

# Post-Secondary Education

Universally accessible public education, from childcare through to all levels of post-secondary education, is one of the most important investments governments can make in both individuals and the public good. Education is an important means to stimulate the economy, break the cycle of poverty and build a strong workforce. In order for Manitoba's post-secondary institutions to maintain standards of high quality, they require adequate and consistent funding. Guaranteed, predictable funding ensures that institutions can develop budgets that meet teaching and programming needs while developing long-term plans. Increased funding would also reduce institutions' need to rely on user fees, and would allow for the reduction and eventual elimination of tuition fees.

The Province's 2009 decision to move away from long-held principles of universal accessibility was indicative of a creeping shift toward the privatization of post-secondary education in Canada. Universal policies are overall more effective, are less costly for the number of students they assist and can also be paired with targeted measures to help specific groups of students who face greater barriers than just the high upfront cost of tuition fees.

## Funding Cuts

The past three provincial budgets saw funding to universities' operating budgets frozen (2017–2018), then cut by 0.9 per cent in 2018–2019<sup>1</sup> and finally decreased another 0.9 per cent in 2019–2020.<sup>2</sup> By restoring the roughly \$13 million cut from university operating budgets since 2016 we can restore some level of predictability for post-secondary institutions core funding and begin to reverse the trend of privatization and increasing fees and tuition in favour of universal accessibility.

*New Expenditure – restoration of operating funds: \$13M*

Public funding for colleges and universities has drastically declined over the past three decades. For example, in 1985, government funding made up 81 per cent of the operating revenue of universities; by 2015, it accounted for only 50 per cent.<sup>3</sup> In order to replace these losses post-secondary institutions have turned to the other obvious source of funding; making students pay higher tuition fees. There were massive tuition fee increases in the 1990s accompanied by a retrenchment of public funding, leaving universities and colleges worse off at the end of the day. The ex-



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perience of the 1990s clearly shows that rising tuition fees are one result of the move towards the corporatization of post-secondary education.

### Corporatization of Post-secondary Education

The gradual privatization and corporatization of Canadian post-secondary institutions is evident in how sources of funding have shifted over the past three decades. In 1985 only 2.7 per cent of university operating revenue came from ‘other [i.e. corporate or philanthropic] sources’; by 2015, nearly 10 per cent did. This difference has meant that post-secondary institutions have dedicated increasingly valuable time and resources toward the pursuit of corporate and private donations rather than addressing barriers to accessing higher education. Another result of this trend is greater corporate influence in the governance of post-secondary institutions. For example CUPE produced background on the subject details that,

an analysis of the Boards of Governors at the 18 largest universities in Ontario conducted by PressProgress found that corporate executives predominate, accounting for 33.5 per cent of board members. This was higher than the number of students, staff, and faculty (30.3%); other external members (28.1 per cent), and ex-officio presidents and chancellors (6.9 per cent). At five

universities, more than two thirds of all external appointments were from the corporate sector.<sup>4</sup>

This increased influence of corporate and private capital within post-secondary institutions has also changed incentives when developing and enhancing programs and faculties. The transformation of higher learning into a mechanism strictly for the purpose of creating specific sorts of workers to fill gaps in the labour market is another result of greater corporate influence. This was indicated most recently in Manitoba with the shuffling of post-secondary out of the purview of the Minister of Education and into the Department of Economic Development and Training.<sup>5</sup> Universities and colleges have long been centers of social, cultural, political and artistic development and growth. To reduce higher learning to its economic output is to miss the bigger picture of how the diversity of knowledge being created at post-secondary institutions affects the world around us.

### Financial Barriers

According to students and their families, financial barriers are the most common impediment they face in pursuing further educational studies. The average tuition fees for undergraduate university students in Manitoba currently sits at \$4,501,<sup>6</sup> and have risen above inflation each year since the provincial government passed “The Ad-

vanced Education Administration Amendment Act” in 2017.<sup>7</sup> That piece of legislation allows for annual tuition fee increases of up to 5 per cent plus inflation. Debt levels have a clear correlation with the level of tuition fees, penalizing lower-income and Indigenous students the most.

The 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) shows that less than 50 per cent of Indigenous women over the age of 25 have a post-secondary degree, compared to 73 percent of non-Indigenous women. Only 46 per cent of Indigenous men have a postsecondary degree, compared to 65 per cent of non-Indigenous men.<sup>8</sup> Education is an Indigenous right recognized both by local treaties as well as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.<sup>9</sup> The full funding of post-secondary education for First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples is therefore an intrinsic step in the process of reconciliation. While much of this falls on the federal government, the province can take action by restoring and doubling the ACCESS bursary funds they recently cut mid-program.<sup>10</sup> These bursaries existed to address the financial, geographic, academic and social barriers that face indigenous and rural students. The path to fully accessible post-secondary education must be equitable; this requires that all levels of government prioritize access for Indigenous people to higher learning.

