Investing in Manitoba's Future: Post-Secondary Education Between 1999 and 2013

ANDREA D. ROUNCE

I. INTRODUCTION: THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

Post-secondary education (PSE) is an important policy area and policy instrument for governments, including the Manitoba government. A provincial responsibility under section 91 of the Canadian Constitution, PSE is vital for economic development and innovation. It is also key for meeting the educational needs of specific populations, such as Francophone Manitobans (through the Université de Saint-Boniface), Mennonites (through the Canadian Mennonite University), and other religious traditions, thus contributing to societal diversity.1 It is a key component of Manitoba's Northern Development Strategy. It can be part of an immigration/migration strategy; useful for drawing in people from other provinces and countries, providing them connections to the community, and working to keep them in Manitoba.2 Government

---


often notes the importance of a new post-secondary capital or building project for what it can contribute to the local community, like the value of a new field house at the University of Winnipeg or the benefit of a new Health and Wellness Centre at Brandon University. Post-secondary education is a vital part of a vibrant health care system, and the inability to train enough doctors and nurses (for example) to support health throughout the province is of grave concern to government. It can facilitate opportunities for students and employers to match skills and employment.

Post-secondary education — whether undertaken at a university, college, or through a combination of college and workplace training (like apprenticeship) — is fundamentally important to Western societies for economic, social, and political reasons. Many emphasize the individual benefits of post-secondary education completion, pointing to increased incomes over the course of a lifetime. Others argue that these benefits do not accrue evenly throughout the

---

3 Speech from the Throne, 2012, supra note 1 at 4.
5 Statistics Canada defines post-secondary education as including “those whose highest level of educational attainment is an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma (including 'centres de formation professionnelle'); college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma; university certificate or diploma below bachelor level; or a university degree (bachelor's degree; university certificate or diploma above bachelor level; degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry; master's degree; earned doctorate)”. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) refers to most post-secondary education (except for apprenticeship/trades certification) as tertiary education. PSE may also be referred to as advanced education or higher education.
population, and some groups benefit more than others. Still others stress that post-secondary education completion has substantial societal impact, including the creation of a healthier population (thus reducing reliance on publicly-funded healthcare), greater social involvement, citizen engagement, a better overall quality of life, and a larger tax base due to higher incomes. Despite the contention over whether individuals or societies benefit more from post-secondary education, governments share the cost of providing post-secondary education with students themselves, based on the understanding that the benefits are also shared.

However, in Manitoba, as in many other provinces, the economic benefits of post-secondary participation are emphasized most by government. For example, the 2008 Speech from the Throne reiterated that Manitoba’s education strategy will remain at the heart of its economic strategy and committed the province to expanding the skills base of the economy in order to open new opportunities for the province’s young people and to increase the province’s long-term competitive advantage.

Understanding where a province spends its money, and the language that it uses to describe these expenditures and their rationale, is key to understanding its priorities for public policy. The investments that governments make in support of post-secondary education are significant. The Government of Manitoba provided $524.5 million in operational funding to both public and private institutions for 2011-2012, not including capital funds ($13.2 million in capital grants; $9.9 million in ACCESS program funding; $40.8 million for Red River College through the College Expansion Program).


Additionally, the Manitoba government provided approximately $28 million in student support for the 2011-2012 year. Most university students in Manitoba have benefitted from a tuition freeze (from 2000-2001 to 2008-2009) and then a cap on tuition fees, excepting international students and those in certain professional programs. However, university administrations have continued to express concern about their ability to manage increasing demands to deliver high quality educational opportunities, groundbreaking research, and community outreach with fewer funds. College students have also benefitted from regulated increases in tuition. But post-secondary institutions are now in a position where they must scale back expenditures. The Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg, along with Brandon University, have been very vocal about where they have needed to make cuts. University College of the North is suspending programming in some communities, where access to post-secondary education is vital to economic development and for underrepresented groups, due in part to a shortage of housing for potential students.

Manitoba has committed to increasing immigration to the province. The post-secondary system has an important role to play in supporting this policy objective. The 2010 Throne Speech noted that Manitoba is "seizing the potential for...global marketing for our schools, colleges and universities". Manitoba's immigration strategy involves "universities and colleges promot[ing] Manitoba as a destination". Many PSE institutions have identified internationalization and the increasing number of international students studying in Manitoba as a way to add diversity to their programming and possibly helping to offset costs. But this option can

11 *Ibid* at 25.
12 University College of the North, News Release, "University College of the North Responds to Editorial" (8 July 2013) online: <https://www.ucn.ca/communications/Documents/News/UCN%20Responds%20to%20Editorial.pdf>.
create additional challenges, which have been met in part with government's introduction of new legislation to ensure that international students coming to Manitoba have their expectations for a quality education met.

Investment in supports for Aboriginal students has been a priority for Manitoba's government throughout the 2000s, beginning with the prominent Aboriginal Education Action Plan announced in 2004. While government has worked with post-secondary institutions in the province to boost the participation, completion, and success of Aboriginal students in all facets of post-secondary education, it is also important to note that First Nations (those with Indian status) and Inuit students may also be funded through the federal government's Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP). This program, which funds some First Nations (FN) students at a level equivalent to what it cost to attend post-secondary education in 1995, does not cover all First Nations post-secondary students. It is inadequate, and FN communities must determine where they might best allocate the limited pool of funds, which often means that all students who are eligible for funding do not receive funding.

A great deal of the discourse around post-secondary education in the past few years both nationally and internationally has been focused on the link between education, skills, and employment. Manitoba's government has not been immune to this discussion. In the 2013 Budget Speech, Finance Minister Stan Struthers said that "[o]ur low unemployment rate means that businesses may not be able to grow if they cannot find the workers with the skills they need. That is why we have focused on skills development and training." Interconnected with the idea that skills must connect with the labour force now is the idea that government must lay the groundwork for

---

future prosperity: ". . . more good jobs for Manitobans mean more young families will choose to build their futures here, which in turn helps support a strong labour force well into the future".\(^{18}\) A focus on "skills" and labour market outcomes suggests that post-secondary institutions (and universities in particular) are not producing the kind of employees that Manitoba's economy needs — there is a skills gap or mismatch. It is skills development — training and trades — that is seen as vital to the province's prosperity.

As societies change, so do post-secondary institutions and systems of post-secondary education. Manitoba is no different than other provinces in this regard. The province's system continues to face challenges around access and participation: who takes part in a post-secondary education and who is missing; around financing; what is the appropriate share between governments and citizens; quality and value of post-secondary education; and the "fit" between post-secondary education and labour market needs, often referred to as the "skills gap". Post-secondary institutions are expected to be increasingly responsive to students, specific populations, and the communities they inhabit. Change is not easy, and government and post-secondary institutions share some priorities but differ on others.

In order to address some of these issues facing the post-secondary system in Manitoba, this article focuses on PSE policy under the NDP government in Manitoba since 1999. We open with a description of the PSE system in Manitoba, including its component institutions, students, and government organizations. Next, we examine the financing roles in this system played by the federal government, provincial government, and individuals. The system is immense and increasingly complex. Many of the issues facing Manitoba's post-secondary system relate to funding, and to government priorities: we explore the issues of sustainable funding for institutions, student spending on post-secondary education, the role of international students in supporting immigration policy, and support for Aboriginal peoples' participation in post-secondary education. Finally, we conclude with an assessment of where Manitoba may go next in these areas.

\(^{18}\) Speech from the Throne, 2012, \textit{supra} note 1 at 1.
II. MANITOBA'S PSE SYSTEM

Manitoba's PSE system provides education and training for students throughout the province. The system is defined to include organizations such as public and private colleges and universities, students, and governance bodies such as Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy and the Council on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE).

