



Our Schools/Our Selves

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Editorial

Brain food: Rejecting zombie narratives and manufactured classroom controversies

Erika Shaker and Bárbara Silva

Since the dawn of public policy, since people elected governments to steward social and economic progress for their electorate, there have existed policies that, like zombies, never die. Even after being proven ineffective, even when proven (again!) to be flawed, expensive, and insufficient, these policies (and their advocates) show a remarkable tenacity, returning at the moment we think we've finally rid the policy landscape of them.

Like Twinkies and cockroaches, Zombie ideologies seem to defy the laws of expiration dates, let alone logic, compassion and community. And unfortunately, public education is rife with them.

Enough of this “new math” and “discovery learning”—we need to get back to basics.

“Alberta’s government is honouring its commitment to end the focus on so-called “discovery” or “inquiry” learning... The new ministerial order...places an emphasis on essential core knowledge, evidence and fact-based materials, and focuses on literacy and numeracy as foundational elements woven throughout the entire curriculum.” — *Alberta Education Minister Ariana LaGrange*

It’s not the job of teachers to tell my kid what to think.

“There is plenty for teachers to do without pushing their opinions and values on their students. All students must learn how to read, write and acquire fundamental knowledge about science and history. None of this requires political or ideological indoctrination.”

— *Michael Zwaagstra, Senior Fellow, Fraser Institute*

Parents know best about how to pay for their child’s education.

“I trust the parent to spend money on their family more than a politician or bureaucrat or a union leader to do so. They will put these dollars to good use. They will invest in their kids for textbooks, for technology, for after-school programming.” — *Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce*

While there may be some variation, the general narrative is as follows: parents are the boss, educators (when they work — because don’t all teachers get six months off in summer?) are intent on circumventing or even defying that “natural” authority, and schools are training children to become subversive progressives who can’t add. And the icing on the cake: you, the taxpayer, is forced — forced! — to pay for all of these things without having any — any! — say.

It's an archetypal power struggle: the traditional family holding off the full force of a government institution that thinks it knows better than actual people. Father (figure) knows best vs a feminized (if not feminist) workforce intent on controlling the children, and reshaping the future for nefarious ends. It's not a new narrative. It's a modern version of David vs Goliath (and in some cases it even appears contradictory) — a 'woke,' gender role- and gender identity-questioning public education system as an authoritarian Goliath, vs David: the small, seemingly powerless family whose parents simply want a return to traditional schooling, rows, authority, and untouched, unrevised, and unquestioned history. But it resonates with certain segments of the population who are resentful at the perceived erosion of their authority and privilege. And consequently it's been extraordinarily effective at mobilizing troops in the culture wars — in increasingly volatile ways — targeting educators, and marginalized and vulnerable students, families and communities as 'elites.'

In an era of rage farming, where seemingly innocuous stories of the 'can you believe it!' variety become code for this larger, and more sinister power dynamic, we need to be much more vigilant about how and why these ideological zombies, on the education landscape and elsewhere, keep being resuscitated — and with what effect.

We need to keep asking three things:

- Who is hurt by these questions?
- Who benefits from this ideology?
- What is the goal of these zombie policies that never die?

Students, communities and the collective are hurt:

In an era of entrenched inequality, with the steady erosion of social programs and public investment, and when post-secondary education is recognized as a prerequisite for employment, who benefits from the insistence that student debt "builds character," or that it ensures kids will appreciate the degree that they've gone into debt for? Who loses? And who pays in both the short and long term?

Whose version of "good citizenship" should be part of the curriculum? Who loses when the notion of "common good" is absent from the discussion?

What are the consequences for students who never see themselves represented in curriculum or resources? What is the result of schools

prioritizing some parent voices — or other angry voices — over safe and caring spaces for children? What happens when zombie policies focus almost exclusively on "input" without any consideration to the "output"?

When workers take collective action to improve their conditions of work (and conditions of learning), who profits from portraying it as selfish or destructive?

Who benefits from these undying antiquated policies?

Who benefits from the notion that politics has no place in classrooms; that issues of systemic inequality and injustice (with practical applications to "the real world") are indicative of a left wing agenda perpetrated by "woke" educators?

Who is served by reinforcing the notion that workers are responsible for their own health and well-being, or by conflating workplace safety with wellness?

What is the goal?

Is it to individualize the common good of a universal system? Is it to dismantle the very purpose of education for an assembly line, playground to workforce pipeline? When students get "there", to the beloved marketplace, will there be any organized labour to protect their rights?

What is the impact of (and who benefits from) the prioritization of a version of education and the trades that minimizes pedagogy and replaces it with the demands of the marketplace?

Finally, who profits from the "private sector does it better — always" mantra, all evidence to the contrary? Who pays the price — literally and figuratively — when public schools are no longer seen as part of the commons?

Contributors to this issue of *Our Schools/Our Selves* address these — and other — zombie arguments; how they're resurfacing in their classrooms and communities across the country, the deleterious effect of these ideologies — and the narratives that underpin them. With public schools, the kids and communities they serve, and the staff who work in them increasingly under attack, we need to be keenly aware of how zombie arguments are being mobilized...and how to fight back.

Enjoy this collection, and all the best for a rejuvenating and zombie-free summer. ●

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Monitoring the situation

CCPA materials illuminate lessons on inequality

Chantal Mancini

If I've learned anything from my two decades as a secondary school teacher, it's that we underestimate young people. Teenagers are preoccupied with pop culture, social media, and video games, we think; oblivious to the news, to the political issues of the day, to the daily struggles that others face. Yet, my experience tells me that nothing could be farther from the truth.

Like most people, teens are very interested in learning about themselves and other humans. In the process of forming their own identities, teens are great observers of life, yearning to figure it all out. As a social science teacher, I am privileged to be able to assist them.

My job isn't to give students the answers, though; it is to guide them to come up with the answers themselves.

Enter the work of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Dusty old textbooks don't cut it in my classes, especially in the social sciences. They are frequently out of date, and the exorbitant cost to replace them is increasingly an impossibility for shrinking school budgets. In contrast, research from the CCPA is current, credible, relevant, and accessible — a social science teacher's dream resource. The CCPA's work is a mainstay for many of the issues students

learn about in my classes, both in person and online. Chances are high that if my students are interested in something, the CCPA has information on the topic that I can draw upon as a teacher and guide my students to explore.

The March/April 2023 edition of the *Monitor* and its articles on income inequality is the perfect example, hitting my mailbox as news circulated that Galen Weston, CEO of Loblaws, was awarded a \$1.2 million dollar raise in 2022, bringing his total compensation up to \$11.79 million. This as grocery bills for my students' families continue to soar, wages remain largely stagnant, and the cost of housing and rent skyrockets.

Imagine this through the eyes of a 17 year-old as they plan for post-secondary education and the prospect of moving out on their own for the first time. How does the guy responsible for a \$37 pack of chicken in Toronto manage to earn such an exorbitant amount, while more Canadians than ever before are forced to rely on food banks?

With a view to helping my students explore the answer to this question, I have incorporated the CCPA's research on inequality as part of an upcoming Sociology unit in a Grade 11 course. Using the case of Galen Weston as a jumping-off point, students will explore CEO pay in Canada.

Routinely subjected to the power of adults, teenagers keenly understand fairness; I anticipate some indignation when students discover that the most highly paid CEOs in Canada, who are overwhelmingly men, had already made the average yearly salary of a Canadian worker by 9:43 am on January 3 of the new year. (Like many members of the public, the distinction between a salary and the bonuses that make up the bulk of CEO compensation will likely be of little interest to them.) In contrast, the shocking fact that these CEOs make 243 times more than the average worker is likely to catch their attention, as will the statistic that between 2019 and 2020, the bottom half of Canadian tax filers saw a 14% drop in their average total income.

Small groups of students will be tasked with an exercise where they try to build a monthly household budget around different categories of income in their community. For this, they will need to conduct their own research and calculate an estimated monthly income based upon available salary data for private and public sector workers, current minimum wage rates, and Ontario Disability Support Payments. Once they have established their monthly salary, students will research average costs of rent and housing, transportation, post-secondary tuition, and data on the current costs of groceries and child care. They will then create an overall budget for their assigned 'family.'

I expect the same results and reactions from students that I encountered when I first piloted this assignment last year, particularly those assigned 'families' with the lowest income categories. I recall the words of one frustrated student, who had tried to calculate and recalculate his monthly budget several times to try to make it work. Exasperated, he announced to the class: "No one can live on this. It's impossible. We will be homeless."

This budgeting task is designed to shine a light on the economic realities of so many individuals and families in our community, particularly as a large proportion of the students I teach come from privileged means. It also illuminates the direct connection between public policy and the lived lives of those whom these policies impact the most.

Informed by this new understanding, students will turn to the root causes of inequality. Using data from the *Monitor* and other sources, I will invite students to take an intersectional approach, and to consider how Indigeneity, race, gender, and disability are also factors in inequality. Students will explore the growing body of research, captured in accessible news

reports, that demonstrates how this inequality has been compounded by the pandemic, especially for those from marginalized communities.

Students will be asked to think about who has the power to reduce inequality, and how that power could be influenced and/or exercised. As a class, we will consider and debate solutions proposed by contributors to the *Monitor* and elsewhere. How might affordable child care help? What if we made it easier for workers to unionize? What if governments taxed the rich and put controls on how much CEOs can earn? Would a basic income for all Canadians be an effective approach to inequality? What if employers were obligated to pay a living wage rather than just a minimum wage, with raises indexed to inflation? How do we move more politicians to enact policies that assist the most marginalized citizens among us, policies that consider intersecting systems of oppression? Each of these questions opens the door to potentially more inquiry and further study.

To consolidate, I will ask students to think about other ways that we can tackle the inequality and poverty that continues to grow sharply with each passing year. As young people with a unique perspective, I have no doubt that they will come up with some creative suggestions. I have found that asking them individually to reflect in a personal journal provides them with the time and space to collect their thoughts and synthesize their learning. I always look forward to reading them.

In her *Monitor* article 'Education: Inequality's solution or great reinforcer?' Erika Shaker ponders the role of public education in inequality, particularly as it has fallen to neoliberal policy and chronic underfunding right across the country. There is no question that public education's dual roles of preparing students for work and preparing them as good citizens are repeatedly pitted against one another by neoliberal governments eager to shape the system in their own ideological image. Sadly, at this moment in time, the notion that students must be shaped as labourers first is winning at the structural level, especially here in Ontario.

But on an individual level, behind a closed door in a classroom, there remains the opportunity and the space to invite students to challenge the status quo and to envision a community and a society that works for everyone. Using the tools that the CCPA provides, we can imagine and build a better place for all. ●

Chantal Mancini is a public secondary school teacher in Ontario. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the School of Labour Studies at McMaster University.



Democracy and citizenship education

What's missing?

Sheila Stevens

Scholars such as Pinto (2012) among many others, have argued that “schools play an essential role in creating democratic societies” (p. 3) by providing Citizenship Education (CE) to develop young people’s understandings of democratic citizenship. Provincial CE curriculum guidelines and policies are intended to address citizenship in democratic societies by mandating what “students ought to learn and what teachers ought to teach” (Pinto, 2012, p. 4) about it.