### International Students

International student tuition fees remain unregulated in Manitoba and as public funding for universities has decreased over time international students have become a target for cash-strapped post-secondary institutions to make up for lost revenue. Since the deregulation of differential fees in 2002, international students have faced rapidly increasing tuition fees. Currently, average tuition fees for international students are three to four times those of domestic learners. For example, international students entering the University 1 program at the University of Manitoba

will pay approximately \$16,300 in tuition and student fees each year compared to the \$4,800 their domestic peers pay.<sup>11</sup> This figure does not include textbooks, recreation fees, housing or the cost of their UPASS. As well, due to federal regulations international students are arbitrarily limited to working a maximum of 20 hours per week, further limiting their ability to fund the ever-increasing cost of their education. Students who are caught working more hours face a revocation of current and future study permits<sup>12</sup> and deportation.<sup>13</sup>

As of 2018 the financial burden for international students was further increased following the provincial government’s decision to cut them off of Manitoba’s public healthcare system. By the government’s own estimates it cost the province \$3.1 million per year to fund international student healthcare. Yet the Province also estimates international students’ economic contribution to Manitoba as “over 400 million dollars per year”, working roughly 4,250 jobs and paying income/sales taxes for many public services they themselves cannot access.<sup>14</sup>

Access to public health care is a key incentive for international students. The decision to remove basic health care for international students raises serious concerns about what that could mean for the recruitment and retention of international students completing their degrees in Manitoba. Immigration is vital to the health and sustainability of Manitoba’s communities. It is well demonstrated that a high proportion of international students remain in Manitoba after graduation and that immigrants who arrive as students adjust more easily to life in Canada. The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program (MPNP) nominated 1,923 international graduates for permanent residency in 2018; this figure represents 37 per cent of total nominations, the largest number in the program’s history.<sup>15</sup> To help facilitate the integration of new Canadians, a small but important step will be to bring international students back under the public health care system<sup>16</sup>

(see Health Care section for international student budget line). The long-term contributions of international students to Manitoba's social and cultural fabric must also be acknowledged; the development of dynamic and diverse communities has inherent value beyond the economic outputs that international students, and immigrants more broadly, are often reduced to (see chapter on Newcomers for more).

**Increased Operating Expenditures:**

*Restore operating funds: \$13M*

*Convert every part of Manitoba Student Loan administration and interest relief to up-front grants: \$7.38M<sup>17</sup>*

*Double Manitoba Bursaries and Scholarships Initiative: \$6.77M<sup>18</sup>*

*Restore and double ACCESS bursaries for Indigenous and low-income students: \$3M<sup>19</sup>*

**Total Increase: \$30.15M**

<sup>1</sup> Froese, Ian (2019). Manitoba's universities shackled without hike in provincial grant, tuition, budget documents say. *CBC News*. March 09.

<sup>2</sup> UM Today News, (2019, March 07). President Barnard comments on provincial budget. Retrieved October 10, 2019 from: <https://news.umanitoba.ca/president-dr-david-barnard-comments-on-provincial-budget/>

<sup>3</sup> CUPE (2019). Backgrounder No 3: Corporatization in Post-Secondary Education POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: OUR TIME TO ACT. Canadian Union of Public Employees. Available at: [https://cupe.azureedge.net/sites/cupe/files/backgrounder\\_3\\_corporatization\\_eng.pdf](https://cupe.azureedge.net/sites/cupe/files/backgrounder_3_corporatization_eng.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Bothelo-Urbanski (2019). Pallister transfers post-secondary schooling to economic development. *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 28.

<sup>6</sup> Canadian Federation of Students (2019). Time to Be Bold, Education for all, Lobby Document 2019. Available from: <https://cfs-fcee.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Lobby-Documents-2019.pdf> PAGE 6.

<sup>7</sup> Bill 31: "The Advanced Education Administration Amendment Act" (2017). 1st Reading March 20, 2017, 41st Legislature, 2nd Session. Retrieved from the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba website: <https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/41-2/bo31e.php>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Rossman, Christine. (2019). Access for all? Cuts to Manitoba post-secondary program create barrier for students who most need help. *CBC News*, May 11.

<sup>11</sup> University of Manitoba, (July 30, 2019). Tuition Fees 2019-2020 Academic Year. Retrieved Oct. 30, 2019 from: <https://umanitoba.ca/student/admissions/finances/tuition-fees.html>

<sup>12</sup> Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Study Permits: Off-campus work. Retrieved Oct. 30, 2019 from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/study-permits/campus-work.html#conditions-work>

<sup>13</sup> Ricci, Talia (2019). Foreign students say they 'have no choice' but to work more than their permits allow. *CBC News*, June 10.

<sup>14</sup> Province of Manitoba. (March 01, 2019). Manitoba welcomes record number of international students. [Press Release]. Retrieved from <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=45099>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/international-students-health-coverage-1.5264463>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/budget2019/estimate-expenditures.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/budget2019/estimate-expenditures.pdf) .Page 41

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/opinion-manitoba-access-programs-1.5130346>