

RESEARCH REPORT

OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

83 Yonge Street, Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario M5C 1S8
Telephone: 416-979-2117 • Fax: 416-593-5607 • E-mail: ocufa@ocufa.on.ca • Web Page: <http://www.ocufa.on.ca>

Ontario Universities, the Double Cohort, and the *Maclean's* Rankings: The Legacy of the Harris/Eves Years, 1995-2003

Michael J. Doucet, Ph.D.

March 2004

Vol. 5, No. 1

Ontario Universities, the Double Cohort, and the Maclean's Rankings: The Legacy of the Harris/Eves Years, 1995-2003

Executive Summary

The legacy of the Harris/Eves governments from 1995-2003 was to leave Ontario's system of public universities tenth and last in Canada on many critical measures of quality, opportunity and accessibility. If comparisons are extended to American public universities, Ontario looks even worse. The impact of this legacy has been reflected in the *Maclean's* magazine rankings of Canadian universities, which have shown Ontario universities, with a few notable exceptions, dropping in relation to their peers in the rest of the country.

Elected in 1995 on a platform based on provincial income tax cuts of 30 per cent and a reduction in the role of government, the Progressive Conservative government of Premier Mike Harris set out quickly to alter the structure of both government and government services. Most government departments were ordered to produce smaller budgets, and the Ministry of Education and Training was no exception. Universities were among the hardest hit of Ontario's transfer-payment agencies, with budgets cut by \$329.1 million between 1995 and 1998, for a cumulative impact of \$2.3 billion by 2003. Increases in the later years of the Harris government and under his successor as Premier, Ernie Eves, only partially restored lost funding, for a net cumulative loss of about \$1.8 billion over the Harris/Eves period.

The consequences of these funding cuts on universities were striking:

- Tuition increased by 55% in those programs that remained regulated, and even more dramatically in fields such as medicine, dentistry, and law which were deregulated in 1998;
- The provincial contribution to the operating budgets of Ontario universities plummeted from 68% to just 50%, last among Canadian provinces;
- The ranks of faculty shrank, and in conjunction with a marked growth in student enrolment, Ontario ranked last among provinces in the student-faculty ratio.

Many of these developments did not go unnoticed by the Conservative government's own reviews of postsecondary education. Two reviews, commissioned in 1996 and 2000, made comprehensive recommendations for action. In both cases the government "cherry picked" recommendations it liked, ignoring calls for substantial new public investments in colleges and universities.

Universities were also affected substantially by the government's decision to eliminate Grade 13/OAC from secondary schools, creating the "double cohort" year of 2003 when the first group under the new four-year curriculum and the last year under the old system graduated together. The Tory government was slow in providing assistance to Ontario universities in the face of this steadily and quite predictably advancing onslaught. Operating budgets were miserly, while capital funding came too late to ensure that new spaces would be ready in time, and – by requiring matching private funds – favoured certain kinds of infrastructure over others and put newer universities and those in Northern Ontario at a disadvantage. In the end, the double cohort was not so much accommodated in universities: rather, it was squeezed in.

The impact of the Conservative legacy also registered in the *Maclean's* annual ranking of Canadian universities. With only a few notable exceptions, Ontario universities performed increasingly poorly in the rankings during the Harris/Eves era. Within each university category, Ontario's public universities slipped by about one full rank between 1995 and 2003. There seems little doubt that Ontario's universities lost ground in comparison to their counterparts in other provinces, at least on the measures used by *Maclean's*.

The *Maclean's* rankings, flawed as they might be, managed to capture a stark reality for Ontario's university students, especially those at the undergraduate level: their escalating tuition fees were purchasing less and less quality with each passing year. This is unlikely to change until the Ontario Government increases its contribution to university operating budgets to at least the national average.

With the end of the Harris/Eves era and the election of a Liberal government in October 2003, Ontarians expect the Liberals to deliver on their promises. The Liberal election platform, entitled *Choose Change*, contains a series of promises related to postsecondary education. These include: 1) the creation of spaces for 50,000 more students at public colleges and universities; 2) allowing the institutions to hire thousands more academic staff and reduce student/faculty ratios; 3) a tuition freeze for two years, with compensation for lost revenue; 4) a 50 per cent increase in graduate scholarships; 5) improvements to the student financial aid system; 6) tuition waivers for the neediest 10 per cent of students; 7) the establishment of a faculty recruitment fund to attract up to 800 "star" faculty; and 8) the creation of a tuition savings program. Furthermore, during the 1999 election campaign, Liberal Leader Dalton McGuinty signed a pledge to bring university funding up to the national average during his first term as premier.

The new government's first real opportunity to signal a pivotal change in direction away from the Harris/Eves legacy will come in its initial budget to be presented in Spring 2004. The new Liberal government will need to be seen to be moving forward on postsecondary education and other key areas to ensure both the province's future prosperity and the continued support of the electorate.

Ontario Universities, the Double Cohort, and the Maclean's Rankings: The Legacy of the Harris/Eves Years, 1995-2003¹

Michael J. Doucet, PhD
President, OCUFA

*The double cohort is just part of a much larger national story, one that has been unfolding for some time, and will continue to do so into the next decade. This fall [2003], with an increase of more than 50,000 undergraduate students, Canadian universities experienced their biggest year-to-year enrolment increase ever - **for the third year in a row**. . . . Keep in mind: even at the height of the baby-boom bulge, the biggest year-to-year growth was 25,000. Canada responded [then] by building new universities and filling them with students and faculty. Now, as the babies of that well-educated baby-boom generation – the echo boom – beat a path to the postsecondary doorstep in record numbers, the faculty who taught their parents are heading in the opposite direction, retiring in record numbers as well. In 1990, there were 532,000 full-time students enrolled in Canadian universities and 36,400 full-time faculty to teach them. This fall? Virtually no change in the number of full-time faculty.²*

The Political Context

On 8 June 1995, the Ontario electorate decisively declared that the mandate of the Province's first-ever NDP government would not extend beyond a single term. Almost 63 per cent of Ontarians exercised their franchise on that June day, and when all of the ballots had been counted, the Progressive Conservatives, led by North Bay's Mike Harris, had won a massive majority government. With 44.8 per cent of the votes cast, the Tories were victorious in 82, or 63.1 per cent, of the then-130 seats in the Ontario Legislature. From the very outset, the Tories clearly indicated their intention to run Ontario as a

¹ The assistance and comments of Henry Mandelbaum, Mark Rosenfeld, Karen Wheeler, Iris Shegda, Charlie Campbell, Amy Dickieson Kaufman and Heather McKenzie of the OCUFA office in the preparation of this report are gratefully acknowledged. Any errors remain the sole responsibility of the author.

² Ann Dowsett Johnston, "Measuring Excellence: With the Largest Incoming Class Ever, and More Students on the Way, Universities Face Unprecedented Demand to Deliver," *Maclean's* 116 (17 November 2003): 28, emphasis as in the original.

business, an ideology that would be extended to the education field. A series of early decisions would clearly set the tone for what was to follow over the ensuing eight years.

At the time of the Tory victory, responsibility for the well-being of Ontario's universities fell under the mandate of the Ministry of Education and Training. Many were surprised when Premier Harris appointed rookie Mississauga North MPP John Snobelen, a high-school drop-out and former president of a trucking firm, as his first Minister of Education. As one *Toronto Star* editorial mused at the time the cabinet was announced: "What special skills does trucking company owner John Snobelen possess that will vault him to the education and training ministry?" The autonomy of Ontario's universities, each of which had associated with it a separate legislative act, would only provide a partial shield from the ideological and fiscal onslaught that was about to unfold.³

Snobelen quickly found himself in trouble when he suggested that in order to effect change you either had to be in a crisis situation, or one would have to be created. While most of his attention, and crisis-creating activity, was focussed upon the elementary- and secondary-education levels of his portfolio, Snobelen proved to be no friend of Ontario's postsecondary sector, and left a legacy of budget cuts.⁴

John Snobelen lasted barely two years as Minister of Education, and was replaced in Premier Harris's first major cabinet shuffle in October 1997 by Dave Johnson, MPP for Don Mills. An editorial at the time described Snobelen as "much-loathed" and Johnson as "ever-calm." Johnson was a former mayor of East York and in possession of a Master of Science degree in mathematics from the University of Waterloo. While more respected than John Snobelen, Johnson also did little in a positive sense for

³ "A Lean Tory Team for Tough Times," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 27 June 1995, A18; Andrew Duffy, "'Drop-Out' Who Runs Our Schools Gets Down to Business," *Toronto Star*, 9 September 1995, A1 and A28. While universities suffered economically under the Harris/Eves regime, other areas of the broader public sector fared even worse, especially in structural terms. Several urban areas, most notably Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa, had amalgamations imposed on them, usually in defiance of the expressed wishes of their municipal politicians and citizens. School Boards were merged and the salaries paid to school trustees were cut to just \$5,000 per year. On the latter matter see Tess Kalinowski and Kristin Rushowy, "What Does \$5,000 Get You?: School Trustees Frustrated by Lack of Compensation," *Toronto Star*, 9 February 2004, B4.

⁴ On John Snobelen's invent-a-crisis strategy see Richard Brennan, "Minister Plotted to Invent a Crisis," *Toronto Star*, 13 September 1995, A3; Lisa Wright, "Apologize for Remarks Harris Tells Snobelen," *Toronto Star*, 14 September 1995, A3; Thomas Walkom, "Snobelen Scales Windy Heights of Bafflegab," *Toronto Star*, 14 September 1995, A25. Snobelen's remarks, which were videotaped, were made before a group of provincial education bureaucrats at a meeting on 6 July 1995. His comments on that occasion also included references to teachers as service providers, students as clients, and parents as customers.

