



Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations
Fédération des Associations des Professeurs Universitaires du Manitoba

MANITOBA ORGANIZATION OF FACULTY ASSOCIATIONS 2023 PROVINCIAL BUDGET SUBMISSION

The Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations (MOFA) represents more than 2,000 faculty who teach, conduct research, and provide community services at Manitoba's four major public universities: University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, Brandon University, and Université de Saint-Boniface. MOFA is a proud member of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT). We are based on both Treaty 1 and Treaty 2 territories, and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

This provincial budget submission provides both a precis of the harm done to our universities under current government policies and provides guidance on first steps to chart a new course.

MOFA believes strongly that we need a post-secondary education system that:

1. Will be provided with adequate public funding, with clear multi-year funding commitments that will allow our institutions to best serve Manitobans.
2. Will be affordable and accessible to all, with the long-term objective of reducing the use of student loans and private finance to pay for our education.
3. Will be of high quality and will continue to provide our graduates with the flexible critical thinking skills that will continue to shape our society.
4. Will exist free of political interference, with institutions being allowed to make decisions about how to serve the public.
5. Will lower barriers to participation for Indigenous people and members of other equity-seeking groups, and will provide supports to ensure that all students can succeed in post-secondary education.



**Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations
Fédération des Associations des Professeurs Universitaires du Manitoba**

The Pallister and Stefanson governments have been less than kind to our system of post-secondary education. Like the rest of the public sector, funding has been cut sharply and wages checked by the threat of Bill 28. Students face tuition fees that have risen rapidly, which decreases the role of government in funding public education.

Interference in collective bargaining by the Pallister and Stefanson PCs provoked not one but two strikes at the University of Manitoba. And while reducing public funding, this government has attempted to usurp more control over what our universities offer, attempting to align programming with their narrow political objectives. A big first step in this direction was Bill 33, that gives the Minister unlimited power to set tuition fees program by program; course by course.

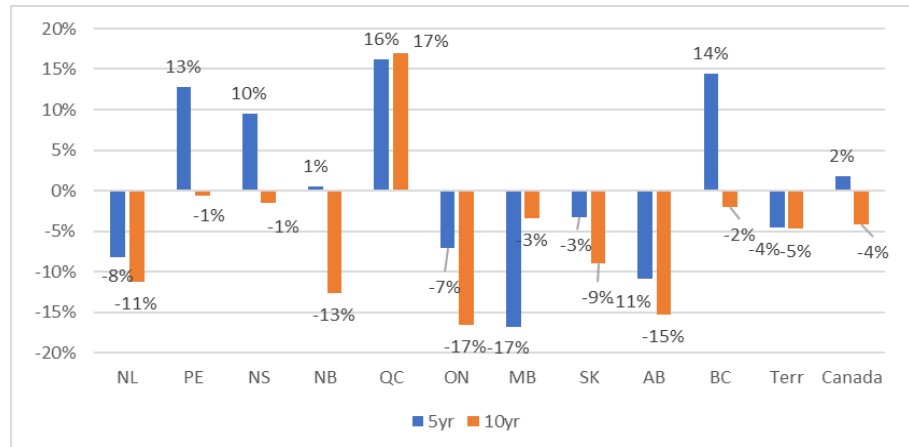
This is direct inference in university autonomy, autonomy that is protected by legislation. Meanwhile, the provincial government has yet to formally renounce their previous intention to follow American counterparts in introducing performance-based funding based upon the failed 'Tennessee model.' Extensive research shows that performance-based funding fails to improve performance and comes with a heavy cost: the exclusion of marginalized groups from Higher Education.

The current government has cut funding to universities by 17.8% (in real dollars) since 2016/2017, including 18.3% at the University of Winnipeg, 19.1% at the University of Manitoba, 9.8% at Brandon University, and 7.1% at Université de Saint-Boniface. Revenues from tuition fees at those respective institutions rose by 35.3%, 11.3%, 54.7% and -10.1%, with St. Boniface, Manitoba's smallest public university, as the outlier. Should these trends continue, Manitobans will see our second largest university receive the majority of its funding from tuition fees by next year.

Regardless of the status of such policies such as performance based-funding, the reality is that Manitoba's government has already caused substantive damage to our universities through these years of cuts. These cuts have caused recruitment and retention issues across our sector, and Manitoba's universities will require years of re-investment to rebuild our post-secondary system.



A recent analysis by Higher Education Strategic Associates (HESA) showed that **Manitoba has led the nation in cuts to funding for post-secondary education over the last five years.**



Manitoba's government must take real steps to not only reverse these damaging policies but must also plot a new course for our universities that respects the academic and institutional freedom that is protected under legislation. In order to chart a new course, we must introduce a stable, predictable funding model that treats students more fairly and allows our institutions to plan for the future.

MOFA recommends that the next provincial government provide a four-year funding commitment ensuring that overall budgets for our public universities rise at or above the rate of inflation. There should be a clear target and timeline to reverse the current trend of declining public funding and shifting the burden increasingly onto students through rapidly rising tuition fees.

Since 2016, we have also seen increasing labour strife at Manitoba's universities. The now repealed Bill 28 – The Public Sector Sustainability Act – prevented faculty associations from engaging in free and fair collective bargaining. This interference, both in 2016 and 2021, played a key role in provoking strikes at the University of Manitoba. By imposing a wage mandate on an entity, the University, that is arm's length from government, the current government undermined good faith bargaining between UMFA and the University.

As a result, wages at the University of Manitoba fell further behind other research-intensive institutions in Canada. Unfortunately, such interference is not limited to just UMFA. Faculty at Brandon and St. Boniface have also had agreements imposed on them under the threat of Bill 28. Continued funding cuts and below-market wages make it increasingly difficult for all our universities to recruit and retain talented faculty. And one cannot have a high-quality system of university education without high-quality faculty.



Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations
Fédération des Associations des Professeurs Universitaires du Manitoba

MOFA recommends that the provincial government respect free and fair collective bargaining at our universities.

Of course, the role of our universities is not limited to the education of our students. Universities are engines of research and development, and cornerstones of any advanced economy. While the current government has paid lip service to this, they have been actively undermining the ability of our universities to perform this critically important function. For example, funding for Research Manitoba has been cut sharply. The President of the University of Manitoba has gone on the record opposing these cuts, as they are inimical to research and economic development. Another area of concern is the poor support for graduate students that lags the rest of the country.

Graduate students are critical to university research, and without adequate support, we cannot keep our most talented students in the province. And this speaks to a broader concern: Manitoba youth are leaving the province to seek better opportunities elsewhere, with two of the major drivers being low wages; and a postsecondary education system where students pay more to get less.

MOFA recommends a restoration of funding to Research Manitoba; and targeting funding to increase support for graduate students in the province.