

Tuition increase

Education



It is widely accepted that the future prosperity of Canada rests on having a well-educated workforce. Yet, the cost to students of post-secondary education has risen rapidly over the last few years as government funding has dropped dramatically. Since the early 1980s, public funding of post-secondary education in Canada has gone down by 30 percent. In addition, across Canada, about 1.1 million full-time students were enrolled in post-secondary institutions in 2001, but thousands have been turned away because of lack of space or they have not applied for admission because the cost of tuition is too high for them.

Ontario has the second-highest tuition fees in the country. On average, tuition fees can cost an undergraduate student close to \$5,000 per year. Over 80 per cent of Ontarians believe tuition fees are too high, even with the current freeze. More than 90 per cent of students voted to reduce tuition fees. Yet Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has announced that tuition fees will be increasing by up to 36 per cent over the next four years. Ontario's post-secondary system, which has 18 universities and 24 community colleges, receives the lowest per-student funding in the country.

For the most part, reductions in university funding by both the federal and provincial governments explain higher university tuition. The federal cash transfer payments for education and training have been cut by \$7 billion since 1993. In the 2000-2001 federal budget, only a \$600 million increase was allocated for both health and education, with no real requirement that any of the money be spent on education. But the Minister of Finance was able to find \$55 billion in tax cuts for corporations, the banks and wealthy Canadians.

The money is available, but the wrong choices are being made. Students are now paying higher fees for a lower quality education - less access to libraries, less lab equipment, reductions in tenured teaching staff and support staff. Tuition fees are a regressive form of taxation. In 1997, Canadians spent 19 percent more on their household budget than in 1996 on education, but their total household spending did not increase. This does not mean that families are paying more for education, but it does mean that they are sacrificing other expenses in order to meet the cost of an education. The government is attempting to deflect anger over tuition increases by pointing to changes in student aid. But the fact is the tuition fee increase over the next four years will effectively wipe out more than the student financial assistance investment to be phased in over the same period. In fact, for every dollar invested in student aid more than a dollar will be clawed back through tuition fee increases. In effect, students are borrowing to finance their own student aid program.

A post-secondary education is now out of reach for poorer Canadians. Those who can get to college and university often end up with debts on graduation, which can range anywhere from \$30, 000 for a four-year undergraduate program to \$60, 000 for those doing graduate studies. Professional faculties can lead to much higher debts: annual tuition at the University of Toronto's medical school, for example, was more than \$16, 000 by 2003, and half of Canada's 16 medical schools were charging more than \$10, 000 a year.

It can all add up to a six-figure bill after graduation - one observer suggested it's one reason why doctors are opting for specialties rather than family medicine because the pay for the former is much higher. It's been <https://assignbuster.com/tuition-increase/>

estimated that by 2020, a four-year university education will cost about \$90,000. In addition to average annual increases, students are faced with deregulated fees. Deregulation of fees happens when a provincial government abandons all guidelines and legislation and lets individual institutions have complete control of tuition fee levels.

Deregulation represents one of the most serious threats to accessibility of post-secondary education, since it always leads to massive tuition fee increases. Dentistry now costs up to \$30,000 a year. Even with the maximum federal and provincial student loans and the maximum private student line of credit, this fee can't be met. Deregulation is not a new tuition fee structure, but the downloading of the cost of education onto the backs of students. Deregulation is not limited to university fees.

Community college programs in Ontario vary from \$1,700 to over \$8,000 a year. It is wrong for the public to believe, and even worse for governments to promote the myth that fees can be raised without affecting accessibility. In a study released by the Maritimes Provinces Higher Education Commission in 1997, it was reported that "there are clear indications of a systemic social inequality affecting accessibility, with students from lower income backgrounds being disadvantaged in their ability to meet the financial demands of attending post-secondary institutions."