To find out what the content of a mandated CE curriculum actually *is*, one must examine the curriculum learning outcomes (called “Overall expectations” and “Specific expectations” in the Ontario curriculum). These learning expectations are what teachers use to plan their teaching units and to outline what students *will be expected to learn*, which, for Citizenship Education, might include developing political capabilities which will reflect understanding of democratic values and governance.

In Canada, education falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction, and as such, Citizenship Education curricula vary widely across the country. Many of the published research

studies on Canadian CE have primarily focused on secondary school curricula, but a small number have addressed CE in the elementary panel (as I do here). Within these studies CE, GCE and global education (GE) tend to be used interchangeably, but in general, these can be viewed as including similar topics regarding the values and philosophy of democratic citizenship. Unfortunately, although recent steps have been made to include general, introductory, philosophical goals promoting CE, there is consistent evidence that the implementation of these goals remains limited (Bickmore, 2014), including in Ontario.

Citizenship Education in Ontario

A welcome development for Citizenship Education in Ontario occurred when a Citizenship Education Framework (CEF) was included within the main introduction to the Elementary Social Studies Curriculum document *SS1-6 and HG7-8 [2013]*. This same framework with a few additional concepts (figure 1) is also found in the revised 2018 curriculum document. It displays the curriculum’s espoused approach to CE in which concepts are divided into four main categories or “Main Elements” (outer



Figure 1. Citizen Education Framework (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018, p. 10)

circle), essential topics/values connected to citizenship are listed (innermost circle), and ways of developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes associated with these topics/values are described (middle circle).

Accompanying the circular graphic is a statement which reflects a philosophy that stresses the importance of initiating CE at an early age:

In every grade and course in the social studies, history and geography curriculum, students are given opportunities to learn about what it means to be a responsible, active citizen in the community of the classroom and the diverse communities to which they belong within and outside the school. (Ontario Ministry of Education)

The premise that CE initiates the “construction” of democratic thinking which can and should begin at an early age, is espoused by many Citizenship Education scholars. Empirical evidence suggests that very young children develop abstract categories of social relationships including stereotypes, allegiances and

identities) and that cynicism about politics also starts at a young age (Sapiro 2004).

Why isn't it working?

The Citizenship Education Framework (CEF) clearly includes terms/topics and KSA's (knowledge, skills, attitudes) which represent relevant, democratic values; however, it is important to note that within Ontario classroom planning, teachers are not given any direction to become familiar with the CEF or to read the introduction at the front end of the document (e.g. within teacher education, in-service workshops, staff directives or supports).

With regard to the actual CE curriculum itself, i.e., the teaching expectations used by teachers to plan their lessons, the CE concepts and values of democratic citizenship laid out in the framework are *embedded* within the Specific Social Studies expectations, rather than included within Overall Expectations or as a designated strand. They are, therefore, not mandated to be taught, except in grade 5 where there is a designated strand on Government. It is within this context (how curriculum

connects with classroom practice) that my analysis reveals significant gaps between what is espoused for CE within the framework, and what students *will be expected* to learn as per the teaching expectations that teachers use to design their units and plans of study.

Of the many concerns that came to light in the findings of this analysis, one that stands out immediately is that the concepts of both citizenship and democracy are completely marginalized. As well, although the term “common good” is used to define one of the main elements, it does not appear within any of the teaching expectations.

The concept of democracy itself, arguably one of the most important notions for CE in the Canadian context, is not addressed. As a term, democracy appears four times across all the expectations in the document; however, three of these expectations are purely historical and therefore not relevant to the CEF criteria which mandates the development of understanding citizenship within the context of students’ lives. Where the term democracy is included, it appears as a term inside a long list of other possible topics to be addressed.

No direction is offered for inquiry into the meaning or significance of the concept of democracy, the current form of governance in which we are meant to participate. An opportunity for teachers to make connections for students between related CE concepts such as, for example, conflict resolution and democracy, is alluded to in one specific expectation within the entire curriculum—a passing reference to democratic developments in Ancient Greece—but it does not connect students with opportunities to understand or practice constructive democratic deliberation about conflict and peacebuilding (Bickmore, 2014; Westheimer 2020), within their own contexts.

Democracy and freedom

Of the topics listed in the CEF considered integral to any democracy, the value of freedom—currently a very ‘hotly’ debated topic—is perhaps one of the core democratic values which, when misunderstood or misused, can threaten a healthy and flourishing democracy. It is a complex topic, requiring multiple levels of understanding. For example, in Canada, the use of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms’ ‘Notwithstanding Clause’ by provincial governments has been highly debated and seen as threatening to the rights and freedoms of citizens. As well, the federal government’s

enactment of the Emergency Measures Act, used for the protection of the rights of those living in downtown Ottawa, was seen by others as a violation of the right to protest. In order for there to be informed deliberation, a clear understanding of all the aspects is required, e.g. the ‘Notwithstanding Clause’ only applies to certain sections of the Charter and cannot be used against provisions that protect the democratic process which would create a pathway to dictatorship; it can’t be used for more than five years at a time, ensuring that the public has the chance to challenge a government’s decision to use the clause in a general election before it can be renewed (Callaghan, 2022), etc.

Given the highly complex nature of the topic of freedom within a democracy, it could be argued that the development and implementation of school curricula, enabling students to participate in reasoned deliberation about the democratic rights and freedoms for which they will be voting, should be considered crucial for the sustainability of democratic governance going forward. Students in grades 6, 7 and 8 are fully capable of developing understanding and building their capabilities for deliberation on the core values of democratic citizenship and should be given opportunities to do so.

Freedom and Inclusive Citizenship

Within the current Ontario Citizenship Education curriculum, the term ‘freedom’ is used in one grade 6 specific expectation; it is also listed in the introduction for this grade as one of the concepts from the CEF that students could be given the opportunity to explore—a happy alignment! Unfortunately, the chances that this one specific expectation will be used by teachers is ad hoc—they *might* incorporate it within their teaching units, but they might not. Nonetheless, a closer look at this expectation does give us a window into the ways in which teachers who do choose to implement it could begin to initiate understanding of freedom and inclusive citizenship within democracy.

Teachers and students are encouraged to make connections between inclusiveness within individual communities as it relates to personal identity and to freedom of choice. They are asked to consider the question: “Do you think that Canadian society allows for your community to make a meaningful contribution to identities in Canada? Why or why not?” However, if students conclude that Canadian society *does not* allow for their community to make “meaningful contributions” to identities in Canada, or if they have questions about

what might constitute “meaningful contributions”, many other essential CE topics would potentially need to be explored: equity, justice, fairness, truth, conflict and peacebuilding, collaboration and cooperation, rules and law. But as the findings of my analysis show, these topics are not included within any curriculum expectations.

Students would need to be given opportunities to understand concretely and actively how it is, specifically, that they *will* have the opportunities to make meaningful contributions, through various kinds of cooperative civic engagement and democratic participation. Ultimately, within the context of this one specific expectation that may or may not be implemented, chances are very limited for providing students with the hope that they will indeed be given opportunities “to learn about what it means to be a responsible, active citizen” through meaningful contributions that will effect change.

As with the concepts of democracy and freedom, citizenship and the common good are alluded to, but in terms of developing understanding, there is only one expectation in the entire curriculum that explicitly refers to the concept of citizenship and to what is meant by good citizenship. The concept of the common good does not appear in any teaching expectation, at all.

The omission of these and other fundamental inter-related CE terms and topics from the curriculum expectations, as well as the sporadic and haphazard distribution of CE concepts across the curriculum, completely diminishes opportunities for students to make connections between CE and their personal identities as members of a democratic citizenry.

Conclusion

This issue of a ‘policy-practice gap’ in Citizenship Education has been identified by many CE scholars as widespread. In this specific example of the Ontario CE curriculum, it is evident that one of the reasons for a policy-practice gap is that the teaching ‘expectations’ which teachers use to plan their lessons actually contain only a very limited amount of the CE curriculum that is outlined in the introduction to this curriculum.

Is it possible that if, in every grade, students were given a required minimum of weekly ‘practice’ in analysing, synthesizing and evaluating the application of democratic values to appropriate current political contexts, this might ensure more effective outcomes for CE and, ultimately, for democracy going forward?

We can teach students that we have choices about the ways we organize our lives, socially, economically, and politically. But to do so, educators must be enabled and encouraged to include those goals in the fabric of the school curriculum... (Westheimer, 2020, p.12)

The “fabric” of school curricula lies in the teaching ‘expectations’ themselves and this is where we must make the changes that will improve outcomes for Citizenship Education which will contribute to building trust for students that *their* democratic government can and *will* find solutions for the common good, and that it is their right and responsibility to participate in making the changes that are so urgently needed. Ultimately, if education is not able to contribute to democratic citizenship in this way, then, as Maria Ressa (2022) has suggested, we may be in danger of forgetting that democracies can and have been “crush[ed]...from within.” ●

Sheila Stevens taught elementary school for 25 years: K-8 vocal music and regular primary grades for the TCDSB in Toronto; grades 2-6 ETEI math, science and English, and regular grades 4 and 5 for the OCDSB in Ottawa. In her retirement, she has completed an MEd in Societies, Cultures and Languages and hopes to work in teacher education in the future.

This article is based on a much longer analysis completed for a Major Research Paper within the MEd program at University of Ottawa. It has been edited to focus on how the Ontario Citizenship Education curriculum addresses the concepts of freedom and citizenship in a democratic society. The full study can be made available upon request by reaching out to sheila.stevens@rogers.com.

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Leaps and bounds

Understanding the Carleton University Contract Instructors and Teaching Assistants' strike (spring 2023)

Noreen Cauley-Le Fevre and Codie Fortin Lalonde

In March 2023, local 4600 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), representing Contract Instructors and Teaching Assistants at Carleton University, took to the picket lines. Local President Noreen Cauley-Le Fevre and Business Agent and Organizer Codie Fortin Lalonde explain the context and the significance of the job action, and what comes next.

What were the key issues underpinning the strike?

There were two groups (units) on strike: for both, the key issues were wages, TA-student ratios, and improved health benefits. In addition, Unit 1 (Teaching Assistants, Service Assistants, and some Research Assistants) had demands regarding End of Term stipulations around marking over the holidays, and for Unit 2 (Contract Instructors [CI]), an additional issue became Intellectual Property rights.

Predictably, the University stalled on key issues, and tried to divide the Units. The union tabled intellectual property language with the University on November 18 (2022), but did not receive a response until March 21 — 5 days from our strike deadline — with truly egregious language that would have given the University unlimited license to do anything they wanted with CIs' course materials. So what first seemed a stalling tactic or red herring became Unit 2's central issue and garnered international attention and widespread academic solidarity. Considering that much of this battle at the bargaining table was waged in the wee hours

of the morning and that they had an arsenal of board of governors members and lawyers against our demands, we came out with incredibly protective language.

For Unit 1, the Employer stalled on the issue of TAs having to mark past the end of term into the holidays (between Dec 24 and the first week of January). But after a late night discussion mid-March, they ended up surprising us with a really thoughtful LOU addressing the issue quite robustly. It showed us that they *are* capable of working creatively with us when they want to.

