

# THE EDUCATOR

**Smell-The-Coffee-Edition** 

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(Chart by Darryl Bedford and Whitney Hoth/Commentary by Whitney Hoth)

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### "I'm OK, So Why Worry?"

For those of us who are full-time faculty, it would be easy to feel we have dodged a bullet.

For those of us with job security, the 10% domestic tuition cut didn't result in layoffs. It feels as though Fanshawe can brush it off feeling confident that international tuition will continue to make up the difference.

Maybe Fanshawe can also "game the system" and survive the shift to 60% of government funding based on yet-to-be-defined metrics.

Some are saying that Doug Ford's Ontario budget was inevitable. That spending would have to be cut to lower the annual deficit, but the budget doesn't do much to dent the deficit despite the cuts. And even before the cuts, Ontario's per capita program spending is about the lowest in Canada. Ontario isn't "spending like drunken sailors" after all. There are analysts who would point out Ontario has a revenue problem, not a spending problem.

What is happening to our elementary and secondary education colleagues is disheartening. Those cuts might easily have happened, and could still happen, to us.

This is a government more interested in distractions such as buck-a-beer, tailgate parties, slogans, licence plates, and logos. Education isn't on the priority list it seems. Our first clue was the cancellation of the College Task Force on the very day the government took office.

The signs are that once they are finished with elementary and secondary, the government will come for us next.

Treasury Board has begun consultations on how to "manage Ontario public sector compensation growth." On Friday, April 26 we had a consultation specifically for OPSEU, which included Executive Board Members and Sector Chairs including our own CAAT Academic Chair RM Kennedy. On May 3 there was another just for the post-secondary sector.

RM Kennedy tells us that the process, run by an external legal firm, is clearly a sham. The first session began with a government lecture about debt and "unsustainable" wage growth. We believe they are engaging in this consultation to try to insulate themselves against future Charter challenges, although any interference with free and collective bargaining will likely result in labour Charter cases. The entire April 26th consultation took only 55 minutes. The consultations should wind up by late May. We do not know what the outcome will be.

Overall, for now, we don't expect the government will try to open up collective agreements and interfere with current wages or defined wage increases because this would be the clearest kind of Charter violation. It is more likely that they will impose restrictions on future collective agreements or other harmful regulations.

This is our wake-up call.

It means that college faculty will need to be visible. It means we wear red on Fridays to support our fellow educators. It means we will need to continue to write letters to MPPs, continue the Charter challenges, continue to counter the College Employer Council, be prepared to defend public colleges, reach out to other unions and to community groups (e.g. parents of children with autism) and be prepared to support them.

It may be easy to say, "Darryl has a lot of experience and he'll do what needs to be done." I'm flattered that some of you have said that to me, but I cannot do this alone. Nor should I do it alone. May I point out that although I plan to stick around for a year or three in this role, I will not be here forever. After all, I'm not the union. You are the union.

The Bat Signal has lit up the sky. We are needed.

We must all answer the call.

Darryl Bedford

## The Provincial Budget and You: Analysis and Warning

For the last 15 years, Liberals have governed Ontario. Now that the Conservatives have the reins again, we should expect to see significant changes, and they are coming thick and fast. Response to these changes is intensely partisan. Out-of-office Liberals and seldom-in-office New Democrats decry the Conservative budget as slash-and-burn vandalism, while incumbent Conservatives accuse the ousted Liberals of criminal negligence, not merely misfeasance but malfeasance. Accusations and rage are standard now in political debate, but let's see if it's possible to look at what's happening more objectively.

The chart below summarizes some of the more important actions and legislative changes of the new government. Some of these, in **bold font**, are of special interest to educators. Marcus Gee of the *Globe & Mail* has correctly pointed out that cuts in the current budget are significantly below those imposed by PC Premier Mike Harris in the 1990s; however, the current cuts do affect important services of government and may forecast transformative changes ahead. Our members, regardless of their political affiliations, should be aware of these changes and what they mean.