In post-secondary education, we often discuss two groups of institutions: the universities and the colleges. Although there are many other kinds of institutions, we have tended to use "college" as a descriptor of everything other than the universities. This is complicated in the Manitoba system by the reality that there are several colleges associated with universities in the province. For example, four are affiliated with the University of Manitoba — St. John's College, St. Paul's College, St. Andrew's College, and University College. The first three of these have their roots in religious education, while University College is secular. However, throughout the rest of this article, "college" will be used specifically to talk about what is traditionally called publicly-funded community or technical colleges.

In part, the distinction between universities and "everybody else" acknowledges the different relationship that publicly-funded universities, publicly-funded colleges, and other training institutions have with the provincial government. Universities traditionally maintain a high level of institutional autonomy, except when it

---


21 Ibid; Michael Skolnik, “State control of degree granting: The establishment of a
comes to funding and accountability.\textsuperscript{22} Provincial governments also keep very strict control over what institutions can grant degrees (traditionally the currency of the university) and which institutions can call themselves universities. This has changed quite dramatically in Manitoba over the past decade, with colleges and private universities expanding their purview with permission from government.\textsuperscript{23} The creation of Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), the University College of the North (UCN), and Université de Saint-Boniface helped to meet the needs of specific communities, but also provided diversity in the system that should support greater accessibility overall.

Publicly-funded community colleges tend to be subject to greater government direction. With the rise of the "skills gap discourse", the role of the community college — along with hybrid institutions, like the University College of the North — has become even more important for the province. Additionally, Red River College's membership in Polytechnics Canada, and its branding as a research-intensive, publicly funded college which is degree-granting and industry-responsive\textsuperscript{24} further differentiates it from both colleges and universities.

However, despite these traditional separations, Shanahan and Jones have argued that

the traditional binary structures of Canadian higher education are becoming increasingly blurred in many provinces by an expansion in the range of institutions that have the authority to grant degrees, and by increased opportunities for experimentation in institutional partnerships.
and articulation arrangements. Provincial post-secondary systems are expanding. Provincial coordinating structures and approaches have shifted focus from the 'sector' level (college or university sector) to the 'system' level.\textsuperscript{25}

This is evident in Manitoba. Thus, we refer to Manitoba post-secondary education as a system, comprising public universities and colleges, a polytechnic, privately-financed universities (some religious, some not), and private vocational schools along with governmental organizations.

A. Universities

Until 1967, Manitoba's system was largely dominated by one university, the University of Manitoba (UM), with all colleges in the province being affiliated with the UM.\textsuperscript{26} This included both the community colleges and the colleges that would continue to be affiliated with the University of Manitoba – St. John's College, St. Andrew's College, St. Paul's College, and University College. Between 1967 and 1997, the system diversified and expanded to include new universities, an amalgamated college system, and key private institutions whose mandates are meant to provide Manitoba residents with access to a spectrum of educational opportunities. The University of Winnipeg (formerly United College) and Brandon University (Brandon College), established as autonomous institutions under the Universities Establishment Act of 1967,\textsuperscript{27} were created as part of a wave of increased demand from baby boomers for post-secondary education that swept the country. These new universities were limited in their offerings to primarily undergraduate education, leaving the UM to remain the key institution in the provision of professional and graduate education.\textsuperscript{28}

The next university to be created in Manitoba was the Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), which brought together three private Mennonite colleges in 1997 through the Mennonite Colleges Federation

\textsuperscript{25} Shanahan & Jones, supra note 20 at 41 – 42.

\textsuperscript{26} Smith, “Manitoba's Post-Secondary”, supra note 19.

\textsuperscript{27} SM 1967, c 69.

Act. University College of the North (UCN), established in 2004 through the University College of the North Act, was intended to bring together both university and college programming that was responsive to the needs of the communities its campuses served. Smith has argued that both of these universities were created to meet local and specific population needs, while also contributing to the overall economic success of the province.

In 1998, both the University of Winnipeg and Brandon University received their own governing legislation. Another key institution, long established to provide post-secondary education in French, has also undergone a series of important changes throughout the 2000s. Le College universitaire de Saint-Boniface Incorporation Act was amended in 2005 to keep le College universitaire de Saint-Boniface (CUSB) as an affiliated college of the University of Manitoba (UM) for degree-granting purposes but created an independent Board of Governors separate from the UM. This legislative change also allowed CUSB to develop partnerships with other post-secondary institutions, which is something it had been prevented from doing previously. In 2011, CUSB became an independent university, known as the Université de Saint Boniface.

These universities all contribute different things to the Manitoba post-secondary system of education. The University of Manitoba is considered a "medical-doctoral" university, which offers professional education in health (medicine, nursing, dentistry), business, and law as well as extensive undergraduate and graduate-level programming and research activity. The University of Winnipeg offers a wide variety of undergraduate programming, with an additional focus on the inner-city in which it is situated. It has recently expanded its graduate offerings as well, with the creation of a Faculty of Graduate Studies.

---

29 CCSM c M 105.
31 Smith, “Manitoba’s Post-Secondary”, supra note 19.
33 Ibid, s 10.
34 The Université de Saint-Boniface Act, CCSM c U50, SM 2011, c 16.
Brandon University has an internationally-renowned program in music education, as well as providing varied undergraduate programs which serve the southern part of the province. CUSB and UCN were both created to support the educational aspirations of people with different language profiles and geographic locations, while being responsive to the needs of specific communities. There is diversity and specialization among these universities, but there are also areas of duplication and overlap. Other provinces (most notably Ontario, BC, and to a lesser extent, Saskatchewan) have seen government "encouragement" of universities' elimination of duplication. As of yet, Manitoba's government has not pursued this approach.

B. Colleges

Community colleges, designed to deliver technical and other training, have played an increasingly important role in the post-secondary sector in Manitoba. Red River College (formerly Manitoba Technical Institute), Assiniboine Community College (formerly Brandon Vocational Training Centre), and Keewatin Community College (formerly Northern Manitoba Vocational Centre) all became more autonomous institutions with the passing of the Colleges Act\(^{35}\) in 1993, which replaced the existing government control of colleges with board governance.\(^{36}\) As well as public colleges, Manitobans have access to a number of private religious colleges.

Throughout the country, provinces have made changes to the types of credentials that can be offered outside a university as well as which institutions could use the term "university" in their names and advertising. Near the beginning of the 2000s, colleges in Manitoba began to lobby government for the ability to grant degrees and to use the title of "university". In 2002, William and Catherine Booth College (Booth College) gained expanded degree-granting powers that would not be controlled by the Minister, which allowed for the creation of new degrees in university-level programming.

As well as expanding into degree-granting territory traditionally held by universities, colleges also began to expand into adult learning

---

36 Smith, “Manitoba's Post-Secondary”, supra note 19.
– providing high school credit and upgrading. After intense debate in the Legislature, the Degree Granting Act of 2006 provided a new process for all institutions to use in order to grant degrees, which was designed to ensure quality control within the system. Until that point, private colleges had limited ability to grant degrees. This new Act ensured that all institutions wanting to implement a degree program would need legislation allowing them to do so. As Smith notes, Red River College led a concerted lobbying effort to expand degree-granting authority. In 2009, this expansion allowed community colleges and the École Technique et Professionelle (the college arm of the CUSB) to grant degrees.

C. Private Vocational Institutions

Manitoba’s post-secondary system also contains organizations known as Private Vocational Institutions (PVIs), which offer employment training in varied fields from flower arranging to truck driving to massage therapy. These institutions receive no direct funding from the provincial government, relying primarily on tuition fees for their operational funds. However, government does regulate these institutions through the Private Vocational Institutions Act and accompanying regulations in order to ensure that students attending a PVI will have access to quality education. Additionally, government controls whether or not an individual PVI will be recognized by Student Financial Assistance so that their students can access Student Loan programming.

