

Understanding the 2023-2024 Anglophone University Tuition Crisis

Comprehensive Context for the Tuition Hikes for Out-of-Province
Students and the Return to Ministry Collection of International Student
Fees

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Land Acknowledgement

As a student at Concordia University and a researcher for the Concordia Student Union, I conducted this research and wrote this report on unceded Indigenous land. Concordia University's territorial acknowledgement, authored by Wahéhson Shiann Whitebean, Dr. Karl S. Here, and Dr. Louellyn White, reads

The Kanien'kehà:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtà:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.¹

I was born and grew up on thousands of kilometres away from Tiohtà:ke, on the territories of the Lekwungen (lək'wəŋən) and Wsanec (W̱SÁNEĆ) nations. Both the lands where I grew up and the lands where I currently live are connected by the now more than 500 year histories of extractive imperialism and settler colonialism of European people and states.

This report focuses on some more specific history: that of the system of public university tuition pricing based on national status. While the scope of this work is narrow and geared towards providing strategic information for a specific set of institutional battles for better, more accessible, and less exploitative public education, the topics touched on clearly implicate the ongoing settler colonial violence of both Canada and Québec and the histories that have produced states that allocate rights and privileges based on legal belonging to the now 'independent' states formed from the British and French colonial empires.

As we work individually and in collective solidarity for better conditions, affordable tuition, livable wages, reliable housing in our day to day lives we must remember that the goals directly in front of us are part of a larger context. For all people to learn and labour together in justice will mean to struggle to overcome the systems of domination and oppression that acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty in name, but deny it in practice, material reality, and the exercise of power.

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Preface: If You Don't Read Anything Else Just Read This! How the CAQ Made Us Blame Each Other and Ensured They Win

This report hopes to demonstrate the economic motives for the changes to tuition policy and prices at Anglophone universities announced by the Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieure du Québec, Pascale Déry, in October 2023. Since the late 1970s university funding policies across Canada have increasingly cut public funding and forced universities to rely on alternative revenue streams: usually international student tuition fees. In Québec, since 1997, the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure (MES) or Ministry of Higher Education has collected extra fees for students without Québec resident status (international AND out of province students). These extra fees from “foreign” students have been used as a private revenue stream that allows the state to cut public spending on universities AND to control exactly how student fee money is used and distributed. The Québec Liberal Party deregulated international student tuition partially in 2008 and more fully in 2018 allowing individual universities to control international student tuition prices and keep 100% of generated revenue.² The state collected no revenue and provided no funding in a classic economically liberal policy that minimized state regulation and maximized ‘free market’ mechanisms. The Liberal Party of Québec has traditionally been a federalist party, while the Coalition Avenir Québec party is a party that is a Québécois nationalist party, but not separatist, seeking to maximize Québécois autonomy AND the economic benefits of federalism. As a justification for the new tuition policies she announced in October 2023, Pascale Déry claimed to be fixing an imbalance in Québécois universities that had allowed Anglophone institutions to benefit more from the deregulation of international student tuition than francophone institutions. As the data explored in section 3.8 shows, Anglophone universities have had an overall higher percentage of international students from countries that are not exempt from deregulated tuition (France and Belgium). Anglophone students have therefore had more students paying deregulated international student tuition and have therefore collected more revenue from deregulation. As the data in section 3.8 also shows, despite having many deregulated students that did not pay any fees to the Québécois state since 2019, anglophone universities have been generating a disproportionately larger amount of revenue for the Québec MES. McGill and Concordia are both smaller schools than the biggest francophone institutions but generate a lot of revenue through state collected student fees. The tuition policy changes explained in this report not only increase the revenue collected from out of province students at anglophone universities - they also ditch deregulation at anglo institutions and return to the 1997 model of international student tuition where the state collects and controls revenue. The state can therefore take revenue from fees at anglophone universities and give that revenue to francophone universities, saving money overall while continuing to

² The 2019 deregulation policies came into effect in autumn 2019 after the Liberal Party had already lost provincial power to the CAQ, but they were Liberal Party Policies. Philip Authier, “Quebec Boosts Funding to Universities, Deregulates Foreign Tuition,” *The Montreal Gazette*, May 17, 2018.

deliver funding to francophone institutions that are important to the CAQ's francophone nationalist voter base. This policy change generates two scenarios that are both a victory for the CAQ in terms of francophone voter support and public spending cuts. **Scenario One:** Concordia and McGill are able to weather the financial difficulty of losing student numbers and losing international student revenue to the state and the CAQ government will have managed to increase the amount of revenue they collect from anglophone universities and redistribute to francophone universities. **Scenario Two:** Concordia and McGill lose significant student numbers, prestige, and possibly even close down (unlikely for McGill but possible for Concordia) and the Québec state can cut funding to anglophone universities and show their francophone nationalist voter base that they can successfully reign in or defeat institutions often portrayed as threatening the integrity of francophone language and culture in Montreal. Whether either of these scenarios will happen or something else unexpected will emerge due to yet unforeseen circumstances, this report aims to show that the primary motivations of these tuition hikes are economic: the CAQ government like many governments before wants to spend less money on higher education but it doesn't want to lose voter support by saying it outright so they market an austerity policy as primarily intended to protect the national integrity of Québec by cutting funding to "freeloading foreigners." This report also ultimately aims to show that a long term trend of massive federal and provincial funding cuts is the root cause of tuition hikes and nationalist tuition policies that target students from abroad with higher prices. Governments that want to cut public spending and encourage more profit in the private sector cut funding for universities and encourage students and institutions to fight with each other for an increasingly tiny public purse so that no one has the time to breathe and remember that the state is ultimately responsible for any of the ideological commitments or economic mismanagement that drive cuts in public spending.

July 2024 Legal Challenge Update:

On the 12th of July 2024, Cour supérieure du Québec judge Éric Dufour rejected Concordia University's request for a stay of the implementation of the policy changes.³ If the stay request had been granted, the September implementation of ministry lump-sum fees for newly re-regulated international students and the rate increase for out-of-province students would have been suspended, stopping the policy changes until the legal challenges posed by McGill and Concordia can be fully evaluated by the court. The Procureur général du Québec (PGQ) expressed in arguments on behalf of the government of Québec that they do not take seriously the legal challenge that Concordia had brought to the courts.⁴ Justice Éric Dufour disagreed with the PGQ and judged the

³ "Quebec Judge Rejects Concordia's Request for Temporary Suspension of Incoming Tuition Hike," *CBC News*, July 17, 2024.

⁴ Éric Dufour J.C.S., Jugement sur demande en sursis d'application de certaines modifications aux règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec - année universitaire 2023-2024, No. 500-17-128942-243 (Cour supérieure du Québec Chambre civile July 12, 2024), 14 § C-3.56-59.

legal challenge brought forward by Concordia to be worthy of serious legal consideration by the courts. Despite this small formal victory in the court for Concordia, Dufour ultimately sided with the PGQ and ruled that granting a stay on the implementation of the new tuition policies would negatively affect the public interest more than the interests of Concordia because the entire provincial higher education budget for 2024-2025 has already been passed and relies on the new tuition policies at anglophone universities to ensure the delivery of funding subsidies to all 19 public universities across Québec. The CAQ have therefore ensured that, regardless of any future decision of the Cour supérieure du Québec, for the 2024-2025 academic year the new tuition policies will be in effect and that the short term funding of francophone institutions now relies on tuition hikes at anglophone universities. The CAQ government has achieved a political victory. They have pushed through the policy changes announced in October 2023. In June of 2024, the MES announced to their constituents across Québec that with the increased rates for non-Québécois students the government has been able to invest in the growth of Francophone universities and the training of much needed skilled workers for the Québécois labour market.⁵ The CAQ timed the implementation of their policies to ensure that the legal challenges brought forward by McGill and Concordia wouldn't be ruled upon by the courts until after the implementation and roll-out of the new budgets for the 2024-2025 academic year. Whether the anglophone universities weather this storm or crumble, the CAQ have delivered a policy that allows them to appear committed to francophone institutions. It doesn't matter to the CAQ that anglophone universities need stable funding and resources to implement robust francization programs that could actually succeed. If McGill and Concordia fail to meet francization targets, the institutions will be individually blamed.

Key Recommendations:

Despite how the CAQ has publicized their victory, students, workers, and unions across Québec need to remember that the key issue affecting universities Québec and Canada-wide is the steady cuts to public funding that have been consistent federally and provincially since the 1980s. Québec is a place that we all must share as we live here together and we cannot allow perceived or real cultural and linguistic divides to undermine the common interests of students and workers. Universities in Québec have only been legally classified as either 'anglophone' or 'francophone' institutions since the implementation of Loi 96, the "Loi sur la langue officielle et commune du Québec, le français" on June 1st 2022.

Together we are stronger and can fight for better conditions for everyone. The Cour supérieur du Québec will eventually rule on the McGill and Concordia tuition hikes lawsuits, but in the meantime students and workers must get organized. Apart from specific institution-specific strikes that have focused on internal governance and policy

⁵ Cabinet de la ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, "Nouvelle politique de financement des universités - La ministre Déry veut plus de diplômés pour répondre aux défis de main-d'œuvre du Québec," *NewsWire*, June 10, 2024.

at a particular university, successful student movements in Québec have been Québec-wide. An overwhelming majority of students and workers at a large majority of universities across Québec must be united in collective action to challenge and redirect the path of the governance and funding of higher education.

The Canada-wide context is more complicated. The federal structure of Canada that gives jurisdiction over education to each individual province and territory makes country-wide solutions to the gutting of higher education difficult. Despite this difficulty, any comprehensive movement to change the course of higher education governance and funding should seek to build strong and collective connections between worker and student unions across provinces. Cuts to funding at Concordia University are not so different to funding cuts at York University or at University of Calgary.

Strategically, students must understand their relationships to the power structures of universities and higher education networks. The Québec model of combative student unionism has its origins in a theory of the student as an intellectual worker who can strike and withhold their labour to force better working conditions. In reality, today, the scale at which students must organize and strike to make a significant economic impact is enormous. Québec-wide policies need Québec-wide strikes.

Students are also not all equal in the amount that they pay to universities and the state or in the amount that their individual educations are subsidized. Student organizations need to understand which sectors of the student body are in a position to make the biggest strategic impact through disruptive action.

Students should also seek to build collaborative power with worker unions on campus. Student and worker interests align on calls for improvements like more funding, lower class sizes, better classroom conditions and supports, and more worker and student governance over universities.

Faculty unions are often, depending on the university, the slowest on campus unions to act, and the least likely to take effective strategic economic action such as striking. The academic field is highly competitive and individual professors are often significantly more economically and socially insulated from the more life-changing effects of funding cuts. A tenured professor's teaching load may get more demanding and more stressful, but they are less likely to end up unable to pay rent or afford groceries than significantly lower paid office staff, technical support workers, teaching assistants, or students accumulating thousands in debt just to attend classes. On the other hand, the salaries and benefits of full-time unionized faculty are a much larger portion of the annual expenses of a university and therefore of public university funding.

Powerful and reliable alliances between student unions and more militant worker unions on campuses should seek to exert pressure on faculty unions to join in the fight against corrupt university governance and continuous public funding cuts.

Lastly, students and worker unions should seek to organize for greater representation and decision making power within university governance. Governing boards made up of university administrators making \$500k a year and corporate CEOs representing private sector business interests will always need to be forced to make

decisions in the interest of students, workers, and economic and political justice. Student and worker unions should fight for enough seats at the table to overpower private interests in higher education.

1. From Cold War Foreign Aid to University Revenue Stream \$\$\$: How Canada Barred International Students from Immigration but Made them Fund Canadian Universities

Long Story Short: In the early post-WWII period, international student tuition prices were the same as for students with Canadian national status. Canadian Cold War diplomatic policy shaped a view of international students from the decolonizing world as important recipients of foreign aid who might otherwise be drawn to study abroad in the Soviet Union. During the 1960s, Canadian immigration laws (that had previously been in essence “white only”) became less racially exclusive in response to declining European immigration and the need for an increased workforce. International students became eligible to apply for immigration to Canada in 1967, but this policy soon sparked backlash and Canada closed immigration to international students in 1976. At the same time as immigration for international students was banned, higher tuition fees for international students began to be introduced across various provinces. Faced with large scale cuts to funding across Canada during this time period, universities that were initially opposed to higher tuition for international students soon became supportive of policies as international student tuition became a needed source of revenue. In 2001 international students became eligible again to immigrate to Canada, but in the decades since 1976 Canadian universities have come to rely even more heavily on exorbitant international student tuition to make up for steadily declining public funding. The Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) an NGO and lobbying group that has been highly influential on international student policy in Canada since the 1960s has helped to popularize an idea of international students as wealthy elites from their respective countries. This image appeals to government regulators that want to spend less money to fund higher education and are happy to marketize international student education at the high expense of students without Canadian citizenship or resident status. The transformation of International student education into a business has led to increasing numbers of international students who end up studying in Canada under precarious conditions, hoping for a permanent residency that they will likely never be granted and blamed for domestic economic problems in housing and labour markets that in reality stem from poor government regulation of Canadian markets and increasing domestic inequality between working poor and wealthy business owning classes.

In a 2021 historical literature review of existing scholarship on international student policy in Canada, scholar Dale M. McCartney summarizes his findings by writing that his review

begins... in an era when international students were seen as targets for charity, grateful sojourners who Canada should fund so that they returned to their country of citizenship as agents for Canadian Cold War foreign policy. It concludes in an era when international students are seen as wealthy cosmopolitans, and most Canadian post-secondary institutions depend on the billions of dollars international students bring to Canada every year.⁶

McCartney doesn't elaborate on his assertion that international students were seen as "agents of Canadian Cold War foreign policy," and that therefore there was a willingness to spend public money their education, but archival records of Concordia University's Board of Governor Meeting Minute attest to the presence of this attitude even in the early 1980s. In the minutes of a meeting of Concordia's Board of Governors in May 1983 a section records board discussions on a "recent increase in foreign student fees." One board member, Dr. Henry Habib, a professor of political science at Concordia "recommended that representations be made to the Government concerning the plight of foreign students." The minutes quote Dr. Habib as having said that "students may go elsewhere (including the U.S.S.R.); this would be a lost opportunity for the West. Support of foreign students should be looked upon by our government as an extension of foreign aid."⁷ Dr. Habib's assertion that increases to international student tuition could mean losing international students to the U.S.S.R. is a reminder that 20th century systems of public higher education in the West developed post russian revolution. The 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union not only codified into law that Citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right to education, but also that higher education would be free of charge and that there would be a "system of state stipends for the overwhelming majority of students in the universities and colleges."⁸ From the beginning of the existence of the Soviet Union, students from abroad had attended soviet institutions of higher education, but this practice expanded after the second world war in the era of global decolonization. A 1968 CIA intelligence memorandum declassified in the late 1990s noted that "the program of Soviet academic training of nationals from less developed countries has grown since its inception in 1956 from a modest effort to train an elite cadre of Communist sympathizers into a sophisticated program for professional training... The Soviet training effort, although modest in comparison with Western programs, is a matter of increasing concern to the Free World as the pool of personnel returning from Soviet training

⁶ Dale McCartney, "A Question of Self-Interest': A Brief History of 50 Years of International Student Policy in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 51, no. 3 (September 13, 2021): 33.

⁷ Board of Governors of Concordia University, "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Governors Held on Thursday, 19th Marc, 1981 at 6:00 P.M. In the Campus Centre, Loyola Campus" (Meeting Minutes, Montreal, QC, March 19, 1981), Concordia University Records Management and Archives, § 6.

⁸ Joseph Stalin, "Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics With Amendments and Additions Adopted by the First, Second, Third, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R." (State Constitution, Kremlin, Moscow, December 5, 1936), Marxists Internet Archive, Article 121.

expands.”⁹ This CIA report shows clearly that providing higher education to students from formerly colonized nations was considered politically important in the Cold War over the political and economic processes of decolonization. McCartney’s historical review, Concordia’s Board of Governor Minutes, the Soviet Constitution, and the CIA report on international students in the USSR all attest to the reality that during the early post WWII Cold War, Western states felt the political need to provide accessible higher education to both their citizens and the citizens of countries in what was known as the “Third World.” As McCartney argues, during this period “Canadian parliamentarians regarded international students as targets not only for the valuable ‘developmental’ content of Canadian pedagogy, but also for the re-socialization that they believed would result from exposure to the perceived superiority of Canadian society.”¹⁰

International student policy in Canada during the early Cold War was also shaped by questions of immigration: whether the Canadian state wished to allow students without Canadian citizenship a path to settle permanently in the country and become a citizen. The board decided that they would give official university support to delegations of students to speak with both the provincial and federal governments to advocate for increased funding of foreign student education. The same Concordia Board meeting minutes that mention the concern of losing international students to the Soviet union also document that “The Rector [Concordia’s Head of Administration] pointed out that in the past the federal government had supported foreign students, but encountered complaints that the students did not return home.”¹¹ In his historical review, McCartney titled his section on “The Emergence of Differential Fee (1970-1985)” “Monetizing Migrants.” McCartney’s title evokes how international students came to be seen as a source of revenue for Canadian systems of higher education. McCartney argues that “three key developments stand out... as the foundation for the internationalization era in Canadian policy regarding international students: the classification of international students as migrants, and therefore undeserving of taxpayer support; the adoption of differential tuition fees; and the standardization of the notion of international students as relatively wealthy foreigners, in contrast to past views of them as targets for foreign aid.”¹²

Canadian immigration policy has its origins in and has been shaped by the settler colonization of Indigenous land and participation in the transatlantic slave trade as part of the British empire. Barrington Walker, a historian of race and immigration in Canada notes that it was “white British loyalists who brought the practice of slavery with them and gave it renewed vigour after the institution had waned in the last days of colonial New France,” and that it was this white British settler population and their traditions that “would emerge as the dominant social and political culture in Canada.”¹³ Immigration in Canada, as in the United States has

⁹ Central Intelligence Agency Directorate of Intelligence, “Assessment of the Soviet Program to Provide Academic Training for Students from the Less Developed Countries” (Intelligence Memorandum, October 1968), Central Intelligence Agency’s Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room, 3.