Ontario's universities during his tenure as Minister of Education and Training, a position he held until his defeat in the 1999 provincial election.⁵

Nor were opinions about postsecondary matters the sole purview of the Education Ministers during this period. Premier Harris, himself, questioned the value of an arts degree, the preferred choice of more than 40 per cent of Ontario's undergraduate students, in a speech given at a conference on the future of universities in Toronto in mid-November of 1997. This would be a theme Harris would continue to enunciate throughout his time in office. Fortunately, it was one that would be vigorously challenged by a distinguished, but normally invisible group; namely, Ontario's university Chancellors, who issued a public statement on the value of a liberal arts education in early 2000. In that statement, which itself was the result of what was termed "an unprecedented meeting" held on the Glendon campus of York University, the Chancellors argued:

Higher education is of the utmost importance to the future of Ontario. To prepare the leaders of tomorrow, we need a university system that is characterized by excellence, accessibility, diversity, and flexibility.

The Liberal arts and sciences must continue to be a seminal part of Ontario's higher education. This is a practical idea as much as a philosophical one. A number of recent studies have clearly underlined that a well-rounded general education – learning to think, to write, and to express one's ideas clearly – is as valuable to future employability as technical or technological training.

To meet these goals, the universities need renewed funding. Both government and the private sector (for it is increasingly a shared concern) must join in an effort to see that the needs of tomorrow – for a well-educated work-force and a new generation of leadership – are met.

Whatever new funding mechanisms are developed, they should permit universities themselves to manage enrolment demand and to maintain a diverse and forward-looking curriculum and program of research.

⁵ Jane Armstrong, Daniel Girard, and Joel Ruimy, "Snobelen's Out: Johnson New Education Chief in Bid to Avoid War with Teachers," *Toronto Star*, 10 October 1997, A1 and A33; Daniel Girard, "Teachers Seek 'Fresh Start' after Sacking of Snobelen: Successor Has Reputation as 'Straight Shooter'," *Toronto Star*, 10 October 1997, A33; "Sensible Changes in Harris' Cabinet," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 11 October 1997, B2.

The people of Ontario are, and should be, proud of their universities and what they stand for. They – we – should work together to see that that pride is maintained.⁶

Mike Harris would lead the Progressive Conservatives to another majority government in the election of 1999 (capturing 59 of the 103 seats with 45.1 per cent of the vote). In the creation of his new cabinet following the 3 June 1999 election, Harris carved a new ministry, Training, Colleges, and Universities out of the former Ministry of Education and Training, and appointed London-area MPP Dianne Cunningham as its first minister. Harris would retire from office in April of 2002, when he was succeeded as Premier by Ernie Eves. A former Finance Minister in the Harris government, Eves had retired in February of 2001 as the long-serving MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka to take a position as a Canadian Vice-President at the financial firm Credit Suisse First Boston. Once selected as PC party leader at a leadership convention held on 23 March 2002, he returned to the Legislature via a by-election victory in Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey that took place on 2 May 2002. The Harris/Eves era came to an end on 2 October 2003 when the Liberals under Dalton McGuinty won 72 seats and 46.5 per cent of the popular vote. It is our purpose in this report to examine the fate of Ontario's universities during the 8-year stewardship of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves.

The Tory Record

Elected in 1995 on a platform, known as the *Common Sense Revolution*, that was based on provincial income tax cuts of 30 per cent and a reduction in the role of government, the Tories quickly set out to alter the structure of both government and government services.⁷ As Harris would later tell delegates to his Party's 1998 annual meeting: "We are not the government. We're the people who came to fix government." Under the Common Sense Revolution, the government's concept of Ontarians shifted from regarding them as citizens to seeing them solely as taxpayers, a perspective that would have profound consequences in many areas of provincial life. In the process, the Tories proved themselves to be not so much fixers of government as they were micro-managers. For a group that claimed to not be the

⁶ Jane Armstrong, "Premier Ducks Demonstrators at Meeting," *Toronto Star*, 20 November 1997, A7; "OCUFA Dismayed by Premier's Remarks on Arts Graduates," media release, 27 November 1997; "Statement of the Ontario University Chancellors on the Importance of University Education and the Value of a Liberal Arts Education," media release, 29 February 2000. On reaction to this statement see "Higher Education," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 4 March 2000, H6.

⁷ This platform was released by the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party in May of 1994.

government, the Harris Tories certainly did a lot of governing. Nor would their novel approach to government prevent them from seeking re-election.⁸

On the matter of reduced government expenditures and services, most departments were ordered to produce smaller budgets, and the Ministry of Education and Training was no exception. In the Tories' 1996 Budget, that Ministry's budget for postsecondary education was cut by \$400 million, with \$272.4 million of that taken from the budgets of Ontario's universities, making them among the hardest hit of Ontario's transfer-payment agencies. In all, the Tories reduced university budgets by \$329.1 million between 1995 and 1998. By 2003, the cumulative impact of these cuts was \$2.3 billion. While they did add \$258.8 million to university budgets between 1998 and 2003, the cumulative impact of these increases by the latter year was just \$518.3 million, making the cumulative loss to Ontario university budgets about \$1.8 billion over the Harris/Eves period. So, one aspect of the Harris/Eves legacy was a significant contribution to Ontario's postsecondary education deficit.⁹

According to the *Common Sense Revolution*, Ontario's universities were to be given a mechanism to recoup these lost revenues: "we propose to partially de-regulate tuition over a two-year period, enabling schools to charge appropriately for their services." The Tories claimed that this would "enable Ontario taxpayers to save \$400 million, while maintaining funding for our postsecondary system at current levels," even though they had no intention of maintaining university funding at its current, and already insufficient, levels. Permission to deregulate certain programs was given to the universities in 1998, with the proviso that 30 per cent of any tuition increases had to be put towards scholarships and bursaries, making such programs **student self-funded** to a marked degree. Not surprisingly, universities rushed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by deregulation. Programs in medicine, dentistry, law, and high-tech fields

⁸ Michele Landsberg, "Harris Shrugs Off Responsibility," *Toronto Star*, 25 October 1998, A2.

⁹ University budgets also took a substantial hit from the federal government in 1995. The federal budget of that year introduced the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) which replaced individual transfer envelopes for health, higher education, and social programs with a single block transfer that gave the provinces greater discretion about how these funds could be spent, with health care winning out over the other programs. The author of the CHST was the then-Finance Minister, Paul Martin, who now is Prime Minister. See "Paul Martin and the 40 Per Cent Solution," *CAUT Bulletin* (October 1996), accessed via www.caut.ca and "How Ottawa Is Weakening PSE," *CAUT Now!* 2 (21 June 2000). On the Ontario scene see OCUFA, *Between the Numbers: Government Funding Support for Ontario Universities Fails to Redress Educational Deficit*, Research Report 1-3 (Toronto: OCUFA, 2000). For a useful and interesting comparison of the university funding situations in Ontario and Australia see Mark Rosenfeld, "Canuck-Do Higher Education," *Australian Universities Review* 46 (2003): 24-31. See also University of Guelph, *Presidential Task Force on Accessibility to University Education: Interim Report* (Guelph: University of Guelph, 2004) - www.uoguelph.ca/president/ptfa/report.shtml

saw significant tuition increases. For example, at the University of Western Ontario, tuition fees for its medical school rose from \$4,037 in 1996 to \$15,393 in 2003, an increase of 281 per cent, and enough to make the Dean worry about rising student debt. One study found increasing numbers of Ontario medical students expected to graduate with debts of more than \$50,000. Law school fees at the University of Toronto went from \$3,173 in 1996 to \$14,700, in 2003 (up 363 per cent) and were scheduled to rise to \$22,000 by 2006 (for a rise of 593 per cent since 1996).¹⁰ In the light of these dramatic increases, concerns began to be expressed about access to such programs for the members of disadvantaged groups.¹¹

While deregulation meant something of a revenue gain for those Ontario universities with eligible programs, the Tories delivered a very different message about tuition increases for the still regulated programs. These had been allowed to increase from an average of \$2,451 in 1995 to \$3,812 by 1999, or by some 55.5 per cent, compared with an inflation rate of just 6.8 per cent over this same period.¹²

¹⁰ Fee information was gathered in December of 2003 from the websites of the named institutions. For more on the rise of tuition fees at Ontario universities see Michael J. Doucet, "The Tuition Squeeze: A Trans-Generational Perspective," *OCUFA Forum* (Fall 2000), 16-21. See also Hugh Mackenzie and Mark Rosenfeld, *University Funding Cuts: Shortchanging Ontario Students* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2002).