For TA-Student ratios, Management refused to engage, and repeatedly crossed out our proposed language. We're preparing to continue working on this issue through Campus United.

When it came to wages, the University again avoided giving us a bottom line until very late into the process. They finally agreed to move on Unit 2 wages (14% over 3 years), but refused the same for Unit 1's graduate TA wages (only 9% over 3 years). However, we did succeed in closing some of the wage gap between undergraduate and graduate TAs (13.5% over 3 years for undergrad TAs).



Canada's silent crisis

Teachers left waiting at the bargaining table

Sam Hammond

Spring 2023 is likely to be remembered as the time when the 160,000 members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) went on strike after two years of negotiations with the Federal Government for a new collective agreement. With workers spread across the nation, the labour action, which halted tax season and passport applications, among many other services, caught the country's attention. However, a solution was eventually found after almost two weeks of work stoppages, but in the meantime, one of Canada's largest professions still finds itself at a bargaining crossroads, mostly out of the eye of the public.

Over 200,000 teachers in six Canadian provinces remain without an active collective agreement. Canada's public education systems may be provincial and territorial, but together they form the most important foundation to this country's national cohesion, identity, and to our democracy. It was teachers and education workers who through sheer will, dedication, and creativity kept schools going in whichever ways they could during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, apart from a minority of provincial governments who eventually recognized they needed to respond to rising inflation, Canada's teachers are being asked to do more with less while earning less.

Teachers have arrived at this moment following a pandemic that saw them overworked, under resourced, and now, under compensated. But let us be clear, the challenges were building long before the world was thrown upside down by COVID-19. For years, a teacher shortage crisis loomed below the surface of shrinking education budgets. That crisis is now in full bloom and will not be reversed if governments continue dismantling publicly funded public education.

The dramatic consequence is that an already considerable teacher shortage is now becoming even more severe. Quality publicly funded public education is an investment into a country's future and it depends upon qualified, skilled, and well-resourced teachers. Which is why we need to ask our politicians what kind of a future they want to leave Canadians. If we follow their current example, it is a future that is less equal, less just, and presents fewer opportunities to an increasing number of people.

We know from national polling that more than 90% of Canadians hold publicly funded public education as an essential pillar of society. That same polling tells us that only 29% have a positive view of their provincial education minister, the very people who are currently dragging their feet during contract talks with teachers despite sitting on hefty provincial budget surpluses.

From east to west, this theme repeats itself wherever one takes a closer look at ongoing talks between the teachers' unions and the respective provincial governments.

Quality publicly funded public education is a bargain for every democratic society as it uplifts and provides future generations with a fair shot at achieving their full potential. It is beyond unfortunate that too many provincial governments are using it as a bargaining chip they are willing to lose. Teacher unions have historically safeguarded Canada's publicly funded public education systems from cuts and privatization attempts. The attacks we see today may not be as blatant as wage capping, increasing class sizes or hiring freezes we have seen in the past. However, a failure to keep teachers' salaries attractive enough to recruit and maintain staff in combination with the failure to address a pan-Canadian teacher shortage amid deteriorating working conditions may prove to be an even greater threat to Canada's public schools. ●

Prior to beginning his two-year term as CTF/FCE President in July 2021, **Sam Hammond** served as Vice-President and First Vice-President at the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario before becoming President of ETFO in 2009. Throughout his career, Sam taught all grades from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8, was an instructor in the Labour Studies Program at McMaster University, and taught Collective Bargaining for the CLC and qualification courses for Brock University.

What did you hear from members on the line?

We heard a mix of excitement, concern and anxiety, courage, and anger. From long-time members, we heard that they were so proud that we were finally striking after all these years. For many members, this was their first strike and it was a huge learning experience.

Anyone who has experienced a strike will understand that different picket lines take on different personalities based on their location and the kinds of interactions and issues they experience together. We heard about those experiences — for example, aggressive drivers putting people in danger or the solidarity felt from rallies held by other campus Unions.

After the first few days, we started hearing questions about bargaining and how long the strike would last. Into week two, members were concerned about how long the strike could continue and how long they could realistically hold the line based on the money they received for picketing. These concerns were often bookended with sentiments of support for the strike and their union, and a commitment to hold the line for as long as possible.



What did the final Minutes of Settlement (MOS) include? What other issues need to be addressed going forward?

The MOS include things like agreement on return to work dates and retroactive aspects. When we came back to the table for Unit 1 and had concluded bargaining, we were planning to negotiate the MOS and Return to Work (RTW) Protocol. But after negotiating the MOS, the University refused to engage in a discussion about the RTW.

The University also imposed a wage claw-back of 15 hours (\$638, 12% of their stipend) from Unit 1 Members and 9% per 0.5 credit contract (roughly \$678/contract) for Unit 2 members. This seemed arbitrary and punitive: some TAs finished their hours before the strike started; most missed only 2-3 hours of scheduled duties such as tutorials or office hours. For CIs, the work was still there — as teachers, they had to finish their courses and marking. We're

Personally, I'll remember the cruelty of the imposed decisions. But I will also remember the determination of the bargaining teams to do right by and protect the membership, the courage of the membership, the tireless work of many of the picket captains, and the deep solidarity felt between the other campus unions (particularly CUASA, CUPE 2424, and the Graduate Student Association).
—*Codie Fortin Lalonde*



currently filing grievances and exploring our options with the Labour Board.

The University also turned to a SAT/UNSAT grading scheme, which meant that students who had a D- or higher in an undergraduate winter 2023 or a full year 2022-23 course could simply convert their grade to SAT (satisfactory). This decision undermined the need for TAs to finish their contracts upon return and sidestepped anti-scabbing rights of CIs and full-time faculty members. It was undoubtedly a punitive measure aimed by the University at striking workers.

What were some key moments?

The first was both bargaining teams, at the direction of the membership, making the decision to go on strike. No matter the preparation, when it came down to that moment, the weight of that decision was felt deeply by the bargaining teams.

During the strike, one of the turning points was winning the Intellectual Property language for CIs. The second was learning that the University wasn't going to budge on Unit 1

wages and was planning to leave grad students out on the lines (similar to the York strike).

The strike was no small undertaking. It took a massive amount of time, planning and strategy, organizing, and learning on our feet. We often say that bargaining improvements into Collective Agreements is done in baby steps, but these two Collective Agreements have made leaps and bounds. While we can't win everything or please everyone, we're incredibly proud of what we accomplished here.

On April 4, after seven days on the picket line, CUPE Local 4600, Unit 2 (Contract Instructors) at Carleton University in Ottawa ON signed a new collective agreement with their Employer. On April 6 after nine days on the picket line, Unit 1 (TAs, research assistants and service assistance) signed a new collective agreement with their employer. The CAs will be accessible at cupe4400.ca.

Noreen Cauley-Le Fevre is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Geography at Carleton University and has just started her third term as President of CUPE Local 4600.

Dr. Codie Fortin Lalonde is a recent graduate of the PhD in Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies at Carleton University and is the acting Business Agent and Organizer for CUPE Local 4600 (the Union representing Teaching Assistants and Contract Instructors at Carleton University). You can follow her on Twitter @girlwnohedges





Promises and perils of public-private partnerships

Sue Winton

In March 2023 Manitoba's Minister of Government Services, James Teitsma, announced the government's plan to enter into an agreement with a private company to build and maintain nine schools in the province. He claimed that this approach, a public-private partnership (P3), would enable the schools to be built more quickly and at a lower cost than would be the case if a traditional model was used. He promised that problems with P3s experienced by other governments would be avoided.

Response to the announcement was swift, with multiple actors and groups raising concerns about the government's plan.

It's important to highlight that public-private partnerships have many variations. In general, a public-private partnership involves an agreement between the government and an actor from the private sector to deliver a product or project wherein both parties are expected to share costs, risks, and rewards.¹ Private sector actors who participate in P3s may include for-profit businesses, foundations, post-secondary institutions, other non-government organizations, and regular citizens.

P3s have a lot of variations. In education, they've been used to pay for private schooling, to top up public funding of public schools, to

provide space for instruction, and to finance, design, construct, and maintain infrastructure. When they're used to build schools, governments typically lease the space from the company that built them for a specific period of time. After the lease ends, the government may be able to buy the buildings. According to the Minister's announcement, Manitoba plans to use a single contractor to construct and maintain nine schools for 30 years.

Motives for governments to enter into P3s to build infrastructure also vary. Sometimes a new building is needed but the government doesn't have the money to pay for it and may think it unwise—or politically inconvenient—to borrow funds. The government may also believe that the infrastructure will be built faster since it doesn't have to negotiate discrete contracts for the finance, design, and build aspects of the project (this is the usual way public infrastructure projects unfold).

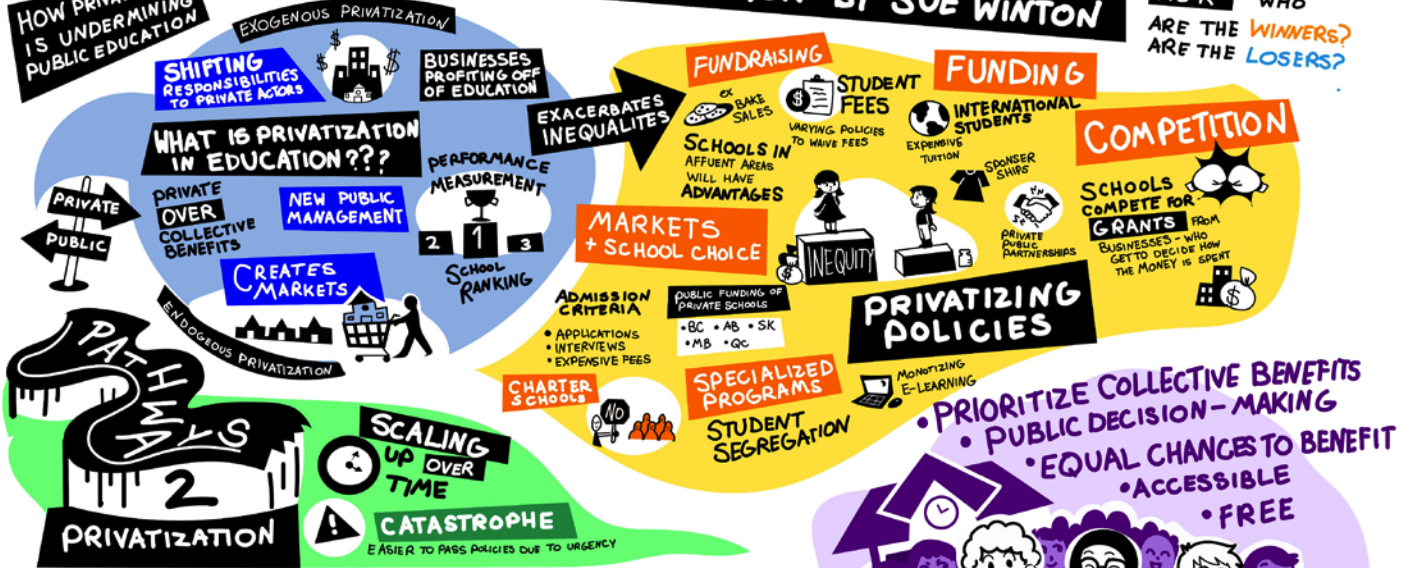
This latter rationale has been offered by Manitoba's Government Services Minister James Teitsma: "The purpose of bundling the schools together is to really accelerate the time frame and to ensure that we get more schools built more quickly". The built-in assumptions here are that expedited contracting and building processes will lead to cost savings, and that the



PRIVATIZATION + PUBLIC EDUCATION BY SUE WINTON

POLICIES ARE NOT NEUTRAL
ASK WHO ARE THE WINNERS? ARE THE LOSERS?