¹⁰ Dale M. McCartney, “Inventing International Students: Exploring Discourses in International Student Policy Talk, 1945 –75,” *Historical Studies in Education / Revue d’histoire de l’éducation*, October 20, 2016, 5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² McCartney, “A question of self-interest,” 36.

¹³ Barrington Walker, ed., “Introduction,” in *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2008), 12.

historically been influenced by competing desires to keep the country white-dominated and to fill the need for exploitable cheap labour. Prior to the post-WWII period Canada had explicitly white supremacist immigration policies such as the exclusion of Chinese migration.¹⁴ Scholar of Anti-Black Racism in Canada Robyn Maynard recounts that the 1910 Canadian *Immigration Act* had a clause specifically “to prohibit entry of immigrants belonging to ‘any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada.’”¹⁵ This coded racist language allowed the Canadian state to prohibit Black people from immigration to Canada on the basis that they were racially unfit for the northern Weather despite the history of minority Black populations already living in Canada. Maynard notes that these ‘climate’ based policies persisted until the 1960s.

In the 1960s Canadian immigration policy changed for a variety of reasons chief among them being that “there were fewer European immigrants moving to Canada.”¹⁶ McCartney explains that the shift in policies resulted in the “the move of immigration into the ministry responsible for work,” and the creation of a new federal Department of Manpower and Immigration by the then Liberal party government.¹⁷ This change signified the need for Canada to break from past white supremacist policies and to open immigration to people of colour from the newly decolonizing world. During this period of change and liberalization, Canada briefly made it possible for international students at universities and colleges to apply for immigration beginning in 1967.¹⁸ This immigration pathway was quickly closed by the Federal *Immigration Act* of 1976 which “formally designated international students as visitors, meaning they came to Canada ‘for a temporary purpose,’ were barred from working in Canada, could not change institutions or programs of study after arriving and were prohibited from applying to be an immigrant while in Canada.”¹⁹ While emphasizing that attitudes towards government funding for international students in Canada had been turning negative throughout the end of the 1960s, McCartney argues that a turning point in Canadian attitudes towards international students was the 1969 Sir George Williams affair that took place at what would later become the downtown campus of Concordia. While often told as a surface narrative of a protest against anti-black racism on campus, the occupation of the Hall Building computer centre by Afro-Caribbean students and their allies reflected both the ongoing civil rights movements in Canada and the USA and the wider anti-colonial struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. Anne Cools, the first Black senate member in Canada, of Afro-Caribbean origin from Barbados, participated in the computer centre occupation while a student at McGill University. In a 2015 documentary on the occupation, she recalled that “[she] did not view [her]self as an immigrant,” but rather as “moving from one part of the British Empire to the other.”²⁰ In 1969 Cools’ native Barbados had only gained full, official independence from the British Empire three years prior in 1966. Cools’

¹⁴ Harold Troper, Maude-Emmanuelle Lambert, and Clayton Ma, “Immigration to Canada,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, October 26, 2022.

¹⁵ Robyn Maynard, “Devaluing Black Life, Demonizing Black Bodies: Anti-Blackness from Slavery to Segregation,” in *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present* (Halifax Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2017).

¹⁶ McCartney, “Inventing International Students,” 11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁸ McCartney, “A question of self-interest,” 36.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁰ Mina Shum, *Ninth Floor* (National Film Board, 2015).

self perception from this period is a reminder of the place of Canada in the British empire and the lasting effects of British colonialism in modern immigration policy and Canadian society.

After international students were barred from immigration to Canada in 1976, differential (more expensive) tuition fees began being introduced for ‘foreign’ or international students without Canadian citizenship, landed immigrant, or resident status. This period marked the beginning of the use of international students as a source of revenue for Canadian universities. According to McCartney, the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), a non-profit NGO incorporated in 1966 also “helped to shape a shift to viewing international students as primarily affluent... a cosmopolitan economic elite, making rational choices from a host of possible educational options.”²¹ This messaging from the CBIE, along with Canadian anti-immigrant sentiment helped to garner popular and state support for higher tuition fees for international students. International tuition fees were introduced province by province and gained wider support as Canadian provincial governments cut funding for higher education. McCartney notes in particular that universities in BC were initially opposed to international student tuition fees but later supported their adoption after “the Social Credit Government of British Columbia drastically cut post-secondary budgets in 1982.”²² This relationship between state defunding of higher educational institutions and increased international student fees is a key theme that is crucial to understand the Québec model of differential tuition for international students AND out-of-province students that was officially introduced in 1997.

Specific fees for international students first showed up on Concordia University’s annual undergraduate calendar fee chart in the 1979-1980 school year when tuition cost \$15 per course for Canadian students and \$50 per course for “foreign students.”²³ Following this introduction, international student tuition rose steadily and swiftly and by 1985-1986 international student tuition at Concordia university cost \$195 a credit while Canadian citizens and residents continued to pay \$15 per credit.²⁴ In 1984, the Québec government proposed the idea of charging higher ‘foreign’ tuition rates for Canadian citizens and residents coming to study at Québécois universities from outside the province, but this idea was scrapped in early 1985 because of widespread public opposition to the policy.²⁵ Differential tuition for non-Québécois students would not be successfully implemented until after further rounds of public funding cuts and the failed 1995 Quebec independence referendum.

After 1976, immigration to Canada for international students did not become legally possible again until the passage of the 2001 federal *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*.²⁶ A comprehensive study by McCartney of Canadian parliamentary debate on international student policy from 1984 to 2019, found that “parliamentarians saw international students as

²¹ McCartney, “A question of self-interest,” 37.

²² McCartney, *Ibid.*, 37.

²³ Concordia University, “1979-1980 Undergraduate Calendar” (Montreal, QC, 1979), Concordia University Records Management and Archives, 63.

²⁴ Concordia University, “1985-86 Undergraduate Calendar” (Montreal, QC, 1985), Concordia University Records Management and Archives, 42.

²⁵ The Canadian Press, “Quebec ‘foreign’ Student Tuition Plan Postponed,” *The Record*, January 23, 1985, Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec numérique.

²⁶ Dale M. McCartney, “Border Imperialism and Exclusion in Canadian Parliamentary Talk about International Students,” *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 50, no. 4 (December 8, 2020): 45.

outsiders who were only of value to the extent that they could be made to serve Canada's economic or political agenda."²⁷

²⁷ McCartney, "Canadian Parliamentary Talk about International Students," 37.

2. Québec Separatism and Massive Federal Budget Cuts: The Defeated 1995 Sovereignty Referendum and the Resulting Québec-First Tuition Pricing System

Long Story Short: During the mid 1990s the Federal Liberal Government cut billions in funding transfers to Canadian provinces for public higher education forcing tuition prices up across the country. At the same time, Québécois premier Jacques Parizeau was preparing for the 1995 Québec independence referendum and refused to raise tuition fees as a bid to ensure the support of young people for the Parti Québécois' push for independence. When the independence referendum lost by 0.5% of total votes, Parizeau blamed the 'ethnic vote', meaning populations with historically or recently immigrant origins. While there was no evidence that the "ethnic vote" in particular made the difference between a win and a loss for the PQ referendum, Parizeau's comments and large majority "No" votes in specific Montreal districts contributed substantially to anti-immigrant sentiment in Québécois sovereigntist politics. The context of the failed 1995 referendum and the shift it catalyzed towards increasingly prominent nationalist chauvinism in Québécois politics are important factors for understanding the introduction of the 1997 direct-to-government tuition fees for non-Québécois students explained in the upcoming section on the "Nationalist Tuition Split." Québécois nationalists had not succeeded in achieving an independent Québec but they could ensure that 'foreigners' would pay the bill to keep the Québécois university network operational after federal funding cuts.

While the onset of neoliberalism is most associated with the 1980s and Reagan and Thatcher, the 1990s were a key era of neoliberal restructuring in Canada and Quebec. At the federal level, in 1994 massive budget reforms pushed by cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy significantly reduced the yearly funding that the federal government provided to the provinces specifically for higher education. The federal government cut \$2.6 billion dollars in funding for post secondary education for the years 1996-1998 but scholar Arnaud Theurillat-Cloutier estimates that the reform actually translated to an immediate cut of 721 million dollars for the province of Quebec in 1994-1995 alone, and that it resulted in a loss of \$3.64 billion in funding between 1994 and 2001.²⁸

Most provinces significantly raised university tuition fees to compensate for the 1994 lost federal funding, but in Quebec, the 1995 sovereignty referendum was coming up and Prime Minister Parizeau kept Quebec tuition frozen, hoping to ensure the support of the student demographics for an independent Quebec.²⁹

In 1995, the highly contentious and failed Quebec sovereignty referendum took place. After the vote failed by just over half a percent, premier Parizeau pronounced his now infamous

²⁸ Arnaud Theurillat-Cloutier, "L'héritage de Lucien Bouchard: L'obsession du 'déficit zéro,'" in *Printemps de force: une histoire engagée du mouvement étudiant au Québec (1958-2013)* (Montréal, QC: Lux Éditeur, 2017), 196–99.

²⁹ Theurillat-Cloutier, "L'heritage de Lucien Bouchard," *Printemps de force*, 196.

interpretation of the loss declaring that Quebec sovereignty had been defeated “au fond par quoi? Par l’argent et des votes ethniques.”³⁰ A comprehensive review of the results of the 1995 referendum by ethnic background is not easily possible given available data from élections Québec, however this report will attempt to provide some surface-level analysis for context. The independence referendum lost by 0.58% - a figure that for sovereigntist Québécois must have been infuriatingly close to official electoral victory, but that also suggests that there was simply not enough widespread support for sovereignty in Quebec to garner the “Yes” vote of a real majority of the population. The electoral district with the largest majority of “No” votes was D’Arcy McGee, a riding made up of the western Montreal districts of Côte-Saint-Luc, Hampstead, and parts of Côte-des-Neiges–Notre-Dame-de-Grâce. D’Arcy McGee had a voter turnout of 94.5% of registered voters, 96.38% of whom voted “No” to Québec sovereignty.³¹ Historically, D’Arcy McGee voters have voted in candidates from the Parti Libéral du Québec in every election since the riding’s creation except for the provincial election of 1989.³² A 1998 report on the socio-economic demographics of D’Arcy McGee from the Directeur générale des élections de Québec using statistical data from the 1996 Statistics Canada Census shows that the district had an anglophone majority, a small francophone minority, and a large minority of residents with neither English nor French as their first languages.³³ In 1996, just under 50% of D’Arcy McGee residents self-reported as Jewish, and D’Arcy McGee’s population was made up of 17% visible minorities (self-reporting as not White or indigenous).³⁴ D’Arcy McGee’s large Jewish community may have influenced the massive majority vote against Québec sovereignty in the district. While Canada has a country-wide history of anti-semitism across all provinces, by 1995 Canada had federal multiculturalism policies to protect ethnic minorities against discrimination whereas Québec’s history of antisemitism was particularly tied to Francophone Catholic patriotism which still had a large cultural influence on Québécois separatism.³⁵ For example, figures like Lionel Groulx a Catholic priest, historian of Québec who and a Québécois nationalist remains a hero for Québécois nationalists despite the fact that he spent his life publicly spreading antisemitism across Québec through public speaking appearances and

³⁰ Verity Stevenson, “How Quebec’s 1995 Referendum Was a Turning Point for Racist Comments in Political Discourse That’s Still Felt,” *CBC News*, October 1, 2022.

³¹ Élections Québec, “1995 Referendum on Québec’s Accession to Sovereignty” (Electoral Results and Statistics), accessed July 15, 2024.

³² Lili Boisvert, “D’Arcy-McGee: le PLQ tatoué sur le coeur | Élections Québec 2012,” *Radio-Canada*, August 20, 2012.

³³ Directeur général des élections du Québec, “Dossier socio-économique: Circonscription électorale de D’Arcy McGee” (Government Statistical Report, 1998), Bibliothèque et Archives Nationales du Québec numérique, 9.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 15, 20. The 1996 Census noted that “The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as ‘persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour’. The visible minority population includes the following groups: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Arab/West Asian, Filipino, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Japanese, Korean and Pacific Islander.” Statistics Canada, “Montreal, Profile of Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 1996 Census” (Census Report, 1996), Footnote #135.

³⁵ Musée Holocauste Montréal, “Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada” (Reference Guide, Montreal, QC, 2015), 15.

journalistic contributions to nationalist newspapers.³⁶ Recent efforts to change the name of Lionel Groulx metro station in Montreal's Little Burgundy neighbourhood met with both official resistance from the City of Montreal, the STM, and from public opinion across Québec showing that there remains widespread official and public support for Lionel Groulx's legacy.³⁷ Jewish communities in Montreal have also been historically implicated in the language politics of Québécois nationalism. Prior to the construction of the first Jewish community schools in Montreal in the 1910s, official government policies at the beginning of the 20th century forced Jewish children to attend Anglophone protestant schools ensuring a separation of Jewish communities from Francophone Catholics.³⁸ The Holocaust Museum of Montreal cites Québécoise scholar Sabrina Moisan whose research concluded that "as Jews gradually integrated into English-speaking society, they represented – along with Anglophone Protestants – increasing domination of the English language, which was perceived by Quebecers as a 'symbol of misery and submission.'"³⁹ A complex context accompanied Jean Parizeau's derogatory comments on the "ethnic vote." Parizeau's comment in some ways referred to a real phenomenon of certain ethnic minority populations, like the Montreal Jewish communities of the D'Arcy McGee district, voting overwhelmingly against Québécois independence. Despite this reality however, it would be impossible to prove that the Québécois referendum of 1995 was lost *because* of ethnic minority votes and the comment expressed a real and deep-rooted xenophobia in the Québécois separatism of the time.

As the second failed independence vote, the 1995 referendum loss embittered many Québécois sovereigntists. A CBC News report on racism in Québécois politics from the leadup to the 2022 Québec provincial elections described "how Quebec's 1995 referendum was a turning point for racist comments in political discourse that's still felt."⁴⁰ The CBC article compared Parizeau's 1995 comments on the "ethnic vote" being the cause of the referendum loss to 2022 comments by Jean Boulet, Coalition Avenir Québec's minister of immigration and labour who said during a Radio Canada interview that "80 per cent of immigrants go to Montreal, don't work, don't speak French or don't adhere to the values of Quebec society."⁴¹ Québécois scholar Aly Ndiaye stated that "he [saw] the 1995 referendum loss and Parizeau's remark as a turning point for Quebec nationalism that made way for the kind of things Boulet and [premier] Legault have said [in the 2022] election campaign."⁴² Ndiaye explained that Québécois nationalism during the time of the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s had strong factions that took inspiration from movements of decolonization around the world and

³⁶ Ibid., 15.

³⁷ Sidhartha Banerjee, "Montreal Unlikely to Rename Lionel-Groulx Metro Station after Jazz Great Oscar Peterson," *Global News*, June 24, 2020; Jason Magder, "Quebecers Want to Keep Name of Lionel-Groulx Métro Station, Poll Finds," *The Montreal Gazette*, September 10, 2020.

³⁸ "Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada," 16.

³⁹ Sabrina Moisan, "L'Holocauste et l'histoire nationale du Québec et du Canada : Quelles voies emprunter?," in *Judaïsme et éducation: enjeux et défis pédagogiques*, ed. Sivane Hirsch et al., La vie dans la classe (Laval (Québec): PUL, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2016) in "Brief History of Antisemitism in Canada," 14.

⁴⁰ Stevenson, "How Québec's 1995 referendum was a turning point for racist comments."

