



# FUND THE FUTURE: THE STATE OF SASKATCHEWAN'S POST-SECONDARY SECTOR



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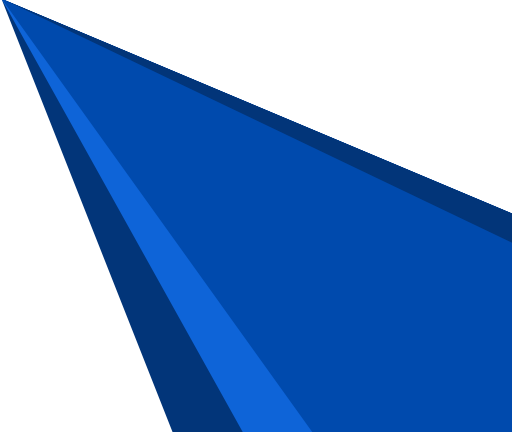
## **Prepared for the University of Regina Students Union by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Saskatchewan**

The following report gives a comprehensive overview of the state of Saskatchewan's post-secondary sector over the past decade. Based on available data, the report compares Saskatchewan's post-secondary sector to the rest of the country in regard to funding, tuition and fees, student financial assistance, and university spending on academic and non-academic salaries. The report concludes with an appraisal of what a performance-based funding model might mean for Saskatchewan's universities and post-secondary students. Data and Tables were compiled by Vivic Research. Any errors or omissions in interpretation are entirely the responsibility of the Saskatchewan Office of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

### **Who We are**

*The University of Regina Students Union (URSU) is the students' union representing 12,000 full-time, part-time, continuing education and post-graduate degree students at the University of Regina. URSU has a mandate to fight for students' rights and a student voice at the table, as well as offer cost-saving services, and provide programming that improves the student experience.*

*Our membership includes students from across the globe who are studying in varied full-time, part-time, online programs unique to University of Regina. Our membership is diverse, so our voice and our advocacy reflects that diversity.*







# FUND THE FUTURE : THE STATE OF SASKATCHEWAN'S POST – SECONDARY SECTOR

## Executive Summary

### POST-SECONDARY FUNDING

- While government funding of post-secondary education is declining nationwide, post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan receive a greater proportion of funding from the provincial government than all other provinces except Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. Post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan also receive a smaller proportion of funding from tuition and other fees than all other provinces except Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Nevertheless, the proportion of post-secondary institution revenue from tuition fees has increased over time. Although the trend has been slower in Saskatchewan than in Canada as a whole, the proportion of revenue from tuition fees has increased from 14.2% in 2010/11 to 21.5% in 2019/20, while the proportion of revenue from the province has declined from 53.1% to 49.5%.
- Per-student provincial government expenditure on post-secondary institutions has consistently been higher in Saskatchewan than the national average over the past 20 years. However, the level of real per-student provincial expenditure per student in Saskatchewan declined from 2009/10 to 2019/20.
- Real per-student government spending has declined by 12% in Saskatchewan over the past two decades, entirely due to declining provincial government spending per student. Only Ontario and PEI have had larger declines in per-student government spending.

### TUITION AND FEES

- Saskatchewan's domestic student tuition fees are higher than the national average and the gap has widened over time.
- Saskatchewan's international student tuition fees are lower than the national average.
- The proportion of tuition revenue from international students in Saskatchewan has
- increased from 9% in 2006/07 to 25% in 2019/20.

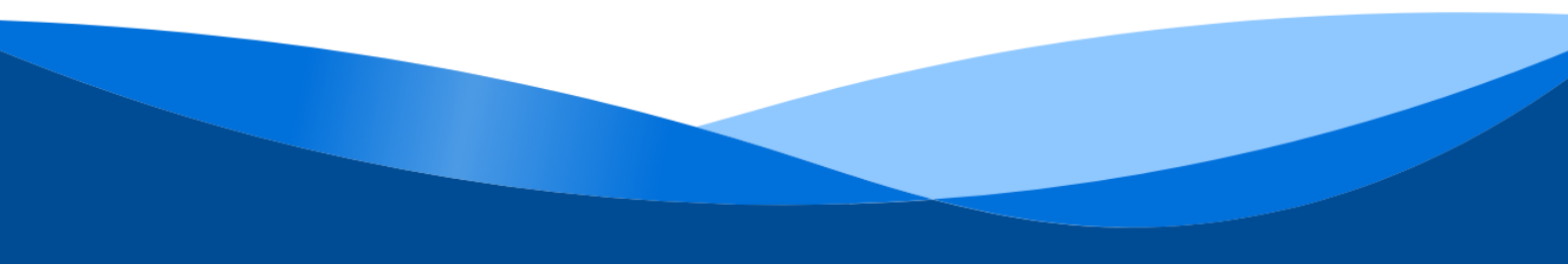
## **STUDENT LOANS AND GRANTS**

- In 2017/18, significant cuts were made to the Saskatchewan student grant system. The Saskatchewan Student Bursary was phased out and the Saskatchewan Student Grant replaced it. In 2021-22, total student grants were lower than they were in 2016/17.
- Overall, the amount of provincial student aid has increased significantly over the past 5 years but it has been primarily offered via loans rather than grants, significantly adding to student debt levels.
- Although total student aid per enrolled student has increased over the past decade, average tuition fees have increased faster.

## **UNIVERSITY SPENDING (ACADEMIC VS. NON-ACADEMIC)**

- Spending on academic salaries as a proportion of operating expenditure has fallen significantly over time in Saskatchewan while there has been little fall nationally. Thus, as of 2019/20 and 2020/21, Saskatchewan spent more on non-academic salaries and wages than academic salaries and wages while the reverse was true in the rest of Canada.
- The proportion of university spending on academic salaries in Saskatchewan declined from 37.5% in 2000-01 to 30.9% in 2020-21.
- The proportion of university spending on non-academic salaries and wages in Saskatchewan has increased from 29.8% in 2000-01 to 32.5% in 2020-21.
- Saskatchewan spent 32.5% of operating expenditure on non-academic salaries and wages, larger than every other province except Newfoundland & Labrador.
- In 2020/21, universities in Saskatchewan spent the largest proportion of their budget (65%) on items other than academic salaries and student aid of all provinces.

## **PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING**

- Recent evidence from the U.S. shows that performance-based funding (PBF) models have “no impact on degree completion outcomes” and have not consistently improved retention or the number of degrees earned. There is also compelling evidence that PBF policies lead to unintended outcomes, such as restricting access to historically marginalized students, higher administration costs, and shifting the burden of the cost of post-secondary education from the government onto students.
  - The Ministry of Advanced Education’s own research into PBF shows that it can significantly reduce government-spending on PSE (40 percent) while dramatically raising the costs shouldered by students (70 percent).
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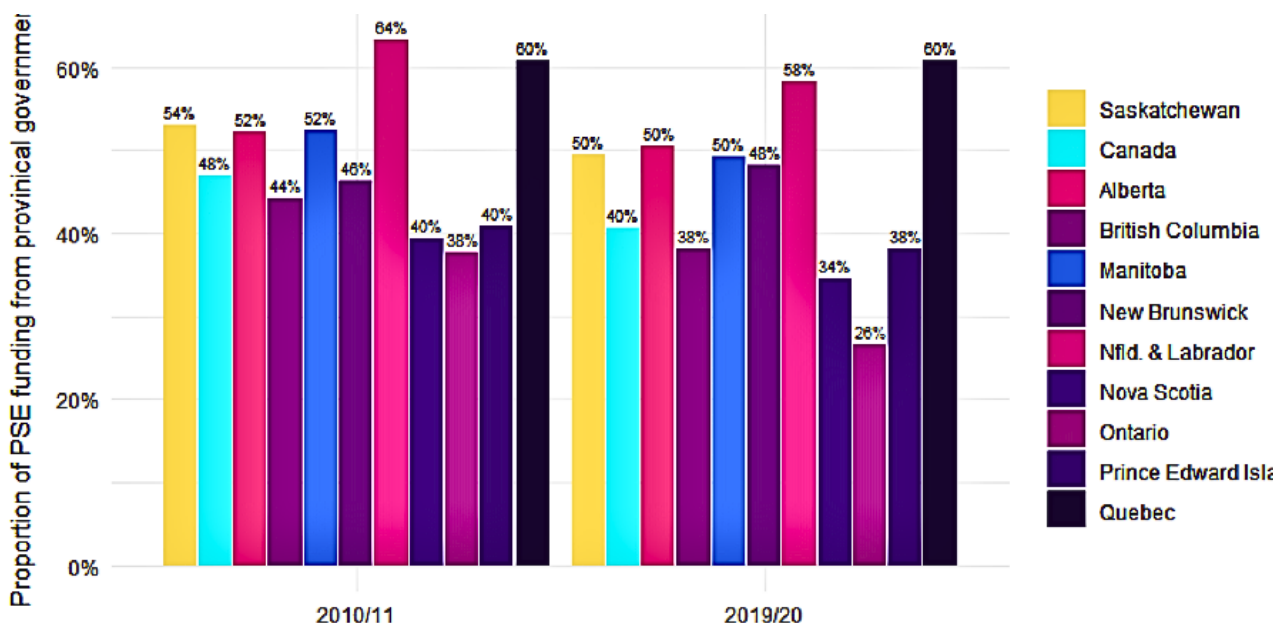
# FUND THE FUTURE : THE STATE OF SASKATCHEWAN'S POST-SECONDARY SECTOR