Date	Legislative Change/Government Action	What it Means
June 2018	Cancelled the College Task Force on the very first day of office	The College Task Force was a part of the arbitrated settlement ending the strike of 2017. Suspension of the Task Force arguably violates Charter Rights to collective bargaining and signals government opposition to collective bargaining. At minimum, the integrity of binding arbitration as a resolution procedure is compromised.
	Restricted access to free prescription drugs for Ontarians 24 and under, who currently do not have access to such benefits	
July 2018	Legislated members of CUPE 3903 at York university back to work	Government intervened to suspend collective bargaining immediately.
August 2018	Halted opening of new safe injection, overdose prevention sites	
	Introduced a complaint procedure (aka 'snitch line') against secondary-school teachers, targeting those using the updated health curriculum	Could similar procedures be instituted for post- secondary delivery? Further reinforces the need for academic freedom in colleges.
	Ended the practice of releasing Ministers' mandate letters	This was always important for transparency
	Announced the requirement of post- secondary institutions to introduce a free speech policy by 2019	On the face of it, a free speech policy is unobjectionable; however, these policies may be focused on restricting speech more than freeing

		it. A key concern is faculty consultation in developing these policies.
September 2018	Proposed to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause to reduce the number of Toronto City Council seats	The Notwithstanding Clause is understood to be a "nuclear option" in provincial governance, not to be used lightly for minor political advantage. Ford's readiness to invoke the Notwithstanding Clause to force a minor issue of municipal governance appeared reckless and suggested a willingness to use extraordinary powers casually. Widely condemned as disproportionate, the Notwithstanding Clause was not applied, but its invocation alone signals a government potentially prepared to suspend democratic procedures and constitutional guarantees to achieve partisan objectives.  Any governing party resorting to the Notwithstanding Clause for any purpose is a concern. Developed as an expedient to secure and maintain Confederation, the Notwithstanding Clause should be a choice of last resort only. It is a mechanism allowing majoritarian sovereignty to govern outside legal guarantees, a dangerous precedent. Prominent PC commentators, as well as Liberals and New Democrats, denounced Ford's action as irresponsible and destabilizing.
	Declared a \$15 billion deficit, which was disputed, but seen as a prelude to cut and privatize public services	
October 2018	Revoked a regulation that would have standardized training for volunteer firefighters across the province	
	Paused the allocation of "parent reaching out grants," which help fund school councils and student events	
	Disbanded the expert panel to end violence against women	
	Allotted the sale of recreational cannabis to private retailers – in lieu of the LCBO	This was contrary to what OPSEU had negotiated with the LCBO in their Collective Agreement.
	Froze proactive workplace inspections	

	Cut \$307.3 million from post-secondary education, rescinding funding for three university satellite campuses  Scrapped worker protections in Bill 148	A clear message that to proceed with capital projects, colleges and universities will need to transfer operating funds to capital.  The "equal pay" provision was critical for our
	(e.g., minimum wage; equal pay for equal work; access to workplace information)	contract faculty.
November 2018	Required all provincial agencies, as of 2019, to obtain approval of 1) their bargaining mandates and 2) ratification of collective agreements, potentially expanding this oversight to other areas of the broader public sector	
	Passed Bill 57, Restoring Trust, Transparency, and Accountability Act (e.g., delayed the Pay Transparency Act; removed independent officers of the House; cancelled a small increase in taxes for high-income earners; rolled back rent control for existing units)	
December 2018	Legislated OPG workers back-to-work	Again, pre-emptive suspension of collective bargaining process even before a strike begins
	Cut \$25 million from school board funding, which funds tutors in classrooms and extra services for Indigenous and racialized students	
	Revoked current and future funding for the College of Midwives of Ontario	
	Slashed \$5 million in base funding to the Ontario Arts Council and more than \$2 million to the Indigenous Culture Fund	
	Introduced Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act (e.g., loosened home-based child care regulations; reclassified employers to avoid hiring well-trained unionized workers for public infrastructure projects; removed important health & safety regulations to maintain clean drinking water; repealed	Something as simple as requiring employers to post the "Your rights at work" ESA poster was removed.