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

were “intent on being progressive and inclusive,” but after 1995 “Quebec nationalism turned inward” and became more ethnonationalist.⁴³ While ethnonationalism and ethnic separatism have been parts of Québécois nationalism since the 19th century, the period of the Quiet Revolution had significant elements that did view Québécois nationalism as a progressive fight for Québec’s francophone worker and peasant classes who had been historically economically, politically, and culturally disadvantaged since the British conquest of Nouvelle France in 1763. For instance, the Front de libération du Québec, the group famous for bombing the Montreal stock exchange and kidnapping and assassinating the Québécois labour minister during the 1970 October Crisis, were a self-identified socialist group who had cordial relationships with the Black Panther Party. At the end of the 1970s, a national scandal on RCMP corruption led to the revelation that “an elite RCMP squad known only as G-4 burned down a barn in the Eastern Townships during the spring of 1972 to prevent a meeting between the FLQ and the U.S.-based Black Panther organization.”⁴⁴ The barn had been owned by a commune called Le Petit Québec Libre started by a francophone, Québécois separatist, political-jazz organization called Jazz Libre du Québec.⁴⁵ By 1995, Québécois nationalism had achieved many gains including significant economic and political representation and betterment of francophones in Québec, and the establishment of large scale welfare state infrastructure including francophone universities, but Québec was still not independent and the province remained divided enough on sovereignty for the 1995 referendum to fail. Parizeau’s comments on the “ethnic vote” gave many Québécois nationalist express permission to openly express racism and xenophobia towards ethnic minorities and immigrants in Québec and to associate ethnic minorities and immigrants to Québec with the slim margin by which the 1995 referendum lost. This historical event was a catalyst for the increasingly open and rabid racism of Québécois nationalist politics today.

The other factor in collective memory of the 1995 referendum among Québécois nationalists is private sector and government corruption and interference in the political process leading up to the referendum. In particular, the “Unity Day” rally or “Rassemblement de l’unité” that took place in Montreal on October 27th 1995, three days before the voting, is remembered as interfering in the vote. 150,000 people from across Canada gathered in the Place du Canada and the New York Times reported that federalists’ journeys for the rally were made possible by “cut-rate ‘unity fares’ offered by train, bus and airline companies.”⁴⁶ Some of the prices for travel to Montreal had been reduced by “as much as 90 percent below usual.”⁴⁷ The rally had originally been proposed by the Quebec Business Council, and members of the Federal Liberal government Cabinet also encouraged Canadians to attend. Elections Québec officials accused businesses offering reduced travel rates for the rally as interfering in the campaigning process

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lewis Harris, “Barn Fire Kept out Panthers Inquiry Told,” *The Montreal Gazette*, November 2, 1977, Yves Charbonneau Fonds, F033-01-f12, Concordia University Library, Special Collections.

⁴⁵ Steve Kowch, “Barn the Mounties Burned Was Used by Commune,” *The Montreal Gazette*, November 2, 1977, Yves Charbonneau Fonds, F033-01-f12, Concordia University Library, Special Collections.

⁴⁶ Clyde H. Farnsworth, “150,000 Rally to Ask Quebec Not to Secede,” *The New York Times*, October 28, 1995.

⁴⁷ Farnsworth, “150,000 Rally to Ask Quebec Not to Secede.”

and violating laws on campaign spending, but the referendum vote was held and the results were never overturned.

Revelations following the 1995 referendum also revealed Canadian federal government corruption and interference in Québec politics in a scandal called the “Scandale des Commandites,” or the sponsorship scandal in English. News began to circulate on the matter in 1999 and by 2004 a federal public inquiry commission had been set up that revealed the Liberal Party government of Prime Minister Jean Chrétien had broken Canadian laws and spent hundreds of millions to influence public opinion in Québec and promote Canadian federalism in the province.⁴⁸ In 2005 a private forensic accounting firm contracted by the federal commission revealed that over \$300 million in federal funds had been illegally funnelled into sponsorships promoting federalism through cultural, sports and community events in Québec.⁴⁹ While this illegal funding began after the 1995 referendum campaign was already over, the memory of the Unity Day rally discounted travel rates and the subsequent sponsorship scandal have blended together in the collective memory and public facing discourse of Québécois nationalism to create a lasting image of the 1995 referendum as having been lost because of both federalist corruption and ethnic minority community votes. This combination has enabled anti-immigrant rhetoric to rise increasingly to the centre of Québécois nationalist rhetoric and electoral politics in the years since the 1995 referendum.

Historian of the Québécois student movement Theurillat-Cloutier characterizes the 1990s in Quebec as the time period where the state undertook a large-scale structural transformation of post-secondary institutions, especially universities, intending to ensure that universities served market needs and followed market logic.⁵⁰ He also particularly identifies the period after the failure of the 1995 referendum as a key turning point for the Parti Québécois as they took on a neoliberal project of restructuring the state and public finances.⁵¹ This context is key for understanding the kinds of policy changes to funding universities that resulted in the 1997 introduction of lump sum fees for out-of-province and international students and the 2000 shift to an enrolment based funding model for universities discussed in the following section. The 1995 referendum loss provided a perfect justification for the introduction of new tuition policies that subject both international students and Canadian students from outside of Québec to the new system of fees paid directly into the state coffers. Québécois nationalists had not succeeded in achieving an independent Québec but they could ensure that ‘foreigners’ would pay the bill to keep the Québécois university network operational after federal funding cuts.

Overall, many anglophone Canadians have very little knowledge of the complexity of Québécois history and the Québec sovereignty movement because issues of Québec sovereignty are explained very differently in the anglophone press across Canada than they are in the francophone press in Québec. Both federalist Canadian nationalism and separatist

⁴⁸ John Boyko and Andrew McIntosh, “Scandale des programmes de commandites,” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, November 30, 2021.

⁴⁹ Radio-Canada, “Commandites: la facture atteint 332 millions : Le scandale des commandites,” May 24, 2005.

⁵⁰ Theurillat-Cloutier, “Nouvelle gouvernance publique et économie du savoir,” in *Printemps de force*, 190–91.

⁵¹ Theurillat-Cloutier, “L’heritage de Lucien Bouchard,” in *Printemps de force*, 197.

Québécois nationalism have chauvinistic tendencies that each blame the other side or collectively blame immigrants for problems created by local politicians and big business. Just like with the introduction of international student tuition across Canada at the end of the '70s and the introduction of the nationalist lump sum fee model in Québec in 1997 **the root issue was cuts in public funding for higher education. The framing of issues of higher education as Québec vs. Canada, anglophones vs. francophones, or local students vs. 'foreigners' obscures the fact that governments of all factions have been steadily cutting public funding to higher educational institutions in Canada since at least the 1980s and slowly but surely forcing educational institutions to rely on private sources of revenue in the form of student fees divided by national status.**

3. The Current Quebec University Funding Model: 27 years of Cuts, Nationalism, and Tuition Hikes at the Expense of International and Out-of-Province Students

Long Story Short: The strong student movement in Québec has historically been successful in their struggle keeping the price of Québécois student tuition frozen for decades at a time. Thanks to the student movement, tuition prices remained the same between 1975 and 1990 and between 1995 and 2007.⁵² Because of the nationalist popular base of the student movement that has its origins in the Quiet Revolution, these victories have been achieved almost exclusively for Québec resident students. Faced with a strong and primarily francophone student militant base unwilling to give up the gains in affordable public higher education won during the 1960s and 1970s, the Québécois state has had to adapt and find methods that can reduce state spending on higher education without overly angering the enduring student movement. This section outlines major changes to the overall funding model for Quebec Higher Education since 1997. In summary, the major change has been the introduction of lump sum fees paid by out-of-province and international students that go directly to supplement the ministry of higher education's annual budget. Deregulation of international student tuition has also been attempted, allowing universities to operate international student education as a private business without government funding or revenue collection, but this approach has been scrapped for 2024-2025 to give the state more control over university revenue. Tuition for Québec resident students has remained significantly lower than in the rest of Canada, but has been rising annually at a gradual rate since 2007 suggesting that the days of total tuition freezes are long gone.

⁵² Theurillat-Cloutier, "Evolution des droits de scolarité annuels au Québec et au Canada (1975 à 2015)," data chart, *Printemps de force*, 401.

3.1. 1997: A New Funding Source for Québec Universities: Direct-to-Government Lump Sum Fees for Out-of-Province and International Students

Long Story Short: After trying to hike tuition for all Québec students in 1996 and being defeated by a Québec-wide student general strike, the Québécois state decided to cut costs by introducing new fees for out-of-province and international students that essentially bill non-Québec-resident students for the state's costs of maintaining a public higher education system. Québécois voters and students kept the welfare state public education that they were used to but at the cost of 'foreign' students who have been subsidizing the system ever since.

In 1990, after tuition fees had been frozen since 1975, the Québécois government raised tuition fees for students from \$567 to \$1240. A poorly organized student movement struck against the hikes, but the hikes were maintained. Pauline Marois, at the time minister for higher education, proposed across the board tuition hikes in 1996, after the defeat of the Quebec sovereignty referendum, but the student movement responded forcefully with a general strike and managed to win a promise that tuition fees would remain frozen until the year 2007.

Immediately after this major victory, the state turned to other methods, cutting \$700 million from the higher education budget and restricting loans and bursaries.⁵³

In 1997, the Quebec ministry of higher education made a massive change to their budgetary regulations, introducing the split-tuition fee model that we know today with additional fees for out-of-province, and international students.

Following the defeat of the sovereignty referendum, the ministry of higher education shifted to the use of a new nationalist tactic for marketizing and defunding universities. The Québécois state introduced lump-sum fees for out-of-province and international students. Since then, Non-Quebec resident students have been charged an extra fee per credit unit. To this day, each budgetary regulations document that the ministry of higher education produces explains, "Since the autumn 1997 semester, Canadian citizen and permanent resident students who are not residents of Québec have been paying tuition fees broadly comparable to those in effect at other Canadian universities. These students pay the base Québécois tuition fees and a lump sum fee per credit unit."⁵⁴

These fees are collected directly by the ministry of higher education and then are redistributed across the university network as part of the total annual university budget. Over time these fees have been increased at catastrophic rates and have become a major source of state revenue for funding higher education. These fees supplement the public education budget ensuring that the Quebec state can spend less public money funding universities.

⁵³ ASSÉ, "History of Quebec's Student Strikes," *Ultimatum* 11, no. 3 (April 2012): 4.

⁵⁴Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, "Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec, année universitaire 2023-2024, février 2024" (Government Document, Québec, QC, February 2024). 118. (quote translated for this report)

3.2. 2000: Student Enrolment Numbers Decide Annual University Funding and Force Universities to Recruit or Face Cuts

Long Story Short: In a move that was promoted as ensuring full funding for all students in higher education, the Québec state introduced a new funding model in 2000 that ensured university funding relied primarily on student enrolment numbers. This policy has forced universities to compete for students and operate on a growth model trying to recruit more and more students each year or risk funding cuts. It has been widely unpopular with unions and universities since its introduction.

In the year 2000, with Francois Legault serving as minister of education, the Québécois state fundamentally changed the method by which they calculated the amount of funding allocated to each university in the province. Previously, while student enrolment numbers had been a factor taken into account, each annual budget was calculated starting with the amount of funding from the previous budget year and adjusting that number for new costs and needs. Legault's new funding policy made student enrolment numbers the most important factor in the calculation of university funding budgets. The ministry's budgetary regulations explain:

"Between 1971 and 1999 the government allocated universities an operating subsidy calculated based on a so-called "historical" funding model. The base subsidy figures from the previous calendar year were the starting point for determining the subsidy for the financial year in question. In 2000, the government of Québec adopted the Québec policy on universities, stating their expectations and commitments, as well as the Québec policy to fund universities - a policy that aimed to fund 100% of the student body."⁵⁵

Today, 80% of the total state budgetary envelope for university education is based on student enrollment numbers and this means that each university receives funding based on how many students they are able to recruit and enroll.⁵⁶

Universities have had to begin competing for increased student numbers, in order to ensure a growth in funding. In addition, any drop in student numbers due to circumstances like demographic changes, economic crisis, pandemics, or international student visa restrictions means that institutions lose funding. While Legault tried to sell this policy as a way of ensuring that Universities would receive enough funding for all of their students it meant the introduction of neoliberal competition and marketization into Quebec university enrolment. Understandably, these policies have been unpopular with unions in the province, there have been many calls over the years for a new funding model that would not depend on a constant increase in student enrolment. CSN made the call in 2013, the Union étudiante du Québec in 2018, and the Fédération Québécoise des Professeures et Professeurs d'Universités made the call in 2020.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, "Règles budgétaires, février 2024," 31. (quote translated for this report)

⁵⁶ Comité consultatif sur l'accessibilité financière aux études, "Révision de la Politique québécoise de financement des universités" (Government Document, Québec, QC, June 12, 2023), 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 8.

3.3. 2007: Resident Tuition Is Unfrozen and Gradual Annual Hikes Begin

Short and straightforward: After the end of the tuition hike freeze won by students in the 1996 strike, in 2007, the Quebec ministry of education began imposing a 6% annual hike on tuition; this approximate annual rate was implemented for each annual budget from 2007-2008 until 2011-2012 raising tuition from \$55.61 per credit to \$72.26 per credit during that time period.⁵⁸

3.4. 2008: Québec Gives Universities Control Over International Student Tuition in Big Ticket Programs

Short and straightforward: The tuition hike freeze ended in 2007 and tuition fees began being raised gradually each year. In 2008, student tuition was deregulated for international undergraduate students in Engineering, Computer Science, Math, 'Hard' Science, Business, and Law programs. Deregulation, brought in by the Liberal government was gradually introduced over the next six years, and by 2014, the government no longer provided universities any funding for these students. Instead the individual universities could set their own tuition fees and keep 100% of the revenue. This was the first attempt at introducing total marketization of tuition fees into a portion of the Québécois university system.⁵⁹

3.5. 2013: Gradual Tuition Hikes 2.0: The Québec State Fixes Annual Tuition Fee Increases to the Rate of Per Capita Household Income

Short and straightforward: In March 2011 announcement the the liberal government of Quebec would raise tuition \$325 a year for each year between 2012 and 2017. This announcement sparked the massive 2012 student strikes that are remembered as the "Maple Spring."⁶⁰ After the strikes ended, the 2013 budget documents introduced a new approach to indexing annual tuition, tying the rate of annual tuition hikes to data on per-capita household income.

The 2013-2014 budget regulations explains "beginning with the autumn 2013 semester, base tuition fees will be indexed annually according to the latest known annual change in

⁵⁸ Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, "Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec pour l'année universitaire 2007-2008" (Government Document, Québec, QC, November 6, 2007), 23.

⁵⁹ Marc-André Fabien et al., L'institution royale pour l'avancement des sciences (Université McGill) c. Ministre de L'Enseignement supérieur et Procureur général du Québec, Demande de pourvoi en contrôle judiciaire en déclaration d'invalidité et d'inconstitutionnalité, ainsi que demande de sursis à l'encontre des modifications aux règles budgétaires haussant les droits de scolarité minimalement exigibles des étudiants universitaires hors québec non exemptés au 1er cycle ou 2e cycle de type professionnel (Cour supérieure du Québec Chambre civile February 22, 2024) 22 § 148; Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur, "Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec année universitaire 2018-2019, juillet 2018" (Government Document, Québec, QC, July 2018) 53.

⁶⁰ The Canadian Press, "Timeline of Events in Quebec Student Strike," CBC News, May 23, 2012.

household disposable income per capita. For 2013-2014, the rate is 2.6% and tuition fees will be \$74.14 per credit unit.”⁶¹ While the 2012 strikes were victorious in reducing the amount that tuition would rise per year, the resulting continuation of gradual annual tuition increases showed that tuition freezes in Québec had become an antiquated practice. Tuition has continued to rise each year.

3.6. 2019: Mass Deregulation: Universities Gain Control of International Student Tuition Across (Nearly) All Programs

Long story short: International student tuition was deregulated for all undergraduate students and a larger portion of masters students for the 2019-2020 school year. Universities no longer had to share their international student tuition revenue with the state but also received no state funding for their international students. International student tuition became a business run by each individual university where each had to compete for prospective students and offer a market price for their degrees.

In 2019, the government of Québec completely deregulated international student tuition for all undergraduate students and all master’s students not enrolled in research-based (thesis) programs. The 2019-2020 budget regulations explained: “Beginning in Fall 2019, tuition fees will be deregulated for all undergraduate and master’s international students who are not exempt from international lump sums or enrolled in a research-based master’s program.”⁶²

The phrase “not exempt from international lump sums,” refers to Belgian and French students. Bilateral agreements signed between Quebec and France and Belgium in 2015 and 2018 respectively that still today exempt Belgian and French students from paying per credit lump sum fees at an international student rate. Universities continue to receive grant funding for Belgian and French students and these students are charged the same lump sum fees as Canadian out-of-province students.

In Fall 2019, when deregulation was implemented en masse, out-of-province lump sum prices paid by Canadians from outside of Québec and by French and Belgian students were \$179.87 per credit. Directly prior to the implementation of mass deregulation, in Summer 2019, international students not from France or Belgium paid between \$382.97 and \$494.76 per credit depending on their program of study.⁶³

Supplemental funding for universities was provided for a few years in order to ensure a ‘smooth’ transition to total deregulation of international students, but the long-term effect was that all universities stopped receiving any funding for international undergraduate students and many masters students. Universities were allowed to fully marketize their tuition fees for

⁶¹ Ministère de l’Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie, “Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec année universitaire 2013-2014, octobre 2013” (Government Document, Québec, QC, October 2013) 38.

⁶² Ministère de l’Éducation et de l’Enseignement supérieur, “Règles budgétaires et calcul des Subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec année universitaire 2019-2020, juin 2019” (Government Document, Québec, QC, June 2019), 75.

⁶³ Ibid., 70, 72.

international students, charging these out-of-country students as much as they liked in order to make up for lost government funding.