## Post-Secondary Funding

The funding relationship between post-secondary education and provincial governments in Canada for the past 40 years has been a story of decline. In all provinces, post-secondary institutions are relying less and less on the government as a source of income. While grants from provincial governments are still the largest single source of income for the post-secondary sector – public funding has declined as a proportion of total revenues for post-secondary institutions (Statistics Canada, 2020). Indeed, the national average proportion of revenue received from provincial governments declined from 48 percent in 2010-11 to 40 percent in 2019-20 (Figure 1).

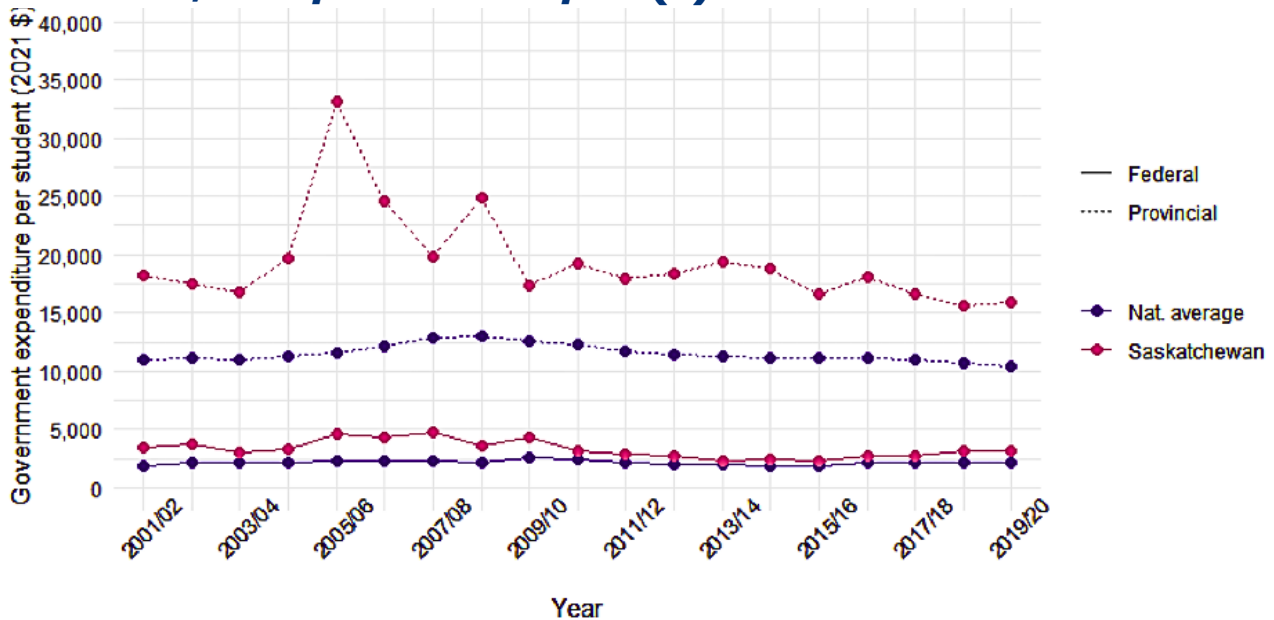
While all provinces are experiencing decline, the real distinction between the provinces is the degree and speed of declining government funding for post-secondary education. In this respect, Saskatchewan is doing better – or at least declining less quickly – in comparison to most other provinces. Between 2010 to 2020, Saskatchewan saw its proportion of funding from the provincial government decline from 54 to 50 percent. However, over that time period, post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan received a greater proportion of funding from the provincial government than all other provinces except Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador.

**FIGURE 1. PROPORTION OF PSE FUNDING FROM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS BY PROVINCE, 2010/11 AND 2019/20. (1)**

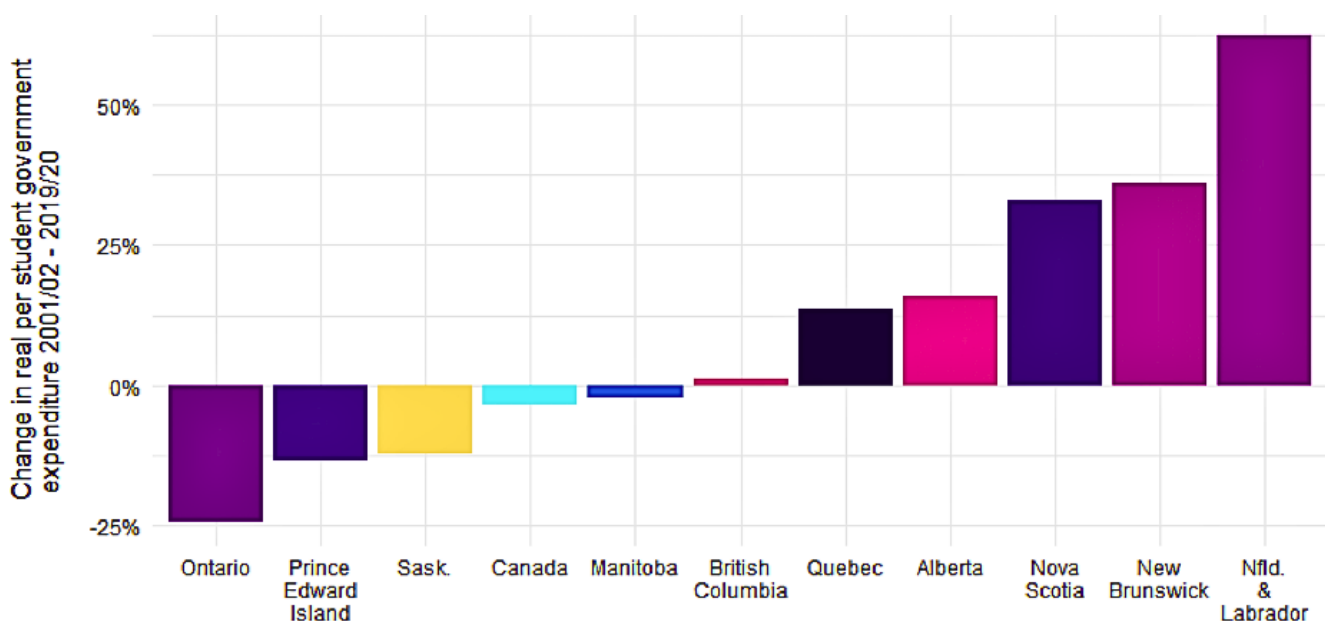


Indeed, looking at per-student expenditure, Saskatchewan has consistently spent more per student than the national average over the past twenty years.

**FIGURE 2. REAL PROVINCIAL AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING PER STUDENT FOR SASKATCHEWAN AND CANADA, 2001/02 TO 2019/20.(2)**



However, the level of real per-student provincial expenditure per student in Saskatchewan has declined from 2009/10 to 2019/20. Real per-student government spending has declined by 12 percent in Saskatchewan over the past two decades, entirely due to declining provincial government spending per student (Figure 3). Only Ontario and PEI have had larger declines in per-student government spending. In comparison, per-student government spending nationally declined by 3.4 percent since 2001/02.



