also, that stating here anything can be made a professional—in relation to 25.10(3), stating here anything—the bill says that anything can be made into—pretty much anything can

be made into a professional degree program, looking at the criterias which it has to follow. And this is saying whether the degree the program leads to is entry practice requirements for a profession. I believe, every course offered in this—in the university actually leads to a profession unless I don't know why someone would want to study that.

If higher tuition fees would better students—including students from under-represented groups from enrolling in the program. If I want to study a course that I know the school fees increments is going to stop me from enrolling in that program, I wouldn't want to do that. I have to resort to doing something else. When I was a child, I said I wanted to be an engineer. Today, I'm studying economics, because I know economics is cheaper to study than engineering itself. The total cost of the program—if higher tuition fees are implemented, including the course-related fee and any other fee that the students pay as a result of being enrolled in a program, and the reasonableness of resulting increased debts brought in, our graduates may experience increasing the fees obviously increases the debts that your students will have to incur. So this means it's quite obvious that increasing the fees should not be done. If the market—how the students—if the students currently enrolled in the programs support paying the higher tuition fees, I don't think there's any student out there who would want to pay higher tuition fees for anything at all.

And it's worse in regards to questions that someone asked earlier on today, saying, why—what question has people—has he—what answers has he given to international students who has asked them, how—why is it that international students pay more? I have been asked that question so many times. When I was running for election, that was the first—that was the question so many people were asking me. And the same—I gave them the same answer over and over again. I just told them, it's because you're a source of revenue for the Canadian governments and you're—because you don't vote, you're not—your voice is not heard. You're pretty much seen and not heard. So there's nothing you can do about it.

* (20:50)

Well, I believe now that I have a chance to actually talk to you all about what's going on with the international students, I hope you all put into consideration the effect that this is going to give on the international students. We are people too, and we're not here studying because we believe Canada

is the land of dreams or whatever; we are here studying because we know the quality of education here is really good for us and we enjoy being in Canada. We love the weather here. Even if it's cold sometimes, we are still happy to be here. We hardly get the chance to actually go home for the winter. We still stay here and none of us have died due to winter. So it's not like we hate it here or we're forced to be here. We are happy to be here, and please make it a lot more conducive for us as international students to be around here. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation.

We'll now move on to questions.

Ms. Selby: I will apologize in advance for my pronunciation of your name, Ms. Igweagu. I'm sure there'll be a few more people apologizing, but I do thank you for sharing your story. I thank you for choosing Canada and specifically for choosing Manitoba. I have to say I'm surprised to hear that you like our weather, but it's wonderful to hear that as well, and I'm sure you're a great ambassador of how wonderful our weather in Manitoba is. And I also just feel like I need to thank your mother as well for supporting her family, so thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Igweagu, for your—I got it? Okay, great—for your presentation. And I think part of—the majority of your presentation was bang on as far as using your personal story and hitting us right where it counts, right in our hearts. And hopefully, our brains aren't disconnected from our hearts and we're actually listening to you. So thank you very much.

Mr. Schuler: Yes, and thank you for your presentation.

I just have one question. And I've heard it now several times that the third biggest income for the country is international student fees. Am I hearing that right?

Ms. Igweagu: Sorry, I'm sorry. Yes, you are.

Mr. Schuler: Could you point the committee in the direction where we would find that kind of information? Like, where is this being sourced from? I'd be interested to look into that.

Ms. Igweagu: Can I withdraw to my seat and get the—it out?

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Ms. Igweagu: It's—sorry. If—it's on the website, if I could read it out for you, okay, cic.gc.ca/english/departments/media/release/2010/2010-11-01a.asp. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now move on to the next presenter. I call on Irene Fubara-Manuel.

Ms. Fubara-Manuel, do you have any written materials for the committee?

Ms. Irene Fubara-Manuel (Private Citizen): No written materials.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. Well, thank you very much, and you may proceed with your presentation, then, when ready.

Ms. Fubara-Manuel: Also, thank you for pronouncing my name correctly.

As you already know, my name is Irene Fubara-Manuel. I'm the women's rep on UMSU. I'm a double honours student in psychology and gender studies at the U of M. I've been a student there for four years, and I'm also an international student.

And just to echo what everybody's been saying, most people walk up to me and they're like, how do you pay these fees? They assume that we are rich. They assume that international students are rich, but the funniest thing is that I'm not rich. Just like Monica and Jennifer, my mom is a single—she's a single parent. She's basically taking me and my younger brother—she pays our school fees on time every year. And I wouldn't even say that I have, like, financial issues, because I truthfully don't, but I know people who have so many financial issues and this is what I'm going to talk about right now.

I want you guys to imagine for, like—just use your imagination, because Kyra already started talking about, like, think into the future about the consequences of, like, what could happen. Think into the future now. Tuition fees go higher and they keep going higher, and what you have is basically a student underclass. And in order for them to make that money now, in order for them to pay for their debt, in order for them to pay for their living costs and everything, we all know that there is a huge rate of crime in underclasses. So what you are going to do at the end of the day, if you pass this bill, is basically create a criminal underclass that will try to pay for their education with crime, if they can't pay

for it with debts because no one likes debts. They will pay for it with crime. And that's the first thing.