In Fall 2019, International student education in Québec became fully privatized. Universities were allowed to make the education of international students a for-profit business that they could run independently without the regulation of the state or the need to share tuition revenue with the Ministry of Higher Education.

3.7. 2022: Loi I-7.1 Introduced to Temporarily Limit Annual Québec Resident Tuition Hikes to 3% Until the End of 2026

Long story short: In December of 2022, to counter high costs of living, the government of Quebec passed a law to limit the rate of annual increases to some government tariffs including tuition fees for Québec residents (also the base rate that all other students pay before lump sum fees). While the per capita household income-based increase for tuition prices for 2023-2024 would have been 5.3% they were limited by this law to 3%. The law will expire on December 31st 2026 just after the next provincial general election and the annual rate increase should return to the indexation to per capita household income, but with the possibility of a new government the expiration may be an opportunity for changes in the rate formula including bigger than usual tuition hikes.

As the real cost of living began to increase at a high rate with inflation since the Covid-19 pandemic, the government of Québec voted into law Loi I-7.1, the “Act to limit the indexation of several government tariffs,” a temporary limit on the annual increase rate of government collected fees *including tuition fees*.⁶⁴ Eric Girard, Minister of Finance for Québec stated in a press release announcing the law that “in order to help the people of Québec cope with the rising cost of living, the government is amending certain regulations to limit the indexed rate of tariff increases to 3% beginning January 1, 2023. Without these modifications, under the established mechanisms, the indexed rates would have risen over 6%, as forecast in the Ministère des Finances’ 2022 pre-election report.”⁶⁵

The May 2023-2024 budgetary regulations explained that “the annual indexation of base tuition fees is usually calculated based on the latest known per capita household income. For the 2023-2024 year, the rate of increase is 5.3%. Despite this, on December 9th 2022, the ‘Act to limit the indexation of several government tariffs’ (2022, chapter 29)... introduced by the Minister of Finance was passed and has been in force since that date. This law limits to 3% the annual indexation rate of several rates payable for the period from January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026, including university tuition fees.”⁶⁶ It is unknown, at the time of writing this,

⁶⁴ Gouvernement du Québec, “Act to Limit the Indexation of Several Government Tariffs,” CQLR c I-7.1 (2022).

⁶⁵ Cabinet du ministre des Finances, “Le gouvernement limite à 3 % l’indexation de certains tarifs gouvernementaux,” *NewsWire*, November 16, 2022.

⁶⁶ Ministère de l’Enseignement supérieur, “Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec, année universitaire 2023-2024, mai 2023” (Government Document, Québec, QC, May 2024), 112.

what plans the Coalition Avenir Québec government has for tuition fee indexation rates after the temporary restriction law expires at the end of 2026. The next upcoming provincial general election in Québec is set for the 5th of October 2026, therefore there may be a new governing party responsible for tuition fee regulation after the expiration of Loi I-7.1. Officially, the rate of increase should return to the rate of per capita household income increase, but it is unknown whether the government in power will impose larger hikes in 2027 to make up for the rising cost of running universities.

3.8. 2023-2024: The Anglo University Crisis: Making International Students Pay Direct-To-Government Fees Again and Huge Hikes to Lump Sum Fees at Anglophone Universities

Long story short: Since 1997, the Québécois Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure has relied increasingly on student fee revenue to fund the Québec network of universities. Student fee collection by the MES has allowed the MES to spend less and less public money on higher education therefore enabling steady funding cuts. The Parti Libéral du Québec instituted free market privatization policies of deregulation in a limited capacity in 2008 and on a mass scale in 2019. These deregulation policies allowed individual universities to set their own international student tuition fees and keep 100% of the corresponding revenue. Anglophone universities, historically, each have larger numbers of international students than their francophone counterparts and a smaller proportion of international students exempted from deregulation through Québec-France and Québec-Belgium agreements. Anglophone universities have therefore taken in a lot more revenue from deregulation than Francophone universities. Instead of investing new public funding into Francophone universities to help francophone institutions thrive and keep up with increased operating costs, Pascale Déry designed a new tuition framework that will recuperate the revenue that the MES lost to Anglophone universities from deregulation. International students will pay extra fees directly to the MES again and out-of-province fees will increase generating a substantial revenue stream that the MES has redistributed to francophone universities for the 2024-2025 academic year operating budget. International students attending anglophone universities will now be charged extremely high tuition fees but won't benefit from the amount they are paying because their universities will not receive revenue from their fees. Francophone universities will now be forced to rely on an unstable and unsustainable revenue stream coming from international and out-of-province students at anglophone universities. If enrolment numbers of international and out-of-province students at anglophone universities continue to drop in future years, both anglophone and francophone universities will lose funding as a result, hurting the entire Québec university network.

Understanding the new Québec tuition policy changes comes down to understanding the true motives of the Québec Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure. This report aims to argue

that the true motives of the MES are entirely economic and to prove it by comparing the MES' justification for these policy changes with recent representative data on university demographics and revenue generation. Ultimately, anglophone universities have the student demographics to generate more revenue for the MES than francophone universities do. The new policy framework of higher out-of-province fees and the re-regulation of international students at anglophone universities are intended to maximize the revenue that anglophone universities generate and ensure MES control of how that revenue is distributed. With maximum control over the largest sources of student-fee revenue, the MES can strategically reduce overall public spending on higher education without visibly cutting funding for the francophone universities that matter to the francophone voter base of the CAQ.

The core of the new policy for the MES can be boiled down to two principles. The new policies will allow the MES to:

1. Collect and control revenue previously kept by anglophone universities
2. Maximize total revenue collected from anglophone universities

The first principle is achieved by the re-regulation of the majority of international students. International students that had paid deregulated tuition kept by individual universities will instead pay regulated lump sum fees to the MES. The second principle is achieved by a combination of the international student re-regulation and the rate hikes for lump sum fees for all out-of-province and regulated international students at anglophone universities.

When Ministre Pascale Déry made the official announcement of the new policies on October 13, 2023, she announced that the new framework would “correct the financial imbalance between the French and English [university] networks, caused by previous governments.”⁶⁷ She was referring to the fact that Anglophone universities, namely McGill and Concordia had collected significantly larger amounts in international tuition fee revenue since the 2019 implementation of the previous Liberal Government's mass deregulation policies.

The press release presented the following statistics to emphasize the nature of that imbalance:

- “Since the adoption of the deregulation policy by the previous Liberal government, between 2019 and 2022, McGill, Concordia and Bishop's [combined] have collected around \$282 million in additional revenues generated by international student tuition fees, out of a total of \$407 million for all Quebec universities.”⁶⁸
- In comparison [with the total revenue from English language universities], the 10 French-language institutions in the Université du Québec network shared only \$46.9 million of [the \$407 million Québec-wide total revenue] envelope over the same period.

These numbers indicate that McGill, Concordia, and Bishop's did collectively make more money from deregulated international student tuition than all of the francophone institutions

⁶⁷ Cabinet de la ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, “Nouveau modèle de tarification pour les étudiants hors Québec,” *NewsWire*, October 13, 2023. (quote translated for this report)

⁶⁸ Cabinet de la MES, “Nouveau modèle de tarification.” (quote translated for this report)

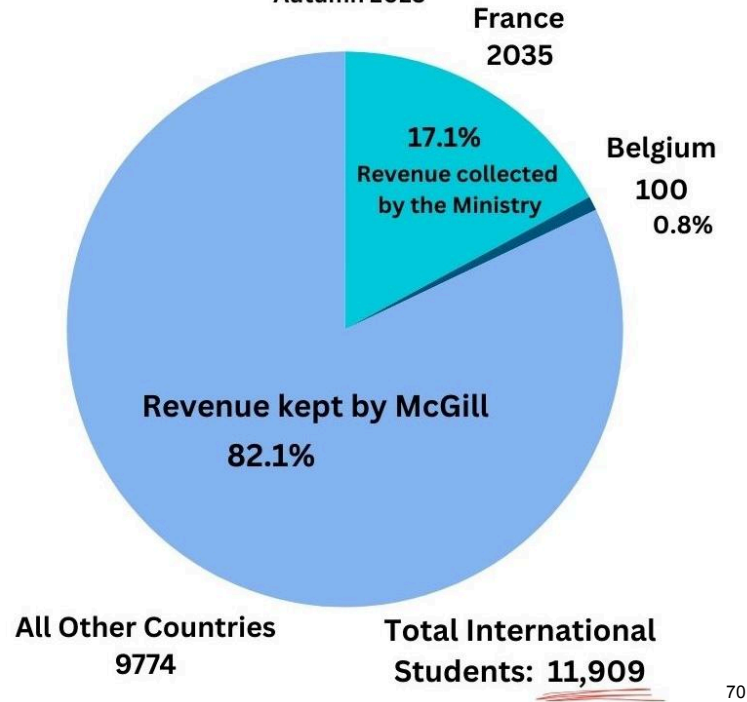
combined, including the 10 Université du Québec institutions. But it is important to remember that these numbers are taken out of context. These numbers do not indicate how many international students attended each institution during this period of time. They also do not indicate what percentage of international students at each institution paid deregulated fees directly to each university and what percentage paid lump sum fees to the MES. These numbers also don't indicate how much money the MES paid to each university during this period to subsidize international student education for students that were exempt from deregulation such as students from Belgium or France.

To understand better the reasons that the Anglophone universities collected so much revenue, it is useful to compare international student numbers and demographics at different institutions in Québec. Data released by the MES in a 2021 statistical report on international students gives a clear picture of the distribution of international students in Québec. The MES data shows that between 2015-2016 and 2018-2019 francophone universities overall had a greater number of international students than anglophone universities but both Concordia and McGill each had more international students than any single francophone institution.⁶⁹ For the Full data see Appendix A.

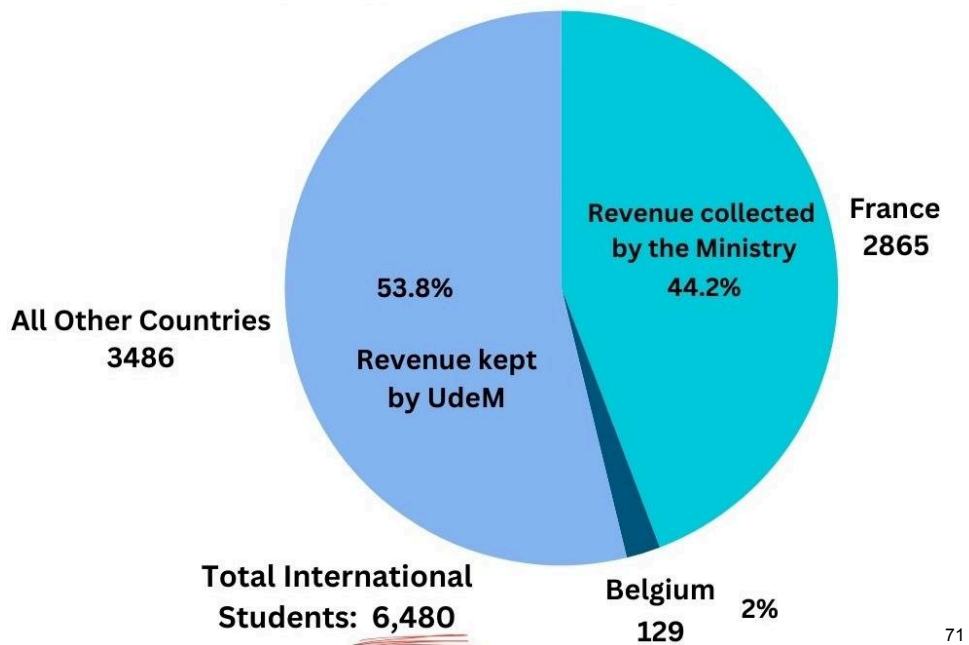
As an example, the pie charts on the next page show international student numbers for Autumn 2023 at the two largest universities in the city of Montreal: McGill and the Université de Montréal (not including HEC and Polytechnique Montréal). At the time, UdeM had 33,999 full time students and McGill had 35,009 full time students - a difference in student population of only 1010 full time students.

⁶⁹ Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur, "Les étudiants internationaux à l'enseignement supérieur - Portrait Statistique" (Government Document, Quebec, QC, 2021), 23.

**McGill University International Students by Country of Origin
Autumn 2023**



**Université de Montréal International Students by Country of Origin
Autumn 2023
(excluding HEC and Polytechnique Mtl)**



⁷⁰ "Enrolment Report Fall 2023," McGill University Enrolment Services, accessed July 30, 2024.

⁷¹ "Statistiques officielles Automne 2023," Université de Montréal Bureau du registraire, accessed July 30, 2024.

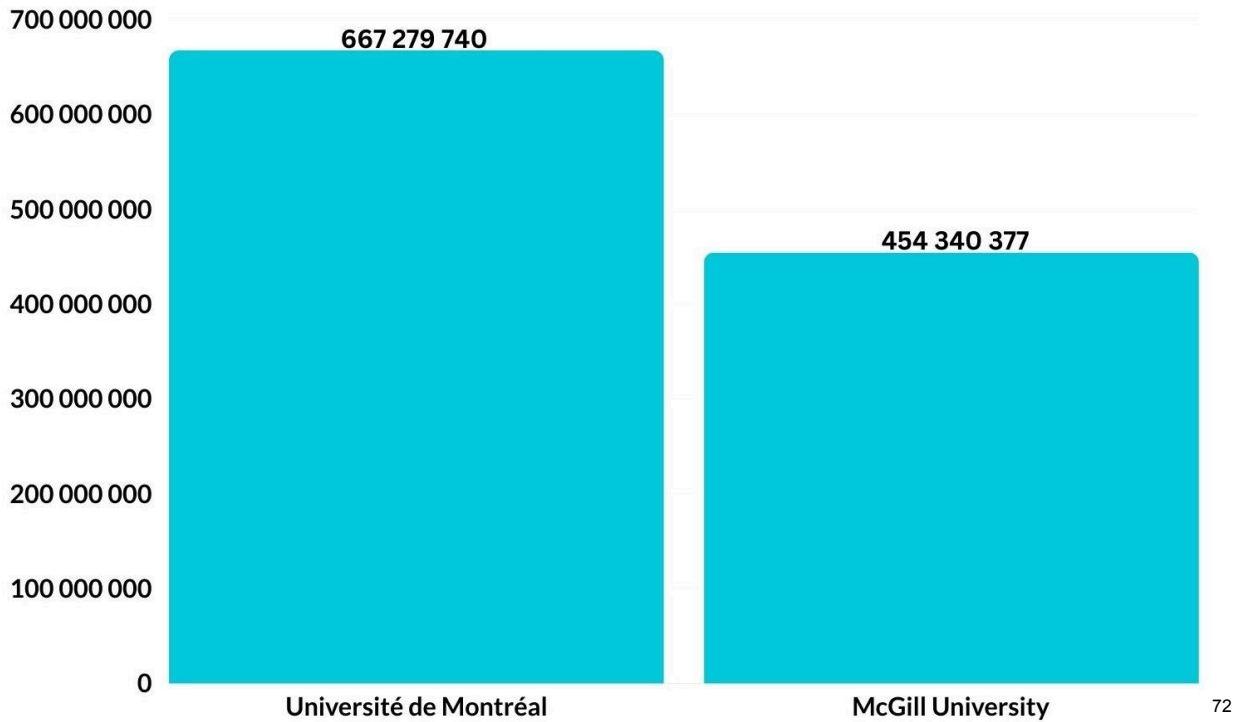
The above statistics from the autumn 2023 semester immediately make it evident first that McGill had nearly twice the total number of international students as UdeM (11,909 vs. 6480). Of the nearly 12k total number at McGill, only 17.1% of those international students were exempt from deregulation by coming from France or Belgium. At UdeM 44.2% of the total 6480 international students were from France or Belgium and were exempt from deregulation. At each university, some of the international students not from France or Belgium would have been studying in research-stream graduate programs and therefore also exempt from deregulation. Despite the data not specifying how many students are exempt from deregulation through graduate studies, it is easy to see that UdeM would have collected significantly less revenue from deregulation due to its much smaller international student population and much higher percentage of international students who are by default exempt from deregulation.

Simply put: McGill has more international students, more of them are deregulated so McGill has collected more deregulated tuition. UdeM has collected less deregulated tuition because UdeM has fewer international students and fewer of them are deregulated. This explains the imbalance in how deregulation has affected anglophone and francophone universities.

Deregulation was a cost cutting policy for the state. The MES does not have to fund deregulated international students. This is crucial to understand because it means that if Anglophone universities made more money from deregulation then the MES was able to cut funding for anglophone universities at a much higher rate than at francophone universities. Simply put then, deregulation forced anglophone universities to be more financially self-sufficient, but Francophone universities stayed more expensive for the state to fund.

The bar graph on the next page, using data published by the MES in March 2024, shows that for the 2023-2024 academic year, McGill university received much less overall funding from the MES than UdeM. For a more comprehensive range of data, see Appendix B.