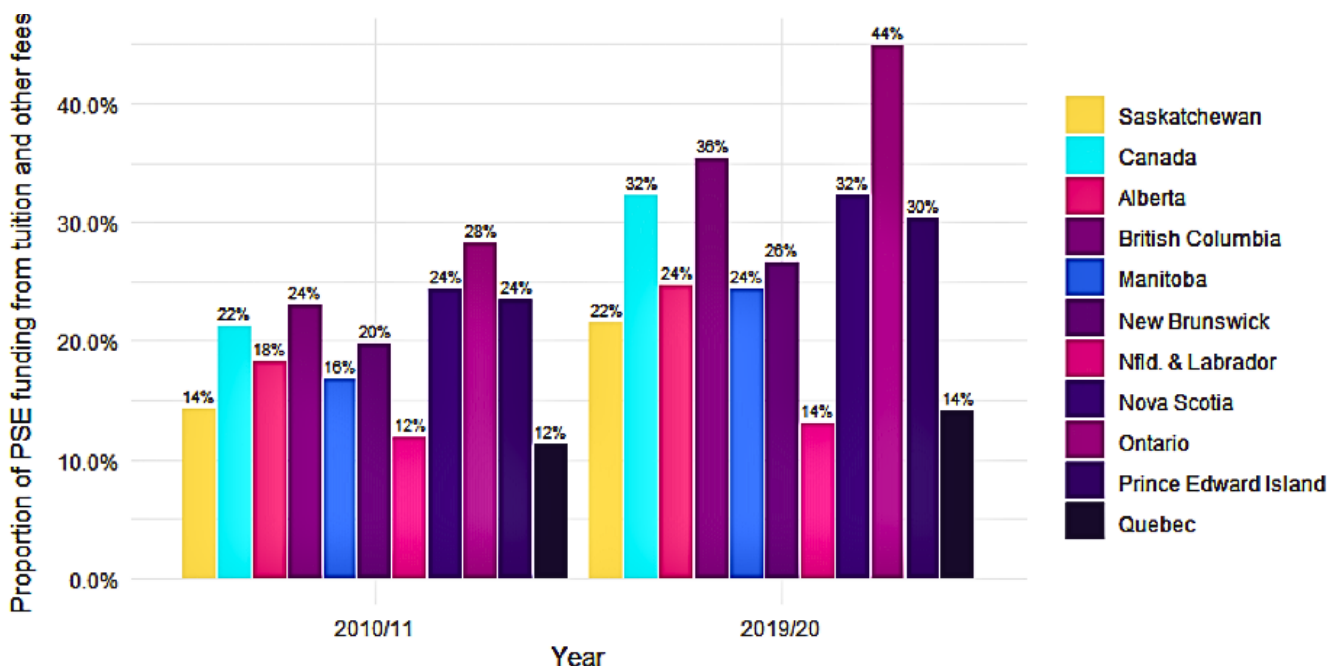
**FIGURE 3. CHANGE IN REAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING PER STUDENT BY PROVINCE, 2001/02 TO 2019/20. (3)**

## Tuition and Fees

In response to shrinking government funding, universities across the country have sought to replace lost government revenues via tuition increases, particularly for international students, who have become the primary means by which many Canadian universities try to make up the shortfall. The national average proportion of revenue received from tuition and other fees increased from 22 percent in 2010/11 to 32 percent in 2019/20. Once again, while Saskatchewan has not been immune to these effects, post-secondary institutions in the province receive a smaller proportion of funding from tuition and other fees than all other provinces except Quebec and Newfoundland & Labrador.

Saskatchewan post-secondary institutions have seen their proportion of funding from tuition and fees grow from 14 percent in 2010 to 22 percent in 2020 (Figure 4). Regarding international student tuition, Saskatchewan closely follows the national trend. Nationwide, the proportion of tuition revenue from international students at Canadian universities has increased from 15 percent in 2006/07 to 38 percent in 2019/20. While Saskatchewan universities receive a smaller proportion of tuition fees from international students, it has seen rapid growth in the proportion it takes, growing from 9 percent in 2006/07 to 25 percent in 2019/20 (Figure 5).

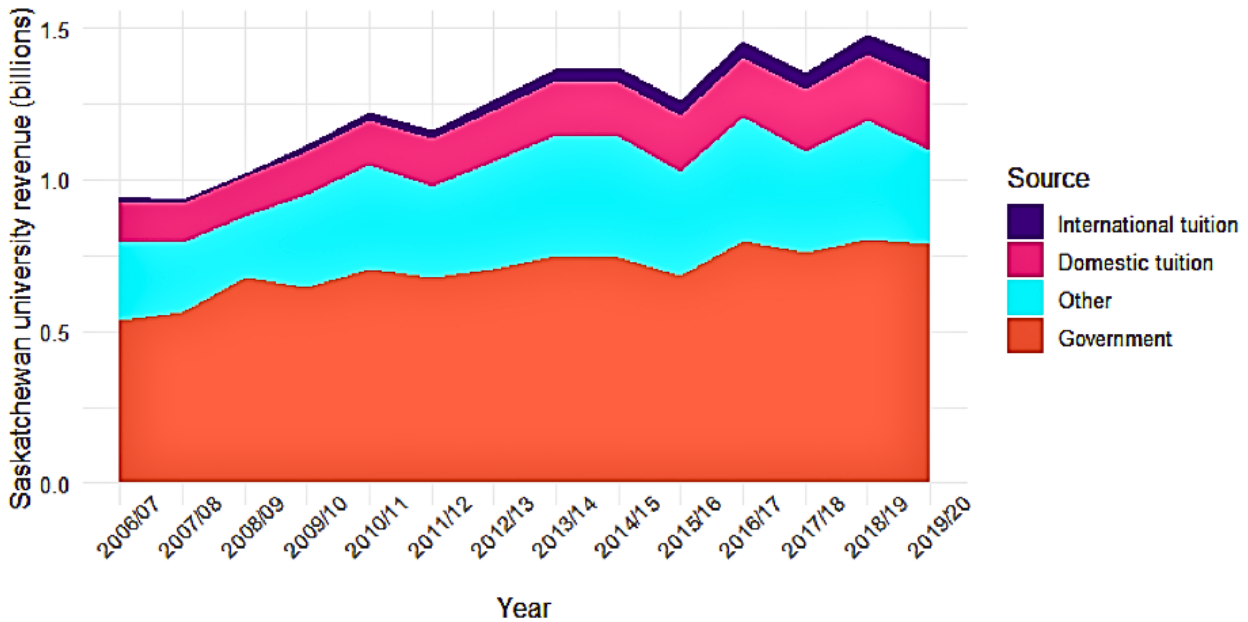
**FIGURE 4. PROPORTION OF PSE FUNDING FROM TUITION AND FEES BY PROVINCE, 2010/11 AND 2019/20.(4)**



Indeed, looking at per-student expenditure, Saskatchewan has consistently spent more per student than the national average over the past twenty years.

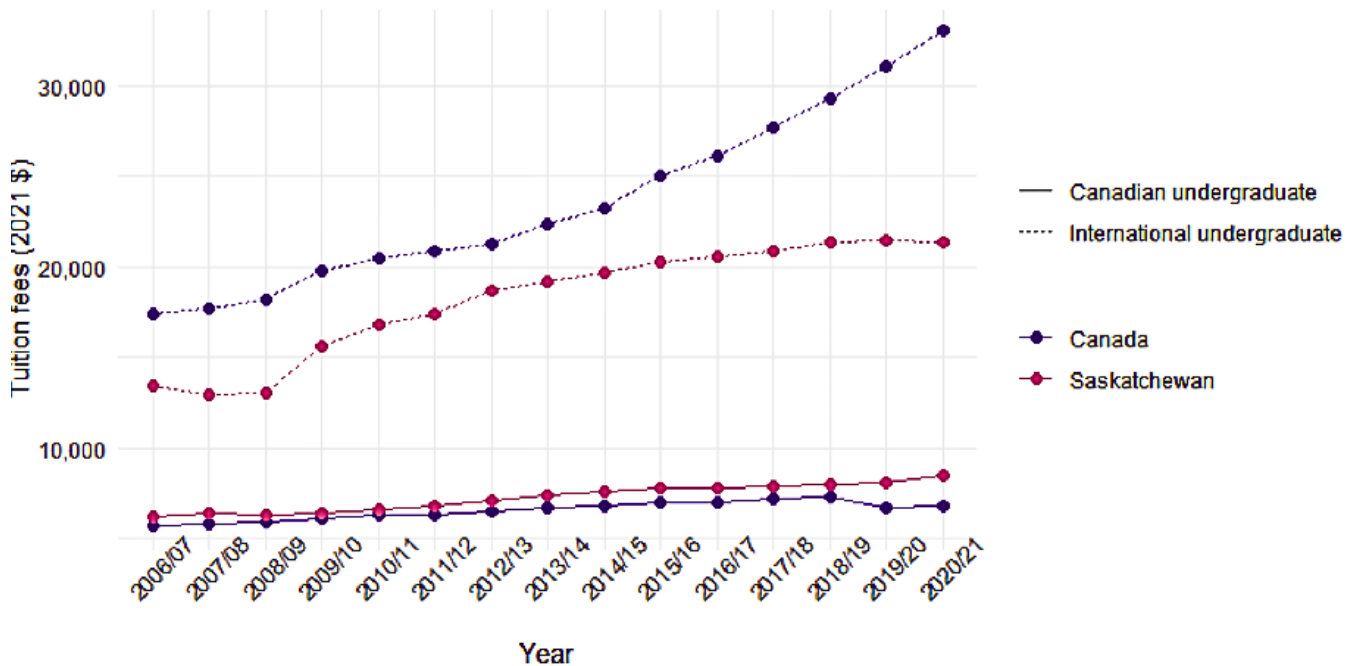


**FIGURE 5. SASKATCHEWAN UNIVERSITY REVENUE BY SOURCE, 2006/07 TO 2019/20. (5)**



For domestic tuition, Saskatchewan’s domestic student tuition fees are higher than the national average and the gap has widened over time. As of 2022, Saskatchewan’s undergraduate tuition rate stood at \$8,854 versus the national average of \$6,834. (6) However, both Canadian graduate and international undergraduate tuition is lower in Saskatchewan than the national average.