D. Government Organizations

Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy is the key department that sets priorities and allocates funds in support of the post-secondary system. It is responsible for legislation and regulation, and provides public policy direction for organizations and processes that fall within

---

37 Ibid at 55; Ben Levin, Governing Education (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
38 CCSM, c D25, SM 2006, c 33.
40 CCSM, c P137, SM 2002, c 23; also see MR 37/2002.
41 COPSE, Annual Report, supra note 10 at 1.
the post-secondary education system. The Minister of the department is tasked with providing strategic direction; setting priorities for post-secondary providers and student aid; allocating funds; working with organizations "to ensure access to quality, post-secondary and adult education for all Manitobans"; to coordinate and promote international education opportunities; to lead an adult literacy strategy; to work with federal and other governments as well as varied public and private sector organizations; and to lead organizations to address "Manitoba's economic and social goals".  

While the Department has a key role to play in coordination, leadership, and prioritization for the post-secondary system, Manitoba has another organization that operates between the Department and the organizations of the post-secondary system: the Council on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE). Manitoba's approach to system coordination has been a relatively unique one. While most provinces were moving away from formal organizations of coordination, Manitoba implemented first the Universities Grants Commission (UGC) in 1967 and then the Council on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE) in 1997 to better manage post-secondary education as a system rather than a diverse set of sectors. Created by the Council on Post-Secondary Education (COPSE) Act, COPSE was built on the foundation of the Universities Grants Commission (UGC) and extended the reach of the intermediary body acting between government and post-secondary institutions. Many provinces do not have an organization that acts as an intermediary between the government and post-secondary institutions, instead the department responsible for advanced/higher/post-secondary education acts as coordinating body and funder. Manitoba's establishment of COPSE created a force for additional coordination within the post-secondary system, that was supported by its position as the funder of post-secondary institutions. COPSE would approve programs and capital and operating funding, as the UGC had before it. But COPSE would

42 Ibid at 2.
44 CCSM, c C235, SM 1996, c 38.
go further than that, with a mandate "to plan and coordinate the
development of a post-secondary education system in the province
that promotes excellence in and accessibility to education, supports
the coordination and integration of services and facilities, and
promotes fiscal responsibility".\footnote{45}

This force for funding and coordination has developed greater
reach. By 1998, COPSE was providing funds to three private religious
colleges: Providence College, Steinbach Bible College, and William &
Catherine Booth College.\footnote{46} This was an interesting step for Manitoba
to take; including these private religious institutions in the public
framework meant that government would have more control over the
coordination and funding of the post-secondary system overall.
COPSE also facilitates credit transfer and articulation between
institutions, which allows students to transfer completed credits of
study between post-secondary institutions and programs in the
province. A consultation process provided COPSE with
recommendations on how to increase student access and mobility that
led to the modernization of Campus Manitoba, an online hub for
distance learning and credit transfer.

While COPSE is precluded from interfering with the institutional
formulation of academic policies and standards, admission/graduation standards, and staff appointments, COPSE is
also directed to

\begin{quote}
operate within a framework of accountability established by the minister,
who may give the council general direction on matters that relate to its
mandate and that are, in the minister's opinion, of significant public
interest.\footnote{47}
\end{quote}

This intermediary body has a tremendous amount of power and
influence within the post-secondary education sector in Manitoba, as
is specified through its range of duties.\footnote{48}

\footnote{45} Ibid, s 3(1).
\footnote{46} Smith, “Manitoba's PostSecondary”, supra note 21 at 54.
\footnote{47} COPSE, supra note 45, s 4(b).
\footnote{48} Ibid, s 11.
E. Students

Who participates in Manitoba post-secondary education matters for our understanding of the post-secondary system. Many post-secondary education programs require a student to have completed high school. When comparing Manitoba to other provinces in the country, we know that Manitoba has a lower high school graduation rate and a lower post-secondary participation rate than many other provinces. The high school graduation rate in 2009 was 71% among Manitobans under age 25, and 74% among those of all ages.\(^\text{49}\) As of 2011, 81% of Canadians under age 25 would have completed high school or its equivalent.\(^\text{50}\) We also know that the high school graduation rate is lower among Aboriginal people in the province, which has impacted their participation in post-secondary education.

When speaking of post-secondary education attainment, different sources will use different terms. We can speak of participation as enrolment, which is often defined as whether or not someone is formally registered in a particular program. We can speak of completion and credential attainment, which means that a person has completed and been awarded a credential that is specific to the program they've finished. We also speak of the proportion of the population which has taken some post-secondary education — or participated in post-secondary education — but has not completed the credential. Often our focus is on the achievement of a credential, as that is what is most recognized by the labour market in terms of successful connection.

As of 2010, 46% of Manitobans aged 25 to 64 had completed some form of post-secondary education, an increase from the 37% of 2000.\(^\text{51}\) An OECD report released in June 2013 found that 51% of


\(^{51}\) StatCan, Education Indicators, *supra* note 49 at Chart A.1.5.2 [OECD]. The OECD uses ISCED classifications to identify tertiary education (ISCED 5a, 5b, 6: including college diplomas/certificates, university certificates/diplomas, degrees, and post-graduate work) versus post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 3,4), which includes apprenticeship and trades training. Canada is one
Canadians aged 18 and over have completed university, college, or polytechnic-level education, up from 40% in 2000. This participation rate varies by age category, however, and approximately 56% of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 34 have completed some form of post-secondary education, an increase from 41% in 2000.\(^52\) It also varies by sex, with women being more likely to complete a tertiary education than men, both for the 25-64 year old category (51% of 25-64 year olds compared with 41%) and for those aged 25 to 34 (55% compared with 42%).\(^53\) This division remains for the remaining age categories.

**Figure 1: Trends in Educational Attainment among 25-64 Year Old Population: Manitoba**\(^54\)

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Below upper secondary</th>
<th>Upper secondary and postsecondary non-tertiary</th>
<th>Tertiary education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

However, as we can see in Figure 1, enrolment in Manitoba's post-secondary institutions increased throughout the first decade of the 2000s.\(^55\) Statistics Canada calculates that Manitoba's participation

\(^{52}\) OECD, *supra* note 50 at 26 & 38.

\(^{53}\) StatCan, Education Indicators, *supra* note 49 at Chart A.1.3.

\(^{54}\) *Ibid* at Chart A.1.4.

rate increased by approximately 2% per year between 1997 and 2010.

1. Universities

Enrolment in the post-secondary system is monitored centrally by COPSE. One of the key policy goals for the NDP government going in to the year 2000 was to increase the number of students participating in Manitoba’s system. Between 2001/02 and 2010/11, Manitoba universities increased enrolment from 34,256 (both full-time (FT) and part-time (PT) students) to 41,707 (both FT and PT students), looking at the regular session (Fall/Winter) and all levels of education (graduate and undergraduate). As of 2010/11, well over half of these students were female (59%, 22,183) and the remainder were male (41%, 15,180).

Graduate enrolment in Manitoba universities has increased between 2001-2002 and 2010-2011, to a total of 4,253 graduate students (both FT and PT) in regular session (Fall/Winter); 55% are female and 45% were male.

56 StatCan, Education Indicators, supra note 49 at Chart A.1.4.
57 Ben Levin, Governing Education (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005).
58 COPSE, Annual Report, supra note 10 at 15.
59 Ibid at 29.
60 Ibid at 60 & 64.
2. Colleges

Enrolment in Manitoba's colleges has increased at a faster pace than in the universities, as shown in Figure 3 below. Between 2001-2002 and 2010-2011, enrolment increased from 13,050 to 17,137, a total of 31.3%. The gender breakdown of students enrolled in Manitoba's colleges also differs from universities: in 2010/11, 55% of college students were male and 42% female.