HOW PRIVATIZATION IS UNDERMINING PUBLIC EDUCATION



RECOMMITTING TO PUBLIC ED

- STAY INFORMED
- QUESTION POLICIES
- JOIN PUBLIC DIALOGUE
- BELIEVE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IDEAL



ILLUSTRATED BY ALYSSA BROWN

private actor assumes the risk of delays, cost overruns, or maintenance problems. Perhaps more discreetly, it also enables the government to “kick the can down the road” to future administrations” while appearing more fiscally responsible to voters.²

New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta have all used P3s to design, build, finance, and/or maintain schools. New Brunswick used this approach in 1994 to build the Evergreen Park School. Nova Scotia’s government followed, announcing in 1997 it planned to use P3s to build and manage 39 schools. Various governments in Alberta have engaged this approach since 2008 to build over 40 schools, although in December 2022 the current government announced it had changed its mind about using the P3 model going forward. Saskatchewan announced in 2013 it would use a P3 to construct 18 school buildings. Information about the outcomes and on-going experiences of the infrastructure P3s

comes mainly from Auditor General reports, studies by public sector unions, research by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, news reports, and subsequent decisions by governments. These reports and announcements provide important insights into how well P3s achieve their promises as well as the perils of these arrangements for the public.

The P3 model in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta resulted in quick construction; however, the promise that these partnerships would save the public money has often gone unrealized. New Brunswick’s Auditor General, for example, found that using a P3 to build the Evergreen School cost almost \$775,000 more than it would have using traditional approaches.³ In 2014, Alberta cancelled the previous government’s plans to use P3s as “It was determined that using a P3 method to deliver the 19 schools would cost \$570.7 million, whereas the cost would be \$556.6 million through traditional procurement methods.”

Additional costs to the public have appeared after the P3 schools opened. For example, the Calgary Board of Education had to pay over \$100,000 to fix a leaky roof in a school — within months of its opening — built by a private company. Staff in Edmonton reported maintenance delays that created safety risks in some schools. Rather than wait for contractors, board staff sometimes do the work themselves, meaning the public actually pays twice for the same fix. In Nova Scotia, the Auditor General reported that two contractors paid by the government to maintain their schools actually subcontracted this work back to the school boards at a higher price, netting them \$52 million. By the time the NS Auditor General's report was released in 2010, the P3 program had already been cancelled in recognition that schools could be built less expensively using the traditional method.

Other public costs of P3s have included challenges accessing the facilities. A contractor in Nova Scotia, for example, increased fees for community groups to rent school space after hours from \$7/hour to \$57/hour. Groups in Alberta faced similar problems, and community members complained that contract terms preventing the board from leasing school space to other organizations meant there was no way to address communities' preschool or daycare needs. In Saskatchewan, teachers at one P3 school weren't allowed to open classroom windows and could only cover 20% of the walls — which, as anyone familiar with today's classrooms knows, is a huge restriction.

Manitoba's Government Services Minister promises the government will avoid the "mistakes" of governments elsewhere, but hasn't explained how they plan to do so. And while the province may still be working out the details, the lack of information points to other known

problems of P3s for the public: accountability and transparency. Confidentiality protections of private sector contracts makes it difficult for the public to determine whether it is *really* getting a better deal through the P3 approach. When CCPA-NS couldn't get access to the terms of agreement for P3 contracts to determine how much the private sector partners netted through their arrangements, they raised the question: "Should the protection of a private corporation's private interests trump the public's interest?"

Manitoba's government seems aware of the perils of using P3s for schools and yet clings to the (often unrealized) promise that they offer a good deal for the public. Manitobans expect more than rapidly-constructed buildings from their leaders, however. They deserve public spaces that put students' and communities' needs above profits and processes that put transparency before private interests. ●

Dr. Sue Winton is a critical education policy researcher, Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University, and co-director of the World Educational Research Association's International Research Network on Families, Educators and Communities as Educational Advocates. She is the author of *Unequal Benefits: Privatization and Public Education in Canada*.

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1 Tilak, Jandhyala B.G. 'Public-Private Partnership in Education'. Moonis Raza Memorial Lecture, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India, 6 November 2015. Page 3.

2 Opara, M., & Rouse, P. (2019). The perceived efficacy of public-private partnerships: A study from Canada. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 58(Complete), 92.

3 Opara, M., & Rouse, P. (2019). The perceived efficacy of public-private partnerships: A study from Canada. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 58(Complete), 77-99.

Additional sources are available in the online version of the article at MonitorMag.ca.

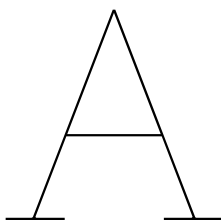
Community members complained that contract terms preventing the board from leasing school space to other organizations meant there was no way to address communities' preschool or daycare needs.



Occupational mental health

Wellness apps won't cut it

Ishani Weera



s places of learning, public schools are complex spaces shaped by patterns of financial austerity. But years of chronic underfunding also impact schools as places of work. Results show up in the working conditions and rates and severity of occupational mental health hazards, mushrooming rates of exposure to violence, bullying and harassment, job precarity and impossible job expectations.

These unaddressed issues too often become the status quo and, over years, continue to compound. The patterns show up in sustained fatigue due to understaffing and high workloads with increasing — often gendered — expectations of more and more unpaid time spent “pitching in” at school; crushing inability to fully meet student learning needs with the required emotional labour, sustained energy, time and compassion; and the creeping normalization, across all roles, of irregular and unstable job status in schools.

Ask a school support staff worker or teacher about their daily job conditions, over the last three years in particular, and descriptions are likely to demonstrate a notable absence of the things that improve the mental health of staff. These would include effective workload

management, adequate protection of physical safety, civility and respect — all of which the voluntary National Standard of Canada¹ and the Mental Health Commission of Canada identify as part of 13 specific factors of psychologically safer workplaces.

Incidents of occupational exposure to violence in school settings are increasing in several provinces. For instance, a May 2023 survey conducted by the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario² found over two thirds of their members had experienced increases in the rate and severity of violence since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey also found that understaffing of educational assistants, social workers, and child and youth workers meant needs during the school year went unmet.

But not to worry. All that's needed to address risks and improve occupational health outcomes for staff and even their families are better wellness practices based on science-backed research. It's a broken, corporatized mental health approach that gets applied to all kinds of workplaces, from school boards to major financial institutions.

Neoliberal solutions: there's an app for that

The underpinnings of this approach were strikingly evident in the announcement made last

year by a major Canadian bank, conspicuously timed to coincide with World Mental Health Day. The press release boasted a new North America-wide initiative that “helps remove some of the barriers that employees may face in prioritizing their mental health.”³

The big offering being celebrated was a subscription to a wellness app, the result of a formal partnership between the bank and Headspace. The Headspace app promises to provide access to exercises for stress, focus, sleep, and movement and help users “get through tough times and find joy in every day.”⁴

It’s a message and logic that, while perhaps not as flashy and corporate in its presentation, is still very much present in the K-12 education sector.

Neoliberal strategy: anything but eliminating dangerous conditions

Is there anything inherently awful about using app-based technology for making education and other workplaces safer?

A secure mobile platform for confidentially reporting violence or harassment? Great — it may also potentially remove barriers to reporting.

An easy way to check in with your supervisor regularly when working alone in an isolated location? Useful, especially with increasing hybrid work.

A tool for documenting instances of understaffed shifts? Great, and let’s make it easy to do data pulls for prevention of workload related hazards.

But the tools being prescribed to workers by CEOs and marketed to public school boards by app developers are neoliberal answers to the wrong question.

Santa Monica-based Headspace offers free access to K-12 support staff and teachers in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia. San Francisco-based Calm offers to “develop effective mental wellness habits that continuously support your employees’ learning and exploration”. Montreal-based Teacher App—TAPP—(whose CEO aims to “partner with school boards nationwide”) was developed by a teacher and brands itself the first “digital, one-stop-hub for all community, mental health, and wellness needs curated for educators”.

Curated. Wellness. Habits. It sounds great. But the focus is all

on the responsibility of the individual worker to “feel better” or “do better” — none of these apps focus on providing digital support for monitoring and prevention measures to help ensure psychologically healthy workplaces.

The wrong questions lead to inevitable non-answers: bring on the digital version of guided meditation in the staff lounge.

Neoliberal analysis: careless workers needing behavior change

Nothing has more impact on psychological safety at work than the elimination of hazards by the party that has the power, capital and operational ability to do so; employers. And the best way to achieve this is with active and informed worker participation.

However, Occupational Mental Health almost exclusively prescribes behaviour change to staff, which conveniently bypasses employer obligations when it comes to the conditions of work. And what is reinforced (by employers and corporations) is the narrative of benevolent (parental) employers having to help careless workers take better care of their own mental health.

Attributing cause to workplaces

According to Statistics Canada’s 2004 General Social Survey on victimization, 17% of self-reported incidents of violent victimization in Canada happened at the workplace, adding up to 356,000 violent workplace incidents in the 10 provinces.

A 2021 study by the The Australian Institute and the Centre for FutureWork found that 15-45% of of mental health problems experienced by employed people in Australia are attributable to conditions in their workplaces⁵.

Clearly, any effective solutions to violence or victimization must address workplace conditions.

Worker-centric alternatives and regulatory frameworks

The same 2021 Australian study also revealed that while the country’s occupational health and safety laws have been able to reduce physical injuries and illness through mandating “explicit and well-enforced responsibilities on employers to systematically identify and remove risks from their operations...an equally rigorous approach has not been applied to reducing workplace mental health risks.” The review of existing legislative frameworks found asymmetrical approaches to physical injuries and psychological ones.

Rather than asking, “how can we help staff make more time for mental self care?” employers need to ask themselves: “what mental health hazards can we identify, monitor and eliminate to fulfill our obligation to provide safe workplaces?”

In addition to treating psychological injury with the same rigour as its physical equivalents, it's critical to reframe the questions being posed. Rather than asking, "how can we help staff make more time for mental self care?" employers need to ask themselves: "what mental health hazards can we identify, monitor and eliminate to fulfill our obligation to provide safe workplaces?"

Psychologically harmful and toxic workplace practices also need to be addressed through existing health and safety legislation and regulatory frameworks. Violence and psychological harassment prevention therefore must continue to be integrated into existing provincial and territorial occupational health and safety regulations. This has only started happening recently in Canada.