**FIGURE 6. AVERAGE TUITION FEES FOR DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR SASKATCHEWAN AND CANADA, 2006/07 TO 2021/22. (7)**



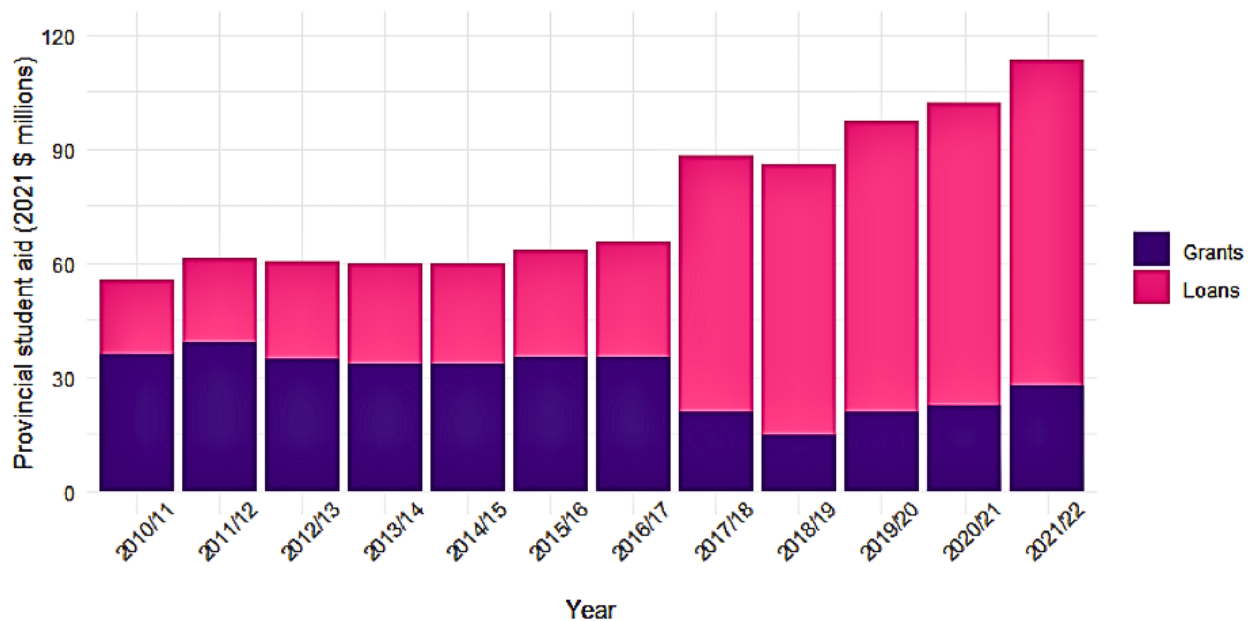


## Student Aid / Financial Assistance

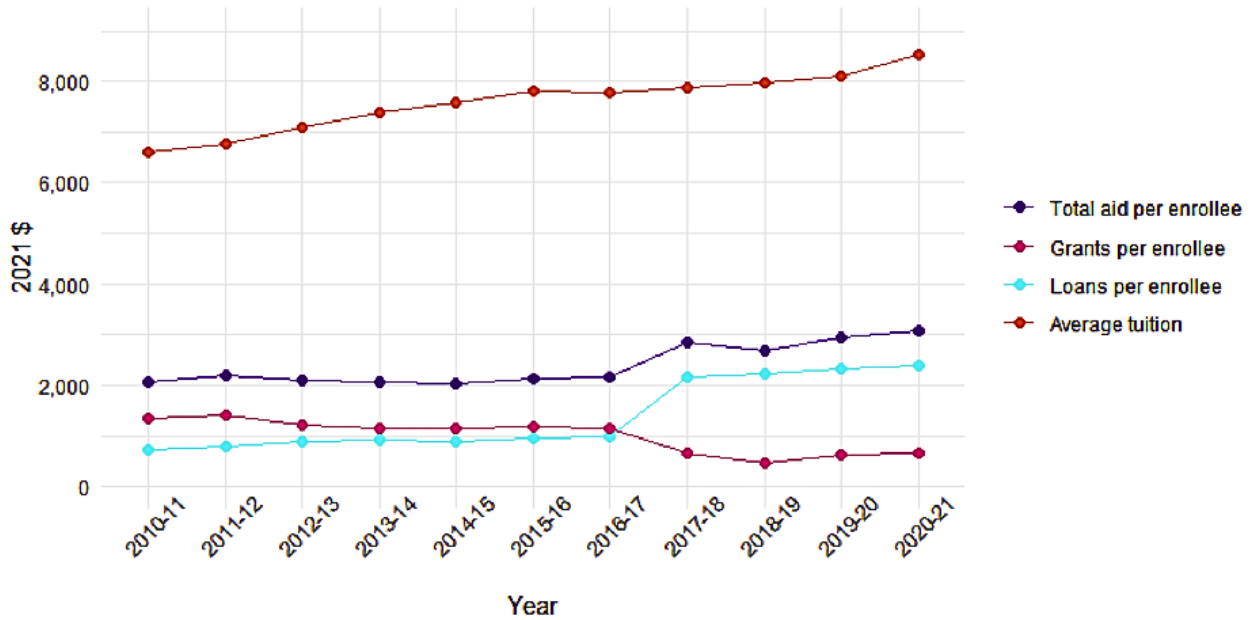
Student loans from the Canadian and Saskatchewan governments are the primary source of funding for most students who are unable to finance attendance at university by themselves or with the help of their families. While some of the student debt is eligible for debt reduction benefits or tax credits, students are often required to build debt first. Only after applying for and receiving student loans do most students become eligible for debt reduction in the form of provincial and federal bursaries, grants, and tax credits (Gingrich, 2011).

While the provision of provincial student loans and grants were relatively stable and balanced in the first half of the 2010s, in 2017/18, significant cuts were made to the Saskatchewan student grant system. The more generous Saskatchewan Student Bursary was phased out, and the Saskatchewan Student Grant replaced it. (8) As Figure 7 illustrates, in 2021-22, total student grants were lower than they were in 2016/17. 2017/18 also saw significant increases in the value of student loans offered to Saskatchewan students, greatly increasing the proportion of loans versus grants. Overall, the amount of provincial student aid has increased significantly over the past five years, but it has also significantly added to student debt levels. Figure 8 shows that even though total student aid has increased over the past decade, average tuition fees have increased faster. Lastly, while total provincial student aid has outpaced inflation over the past decade, student grants have declined relative to inflation (Figure 9).