3. International Students

International students are defined by Statistics Canada as "those who, for the specific purpose of pursuing their education, go to a country other than their country of residence or the country in which they were previously educated". As of 2009, international students represent a total of 7.6% of all tertiary-level (university, college, polytechnic) students. The greatest proportion of international students were studying in advanced research programs, usually at the graduate level (34.6% of all those in this category). Interestingly, Manitoba had the second highest growth rate in international student

---


62 StatCan, Education Indicators, supra note 49 at table c.1.1.

63 Ibid.
participation: from 2001 to 2009, the proportion of international students attending institutions in Manitoba increased by 16.4%.\textsuperscript{64}

Figure 3: Full-Time, Part-Time, and Total Enrolment in Manitoba Colleges: 2001/02 to 2010/11\textsuperscript{65}

4. Aboriginal Students

As of the 2006 Census, Aboriginal people\textsuperscript{66} made up 15.5% of Manitoba's population\textsuperscript{67} – the highest proportion for any province in Canada.\textsuperscript{68} Manitoba's population also includes a higher proportion of

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid at 84.
\textsuperscript{66} Throughout this article, reflecting the research on post-secondary education participation and completion focusing on Aboriginal peoples, we use a variety of terms. The term "Aboriginal people" is used to refer to people who report being First Nations, Métis, or Inuit/Inuk, being a Registered/Treaty/Status Indian, and/or being a member of a First Nation or Indian Band (Statistics Canada). "Status Indian" is also referred to as Registered or Treaty Indian, which denotes a specific relationship with the federal government usually established through Treaties. According to Statistics Canada, "Registered Indians are person who are registered under the Indian Act of Canada". The majority of Registered or Status Indians also identify as First Nations people, although in the 2011 National Household Survey, nearly 5% identified as Métis.
\textsuperscript{67} Manitoba, Aboriginal People in Manitoba, (2012) online: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/ana/pdf/AbPeopleMBweb.pdf> at 4 [Aboriginal People in Manitoba].
\textsuperscript{68} Aboriginal people make up 14.9% of Saskatchewan's population: the next highest per capita number of Aboriginal people in the provinces. While more current data is available through the 2012 National Household Survey and Census, enough concerns exist about the quality of that data - particularly when
Métis people than in any other province; 38.1% of Aboriginal people in Manitoba identify as Métis.\(^69\) The age distribution for the Aboriginal population in Manitoba also has significant implications for post-secondary education. As of 2006, 25.9% of Manitoba children aged 14 and under are Aboriginal. These proportions are significantly higher among status Indians and non-status Indians (37.1% and 39.2%) than among Métis people (26.8%).\(^70\) Thus, the demand for access to post-secondary education and labour market connections will almost certainly increase for this population in the next decade — and questions about which level(s) of government should be involved in supporting this education are certain to arise.

As of 2012, off-reserve Aboriginal people aged 25-64 and non-Aboriginal people had completed similar levels of certification in trades (11% off-reserve Aboriginal versus 10% non-Aboriginal) and college education (21% off-reserve Aboriginal versus 23% non-Aboriginal).\(^71\) However, there is a significant difference between off-reserve Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Manitoba when it comes to university completion. As of 2012, 10% of the off-reserve Aboriginal population aged 25 to 64 had completed a university credential, while 25% of non-Aboriginal people aged 25 to 64 had done so.\(^72\) There are also important differences in educational attainment between on-reserve Status Indians and those living off-reserve: people living on-reserve have lower educational attainment rates than off-reserve people and lower rates than Métis people throughout the province.\(^73\)

\(^{69}\) Aboriginal People in Manitoba, supra note 67 at 7.

\(^{70}\) Ibid at 14-15.

\(^{71}\) StatCan, Education Indicators, supra note 49 at table D.6.3.

\(^{72}\) Ibid.

III. Financing PSE in Manitoba

A. Federal Government’s Role

Under the Canadian Constitution post-secondary education is a provincial responsibility. However, the federal government is heavily involved in financing both the operations of post-secondary institutions and the students who study in those institutions. There is overlap between federal jurisdiction in Indian affairs, economic development, and other areas of national interest and with post-secondary education activities within the boundaries of the provinces. Federal involvement, through establishing policy direction and providing financial supports, is particularly evident in transfers to the provinces, skills development, research and development, and student financial assistance.

Financial transfers to the provinces include funds to support post-secondary education. Coming in the form of cash transfers, tax point transfers, and equalization to poorer provinces (like Manitoba), federal supports help to fund operations of post-secondary education in the provinces. From 1996-1997 to 2004-2005, the federal government transferred funds to support health, education, and welfare together in the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) — a mechanism also designed to assist the federal government in reigning in spending in these areas as it cut expenditures through recessionary times. In April 2004, the federal transfers for health and social programming were split into the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) and the Canada Social Transfer (CST). The CST is designed to support both social welfare and post-secondary education and totals 38% of the full transfer dollars for this area.

Fisher et al have found that the funds transferred between 1994-1995 to 2004-2005 decreased by nearly 50%, when compared against

---

75 Shanahan & Jones, supra note 20.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid at 33.
student enrolment (as cited in Shanahan and Jones).\textsuperscript{78} Manitoba’s 2005 Budget Address noted that

in the last decade, the federal share of provincial spending on post-secondary education is roughly half what it used to be — declining from 15% in 1995/96 to just over 7% in 2004/05.\textsuperscript{79}

As federal transfers to the provinces in support of post-secondary education declined into the mid-2000s, provinces were faced with limited options: either "backfill" the losses by providing additional public funds to institutions, ask the institutions to make cuts, or pass the responsibility for the funding shortfall on to individuals and their families by allowing institutions to increase tuition and other related fees. Manitoba students saw their tuition fees rise dramatically, and differential fees were introduced for more "expensive" programs like medicine, dentistry, engineering, and architecture and for international students.

The federal government has also had a substantive role in the area of labour market skills training and development, often working in partnership with provincial governments, colleges, and employers. The nature of the federal involvement in this area has varied over time, from direct involvement in programming toward supporting employers and students directly. Responsibility for much of the funding and provision of training was passed on to the provinces in the mid-1990s, under the Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) and the later Labour Market Agreements (LMAs, beginning in 2007) totalling $2.5 billion in transfers to the provinces by 2013-2014.\textsuperscript{80} In Budget 2013-2014, the federal government announced a dramatic shift in how it would fund skills development: moving from the LMAs to a national program called the Canada Jobs Grant as of 2014-2015, which would require employers and provinces to invest funds before the federal government would match them.\textsuperscript{81} This move

\textsuperscript{78} Shanahan & Jones, \textit{supra} note 20 at 33.


\textsuperscript{80} Bill Curry, "Flaherty to make skills training a budget focus" \textit{The Globe and Mail} (19 March 2013) online: The Globe and Mail \texttt{<http://www.theglobeandmail.com>}. 

\textsuperscript{81} Adrian Morrow, "Canada Jobs Grant overhauls how Ottawa funds training" \textit{The
remains controversial, and the Premiers continue to discuss the new grant and how each province will respond to it.

The federal government has long been the key governmental partner in post-secondary research and development, particularly in the university sector. The provision of funds through the three research councils (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council), through the Canada Research Chairs (CRC) and Indirect Costs of Research programs, and through organizations like the non-profit Canadian Council on Learning (dissolved in 2012) has supported innovative research and training throughout the country. While there have been challenges to all of these programs and organizations, the federal government remains a vital part of funded research in Canada.

Research into post-secondary education has also been funded by the federal government over the past twenty years: education-related surveys like the National Graduate Survey (conducted 1978-2007) and the Youth in Transition Survey (conducted 2000-2009) provided researchers with the opportunity to understand how graduates moved into the labour force and how youth moved from elementary to high school and then on to post-secondary education and the labour force; research funds allocated by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation provided many opportunities to better understand access, participation and completion in post-secondary education. However, many of these research opportunities were either cancelled or ended under the Harper Conservatives, leaving individual institutions and organizations without access to valuable and consistent data.