Beginning with 2004 changes introduced to Quebec's Act Respecting Labour Standards, protection from psychological harassment moved from the domain of human rights legislation to labour law. Later in 2007, Saskatchewan became the first province to integrate the prevention of harassment into health and safety legislation. In May 2023 the province further amended provisions to require all employers to use workplace violence prevention policies. Schools and educational institutions in Saskatchewan, along with all other employers, have until May 2024 to create and implement prevention policies.

As part of her public response to the announcement, Saskatchewan Federation of Labour President Lori Johb remarked, "The worker can really only respond to violence. It's up to the employer to prevent it."

Johb's statement of fact should continue to shape how we address workplace mental health. Workers can react, recover, cope and bear with violence, stress, burnout and other psychological hazards through self-regulation and self care practices, but only employers have the organizational capacity and structural power to *prevent* injury in the first place.

Education sector employers can take other actions to address risks including:

- hiring more people so work can be done more safely (including in critical roles like educational assistants, social workers and youth workers who were identified in the 2023 EFTO survey to be "often not available to educators and students").
- ensuring that weekly schedules have time and space to implement the big and small parts of existing school safety policy like filing reports and doing site visits to field trip locations.
- providing conditions to organize the delegation and flow of work differently so the intensity of work cycles are reasonable with short and predictable periods of high volume.

Employers can take appropriate, fair and collectively negotiated steps to address bully management cultures for supervisors and staff who refuse to stop violating anti-bullying and harassment rules. These are all actions within their control and obligation, supported and informed by staff participation and insights.

And while apps and subscription-based digital tools can help individual school staff build new muscles to cope with the stressors of life, they don't have the capacity to address collective workplace health or make school worksites any less toxic by themselves. Only solidarity-based resistance to standards that are less than enforceable, measurable, or meaningful will make a real difference.

And there's no app for that. ●

Ishani Weera is the Executive Director of the BC Federation of Labour Health & Safety Centre.

Notes

¹ CSA Group, Bureau de normalization du Quebec, Mental Health Commission of Canada & Standards Council of Canada, Psychological health and safety in the workplace: Prevention, promotion and guidance to staged implementation (2013).

² Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Chronic underfunding of public education responsible for rise in violence, <www.etfo.ca/news-publications/media-releases/etfo-member-survey-shows-violence-pervasive-in-schools> (May 2003)

³ Bank of Montreal. "BMO offers free access to Headspace to North American employees and their families." BMO Press Release, 6 Oct. 2022.

⁴ About Headspace <www.headspace.com/aboutus> (May, 2023).

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Shapeshifting P3s in Manitoba

Molly McCracken and Niall Harney

Five schools for the price of four—this is the deal the Pallister government got when it abandoned the plan to build schools through a Public-Private-Partnership (P3) model and used the usual public model instead. The government built five schools for the same cost using the regular process. In addition to being more expensive, P3s have been criticized for excluding local contractors, lack of transparency and loss of public control over taxpayer-funded assets.

So why is Manitoba looking at the P3 model again in 2023?

In growing communities, the need for new schools is pressing and will be an important talking point on doorsteps in the upcoming provincial election. Voters may not know the risks of P3s, but Manitobans need to prepare for more P3 proposals. Alongside the nine P3 schools announced last month, the province tendered an RFP to pre-approve consultants for work on P3 infrastructure projects across the Manitoba government.

The usual public model involves several contracts with the local private sector: architects, engineers and construction firms. Government then either pays for the infrastructure through general revenues or borrows money, by issuing bonds, to pay for it. When construction is done, the government owns and operates the

infrastructure — whether that be a highway, a school, or a hospital.

With P3s, generally, one large private sector firm is contracted to build, finance, maintain, and operate the project. The government leases the infrastructure back for public services, while the private company maintains ownership.

The Pallister government had retained KPMG to do a study on using the P3 model for schools. In 2018, KPMG recommended against it because they would cost more. The overwhelming evidence of costly problems related to P3s has not changed since then.

Canada's history with P3 schools also hasn't changed — everywhere it's been tried, it's been a disaster. Conservative governments in Alberta have twice abandoned the model — once because they were too expensive, the second time because of the restrictive controls private companies put on schools. Contracts with these private companies prohibited space from being leased to community groups like child care, sports leagues, and other after-hours uses. When school space was made available, the private owners charged on a for-profit, fee-for-service basis.

In Saskatchewan, teachers weren't allowed to decorate classrooms or open windows, and the province is spending four times more on maintenance in new P3 schools than older schools owned by the province. In New Brunswick, the Auditor General found the

There is no reason why the Manitoba government could not also build better schools to save maintenance costs in the lifetime of the school. P3 projects do not take less time, they take longer to get started due to complex, and expensive, contract negotiations.

P3 process lacked transparency, and there was no proof of cost savings. In Nova Scotia, former P3 schools were bought back from the company because leasing costs were so high. During the life of the contract, the province had to go to arbitration to settle issues over cafeteria revenue, after-hours fees, and insurance issues.

Manitoba's ostensible reasons for returning to P3s for schools are speed and cost. Minister Teitsma argued that by bundling the construction and maintenance costs, the contractor would spend more upfront to keep major maintenance costs low. There is no reason why the Manitoba government could not

also build better schools to save maintenance costs in the lifetime of the school. P3 projects do not take less time, they take longer to get started due to complex, and expensive, contract negotiations.

As the Pallister and then Stefanson governments have slashed taxes and revenue by \$1.5 billion per year, one strategic reason for the Stefanson government to bring back P3s is that P3s cost governments less now but more later, after these politicians are long gone.

Governments borrow at much lower interest rates as they own significant assets and are low-risk. Evidence from the UK finds P3 repayment typically exceeds the cost of publicly financed projects after 15 years and is 40% more expensive than publicly financed projects over the project's lifetime because borrowing costs for private financing is high. The UK Auditor General found interest rates for P3s were 2-5% percent higher. On Manitoba's previous proposed P3 schools' \$100 million project, interest payments over 30 years at a 4% interest rate would be \$73 million versus \$166 million at 8% — more than double. Taxpayers would bear the cost of repaying these higher financing costs.

The UK is one of the first countries to see the long-term impacts of the P3 model on the public purse. These were so significant that the UK decided to abandon the P3 model altogether, citing its "significant fiscal risk for government."

In Canada, Auditor Generals in five provinces have released reports heavily critiquing P3s for the high expense to the public purse and taxpayers: New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The Auditor General of Canada found the value-for-money analysis done to justify P3 projects downplayed their costs while inflating the cost of the traditional model.

After critiques of the Chief Peguis Trail and Disraeli Freeway P3 projects' lack of cost/benefit analysis, the Selinger government introduced legislation requiring a value-for-money assessment of P3s. But the Public-Private Partnerships Transparencies Act was eliminated in 2017. The value for money approach needs to be used carefully. P3 value-for-money assessment methodology is often held privately by consultants, away from public scrutiny.

P3 contracts are not available to the public, so public interest groups cannot review past P3 projects to assess costs. Minister Teitsma argued that Manitoba's P3 contract would be improved from other jurisdictions and control costs and public school access. The public, however, won't have access to the contract to assess the exact agreement. These are held as confidential due to corporate interests.

So again, why P3s now? Many high-profile corporate leaders sit on the Canada Council for Public-Private-Partnerships. They are a powerful group and will continue to push and "shapeshift" procurement processes across Canada in favour of the P3 model as it represents a massive opportunity for profit to the private sector at taxpayers' expense. ●

Molly McCracken is the Manitoba Director and **Niall Harney** is the Errol Black Chair in Labour Issues at the CCPA-MB.

A version of this op ed appeared in the *Brandon Sun* on May 9th, 2023.



The gateway debt

Who pays for the underfunding of post-secondary education?

Ryan Romard

Canada's user-pays model of higher education — where government support to students is quite limited relative to the true cost of studying — makes student debt a fact of life for countless working-class students and their families. Student debt in Canada largely falls along and further reinforces existing lines of wealth inequality, trapping many students and their families in a vicious cycle of indebtedness, greatly limiting their opportunities to achieve financial stability.

Student fees — tuition — which have grown tremendously since the turn of the century, understandably take centre stage in discussions of higher education affordability in Canada. But because student fees only account for about 40% of the cost of an average year of study in Canada, too specific a focus on tuition risks obscuring the true costs of post-secondary education.

There are three factors whose interaction determines affordability (or unaffordability) in a user-pays model of higher education:

- the direct costs of education, like tuition, lab fees, texts and supplies;
- the indirect costs of education, which are mostly just the cost of living while attending school; and
- the income foregone due to not working or working less during study.

Direct costs of post-secondary education

Since the early 1990s, most provincial higher education systems have become increasingly dependent on revenue from student fees — the only exceptions being Quebec and Newfoundland & Labrador (less so now), where conscious policy choices were made to preserve some level of affordability.

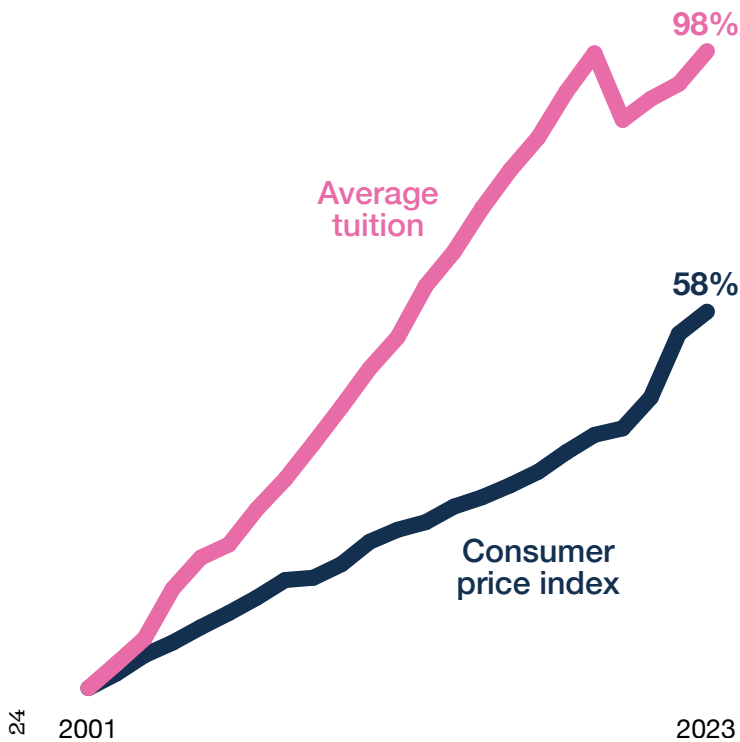
By 1990-91 (the end of the era of strong public funding), average Canadian domestic undergraduate tuition was just \$2,506 (in 2023 dollars). With the deregulation of tuition fee increases in most provinces, student fees rose dramatically over the next decade, doubling by 2000-01 in real terms to reach \$5,445. From that point, average tuition across Canada grew steadily to hit an inflation-adjusted high of \$7,752 in the 2018-19 school year.

Although the rate of increase mostly slowed from the extreme pace of the prior decade (several provinces capped annual fee increases), domestic student fee increases still outpaced inflation up until the onset of the current inflationary crisis in 2021-22. From 2000-01 until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-20, average tuition fees grew by just under 98%, while the all-items Consumer Price Index — the most conventionally used measure of price inflation — grew by just under 40%.