**Total Funding from Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure 2023-2024
(In Dollars)**

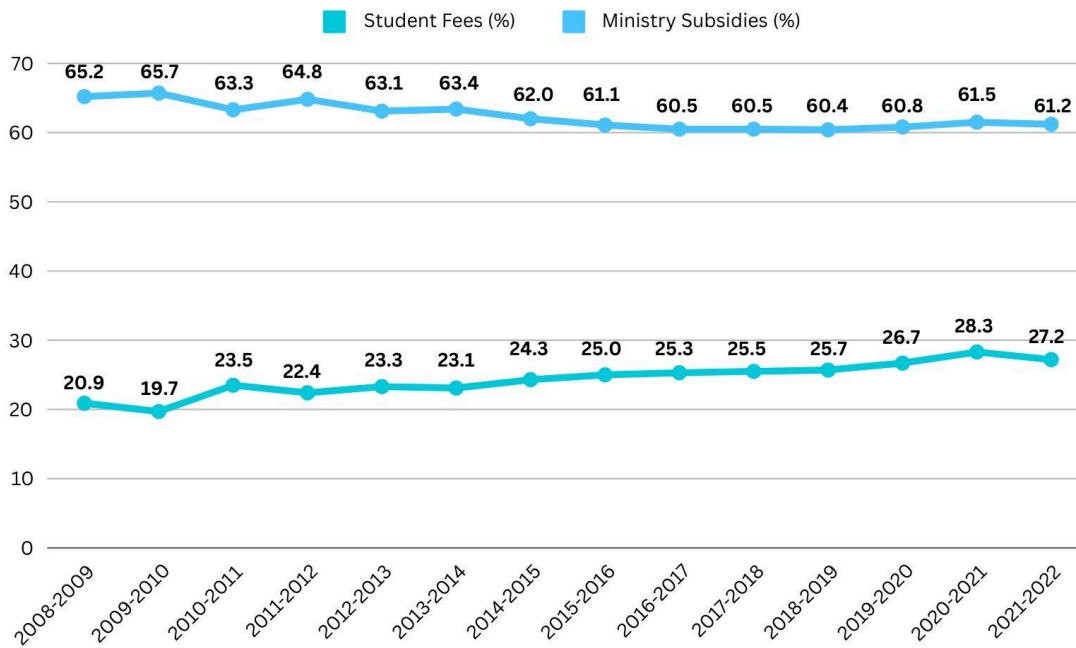


For 2023-2024, McGill university received just over \$454 million in subsidized funding from the MES, whereas UdeM received just over \$667 million.

⁷² Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, Tableau B in "Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec, année universitaire 2023-2024, mars 2024" March 2024.

Since the 1997 implementation of the MES revenue stream of lump sum fees for out-of-province and international students, an increasing portion of the MES' annual university budget has been funded by these student fees. The below line graph shows data published in 2023 by the MES' Comité consultatif sur l'accessibilité financière aux études demonstrating that between 2008-2009 and 2021-2022 the amount of public money spent on universities in Québec steadily declined while the amount of student fee revenue spent on universities in Québec steadily rose.

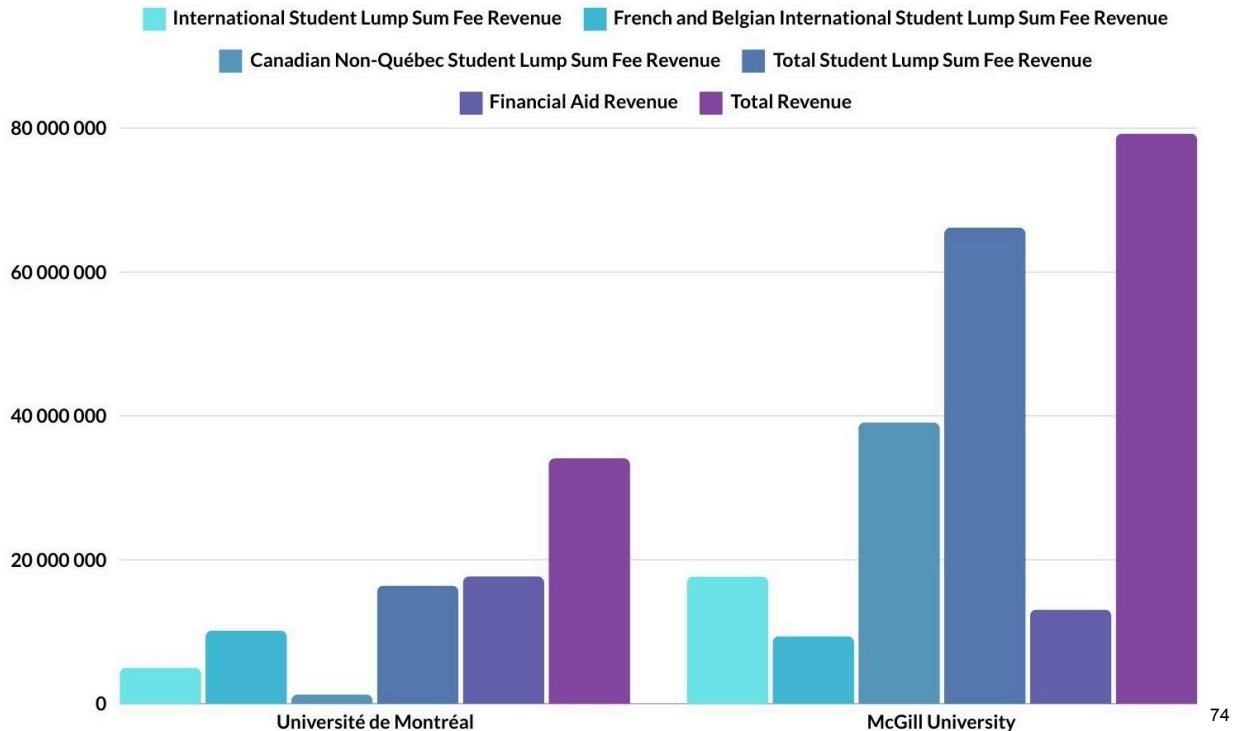
Evolution of the Percentage of University Operating Fund Money Coming From Students vs. Money Coming from Government Subsidies
2008-2009 to 2021-2022



⁷³ Comité consultatif sur l'accessibilité financière aux études, "Révision de la Politique québécoise de financement des universités" (Government Document, Québec, QC, June 12, 2023), 9.

Recent MES data published in March 2024, also shows that in recent years, anglophone universities, particularly McGill, have produced a significantly larger amount of revenue for the MES than similarly sized Francophone universities like UdeM. The below bar charts show how much revenue the MES collected from students at McGill and UdeM in 2023-2024. For a more comprehensive range of data, see Appendix C

**Revenues Collected by the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure 2023-2024
(In Dollars)**



The data graphed above shows that for 2023-2024, UdeM and McGill both produced approximately the same amount of revenue from French and Belgian International Student Lump Sum Fees. McGill brought in just over \$9 million from French and Belgian students, and UdeM brought in just over \$10 million. The similarities end there. McGill brought in way more revenue than UdeM from out-of-province students (just over \$39 million from McGill and just over \$1 million from UdeM). McGill also brought in more revenue from regulated international students not from Belgium and France (just over \$17.5 million from McGill and just under \$5 million from UdeM). This data makes sense with the earlier demographic data that showed that McGill simply had nearly twice the international students as UdeM during this period.

⁷⁴ Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, Tableau E in "Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec, année universitaire 2023-2024, mars 2024" March 2024.

So what can be concluded from the variety of charted data that this report has just presented?

- The MES has been steadily increasing the proportion of its annual budget originating from student fees
- McGill generates significantly more student fee revenue for the MES than UdeM
- UdeM costs significantly more for the MES to fund than McGill
- Since 2019 deregulation, McGill has collected significantly more money from deregulated tuition fees than UdeM

The MES has understood that Anglophone universities generate a lot of revenue from international and out-of-province students. The MES have also understood that deregulation has kept a lot of that revenue at McGill university, preventing that revenue from being used by the MES across their overall budget. The data given by the MES in their original October 2023 press release wasn't a clear representation of the actual financial imbalances between anglophone and francophone universities in Québec. Despite this, the original press release did actually explain exactly what the new policy changes achieve for the MES. Ministre Pascale Déry stated that “thanks to this new pricing model, we [the MES] are giving ourselves the means to put in place strong measures to promote the French language, promote the French-speaking university network and promote the attraction and retention of non-Quebec French-speaking students in our establishments.”⁷⁵ Dery meant that the MES would be collecting a lot more revenue from anglophone universities and using that revenue to fund the more expensive francophone establishments that have had fewer international students and out-of-province students to make them more financially self-sufficient. According to case documents supplied to the Cour supérieure du Québec by the CAQ's prosecutor general, the new tuition policies and pricing model will generate \$160 million a year for the MES.⁷⁶ In summary, the MES has simply found a way to cover the costs of subsidizing the operation of francophone universities in Québec without having to invest larger amounts of public funding. International and out-of-province students at anglophone universities will be paying the bill.

3.8.1. Note on International Student Exploitation:

It is vitally important to emphasize that both before and after these new tuition policies, international students have been responsible for paying extraordinarily high fees to keep universities afloat as governments have spent decades cutting public funding subsidies. With deregulation, international students at anglophone universities paid huge fees to the university that they attended. Those fees allowed the anglophone universities to fund their operating costs despite massive public funding cuts. With the new tuition policies, international students at anglophone universities will be paying extraordinarily high fees but paying them to the MES rather than to their university. The MES will redistribute these fees to subsidize francophone

⁷⁵ Cabinet de la MES, “Nouveau modèle de tarification pour les étudiants hors Québec.” (quote translated for this report)

⁷⁶Éric Dufour J.C.S., Jugement sur demande en sursis d'application de certaines modifications aux règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec - année universitaire 2023-2024, No. 500-17-128942-243 (Cour supérieure du Québec Chambre civile July 12, 2024).

universities meaning that anglophone universities will lose money. Unfortunately for these international students at anglophone universities this means that despite the fact that their tuition has not gone down in price, their universities will have less money available to provide them the education that they are paying for. It is a truly bad deal for both international students at anglophone universities and the anglophone universities they are attending. It might be an okay short term deal for francophone universities that are receiving an increase in funding, but it is likely to be unstable long term. If international student numbers go significantly down at anglophone universities, then the MES will lose the revenue that they are redistributing to francophone universities and will have to rethink their funding model. If the Cour supérieure du Québec were to overturn the new tuition regulations upon fully evaluating the legal challenges brought forward by McGill and Concordia, then out-of-province student tuition at anglophone universities would go back down to a cheaper rate. International students at anglophone universities are in a lose-lose financial situation. They might receive a higher quality education if the tuition policies are reversed, but they will continue paying exorbitant tuition fees.

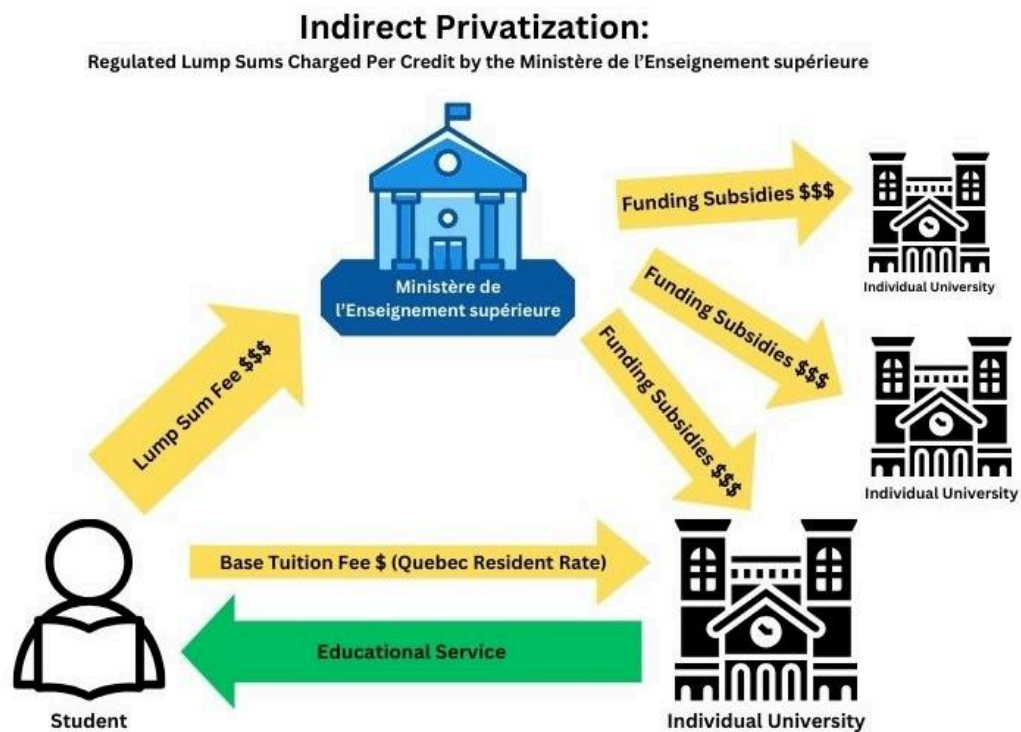
4. Comparing Two Different Methods for Cutting Government Spending: Letting Universities Collect Their Own Revenue OR State Collection and Control of University Tuition Revenues

Long story short: Québec has employed two methods of privatizing international student tuition for cutting costs at universities - direct and indirect or more specifically lump sum fees and deregulated tuition. Deregulation, or direct privatization, gave universities control over international student tuition rates and the ability to keep 100% of collected international student tuition revenue. In return the state stopped funding universities for the international students who were paying the universities directly and therefore the state saved money as a result. Lump sum fees are indirect privatization because the state is still a mediating third party. With lump sum fees, international students pay the base Québec tuition rate to the university they attend and then pay extra fees per credit unit to the state. The state controls the price of the lump sum fees and controls the revenue that they collect from those fees. The state can therefore decide how that revenue will be used and to which universities it will be allocated. Lump sum fees, or indirect privatization is more advantageous for the Québécois state because it allows both the cutting of costs and the ability to direct more revenue towards francophone institutions. The Québécois state can therefore cut overall funding for higher education but keep their francophone voter base happy by using revenue from anglophone universities to subsidize francophone institutions.

For decades, the Québécois state has tried a variety of different neoliberalization strategies to reduce the amount of public funds spent on university education in the province. They have tried both direct privatization and indirect privatization. Direct privatization is the total withdrawal of state involvement in a portion of university budgets. In Québec, indirect privatization of higher education uses private sources of revenue that the Québécois state can collect and redistribute to fund universities instead of using funding from the public treasury.

The difference between the use of private funds and public funds for higher education in Québec is not just the source of revenue but also how it is collected. At the level of a Canadian province such as Québec, public funds come from sources like taxes and federal grants. Individuals pay taxes, but taxes on individuals take into account individually differing factors such as income, property, and whether or not a person supports a family. Private enterprises also pay taxes and therefore contribute portions of the wealth that they generate to the public coffers of the state. Taxes, as they function in Québec, are not imposed as a blanket rate upon each person. Lump sum fees are imposed at a blanket rate, a commodity price for an educational consumer to purchase regardless of their individual financial situation. The increasing number of students living in poverty, juggling employment and their studies, are each required to pay the exorbitant prices set by the Ministry of Higher Education

4.1. Visualizing Indirect Vs. Direct Privatization:



4.2. Deregulation (Direct Privatization) - Universities as Independent Businesses:

Long story short: Deregulation allowed each individual university to choose their own tuition prices (usually setting them at a rate based on market research) and to collect 100% of the revenue from tuition fees. The state is uninvolved, neither providing funding for students nor collecting revenue from tuition fees.

Since 2008, the Québécois state has experimented with the direct privatization of international student education at universities. In 2008 international student education in business, law, medicine, and certain science programs were deregulated and privatized. With deregulation, the state stopped subsidizing international tuition fees and stopped choosing the tuition fee rates that universities charged. The Québécois state gave individual universities the power to operate international student education as a private business by setting their own tuition fees and collecting 100% of tuition revenue. Individual universities were therefore required to compete for international students by setting tuition rates that would meet their budgetary needs without dissuading international students from choosing a more affordable institution.

In 2019, the Québécois state decided to expand its 2008 experiment with direct privatization of international student education. They decided to deregulate all undergraduate international students and all masters students not enrolled in a research-based program. At the time, many international students considering or already attending Concordia were unsure how this would affect the cost of their education. To quell student fears, Concordia published an explainer article on their website that provided a breakdown of how the university calculated and justified their newly chosen price model for international student tuition.⁷⁷ In a section entitled “What is the rationale behind the new fee framework?” the university explained that “[their] framework reflect[ed] and constructively leverage[d] the factors that prospective students consistently identif[ed] as positive attributes for studying at Concordia. These include[d]: the quality and distinctiveness of [their] academic programs; [their] global reputation as the top North American university under 50 years of age.” They also cited “location: [emphasizing that] Montreal [was] consistently ranked among the world’s top 5 cities for students.” Concordia explained that they had marketized their international student tuition writing that “the framework better reflect[ed] the market value of a Concordia education in the Canadian and international context.”⁷⁸ Concordia stated that they “aim[ed] to protect and enhance the global reputational value of a Concordia degree by better aligning [their] tuition with the norms at comparator universities in Canada (i.e., Ryerson, Carleton, York, Simon Fraser, Waterloo), as well as with McGill and, for certain disciplines, other Quebec universities such as HEC and Ecole Polytechnique.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Concordia University, “International Students Tuition Fee Framework - Concordia University,” February 9, 2023, accessed July 20 2024.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Deregulation meant the ultimate commodification of international student education. Deregulated institutions function like private universities, advertising and recruiting international students by selling the education they offer as a market commodity. International students are both market consumers purchasing their education, and a source of commodity capital for universities, providing institutions with revenue through their tuition fees and market clout by choosing their institution and bringing a branded degree onto the job market. With deregulation of international students at Québec universities, institutions in the province have functioned as hybrid public/private universities.