¹¹ Tracey Tyler, "U of T Hikes Law School Tuition 14%: Annual Fee Now \$16,000, Expected to Hit \$22,000 by 2006," *Toronto Star*, 4 April 2003, F3; "Law School Math," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 3 March 2003, A12; Tracy Tyler, "Student Fights Planned Tuition Hike: Law School a 'Pipe Dream' for Blacks," *Toronto Star*, 3 April 2003, B5; Heather Sokoloff, "Tuition Hike Did Not Keep Poor Out of Law School: Number of Black, Aboriginal Students Grew as Costs Rose: U of T Study," *National Post*, 21 February 2003, A7; Carol Goar, "Where High Student Debt Leads," *Toronto Star*, 20 January 2003, A18. On the impacts of the medical school fee increases at Western see Dalice A. Sim, *Report of the 1999 Survey of Medical Students* (London: Telephone Survey Unit, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, University of Western Ontario, 1999); Patrick Maloney, "Medical Students Focus on Tuition," *London Free Press*, 25 September 2003, A3; Shawn Jeffords, "Dean Fears Debt Deterring Doctors," *London Free Press*, 28 August, 2003, B6; CanWest News Service, "Medical Students Burden[ed] with Debt: Mortgage-Size Loans Hit Graduating Docs," *Windsor Star*, 2 September 2003, C1; Jeff C. Kwong et al., "Effects of Rising Tuition Fees on Medical School Class Composition and Financial Outlook," *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 166 (16 April 2002): 1023-1028. See also University of Guelph, *Presidential Task Force on Accessibility to University Education: Interim Report* (Guelph: University of Guelph, 2004) - www.uoguelph.ca/president/ptfa/report.shtml

¹² Both the Liberals and the NDP had allowed tuition to increase. For Bachelor of Arts degrees, it rose from an average of \$1,397 in 1988 to \$2,451 in 1995, or by 75.4 per cent. Inflation over this period was just 21.5 per cent. All inflation figures used in this report have been produced

Starting in 2000, tuition fees in regulated programs were allowed to rise by 2 per cent over the 1999 base, for 2000 and the following four years. This was not, it should be emphasized, a 2 per cent increase each year, since it always related back to the 1999 base year; so the revenue gain associated with regulated programs between 2002 and 2003, for example, was just 1.85 per cent. As with the deregulated programs, 30 per cent of these increases had to be set aside for student aid. So, the real gain to Ontario university operating budgets from the 2002/03 increase in regulated tuition fees was just 1.3 per cent, a figure well below the rate of inflation, 1.6 per cent, for this period. As the years unfolded, the situation proved to be anything but revenue neutral for Ontario's universities. In the face of both inflationary pressures (17.24 per cent between 1995 and 2003) and growth in enrolment, the fiscal position of the Province's public universities eroded significantly during the Harris/Eves years, and the quality of system suffered noticeably as a direct consequence.

The Art of “Cherry Picking” Advice

In 1995, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives inherited a system of public universities that had been chronically under-funded for at least a decade. Under their stewardship, conditions worsened. As one report from the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) argued:

Ontario government funding for universities was 10th out of ten provinces on a per student basis in 2001-2002, and has been 10th on a per capita basis since 1993-94 and on a per *\$1,000 of personal income* basis since 1990-91. Given 2001-2002 funding levels, provincial funding to Ontario universities would have to increase by about \$646 million to reach the funding per student of the other nine provinces, by about \$849 million to reach the funding per [capita] level, and by \$1.2 billion to reach the funding per \$1,000 of personal income level.¹³

The government should have known better. Not only did it ignore funding advice received from OCUFA, the Council of Ontario Universities, and other interested groups it was only too happy to dismiss as “special interests,” it also failed to act on recommendations made to it by the members of both its own hand-picked advisory panel and an equally hand-picked task force.

In 1996, Education and Training Minister John Snobelen established an Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, chaired by former Queen's University Principal David C. Smith.

using the inflation calculator found on the Bank of Canada's website at www.bankofcanada.ca/en/inflation_cal.htm

¹³ Council of Ontario Universities, *Briefing Notes*, October 2003, section 3.3. Italics in the original.

From this group, the Minister sought advice on three “key issues,” matters that were in close accord with the Tory vision for postsecondary education:

- the most appropriate sharing of costs among students, the private sector, and government;
- ways to promote and support cooperation between colleges and universities, and between them and the secondary school system; and
- ways to meet expected levels of demand for postsecondary education, with reference to existing public institutions and existing or proposed private institutions.¹⁴

The Panel’s final report was entitled *Excellence, Accessibility, Responsibility*, and contained 18 far-reaching recommendations. As is often the case, the Provincial Government acted on some of the recommendations, and ignored others, a process commonly called “cherry picking.” For our purposes, it is worth noting the acceptance by the Tories of the proposals to allow limited private universities and limited degree-granting powers for community colleges. They also partially accepted the recommendation that:

an institution should be free to set tuition fees at whatever level it regards as appropriate, program by program, on condition that if an institution chooses to set fees above the government-specified upper limit defined in (ii), it must distribute 30% of the incremental revenue as financial assistance to its students, based on need.

(ii) We recommend that the government set an upper limit on fees used to calculate the amount of government-provided student assistance for which a student would be eligible. There should be a single limit used for all institutions, both publicly- and privately-funded, participating in the public student assistance program.¹⁵

¹⁴ Ministry of Education and Training, “Snobelen Appoints Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education,” media release, 16 July 1996.

¹⁵ Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, *Excellence, Accessibility, Responsibility* (Toronto: Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, 1996), 34, 46, 60. In addition to Smith, the members of the Advisory Panel included David M. Cameron, Chair of Political Science at Dalhousie University; Frederick W. Gorbet, a Vice-President at Manulife Financial in Toronto; Catherine Henderson, President of Centennial College in Scarborough; and Bette M. Stephenson, a medical doctor and former Ontario Minister of Education and of Colleges and Universities (1975 to 1985). See Ministry of Education and Training,

Recommendations such as these were in agreement with the Tories' vision for postsecondary education in Ontario.

What the Harris government refused to accept, however, were the first two recommendations made by the members of the Advisory Panel. These, of course, were the ones with financial implications for the government. In the first recommendation, an attempt was made to both identify the shortfall in university funding and to assign responsibility for rectifying that situation:

We recommend that Ontarians undertake to correct the current serious inadequacies in total financial resources available to postsecondary education. This undertaking is a shared responsibility that includes government, postsecondary institutions, students and their families, and the private sector.

While members of the Panel called for shared responsibility, they were very clear about their expectations for government funding:

Thus, while we appreciate the call for all sectors to share in the general constraints on public expenditures, we believe that much attention must also be given to priorities in a longer-term context. A first-rate postsecondary education system is vital for Ontario's future. To meet this priority, we are convinced that the system should not sustain further reductions in grants, and that a medium-term goal should be for government support to approximate the average of other Canadian provinces and to close the gap with public funding of major public university and college systems in the United States.

The second recommendation of the Advisory Panel attempted both to place the Ontario situation in a broader context and to set reasonable funding-level targets:

We recommend that provincial government support of universities and colleges in Ontario be comparable to the average for other Canadian provinces and be reasonably in line with government support of major public university and college systems in the United States. This goal should be achieved by arresting reductions in government grants now and by

“Backgrounder: Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education,” 16 July 1996. One of the strongest advocates of deregulation of tuition throughout this period was William Leggett, Principal of Queen's University since 1994. Leggett argued in favour of the deregulation of all tuition fees. Even the Tories could not bring themselves to approve this scenario. See Theresa Boyle, “Ontario Turns Down University Fee-Hike Bid,” *Toronto Star* 24 January 2002, A1 and A21.

building towards this goal over several years in ways that strengthen excellence and accessibility.¹⁶

Rather than follow this advice, the Tories chose to allow funding levels to continue to deteriorate. According to research conducted by the Council of Ontario Universities, the funding gap between Ontario and both the other Canadian provinces and comparator US states continued to widen during most of the Harris/Eves period.¹⁷

In September of 2000, Training, Colleges, and Universities Minister Dianne Cunningham announced the establishment of the cleverly-named Investing in Students Task Force to be chaired by Jalynn Bennett. This Task Force was set up to “examine current college and university administrative operations to ensure the accessibility, accountability, and affordability of the system in the future.” The mandate given to the Task Force, with its emphasis on a search for efficiencies, the use of best practices, and the establishment of a business case for any proposals, seemed destined to produce a report that would be sympathetic to the ideological bent of the Tory government. Seven items were listed for the members of the Task Force to consider:

- The purpose of the task force is to advise the Minister on ways to ensure that public funds supporting postsecondary education are directed at providing the highest quality of education while ensuring access for students, affordability, and accountability. In conducting this review, the task force will examine best practices in Ontario and comparable initiatives in other jurisdictions.
- In developing its recommendations, the task force will give full consideration to the significant role that postsecondary institutions play in their local communities, the need to maintain service in local communities while assessing how service delivery may be made more effective, and the need to continue to offer postsecondary education opportunities in English and French in all regions of the province.
- The task force will examine options for shared services, finding “best of class” examples of service provision and looking for administrative applications elsewhere in the postsecondary education system, concentrating on issues of common service delivery and good administrative practices (e.g., information technology, procurement, and data collection).

¹⁶ Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, *Excellence, Accessibility, Responsibility* (Toronto: Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, 1996), 4-5.

¹⁷ Council of Ontario Universities, *Council of Ontario Universities Briefing Notes* (Toronto: COU, 2003), section 3.3.

- The task force will recommend ways to ensure a continuing focus on best practices and their implementation so that current and future spending is directed to meeting the changing needs of students.
- The task force will seek the views of students, postsecondary institutions, faculty and staff associations, local communities, business groups, and other organizations as appropriate to ensure a broad, system level perspective is obtained.
- The task force will solicit proposals from institutions on ways to increase administrative efficiencies through shared services, administrative collaborations, or other activities, while maintaining access and ensuring affordability and accountability. The Task Force may also provide advice to the Minister as appropriate.
- The task force will ensure proposals are accompanied by a strong business case and will develop criteria for such business cases.