The federal government has a substantive role to play in providing financial assistance to post-secondary students studying in Canada and abroad. Building on funds made available to veterans returning from World War II, the Canada Student Loan Program was created in 1964 and has grown to include a mix of loans and grants for students

---


83 Shanahan & Jones, supra note 20 at 35.
who require additional resources to participate in post-secondary education. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, the federal government implemented changes to vary the kinds and amounts of funds available. Recognizing that increasing tuition fees were impacting levels of student debt – particularly for more disadvantaged groups of students – grant programs were created for students with high financial needs. Additionally, the federal government created a Registered Education Savings Program (RESP) that includes a top-up grant to encourage families to save for their children's post-secondary education. Tax credits have been a policy instrument of choice for the federal government, as it has increased the level and number of tax credits available to students for tuition, books, and maintenance costs. While these actions have been heavily criticised, they are also highlighted by others as a way for students to decrease the overall cost of participation in post-secondary education, although not a particularly effective one since they did not necessarily benefit the students during their education.

B. Provincial Government's Role

As noted previously, provincial governments have constitutional responsibility for post-secondary education. They provide funds in support of the system (for operations, capital expenditures, and research), funds in support of students, and in some cases, they work to "coordinate" the post-secondary education system – in part to ensure that the system meets the economic needs of the province, that it delivers high-quality education, and that it is diverse enough to support students' varying needs. Manitoba's government does all of these things. Manitoba has also created targeted funds for the post-secondary system to support particular policy objectives, including

84 Rounce, supra note 21.
85 Service Canada, Registered Education Savings Plan (RESP) (Ottawa: Service Canada, nd) online: <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/resp.shtml>.
87 Alex Usher, Beyond the Sticker Price: A Closer Look at Canadian University Tuition Levels, (Toronto: Educational Policy Institute, 2006).
funds to support community college labour market responsiveness (Colleges Growth Plan) and program development for all institutions in the province, Post-Secondary Strategic Initiatives Fund.\(^{88}\)

Manitoba’s government has also emphasized its investments in research within the post-secondary system, drawing connections between these investments and other policy priorities, rather than focusing on the broader benefits of research. Announcements about food and neutraceutical research support in the 2002 budget\(^{89}\) reinforced the government’s policy connection between research and development and economic development. Additionally, investment in graduate scholarships, primarily through the Manitoba Graduate Scholarship Program, is designed to support participation in research-based activities.\(^{90}\) Multi-year operating funds for post-secondary institutions, announced in Budget 2006, were designed in part to both plan and develop programs for labour market needs and "to better co-ordinate research activities".\(^{91}\) Linking research and innovation to education, government has emphasized investment in applied research at institutions like the Red River College — supporting the province’s first "dedicated college-based research facility" in the Centre for Applied Research in Sustainable Infrastructure at Red River College.\(^{92}\) Whether or not these investments have achieved results for government in terms of better understanding policy problems or solutions is not clear.

Manitoba’s commitment to research funding at provincial post-secondary institutions provided approximately 9% of the funds spent


\(^{91}\) Manitoba, 23 March 2010 *supra* note 4 at 4.

\(^{92}\) *Ibid* at 5.

on research and development (R & D) as of 2010.\(^\text{94}\) However, it must also be noted that approximately half of the funds spent on R & D in 2010 could be attributed to ‘higher education’, which includes infrastructure, research, and teaching supported within post-secondary institutions. Funds from the province would certainly also be used to support this category of expenditure. Of the remaining funds spent, 8% is attributed to business investment, 23% came from the federal government, 9% from private non-profits, and 5% from foreign sources.\(^\text{95}\)

Manitoba’s government has committed publicly to ensuring that post-secondary education is affordable and accessible for Manitoba students. In order to help make this possible, government works provides a web of loans, grants, bursaries, scholarships, tax credits, and repayment assistance through Manitoba Student Aid, an organization within the Department of Advanced Education and Literacy. These funds consist of both repayable (loans) and non-repayable (bursaries and scholarships) funds. Since August 1, 2001, Manitoba has direct-financed student loans for Manitoba students,\(^\text{96}\) and administers both Canada Student Loans and Manitoba Student Loans. Scholarships for academic excellence are provided, along with bursaries and early intervention initiatives which target students from under-represented populations (such as ACCESS Bursaries, Adult Learner Bursary, Fly Higher Aboriginal Education Awards, Bright Futures Fund, Student Success Grants, etc.).

As of 2010-2011, approximately 18% of full-time university students in Manitoba received a Canada Student Loan.\(^\text{97}\) Students in Manitoba who qualified for a Canada Student Loan borrowed the second least, on average, of students in the country in 2010-11 ($4,567, compared with $4,480 for Newfoundland and Labrador

\(^{94}\) StatCan, *Education Indicators*, supra note 49 at table D.4.5.

\(^{95}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{96}\) Prior to August 2001, Manitoba had an agreement with a number of private financial institutions to deliver and manage student loans.

students), and had the lowest average balances upon graduation.\footnote{98} This is due in large part to the relatively low tuition rates available in the province, and the number of students able to live at home while studying.

Criteria for eligibility are developed by the federal student loan program and implemented for both the Manitoba and Canada student loan programs, and are designed to ensure a potential student is in financial need, is in a designated program, progresses satisfactorily through their program, is not in default/have a poor credit history, and is a Manitoba resident and Canadian citizen, Permanent Resident, or Protected Person.\footnote{99} Manitoba Student Aid also oversees the designation of post-secondary institutions for student loan purposes, deciding which institutions can have their students apply for student loans.\footnote{100} Government subsidizes the cost of borrowing while in program, and as of 2011, interest rates on Manitoba Student Loans were reduced to prime in order to help minimize the cost of borrowing.\footnote{101} The Manitoba government also provides support to students and their families through tax credits, both those offered as non-refundable tax credits for post-secondary education and specific credits. Budget 2007 announced a new income tax rebate of 60% on tuition fees up to $25,000 for all post-secondary graduates living and working in Manitoba. The Tuition Fee Income Tax Rebate was designed to both "attract and retain youth", and to "serve as a powerful recruitment tool for business in a highly competitive job market".\footnote{102} As of 2010, students can apply for this rebate while still enrolled in post-secondary education to help offset some of the costs of post-secondary education.\footnote{103} This program is configured slightly differently than similar programs in other

\footnote{99} COPSE, Annual Report, supra note 10 at 9.
\footnote{100} COPSE, Annual Report, supra note 10 at 2.
\footnote{101} Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, Official Report of Debates, 39th Leg, 5nd Sess, Vol 2011 (12 April 2011) (Manitoba Budget Address) [Manitoba, 12 April 2011].
\footnote{102} Manitoba, 4 April 2007, supra note 93 at 7-8.
\footnote{103} Manitoba, 23 March 2010, supra note 4 at 11.
provinces — for example, the Saskatchewan program does not apply to graduate programming, though the Manitoba program does. This means that the Manitoba program's reach is greater than it might be in other provinces. However, a major criticism of all programs like this one is whether or not they really help to retain or attract people to the province who would not be staying or coming anyway.

Student organizations, particularly the Canadian Federation of Students (in Manitoba and nationally), focus on the connection between the cost of tuition fees and affordability. While Manitoba students have argued that tuition fees are too high in the province for some people to afford, government, post-secondary institutions, and other organizations argue that Manitoba does provide more affordable post-secondary education, particularly when compared with the costs in other provinces. Manitoba’s tuition fee levels, considering undergraduate tuition fee increases at universities in the province, have increased over the years between 1991-1992 and 2012-2013 by 102%. This means that Manitobans have faced the second smallest tuition fee increase (next to Newfoundland, at 72% over the same time period) in an era when undergraduates in neighbouring provinces saw increases of up to 224% (in Saskatchewan) or 295% (in Ontario).