When measured in inflation-adjusted dollars, average tuition across Canada appears to have declined modestly since the 2018-19 school year (the first average decline in cross-country

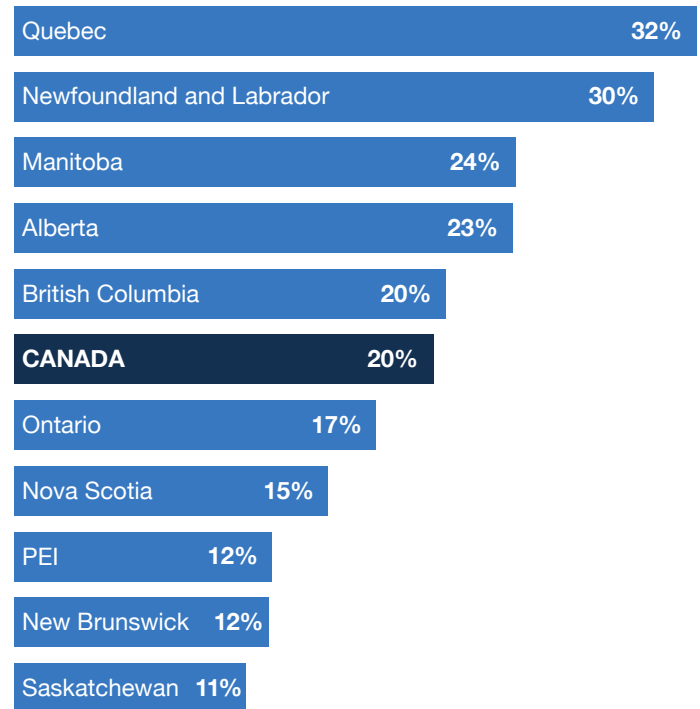
Tuition growth outpaced inflation by 40 percentage points since 2000–01

Percent change between 2001 and 2023: Canadian average domestic undergraduate tuition versus consumer price index (all-items).



Added costs on top of tuition fees

Additional direct education costs for domestic undergraduate students in 2023 (\$2023), including mandatory fees, textbooks and supplies (textbook data from 2019), as a percentage of the total direct cost of education.



tuition in the modern history of Canadian higher education).

This change can be entirely attributed to two factors:

- A modest tuition cut of 10% and subsequent fee freeze in Ontario. This came at the expense of a targeted free tuition program for low-income students. To make matters worse, the cut was imposed without any corresponding increase in provincial funding to offset the lost tuition fee revenue, leading to a looming revenue crisis at several universities and colleges.
- The current inflationary cost-of-living crisis that began in 2021. Before adjusting for inflation, average tuition increased significantly in nine out of 10 provinces, with especially large increases in the Atlantic and Prairie provinces.

So when we see tuition declining in real terms in this instance, that does not indicate that it is getting cheaper *per se*, rather that it is growing more expensive at a slower rate than the extreme rises in prices of staple goods like food, shelter, and gasoline. Despite the pace of inflation, tuition still grew in real terms in six out of 10 provinces, while breaking even in Quebec.

More than tuition fees

There are other direct costs, including compulsory fees (like registration or lab fees) and expenses for textbooks, plus other necessary school supplies. These additional costs comprise on average nearly one-fifth of the direct costs of education. Average spending on textbooks and school supplies¹ in 2019 was \$640 in 2023 dollars, the last year we have household spending data for. It should be noted that school supplies in this case do not include the cost of computers, other electronics or

software, which are essential for education in the 21st century.

Indirect costs of post-secondary education

While student fees are usually the biggest up-front cost to students and their families, they are only a portion of the total price tag. In the 2022-23 academic year, the Canadian Student Financial Assistance Program (the main provider of student financial aid at the federal level), estimated that the total cost of an average year of undergraduate study was \$22,800. The CSFA allotted \$8,700 (just 38%) of the total to cover tuition and mandatory fees, while indirect expenses such as transportation, child care, and the general cost of living while in school came to an additional \$14,100.

The high(er) price of student life

The issue isn't just that students need to pay for living expenses on top of direct education costs, it's also that living as a student is often more expensive in general. While Canada lacks the detailed data on the spending of post-secondary students of other jurisdictions, the Survey of Household Spending provides some limited insights into the added costs of living faced by students.

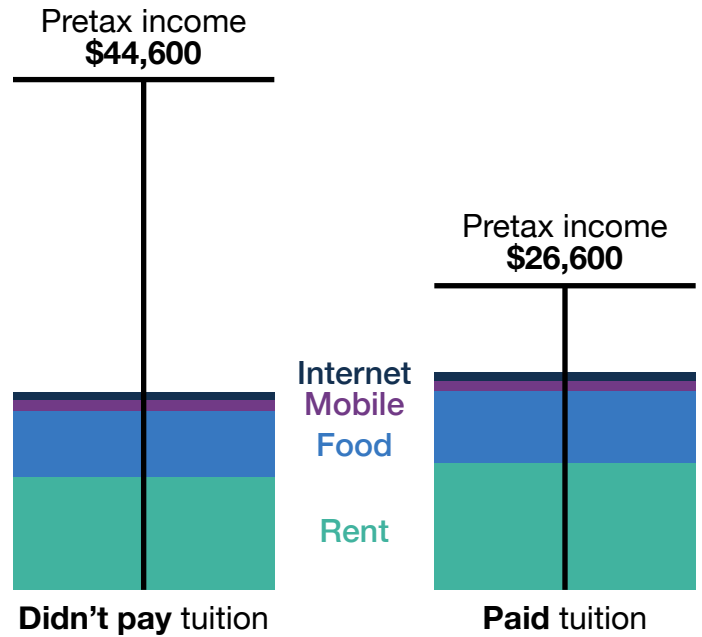
In 2019, for individuals under the age of 30 who are living alone, those that paid at least half of the average undergraduate tuition in their province of residence consistently had higher spending on basic needs and lower incomes than individuals who paid no tuition at all. Across Canada in 2019, average student spending on food and rent was \$17,340 in 2023 dollars, over \$1,770 higher than that of non-students.

Rent was the greatest driver of the increased cost of living for students in 2019 – consistent with recent research based on rental listings showing that students pay an average of 25% more on rent than the general population. As many as 80,000 post-secondary students in Canada experienced homelessness in 2019, often disguised as couch surfing or sleeping in a vehicle. In 2022, the largest agency serving homeless youth in Toronto reported that about 13% of shelter residents were actually university or college students. According to a national survey of major universities, 56.8% of students reported experiencing food insecurity in fall 2021, up from about 40% in 2016.

Food costs were also much higher for households that paid tuition – no surprise to anyone who has dined on campus, where food services are dominated by a small group of

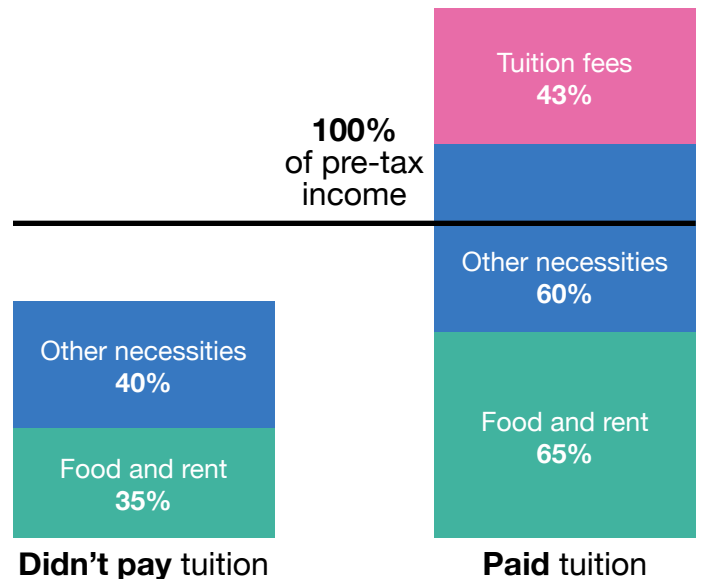
Despite lower incomes, students spent more on food and rent

Average real (2023 dollars) expenses in 2019, individuals under age 30 living alone, those that paid no tuition vs. those that paid at least 50% average tuition in their province of residence.



Cost of living for average student much greater than income

Average expenses as share of pre-tax income (2019), individuals under age 30 and living alone who paid at least 50% average tuition in their province of residence vs. those who paid no tuition.



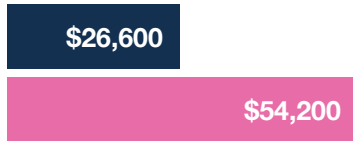
Other necessities includes: transportation, computers, cell phones, internet, personal care products, health care (direct), and household utilities.

Lost income during study a main driver of student debt

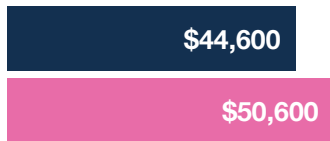
Canadian average real (2023 dollars) income and total current consumption in 2019

Pre-tax income Current consumption

People (under age 30, living alone) who paid at least **50% of average provincial tuition fees**



People (under age 30, living alone) who paid **no tuition fees**



All households



major multinational corporations. Students eating on campus are paying a premium to pad the profits of both private food service providers and the large-scale food production and distribution companies they frequently offer kickbacks and exclusive deals to. University-run food services are often no less problematic, given the prevalent impulse among university management to cut costs at the expense of students (and, often, workers). Students living on-campus are typically forced to lock into meal plans that are very expensive, yet often fail to cover food needs over the course of a year.

On top of the added cost-of-living expenses, students also had average incomes that were nearly half of those earned by non-students. The income gap, in this instance, is

almost entirely explained by foregone income due to study. Only about four in 10 full-time students are employed during the school year and students are much more likely to work part-time, even during the summer months.

In 2019, the average student spent over 65% of their income *just* on food and shelter. With other necessities like cell phones, personal care products, and transportation, students were spending over 125% of their average incomes just to cover the costs of living. While the average non-student under age 30 was not faring very well financially either, their spending on necessities still landed at well under 100% of their total incomes.

Throwing student fees into the mix seals the deal, forcing many students into a situation where they must choose between paying tuition, eviction, or going hungry. For the average student under age 30, out of pocket student fee expenses — what is paid *after* reductions by bursaries, grants and scholarships — took up an additional 43% of income.

The debt driver: foregone income during study

Stacking student fees on top of food, rent and other necessary costs means that the cost of education greatly outstrips the income of most students. This leaves students with two options over the course of a year: receiving gifts of money or in-kind — as is the case with students who are financially supported by their families to some degree — or going into debt.

Among students, average current consumption was just over \$54,100 in 2023 dollars, more than \$27,500 higher than their average income.² Non-students were also consuming more than they were earning, but the gap was much smaller: \$5,960. Despite similar levels of total spending, students were going into vastly more debt than their peers not in study because they had much lower incomes.

Taken all together, in 2019, student households selected for analysis outspent their incomes by about \$4 billion, while comparable non-students outspent theirs by \$2.4 billion.

The burden of student debt in Canada

Throughout the modern history of Canadian post-secondary education, roughly half of students have graduated with student debt. But given the findings reviewed so far, it is a wonder that as many as half of students are able to avoid going into debt at all.