Second of all, I think—Ashley had already spoken about this: the naming of the bill. What's it again? The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act. I—basically when I read this, I was, like, okay they're protecting affordability for some university students. Like, that's the truth there. That's the truth, because I was explaining to Bilan that, if this was protection, it would be like an umbrella with holes in it, and international students, students within the colleges and students in professional programs, they will be drenched, because you can't see anything here that actually—when I constantly saw that word "student," I was, like, what are they talking about here, because in my head, I'm a student, and I'm not only a student right now. My thesis for women's studies, I finished it. My thesis is getting—like, I've been trying to finalize the situation where I would basically submit my thesis to SERC, the Sexuality Education Resource Centre, and that doesn't only mean—that doesn't mean that I'm at a revenue or whatever. If I'm a financial revenue, I know I'm an intellectual revenue also. That is guaranteed. There is no way that you could, like, belittle, like, me and commodify my intellects to anything else at all.

So, what was I talking about here? What's this thing? Basically, just keeps talking about students and students, and Monica has already spoken about, like, most of the things I wanted to talk about.

And what was that—bill—in section 25.11.(b), it explains that for assessment for application for tuition increase—excuse me—if the tuition fees could deter students from under-represented groups in enrol in the program, it will basically not be accepted. And this is one thing that people need to understand. You cannot separate the international students from the immigrant population in Winnipeg. They are intertwined.

Like, that's basically what I was trying to explain in my thesis, and that's why my thesis has been asked for in SERC because they don't have too much information on immigrant sexuality, especially when it comes to LGBT immigrants.

So it's basically, like, when you come back and you look constantly at the way that a student is defined in each of these bills, you would see fully well that international students are excluded, program students are excluded. Like, at least, if you're going to be—you defined a few things here. If

you're going to be truthful, define a student and say international students were not excluded in this, and it would be a very truthful bill.

By the end of the day, there's nothing there. It's just international students in a few sentences, in a few paragraphs, and it just puts you in a haze, and you're, like, am I not a student? Am I not important?

And the funniest thing is that, like, international students actually strive—they strive a lot more than most of the Canadians students that I've seen here because of the situations that you have to face coming back from home, like being away from people that you love, trying to redefine yourself in a different situation. You have to deal with migration, which is basically a different form of grief and loneliness. So it's not just one thing you're going to deal with as an international student. Therefore, all the situations where you—they are constantly bombarded with things, simply because they have no protection. It makes no sense. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Fubara-Manuel, and we'll move on now to questions.

Mr. Swan: On behalf of Minister Selby and all of us, thank you very much for coming down to the Legislature tonight and presenting your view on behalf of international students. It was very helpful.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd like to just take a few seconds just to say thank you very much for your presentation, and I—you mentioned a few of the other presenters as well. Everybody is speaking quite passionately, and again, to reiterate, you know, from the heart, telling personal stories and how it affects you—not necessarily just yourself, but also the other international students who are coming to this fantastic province as well. So thank you again.

* (21:00)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Seeing no further questions, thank you again for your presentation.

And I'd like to call on the next presenter, Vordar Poitras. Sorry, I apologize, if you could, to—just to correct the record, maybe to—

Mr. Jordan Poitras (Private Citizen): Jordan Poitras.

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, Jordan, okay. Thank you very much, Jordan.

Do you have written material for the committee?

Mr. Poitras: No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you may proceed with your presentation when ready. Thank you.

Mr. Poitras: All right. Protecting affordability for university students; that would indicate that university was affordable in the first place. In this province we do have a lower tuition, but you cannot deny that there are those in Manitoba who would feel that university is completely unattainable. Any increase would be counteractive to building the province that this government has so enthusiastically laid out for us in their plan.

I do not represent any union or student group, but I know that my own personal situation is not unlike those I know in the community I live. I am 25 years old. I have not yet had the opportunity to continue my own education after high school. I'll actually be applying for spring—very excited. But given my financial situation, the story of student debt has kept me away, until just now, from continuing my education.

My partner's debt, which currently is at \$20,000—he's a graduate of the University of Winnipeg and the Red River. He waits tables because he would be unable to pay his debt in an entry-level position in his studied area.

So let's keep it short; you cannot make anything more affordable by potentially raising the price on something that is so arbitrary, as inflation. Legislation, when it comes to education, should be transformative, inclusive, radical and all-encompassing, whether anyone would like to study politics, arts, or medicine. Accessible education can only make us all better.

If you are protecting affordability, you will not pass this bill. That's it.

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

We'll now move on to questions.

Mr. Swan: Yes. Jordan, thank you for coming presenting to the committee.

Can I ask, what are you planning on studying in the fall?

Mr. Poitras: I would—a Bachelor of Science, I'd begin with, and then move on to engineering—environmental engineering.

Mr. Swan: Okay, well, thank you for that, and thank you for coming down and presenting to our committee, and best of luck to you with your studies.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Jordan—or Mr. Poitras, for your presentation, and I wish you all the best and all the luck for your future endeavours in the Bachelor of Science, then moving on. Thank you.

