

Ontario's public colleges at

50

A Better Plan

Public, not private

Public colleges should be **publicly funded**

Ontario's public colleges play a crucial role in supporting economic growth and educating students for the jobs of tomorrow. Sadly, however, years of government under-funding have created a situation where Ontario's public colleges now receive the least per-student funding of any province.

This is pushing colleges into questionable ventures with private colleges, corporations, and overseas campuses. In some cases, public colleges are selling or licensing their courses, video lectures, course materials and even entire programs. In others, colleges are privatizing important frontline services, such as counselling, putting at risk the quality of the supports that students rely on.

As Ontario's colleges turn 50, we have a choice to make. Will we provide enough funding for our public colleges to do their jobs, and deliver the education Ontario students need? Or will we force our colleges to continue with an approach of privatization that's failing students and faculty? It's pretty clear what the right answer is – what's less clear is why the government, and college presidents, don't want to acknowledge it.



STUDENTS AT PUBLIC COLLEGES

- Students get less innovative, less cutting-edge teaching as a result of the innovation chill created when faculty members' work is stolen by the college and sold off for profit.
- The mental health of students can be put at risk when privatized frontline services, such as counselling, provide lower-quality service, or eliminate some services altogether.

FACULTY

- Some faculty lose their jobs when the work they have created is sold to a private college and the original program is cut at the public college.
- Faculty receive no compensation for the time they invested in researching and creating course materials and lectures when they are sold or licensed by colleges.

**Who pays the price
for private profits?**



STUDENTS AT PRIVATE COLLEGES

- Despite paying premium prices, students at private career colleges receive a lower-quality education and are denied access to additional services and opportunities that students at public colleges receive.

PUBLIC COLLEGES

- Short-term revenue increases from licensing programs and courses can end up costing colleges both students and revenue in the long term to the new competitors they create.
- The reputation of colleges can be put at risk when their brand is attached to lower-quality programs or questionable ventures.

Excerpt from “Strip Mall Campuses”

RM Kennedy, Chair,
OPSEU College Academic Division

“...The public colleges insist they can [license faculty-produced materials] because they argue that they own faculty intellectual property (IP). Faculty at Ontario's public colleges need to vigorously contest this assertion and continue to fight for IP rights over our own creations. The legal basis for faculty ownership of our IP flows from what is known as the “academic exception” to copyright law, which allows academics in higher education—not our employers—to own the fruits of our research and creativity. This provides the foundation for free and innovative societies.

Without such protection, every time we put another video, lecture or article in that centralized database most colleges are developing, we are literally giving away our own jobs.

Ultimately, the delivery of publicly funded and developed curriculum by for-profit private colleges does a profound disservice not only to faculty but to students who believe that they are truly receiving a Canadore, Lambton or Cambrian education. Despite the veneer, they never experience the benefits of a real public education.

The solution to the colleges' economic woes is not outsourcing for short-term gain. The solution lies with increasing public funding, and making sure that all resources get directed where they belong: into quality teaching and learning.

Contracting out won't fix the problem. It will only make it worse.

Read RM's full article in the March 2017 issue of *Unfettered*, OPSEU 558's newsletter, available at:
<http://www.opseu558.org/strip-mall-campuses/>

Contracting out our students' mental health

The mental health of students at our public colleges is being put at risk by decisions to contract out counselling services.

While colleges do this in an attempt to save money, the slight savings to the college can hurt students. Students at these colleges end up with less access to the supports they need to succeed, longer wait times when they need help, and an increased chance of finding themselves in crisis with no one to intervene.

For example, La Cité has contracted out their counselling services in the last few years, with the result that one-sixth the number of counsellors are being used to support the same number of students: there is no one left dedicated to helping students in crisis. At Canadore, four counsellors employed by the college were laid off and replaced by two privately contracted counsellors, with the resulting gap filled by support staff, now called “navigators,” as well as a new therapy dog – which has

since retired.

Even more concerning, in many cases of privatization of these services, the criteria used by the private provider to hire counsellors can be much lower, meaning that when students finally do get in to see someone, they can be left with counsellors who are in over their heads.

Is it really worth saving a couple of dollars when it puts the mental health of our students at risk?



Case Study: Are Canadore faculty working themselves out of a job?

Faculty are right to be concerned about the consequences of the sale and licensing of programs and course materials. After all – their jobs are at stake.

Take the case of Canadore College's Mobile App Development

program. Globally, the number of mobile apps continues to grow rapidly, and as of early 2017, there were more than 2 million apps in each of the Apple and Android app stores. Yet after licensing the Mobile App program to the private Stanford College through their Canadore @ Stanford partnership, Canadore cut the program at their main campus, and then laid off the full-time faculty members who had developed the

material for it!

Students can now only take the program through the Stanford campus, where they can end up with a lower quality of teaching, and no access to the additional services and opportunities that are part of a public college education. Meanwhile, the laid-off faculty are left watching from the sidelines as a private college uses their program, and their courses, to turn a profit.

Time to end questionable overseas ventures

The drop in government funding is also forcing public colleges to engage in risky ventures in an attempt to make up the shortfall in revenue. In the case of three colleges (Algonquin, Centennial, and Niagara), this included a foray into overseas education, with multiple new campuses in Saudi Arabia.

The catch? Saudi Arabia's human rights record, the shady nature of the deals reached to launch these ventures, and the lack of academic freedom for faculty combined to damage these schools' reputations. Public scrutiny also led to significant concerns in Ontario about why our public colleges were helping to support a repressive regime. Under pressure, Algonquin and Centennial ceased their operations, while Niagara continues to operate their campus, despite a growing threat of censure from the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT).

\$6.2 million: Algonquin College's losses on failed campuses in Saudi Arabia

And while the ventures were supposed to be revenue-generators for the colleges, the promised windfall never appeared. Instead, by the time Algonquin shut down their campuses in 2016, the college had lost more than \$6 million on these shady deals. This just goes to show what college faculty have been saying all along: when students' success is at stake, our public colleges need public funding – not risky investment schemes.

McDegrees?

Some of the risks of handing parts of our public education over to the private sector can be seen in the case of the shadowy deal between Colleges Ontario and McDonald's in 2016.

This deal hands control of a significant number of college credits over to a private corporation – one with particularly questionable business practices, from tax avoidance to a reliance on a precarious, low-wage workforce. Employees who have taken McDonald's in-house training program will be given credit for a full year's worth of courses in a college business diploma, despite no certainty over whether they have in fact received the breadth of training required to succeed in the broader business world.

The lack of transparency in this deal, along with the degree of control given to a private corporation, sets a troubling standard for future partnerships. The deal also raises a larger question: what will be the longer-term impact on Ontario's business sector of sacrificing the broad education provided by public colleges for the company-specific training of one corporation?

What can I do to help?

- Share our short video about this issue with your friends and colleagues
- Join the conversation online through our Twitter or Facebook:

 @CAATfaculty

 facebook.com/OntarioCollegeFaculty

- Learn more about this and other issues online at: www.collegefaculty.org
- Let your local executive committee know that you want to help at your college