Analysis of student debt via the Survey of Financial Security, the main source of data on

The three pillars of post-secondary unaffordability — direct education costs, the cost of living, and foregone income during study — interact to put immense financial pressure on students. Due to much lower incomes, the already high cost of living for students has a much heavier burden compared to those not in study.

the assets and debts of Canadian households, shows conclusively that the vast majority of student debt in Canada is owed by borrowers from low- to no-wealth households without the means to pay for education up-front or to rapidly pay down debts after graduating. As household wealth rises, the share of student debt owed decreases accordingly, with the richest households owing the smallest portion.

Across Canada in 2019, more than \$4 of every \$10 in student debt is owed by households in the lowest wealth quintile, with negative average net worth (their debts are worth more than their assets). For many new graduates, the value of their student debt alone is enough to push them into negative net worth territory. Some, especially those with degrees in high-earning fields like medicine or law, will make up the difference over time with increased earnings — but many more will not.

Even when controlling for the age and education level of the main income earners,

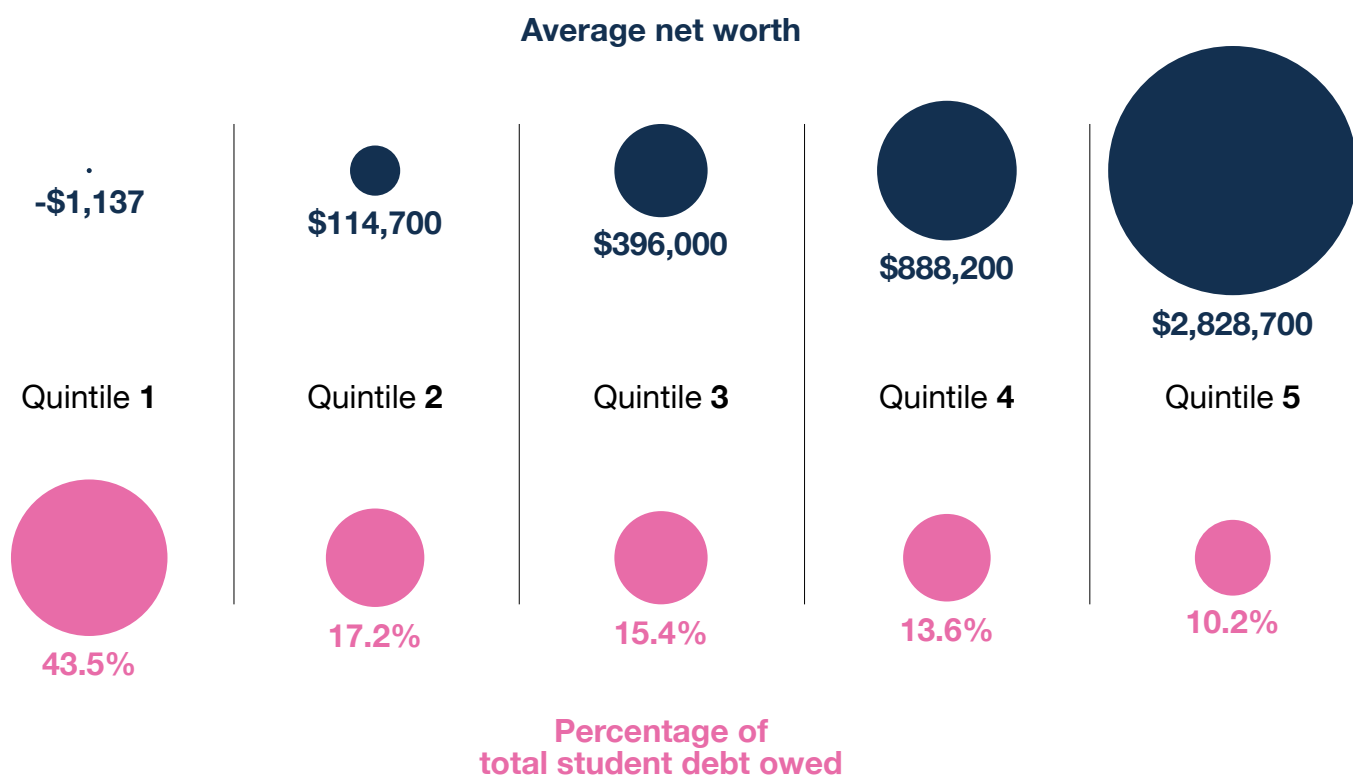
student debt-free households had greatly higher average levels of wealth.

The gateway debt

While the relationship between student debt and other forms of debt is complex, in general, as the level of indebtedness rose, so too did the level of non-student debt. That gap was not just due to student loan balances inflating debt totals: student borrowers had higher average debts across all major sources of debt, including mortgage, auto loan, consumer debt, and other forms of debt. Further, research done in the U.S. has shown that high student debts can impede the ability of borrowers to pay down their non-student debts. In other words, student debt often begets more debt: households headed by recent university graduates, aged 20 to 29 in 2019, owed average non-mortgage debts of \$72,700, which was \$43,500 more than student debt-free graduates.

Percentage of total student debt owed by household wealth quintile

Canadian average real (2023 dollars) household net worth and total student debt owed in 2019 by quintile.



There is evidence that the generational debt burden effect of student debt goes in both directions, straining the budgets and ramping up the debts of many parents and families that financially support their children while they are in school. In 2019, over \$12.3 billion in student debt — about 28% of all student debt — was owed by members of households headed by someone aged 50 years and up. That figure mostly represents debts racked up by the half of students still living with their families during study or the many young graduates that live at home after graduation.

While student debtors and debt-free households headed by older adults had nearly identical levels of home equity, those with student debt had 2.7 times as much mortgage debt as those without. In a 2019 Leger survey on student debt, one-fifth (20%) of parents who had financially supported their children in post-secondary education said that doing so impeded their own debt repayment.

There is, further, an especially problematic relationship between student debt and credit usage. Even when controlling for the age of the household's main income earners, households that owed student debt also owed significantly more in credit card and line-of-credit debt than student debt-free households. And while only about 12.5% of households had student debt, the \$8.17 billion in credit card debt they owed was just under 18% of all credit card debt owed nationally.

People who reported difficulties in credit card use also had much higher average student debts. For instance, those paying only the minimum monthly balance on their card held 213% more student debt than those paying off the full amount each month. The more credit cards owned in a household, the higher their average student debts — those with five or more cards had 236% more debt than those with just one or two.

There is a small, but growing, body of research demonstrating that high student debts reduce the consumption of graduates by constraining access to credit, limiting and delaying their ability to make major, milestone purchases like homes — one of the very few ways that working-class people can build intergenerational wealth and achieve financial stability.

In households headed by university-educated individuals in 2019, those without student debt owned assets worth \$312,000 more during their thirties and \$733,000 more during their forties. In other words, student debtors are both starting adult life owning much less wealth and, due to the impact of student debt on accessing credit, they are also much less likely to accumulate wealth over time.

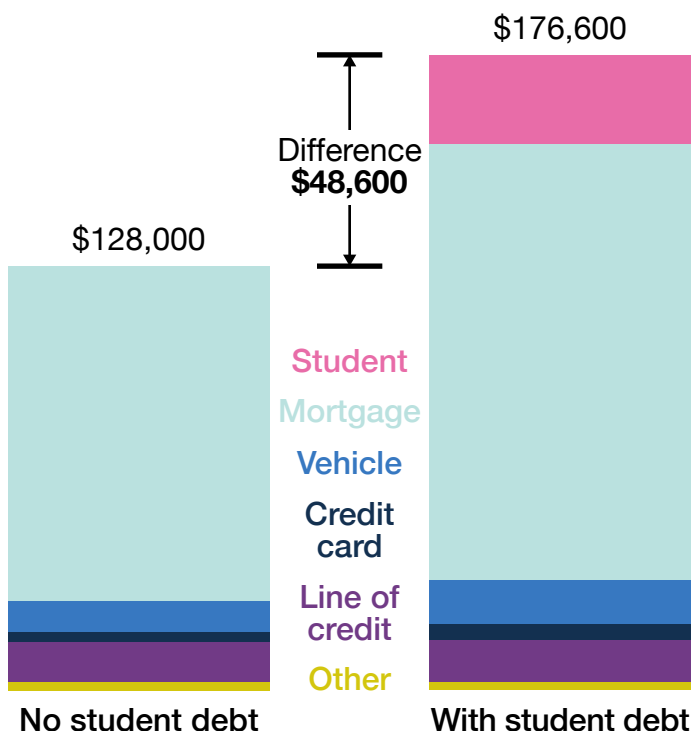
Removing the debt millstone

The very high cost of studying — which goes far beyond just student fees — makes student debt an unavoidable reality for about half of Canadian post-secondary graduates each year. The burden of that debt falls mostly on the shoulders of working-class graduates and their families — the bottom 40% of households that own just 2.8% of national wealth — without the means to evade student debt or pay their debts shortly after graduation. Wealth inequality is further entrenched by student debt, which often drives those that owe further into indebtedness and restricts opportunities to build wealth and achieve financial stability.

Especially in light of the current inflationary cost-of-living crisis affecting millions, these

28 People with student debt owed more across the board in 2019

Average real household debts in 2019, all age groups, 2023 dollars.



Student debtors owe more on credit cards and lines of credit

Average real (2023 dollars) household credit card and line of credit debt in 2019, by age of household main income earner(s).

Credit card Line of credit ○ Without student debt ◉ With student debt

Under 25



26–35



36–49



Over 50



findings provide a strong argument for broad-based student debt cancellation in Canada, which would offer vital relief to the many graduates and their families burdened by student debt. ●

Ryan Romard (He/Him) is a sociologist, research analyst, and data science enthusiast. Ryan has several years of experience conducting survey research in Ontario's public school system and was the CCPA's 2022 Progressive Economics Fellow.

Notes

1 For households only with no children present to remove K-12 books and supply spending from the equation.

2 Income includes scholarships, bursaries, and fellowships. Survey of Household Spending (SHS), www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/62f-0026m/62f0026m2021001-eng.htm. Section 2.2

Sources

Data used in all figures are from Survey of Financial Security PUMF (2019). Figures on page 22 also use data from Statistics Canada tables 37-10-0003-01 and 37-10-0121-01.

Additional information sources are available in the online version of this article at MonitorMag.ca.



“Getting it done”

Ontario’s agenda for college education

Diane Meaghan and Howard A. Doughty

I don’t think bringing an arts degree is necessarily the criteria [sic] to go to Ontario Police College, and to be a cadet I think it’s our whole life experience that we bring. I’m really excited that by removing the barrier of a university or college degree will encourage people who have these life experiences to come forward.

— Solicitor General Michael Kerzner

The Ontario government’s prioritizing the demands of the marketplace came into even sharper relief with two recent policy moves in education. Ontario students will now be allowed to start apprenticeships after Grade 11, getting credit for their high school diploma through trades training. And more recently, the premier announced that — to boost recruitment and get “more boots on the ground” — a post-secondary degree or diploma would no longer be a requirement for police officers.