Mr. Poitras: That's it. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you very much, and thank you again for your presentation.

Moving on to the next presenter, I call on Craig Becker, private citizen. Craig Becker, private citizen. Okay. Craig's name, then, will be removed to the bottom of the list and called at the end.

Next presenter, Alon Weinberg. Alon Weinberg. Mr. Weinberg's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

The next presenter, Kahleigh Krochak. Ms. Krochak, thank you. Do you have a written submission for the committee?

Ms. Kahleigh Krochak (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you. You may proceed with your presentation, then, when ready.

Ms. Krochak: Well, I think lots of people have come here and done a great job covering the nuts and bolts of this bill, so I'm going to speak to my personal experience.

I'm a graduate of U of W. In fact, I graduate tomorrow. But I'm not here to tell you a story of crushing student debt. I was fortunate enough to have my tuition paid for by my parents, a feat not possible for the average Canadian family. My father is one of the two people in Canada who does his job creating a unique situation where my family can pay for both my tuition and that of my younger brothers.

I was blind to the spectre of student debt for many years, believing that it wasn't that bad, or it was something that only happened to other people. As I—as my education progressed, I began to meet these other people to see the difference between their lives and mine. I saw the stresses they suffered, and I watched as they dropped out or put their lives on hold after graduation, crippled by debt.

I saw my friends who had come to terms with the fact that university education would always be out of their reach. I saw all these people, my peers, and I wondered: Why do I deserve to learn to

succeed and fulfill my dreams? By luck alone I was born into a family who could afford to send me to school. Just by virtue of being born, I was given opportunities that many aspiring students never have. In a country like Canada that prides itself as a champion of equality among all people, white, people of coloured, men, women, disabled or able-bodied, is nothing less than hypocritical to pass a bill that will almost certainly result in rising tuition.

It is nothing less than a form of discrimination against those of us who weren't as lucky as I am. It is a bill that denies those not born into a high enough socio-economic status with the ability to realize their dreams, either by keeping them out of school entirely or saddling them with crushing debt.

What's the difference between them and me—the difference between them and you? The point is, there is no difference except that which we create. Tuition is nothing but another in a long line of socially accepted forms of discrimination against the economically disadvantaged, another way to keep the poor, poor and the rich, rich. This bill does nothing but further entrench this division, making a farce of Canada's claim of a commitment to equality.

I urge this council to vote against Bill 2 and to—and work towards the Canadian value, the human value of equality by removing barriers to education, not adding to them.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Krochak.

And before moving to the question period, I would just like to apologize to the committee and to the members of the public for not mentioning earlier, but during these proceedings, interaction from the public should—there should be no interaction whatsoever, and that includes any kind of applause or any kind of other disturbance.

So I'd ask the members of the public to adhere to that. Thank you very much.

Questions?

Ms. Selby: Just—I wanted to thank you Ms. Krochak. I'm sorry if I'm saying that wrong. Thank you so much for coming out and speaking on behalf of your peers.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Ms. Krochak, for your presentation.

I did have a question, but it's escaped me because I didn't jot it down earlier on in your presentation.

Yes, it is worthy—very worthy of an applause. But, unfortunately, due to the process, we're unable to be doing that. But thanks again for your presentation, and if I think of the question I had for you, later on this evening, if you're still kicking around, I'll ask you. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Moving on to the next presenter, I will now call on Alex Paterson, private citizen. Alex Paterson, private citizen.

Moving on to the next presenter, Amanda Jonson, private citizen. Amanda Jonson, private citizen. Amanda Jonson's name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land, Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land, private citizen. The name will be dropped to the bottom of the list.

Cameron Monkman, private citizen. Mr. Monkman, do you have any written submission for the committee? Okay, thank you. You may proceed when ready.

Mr. Cameron Monkman (Private Citizen): I am a local hip-hop music artist for the youth and community. And I think that the bill, itself, I'd like to kind of—it's kind of difficult when, you know, there are people out there who are struggling—being economically poor and stuff like that.

I think, you know, I might not understand all the big words and all that stuff that you guys probably understand by now, but I think it's important that people, regardless of, you know, the necessities that they have in life being money or, you know, if they can't afford school. I think education is a key to people that really want to pursue their dreams.

* (21:10)

I mean, education is one thing that was pushed among so many people growing up—so many people from different countries. And I think now that people are starting to take education a little more seriously, I think, it's just the whole money thing coming up, and people just—you know, I think, the fees and stuff like that. I don't think education should be more about money, but more about success, and I think I stand in front of so many people when I say that. You know, it's a difficult point of view looking at it, you know. Like, you got to look at it from people who want to go to school, but people who can't afford to go to school.

I think increasing tuition fees for universities, or even for education, for that matter, would be a wrongdoing, because, then you're, kind of, penalizing people who want to—you know, who want to pursue the education, who want to do what they want to do and following their dreams.

And I speak on behalf of the African community, on behalf of the Native American community, on everybody who wants to do something positive, who wants to make a difference and make a change and pursue education as that being a reference to doing what they want to do.