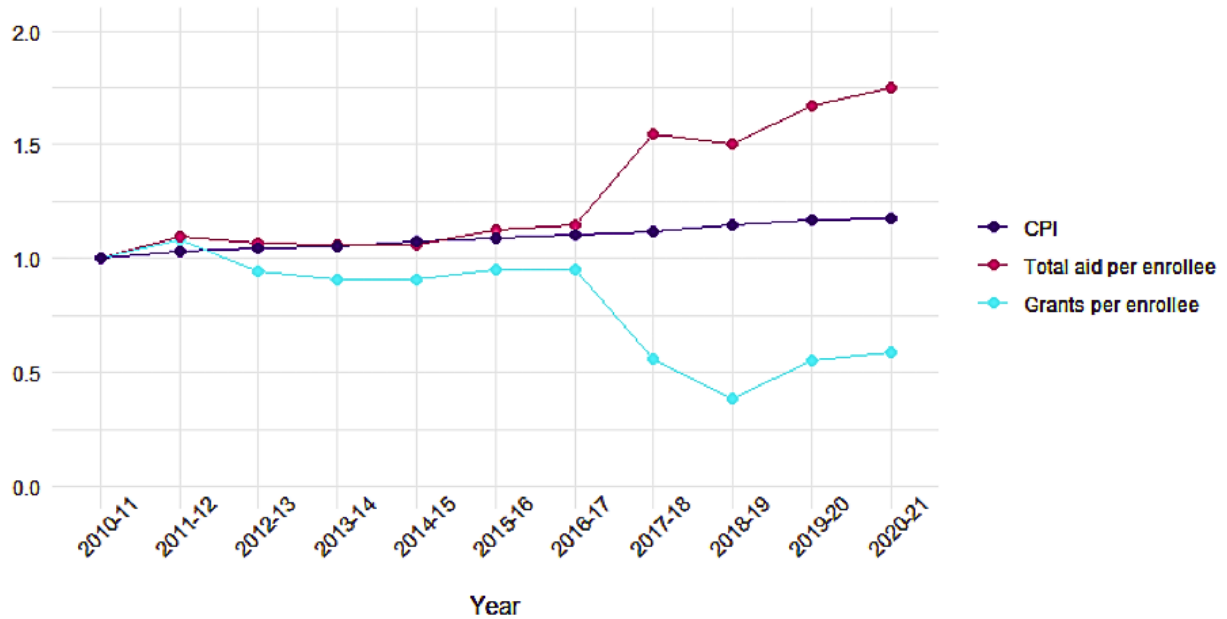
**FIGURE 7. TOTAL VALUE OF PROVINCIAL POST-SECONDARY GRANTS AND LOANS TO SASKATCHEWAN STUDENTS, 2010/11 TO 2020/21. (9)**



**FIGURE 8. REAL PROVINCIAL POST-SECONDARY GRANTS AND LOANS PER ENROLLED STUDENT AND AVERAGE DOMESTIC TUITION FEES, 2010/11 TO 2020/21. (10)**



**FIGURE 9. CHANGES IN PROVINCIAL POST-SECONDARY GRANTS AND TOTAL AID PER ENROLLED STUDENT AND INFLATION, 2010/11 TO 2020/21. (11)**

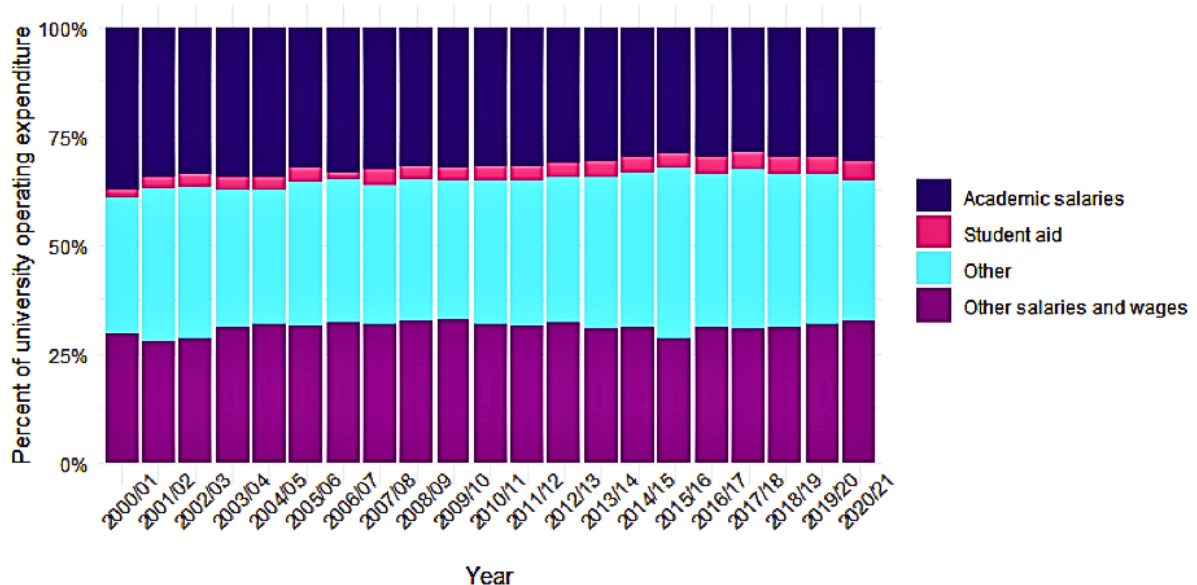


## University Spending (Academic vs. Non-Academic)

There is no doubt that the university of today is a much more extensive enterprise, with myriad roles and responsibilities in comparison to the university of old. Expanded research activities, growing information technology requirements, and increased student services and support have all conspired to grow the administrative apparatus within the modern university. Concerns of 'administrative bloat,' where high-paid management positions proliferate to the detriment of academic instruction have grown alongside the expansion of the university (Ginsberg, 2011). Critics lament that the growth of administration within the university not only deprioritizes the traditional academic mission of the university but can also bypass collegial bodies and other forms of democratic governance and decision-making within the university (Newson & Polster, 2008). Unfortunately, without more detailed data, it is impossible to test the validity of this theory in Saskatchewan. What the numbers do reveal is that Saskatchewan universities spent the largest proportion of their budget (65 percent) on items other than academic salaries and student aid of all provinces in 2021. (12)

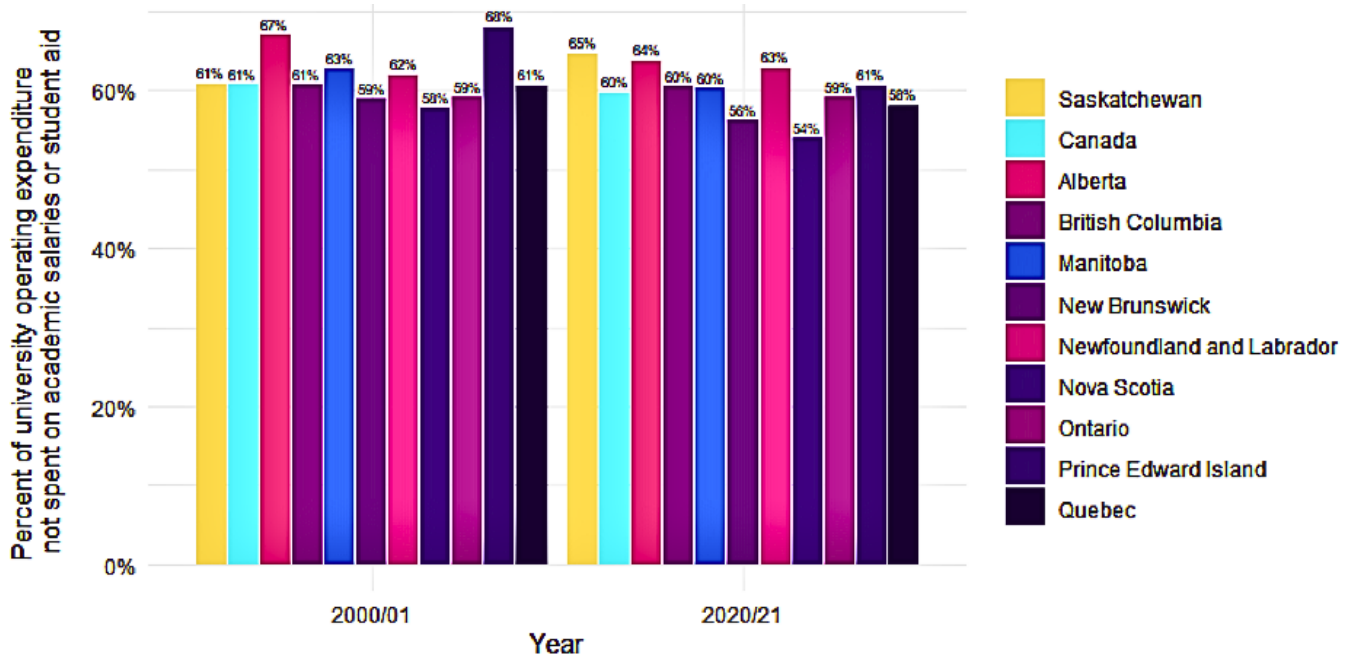
Regarding spending on wages and salaries for non-academic staff in particular, Saskatchewan universities have seen an increase in spending from 29.8 percent in 2001 to 32.5 percent in 2021. In comparison to other provinces, Saskatchewan's spending of 32.5 percent of operating expenditure on non-academic salaries and wages is larger than every other province except Newfoundland & Labrador.

