

## **Backgrounder on Bill 33 - “The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act”**

Prepared by the Canadian Federation of Students - Manitoba

Available Online: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/42-3/b033e.php>

### **Overview**

Bill 33 amends what powers the Minister responsible for Post Secondary Education has with regards to post-secondary institutions (PSI's). If implemented, it would enhance the minister's powers to set guidelines related to tuition and student fees. These guidelines may limit a fee increase or require a fee to be decreased. The Minister may also prohibit compulsory student fees altogether. A university's provincial funding can be reduced by the amount that the university charges in excess of the guidelines set out by the Minister.

### **Key Issues**

- Bill 33 would allow the Minister responsible for Post Secondary Education to determine whether or not democratically established student fees are compulsory or not. Student union fees and levies are democratically established by referendum through elected student governing bodies and should not be determined by the Minister. These fees include but are not limited to student services, health plans, food banks, community spaces, student clubs, day cares, student unions and student service organizations.
- We have been told in meetings that the intent for Bill 33 is not to target student union fees and that these student fees will “not be touched”. Despite hearing this verbally by both the Minister currently responsible for PSE, Minister Ewasko, and his predecessor Minister Eichler, we remain concerned that the vagueness of Bill 33 still threatens the democratically established student organizations and the essential services they provide to students. Student fees + levy groups are established over decades of advocacy and services development and should not be interfered with by government;
- Further cause for concern lies in that Bill 33 resembles the Student Choice Initiative, a policy put forward by the Ford PC Government of Ontario in 2019. A policy which was deemed unlawful by the courts in Ontario just this past year;
- If Bill 33 passes as written, the Minister can issue a directive that mandatory student fees cannot exceed a certain amount (reducing budgets and funding for student-funded organizations), decide which parts of student fees are mandatory or implement “voluntary unionism” whereby students would either opt-in or out of their student fees - toying with the financial stability of democratically established fee structures;
- The province currently limits university and college's ability to increase tuition fees by 5% + inflation (~6.6%) each year but the decision to increase or decrease remains with the administrations. Bill 33 allows the Minister to unilaterally set guidelines to increase or decrease tuition fees at their discretion. This, coupled with the operational and funding cuts we have seen over the last 4 provincial budgets, will further weaken the capacity of our already under-funded post-secondary institutions.
- As a sustained lack of consultation with students on Bill 33 continues, we remain concerned about the impacts that this legislation will have on the student population in Manitoba and the 45,000 members of the CFSMB.

**Desired Outcomes:** Possible amendments to the bill to protect student organizations and reign in the overreach of power exhibited in Bill 33 related to ancillary fees and tuition. Or, to scrap Bill 33 altogether.