	Employment Standards Act provisions to protect vulnerable workers)	
January 2019	Announced removing post-secondary grants for low-income students and reversing recent OSAP changes; reduced post-secondary operating funding through unfunded tuition reductions	Under previous OSAP provisions, students with household incomes below \$50,000 received grants sufficient to cover all or most tuition costs (in essence, "free tuition"). New OSAP provisions return low income students to loans, increasing indebtedness for vulnerable student populations.
	Announced the Student Choice Initiative, which will allow post- secondary students to opt out of union fees outside of "essential campus health and safety initiatives"	Puts student unions and their services at risk. Student unions have contributed to the growth and vibrancy of colleges.
	Transitioning health and safety training from in-person to online, affecting 50,000 workplaces	
February 2019	Introduced the People's Health Care Act (Bill 74), which allows for the privatization of health care services	We can expect that privatization will either be encouraged or ignored in the college system.
	Considering slashing the number of regional school boards, particularly in smaller communities	This may signal a willingness to merge colleges.
March 2019	Recommended that Ontario school boards implement a hiring freeze	
	Announced changes to the education system (e.g., increasing class size averages from 22 to 28 in grades 9 to 12)	An increase of more than 25% in secondary enrolments at a time when teachers are facing increasing challenges managing special needs and learning accommodations.
	Appointed Ken Hughes to lead a review of alcohol sales in Ontario to give "consumer more choice and convenience", who will earn \$1000 per day	
	Considering allowing Infrastructure Ontario to further open the door to public-private partnerships with foreign investors	

April 2019	Moved ESA-related inspections online from in-person audits conducted by Employment Standards Officers  Considering merging ambulance services across Ontario, shrinking the	Another sign that colleges could be merged.
	number of regional ambulance providers from 59 to 10	
	Froze Special Services at Home funding for children with disabilities; current waitlist of 5,700 families will not be able to access funds	
	Considering removing seniority-based hiring for teachers (Regulation 274) and violating collective agreements	
	Funding formula changes caused school boards across Ontario to issue more teacher surplus notices	
	Delivered their first budget, cutting costs in nearly every ministry to offset a multi-year \$3.8 billion tax break to corporations and businesses	Contrary to widely-held belief, the budget does not put much of a dent in the annual deficit.  Instead of lowering the corporate tax rate, The Ford government proposes to allow corporations and businesses "faster write-offs on capital investments," estimated to generate a tax savings of \$3.8 billion over six years. "[F]aster write-offs on capital investments" means that money spent in expanding business operations (capital investments) can be deducted from taxable income. Basically, businesses will pay the same corporate tax rates but on a smaller base of taxable capital. It's a less transparent way to reduce corporate taxation than lowering the current corporate tax rate. The Conservative argument is that these incentives (tax breaks) will encourage business expansion and thereby employment. Of course, it also reduces government revenue which has to be offset by cutting costs of services. This is resource reallocation rather than deficit reduction, a form of supply-side economics.
	Considering freezing wages for public sector workers	This resulted in a consultation through the Treasury Board on how to "manage Ontario public sector compensation growth." On Friday, April 26

		lecture about debt and "unsustainable" wage growth. We believe they are engaging in this consultation to try to insulate themselves against future Charter challenges, although any interference with free and collective bargaining will likely result in labour Charter cases. The entire consultation took 55 minutes. The consultations
		should wind up by late May. We do not know what the outcome will be. Overall, for now, we don't expect that they will try to open up collective agreements and interfere with current wages or defined wage increases because this would be the clearest kind of Charter violation. It is more likely that they will impose restrictions on future collective agreements or other noxious regulations. We'll let you know as soon as we hear anything further.
		This is certainly a wake-up call that we need to focus on building strong and engaged locals so we can fight back against further cutbacks that are undoubtedly coming our way.
May 2019	Cuts regional library service budgets by 50%.	Northern and Southern regional libraries discontinue inter-library loan programs limiting access to information for rural and indigenous populations.

The current budget and new legislation are not friendly to education. Fundamentals of education – (class size, curriculum, access) – are negatively impacted. Let's consider the implications of these changes in more detail.