Both decisions speak to the ideological direction of this government, and the conflating of education with training and training with work. But they are also linked to the evolution of the college system in Ontario, and its place in the broader post-secondary education sector.

Ontario’s colleges: a brief history

Following World War II, demands for change in post-secondary education (PSE) became

sudden and jolting. Post-war (and post-depression) capitalism adapted Keynesian economics, adopted the welfare state, accommodated popular pressure for upward mobility, and boosted cold-war anxieties, as technological innovation ushered out the elitism of Ontario universities and encouraged mass education in new, expanded facilities.

A larger, more equitable, and more practical PSE system was required and led to the expansion and creation of several new universities. The postindustrial, high-tech society was imminent.

In 1965, then-Education Minister Bill Davis went further. Universities would still grow, but he created, almost *ex nihilo*, an equivalent number of colleges of applied arts and technology (CAATs). They would be affordable and oriented toward applied rather than theoretical knowledge, but they would maintain academic standards roughly equivalent to undergraduate university programs.

Unlike American junior colleges, they would be “stand-alone,” not “feeder” institutions. By provincial mandate, about 40% of the curriculum in all diploma programs in all colleges was required to be in the liberal arts. The goal was to create immediately employable, communicatively competent, socially aware, and politically responsible citizens for the new “high-tech economy.” If the CAATs fell short of the Gramscian ideal of producing “worker-intellectuals,” neither would colleges be mere trade schools.

Davis' ideal was short-lived.

Almost from the outset, but certainly after college faculty joined the Ontario Public Service Employees Union in 1972 (Roberts, 1994, p. 137-140), the social purpose and academic status of the CAATs became subjects of controversy. By the later 1980s, following the first faculty strike in 1984, successive provincial inquiries (Skolnik, Marcotte & Sharples, 1985; Pitman, 1986; Gandz, 1988) identified the "complete unworkability of an 'industrial' or 'military' model of management [and] a continued lack of faculty participation in academic decision-making that would be catastrophic" (MacKay, 2014, p. 26).

At issue were college governance and academic freedom. Faculty grew restless partly because of the increasingly corporate culture and partly because of the growing neglect of the CAAT's original ideals. Wholly within the liberal tradition of John Stuart Mill, the colleges seemed dedicated to the proposition that democracy would thrive and prosperity would follow if the middling and working-class citizens learned to exercise electoral power wisely through both avocational and vocational education. So, among the CAATs' founding principles, these came first: "they must embrace total education, vocational and avocational...[and] they must develop curricula that meet the cultural and occupational needs of the student". A ratio was specified: the curriculum of every student in every CAAT diploma program would include 40% vocational, 20% "related theory," and 40% in liberal arts.

The rise of neoliberalism

Unfortunately, *neoliberal* ideology was also growing and began pressing the whole of PSE toward a competitive, corporate model. Both

colleges and universities struggled to increase their "market share" of "customers." Far from the original optimism of the early Davis years, the 1990s witnessed the transition to a "post-secondary sector characterized by underfunding, intense competition, privatization, internationalization, job-deskilling, online learning, rising tuitions, the unbundling of faculty work, and the casualization of labour" (MacKay & Devitt, 2021, p. 3).

The spectre of the digital diploma mills (Noble, 1999) yielded to the academic equivalent of discount department stores of knowledge

with associate professors transformed into intellectual versions of superstore "associates". The CAAT mandate faded further with the advent of large numbers of contingent faculty on campus.

Colleges added baccalaureate degrees for example, one-year certificates in financial planning or corporate communications to students with accredited B.Com or even MBA degrees. Recently, partnership deals have been struck allowing students with CAAT degrees to undertake MA studies at Northeastern University in Massachusetts or the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia.

Faculty morale plummeted partly due to the adoption of a managerial model that resisted academic freedom and administration/faculty co-determination and partly because of a lack of clarity about what the colleges were *for*.

In 2017, matters came to a head. The longest faculty strike in Ontario's history not only shuttered the colleges for five weeks, but surprised Kathleen Wynne's Liberal government when the employer's "final" offer was rejected by 86% (Doughty, 2018; MacKay & Devitt, 2021). Legislated back to work and subjected to compulsory arbitration, college faculty demands were validated when Arbitrator William Kaplan's award provided academic freedom and established a task force to suggest reforms to college governance and precarious employment. The sense of satisfaction was temporary.

"Getting it done"

The Progressive Conservatives won provincial political power in June, 2018, garnering a majority with 40.8% (17.8% of eligible voters). Upon taking office, Premier Doug Ford initiated a caribou-in-a-ceramics-shop approach to policy making (and unmaking) (Doughty, 2021). And while he did not invent the problems of the Ontario colleges, he made them his own and made them worse.

The premier has made clear he is no fan of "academia." After one month at Humber College where he complained he was "bored silly in the lectures," he quit and went to work in the family business, "an option available to very few Ontarians" (Borins, 2018), which allowed him to inherit, with his brothers, his father's lucrative printing business and deep conservative party connections.

It would be easy to claim that the premier is not *totally* driven by right-wing ideological convictions. Yet even his apparent friendship with Chrystia Freeland and occasionally friendly dealings with Justin Trudeau are rooted

Faculty morale plummeted partly due to the adoption of a managerial model that resisted academic freedom and administration/faculty co-determination and partly because of a lack of clarity about what the colleges were for.

in neoliberalism's disruptive, transactional, market-driven precepts wherein collective well-being and the common weal carry little weight. Libertarian today, authoritarian tomorrow, this inconsistency and cunning fits nicely with the essence of neoliberalism which is paleocapitalism (primal Adam Smith sans the moral philosophy).

Recent proposed changes for the colleges reveal a politicized administrative agenda based on an amalgam of neoliberal and neoconservative ideology. The rhetoric of cost-efficiency embraces regulation, hierarchy and monopoly to transform college educational policy. The resulting marketing of education is destabilizing the college system by lowering educational standards and replacing education with labour-ready training.

The infamous slogan of "getting it done" alleges to speak to a concern for the people of Ontario; however, a closer look at the economic plan for post-secondary education paints a different picture. After obtaining the first majority mandate, the Ontario government instituted a 10% cut in 2019 to the budgets of colleges and universities, followed by three annual financial freezes that resulted in a decrease of 30% of funding when factoring in inflation (Cohn, 2023a).

In addition, there have been various systematic cuts and defunding initiatives, such as a cap on the number of students the government supports (Cohn, 2023b). Not only has Ontario actively defunded post-secondary education for many years, but funding problems are exacerbated by the fact that Ontario lagged

behind the rest of the country in PSE spending for more than a decade. In 2017-18, Ontario only spent 0.7% of its gross domestic product, well behind Newfoundland-Labrador and Quebec (both at 1.4%). (Canadian Federation of Students, 2021). This orchestrated crisis has resulted in institutional retrenchment at the University of Guelph, for example, which recently announced the cancellation of 16 programs, mostly in the sciences (Cohn, 2023b).

Deskilling and devaluing

With a decline of operational expenditures for Ontario colleges from 75% in 1967 to 30% in 2020, the provincial Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, highlighted in her 2022

annual report the fact that international students currently account for 30% of enrolment and 68% of tuition fees.

Under the guise of making substantive changes in educational policies to improve access to college programs, the provincial government has revealed that the intention is to fill gaps in employment of law enforcement recruits as well as to deliver the province's infrastructure plan regarding the construction of 1.5 million homes by 2031.

But the pedagogical plan is no less disconcerting and will result in changes in student recruitment and training that essentially bypass key components of a college education.

The first example involves alterations to the recruitment and training for large numbers of students entering college trade programs. Students will be allowed to enter 100 skilled trades programs after grade 11 without graduating from high school. Some 30 credits from a Certificate of Apprenticeship can be credited towards earning an Ontario Secondary School Diploma. In anticipation of these and other changes to trades' programs, training has been removed from the integrated colleges and university portfolios under Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, and placed under Minister Monte McNaughton's jurisdiction in Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. Trade specialists have noted that "soft skills" are needed in these occupations including organizational capabilities, customer communication, marketing, and financing, that are lacking in the province's plan for the trades.

While the provincial government is reducing the requirement to enter the trades; several Ontario colleges have recently claimed polytechnical status. In Canada, the label "university" is protected under government provision, but titles such as "college" and "polytechnical institute" can be adopted by any public or private organization. So, Polytechnics Canada now includes seven CAATs (Algonquin, Conestoga, Fanshawe, George Brown, Humber, Seneca, and Sheridan) plus six established polytechnical institutions (British Columbia Institute of Technology, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and Red River College Polytechnic). Polytechnics Canada suggests such organizations provide advanced technical education that is industry-responsive.

In the tradition of world-renowned, polytechnical institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in

The rhetoric of cost-efficiency embraces regulation, hierarchy and monopoly to transform college educational policy. The resulting marketing of education is destabilizing the college system by lowering educational standards and replacing education with labour-ready training.

Ontario's rush to designate several colleges as polytechnics highlights the provincial government's approval of a cheap and quick transformation of colleges to a trades' agenda.

the U.S., program offerings are in civil, electrical, mechanical and automotive engineering with 129 bachelor degrees and a faculty ratio of 8:1 students. And the prestigious German University of Mannheim offers degrees and doctorates equivalent to U.S. bachelor and master's degrees.

Ontario's rush to designate several colleges as polytechnics highlights the provincial government's approval of a cheap and

quick transformation of colleges to a trades' agenda. It may also foretell the transfer of funds among some universities and colleges, in addition to transforming funding within colleges.

The second example of the Ontario government's heightened vocational agenda for the colleges involves changes to law enforcement programs. Ontario previously required that a law enforcement candidate have a college diploma or university degree, supplemented by specific training by police associations regarding requirements for the job. For decades, college law enforcement programs were offered that required vocational courses as well as courses in Canadian government and politics, public administration, psychology, sociology, and several English and liberal arts electives — courses consistent with the CAATs' foundational mandate for a holistic education.

Ontario's new approach not only eliminates the necessity of PSE qualifications, applicants no longer require a high school diploma to enter a police training program. Instead, candidates can enter the Ontario Police College (whose mission is the "pursuit of business excellence") in Aylmer Ontario after Grade 12 and will be further induced to do so with a waiving of the \$15,450 tuition fee for a 13-week course (Martin, 2023, April 25).

In 2017, University of Western Ontario sociologists recommended to the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development that the work of police officers required extensive educational preparation. They suggested that the complex job calls for highly qualified, diverse candidates with an understanding of the world, the development of critical thinking, problem solving, cultural competence, and communication skills, as well as an understanding of research, data analysis, and policing models (Kalya & Peladeau, 2017).

In lowering the educational requirements for policing, the Ontario government has deskilled the profession with potentially dire consequences.

Education consists of more than vocational training. It prepares students for citizenship in a democracy. A robust college system that embodied both was Bill Davis' dream — but "getting it done" seems, at least for now, to have won the day. ●

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Howard A. Doughty has been teaching in the social sciences at Seneca College for 54 years. He was the founding editor of *The College Quarterly* and long-time book review editor of *The Innovation Journal*, and has written and published extensively on the political economy of higher education. He is also a community organizer and veteran trade union activist in OPSEU.

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