Given this mandate, skeptics expected the members of this body to produce a whitewash; but when their report was released in February of 2001, it was a much more balanced document than most had imagined it would be.¹⁸

A number of imposing challenges for universities were identified by the members of the Task Force - record enrolment levels (forecast to rise by 88,000 students by 2005/06), ageing infrastructure, looming faculty shortages due to retirements, and the high costs of the technology needed to ensure currency. No doubt much to the dismay of the Harris Government, the members of the Task Force identified a revenue gap of \$54 million to accommodate university students at current levels of funding for 2001/02, and estimated the gap at \$108 million for 2002/03, \$242 million for 2003/04, \$353 million for 2004/05, and \$351 for 2005/06. The cumulative gap for this period, therefore, amounted to some \$1.1 billion. Members of the Task Force took pains to note:

¹⁸ “New Task Force to Focus Ontario’s Postsecondary Resources on Students,” media release, Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 19 September 2000. Much of the skepticism that greeted the announcement of the creation of the Task Force had to do with its membership, which did not include a single Ontario academic and was heavily weighted towards representation from the business community. Jalynn Bennett, Chair of the Task Force, was president of the strategic planning consulting firm of Jalynn H. Bennett & Associates. Other members included Toronto lawyer Jean Bédard, University of Alberta President Roderick Fraser, Nova Scotia Community College President Ray Ivany, and Hydro One Networks President and CEO Courtney Pratt. The mandate for the Task Force was provided in “Backgrounder: Terms of Reference for the Advisory Task Force on Investing in Students,” Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, 19 September 2000.

these estimates do not include the revenue required to deal with inflationary pressures; to increase investment in postsecondary education to match that of competitive jurisdictions; to maintain the existing physical plant; nor to deal with new and emerging needs, such as improved student services, investments for distributed learning technologies, or the information technology to support innovation. In recent years, declines in operating grants have been managed through increased tuition fees, increasing other revenue sources, and administrative efficiencies. Any flexibility for individual institutions within the system to continue compensating for declining revenues is minimal. Current service levels for students must be improved, not just maintained.

To underscore the true severity of the situation, the members of the Task Force suggested: “the revenue gap projected means that some of our institutions may not survive, let alone thrive.”¹⁹ Like earlier studies of Ontario’s postsecondary educational system, the one chaired by Jalynn Bennett urged the Provincial Government to make substantial new investments. In the words of one OCUFA media release, the Task Force was unable to find a “silver bullet” which would allow the Tories “to avoid paying for quality university education.”²⁰ Sadly, their advice to increase funding would fall on, what most charitably might be called, partially-deaf ears.

In the 1994-95 fiscal year, provincial grants to Ontario universities totalled some \$1.853 billion (Figure 1). This figure represented 67.6 per cent of the universities’ operating income, with the remainder coming from tuition fees (28.5 per cent) and other sources (3.9 per cent). Full-time undergraduate enrolment in Ontario universities stood at 205,618 in the Fall of 1994, with full-time graduate enrolment pegged at 24,201 at that time, for a total of 229,819 full-time university students (Figure 2). These students were taught by 12,792 full-time faculty (Figure 3).²¹

Unfortunately, there is a lag in the reporting of some of these critical measures, so the true nature of the Ontario university system at the end of the Harris/Eves era is not yet known. What is known, however, is far from encouraging. According to one OCUFA study that was based on data from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities: “using the most generous definition of ‘operating funding’ that is reasonable, \$1.803 billion was flowed to public universities in 2002-03,” or \$50 million less in actual

¹⁹ Investing in Students Task Force, *Portals and Pathways: A Review of Postsecondary Education in Ontario* (Toronto: Investing in Students Task Force, 2001), 8.

²⁰ OCUFA, “Government Doesn’t Find Silver Bullet,” media release, 20 March 2001.

²¹ Council of Ontario Universities, *Facts & Figures: A Compendium of Statistics on Ontario Universities 2000* (Toronto: COU, 2002), 45 and 93. The figures for full-time faculty include individuals in both the tenured and non-tenured/sessional streams.

dollars than in 1994/95 when funds already were considered to be inadequate.²² According to the COU, by 2001/02, the provincial contribution to the operating budgets of Ontario's universities had plummeted to just 50.6 per cent, dead last among Canadian provinces (Figure 4).²³

According to the COU, in the Fall of 2003 there were an estimated 310,200 full-time students, both undergraduate and graduate, in Ontario's universities, an increase of some 35.0 per cent over the 1994 totals.²⁴ The most recent data on full-time faculty are for 2000/01 and show a total of just 11,881 individuals, a decline of 7.1 per cent since 1994. Not surprisingly, the ratio of full-time students to full-time faculty at Ontario universities went from 18.0:1 in 1994 to 20.7:1 in 2000, a 15 per cent deterioration in a measure in which Ontario already placed well below the national average, and on which it now stands dead last. Using slightly different data, the COU calculated the rise in the student/faculty ratio to be from 20.1 in 1994 to 22.1 in 1999, for an increase of 10 per cent.²⁵ In comparing these differing results, it is hard to know whether to take solace in the lower growth rate or to lament the higher ratio. OCUFA data suggest the student/faculty ratio rose from 22.1 in 1999/2000 to an estimated 23.8 in 2002/2003, or a deterioration of some 7.7 per cent in just four years. Whatever the choice among these varying estimates, the news was not good for Ontario students and their parents. In fact, Ontario has had the highest university student/faculty ratio among Canadian provinces since 1992. Given the massive increase in enrolment since the Fall of 2000, an increase that was not matched by any noticeable faculty-hiring frenzy, the student-faculty ratio should be even worse for 2003/2004.²⁶ This, too, is part of the Harris/Eves legacy to Ontario's public universities.

The Double Cohort

²² *Under OCUFA Scrutiny: The PC Position on Higher Education* (Toronto: OCUFA, 2003), 1.

²³ Council of Ontario Universities, *Briefing Notes*, October 2003, section 2.1.

²⁴ Full-time undergraduate enrolment grew by 34.8 per cent between 1994 and 2003, while graduate enrolment grew by 36.8 per cent over this period.

²⁵ Council of Ontario Universities, *Facts & Figures 2000: A Compendium of Statistics on Ontario Universities* (Toronto: COU, 2001), 69 and *Ontario Universities - 2002 Resource Document* (Toronto: COU, 2002), 88.

²⁶ OCUFA data indicate that the number of full-time faculty in Ontario increased from 11,889 in 2000/01 to 12,552 in 2002/03, an increase of 5.6 per cent. Over the same period, the number of full-time-equivalent students rose by 13.0 per cent, or by more than twice the rate of the growth in full-time faculty.

While university enrolment in Ontario already had begun to rise in the late 1990s for a trio of reasons – the increasing participation of high-school graduates, demographic changes (the baby boom echo), and the realization of the need for life-long learning by older individuals – 2003 was viewed as a momentous year. In that year, there would be two groups graduating from Ontario’s secondary schools – the last group of Grade 13/OAC students and the first group from the new four-year curriculum. Together, these students became known as the “double cohort,” and an enormous degree of anxiety was a characteristic often associated with the members of this group. One Ontario university Director of Admissions aptly described the looming student wave in a single word – “scary.”²⁷

The Tory government was slow in providing assistance to Ontario’s universities in the face of this steadily and quite predictably advancing onslaught. In fact, the decision to eliminate Ontario’s extra year of secondary school had been announced in 1997, so there should have been plenty of time to allow universities to get ready for the double cohort year. Unfortunately, they were not to be given that luxury because the Tories had no comprehensive plan in place to deal with the matter.²⁸ In fact, two reports commissioned by the COU posed a pair of fundamental questions, the answers to which remained rather uncertain: “Will There Be Room for Me?” and “Will There Be Enough Excellent Profs?” And, at the very time when enrolment at Ontario universities was projected to soar, the Province also was being warned of a looming faculty shortage crisis that was considered worthy of front-page newspaper coverage.²⁹

Lack of preparation, however, did not stop the political rhetoric. In the 1999 provincial election, the Harris government made the following bold and quite foolish promise: “**we commit that every willing**

²⁷ Murray Campbell, “Student Numbers Are Up – So’s the Anxiety,” *Globe and Mail*, 17 January 2003, A7; Mark Rosenfeld and Amy Dickieson Kaufman, “The State of Higher Education in Ontario: Bursting at the Seams,” in Denise Doherty-Delorme and Erika Shaker (eds.), *Missing Pieces IV: An Alternative Guide to Canadian Post-Secondary Education* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2003), 59-63; Steve Kravitz, “Double Cohort Is ‘Scary’,” *The Ryersonian*, 2 October 2002, 1 and 3.

²⁸ OCUFA, “No ‘Comprehensive Plan’ to Deal with Double Cohort, Says OCUFA,” media release, 13 August 2001.

²⁹ PriceWaterhouseCoopers, “*Will There Be Room for Me?*” (Toronto: COU, 1999); David C. Smith, “*Will There Be Enough Excellent Profs?: Report on Prospective Demand and Supply Conditions for University Faculty in Ontario* (Toronto: COU, 2000); OCUFA, *Less Isn’t More: Ontario’s Faculty Shortage Crisis*, Research Report 1-4 (Toronto: OCUFA, 2001); Byron G. Spencer, *The Double Cohort and the Shortage of Faculty: How Big Are the Problems?* (Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute, 2002); Kristin Rushowy, “Hunt On for 15,000 Professors: Universities Face Loss of Teachers, Influx of Students,” *Toronto Star*, 15 January 2001, A1 and A11.

and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend college or university.³⁰ In the ensuing years, these words would become a mantra for The Hon. Dianne Cunningham, Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU). Like many a mantra, the words would begin to ring hollow in the face of the fiscal reality faced by Ontario's universities, especially as it became increasingly difficult to predict the size of the "willing and qualified" group.