Meanwhile, the proportion of university spending on academic salaries in Saskatchewan has declined from 37.5 percent in 2000-01 to 30.9 percent by 2020-21. Indeed, in comparison to the national average, where academic salaries still outpace non-academic salaries, Saskatchewan has seen spending on academic salaries drop below that of non-academic salaries over the past five years (Figure 12).

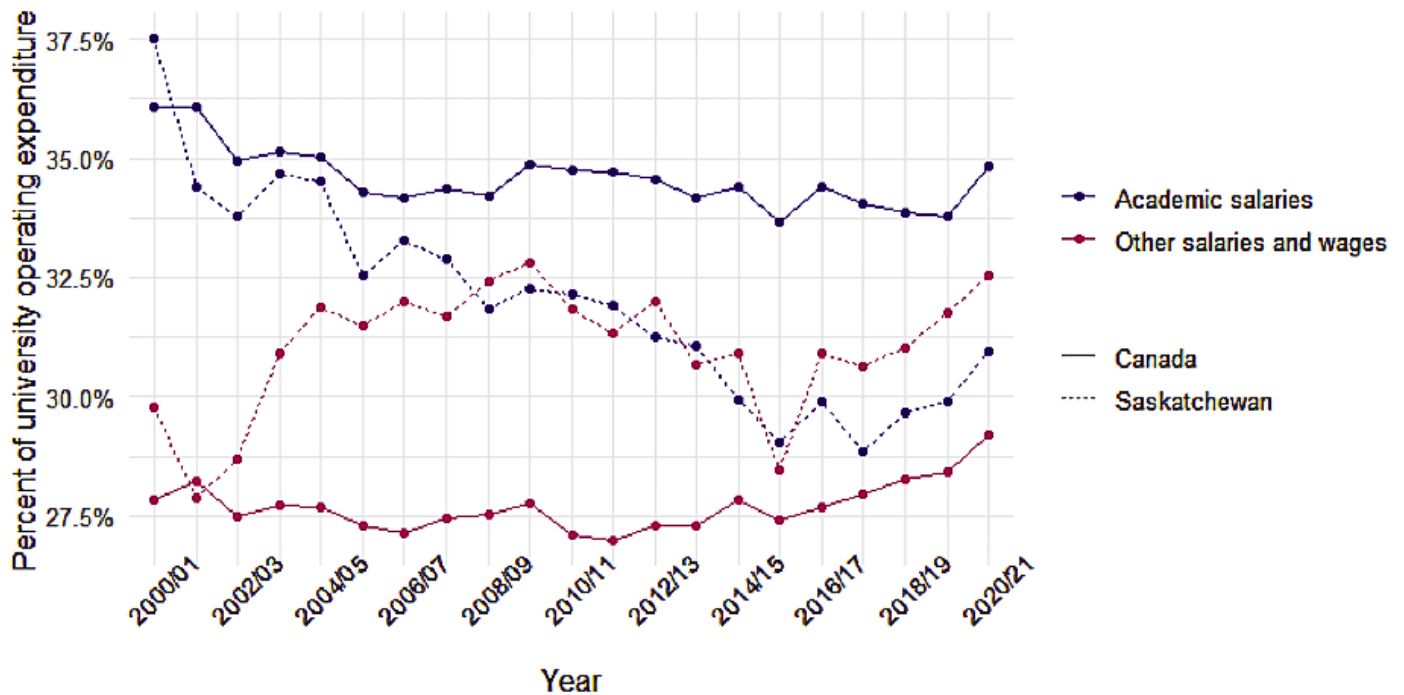


**FIGURE 10. PROPORTION OF UNIVERSITY OPERATING EXPENDITURE BY TYPE IN SASKATCHEWAN, 2000/01 TO 2020/21 (13).**

**FIGURE 11. PROPORTION OF UNIVERSITY SPENDING ON COSTS OTHER THAN ACADEMIC SALARIES AND STUDENT AID BY PROVINCE, 2000/01 AND 2020/21 (14).**



**FIGURE 12. TRENDS IN UNIVERSITY SPENDING ON SALARIES IN CANADA AND SASKATCHEWAN, 2000/01-2020/21 (15).**



## Performance-based Funding

The use of performance indicators for post-secondary education has been controversial, particularly when those indicators are used to allocate funding. While widely used in the United States, performance-based funding is relatively novel in Canada. Only Ontario and Alberta currently allocate a proportion of funds based on performance measurements, with Manitoba planning to follow suit (Peters, 2021; Froese, 2022) (16).

Currently, Saskatchewan allocates university funding based on a 2021 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed with every publicly funded post-secondary institution in the province. The MOU fixed base operating grant levels at their 2020/21 levels. An additional \$60 million over the next two years (2021/22 and 2022/23) was distributed to each institution. These funds were distributed as a fixed proportion (5.5%) of the base operating grant. (17) Direct provincial government funding to post-secondary institutions is not currently based on enrolment or any other metrics but on historical funding levels (18).

In 2022, Saskatchewan's government tabled Bill 61, which establishes several performance indicators that could be used to assess universities' performance. These indicators include the percentage of Saskatchewan residents aged 15 and over with a post-secondary degree, the educational attainment of Indigenous populations, the number of credentials awarded, and the employment rate by credential. While the bill itself does not yet tie funding to these performance indicators, Last year, former Advanced Education Minister Gene Makowsky said, in an interview about Bill 61, that post-secondary funding is "taxpayer dollars and we want to ensure that they're being spent wisely" (Simes, 2022).

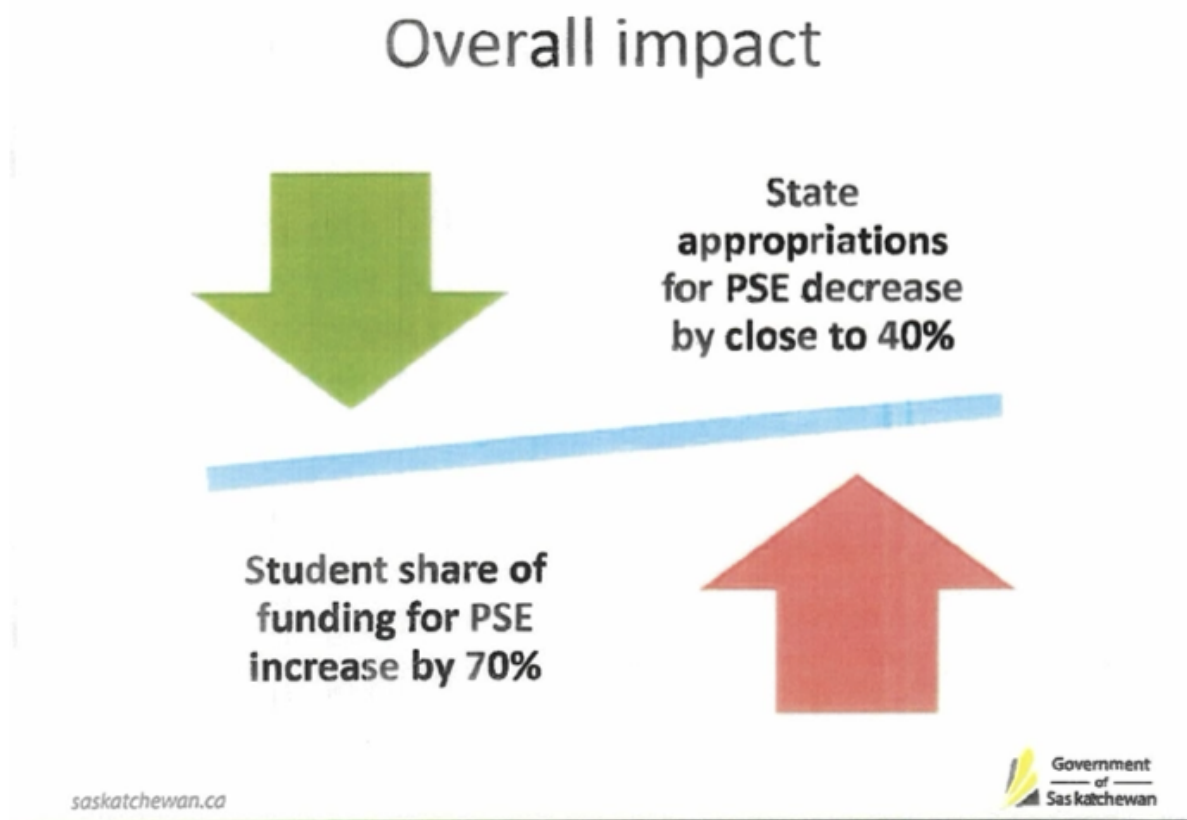
Critics see this Bill as the first step in tying post-secondary institution funding to performance indicators related to student employment outcomes and earnings. At this point in time, there is no evidence that performance against these indicators has influenced university funding in Saskatchewan, however, Bill 61 establishes the systems for the government to do so in the future. According to the Ministry for Advanced Education's 2021/22 annual report,

Saskatchewan did not meet many of its performance targets for the 2020-21 academic year. Post-secondary credentials awarded to Indigenous graduates declined since 2018 and Saskatchewan is not on track to meet its target of a 25 percent increase from 2015 to 2025. Also, the target of increasing the proportion of the population aged 15 and over with a post-secondary credential by 1 percent was not met (result: 0.2 percent). Saskatchewan did achieve its target of maintaining an employment rate above the national average(19). While many of the government's targets were interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is concern that the failure to meet these targets could be used as justification to experiment with performance-based funding in the future.