#### **Class Size**

Conservative critics of education in Ontario have frequently suggested the system is in crisis. We agree, but increasing class sizes will only compound problems of teacher effectiveness. Teachers in the public system are already overburdened dealing with special needs and learning accommodations. Our drive toward inclusivity in public education has outpaced resources and teachers are overwhelmed by complex new demands for tailored instruction and support. We see this in the post-secondary environment as well, right here at Fanshawe College, but it is even more pressing in the secondary system. Class size is an important variable in effective learning under the best of circumstances. In the current situation, it is crucial. Private schools sell class size as a principal benefit of private education, and they charge top dollar for it. If market forces are reliable

determiners of value, as conservative economists routinely maintain, then class size is a valuable commodity. People are ready to pay for it if they have the means. Public education, through taxation, attempts to make favorable teacher/student ratios and quality education available to all citizens not just the wealthy. That's why we have a public system. John Ralston Saul has told us very clearly what is at stake:

It is harder and harder to raise money for public education, because more and more of those who would pay the necessary taxes educate their children elsewhere. And the more expensive private education becomes, the more the middle class resent being taxed for public education. They, after all, cannot really afford the private system. But they sense that education is becoming increasingly elitist. And to deprive their children of that kind of training is to deprive them of future opportunities as adults. To pay for schools and universities they must make enormous financial sacrifices. Thus the middle class, who were the heart and soul of the democratic, broadly-based nation-state, are being converted into enemies (*Voltaire's Bastards*, 1992, p. 137)

Increasing class size is a regressive move designed to reduce education costs at the expense of education quality. The Conservative government claims the increase will not lead to teacher layoffs. This appears improbable, but regardless of the impact on employment, any student in a class of 28 will be relatively worse off (all else being equal) than he or she would be in a class of 22. Individual time and attention available during a classroom hour will be reduced below what is already inadequate at 22. Premier Ford has recommended all secondary and primary teachers be tested for math competence. To confirm our own math competence, we observe that 22 students could receive approximately 2.3 minutes of individual attention each in a 50-minute class hour, and 28 only 1.7. In private secondary classrooms, commonly capped at 15, students can receive 3.3 minutes, a difference which starts to add up significantly over 15 weeks of instruction. So much for math. Education Minister Lisa Thompson may want to be tested.

#### No Free Tuition

Under the Liberals, OSAP was modified to provide enough grant money to students with household incomes below \$50,000 to cover most or all of their tuition costs, essentially "free tuition." Tuitionless education is a norm of European post-secondary education and a principal promise of several 2020 American presidential aspirants. The rationale for free tuition is that higher levels of general education is an economic benefit for all. Mandatory free secondary education is provided for this reason, and the argument goes that higher levels of education are now required to function effectively in more competitive information economies. Just as high-school dropouts are generally not a source of significant economic development, so large numbers of citizens without post-secondary education may limit economic and social progress. We want people to go to school and get as much education as they can manage to sustain economies requiring advanced skills and training. By lowering tuition costs, we may increase the number of students in post-secondary education.

Those of us who teach vulnerable students in basic courses (like WRIT) know that many students who come to college do not stay long enough to receive a certificate or a diploma. Their time at the college is experimental. They are coming to see if higher education is for them, if it is something they can manage. We want them to come. We want them to try. Those who do manage to survive and complete their education are thereby often recovered for economic productivity; they will benefit personally, and we will all benefit from employable future taxpayers. Those who do not make the grade, and there are many, will have to take their chances in the general employment market. Some will do well in various ventures not requiring higher education (such as Ontario Premier), but many, especially those who do not have family wealth or connections, may struggle.

Facing limited opportunities in the increasingly demanding employment market is disadvantage enough; facing them with education debt is an unnecessary hardship. Let students from low-income families attempt higher education without incurring burdensome debt on which many will be tempted to default. It is a benefit to all for more students to receive higher education; we encourage them to try for very sound, hard-headed economic reasons. If they are unable to manage the rigors of higher education, no need to further disadvantage them with debt. We can afford this. What we cannot afford are large numbers of citizens with nothing more than a secondary education, and college dropouts with burdensome life-limiting debt. An enlightened society, looking out for its long-range economic interests, can find ways to encourage large numbers of its citizens to pursue higher education. Low cost, or no cost, tuition for the poor is a reasonable option; low cost or no cost higher education for all is also possible and may be achieved in the United States as it already is in several European countries.

