

# Funding cuts plague college system

About half a million students were impacted by the longest community college strike in Ontario's history. No doubt many are wondering exactly what was accomplished by the faculty walkout that shuttered programs for more than a month.

In legislating teachers back to work, a process delayed by the NDP in a transparent bid to score political points with labour unions, the government determined that binding mediation/arbitration will settle the dispute.

What that means for the contentious issues, such as precarious work and the loss of full-time positions, no one knows.

Typically in this province, a labour dispute involving teachers revolves around wages, no matter how dire the 'it's about quality education' messaging.

But this one is different.

Different, because if things don't change, the ability of our community college system to continue to deliver skilled workers into Ontario's economy could be significantly compromised.

In recent years, funding has been cut for post-secondary education at both the federal and provincial levels.

Ontario has the dubious honour of ranking last in public per-student post-secondary funding in Canada, even as enrolment declines.

College administrators, who must balance their budgets, have responded to this reality by acting as many corporate leaders might - replacing outgoing full-time staff with cheaper part-timers.

The full-time college professor is now an endangered species in Ontario.

The union estimates that 70 per cent of college faculty are part-time workers. It's anyone's guess how high that percentage will eventually rise.

Staffing schools with part-timers who fear for their jobs doesn't sound like a recipe for top-notch education.

Then there's the issue of academic freedom, another sticking point in this dispute.

It stands to reason that students attending a post-secondary institution would expect their professors to guide and assess student achievement.

Yet, OPSEU reportedly has thousands of examples of administrators overturning grades and mandating outdated (cheaper?) resources, said faculty negotiator J.P. Hornick.

Now, a ray of hope did emerge in the form of a promised task force to address these concerns. But is the government prepared to do more than talk?

Early this year, a PricewaterhouseCooper's consultant's report indicated that unless creative solutions are found, our college system is headed for massive debt, program cuts, and a decline in the quality of education.

Sitting back in the hope that an influx of mature students will reverse enrolment trends, as the province has been content to do, is not leadership.

Ontario needs a comprehensive strategy to salvage its community college system.



## • LETTERS & COMMENTARY •

### Ted Arnott misses the mark on climate change

When it comes to fighting climate change, Ontario needs a realistic approach that balances action with affordability.

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott's comments in this paper demonstrate a lopsided view of our approach.

His view illustrates the Conservatives are missing the big picture when it comes to how Ontario is fighting climate change.

Worse, his party's simplistic alternative - a costly and ineffective carbon tax - would actually cost more, not fight climate change, and place a growing financial burden on families and businesses.

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The latest analysis from the prestigious EnviroEconomics organization reveals our plan is almost three times more effective in reducing greenhouse gas - yet costs only half as much as the one MPP Arnott proposes.

It shows that our plan will reduce GHG pollution by 82.2 Metric Tons (MT) by 2022, while the Conservative's scheme will reduce emissions by a measly 28.8 MT. That's not good enough for our children's future.

Our plan guarantees GHG pollution reductions through a constantly reduced cap on the greenhouse gases businesses can belch into the air.

Every year, businesses

must meet the cap.

With a carbon tax, there are no guaranteed pollution reductions - but experts warn life is guaranteed to be more expensive for all of us.

Every dollar collected through the province's climate change program must, by law, be invested in projects that fight climate change in communities across Ontario.

In 2017, Ontario raised \$1.9 billion through our "cap and invest" policy. What does this mean for Ontario families?

It means we are cutting greenhouse gas pollution, and other harmful contaminants, while also investing billions in modernizing our hospitals, improving

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social housing, upgrading our schools, making cycling safer and electric vehicles a more common site, supporting Indigenous communities, and bringing our businesses and industry to the forefront of the new, low-carbon economy.

**Chris Ballard,**  
*Minister of Environment and Climate Change*

### Letters to the Editor



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