Tuition fee levels are linked with student loan and debt levels throughout much of the discussion about the cost of education. The Manitoba government, as is the case with other provinces in Canada, emphasizes the shared responsibility for financing post-secondary education, including "students, their parents, spouses, and government". Thus, student aid is considered to supplement other resources available to students, rather than being their sole source of support. In Budget 2008, government noted that "Manitoba now has

104 Saskatchewan, Advanced Education, Graduate Retention Program (GRP), online: Advanced Education <http://ae.gov.sk.ca/grp>.


106 CAUT, supra note 97 at 48.

107 Ibid.

108 COPSE, Annual Report, supra note 10 at 1.
the lowest student debt levels outside Quebec”. For 2010, government limited tuition fee increases to 5% at universities and to $150 per year at colleges. In Budget 2011, government announced that tuition fee increases at the universities would be held at the rate of inflation and that colleges could increase tuition fees by $100. The Protecting Affordability for University Students Act tied increases in tuition fees to the level of inflation for full-time, domestic undergraduate students.

Investment in Aboriginal education, training, employment, and business development has been an identified priority of the Manitoba government throughout the 2000s and specifically with the Aboriginal Education Action Plan introduced in 2004. Additional funds were promised in 2007 for the University College of the North, to expand their programming and training facilities in support of Northern Development.

Making connections between post-secondary education and the labour market has been a consistent policy priority of the Manitoba government since the 1990s, under the Progressive Conservatives and then with the NDP. In the 1999 Budget Speech, Progressive Conservative Finance Minister Harold Gilleshammer said the following:

Our support for students and post-secondary institutions gives all Manitobans the freedom to deliver the knowledge and skills they need to take advantage of the growing opportunities in our province.

The 2000 Speech from the Throne, the first of the newly-elected NDP government, committed to introducing

a new Manitoba training strategy to include continued expansion of the college system, apprenticeship spaces, new forms of on-the-job training and

---

110 Manitoba, 23 March 2010, supra note 4 at 11.
111 Ibid at 4.
113 Manitoba, 4 April 2007, supra note 93 at 8.
114 Ibid at 12.
115 Manitoba, 29 April 1999 supra note 88 at 25.
adult education, and special consideration for the training needs of Aboriginal youth. \(^\text{116}\)

Investments in skills development have been emphasized over the past decade, with a focus on expanding the college system and apprenticeship spaces. \(^\text{117}\) These expanded investments also form part of the government's Northern Development Strategy. \(^\text{118}\) Most recently, funds in support of Red River College expansion to include a Skilled Trades and Technology Centre were designed to address the skills-training gap. \(^\text{119}\)

**C. Individual's Role**

Public post-secondary institutions rely on a combination of private and public sources of financing. However, the balance between public and private sources of funding has changed dramatically over the past thirty years. While government funds accounted for approximately 85% of university operating funds in 1981, as of 2011, government funds accounted for 64.6% of operational funding. Tuition fees accounted for 10% of operating funds in 1981, rising to 26.2% of operating funds by 2011. \(^\text{120}\)

This is a result of two basic trends: a decrease in the amount of funding coming from government(s) to post-secondary institutions and an increase in the amount of tuition and ancillary fees paid by individual students. In Manitoba, these trends have been slightly different than those of most other provinces, with the exception of Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec (for domestic students). Funding from governments has not increased at the level that universities have requested, although there have not been dramatic

---


\(^{120}\) CAUT, *supra* note 97.
decreases in operating funding. The Manitoba government, under the NDP, has focused on ensuring access to affordable post-secondary opportunities, making a reference to accessibility in every budget speech since 1999. Again, because tuition fees in Manitoba are much lower than the national average, they make up a smaller proportion of operating funds than they do nationally.

Tuition fee increases have been reduced, frozen or capped for most programs and most students, starting in the year 2000-2001. For 2000-2001, government increased university and college operating grants enough to offset a 10% increase in tuition fees. The 2000-2001 through 2008-09 budgets saw tuition fees frozen for most students. Government increased the amount of operating funding transferred to the institutions to compensate for the lost tuition revenues, based on the number of students enrolled. The increase in tuition fees that began in 2009-2010 was accompanied by an increase in student financial assistance, in order to address student concerns about inadequate funding, particularly for rural and northern students.

However, there are exceptions to this tuition management approach. Students in dentistry, dental hygiene, law, business, and medicine all pay much higher levels of tuition than those in other programs. In fact, Faculty of Law students voted to have the tuition fee freeze lifted for their programs, in order to provide additional resources for study. International students also pay fees that are higher than those paid by domestic students.

IV. POLICY ISSUES IN PSE

A. Managing Shortfalls and Financial Challenges

Universities have an increasing number of stakeholders. They must serve the needs of students (and future students) by providing a high-quality education that offers a clear path to a career. They must educate future generations of citizens, who can contribute through their involvement in the economy and in society. They must


undertake research that contributes to understanding, addressing, and solving the problems of science and society. They must create linkages with communities, building connections that ensure the university is not simply an ‘ivory tower’ - contributing nothing to the world around them. As an employer, universities must also address the needs of faculty and staff who keep the institutions operating, and allow for all of the above purposes to be fulfilled. Governments like the Province of Manitoba have certain policy goals for post-secondary institutions to meet, including the connection between education and skills and economic development and support for immigration.

Institutions must meet the increasingly diverse educational and related needs of students and faculty, through the use of technology, provision of common study spaces, and up-to-date classrooms. Students, staff, and faculty all demand additional services, such as quality food services, and health and wellness services. Universities, like the University of Winnipeg, note that a large portion of their operating budget goes to faculty salaries. Faculty pension plans are short the necessary funds to cover future payouts.

Beginning in 2006-2007, Manitoba announced multi-year operational funding for universities. Under this funding proposal, COPSE would submit a funding plan every three years that would include a forecast including grants for the following two years. As of 2010-2011, this funding would include an increase of 5% each year for three years (until 2013-2014). Finance Minister Stan Struthers said that

> strong and predictable funding to our universities will ensure academic excellence, affordability for students, more timely completion rates and better recognition of educational experience between institutions.

While consistent increases were welcomed by the universities, which had been arguing for consistent multi-year funding for years,
the universities would not see the 5% increase in 2013-2014 because of the government's need to reduce the deficit. Instead, they would be given a 2.5% increase in operating funds, an improvement over what many other provinces were providing (such as Ontario or Alberta), but short of what the universities had been expecting.\footnote{Dan Lett, "Post-secondary funding to feel financial pinch" Winnipeg Free Press (8 April 2013) online: Winnipeg Free Press <http://www.winnipegfree press.com/>; Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, \textit{Official Report of Debates}, 40th Leg, 2nd Sess, Vol 2013 (16 April 2013) (Manitoba Budget Address) at 6.} Additionally, Red River College, Assiniboine Community College, and l'Ecole technique et professionnelle would receive a 2% increase in operating funds for 2013-2014.\footnote{Ibid.}

Traditionally, when government would/could not provide sufficient funding, universities and other post-secondary institutions would turn to private sources of funds including tuition fees. However, since tuition fee increases are capped at approximately the rate of inflation per year (except for professional programs and others who successfully petition COPSE), universities and other institutions (with the exception of CMU, Université de Saint-Boniface's college-level instruction, and UCN's college-level instruction) do not have this option.\footnote{In fact, if institutions attempt to implement a tuition fee increase larger than inflation, COPSE must reduce the amount of operating funding provided to the institution by the amount of the increase in tuition fees, \textit{The Council on Post-Secondary Education Act}, \textit{supra} note 44, s 25.7(2).} In previous years, institutions attempted to increase fees through the "back-door" by increasing ancillary or course-related fees rather than tuition fees. COPSE has the ability to designate course-related fees as tuition fees effectively limiting increases in those fees to the rate of inflation.\footnote{Ibid, s 25(5).} An exception was granted to the University of Winnipeg this year, in recognition that students’ infrastructure needs were not being met with existing funding. Additionally, undergraduate university students in Manitoba saw the highest increase in additional fees for 2013-2014, with an increase of 14.2% to $555 per year.\footnote{Canada, \textit{The Daily} “University Tuition Fees, 2013/2014”, (Ottawa: StatCan, 12 September 2013) online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/130912/ dq130912b-eng.htm>.}
Other publicly-funded institutions, like UCN, have resorted to eliminating or restructuring/rescaling services in order to address budget shortfalls. While UCN was expanding services in a significant number of communities only a year ago (and being publicly recognized by government for doing so), questions have been raised about whether or not that expansion was too rapid and unsustainable.\(^{132}\) While it is not at all unusual for universities, especially new ones, to restructure services and programming, the connection between the need for budget cuts and restructuring of services indicates that government funding may be driving change.