#### Who's Conservative?

Conservatism is (or was) a coherent political outlook. It was characterized by an emphasis on individual initiative and responsibility, a preference for small government, moderate taxation, authority and social tradition. None of this is ridiculous or absurd or unreasonable. John Robarts was a Conservative Premier of Ontario for 10 years followed by his education minister and political ally Bill Davis for another 14 years. During that time, between the two of them, they built three new universities, established the community college system, created OHIP, extended the Spadina Expressway and the Ontario Human Rights Code, and promoted French language instruction in schools. Robarts and Davis were both committed to the traditional conservative value of fiscal equilibrium (balanced budgets), but they were both builders who used the government purse to expand government services and benefits. What has changed since then? Government costs have gone up considerably. This is true. But government revenues were also once much higher relative to costs than they are today. Taxation back then was still robust, still carrying forward from the record highs of WWII. The economy was booming. That was then, this is now. What are the challenges facing government now? Service costs are rising and must be contained. That's a PC nostrum. Hard to dismiss if one is fair-minded. However, if costs must be contained, revenue must remain adequate to maintain indispensable services, and revenue means taxation. Deficits grow by increases in cost and by decreases in revenue, both are problems needing solution. The Liberal solution was to borrow big and run a growing deficit in the hopes that a growing economy, fueled by government largesse, would generate increased revenue. It's been tried before, sometimes successfully. It's a gamble. When people say governments should live within their means like private households, they are mistaking scale and running into a false analogy. The government/household comparison introduces a moralism that has nothing to do with how economies work. Governments can run beyond their means and do quite well, but not always. Deficits are not the only measure of economic stability as some folks claim, that's a fetishism, but they do matter, and sometimes they matter a lot. If economic growth does not remain robust, a deficit can sink the ship. However, if shrinking a deficit becomes single focus, and a government pulls back sharply from social investment, that can precipitate recession and also sink the ship. Our current PC government is simultaneously cutting its costs and reducing its revenues. It is cutting service costs principally so it can increase tax breaks for businesses and corporations without growing the deficit. It's a gamble.

The current budget is a wash; the deficit is not appreciably reduced, but services are cut to enable tax reductions. The purpose is to provide incentives and stimulus to businesses and corporations to increase production by making capital investments in production more affordable and more profitable. This, in turn, so goes the thinking, will increase employment, and eventually, revenue. It might work. Something like it is working in the United States. However, although employment is rising in the United States, and even wages,

social services in health and education, infrastructure, and administration of regulatory agencies, are all degrading. People are seeing modest income gains, but the cost of many valued goods and services are rising, out-of-reach, or simply unavailable. Increased wages may allow me to meet a car payment, for instance, but I can't build a high-speed rail system on my own, not unless I am taxed, and my neighbor is taxed, and the richest citizens are taxed; but the richest citizens don't need the train, they fly, so the government must compel them to pay, but the IRS would have to be staffed for that, and they aren't, so they don't. In short, I may be able to afford a better television set in Trump's America, but my children's school seems unable to teach basic literacy. I would send them to a private school, but I can't afford it. Ditto quality health care. Ditto parks and recreation. Ditto environmental protections. Is this what we want for Ontario?

We will see what the Conservatives accomplish. The Harris legacy was sufficiently bleak to put the party out of power for 15 years. You may remember that people were poisoned by their municipal water supply. That made news worldwide. OECD nations don't normally kill citizens with drinking water. One thing is certain: there's nothing conservative about invoking the Notwithstanding Clause to change the number of Toronto city councillors! Old man Bill Davis said as much when asked, and Davis is a conservative's conservative.

Conservatism may or may not be your cup of tea, but it has its merits, and some of its representatives accomplished great things for Ontario. With Ford, conservatism in Ontario has fallen on hard times.

Whitney Hoth

# How (Not) to Irritate a Professor: The Politics of Words about Our Work

Many readers of *The Educator*—especially those Monty Python fans amongst them—will know and love John Cleese's 1968 film *How to Irritate People*. Therein the inimitable Mr. Cleese presents a parody of instructional videos, his goal being to frustrate, upset, bother, and, in a word, *irritate* by means of subtle behaviors, verbal manoeuvres, and other tactics that, ideally, "seem unintentional." What follows does not of course rise to Mr. Cleese's comic standards. Moreover, it does not assume that the verbal manoeuvres that I describe below are *necessarily* intentional. Here we go.