In Québec, like in other parts of North America and the world, the neoliberal state of the 21st century has benefited from deregulation by being able to reduce the cost of subsidizing public higher education. Despite the benefit of cutting public education spending, the Québec state forfeited a source of revenue that it had previously collected AND forfeited the ability to control how and where that money was used.

4.3. Regulation (Indirect Privatization) - Universities as State Revenue Sources:

Long story short: Indirect privatization has been set up in Québec to allow the state to collect tuition revenue to subsidize the public higher education budget by mandating extra fees for students at a lump sum rate per course credit. Since 1997 this has allowed the state to cut public spending on higher education by collecting revenue from a private source: the extra tuition fees from out-of-province and international students. The state then redistributes the revenue that they have collected from the student fees meaning that the state can choose exactly where the money goes and how it is used and can favor or exclude certain institutions during the redistribution of student fee revenues.

Since 1997 the Québec state has also employed policies of indirect privatization of public universities in the province by regulating, collecting, and distributing revenue from student fees. This practice was introduced as a policy of differentiated tuition fees where students who were legally considered Québec residents would pay a base tuition set by the Ministry of Higher Education and collected by universities. All other students, including students with Canadian residency or citizenship but without Québec resident status, and international students without Canadian residency or citizenship would pay additional government mandated fees that universities would be required to collect and transfer to the government of Québec as a source of revenue for the Ministry of Higher Education's annual Québec-wide university budget. Since the late 1970s, international students in various parts of Canada and Québec had been charged different and significantly higher fees than Canadian citizens and residents. A precedent for differentiated tuition regimes based on nationality and immigration status had therefore already been established. Despite this precedent, in 1997, when the Québécois state began to collect revenue from individual students using university tuition, Concordia University took the time to specify to students that the university would not be keeping the funds from the new fees. In their 1997-1998 undergraduate university calendar, Concordia University wrote that non-Québec-resident and international student tuition now "[included] a per credit premium

which must be collected for the government of Québec.” As this specification underlined, the new fees for non-Québec-resident students were a source of private revenue for the state, not for the individual university.

The introduction of per-credit fees collected by universities and passed along to the state was the origin of the current model of indirect privatization of Québécois universities. Individual universities receive funding from the revenue stream created by the per-credit fees or “montants forfaitaires” (lump sums) as they are referred to by the Ministry of Higher Education. The revenue funds the subsidies that the Ministry distributes to institutions.⁸⁰ Regulated lump sum fees allow the Québécois state to directly control the pricing of international student education AND to control how that revenue is used. Lump sum fees privatize education in Québec by ensuring that individual students pay for public education through a consumer price mechanism, but the privatization is indirect because it is implemented through the public infrastructure of the state.

⁸⁰ Perri Ravon and Audrey Mayrand, *Concordia University v. Procureur Général du Québec*, Application for Judicial Review, February 23, 2024 (art. 529 CCP), page 14, § 84.

5. Québec Student Financial Aid is Broken: Students Take On Private Debt and Working Full-Time to Pay for Their Education

Long story short: the government regulated financial aid program for students, Aides financière aux études (AFE) , no longer meets students' basic subsistence needs anymore. More and more students are ineligible for aid because the requirements to qualify are unrealistic and outdated in today's economy. Because of this, money that the state has set aside for student financial aid is going undistributed because few students can meet the qualifications needed to receive it. Today's students must work in addition to full time classes and increasingly take out private loans, accumulating tens of thousands of dollars in debt to private banks to be paid back at interest rates not controlled by the AFE program. Students can barely afford housing and food in addition to tuition and government student loans and bursaries are just no longer sufficient. This debt crisis will continue to bankrupt students and enrich the private finance centre unless something drastic changes.

The AFE (Aides financières aux études or Student Financial Aid) program in Québec, that provides loans and bursaries through the state for university students is failing to meet even the most basic needs of students. In April, 2024 *Le Devoir* broke the news that the CAQ's ministry of higher education admitted in their own annual financial report that approximately 10% of total government funding for student financial aid - nearly half a billion dollars - has gone unused since the 2017-2018 university year.⁸¹ \$483.22 million has been kept out of students pockets because students are increasingly ineligible for the state financial aid and therefore the demand for Québec loans and bursaries has dropped. The criteria that the Québécois state uses to evaluate whether a student is eligible for financial aid are years out of date. For the 2023-2024 school year, the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure estimated that the subsistence cost for a student not living with family was \$1283 a month, a figure that absolutely does not cover the actual price of rent and food especially as rent prices skyrocket in the city of Montreal.⁸²

In autumn 2023, *Le Devoir* journalists Rixane Léouzon and Clémence Pavic recently interviewed students at a weekly food aid market for students at UQAM and noted that many of the students they interviewed who were lined up to benefit from the program worked a job on top of their full-time university studies.⁸³ Léouzon and Pavic also reported that The Université de Sherbrooke had seen a 36% increase in requests for food aid among their student body in the 2022-2023 school year.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Zacharie Goudreault, "Près d'un demi-milliard inutilisé en aide financière aux études en six ans," *Le Devoir*, April 19, 2024.

⁸² Roxane Léouzon, "Les étudiants universitaires s'endettent auprès des banques, selon une enquête," *Le Devoir*, November 13, 2023.

⁸³ Roxane Léouzon and Clémence Pavic, "La précarité étudiante au temps de l'inflation," *Le Devoir*, November 11, 2023.

⁸⁴ Léouzon and Pavic, "La précarité étudiante au temps de l'inflation,"

In the 2021-2022 school year alone, the number of students receiving government financial aid for their studies fell by 9.1% according to the ministry of higher education's internal statistics.⁸⁵ **For several years now, a student working full time at minimum wage is considered to make too much in employment income to qualify for Québec loans and bursaries.**⁸⁶ The ministry of higher education, has continued to use outdated criteria to evaluate loans and bursaries eligibility despite the ministry's own consulting committee on the financial accessibility of higher education recommending for years that the ministry index their eligibility criteria to the growth of the provincial minimum wage.⁸⁷

Ineligible for Québec loans and bursaries or already in debt through AFE but unable to afford the costs of living, many students are borrowing money directly from private banks and racking up tens of thousands in high-interest debt. The Union étudiante du Québec (UEQ) recently published the results of a study on student debt conducted by the UEQ and the Groupe de recherche en économie publique appliquée (GREPA) interviewing over 12,000 students across different demographics at 12 francophone universities between September 2022 and August 2023. Student responses found that 38.8% of all student debt was owed directly to private banks without the oversight of the AFE program.⁸⁸ The study also found that while students had an average of approximately \$5,854 in loans through AFE, the average private bank loan was four times higher at \$22,892.⁸⁹ These figures were generated from a survey of francophone students at francophone universities, students paying Québec resident tuition rates that are notably lower than in the rest of Canada. The fact that even with dramatically lower tuition fees, Québécois students are accumulating so much debt emphasizes how bad the student debt crisis currently is - a student debt crisis that both the state, and increasingly private banks are profiting from by collecting back student debt with accumulating interest. GREPA and the UEQ noted that housing is by far the most backbreaking cost that students face.⁹⁰ The CBC reported in February 2024 that figures from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reported that vacancy rates across Québec have hit a 20 year low and that tenants are facing the largest rent increases in 30 years.⁹¹ Just weeks after the aforementioned CBC report, the Québec state voted through Loi 31, the bill that gives landlords the right to refuse lease transfers - the main mechanism through which tenants across the province had, for decades, found more affordable by preventing landlords from raising rent to market rates for new tenants

⁸⁵ Goudreault, "Près d'un demi-milliard inutilisé en aide financière aux études en six ans."

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Groupe de recherche en économie publique appliquée, "Rapport Sur Le Financement et l'endettement Des Étudiant.e.s. Universitaires Du Québec" (Report, Montreal, QC, 2023), Quoted in Union étudiante du Québec, "Endettement Des Personnes Étudiantes Universitaires Du Québec: Note Explicative Du 'rapport Sur Le Financement et l'endettement Des Étudiants Universitaires Du Québec'" (Report, Montreal, QC, April 14, 2024), 12.

⁸⁹ Groupe de recherche en économie publique appliquée, "Rapport sur le financement et l'endettement des étudiant.e.s. universitaires du Québec" (Report, Montreal, QC, 2023), 14.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 18-19.

⁹¹ Erika Morris, "Quebec's Housing Crisis Is Only Getting Worse: Federal Housing Report," *CBC News*, February 1, 2024,

without a prior lease.⁹² Essentially: students are struggling to keep food on the table and roof over their heads during their studies and they are getting no real help from the state.

⁹² Cabinet de la ministre responsable de l'Habitation, "Adoption du projet de loi 31 - Le gouvernement mettra sur pied d'autres outils afin de contribuer à résorber la crise du logement," *Newswire*, February 21, 2024.

6. Dissolving the Smoke-Screen of Economic Nationalism: Why Pascale Dery's Tuition Policies Make No Sense and Rely on Xenophobic Myths

Long story short: The nationalist rhetoric of Pascale Dery and Francois Legault is a fraudulent distraction. The CAQ are not ensuring justice or economic security for Francophone universities in Québec. The new tuition policies don't introduce any new public funding into the university network, instead forcing francophone universities to rely on an unsustainable and unstable revenue stream from international and out-of-province student fees at anglophone universities. This revenue stream will shrink and disappear if international student enrolment drops in future years. Fear mongering rhetoric about protecting francophone language and culture relies on racist misinterpretations of demographic statistics and xenophobia towards Montreal's diverse and multilingual communities. The policies ultimately harm and exploit international students who are falsely portrayed as freeloaders who benefit from Québec tax dollars. In reality international students fund Québec universities through tuition fees and face increasing precarity, poverty, and few job opportunities throughout and after their studies.

6.1. It's Just Plain, Bad Economic Policy for Universities

Long story short: The UEQ says what everyone is thinking - the new tuition framework is an unsustainable and unjust economic policy. There is no new real funding from the MES, just money that will be taken away from students and institutions at Anglophone universities to provide a temporary funding boost to Francophone universities. Ultimately all universities are harmed by this policy framework that subjects higher education funding to the instability and uncertainty of the international student market.

In June of 2024, the Union étudiante du Québec, released an official statement expressing concern about the new tuition policies for anglophone universities that were first announced by Ministre Pascale Dery the year prior in October 2023.

For context, the UEQ is a student union federation of 12 student member associations from across Québec, including the Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal (FAÉCUM). Only two of the 12 member associations represent students at anglophone universities: the Bishop's University Students Representative Council (BUSRC) and the Association étudiante des cycles supérieurs de l'Université McGill (AÉCSUM). The UEQ therefore overwhelmingly represents the interests of francophone university students at francophone institutions across Québec.

Simply put, the UEQ expressed their concern about the new tuition framework because "this policy brings no new funding to Québec universities. It consists mainly of taking money from English-language universities, notably by revising funding for international and out-of-province students, and giving it to others." They further state that "The UEQ is concerned that, at a time when the Coalition Avenir Québec government claims to want to reduce the

number of English-speaking students in Montreal, it is turning them into the cornerstone of its funding policy. The UEQ warns the government that a reduction in the English-speaking student population, notably through dissuasive tuition fee increases, will only place Québec universities in a situation of underfunding.”⁹³

In summary, there will be no new real public funding for Québec universities and the revenue stream created by the new tuition framework will likely get smaller and smaller in the coming years as a result of the CAQ’s own policies.

The UEQ press release quotes the organization’s president Etienne Paré who makes his distaste for the policy clear, saying that “It takes some nerve to present a university funding policy without announcing new investments. Taking money from one university to pay for another is not a sustainable vision for higher education: it’s robbing Peter to pay Paul.”⁹⁴ In french the idiom Paré uses is “déshabiller Pierre pour habiller Paul.” The direct translation of this phrase is “undressing Peter to dress Paul,” isn’t idiomatic in English, but it cuts to the heart of the tuition policies more accurately than robbing Peter to pay Paul. Pascale Déry has justified her new tuition policy by styling herself and the CAQ as francophone Robin Hood figures, taking excess money from wealthy anglophone institutions and redistributing it to francophone universities. This nationalist Robin Hood narrative is inaccurate - a misrepresentation of the facts. Déry and the CAQ are taking money used to meet the annual operating needs of Anglophone universities. More specifically they are taking the tuition money of individual international and out-of-province students at anglophone institutions. These students were already paying exponentially higher fees than Québec residents, but now that tuition will be redistributed and won’t even contribute to the quality of the education that those students receive. The CAQ are not redistributing funds from McGill universities substantial legacy endowments. They are fleecing operating revenue from McGill, Concordia, and Bishop’s and scraping clean the pockets of young students who have come to Québec to pursue a higher education.

The new policy framework benefits only the CAQ government. The CAQ government, committed to underfunding universities will get to save money. Anglophone and francophone institutions and the students who attend them all get a losing deal. It really is that simple.

6.2. ‘Concerns’ about Francophone Decline Are Really About Racism

Long story short: If Pascale Déry and Francois Legault genuinely cared about growing francophone universities they would provide stable public funding to already francophone institutions and stable funding to anglophone institutions to run comprehensive francization programs. Instead, Déry explicitly refuses to fund francization at anglophone universities and relies on racist and xenophobic rhetoric against the diverse multilingual and multiethnic population of Montreal. Fears about the

⁹³ Union étudiante du Québec, “L’Union étudiante du Québec réagit à l’annonce de la nouvelle politique de financement des universités : Déshabiller Pierre pour habiller Paul,” *Newswire*, June 10, 2024. (quote translated for this report)

⁹⁴ Ibid.

decline of francophone language and culture rely on the false assumption that growth in non-francophone populations is an attack on francophones and must cause a corresponding decrease of francophone populations in Québec.

The most recent Statistics Canada federal census was conducted in 2021. In the three years since the census data on language has been analyzed at length and the statistics are clear. The most accurate picture is provided in a 2022 question period note for the Federal Minister of Official Languages:

“The number of French speakers in Quebec is increasing but their proportion in Québec’s population is decreasing. In 2021, 85.5% of the Quebec population reported speaking French at home at least on a regular basis. The number of people who spoke predominantly French at home increased from 6.4 million in 2016 to 6.5 million in 2021, but their proportion in the population fell from 79.0 to 77.5%.”⁹⁵

This data indicates that the number of French speakers in Quebec is not declining, rather there is an increasing number of people who speak languages other than French. The implication that an increase in the population of non-Francophones in Québec is inherently a threat to Québécois Francophones echoes the inaccurate and racist logic of French author Renaud Camus’ ‘great replacement theory.’ Camus, a French white supremacist and conspiracy theorist argued in a 2011 book entitled *Le Grand Remplacement* that immigration to France by non-white people, specifically Muslims, was leading to a ‘great replacement’ of white French people and a destruction of French culture. Camus theory relied on a misrepresentation of statistical data that relied on the idea that a decrease in the proportion of a population is the same thing as a decline of that population. Increases in immigration do not lead to corresponding declines in the population of people born in a particular area.

For the city of Montréal, the most spoken non-official language in 2021 was Arabic. This demographic data makes sense with the historical legacies of French and British imperial occupation of Arabic speaking countries. For instance, Montreal has large multi-lingual immigrant communities from countries such as Algeria and Lebanon, nations that were colonized by the French empire and didn’t achieve independence until the mid-20th century. It is important to understand this context when the CAQ characterizes the demographics of Montreal as a threat to Francophone speakers in Québec.

The usage of French as a language of work has declined in specific industries but remained the majority language by a large proportion overall. Statistics Canada reported that the usage of French declined as the primary language of work between 2001 and 2021 in information and cultural industries, finance and insurance, and professional, scientific, and technical services.⁹⁶ Despite this, French is still the primary language of business in a majority of the workplaces in each industry that saw a decline. Importantly, the 2021 census data showed that 7% more non-francophone workers speak French as their primary language of work than 20 years prior. In total, 70% of workers in Montreal spoke French as their main language of

⁹⁵ “Question Period Note: Demographic Trends for Official Languages (2021 Census of Canada)” (Government Document, Ottawa, ON, October 31, 2022).