So, yes, that's pretty much what I wanted to say. I don't agree with the bill—the idea of the whole constitution behind all that. That's just, you know—sorry, I just had to say how I felt, because I don't think—you know, who wants to pay for education? Who wants to pay to learn? Who wants to pay to be born? Who wants to pay to—you know, to drink tap water? Like, that's what I mean. What's the world coming to when everyone's got to pay for things to succeed. It's just setting people up to fail, I think.

And, you know, I think, there's got to be a little more lean on some of the financial terms and people got to be a little more understanding as opposed to—you know, like, education. Especially, being Aboriginal myself, I don't really take advantage of the treaty rights, and I don't think I should, because I'm not going to be treated like someone different because my land, or whatever, being taken away. It's not about that. I think everybody has the right to be treated the same. So I think being here and speaking, it's like telling you guys that, you know, I think education is a key—education is a key for the youth. And there's got to be more of the education in the streets, and that's what I propose with my music and stuff like that because I think the kids need that. So thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for the presentation, Mr. Monkman.

We'll now move to questions.

Ms. Selby: I just wanted to thank you, as well, Mr. Monkman, for sharing your opinion. I think it's important that people do voice their opinion, and it's how our democracy is best served. So thank you.

Mr. Ewasko: I, too, Mr. Monkman, would like to just thank you for putting your words and comments on the record and speaking for education and youth for the province. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, I will now call the next presenter.

I would like to call on Theodoros Messinezis Zegeye-Gebrehiwot. And I apologize. I'm sure I mispronounced the name, and I apologize for that. Do you have any written submission for the committee?

Mr. Theodoros Messinezis Zegeye-Gebrehiwot (Private Citizen): No.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you. You may proceed, then, when ready.

Mr. Zegeye-Gebrehiwot: Thanks. The first thing I'll do is I'll pronounce my name correctly; it's Theodoros Messinezis Zegeye-Gebrehiwot. And I'll just continue with my points.

An Honourable Member: Just the way it's spelled. Perfect.

Mr. Zegeye-Gebrehiwot: Yes, that's what happens when you translate it from another language to English; it's always how it's spelled.

I'd like to first just begin by saying, you know, we've all been here for a long time and many people have already made a lot of important points. I'd like to add my voice to some of those points.

The first one is that the main—the serious danger and problem with this Bill 2—I'll go over a few that are, in my opinion, problems, but one serious one that's been mentioned is that it does not include colleges and it does not include international students when it's talking about its protection measures. This has been described already as very discriminatory, and people in these positions are already paying a lot and are in difficult situations financially due to this increase. It's an unfair way to draft something that's supposed to protect students. So that has to be stated and I want to add my voice to that.

The next thing I want to say is that its attempt is trying to cap—trying to make some sort of cap at the way tuition is increased and it's using inflation as the yardstick for determining this, and I think this is a problem as well, because, of course, we have skills to calculate inflation. I mean, there's a formula listed out 25.7(1) of—it gives a little formula to how to determine this inflation. It's not a matter of how can we do that, but the question is, why would we use that method when students are already people who are generally not in the workforce in the same way; they're not making money, they're not receiving the so-called benefits of inflation. And so, to charge

students more, at the rate of inflation, seems like it's like you're misplacing where the balance is coming from.

You know, students aren't getting this inflation when they're working, because they're all—they're—when you're taking school, when you're doing full-time or part-time post-secondary education, it takes work. You know, you cannot have an additional job to fill your time in the same way as someone who's not doing that. You can only divide your time so much; there's only so much time in the day. And so, to tie it to inflation is like presupposing that students have this access to, you know, the benefits of inflation in the first place, which they don't.

I think the underlying thing here is, of course, like, we have a respect for post-secondary education and we're looking at the need to increase funding to it. Mr. Axworthy, earlier you mentioned about how, you know, due to not having enough money, it hurts in a competitive situation where you have to—you can't pay professors as much and, as a result, you can't attract the same amount of students because you don't have this strong teaching force behind it. So, yes, okay, we need money. I mean, yes, let's acknowledge that, but this goes back to the point I was making, that to try to get that money out of increasing tuition is just not the right way to go.

It also seems to undermine—or presuppose that the tuition as it is, without increasing it, is not problematic. You know, like, I read in the *Free Press* that the University of Manitoba tuition is going to increase by \$83 on average. And, you know, if you look at the number \$83 in a year, it's like—it seems like it's kind of tiny, but before that was even being increased, it was already a lot of work to pay for tuition. So increasing an already expensive tuition by a little amount is not protecting students. And I wish I could say that, you know, it's—that it's fair and stuff like that, but it's not, you know.

And maybe I should, just for the record, give some information about who I am. I've graduated from the University of Manitoba in October; I have a degree in film studies; I'm 25 years old; I've been working since I was 14; I've received bursaries, scholarships and I've used student loans; I'm still in debt and I worked a lot. You know, in my first year, I worked on average 30 hours a week in addition to attending school full time, and, you know, this is the kind of situation that students are being pushed into. And you can't really have excellence happening when people are being exhausted by being forced to

work or extending the amount of time they have to do their degree.