It is too soon to tell if the cuts made by the universities will have an impact on enrolment. The perceived value of education for labour market participation cannot be underestimated, as Dan Lett of the Winnipeg Free Press points out:

"perhaps it is the knowledge that high school students will continue to flock to universities in search of a degree that leads to a good job regardless of government funding levels. In other words, demand for post-secondary education will not drop, even if the quality of that education is suffering."\(^{133}\)

Universities, particularly, are in a position where they must look closely at their operations, focus, and financing options. Across Canada and around the world, universities are undertaking programmatic reviews that are designed to assess duplication of services and activities, sources of efficiencies, and program success. Within the province, the University of Manitoba has undertaken the Resource Optimization and Service Enhancement (ROSE) project, designed to find efficiencies and develop more cost-effective processes.\(^{134}\) While we noted earlier that universities are functionally autonomous, when governments make changes in funding regimes, universities still must act. Government policy changes and fiscal retrenchment impact post-secondary institutions, whether they are functionally autonomous or not.


\(^{133}\) Lett, supra note 127.

B. International Students

Recruiting students from outside Canada to participate in the Manitoba post-secondary education system involves a number of identified public policies for the current government, “immigration and skilled labour are central to our economic development strategy. Attracting more international students supports both of these.”\textsuperscript{135}

Tuition fees for international students at most Manitoba universities are at least double what a domestic student would pay. For example, an international law student at the University of Manitoba pays approximately two times the tuition fees that a Canadian student would pay, while an undergraduate student in the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences pays 3.5 times the tuition a Canadian student would pay.\textsuperscript{136} Thus, international students provide a way to access additional private funds without being limited by provincial parameters, despite government noting that international students in Manitoba have the third lowest tuition of any students in Canada.\textsuperscript{137} This may be the case, but international students still pay considerable fees when compared with Canadian students in the province.

While most public institutions in Manitoba have established targets for growth in their international student populations, they argue that this growth would benefit international students as well as domestic students by providing all with an enriched cultural and intellectual experience. However, issues raised by international students studying at a private institution located on the University of Manitoba campus, the International College of Manitoba, has raised concerns about the misinformation provided to some students about their ability to transfer into the university and the supports available to them, as well as the quality of the programming they receive.\textsuperscript{138}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{note135} Manitoba, 17 April 2012, \textit{supra} note 117 at 3.
\end{thebibliography}
As a result of these and other issues related to the provincial nominee program, Manitoba has introduced legislation, Bill 44 The International Education Act, to ensure that institutions recruiting and educating international students would sign a code of conduct governing recruitment and quality of education. In her announcement of the legislation, then Minister of Advanced Education and Literacy Erin Selby said

[i]f an institution is going to use an international agent to recruit students, that agent is going to have to follow our code of conduct...And once they [the students] get here, there's another level ensuring that the classes are what the institution said they would provide.

C. Accessibility and Affordability: Student Debt Levels

As of 2010-2011, three-quarters of Canada Student Loan (CSL) and Manitoba Student Loan (MSL) funds available to Manitoba students are provided to students who are studying in the province. Of these funds, 12% are provided to students attending community colleges, 20% to those attending private institutions, and nearly half (45%) is distributed to university students.

Many of the non-repayable funds available to Manitoba post-secondary students require them to be studying full-time and be eligible for CSL/MSL funds. They must also have financial need that is not addressed with CSL/MSL funds. There is some flexibility within its funding model to target under-represented students, who often have high assessed need and are less likely to participate in post-secondary education — Aboriginal students, students with dependents, students with disabilities, and students from rural and remote communities. For example, the ACCESS Bursary provides bursary (non-repayable) funds for high needs, under-represented students instead of MSL, in order to reduce the amount of funding they would have to pay back. Research shows that students from underrepresented groups are more likely to be deterred by high levels

139 Bill 44, The International Education Act, 2nd Sess, 40th Leg, Manitoba, 2013 (did not proceed beyond 2nd Reading).
140 Larsen, supra note 137.
141 COPSE, Annual Report, supra note 10 at 11.
142 Ibid.
Investing in Manitoba’s Future 261

of debt and borrowing than are other students, so this program aims to help address this reality.

Ensuring that student debt is "manageable" is a key component of government policy regarding student assistance. Students qualifying for the maximum student loan (CSL & MSL) may also qualify for the Manitoba Bursary, which reduces their borrowing by several thousand dollars per year. Other funding, such as the Student Success Grant, is provided to students with unmet need by Manitoba Student Aid and various public universities and colleges in the province.

Student supports are also used for other, specific public policy reasons. In recognition of the need for more physicians to practice in Manitoba, especially in rural and Northern areas, government created the Medical Student/Resident Financial Assistance Program in 2001, which provides grants to students in approved residencies in exchange for their work in Manitoba for six months to two years. Manitoba has worked with the federal government and the Business Council of Manitoba to create funds to support Aboriginal students, through the Fly Higher Aboriginal Education Awards.

However, there are limitations to this funding. Female students are more likely to receive both Canada and Manitoba Student Loans, with 62% of all loans in 2010-11 going to women. Just over one in ten (11%) of loan recipients in 2010-11 self-declared as being Aboriginal. While the majority of loan recipients are single dependent (ie defined as being dependent on their family) or single independent (at least four years out of high school), 13% were married and 9% were single parents.

As Manitoba Student Aid has pointed out, the total accumulated loans (including both Canada Student Loans and Manitoba Student...
Loans) have been increasing over the past decade, despite government creation of bursaries. For students in their last program year in 2010-2011 who received both Manitoba and Canada Student Loans, average debt was approximately $13,000.\textsuperscript{147} For university students in a four-year program, average accumulated debt was closer to $18,000. It is important to recognize that this is an average figure, and that there are many students who borrow more than a total of $18,000. Additionally, this figure does not include borrowing outside of the government loan system — student loans provided by banks and credit unions (as well as credit card usage, borrowing from family, etc.) — which will add to the cost of education for many students, and is virtually impossible to track.

As government continues to manage tuition fee increases for Manitoba students studying in the province, student loan borrowing may not increase dramatically unless the costs of living (ie housing, moving, etc.) increase significantly. However, if government were to take the step of allowing for increasing tuition fees, it is likely that it would have to reconsider the amount of funding available to students, both in the form of repayable (loans) and non-repayable funds, in order to keep the cost of education affordable and accessible.

Although there is a range of government-provided financial supports available to Manitoba students, this does not mean that they meet the needs of all Manitobans who are qualified and want to attend a post-secondary institution. There needs to be on-going discussion about how much debt is appropriate for students completing education, and the recognition that not all students will graduate, that many graduates will not have the same kinds of income that allow them to repay loans more quickly — it is dependent on gender, field of study, type of employment, etc.; and that some programming does not link to employment that provides a greater level of financial compensation than a graduate could earn without the credential. As public institutions publicly discuss their needs for more funding, pressure will build to increase tuition fees, which in turn would result in higher levels of debt for borrowers.