While the Tories eventually promised to fully fund any new enrolment growth associated with the double cohort, the new funding that was given was handed over on a slip-year, or after-the-fact basis, which further compounded budgeting problems for Ontario universities, making planning unnecessarily difficult for their senior administrators. To the Tories, this probably represented an attempt to provide "just-in-time-funding"; it proved to be anything but that. Moreover, initial funding projections had been based on unrealistic assumptions concerning high-school graduation rates.

Early forecasts had suggested there would be about 61,000 first-year students coming directly from high school to Ontario universities in the Fall of 2003; ultimately, just over 76,000, or almost one-quarter more than originally predicted, had to be accommodated. This represented a 42 per cent increase in relation to the direct-high-school-entry first-year class of 2002, which itself had been 16.7 per cent larger than the class of 2001, because thousands of high-school students attempted to fast-track their way to university to avoid the double-cohort crush (Figure 5).³¹

In the end, government predictions concerning the size of the "double-cohort" class proved to be "not in the ballpark," and created much distrust among applicants and their parents; yet, it took many months of tough, and, sometimes surprisingly public, bargaining by Ontario's university presidents to convince the Provincial Government to provide funding at the traditional rates for each and every new student.³² Furthermore, the Tories failed to deal with the roughly 6 to 7 per cent of students already in the

³⁰ PC Party of Ontario, *Blueprint: Mike Harris's Plan to Keep Ontario on the Right Track* (Toronto: PC Party of Ontario, 1999), 45. Bold in the original.

³¹ Ontario Universities' Application Centre data for 25 September 2003. In addition to the direct high school entrants, Ontario's universities had 13,446 non-secondary registrants as full-time students in Fall 2003, down from 14,912 in Fall 2002, a decrease of 9.8 per cent. In 2003, by Government directive, priority was given to the applications from direct high school applicants. Canadian Press, "Students Rushing to Graduate Early," *Globe and Mail*, 25 February 2002, A16; Sarah Schmidt, "Sorting Students 'Very, Very Tricky' for Universities: 101,668 Students Apply for 61,284 Spots," *National Post*, 22 January 2003, A13.

³² A glimpse into the concerns over funding levels can be found in Council of Ontario Universities, *Funding For Ontario Universities: The Detailed Picture* (Toronto: COU, 2002). See also, Christine Cox, "Universities May Face Student Struggle: Still Unclear How Many They Must Accept and Whether They'll Have the Funding for Them," *Hamilton Spectator*, 18 January 2003 A5;

system for whom no government grants were provided. Moreover, they forced universities to give preference in the admissions' process to direct high-school entrants over all other types of applicants, perhaps reflecting a new-found Tory belief in *jeunesse oblige*.

If direct high-school applicants had reason for anxiety in 2003, mature students, international applicants, out-of-province applicants, and those wishing to transfer from one university to another within Ontario had even more to be worried about. Applications from such individuals grew by 9.4 per cent between 2002 and 2003, but their actual registrations declined by 9.8 per cent over the same period, creating a year-over-year gap of almost 20 per cent. Simply because of their place and/or year of birth, some of the willing and qualified did not even rate consideration in the rush to deal with the massive pool of high-school applicants.

Perhaps fearful that the promise of their mantra could not be delivered, in 2000 the Tories passed the mischievously-named *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act*, a piece of legislation designed to permit the certification of private universities and to allow community colleges to grant applied degrees in addition to their widely-recognized and time-tested diplomas. While no private universities have yet been approved by the Education Quality Assessment Board established by the *Choice and Excellence Act*, some community colleges were given permission to establish applied degree programs. It is not yet known the extent to which "willing and qualified" university applicants resorted to the exercise of this option in 2003.

Creating Spaces for the "Willing and Qualified": The SuperBuild Saga

Hank Daniszewski, "Extra \$60 Million Sought to Handle Flood of Grads," *London Free Press*, 21 January 2003, A1-A2; Sarah Schmidt, "University Crush to Cost Ontario \$60M," *National Post*, 18 January 2003, A10 and "Double Cohort Class Will Be Too Large by 10,000 Spaces: Applications Indicate Preparations for Fall 'Not in the Ballpark'," *National Post*, 18 December 2002, A2; Louise Brown, "20,000 Face Entry Refusal by Universities: Survey Shows Lack of Funds to Handle Enrolment Surge," *Toronto Star*, 30 January 2002, A1 and A18; "Education Put at Risk," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 31 January 2002, A24; Kim Honey, "Double Cohort May Keep 7,000 Out of University, Report Finds," *Globe and Mail*, 17 October 2002, A7; "University Hangs Out 'No Vacancy' Sign," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 29 April 2002, A20; Wallace Immen, "Double-Cohort Plan at Risk: Ryerson, U of T Warn Admissions Will Be Cut Unless Ontario Injects Cash for Extra Students," *Globe and Mail*, 29 April 2002, A15; Sarah Schmidt, "Students Expect to Be Shut Out of Universities: Distrust of Government's Guarantee of Placement," *National Post*, 17 October 2002, A7; Murray Campbell, "Parents Don't Buy Tory Promises on Double Cohort," *Globe and Mail*, 18 May 2002, A11; Louise Brown, "Cohort Creates Parental Panic: Universities Rush to Quell Boomers' Admission Fears," *Toronto Star*, 30 March 2002, A1 and A26.

On the capital side of university ledgers, the Tories, during most of their years in office, proved to be just as miserly as they were with operating budgets. Over the first half of the 1990s, Bob Rae's NDP government had provided an average of \$93.6 million (expressed in 2000/2001 constant dollars) in capital grants to universities each year. The Harris/Eves governments provided \$56.8 million in 1995/96, \$36.9 million in 1996/97, \$39.3 million in 1997/98, \$37.0 million in 1998/99, \$94.1 million in 2000/01, and a record low \$26.7 million in 2001/02, for an average of just \$48.5 million in those years (all figures expressed in 2001/02 constant dollars).³³

The Tories eventually responded to the pressing need for new classrooms, labs, and other facilities that would be required to deal with the double cohort through the SuperBuild program. Announced in the Provincial Budget of 1999, the SuperBuild venture initially was intended to create some 73,000 new spaces in the province's colleges and universities, and saw capital grants to universities rise to \$621.9 million in 1999/2000.

While SuperBuild did result in the injection of about \$1.1 billion of provincial government money into university and college capital facilities over three separate rounds of competition, several important strings were associated with it.³⁴ First, universities were required to provide matching funds for their capital projects, which put newer universities and those located in Northern Ontario at a distinct disadvantage

³³ Council of Ontario Universities, *Ontario Universities - 2002 Resource Document* (Toronto: COU, 2002), xii, 70, 71.

³⁴ According to MTCU, *SuperBuild Projects for Postsecondary Institutions - Spring 2003: Summary of Funded Projects by Region* (accessed on 22 December 2003 from www.edu.gov.on.ca/superbuild/english/summary/summary2003.html), by May of 2003, SuperBuild had created 100,604 student spaces at Ontario's universities and community colleges. The same document listed government, or SuperBuild, funding at \$1,161.57 million, and other, or matching, funding at \$1,436.30 million. In other words, the government's contribution to this capital spending spree was just 44.7 per cent of the total value of the projects. At this juncture, it is not yet clear either how much of the "matching" 55.3 per cent the universities and colleges have been able to raise or how much has had to be covered through mortgages and other financing vehicles. What is clear, however, is that over time the matching grants have grown as a burden on university budgets. When the original SuperBuild announcements were made in 2000, they called for the creation of 73,079 student spaces. The funding allocations at that time were given as SuperBuild - \$891.37 million and other funding - \$817.91 million. This meant the provincial government grants would cover 52.1 per cent of the value of the projects, with matching funds standing at 47.9 per cent. The changes in these distributions between 2000 and 2003, no doubt, were due to the establishment of more realistic budgets for the individual projects themselves, with the government unwilling to absorb any of the rising costs associated with changes in such things as the rate of inflation and changes in the costs of materials and labour. See www.edu.gov.on.ca/superbuild/english/summary/summary2000.html

because of their smaller alumni and corporate bases.³⁵ In a rather impressive display of *chutzpah*, the Tories spoke during the 2003 election campaign of the \$2.6 billion in funding associated with the SuperBuild program as if it came entirely from the government. They boasted that this largesse represented “the biggest capital investment in post-secondary education in nearly half a century.”³⁶ Given the parsimony of provincial government contributions to postsecondary capital projects over this period, it would not have taken a very large investment to substantiate this claim.

Without question, the SuperBuild grants tended to favour certain types of structures over others. The Tories proved unable to resist the urge to forecast the demands the economy would place on future university graduates, a path fraught with dangers, and one that ignored the reality of student choices and abilities. According to a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA), social sciences and humanities programs lost out to those in engineering, business, and computer science in the SuperBuild allocation process, especially in the early rounds. The CCPA study indicated that 51 per cent of SuperBuild funds had gone to projects associated with the former programs, while just 3 per cent had gone to facilities for the latter group of programs. In spite of a Ministry claim that “one of the criteria for approving the new buildings was high student demand for specific programs,” such allocations hardly reflected the academic choices being made by Ontario students. In 1999/2000, 24 per cent of Ontario university students were enrolled in engineering, computer science, and business programs, while 40 per cent were enrolled in programs of study in the humanities and social sciences.³⁷

³⁵ OCUFA, *Ontario’s Northern Universities: A Comparative Study of Enrolment and Revenue*, Research Report 3-1 (Toronto: OCUFA, 2002) and Heather-jane Robertson, David McGrane, and Erika Shaker, *For Cash and Future Considerations: Ontario Universities and Public-Private Partnerships* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2003), Appendices 1-4.