Please don't call us "instructors." We're professors. Fanshawe does not actually employ instructors, though some colleges do. "Instructor" has a very specific meaning in our collective agreement; this job classification refers, generally, to teachers who resemble teaching assistants in that they (or so our contract says) don't design the content that they teach. Setting aside for a moment the arguably spurious distinction between designing and delivering "content" (more on that down the page), we are *professors*, and we have the explicit

contractual responsibility for designing the material we teach as well as teaching it.

Please don't call us "content experts" or "subjectmatter experts." Although we are, we're also much more. Yes, we are in fact "content/subject-matter experts" in the sense that we have specialized, advanced knowledge of the subject matter that we teach—everything from architectural technology to welding (we don't have a program name starting with "Z"—I checked). What irritates us about being called "content experts," though, is when this label is used in easy opposition to the notion of content delivery. It has for various reasons become common lately to frame us as content experts in need of some sort of coaching or even rescuing by delivery experts, who are in turn often framed as instructional designers with technical expertise in some shimmery new form of edu-tech.

This way of imagining our daily work is irritating because, as professors, we are experts in both our content and in how to teach it. Beyond our always-expanding experience in teaching the "content,"

moreover, increasing numbers of us, in fact, have formal training in education, including degrees in that discipline up to the doctoral level, in addition to our "content" qualifications. Don't assume that we glide in on default, click through stacks of PowerPoint slides, read from pre-selected textbook passages, or generally recite, present, beam out, or otherwise 'deliver' canned content. We think as much about *how* to teach as we do about *what* to teach, and the two sets of questions are integrated, not separable via politically useful semantic minimizations that fragment our work by artificially pulling apart its key elements.

Please don't assume that we're off work when we're not visibly in the workplace. Noneducators—including at various times my own parents—are often amazed at how little (they think) we work. I recall one moment many years ago when my father expressed amazement that I only spent 12 hours a week inside the classroom. What, he wondered, did I do with the rest of my time? This guery occasioned a detailed explanation of how many emails I received (and had to answer) and how many papers I had to grade, not even counting the time spent staying current with the "content" in which we are experts, preparing our outlines and lessons and so on, and engaging in the various forms of administrative ephemera that accumulate around the peripheries of so-called "knowledge work." My dad admitted that he had no idea whatsoever that much of this work occurred and how much.

Fortunately, our contract has language that allows us to do a lot of this non-classroom work away from the workplace, though many of us choose to do it inside the workplace. Thus, please don't assume that we're giving ourselves over to leisure because we're not sitting at our workplace desks.

Please don't assume that we're all on--or in sight of--the Sunshine list. Upwards of 70% of the professors at Fanshawe are precarious contract employees. During the 2006 strike, some news sources, likely repeating information circulated by the employer, aggressively cited our maximum

salary, which at that time was around 96,000/year. As a new hire (August 2005), I was at that time making 51,000/year, and it was especially galling to hear constant references to how much professors all made (with the ready implication that the strike was greed driven) when I didn't make anything remotely close to that number.

I make more now; however, such disparities have grown far worse. In 2006, Fanshawe employed relatively few precariously employed contract professors. Now, a majority of us are precariously employed, either as unionized partial-load professors or as thus-far-non-unionized part-time and sessional professors. These professors prepare the same lessons for the same courses, teach the same students in the same classrooms, and grade the same assignments and exams, but they do not receive anything approaching the same pay or enjoy the same benefits or job security. There is very little sunshine involved.

These various irritating locutions are not necessarily intentional. It is, however, worth reflecting by way of conclusion on their consequences. These consequences are political.

We are proud of our work as professors, even in the face of an increasingly troubling context in which outright cutbacks, cutting-by-stealth policy frameworks, and other mendacities threaten to bend our attention away from the daily work that we all love. Those who respect our work should recognize the power of words to affect how the world views it.

Those who would choose disrespectfully and dangerously narrow interests over the broad benefits of high-quality and publicly accessible education should know that we're wise to how their words serve their ends instead of ours by minimizing, trivializing, and distorting our work and our working conditions. These words, indeed, do more than just irritate us. They hurt us, and they hurt the students and communities we serve. We will remember them.

Mark Feltham