You know, it's just—it's not the way for Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada, the world—it's not for—a good way for any organization to get ahead, by exhausting its forced innovators, the people who are working on it—and those are students.

So tuition increases only hurt that, and I think it had—this bill has to be increased to include protection measures for international students. I think there shouldn't be a tie to inflation as some sort of fair way to increase tuition. I think it seriously has to be considered that increasing tuition in any capacity is harmful to students, and so it should be frozen, it should be reduced, and we should have a conversation about going in that direction and not in the direction that this bill is asking.

That's all I have to say.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation.

We'll now move onto questions.

Ms. Selby: Thank you very much for your presentation.

You speak really well publicly, and I do want to congratulate you on almost finishing your degree, and thank you for being here.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you for the—I don't know, I'm lacking words already, but—I'm sorry for sounding redundant, but thank you very much for your presentation, as I am going to thank everybody for presenting, and under this short timeline, as far as coming out tonight and staying fairly late; your messages are definitely being heard loud and clear. So, again, thank you.

* (21:20)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Seeing no further questions, thanks, once again, for your presentation.

We will now return to those presenters who have been called once and their names have been dropped to the bottom of the list, and we will go through in the same order that they appear on the form.

Marakary Bayo, private citizen? Marakary Bayo? Okay.

Ronnie Cruz, private citizen? Once again, calling for Ronnie Cruz, private citizen? Seeing that

Ronnie is not here, I will—the name will be dropped from the list.

Martha Terffa, private citizen? Martha Terffa, private citizen? Seeing Ms. Terffa is not here, her name will be dropped from the list.

Craig Becker, private citizen? Craig Becker, private citizen? Seeing Mr. Becker is not here, name will be dropped from the list.

Alon Weinberg, private citizen? Alon Weinberg, private citizen? The name will be dropped from the list.

Alex Paterson, private citizen. Alex Paterson, private citizen? Name will be dropped from the list.

Amanda Jonson, private citizen? Amanda Jonson, private citizen? The name will be dropped from the list.

Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land? Bronwyn Dobchuk-Land, private citizen. The name will be dropped from the list.

And we have a—one more presenter on the—to add to the list. I call on Paula Ducharme, private citizen, to make a presentation.

Ms. Ducharme, do you have a written submission for the committee?

Ms. Paula Ducharme (Private Citizen): No, I do not, but I do have a request.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. You may—

Ms. Ducharme: That in the future, when you hold these things, that you do something to ensure that you guys can stay awake and you put air conditioning in the back to ensure that people can afford to stay in here without passing out.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, thank you. I will ask that you proceed with your presentation now. Thank you very much.

Ms. Ducharme: Okay. As most of you are aware of the Québec students' movement and the pots and pans solidarity and the casseroles movement—

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. I would just remind the presenter that props are not allowed at the committee hearings, so I will ask that we keep order at the committee and follow the rules of the committee. *[interjection]*

Okay, thank you very much, Ms. Ducharme, for adhering to the rules of the committee, and I ask you to proceed with your presentation.

Ms. Ducharme: My apologies; I was unaware. Now, if each of you would wake up and pay attention please. During these proceedings I've found it very rude that most of you weren't paying attention and that some of you snickered at the proper pronunciation of the preceding speaker's name. I felt that was very rude and inappropriate.

But, on with my presentation. I think education should be free and open to everyone. It's done and been modelled in other countries, and note, believe it or not, they don't have a surplus of—it just works, and I think education should be free for everyone. Anybody that wants to be educated should have that opportunity. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Ducharme.

We'll move on to—move on to questions, thank you. Ms.—Minister Swan. Oh, sorry. Minister Selby. It's been a long night.

Ms. Selby: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Ms. Ducharme, for adding your voice to the discussion tonight. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Ewasko? Mr. Ewasko?

Mr. Ewasko: I, as well, would like to thank Ms. Ducharme for her presentation. Thank you—and comments.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much.

This 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.

We now proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 2. During the consideration of the bill, the preamble, the enacting clause, and the title are postponed until all other clauses 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 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 to clause-by-clause consideration of the bills.

Does the minister responsible for Bill 2 have an opening statement?

Ms. Selby: I would just like to thank the presenters for taking the time to come out tonight and speak, and I think that we heard that there is a lot of support and compassion and dedication to ensuring that we continue to have ongoing quality, excellence, affordability, and accessibility at our post-secondary education—post-secondary institutions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the minister.

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

Mr. Ewasko: I do, Mr. Chair, and I'd also like to thank all of the people who came out tonight to give their presentations. I know it was relatively short notice, and at the same time, I didn't quite hear a whole lot of support for the bill. But, that being said, I would just again like to thank you all for coming out tonight and sharing your views, comments, and possible amendments and suggestions.

Mr. Chairperson: We thank the member.

Clauses 1 through 3—pass; clause 4—pass; clauses 5 and 6—pass.

Shall the enacting clause—Mr. Ewasko.