³⁶ PC Party of Ontario, *The Road Ahead: Premier Ernie Eves’ Plan for Ontario’s Future* (Toronto: PC Party of Ontario, 2003), 32. In their platform, the Tories also claimed that more than 135,000 new student spaces were to be created through this funding. The official SuperBuild records, however, placed the number at 100,604, noting that “colleges and universities have committed to creating an additional 36,000 spaces through facility renewal and better use of existing spaces.” See the footnotes to the 2003 SuperBuild posting at: www.edu.gov.on.ca/superbuild/english/summary/summary2003.html

³⁷ Heather-jane Robertson, David McGrane, and Erika Shaker, *For Cash and Future Considerations: Ontario Universities and Public-Private Partnerships* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2003), 41-42. For commentary on this study see Caroline Alphonso, “Arts Programs Suffer as Business Gets Funds,” *Globe and Mail*, 24 September 2003, A7 and “Two-Tier Funding Hurts Education,” editorial, *London Free Press*, 28 September 2003, 14. Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, *Setting Out: The Double Cohort and You* (Toronto: Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2002), n.p.

While SuperBuild promised to deliver some much-needed physical facilities to Ontario's university campuses, it did not, by any means, deal with all of the problems associated with the accommodation of enrolment growth. According to OCUFA, by 2001 the province needed to provide the equivalent of one new McMaster University every year for four years to meet the rising demand for university places associated with the double cohort. Others predicted a continuing space crunch due to the escalating demand for university education due to the baby-boom echo, the trend to life-long learning, and increased participation rates.³⁸

SuperBuild funds provided only certain types of university infrastructure. Most of the SuperBuild money was directed towards the construction of classrooms, laboratories, office space, and other structures. These facilities did not add up to the entire space needs of the students: for universities are far more than classrooms, labs, and offices. In spite of the relatively massive investment in physical facilities, few Ontario universities had the luxury of contemplating additions to their recreational, student service, library, lounge, and study space. On many campuses, these things already were being heavily used, frequently to the point of overuse. Even as the new structures did spring up, concerns about quality, and even safety, remained. As one editorial warned early in 2003: "what will students get in return for their financial, academic, and nervous expenditures? Many will gain admission to seriously crowded, understaffed institutions far from home."³⁹ Moreover, years of underfunding meant that the deferred maintenance bill for Ontario universities stood at about \$1 billion by 2003, leaving parts of many campuses in a very sorry state that was being monitored by a shrinking base of maintenance workers.⁴⁰

³⁸ OCUFA, *Brief to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs* (Toronto: OCUFA, 2001), 1; Sarah Schmidt, "Space Crunch Coming Sooner to Universities: 'Echo Boom' Generation, Mature Students Push Fast-Rising Enrolment," *Ottawa Citizen*, 17 January 2004, A5.

³⁹ "Lots of Students, Restricted Space," editorial, *Guelph Mercury*, 16 January 2003, A8.

⁴⁰ Sarah Schmidt, "Ontario Universities Say Crush Threatens Quality of Education: Faculty, Services Need More Funding," *National Post*, 21 January 2003, A8; "Lots of Students, Restricted Space," editorial, *Guelph Mercury*, 16 January 2003, A8; Caroline Alphonso, "Student Acceptances Swamp Universities: Double-Cohort May Force Schools to Hold Classes in Movie Theatres, on Saturdays," *Globe and Mail*, 20 June 2003, A11; Erinn White, "Crunch Time Approaches for Aging Campus Buildings," *Guelph Mercury*, 13 December 2003, A9; Albert Warson, "Campuses Face Huge Repair Bills: Universities Grapple with \$3.6 Billion Cost to Simply Fix Up and Maintain Buildings," *Globe and Mail*, 12 August 2003, B9; "Our Groaning Universities," editorial, *London Free Press*, 17 August 2003, 16; Murray Campbell, "Double Cohort: Does Space Equal Quality?," *Globe and Mail*, 3 May 2003, A11. According to White, the trades and maintenance staff at the University of Guelph declined from 500 in the early 1990s to closer to 300 by late 2003. See also Canadian Association of University Business Officers, *A Point of No Return: The Urgent Need for Infrastructure Renewal at Canadian Universities* (Ottawa: CAUBO, 1999).

Without question, new bricks and mortar were a welcome sight at Ontario universities, but the SuperBuild program still left dangling significant questions about the source of funding to staff, run, maintain, and pay down the mortgages on the new structures. With many universities struggling to come up with their required matching funds, university administrators were forced to turn to mortgage and financial markets. Down the road, scarce operating funds will have to be used to pay for this borrowing binge. A ticking time bomb of debt, therefore, also was part of the Harris/Eves legacy to Ontario's universities.⁴¹

In the end, and in spite of the assurances given by Dr. Mordechai Rozanski in early May of 2003, when he was both Chair of the Council of Ontario Universities and President of the University of Guelph, there would not be a place for "every willing and qualified Ontario student" in the Province's public universities for several reasons.⁴² For one thing, they arrived in larger numbers than originally expected, so, even under the best-case scenario, there simply could not have been enough physical space for them on Ontario's university campuses. When Dr. Rozanski and the Council of Ontario Universities issued their endorsement of the Government's support for the double cohort, the COU press release suggested Ontario's universities were ready for 70,000 double cohort students, and listed SuperBuild spaces exactly matching that figure, thousands of which would not be open until at least 2004. Within six weeks, another COU press release suggested almost 72,000 high school graduates had accepted offers of admission from an Ontario university, a number that would climb even higher as September approached.⁴³

⁴¹ Sarah Schmidt, "Universities Struggle with Building Plans: SuperBuild Funds Falling Far Short of Project Costs," *National Post*, 16 September 2003, A13; Murray Campbell, "Where Are All the SuperBuild Private Partners?," *Globe and Mail*, 9 July 2002, A8.

⁴² In what has to be regarded as a questionable act of judgment by both COU and Dr. Rozanski, the following quotation from him was included in a document that was part of the PC platform in the 2003 election: "The Ontario government is delivering the resources. Ontario's universities can now deliver the places. Ontario's universities will be able to continue the tradition, established over three decades, of providing a place for all qualified graduates." As quoted in PC Party of Ontario, *The Road Ahead, Policy Paper #4: Providing Advanced Education* (Toronto: PC Party of Ontario, 2003), 2. The platform for the campaign restated the old Tory mantra: "**we guarantee a place in a college or university program for every willing and qualified student in Ontario**" (Ibid., 3). See also Heather Sokoloff, "Universities Can Meet Needs of Double Cohort: Late Funding by Province Enough, Administrators Say," *National Post*, 30 April 2003, A2. For a contrary view see Henry Jacek, "Double Cohort: 'A Day Late and a Dollar Short'," *Toronto Star*, 28 May 2003, A25.

⁴³ Council of Ontario Universities, "Universities Now Ready for 70,000 Double Cohort Students in September: Government Investments Enable Universities to Deliver on Access and Quality," press release, 2 May 2003 and "Close to 72,000 Students Accept Offers of Admission from Ontario Universities: Acceptances of Offers Reflect Historical Norms," press release, 19 June 2003.

Moreover, funding for capital projects came far too late to ensure that the new spaces could be ready in time, and labour and materials shortages delayed the completion of a number of projects at several universities.⁴⁴ Furthermore, announcements concerning the third round of SuperBuild funding, which promised to add some 21,484 new student spaces - 21.4 per cent of the total spaces associated with the program, were not made until April 2003. The bulk of the “double cohort” enrolment was expected to arrive in September of 2003, but research by OCUFA found that many projects funded in the first two rounds would not be ready until at least the Fall of 2004, while those associated with the third round would not open until 2005.⁴⁵

It would, therefore, take ingenuity and luck to accommodate the looming crush of Ontario undergraduates. If there was a space for every willing and qualified Ontario student in the province’s universities in the Fall of 2003, the actual size of that space appeared to be shrinking, at least in the minds of most reasonable observers. The double cohort was not so much accommodated, rather it was squeezed in; and faculty, academic librarians, teaching assistants, support staff, and university administrators did their level best, under very difficult circumstances, to provide them with a university education. As one newspaper editorial observed early in 2003:

universities have prepared as best they can for the double-cohort onslaught. The provincial government, in its tight-fisted, ham-handed, and ill-planned way, has done so too. But what neither has counted on (thus far at least) are the extraordinary numbers of high-school graduates who may be forced to seek supportive, unskilled employment opportunities in a shrinking market outside the universities and colleges.⁴⁶

Competition and Anxiety

⁴⁴ The situation was especially noticeable in the Niagara region, where the competition for workers and materials came from the activity associated with the building of a new casino in Niagara Falls. For the impact on Brock University see Dave Kewley, “Brock Caught Short of Rooms: Delays in Finishing New Residence Force University to Put Students in Motels,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 8 September 2003, B2; Peter Downs, “Brock Students Unfazed by Residence Controversy: Anxious to Move In Soon, Tired of Living in Hotels,” *St. Catharines Standard*, 20 September 2003, A1.

⁴⁵ *Under OCUFA Scrutiny: The PC Position on Higher Education* (Toronto: OCUFA, 2003), 3-4.

⁴⁶ “Lots of Students, Restricted Space,” editorial, *Guelph Mercury*, 16 January 2003, A8.

Given the time lag between SuperBuild funding announcements and project completion dates, the competition for the spaces that would be available in Ontario's universities in the Fall of 2003 was fierce across all programs. For many years, students achieving an average grade of 80 per cent on their six best final-year high-school courses have been known as Ontario Scholars. That level of achievement no longer was sufficient to guarantee access to some university programs, especially in 2003.