⁹⁶ Statistics Canada, “Languages at Work: Spotlight on Montréal” (Government Document, February 21, 2023).

work. Montreal's workers also have the highest proportion of multilingualism across large Canadian cities: 80% of workers spoke at least two languages, and 28% spoke at least three languages.⁹⁷

For McGill and Concordia, the two anglophone universities in Montreal, English is the language of instruction. The students that attend McGill and Concordia reflect the multilingual demographics of the city where they study. Students at the two universities come from both Anglophone and Francophone backgrounds, many are bilingual, and many have languages other than French or English as their mother tongues or the language they speak at home. International students at McGill or Concordia coming from France or Belgium will be exempted from the new tuition framework by virtue of pre-existing bilateral agreements signed by the Québécois state. No non-European member countries of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) have been extended the same exemptions from higher fees. All French and Belgian citizens are exempted by default whereas countries such as Algeria or Vietnam, that were previously colonized by France have only been granted tiny limited numbers of fee exemptions (83 student exemptions for Algeria and 11 for Vietnam).⁹⁸

In light of all of these statistics, it is particularly important to note that Ministre de l'enseignement supérieure Pascale Déry has explicitly stated that she is not interested in funding the teaching of French to students at anglophone universities in Québec. Concordia University's lawyers recounted to the Cour supérieur du Québec that when top Concordia administrators asked Ministre Déry how they could possibly teach French to enough students to meet new francization requirements when their funding was being cut, that Déry "told Concordia that it *did not need to teach French*, but that it should instead compete with Québec's French-Language universities for the limited pool of non-resident students that already master French, measures which neither promote the French language nor the equilibrium with French-language universities."⁹⁹

Déry's assertion that Concordia should just recruit already francophone international students reads like a cruel joke. If anglophone universities like Concordia were to recruit already French speaking international students, these students could be from France or Belgium and therefore exempt from paying the higher tuition fees being used to fund Francophone universities. Economically speaking, increasing the proportion of French and Belgian students at anglophone universities would undermine the collection of higher tuition revenues at Anglophone universities and therefore undermine Déry's revenue transfer to francophone institutions. If universities like Concordia and McGill competed with francophone universities for French and Belgian students, then francophone universities might also see a drop in French and Belgian student recruitment leading to further decreases in funding given that university funding relies directly on enrolment numbers. If the already French speaking students were not from France or Belgium, then Anglophone universities would be recruiting students from OIF

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, "Pays et organisation internationale signataires d'une entente internationale en matière de mobilité étudiante à l'ordre universitaire - Tableau Informatif" (Government Document, Quebec, QC, 2023).

⁹⁹ Perri Ravon and Audrey Mayrand, *Concordia University v. Procureur Général du Québec*, Application for Judicial Review February 23, 2024, 3, §11.

member countries without fee exemptions. These students would then be expected to come to Québec, pay exorbitant tuition fees used to fund other universities, and be granted none of the incentives or privileges of their European or Québécois counterparts.

Déry's national protectionist policies are designed to *look* like they have the best interests of francophone institutions and Québécois people at heart. The reality is that the CAQ wants international students to pay for public higher education in Québec and they want to be able to pick and choose exactly who comes to Québec to fit the standards they have for cultural purity: white European francophones above all others.

6.3. Déry's Nationalist Rhetoric Distracts From Real Inequality and Exploitation

Long story short: Popular narratives about international students being wealthy freeloaders benefiting from the Canadian economy and tax dollars are a distraction from the fact that Canadian federal and provincial governments refuse to properly fund public education. Canada is one of the wealthiest nations on the planet with a proportionally tiny population, but seemingly can't provide affordable university education. For decades rising International student tuition fees have replaced public funding for universities in Canada and resulted in a partial privatization of Canadian universities that relies on the exploitation of international students for money to keep universities operating. Many International students who risk everything to seek education and opportunities in Canada are increasingly facing poverty during their studies as the cost of living in Canada skyrockets and their tuition fees continue to rise.

For 2023, the World Bank listed Canada as the world's 10th largest economy, with an annual GDP of over \$2.1 *trillion* USD (approximately \$2.8 trillion CAD based on exchange rate at time of writing).¹⁰⁰ GDP for Québec in 2023 was more than \$429 billion CAD, the second largest of all Canadian provinces and territories.¹⁰¹ Despite these frankly enormous figures, universities across Canada and Québec are deeply underfunded and increasingly forced to rely on revenue from international student fees to keep paying workers and offering courses to incoming students. In Québec alone, a 2021 comprehensive study by the Bureau de coopération interuniversitaire asked that the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure reinvest \$1 Billion dollars in Québécois universities between 2022-2023 and 2026-2027. This figure was based on an estimate that compared to Ontario universities, Québec universities had been underfunded by \$1,444 Billion between 2001 and 2018.¹⁰² Ontario universities may have received more funding than Québec institutions, but in general, universities across Canada are all struggling for funding. In February 2024, in an episode devoted to the financial crises at public universities across the country, Canadaland reported that on average, public funding for

¹⁰⁰ "GDP (Current US\$)," World Bank Open Data, accessed August 12, 2024.

¹⁰¹ Statistics Canada, "Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Basic Prices, by Industry, Provinces and Territories" (Government of Canada), accessed August 12, 2024.

¹⁰² Bureau de Coopération Interuniversitaire, "Le Retard de scolarisation universitaire et le sous-financement comparé des universités au Québec: un défi à relever pour le développement de notre société: demande budgétaire collective des établissements universitaires québécois dans le cadre du budget 2022-2023 du gouvernement du Québec" (Report, Montreal, QC, November 12, 2021), 5, 15.

universities in Canada has not kept up with inflation and has either remained stagnant or even decreased over the past several decades.¹⁰³

Universities are key structures of economic development and the reproduction of skilled technical and cultural labour, research, and innovation. While no one can deny that the academy, like other such massive institutional frameworks, has its fair share of structural and cultural problems, bad actors, and scammers, no one can deny the importance of universities. Universities are essential to making sure that generations young and old continue to have expertly trained doctors to care for them, engineers to ensure that bridges and buildings don't collapse, great writers and artists to entertain and inspire contemplation, historians to teach and share critical lessons and unexpected discoveries from the past... to name but a very few examples of the professions and vocations that universities train. Autodidacts will always exist, and not every student needs to attend a university to learn their craft, skill or passion but the existence of institutions of higher education benefits all people, not just those who directly take classes.

Both the Canadian federal state and the Québécois state have continuously underfunded universities for decades, insisting that more money cannot be found and should not be allocated to public higher education. Yet the economic figures speak for themselves, Canada is an extraordinarily wealthy nation, especially considering that \$2.8 trillion CAD is the GDP for a country with half the population of the state of California. It's not a radical position to argue that a lack of government and private sector commitment to the common good must be responsible for making it so that such a wealthy country can't fund public higher education for such a small population.

This report is exclusively an analysis of existing quantitative and qualitative data and historical records. This report therefore does not propose any particular alternative modes of governance or economic policy that would redistribute wealth into public institutions. This report hopes that it is obvious that there is enough wealth that greater equality and well funded public institutions are possible. Workers and students should plan and fight to accomplish a better, more equal future.

In his literature review of scholarship on the history of international student education in Canada, Dale McCartney emphasizes the importance of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE) in shaping public opinion and official government policy on international students. CBIE is a non-profit NGO that incorporated in 1966 and is directed by a board of top administrators from universities and colleges across Canada. McCartney recounts how by the end of the 1970s - the same period during which higher prices for international students were introduced at Canadian universities - CBIE were publishing reports that explained to law and policy makers that international students were "a cosmopolitan economic elite, making rational choices from a host of possible educational options."¹⁰⁴ In other words, it should be considered perfectly reasonable to begin privatizing the funding of public education by charging students without Canadian citizenship much higher tuition prices because these students were, simply put, rich. Why should these rich students spend their money at Harvard when they could come

¹⁰³ "Failing Universities 101," podcast, *The Backbench* (Toronto, ON: Canadaland, February 27, 2024).

¹⁰⁴ McCartney, "A Question of Self-Interest," 37.

to McGill university and subsidize Canadian public higher education while they study. This argument lined up nicely with the goals of Canadian federal and provincial governments who were steadily cutting public university funding and also raising tuition for Canadian students.

It is inarguable that there are international students at universities across Canada who come from extremely wealthy families. The cost of an international student education in Canada is in the tens of thousands per year, depending on the institution, and this price prevents many from ever studying at Canadian universities. Despite this, the assertion that all international students are from a 'cosmopolitan economic elite,' is outright false and completely ignores the lengths that many families will take to send their children to school in wealthy countries like Canada in hopes of a more secure economic future. Any analysis of international student policy has to comprehensively take into account the historical context of European and North American colonialism and the origins of the massive economic inequalities between the global north and the global south that prompt families the world over to send their children to Canadian universities in search of a better future.

CBC recently reported that in Sudbury Ontario, Sikh humanitarian organization Khalsa Aid has recently begun providing food aid to hungry international students. Karan Badhesha, the organization's regional director for northern Ontario explained to CBC that "a lot of these kids are not getting proper diet and are sacrificing a lot on their food when it comes to saving money."¹⁰⁵ This was the second story in 2024 that reported on Khalsa Aid supporting international students. The first story from February reported on a massive increase in requests for aid from international students at Khalsa aid in the greater Toronto area.¹⁰⁶ The organization's national director, Jindi Singh told CBC that "its time for the post secondary institutions and governments responsible for the situation to take ownership and get to the root of the problem," noting that "post-secondary institutions are 'making billions out of this situation... but 'there's absolutely no wrap-around services for these students, who are left to fend for themselves.'"¹⁰⁷ Azi Afousi, president of Ontario's College Student Alliance, told CBC that "Ontario's 'chronic underfunding of post-secondary education'" is responsible for the dire conditions that international students face.¹⁰⁸ CBC also recently reported that a University of Waterloo study found that "international students are among the most vulnerable people impacted by the current housing crisis." Waterloo researcher Alkim Karaagac explained that "they experience very similar challenges regarding the lack of affordable, suitable quality housing similar to other groups - newcomers, low income families in Canada and other students. They face discrimination [and] fall victim to fraud a lot."¹⁰⁹ Karaagac told CBC the story of a family from Bangladesh who were defrauded out of an apartment that they thought they had rented explaining that "they have been living in the basement of another [family's house] for the rest of their education."

¹⁰⁵ "Humanitarian Organization Feeding International Students in Sudbury," *CBC News*, August 11, 2024.

¹⁰⁶ Saloni Bhugra, "International Students Are in 'crisis.' Governments Need to Take Responsibility: Peel Charities," *CBC News*, February 11, 2024.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Desmond Brown, "Canada's Housing Crisis Is Adversely Affecting International Students, University of Waterloo Study Finds," *CBC News*, August 9, 2024.

Concordia students with international student friends and classmates will likely find these recent CBC reports familiar. Each time that campus food aid organization The People's Potato runs free grocery programs, every two weeks during a busy semester, a crowd of overwhelmingly international students will show up hours in advance to secure access to the limited resources that the volunteer run organization can provide. Students share horror stories of international students living in cramped conditions, with up to seven people sharing small apartments giving up privacy and sharing bedrooms to make ends meet and afford rent while studying. Canadian federal laws and policies limit how much income an international student can make while in the country on a study permit, forcing many international students to live in conditions of poverty to complete their education.

International student tuition fees have kept many Canadian public universities operating despite funding cuts, but they have not fit the needs in the Canadian job market. In addition to exploiting international students to fund public institutions, a recent analysis of federal data by the CBC showed that "Canada's recruitment of international students has tilted strongly toward filling spots in business programs, while doing little to meet the demand for workers in health care and the skilled trades." Many students complete their education in Canada completely without job prospects while between 2018 and 2023, "just six percent of all [study] permits [issued by the federal government] went to foreign students for health sciences, medicine or biological and biomedical sciences programs, while trades and vocational training programs accounted for 1.25 per cent."¹¹⁰ Anyone in Canada who cannot find a family doctor and has waited hours at a walk-in clinic or hospital emergency room will be angered by the folly of making international student education a business that exploits young students and ultimately doesn't benefit the communities that they study in.

The failures of public institutions of higher education, and the failures of the governance of Canadian society and economy point to deeper problems with the political and economic structures that this country is built on. The CBIE reported that in 2023, there were 1,040,985 international students studying in Canada and 11% of them were in Québec. 41% of all international students in Canada in 2023 were from India.¹¹¹ This particular demographic statistic points to the obvious historical connection between India and Canada - the British empire. The histories of the colonization of both North America and South Asia are deeply complex. To put it most simply, however, while both Canada and India were colonized first by British trading companies for resource exploitation, Canada developed as a settler colony that achieved independent dominion status within the British empire by 1867. India was subjected to direct British crown rule as a colony for resources and labour and liberation struggles on the Indian subcontinent didn't result in formal national independence until 1947. Displacing and genociding local indigenous peoples, Canada's ruling classes of European settlers became citizens of a nation that benefited from the global transfers of wealth and resources from the colonies of the North Atlantic empires across Africa, Asia, and South America. Recent research by Indian economist Utsa Patnaik estimated that "Britain drained a total of nearly \$45 trillion [USD] from

¹¹⁰ Crawley and Ouellet, "Canada's Foreign Student Push 'mismatched' Job Market, Data Shows."

¹¹¹ Canadian Bureau for International Education, "International Students in Canada Infographic," CBIE, accessed August 12, 2024.

India during the period 1765 to 1938.”¹¹² The large percentage of international students in Canada originating from India is representative of the fact that the marketization of international student education is one of the many contemporary economic mechanisms through which global north countries continue to benefit from the patterns of resource and labour exploitation established by European colonization.¹¹³

Above all, the popular perceptions of international students, especially that they are all wealthy elites or freeloaders funded by Canadian tax dollars, are simply false. The exploitation of massive numbers of individual international students through exorbitant tuition fees funds universities across Québec and Canada. Ministre Pascale Déry knows this fact, and that is why her ministry has designed a new tuition fee framework that will fund francophone universities in Québec through the tuition fees charged to international students at the anglophone universities with the highest international student enrolment numbers. This is not economic justice for francophone students - it is just a cost cutting measure for the CAQ at the expense of students from all over the world who come to seek an education and opportunities in Québec.

¹¹² Jason Hickel, “How Britain Stole \$45 Trillion from India,” *Al Jazeera*, December 19, 2018.

¹¹³ Jason Hickel et al., “Imperialist Appropriation in the World Economy: Drain from the Global South through Unequal Exchange, 1990–2015,” *Global Environmental Change* 73 (March 2022).

7. What to Expect Going Forward: Provincial Budget Cuts, Sovereignty Politics, Base Tuition Fee Hikes, Anti-Immigrant Policy, Protectionism, General Elections, and Performance Based Funding

Long story short: It's impossible to predict the future when it comes to the governance of Québécois higher education and tuition policy because there are so many changeable factors. The most important current factors that may affect tuition policy and prices in Québec in the coming years are the possibility of provincial budget austerity, the possibility of continued or increased federal and provincial caps or bans on immigration and international students, the possibility of new federal and provincial administrations following 2025 and 2026 elections, the possibility of Québécois immigration or sovereignty referenda, the possibility of increased economic hardship for Canada amid rising protectionism globally, the possibility of the implementation of performance based public funding for universities, and the possibility of across the board tuition hikes in 2027 following the expiry of the current law limiting annual rate increases.

7.1. Possibility of Overall Provincial Budget Cuts in Québec

Responses to the 2024 budget figures have been varied. In March, *The Gazette* reported that economic analysts from BMO and the Université de Sherbrooke have forecasted future provincial budget deficits in the coming years, while the healthcare and social services worker union the Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux warned that “the Legault government is setting the stage for a return to austerity.”¹¹⁴ Opposition parties in Québec, particularly the liberal party, seized upon the announcement of the larger than expected budget deficit to announce that they would balance budgets if they take power in the upcoming 2026 general election.¹¹⁵ The only thing certain right now is that provincial finances and the question of state debt will be a hot button issue in the next election.

7.2. Federal Crackdowns On International Students and Immigration

As the CBC showed in an investigative report released in May 2024, federal international student policy over the last half decade has been a disaster of mismanagement, failing to meet both the needs of international students for jobs upon graduation and the needs of the Canadian job market for skilled labour.¹¹⁶ The general approach of the federal Liberal party government

¹¹⁴ Frédéric Tomesco, “Economists See Quebec Pushing Goal for Balanced Budget Past 2027-28,” *The Montreal Gazette*, March 7, 2024; Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux, “2024-2025 Québec Budget | The Legault Government Is Setting the Stage for a Return to Austerity, the APTS Warns,” *APTS*, March 12, 2024.

¹¹⁵ Charles Lecavalier, “Budget du Québec 2024: La CAQ a « perdu le contrôle des finances publiques », dit l’opposition,” *La Presse*, March 12, 2024; Patrice Bergeron, “Quebec Liberal Convention: Party Commits to Balanced Budget If It Takes Power,” *CTV News*, May 25, 2024.

¹¹⁶ Mike Crawley and Valerie Ouellet, “Canada’s Foreign Student Push ‘mismatched’ Job Market, Data Shows,” *CBC News*, May 9, 2024.

has been to blame international students and immigrants for the government's own mismanagement of internal economic governance and regulation and then to implement blanket anti-immigrant policies that don't address root causes of economic issues. In January the Federal immigration minister announced a new cap on international student study permits to reduce the international undergraduate student population by 35% for 2024 with the justification that it will help to address the housing crisis.¹¹⁷ The federal government has also introduced caps on temporary residents in the country.¹¹⁸ The independent news site *The Breach* also reported in March that Canada has been "deporting [the country's] highest level of migrants in a decade," spending \$111 million to deport 23,000 migrants during 2022 and 2023.¹¹⁹ Without other measures to address economic crises in Canada, the changes to immigration policies are unlikely to make a noticeable difference to the Canadian cost of living, but if reduced permits for immigration and international students continue long term it may spell bad news for universities networks across Québec and Canada that rely on international student tuition to offset cuts in public funding.