\textsuperscript{147} \textit{Ibid} at Figure 37.
D. Attracting and Retaining Aboriginal Students

As noted in the previous section on financing post-secondary education in Manitoba, the federal and provincial governments, Aboriginal governments, and post-secondary institutions all have a stake in the success of Aboriginal peoples in the post-secondary system. While financing the post-secondary education of status Indians (also referred to as First Nations and Inuit peoples) is constitutionally the responsibility of the federal government (and is referred to in many treaties agreed to between First Nations communities and the federal government), the province of Manitoba also plays a significant role providing financial and other supports to assist people who want to continue their education.

The provincial government has created a number of financing sources (for example, the Helen Betty Osborne Scholarship Fund established in the 2000 Speech from the Throne, and other funds available to First Nations and other Aboriginal students applying through the Student Financial Aid system) which are intended to provide supports in addition to those available to non-First Nations/Aboriginal students. Making connections between post-secondary institutions, public schools, and Aboriginal young people is also important for future success in post-secondary education, starting with a need to increase high school completion levels.

Government has also worked with post-secondary institutions in the province to create programming for members of under-represented groups facing academic, financial, social, and personal barriers – including Aboriginal peoples, northern residents, people with disabilities, visible minorities, women, single parents, and immigrants and refugees. Programming includes degrees and certificates in education, nursing, and medicine, among others. As of


2010, 71.8% of the 284 students enrolled in ACCESS programming throughout the province are of Aboriginal descent.\textsuperscript{150}

Post-secondary institutions in the province have also implemented a series of programs and changes to attract and support Aboriginal students. The University of Winnipeg, for example, has undertaken a wide range of programming designed to engage Aboriginal people living in proximity to the university. Most post-secondary institutions have created an Aboriginal Students’ Centre, and many have a senior administrator responsible for the inclusion and success of Aboriginal students.

Manitoba’s government and its post-secondary institutions have all identified Aboriginal peoples’ participation and success as a key priority. The actions taken so far help, but much more needs to be done in order to ensure that Aboriginal people participate in PSE in Manitoba at the same rate as non-Aboriginal people. There are other partners that are vital for success in this area: Aboriginal peoples themselves, who must have access to education and the federal government, which must increase the funds it allocates to support the post-secondary education of status Indians/Inuit people. This is not simply a financial issue: ensuring greater access to post-secondary education for Aboriginal peoples is a complex issue that all partners must work to address.

V. CONCLUSIONS

From 1999 to the present, Manitoba’s post-secondary education system has encountered substantial changes. Its institutions have seen an increase in enrollment across the system in part due to the restrained cost of tuition fees at the public institutions. It has seen an expansion of the system, to include different types of institutions with different abilities to grant degrees and call themselves universities. It has seen the provincial government expand its funding portfolio to include private colleges. It has experienced significant changes in federal government priorities, and the spending patterns designed to meet those priorities – including a dramatic decline in the funding available to support post-secondary education through transfer

\textsuperscript{150} COPSE, Statistical Compendium, \textit{supra} note 61.
agreements and through transfers to students through programs like the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) for First Nations and Inuit students.

Throughout much of the first decade of the 21st century, tuition fees were frozen and then capped at approximately the cost of inflation for universities and at a “reasonable” amount for the colleges. As of 2012/13, Manitoba’s university students pay the third lowest tuition fees in Canada, and its community college students pay the second lowest tuition fees.\textsuperscript{151} Manitoba’s government increased non-repayable funds while also ensuring that repayable funds were available to help supplement a financial investment from students and families.

However, there is a great deal of pressure coming from post-secondary institutions, particularly universities, to allow the institutions to increase tuition fees at a more substantial pace. They point to the minimized cost of tuition as a limiting factor which restricts their ability to provide a quality educational environment. Government seems minimally sympathetic to this argument, but all of Manitoba’s publicly funded universities have had to revaluate staffing, program/course offerings, and/or student supports in their 2013-2014 budgets.

The University Education Review Commission of 1993 noted that the province’s universities were going to have to do something different in order to deliver on their promises to the students and communities of the province while government resources were restricted. The Roblin Report concluded that

While it is right that we should look forward to better times, we have no means of knowing when public finances will ease. It is wise, therefore, to accept the evident probability that public financial constraints will continue for the medium term planning horizon. Universities must therefore so order their affairs as to make the best use of present resources in discharging their responsibilities to the Manitoba community.\textsuperscript{152}

One wonders if Manitoba, and its universities, are not in a similar situation in 2013. Pressures from students, governments, faculty

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.

associations, other unionized groups, and increasing funds needed to ensure pension plans remain solvent will mean that universities, along with other post-secondary institutions, are going to need to be particularly careful about their spending and prioritizing going forward.

Post-secondary education is viewed as a means to an end for governments: research, service, and teaching is seen as a way to revitalize urban communities,\(^\text{153}\) strengthen links to the labour market, and attract and retain immigrants. As Finance Minister Stan Struthers noted in his 2011 Budget Speech,

> university or college education can open the door to a successful career. We are working with universities and colleges to improve completion times and graduation rates, strengthen the quality of programs, make it easier for students to transfer credits between institutions and programs and make postsecondary education more accessible.\(^\text{154}\)

Another key priority for the Province of Manitoba is addressing the fact that Aboriginal people remain underrepresented in Manitoba’s post-secondary institutions, as well as in the labour market. Given that Manitoba has the largest proportion of Aboriginal people in the country, and that this population is growing rapidly, it will be key for any government going forward to work with Aboriginal peoples themselves, their governments, the federal government, and post-secondary education institutions in the province to support participation and completion of post-secondary credentials.

Manitoba remains committed to increasing immigration and internationalization, as demonstrated through the introduction of Bill 44 in spring 2013. Interest in the Bill has remained strong, and it seems likely that the legislation will be amended and passed – reinforcing the province’s commitment to its reputation internationally as well as ensuring that connections between the province’s post-secondary institutions and international students grow stronger.

Ensuring that Manitobans have access to post-secondary education that will help to connect them to the labour market is a key priority for both the provincial and the federal governments. What

\(^{153}\) Manitoba, 22 April 2003 supra note 149

\(^{154}\) Manitoba, 12 April 2011 supra note 101 at 3.
this looks like — and what programming is available to Manitoban students and employers — is still to be confirmed, after further negotiations between the provincial and federal governments. It is clear, however, that there are important groups of people who do not have the ability to participate in the workforce to the same degree as others, and linking education to employment is an important priority for government.

As noted previously, Manitoba is an unusual province in the Canadian context due to its on-going approach to system coordination. The existence of a governmental body, COPSE, has a long tradition, and though other provinces tried out this approach and abandoned it, Manitoba's intermediary between post-secondary institutions and government remains a powerful figure in the post-secondary sector with control over elements of post-secondary policy. COPSE provides the government with an important policy lever, the ability to persuade post-secondary institutions to address provincial policy objectives through its control of budget approval. Providing funds in support of governmental priorities, whatever they may be, is a key way to have autonomous and relatively autonomous institutions move toward those priorities.

Coordination within the system seems to have worked for Manitoba. Despite a focus on coordination, Manitoba's government has emphasized differentiation within the system. Institutions within the system are still competitors for resources and for students. They all have varied mandates, although there is often overlap between some of them.

Manitoba will be going in to an election in Fall 2015 or Winter/Spring 2016. Governance of the post-secondary system under an NDP government, traditionally supportive of social spending and investment, may be approached differently under a government with a different set of priorities. Post-secondary education is traditionally not a hot button election issue for all potential voters, but it does resonate with current post-secondary students and their families — many of whom have completed post-secondary education and are likely to vote. The combination of declining funds for post-secondary institutions and the cost of education for students and their families — as well as

---

155 Shanahan & Jones, supra note 20 at 39; Saunders, supra note 43.
the important connection between education and the labour market — may in fact lay the groundwork for an increased role for education in the next provincial election.