According to published reports, admittance grades rose by from 3 to 10 per cent for many programs. For example, at McMaster University, the average entrance grade rose from 82.6 per cent in 2002 to 85.3 per cent in 2003, with all 5,334 of its first-year students arriving with averages of at least 75 per cent. In the previous year, 10.5 per cent of its 4,728 first-year students had been accepted with averages of less than 75 per cent. Clearly, competition had stiffened, shutting out many willing and qualified students with solid "B" averages. Ontario universities reported there were between five and ten applications for every available spot in their first-year programs, all of which complicated the admissions' process.⁴⁷

In spite of these realities, a COU document intended to assuage the concerns of university applicants and their parents contained this rather unhelpful information about minimum entrance requirements under the new curriculum as the first item in a list of frequently asked questions:

the completion of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, or the equivalent, with a minimum overall average of 60% and six Grade 12 U or M courses, will be necessary for admission to an Ontario university. Most universities and/or programs have higher admission averages.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Christine Cox, "Mac's Entrance Marks Rise to Average 85.3% in 2003," *Hamilton Spectator*, 13 December 2003, A4; Caroline Alphonso, "Universities Raise Early-Admittance Marks: Ontario Students Can Blame Double Cohort for Increased Competition," *Globe and Mail*, 15 May 2003, A13; Louise Brown, "Universities Playing the Numbers Game: Double Cohort Complicates Admission," *Toronto Star*, 3 March 2003, A4; Sarah Schmidt, "Sorting Students 'Very, Very Tricky' for Universities: Double Cohort: 101,688 Students Apply for 61,284 Spots," *National Post*, 22 January 2003, A13; Caroline Alphonso, "Entrance Marks at Highest Levels: Many University Applicants Must Have Grades in the Range of 80 to 90 Per Cent," *Globe and Mail*, 18 January 2003, A12; Murray Campbell, "Why Make It More Difficult to Get a University Education?," *Globe and Mail*, 20 January 2003, A11; Joe Belanger, "Extra Grads Flood Universities: Scrapping Grade 13 Means Up to 10,000 Applicants Won't Find Places at University," *London Free Press*, 19 January 2003, A1 and A11; Margaret Philip, "Good Marks Won't Be Enough for Graduates," *Globe and Mail*, 17 October 2002, A7.

⁴⁸ Council of Ontario Universities, *The Knowledge Track: The Double Cohort*, n.d., accessed from www.cou.on.ca in December 2003.

If the “willing and qualified” were to be defined as those with relevant averages of at least 60 per cent, there were bound to be thousands of disappointed young Ontarians come September of 2003.

In the end, almost 103,000 high school students applied for admission to an Ontario university for the Fall of 2003, an increase of 46 per cent over 2002 (Figure 6). Ultimately, only 46 per cent of these applicants were accepted into the university and program of study they had listed as their first choice, down from 49 per cent in 2002. If there were spaces for the willing and qualified, clearly they were not always nearby.⁴⁹ As one editorial warned:

the Ontario government has made promises that no qualified applicant would be turned away, and it should keep its promises. It would be a shame if the less affluent, for instance, were to find the artificial hurdles of the double cohort too high. The students have done their part; now the adults must do theirs.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, the adults did not play their part. Another editorial placed the blame squarely on the shoulders of the Provincial Government:

. . . Many graduating students, even some leaving high school with honours, will have a tough time getting into the universities or programs of their choosing. . . . But the result is that plenty of otherwise qualified students will find themselves shunted to postsecondary institutions that were not their first, second, or even third choice. And all because they had the misfortune to be born in 1984 or 1985 and to be at the mercy of a government that has bungled the whole issue from the beginning. . . . [Because] Queen’s Park didn’t do its homework properly before embarking on this experiment, enormous pressure is being

⁴⁹ As reported in Kristin Rushowy and Louise Brown, “Northern University Welcomes Freshmen from the GTA,” *Toronto Star*, 20 June 2003, A22. Preliminary figures from the Ontario Universities’ Application Centre for 2004 counted 71,222 direct high-school applicants. While this represented a 30.1 per cent decrease over 2003, it was 2.8 per cent higher than had been the case in 2002, and 19.0 per cent higher than in 2001. Leaving aside 2003, the trend continues upward in terms of applications to Ontario universities from those about to leave high school.

⁵⁰ “Ontario’s Student Flood,” editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 27 January 2003, A14. See also Tess Kalinowski, “Nursing Leads Dramatic Surge in University Applications: High School Grads Drive Up Demand for Programs,” *Toronto Star*, 23 January 2003, A21; Louise Brown and Tess Kalinowski, “Space Crunch for Class of 2003: Enrolment Surges at Smaller Schools: Double Cohort Strains System,” *Toronto Star*, 23 January 2003, A1 and A20.

placed on the shoulders of students whose only mistake was to have entered the school system at the wrong time. They deserve a lot better.⁵¹

Applicants seeking direct entry from an Ontario high school employed a number of strategies to improve their chances for admission to university, among which applying to multiple universities/programs was paramount. The 2003 applicants listed an average of 5.1 university/program choices on their applications, compared with an average of 4.2 in 2002. Indeed, it was reported that one student applied to 51 Ontario university programs, at an application cost of \$1,255.⁵² Moreover, the better students also applied to, and accepted positions at, out-of-province universities in record numbers for Fall 2003, creating housing shortages on many campuses in Atlantic Canada, many of which had aggressively recruited Ontario students. McGill University also experienced a surge in applications from Ontarians, and purchased the Renaissance-Montreal Hotel to provide residence space for its burgeoning number of out-of-province students.⁵³

Even in 2002/03, Ontarians had made up 15.2 per cent of the full-time student body at Dalhousie University in Halifax. Applications to Dalhousie by Ontario students increased by 300 per cent in 2003, with other Atlantic Canada universities experiencing similar increases. According to published reports, Ontario first-year registrants increased from 424 in 2002 to almost 800 in 2003 at Dalhousie, and from 86 to 320 at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton and from 156 to 400 at Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec over the same period. At these three institutions alone, registrations by Ontario students rose from 666 to about 1,500, an increase on the order of 125 per cent and well above the 46 per cent increase in the Ontario high-school applicant pool. In response to this competition, some Ontario universities sent early offers of admission to their most promising applicants.⁵⁴ Another aspect of the

⁵¹ "Cramming for Courses," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 20 May 2003, A14. See also "Tories' Poor Planning Is Failing the Cohort," editorial, *Toronto Star*, 20 October 2002, A12.

⁵² "Ontario's Student Flood," editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 27 January 2003, A14.

⁵³ Caroline Alphonso, "Shortage of Residence Rooms Hitting Atlantic Universities: Double Cohort Means That Students Must Seek Out Alternatives," *Globe and Mail*, 26 August 2003, A3; Louise Brown, "McGill Buys Hotel to Help House Out-of-Province Students," *Toronto Star*, 16 April 2003, A24.

⁵⁴ Louise Brown, "Universities Across the Country Drawing Students from Ontario: Our Double Cohort Loss Is Their Gain," *Toronto Star*, 24 June 2003, A3; Caroline Alphonso and Shawna Richer, "Dalhousie's Many Charms Making It a Hit with Ontarians: Popularity Up as Double-Cohort Students Hedge Bets by Looking Out of Province," *Globe and Mail*, 13 January 2003, A3; Caroline Alphonso, "Atlantic Schools Lure Ontario's Best," *Globe and Mail*, 4 March 2003, A1-A2; Louise Brown, "U of T Hustles for Best Grads: Offers Sent Early to Top 10 Per Cent of Applicants," *Toronto Star*, 15 April 2003, A18.

Harris/Eves legacy, then, was to ensure that record numbers of bright Ontarians would elect to choose to study at universities located outside the Province.

Another strategy emerged early on for some members of the double cohort. Even before universities had made their final admission decisions, they sought relief from the stress and anxiety associated with the application process in 2003, and decided to return to high school. There were at least three reasons cited for this course of action: namely, to avoid the fierce competition of 2003, to improve their high-school average, and to earn money to help offset rising tuition and other costs. The numbers who followed this path were anything but inconsequential – just over one-quarter of high school graduates returned to high school in the Fall of 2003 in London’s Thames Valley District School Board, with fully 56 per cent returning in the Toronto District School Board, up from an original forecast of a 40 per cent return rate.⁵⁵

Space Shortage and Space Quality

For the lucky students who did get into the Ontario university of their choice in September of 2003, a quality experience did not always meet them on arrival. The hard-to-predict admissions process left several universities with too few residence spaces. The U of T bought the Colony Hotel in downtown Toronto, and converted it into a popular residence, though one with a premium price of about \$2,000 above the normal U of T residence rate. On some campuses, single rooms were converted to doubles, and doubles were converted to triples, a situation described in one editorial as “Sardine U.” In the face of significant shortages, both McMaster and Wilfrid Laurier resorted to bribes to entice some to give up their spots. The incentives offered included bookstore credits, tuition credits, computers, and food credits.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Marissa Nelson, “Grade 12s Return to High Schools in Droves,” *London Free Press*, 2 October 2003, B5; Kristin Rushowy, “Half of Double Cohort Staying Put: 56 Per Cent of Students in Toronto Take Extra Year: Economics, Avoiding Competition, Upgrading Marks Cited,” *Toronto Star*, 1 October 2003, B1 and B4; Caroline Alphonso, “Graduates Flock Back to Ontario Schools,” *Globe and Mail*, 18 September 2003, A10; Kristin Rushowy, “Double Cohort Students Return to School: Toronto Board Expects 40 Per Cent Back,” *Toronto Star*, 18 September 2003, A23; Louise Brown, “Students Pass on Double Cohort Rush: Some Plan to Return to High School after Graduating: Polishing Marks, Earning Tuition Cited as Reasons,” *Toronto Star*, 19 April 2003, A4.