However, evidence from the United States clearly shows that performance-based funding (PBF) does little to improve outcomes and often introduces perverse incentives that result in unintended consequences. A recent systematic review of the causal effects of performance-based funding in the United States found that PBF has “no impact on degree completion outcomes” and has not consistently improved retention or the number of degrees earned. Their review concluded that there is “compelling evidence that PBF policies lead to unintended outcomes related to restricting access, gaming of the PBF system, and disadvantages for under-served student groups and under-resourced institution types (Ortagus et al., 2020). As Chan et al. demonstrate, even attempts by PBF models to mitigate these outcomes through equity provisions still produced negative outcomes for underrepresented groups (2021, 21-22).

Moreover, performance-based funding systems invariably require extensive and costly bureaucracies and administration to compile, monitor, report – and ultimately game – the new metrics. As University of Regina, Education Professor Dr. Marc Spooner concludes, “It is no surprise that these frameworks have led to drastic deformations and growing bureaucratic bloat while diverting larger and larger pieces of the pie away from teaching, research, and service—the very budget line items that best serve students and society” (Spooner, 2021).

### **FIGURE 13. MINISTRY OF ADVANCED EDUCATION “OUTCOMES BASED FUNDING” PRESENTATION (20)**





Indeed, research produced by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education confirms many of these fears. A presentation produced by the Ministry on the impacts of outcome and performance-based funding models in Tennessee clearly states that “there is no statistically significant relationship between student outcomes (graduation and retention) and performance-based funding. Tennessee has not seen improvement in student outcomes performance and remains below the national average for higher education.” Even more concerning, the Ministry presentation observes that in Tennessee, “there has been a significant reduction in annual state appropriations to higher education institutions and an increase in annual tuition and mandatory fees for students during the period that performance-based funding has been used.” Citing the overall impact of PBF in Tennessee, the Ministry presentation observes that state appropriations for PSE have decreased by close to 40 percent, while students’ share of funding for PSE has increased by 70 percent (Figure 13). Adopting a PBF model in Saskatchewan would mean more costs for university administration and less government funding – particularly for those institutions that fail to meet government-proscribed targets, all while shifting the burden of the costs of post-secondary education onto the backs of students.

## **Conclusion**

As this report makes clear, the state of post-secondary education in Canada over the past decade has been one of decline. Declining government support has resulted in universities across the country increasing domestic tuition and becoming increasingly reliant on international student recruitment. Declining government support for student bursaries and grants has resulted in increasing student loans and student debt. Within this climate of decline, Saskatchewan has fared better in some respects, and worse in others. While Saskatchewan has seen declines in government funding, post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan still receive a greater proportion of funding from the provincial government than all other provinces except Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador. While per-student funding in Saskatchewan has declined over the past decade, it remains consistently higher than the national average. Although the proportion of post-secondary institution revenue from tuition fees has increased over time, the trend has been slower in Saskatchewan than in Canada as a whole, with the proportion of revenue from tuition fees increasing from 14.2% in 2010/11 to 21.5% in 2019/20.

However, Saskatchewan has fared less well in other areas. Saskatchewan’s domestic student tuition fees are higher than the national average and the gap has only widened over time. Student grants and bursaries have cratered, while student loans have greatly expanded. Spending on academic salaries as a proportion of operating expenditure has fallen significantly over time in Saskatchewan while there has been little fall nationally.

Thus, as of 2019/20 and 2020/21, Saskatchewan spent more on non-academic salaries and wages than academic salaries and wages while the reverse was true in the rest of Canada. Lastly, the provincial government's flirtation with performance-based funding threatens to not only further the decline in government support for post-secondary education but also potentially threaten the very academic mission of the university. Thus, while we can take some solace in the fact that the state of post-secondary education in Saskatchewan has not declined as quickly in some areas as in other provinces, there are others where Saskatchewan is unfortunately leading the decline.

## Notes

**(1)** Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities.

**(2)** Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities, 37-10-0011-01 for enrollment by province. Spending per student is calculated as total (university + college) expenditure divided by the total number of students enrolled in college or university. The spike in per-student expenditure between 2005 and 2009 is due entirely to changes in enrollment numbers during this period and could reflect changing student classifications rather than a spike in per-student expenditure.

**(3)** Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities, 37-10-0011-01 for enrollment by province. Spending per student is calculated as total (university + college) expenditure divided by the total number of students enrolled in college or university.

**(4)** Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities.

**(5)** University revenue from Statistics Canada table 37-10-0026-01. Revenue from tuition and fees in this table was divided into international and domestic revenue based on the product of tuition fees from table 37-10-0045-01 and enrollment numbers from table 37-10-0018-01.

**(6)** Tuition fees are drawn from Statistics Canada Table 37-10-0045-01

**(7)** Tuition fees are drawn from Statistics Canada Table 37-10-0045-01

**(8)** The Saskatchewan Student Bursary provided assistance to a maximum amount of \$140 per week of study to all students (except graduate students, medical students, and students who are above middle-income) with loan assistance exceeding \$210 per week of study. The Saskatchewan Student Grant targets low-income students and provides up to \$30 per week (\$1,000 per year). The grants progressively decline as annual income increases (See Ministry of Advanced Education 2017; Ministry of Advanced Education 2018).

**(9)** Saskatchewan Student Aid Fund Annual Reports.

**(10)** Loan and grant information drawn from Saskatchewan Student Aid Annual Reports and Financial statements. Student enrollment numbers reflect total college and bachelor's degree enrollment from Statistics Canada Table 37-10-0011-01. Dollar values adjusted to 2021 dollars using Statistics Canada Table 18-10-0005-01.

**(11)** Statistics Canada Tables 37-10-0011-01 and 18-10-0005-01 and Saskatchewan Student Aid Fund Annual Reports and Financial Statements.

**(12)** This would include non-academic salaries, as well as operating expenses library acquisitions, printing, utilities, etc.), as well as equipment purchases, and externally contracted services. For a complete list see Statistics Canada Table: 37-10-0027-01.

**(13)** University expenditure data from Statistics Canada table 37-10-0027-01.

**(14)** University expenditure data from Statistics Canada table 37-10-0027-01.

**(15)** University expenditure data from Statistics Canada table 37-10-0027-01.

**(16)** By 2024-25, it is anticipated that 60 percent of Ontario's operating funding to universities will be based on performance. Alberta had slated up to 40 percent of funding to be tied to performance by 2023-24 (See Government of Ontario, 2020; French, 2021). Ontario first established post-secondary institution performance indicators in 1995 and tied about 1.3% of funding to these indicators in 2000/01. However, they had little impact on funding because of the limited proportion of funding tied to these indicators and little variation between institutions on these indicators (See Council of Ontario Universities, 2013).