Mr. Ewasko: I'd just like a quick question even though we sort of zoomed past it there for a second, but on the permitted increase in tuition fees. Can I ask for leave to revert to page 5?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave of the committee to revert to page 5? *[Agreed]*

Please proceed, Mr. Ewasko.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you. Mr. Chair, 25.7(1), just a quick question, just to be put on the record. If the—what would happen if we had a rate of deflation? Would tuition fees then go down?

Ms. Selby: I would point out that it's a 12-month rolling average which usually it would result in smoothing out any spikes that we would see. It would need to be a substantial, ongoing deflation in order for it to, in that case, directly affect it, and I would like to point out to the member that in Canada, we've only seen deflation in 1953 and 1933. We've only been keeping records in Manitoba since 1961 and therefore haven't actually got it on record, and I would also point out that if we were to see deflation across the country, I think that we would have several very big issues to deal with along with post-secondary education.

* (21:30)

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Minister, for your answer to that question. Then, on the contrary, do we have—is there any thought of an insulator being put into the bill for—just in case of some serious inflation?

Ms. Selby: Again, the 12-month rolling average would smooth out any particular spikes one way or another. But I should point out, Mr. Chair, that this legislation is being brought in just so that we can avoid the type of increases that we did see in the '90s under tuition, and that this government is committed to affordable, accessible and excellence at universities and colleges.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Madam Minister, for that question. As it's pointed out, this bill doesn't reflect the colleges piece, just the universities. But that being said, under policy for designated professional degree programs, 25.8, page 6, just in regards to: The council must in consultation with the universities, develop a policy respecting the designation of programs as professional degree programs—does the minister see, probably within the near future few years, the faculty of arts and sciences of being the minority that will not be the—under the professional degree programs?

Ms. Selby: I would hesitate to try to predict the future, and the minister—the member is asking me to speculate on a possibility that is not reality. But I would say that this government's track record is to maintain affordable tuition.

We think it's important to put tuition, reasonable tuition, frozen to the rate of inflation in legislation so that we don't see the type of tuition increases that we saw in the '90s under the previous government where tuition went up 132 per cent.

In the time that we've been in office it's only gone up 3.4 per cent, and our commitment is to ensure affordability, accessibility. But, of course, the bill also includes three-year funding to universities so that they can have predictability, and we can help ensure that we go—continue with the ongoing excellence at our post-secondary education institutions.

Mr. Ewasko: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Madam Minister, for half of that answer. I do believe that we tackled this a little bit in Estimates, the fact that in the '90s the severe cutbacks in transfer payments from the federal government—as opposed to now, the federal government actually funding 40 per cent of

the provincial funding. But we're here to talk about the bill at hand.

Some of the concerns—I'd like to see some possible guidelines put in place so that COPSE or whoever was possibly applying for professional degree status, couldn't necessarily label all faculties professional degree programs, except for possibly arts and sciences.

Ms. Selby: The member does point out quite correctly that governments do have to make choices, and our government chooses to balance the budget while protecting front-line services. And we consider post-secondary education one of those front-line services that we will continue to protect.

But, as pointed out in the legislation, I should point out, Mr. Chair, that the council is going to be doing consultation with the universities to develop that exact policy that the member is referring to, in what will constitute and what criteria will need to be met in order to consider a program, a professional degree program. Of course, at that point, it still does have to come to the minister and to Cabinet as well, before that designation would be complete.

Mr. Ewasko: I was just making the comment for on the record that I definitely see a loophole in the bill, but that being said, I'm okay to move on unless there's other questions.

Mr. Chairperson: Seeing no further questions, we'll continue on with clause by clause. Okay.

Clause 5 and 6—pass; enacting clause—pass.

Shall the title pass?

Mr. Schuler: Yes, thank you very much. And it's been a very interesting evening sitting here as one of the committee members on this bill. We've had presentations coming from management, from right from the top, middle management and from student organizations and from grassroots students, all saying the same thing, which is unique because often you will get, at committee, management will say one thing and often the individuals, the consumers or the students will say something different, and very unique.

And we asked, on numerous occasions, what individuals thought the committee should do with this legislation, and they said it should be defeated. I take it the government members, who have the majority on this committee—let's be very clear, the NDP has the majority so they can do whatever they will. There's very little we can do as an opposition,

but I think if government members have heard what opposition members have heard, is that I don't think the consultation process was appropriately done, No. 1, that we had senior management of universities coming forward with difficulties in certain parts of the legislation. You know, student organizations felt that they had been consulted to some degree, but not necessarily on what was in the legislation as it sits in front of us. And grassroots students felt—in fact, one student even mentioned that, you know, maybe the time frame for the committee was a little short, the notice of this committee meeting.

Perhaps the government members did listen to what was said. Perhaps they did hear what the public was saying. And I'm wondering if the minister and her colleagues—because, again, they can put this through, no problem—would they consider putting a hoist on this for six months and allowing further consultation and perhaps allowing the government to come forward with some amendments. There's going to be another legislative session in fall, and the Legislature could have another look at it at that time.

So my question to the minister is would she consider a hoist of six months so that perhaps this legislation could be further debated, improved. Would she consider that?