7.3. A Federal Election in 2025 and a Provincial Election in 2026

The Federal general election is currently set for October 20, 2025 and the Québec general election is currently set for October 5 2026.¹²⁰ At the time of writing this report it seems likely that the Parti Québécois will win in Québec and the Conservative Party will win federally, but much could change in the coming months and years to affect the results. Student and worker unions will need to look ahead and pay close attention to the platforms, policy promises, and rhetoric of the leading parties to anticipate what challenges and opportunities might arise with the possibility of new governing parties.

7.4. New Referenda: Anti-Immigration, Pro-Sovereignty Politics Grow in Prominence in Québec

After a highly publicized dispute with Justin Trudeau where Francois Legault demanded greater autonomy for Québec on immigration regulation and Trudeau refused, Legault has proposed the possibility of a constitutional referendum on Québécois immigration sovereignty.¹²¹ Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, leader of the Parti Québécois, seized the political space opened up by Legault's proposal of a referendum to announce that the PQ will campaign for another 1995 style overall sovereignty referendum for Québec and that he intends to push for Québécois

¹¹⁷ Aaron Wherry, "Federal Government Announces 2-Year Cap on Student Permits," *CBC News*, January 22, 2024;

¹¹⁸ Darren Major, "Federal Government Aiming to Shrink Temporary Residents' Share of Population by 2027," *CBC News*, March 21, 2024.

¹¹⁹ Noushin Ziafati, "Canada Deporting Highest Level of Migrants in a Decade, despite Promises to Let More Stay," *The Breach*, March 27, 2024.

¹²⁰ Elections Canada, "FAQs on Elections," June 11, 2024; élections Québec, "Élections en cours et à venir," February 22, 2021.

¹²¹ "Quebec Premier Threatens Referendum on Immigration Powers, Calls out Trudeau" *Global News*, April 9, 2024;

independence by 2030.¹²² It is impossible yet to know whether these proposed referenda will materialize into real political events or whether they are just rhetoric aimed to gain voters ahead of the upcoming 2026 election. Whatever results from these proposed referenda, it seems clear that the increasing closure of Québec borders to migration is a serious possibility in the coming years which spells consequences for out-of-province and international students and is at odds with the increasing reliance on international student tuition fees in Québécois higher education.

7.5. A Rising Trend of Protectionism Worldwide Spells Economic Uncertainty

Covid-19 and wars in Russia-Ukraine and Palestine have accelerated the emergence of pre-existing trends in geopolitics and global political economy. Decades of western deindustrialization and off-shoring of production to China for cheaper labour costs has resulted in the increasing economic dominance of China and an almost non-existent base of local production in countries like Canada. Global production, trade, and finance patterns are shifting. BRICS, the international alliance originally consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has been expanding membership to further economically developing countries and working to build a common reserve currency that would reduce international dependency on the American dollar.¹²³ Key institutions and publications of globalized western capital networks like the World Bank, the European Centre for Economic Policy Research, Washington, D.C.'s *Foreign Policy* magazine, and American agribusiness industry magazine *World Grain* are all reporting on protectionism with concern for the international economic implications.¹²⁴ Despite alarm bells raised by organizations that have advocated for and relied on neoliberal globalization and free trade, protectionism seems to be a persistent force and for Canada this matters due to economic ties to the United States. In January 2024, David MacNaughton, former Canadian ambassador to the United States, went on the record with his opinion that Canada will have to worry about the consequences of American protectionism regardless of which party wins the upcoming American election.¹²⁵ While opposition to protectionist policies often comes from business and diplomatic elites with a direct economic interest in promoting the ease of international trade, protectionism in and of itself cannot guarantee better conditions for the working people of Canada and Québec. The rise in protectionism should best be understood as a response to economic crisis and while it promises revitalization of national economies, the form protectionism will take and how it will affect labour relations and the cost of living remains to be seen. *Long story short: economic uncertainty and upheaval ahead.*

¹²² Philip Authier, "Another Referendum 'will Arrive Sooner than We Think,' PQ Leader Vows," *The Montreal Gazette*, April 16, 2024.

¹²³ Melissa Pistilli, "How Would a New BRICS Currency Affect the US Dollar? (Updated 2024)," *Nasdaq Investing News Network*, July 8, 2024.

¹²⁴ Jorge Guajardo, "Western Protectionism Needs an End Date," *Foreign Policy*, June 24, 2024; Mehmet Canayaz, Isil Erel, and Umit Gurun, "The Global Semiconductor Talent Crunch: How Protectionism Backfired," *CEPR VoxEU* (blog), July 23, 2024; Susan Reidy, "Growing Protectionism Complicating Global Trade," *World Grain*, July 19, 2024; World Bank Group, "Protectionism Is Failing to Achieve Its Goals and Threatens the Future of Critical Industries," *World Bank News* (blog), August 29, 2023.

¹²⁵ David Baxter, "Canada Faces a More Protectionist U.S. Regardless of Who Is President: Ex-Envoy," *Global News National*, January 25, 2024.

7.6. CCAFE and UEQ Warn Against Performance-Based Funding for Québec Universities

Unions and universities across Québec have been advocating for decades for a better alternative to the current student-enrolment-based university funding model in place since 2000. Despite this long history of pushing for better funding, both the Comité consultatif sur l'accessibilité financière aux études (CCAFE) and the Union étudiante du Québec (UEQ) have been vocally concerned in recent years that the Québécois state is more likely to replace the current funding model with a performance based funding model that will likely be worse for universities. A performance based funding model would make government subsidy distribution conditional on individual university achievement of specific goals and metrics set by the state. Currently this model already exists to a degree in Québec. For instance, Concordia Chief Financial Officer Denis Cossette recounted in June 2024 that the ministry of higher education subjects the university to regular financial stress testing simulations before greenlighting subsidies and noted that if Anglophone universities are unable to comply with new francization requirements there will be financial penalties from the state.¹²⁶ In their 2023 review of the Québécois university funding model, produced during a provincial review and call for public consultation on the funding model, the CCAFE included a section “warning against a shift towards a performance based funding model,” emphasizing that the negative effects would outweigh any possible gains in efficiency or productivity.¹²⁷ During the same provincial review period the UEQ issued a report officially recommending that the government *not* adopt a performance based funding model, warning of the consequences and reminding the Québec state that the model was tried once before in the early 2000s and quickly scrapped following its failure to produce good results.¹²⁸ The fact that both the CCAFE and the UEQ took the time to specifically discourage the state from adopting a performance based funding model suggests that there has been serious recent concern about the possibility of changing the university funding model in Québec to encourage universities to increase ‘efficiency’ or risk losing funding. University student and worker unions should be concerned about the possibility of performance based funding models going forward and organize to resist their implementation.

7.7. 2026 Expiry of Law Limiting Annual Hikes to Québec Tuition:

The “Act to Limit the Indexation of Several Government Tariffs,” that included capping the annual increase of Québec resident tuition prices at 3% will expire on December 31st 2026.¹²⁹ While the Québec state may allow a simple return to the pre-existing policy of indexing the annual increase in tuition prices to per capita household income data, the end of this law falls just after the next provincial general election (October 2026). It may be an ideal opportunity for

¹²⁶ Denis Cossette and Anne Whitelaw, “Concordia University Budget Conversations 2024-25” (Presentation, June 18, 2024).

¹²⁷ CCAFE, “Révision de la Politique québécoise de financement des universités,” 10-12.

¹²⁸ Union étudiante du Québec, “Le financement des universités à la performance” (Report, Montreal, QC, October 2, 2023), 6-7.

¹²⁹ Gouvernement du Québec, “Act to Limit the Indexation of Several Government Tariffs,” CQLR c I-7.1 (2022).

the new Québécois government, CAQ or otherwise, to introduce new policies or laws that change the rate of annual tuition increases for Québec residents and given concerns about government spending and debt since the 2024 provincial budget it is likely that it could be an opportunity for across the board tuition hikes to offset state spending on higher education amid inflation and rising costs. University worker and student unions should be prepared for this possibility of tuition hikes and for the opportunity to pressure the state for continued caps on the rate of tuition increase or to reintroduce a policy of tuition freezes.

Appendix

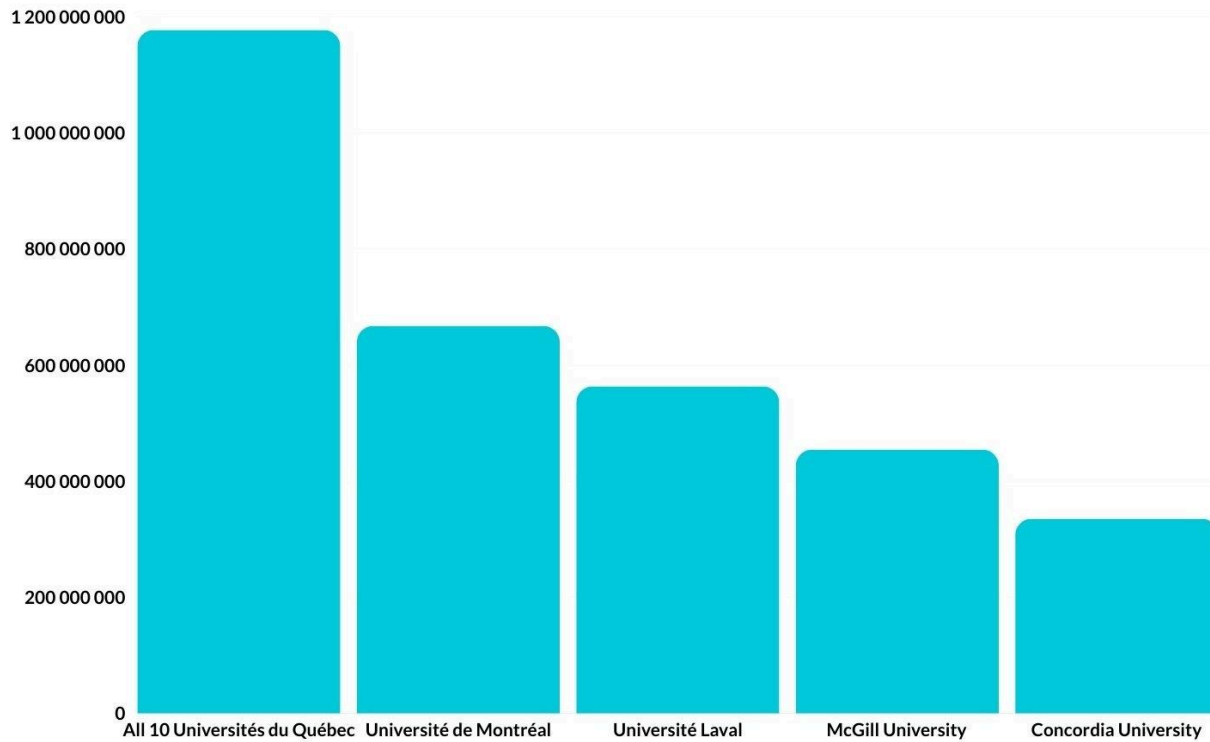
Appendix A: Distribution of International Students Enrolled in Québec Universities (by University, Autumn Semester, 2015-2016 to 2018-2019)

This table is directly reproduced from page 23 of the 2021 Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure report "Les étudiants internationaux à l'enseignement supérieur - Portrait statistique."

Établissement	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020 ^P	Poids 2019-2020 ^P
Bishop's	355	436	552	615	745	1,5%
Concordia	5 622	5 906	6 825	7 569	8 308	17,2%
McGill	9 233	9 934	11 025	11 443	11 683	24,1%
Universités anglophones	15 210	16 276	18 402	19 627	20 736	42,8%
Proportion	40,1%	41,4%	43,4%	43,6%	42,8%	
Laval	3 725	3 919	3 851	4 039	4 485	9,3%
Montréal	4 955	4 939	4 993	5 220	5 685	11,7%
HEC	2 102	2 073	2 074	2 138	2 199	4,5%
Polytechnique	2 090	2 124	2 278	2 428	2 466	5,1%
Sherbrooke	1 664	1 694	1 777	1 862	1 927	4,0%
Université du Québec	8 177	8 286	9 071	9 669	10 908	22,5%
Universités francophones	22 713	23 035	24 044	25 356	27 670	57,2%
Proportion	59,9%	58,6%	56,6%	56,4%	57,2%	
Total	37 923	39 311	42 446	44 983	48 406	100,0%

^P La mention P indique au lecteur qu'il s'agit de données provisoires.

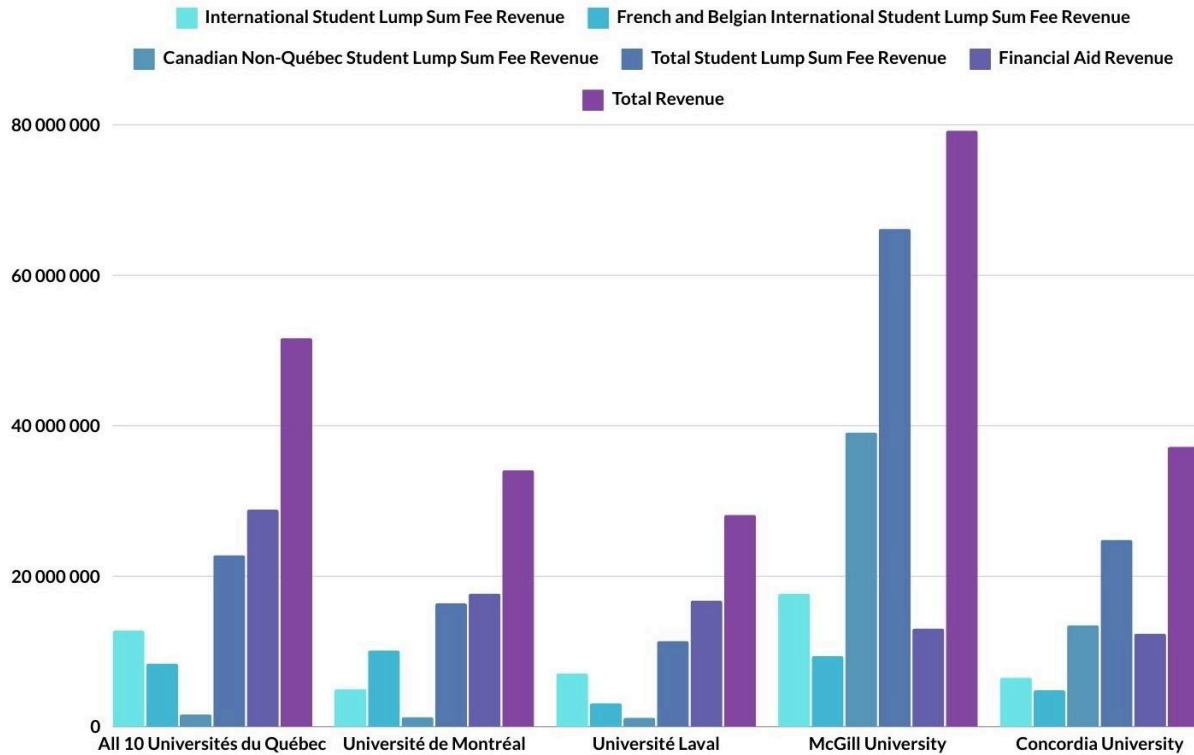
Appendix B: The Largest Anglophone and Francophone Universities - Total Funding from Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieure 2023-2024 (In Dollars) Bar Chart and Number Table¹³⁰



University (In Descending Order of Total Funding)	Total Government Subsidy Funding \$
Université du Québec Network (All 10 UQ Universities Combined)	1 177 333 850
Université de Montréal	667 279 740
Université Laval	563 400 054
McGill University	454 340 377
Concordia University	335 110 761

¹³⁰ Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, Tableau B in "Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec, année universitaire 2023-2024, mars 2024" March 2024.

Appendix C: The Largest Anglophone and Francophone Universities - Revenues Collected by the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur 2023-2024 (In Dollars) Bar Chart and Number Table¹³¹



University (In Descending Order of Total Revenue)	International Student Fee Revenue (\$)	French and Belgian International Student Fee Revenue (\$)	Canadian non-Québec Resident Student Fee Revenue (\$)	Total Student Fee Revenue (\$)	Financial Aid Revenue \$	Total Revenue \$
McGill University	17 684 542	9 392 432	39 104 304	66 181 278	13 074 043	79 255 321
Université du Québec Network (All 10 UQ Universités Combined)	12 784 224	8 381 211	1 646 676	22 812 111	28 862 505	51 674 616
Concordia University	6 523 503	4 839 575	13 480 544	24 843 622	12 372 612	37 216 234
Université de Montréal	4 991 185	10 149 184	1 270 214	16 410 483	17 700 429	34 111 012
Université Laval	7 082 010	3 107 672	1 205 354	11 395 036	16 758 347	28 153 383

¹³¹ Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, Tableau E in "Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec, année universitaire 2023-2024, mars 2024" March 2024.

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