**(17)** The base operating grant from Saskatchewan is not based on overall enrollment or enrollment for different demographic groups. For a detailed example of the schedule of funding see the University of Regina's Budget Letter: <https://www.uregina.ca/oir/budget/budget-letter.html>

**(18)** Historically, Saskatchewan did use a weighted enrolment funding formula with targeted envelopes (See Snowdon, 2005, 74). TABBS, which allocates tuition revenue to post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan, does allocate money based on overall enrollment but is not based on enrollment by demographic group. Allocations do have different weights based on level of study: Certificate & diploma: 0.5, Bachelor's: 1, Master's: 2, Doctoral: 4 (See TABBS Unrestricted Operating Grant <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CN7XKiwjPdc>)

**(19)** See Ministry of Advanced Education Annual Report for 2021-2022. Available at: <https://publications.saskatchewan.ca/api/v1/products/118428/formats/136215/download>

**(20)** Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education (2015). Outcomes Based Funding. December 23. Received through Access to Information Request AE05/21G

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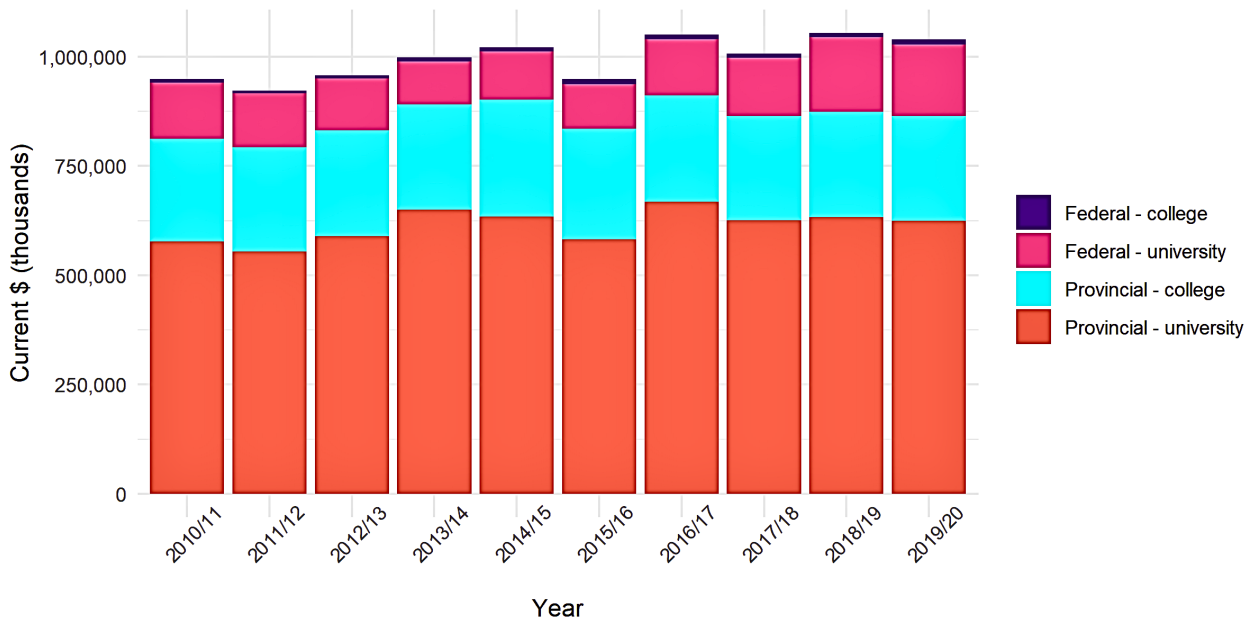
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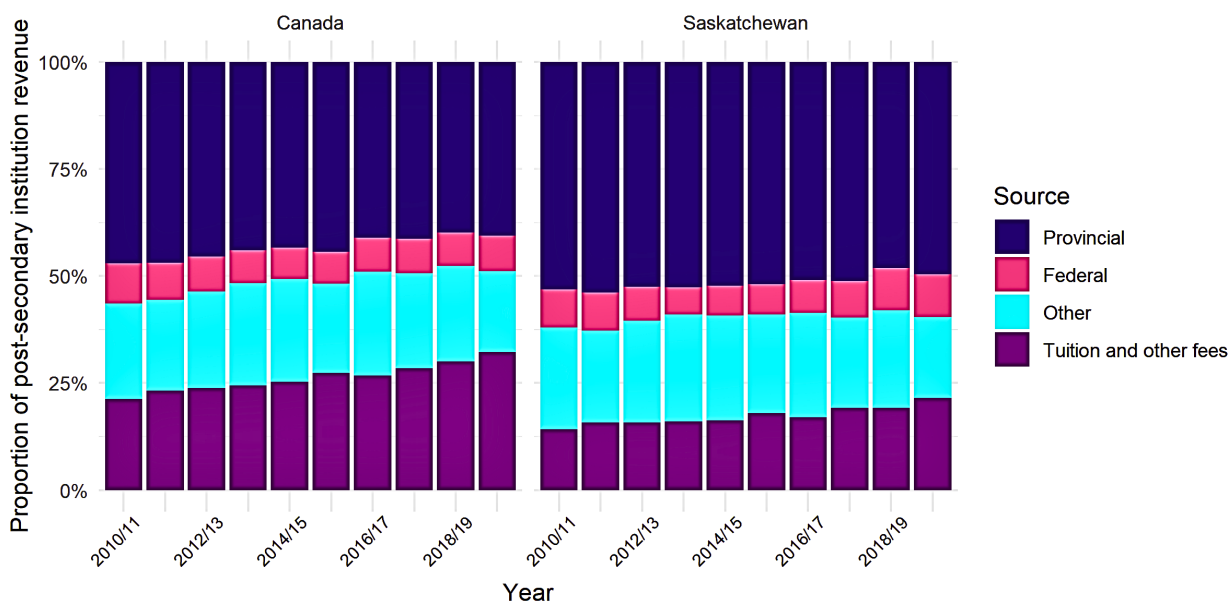
# Appendix

**FIGURE A1. FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING ON UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES IN SASKATCHEWAN, 2010/11 TO 2019/20.**



Sources: Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities.

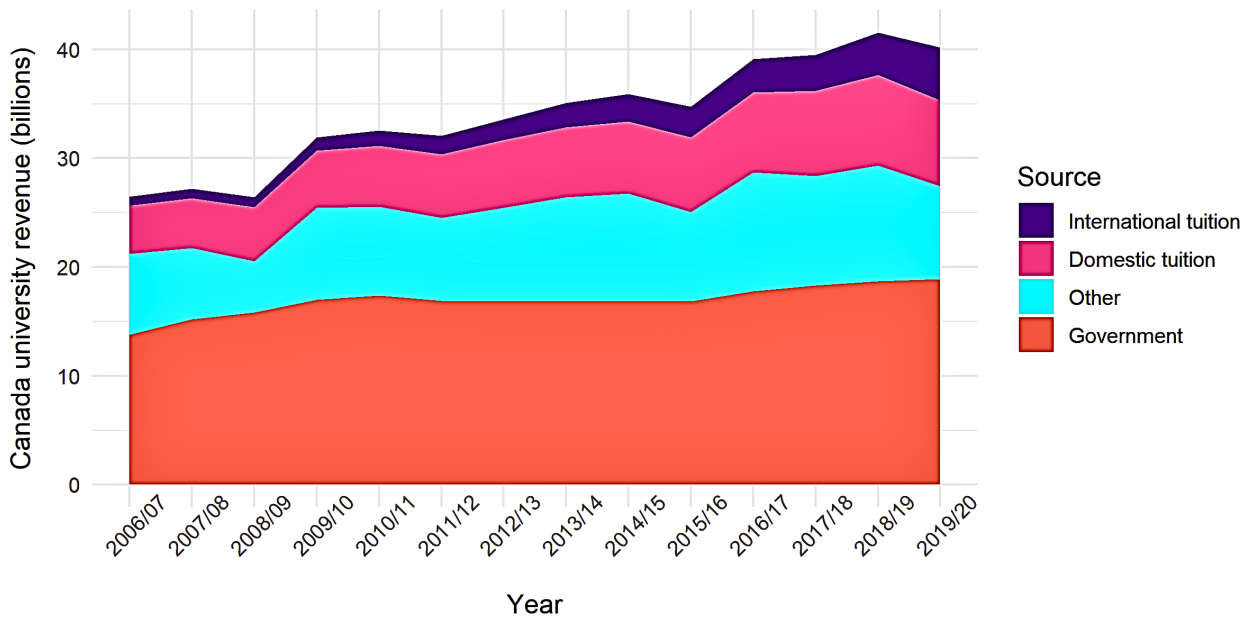
**FIGURE A2. BREAKDOWN OF POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTION REVENUE BY SOURCE FOR SASKATCHEWAN AND CANADA, 2010/11 TO 2019/20.**



Sources: Statistics Canada table 37-10-0028-01 for government expenditure on colleges, table 37-10-0026-01 for government expenditure on universities.



**FIGURE A3. CANADA UNIVERSITY REVENUE BY SOURCE, 2006/07 TO 2019/20.**



University revenue from Statistics Canada table 37-10-0026-01. Revenue from tuition and fees in this table was divided into international and domestic revenue based on the product of tuition fees from table 37-10-0045-01 and enrollment numbers from table 37-10-0018-01.



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