Ms. Selby: I can tell you I would never consider increases like seen under the previous government of 132 per cent during the '90s. I would never consider getting rid of the bursary program, which is what your—what, Mr. Chair, the previous government did when they were around. What I would consider doing is, of course, continuing moving forward and making sure that we have excellence at our universities and college.

I'm very proud of the work that the post-secondary institutions in this province do, and I will continue to support them, as will my colleagues. And we will also continue to make sure that we have affordability and accessibility for students in Manitoba and from around the world who, we've heard, have been choosing Manitoba as their place to study, and for that we are very thankful.

Mr. Schuler: We had a lot of individuals come forward, indicate to the committee—and I always appreciate the honesty. In fact, I think it was the last presenter, who brought the crockery pot with her and, I mean—

Floor Comment: Casserole dish.

Mr. Schuler: Casserole dish, I'm sorry. She—I'm like James; I get certain things wrong here at committee.

You know what I appreciated? Just the honesty of it. The young gentlemen, the musician, you know, absolute honesty. It wasn't a lawyer-crafted presentation as most of the presentations were. They were from the heart, and they were very much appreciated.

* (21:40)

And, you know, for the minister to sit and spin fairy tales from yore gone past, you know what? None of that—none of that's going to help the one student who said, you know, my mom's working really hard. You know, there's four kids at home, and we're having trouble making ends meet.

And, you know, to spin yarns, you know, I would suggest to members opposite they've had 12 years and now we're at this point in time, we're talking about this piece of legislation. You heard it from senior management, middle management, you heard it from student organizations, you heard it from grassroots students, all of them asking—frankly, it doesn't really impact me one way or another. I've made it through university. I'm here now. It's the individuals that are sitting here looking at the minister and are asking the minister, I think, by and large, either defeat this or set it aside and see if there's room for improvement, if there's ways to improvement—prove it.

And I think that's a very fair analysis of what the presentations were here this evening and, you know, Minister, by all means, talk about an era and a time when you weren't here, I wasn't here, and spin yarns of yore, but that doesn't help any of those individuals who are sitting here looking at you saying, you know, could you at least listen to us.

So, if you don't want to listen to the opposition, I get it. This is politics at this table. But at—I hope you listen to the presentations and, no, they weren't always the most grammatically correct, and there were people who stood there very nervous. And you know what? That is the beauty of the presentations. That's the beauty of this committee, is that you come here as real individuals. You come here as real human beings and you say to the majority—and we have a majority government and you, basically, were addressing them—you say to them, will you at least consider changing it, push—putting it aside, and that's why I—we suggested perhaps a hoist.

If it's not something you're going to consider, say so and, again, it's—you have the majority. I guess right now we suffer under tyranny of the majority. Fine. You know, we accept that that was the democracy. That was the outcome of the last election.

But the question is very clear. Minister, have you listened and are you prepared for a hoist? Yes or no?

Mr. Chairperson: I'd just like to, before continuing on with questions, I'd like to remind all members of the committee to address your questions through the Chair.

Mr. Swan: Well it's—you know, it's fascinating tonight to hear the member for St. Paul trying, first of all, to ignore his government's record back in the '90s, but I know he doesn't want to talk about that past. But since he's been in this Legislature, the member for St. Paul voted against budgets that rolled back tuition by 10 per cent, voted against each budget that maintained the tuition fee freeze in Manitoba year after year, and every year voted against budgets that have increased funding to universities. Every year, he's spoken against increases in minimum wage, which have helped more Manitobans. So it's fine for the member to make his speech tonight. If he doesn't support the bill, he can vote against the bill.

But we believe that this is the best way to go to maintain the excellence in our universities, but also maintaining the cost effectiveness for our students.

So I know we don't want to talk about past history, but the member for St. Paul made a great speech, but maybe he should look at his own record since he's been sitting in this Legislature. And every chance he's had a chance to stand up for students, he has stood down and has refused to support students.

So, I'll put up our record as a government against his record in opposition.

Mrs. Rowat: And I would just like to put a couple of words on the record.

There was one day notice given on this presentation of this committee tonight. There are a significant number of people from Brandon University that, I think, would have appreciated having the opportunity to speak today and didn't have that opportunity, and it's unfortunate.

And I think that by reflecting back in the '90s—my kid was born in the '90s. He's just heading to

university now. To me, I think most of you there would be looking at the future. You're looking at an education. We're looking at a minister that has the opportunity to listen to you, and I think that's failing tonight.

So I think that this government has an opportunity to pull the bill and to make the amendments that are necessary to ensure that this is a bill that is not providing a false statement in the introduction, as was shared earlier tonight, and actually is inclusive of all university students, college students and international students.

So I think that you've presented a fairly clear and detailed list of asks, and I think that as students and, I think, as Manitobans, you have a right to ask this government to consult and to provide a better bill than what has been presented here tonight.

And I think if they're offended, that's too bad. I think what you're presenting tonight was important information, and if this government decides to push through a bill that is not in line with what your beliefs are or what you've been told during an election, then I think that you have a right to be very angry and a right to hold this government to account. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, seeing no further speakers, we'll continue on with clause by clause.

Title—pass. Bill be reported.

What is the will of the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Rise.

Mr. Chairperson: Committee rise. Thank you.

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 9:47 p.m.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Re: Bill 2

Hello,

I regretfully am not able to make the Standing Committee meeting tonight on Bill 2, The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act, but I would like to pass along my support for this bill. As a U of M student studying for the MCAT and hoping to be a first year med student next year I am pleased to see additional steps required in Bill 2 before a tuition increase can happen in professional programs such as mine. I am also equally as happy to see that ancillary fees can be challenged by students if they feel they are being raised arbitrarily. I think there are many good things in this bill for students and not

sure why my Student Union representatives are so against it.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Dansen

Clerk of Committees
Room 251 - 450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 0V8

Lauren Bosc
President
University of Winnipeg Students' Association

June 6, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to bring forth my concerns regarding Bill 2, "Protecting Affordability for University Students" on behalf of students at the University of Winnipeg.

Although this Bill is well intended, as it attempts to legislate protection for students in the Province of Manitoba against tuition fee increases, it fails to provide adequate protection from increases. The legislation presented in Bill 2 works toward legislating tuition fee increases with no guarantee for a maximum increase that students may face. Tying tuition fees to inflation presents a measure that can be incredibly unstable and from this students may be presented with increases that exceed those allowed by the province after the tuition fee freeze was lifted in 2008 (more than five percent). For a student who is constantly struggling with not only paying tuition fees but is also attempting to pay everyday expenses including food, rent, and other amenities, a legislated unstable increase to tuition fees actually increases barriers for students and forces them to consider taking on debt in order to continue with their studies. Student debt in Manitoba is on average \$19 000 and rising, and further increasing tuition fees will only aggregate this issue for students.

The issues raised here regarding tuition fee increases could be mediated by ensuring that there is a cap that protects students from high inflationary increases, which would ultimately allow students to plan for their preceding years at University and not face financial insecurity due to the unstable nature of inflation.

Bill 2 also addresses the institution of three year funding forecasts for post-secondary institutions in

the province, a decision that is very much supported by students at the University of Winnipeg. Students understand that the more funding their institutions receive from the province, the less likely the institution will be to turn to students to make up the revenue they need to cover their operational budget. Taking this into account, the issue that students see about the funding formula presented by Bill 2, is that there is no guarantee that the province must fulfill the projected increases that they set forth in their forecast.

The issue relating to the funding forecast could be mediated by ensuring that funding projections happen on a rolling forecast schedule where each budget would include a projection for the next three years, and that these forecast commitments are legally binding on the government.

Finally, the last issue I wish to raise regarding Bill 2 is the question of which students are covered under this Bill to "protect affordability for university students". There are many students who are not explicitly covered under this legislation that we feel must be included when discussing legislating tuition fee increases, including international students, college students, and students in professional programs. Based on the most recent province wide data, approximately 52.7% of all students in the province of Manitoba will be left unprotected by this legislation.

To mediate the exclusion of more than half the students in Manitoba, Bill 2 could be amended to include provisions for international students, college students, and protection from exorbitant fee increases for students in professional programs, which is currently permitted under this new legislation.

To conclude, students at the University of Winnipeg are calling on the Government of Manitoba to address these issues, and present changes that would create an absolute cap on all kinds of fees in a given year, as well as create a system that would allow the government to implement tuition fee increases below inflation or even tuition fee freezes or decreases. Additionally, in order to be effective, Bill 2 must include all students in the province as well as adhere to binding, three year funding forecasts that are presented in every year's budget.

This Bill has the potential to make a difference in the lives of students, however this potential is lost in the ways in which the Bill undermines its own intent. I urge the Government of Manitoba to take into consideration the issues I have raised in this letter, and will be available for any follow-up that is needed.

Thank-you again for your time and consideration.

On behalf of the UWSA Board of Directors,

Lauren Bosc
President, UWSA

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Re: Bill 2

As a student looking to do Honours History at the U of M, I am in full support of Bill 2, The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act but cannot attend the Standing Committee meeting tonight, so I am sending my comments in writing instead.

This bill and this government have always been strong advocates for affordable post-secondary education. Being able to have predictability of what my tuition fees will be as I finish this degree and move onto an Education degree will greatly help with my budgeting. On CJOB last year the then Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students, Alanna Makinson said:

"We welcome tuition fees capped at the rate of inflation. We've been calling for tuition fee protection. This is a step in the right direction. Students are definitely welcoming tuition fees being capped at the rate of inflation, especially with the long-term vision with respect to funding for universities and colleges. It's something that we've been calling for, long-term tuition fee protection, as well as stable core funding that universities can depend on, as well as students can depend on for planning."

I am not sure what has caused the sudden change of heart from the Canadian Federation of Students, I believe this bill makes what they were applauding last year stronger through legislation and as a student at the U of M I am in full support of this bill.

Sincerely,
Ericka Beaudry

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba Debates and Proceedings
are also available on the Internet at the following address:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/index.html>