⁵⁶ Louise Brown, “Students the Stars at This Grand Hotel: U of T Renovated Downtown Colony as Overflow Dorms,” *Toronto Star*, 8 August 2003, E1; Louise Brown, “Will That Be Residence, or a Free PC?: Wilfrid Laurier 80 Rooms Short: Offers \$2,500 in Goods to Vacate,” *Toronto Star*, 16 July 2003, A4; Caroline Alphonso, “Universities Give Gifts for Students’ Rooms,” *Globe and Mail*, 16 July 2003, A1 and A8; “Don’t-Move-In Condition,” editorial, *Globe and Mail*, 18 July 2003, A14; “Welcome to Sardine U,” editorial, *Toronto Star*, 18 July 2003, A22; Jennifer

Crowding became a reality for many students in 2003. They faced long lineups for a variety of on-campus services, and classroom crowding was widely reported. On a number of campuses residences, cafeterias, and even libraries were not ready for occupancy/use until several weeks after the start of the fall semester. At Ryerson University, many students attended lectures in an old, off-campus multiplex movie theatre, while those at McMaster sat in portable lecture halls, and those at the U of T were more likely than ever to have a class in the 1,500-seat Convocation Hall. Not all of these innovations were well received by students.⁵⁷

Furthermore, graduate students on several campuses were complaining about the increased workloads associated with their duties as teaching assistants in the face of the double cohort. At the University of Guelph, their union, CUPE, launched a study into the situation. In some subjects, especially mathematics, special tutorials were needed to ensure that those who had graduated from the new four-year curriculum were at the same level as their Grade 13 classmates. Without doubt, this remedial effort added to the workload of teaching assistants and faculty. All hoped it would be a short-term glitch.⁵⁸ At the same

Hamilton-McCharles, "Student Housing in Demand: More than 300 in Search of Off-Campus Housing," *North Bay Nugget*, 12 July 2003, A1.

⁵⁷ Wendy Glauser, "Studying at Frustration U.," *Toronto Star*, 6 January 2004, C3; Joe Castaldo and Andrea Jezavit, "Prof Sparks Carlton Inspection: Registrar's Office to Inspect Theatre 9 after Prof Slams Bad Lighting and Limited Seating," *The Ryersonian*, 17 September 2003, 3; Elysse Zarek, "Solution Doesn't Sit Well," *The Eyeopener*, 17 September 2003, 5; Louise Brown, "Notepad, Pen . . . Popcorn, Drink: Classes Held at Carlton Cinema: Space Crunch Irks Ryerson Students," *Toronto Star*, 16 September 2003, A1 and A4; Louise Brown, "Student Cohort to Cram Classes: Vast U of T Hall Will See Heavy Use: Students Race to Register Online," *Toronto Star*, 24 July 2003, B3; Louise Brown and Kristin Rushowy, "Almost All University Applicants to Get Spots: Double-Cohort Year Sees Over 71,000 Accepted: But Critics Warn of Crowding, Lineups, Scarcer Resources," *Toronto Star*, 19 June 2003, A7; Caroline Alphonso, "University Students Scramble for Classes," *Globe and Mail*, 23 July 2003, A6; Caroline Alphonso, "Fact: Lineups Part of College Life: Double-Cohort Class to Strain Services; Even Washroom Space at a Premium," *Globe and Mail*, 7 February 2003, A7; Sarah Schmidt, "Universities to Hold Classes in Portables: U of T and McMaster," *National Post*, 9 October 2002, A1 and A6.

⁵⁸ Jon Willing, "Teaching Assistants' Workload Surveyed: Impact of Double Cohort Checked by Union at University of Guelph," *Guelph Mercury*, 26 November 2003, A4; Caroline Alphonso, "University TAs to Face Challenging School Year," *Globe and Mail*, 10 September 2003, A7; Tess Kalinowski and Kristin Rushowy, "Grad Students Face New Woes: Double Cohort Increases Workload, Teaching Assistants Say: Shortage of Professors Limits Supervisors for Their Research," *Toronto Star*, 28 July 2003, B5; Louise Brown, "First-Year University Students Can't Do the Math, Profs Say: Tutorials Added to help Them Catch Up: New Curriculum Blamed for Gaps," *Toronto Star*, 13 November, 2003, A17.

time, Ontario universities were scrambling to hire faculty to both offset losses due to retirements and resignations and to keep up with the demands associated with rising student numbers.⁵⁹ Lack of adequate preparation by the Harris/Eves governments to provide the means to deal with soaring enrolment meant that the quality of an undergraduate education in Ontario universities deteriorated even more in 2003.

The Maclean's Rankings

The deterioration in Ontario universities, at least from a Canadian perspective, can readily be seen through an analysis of their performance in the annual Canadian university rankings published in *Maclean's* magazine. Begun in 1991 and, like many Canadian initiatives, based upon a modified American template - the annual university rankings conducted by *U.S. News & World Report*,⁶⁰ the *Maclean's* version has not been without its critics.⁶¹ Even today, several universities, especially in Quebec, refuse to participate; but

⁵⁹ Tess Kalinowski, "Universities Scrambling for Professors: Huge Retirement Bulge Looming in Next Decade," *Toronto Star*, 12 March 2003, A22; OCUFA, *Less Isn't More: Ontario's Faculty Shortage Crisis*, Research Report 1-4 (Toronto: OCUFA, 2001). For more than a decade, OCUFA has supported the elimination of mandatory retirement for university faculty and academic librarians. It now seems likely that legislation to deal with this issue will be tabled in the near future. The elimination of mandatory retirement, however, will not end retirements by university academic staff, though it will delay retirement for some individuals. In jurisdictions where mandatory retirement has been eliminated, the average age of retirement for university faculty is between 62 and 63. Thus, the replacement of retired faculty and academic librarians will remain an important concern for OCUFA and its members.

⁶⁰ The rankings for US universities have been published annually in a Fall issue of *US News & World Report* since 1987. Rankings were also published in 1983 and 1985. *Maclean's* now issues a second publication, *Maclean's Guide to Canadian Universities*, each February. This is an expanded version of the annual rankings that is intended to be of assistance in choosing a university, with the 2003 edition running to 256 pages.

⁶¹ See, for example, Pauline Tam, "Carleton Ad Disputes Low Ranking: University Takes Issue with How Maclean's Judges Criteria," *Ottawa Citizen*, 1 December 2003, B1 and B3; Robin Summerfield, "Universities Gang Up on Maclean's: Grade Rankings Not Fair, Three Alberta Schools Say," *National Post*, 7 November 2003, A5; Ken Pagan, "Nipissing Official Questions Magazine Ranking Criteria," *North Bay Nugget*, 12 November 2003, A3; Don Fraser, "Brock's Higher Rating Still Ignores Reality: University President Says Maclean's Survey Puts School in Wrong Category," *St. Catharines Standard*, 10 November 2003, A1-A2; Yohannes Edemariam, "Maclean's Survey Skewed," *The Ryersonian*, 12 November 2003, 7; Jeffrey Simpson, "Wipe That Grin Off Your Face," *Globe and Mail*, 12 November 2003, A29.

the administrators of their Ontario counterparts have held their noses and sent the requested data to the magazine each year, sometimes massaging it to paint their institution in the most favourable possible light. Recently, an impressive piece of investigative journalism by Sarah Schmidt of the CanWest News Service has uncovered the lengths to which at least one university, UBC, was prepared to go to improve its standings in the annual rankings.⁶² For its part, *Maclean's* views the exercise as a “work in progress.” Nevertheless, the mid-November number featuring the annual university rankings remains one of the most widely-read issues of the magazine each year.⁶³ Throughout the Harris/Eves years, 17 Ontario universities were ranked by *Maclean's*. Most of these institutions have worked hard to put a positive spin on what, for many senior administrators, is an annual dose of bad news, with many finding solace in their placement on the “reputational” ranking measures whenever the harder data portray a sorrier tale.⁶⁴

Maclean's divides Canadian universities into three categories: Primarily Undergraduate, Comprehensive, and Medical/Doctoral. With only a few notable exceptions, Ontario universities performed increasingly poorly in the annual *Maclean's* rankings during the Harris/Eves era. On the positive side, the University of Toronto has been at the top of the Medical/Doctoral category for a decade, the only institution to maintain the same high rank for such a long period. Founded in 1827, it is the oldest and largest university in Ontario, and the one with, far and away, both the largest endowment and the largest library. Also on the plus side, the University of Guelph has been the top-ranked Comprehensive University since 2002, and Waterloo University came second in this category during this same period (though it was first in 2001).

⁶² Sarah Schmidt, “Schools ‘Massage’ *Maclean's* Data for Best Result,” *Kingston Whig-Standard*, 10 November 2003, 11; “UBC Rigs Class Size to Boost Rank: Documents,” *National Post*, 31 January 2004, A1 and A8; “Move to Cut Class Size Followed Ratings,” *National Post*, 31 January 2004, A8; “*Maclean's* Calls Shots, Profs Warn: Schools Being Warped?,” *National Post*, 2 February 2004, A4; Chad Skelton, “UBC Denies *Maclean's* Influences Class-Size Cuts,” *National Post*, 4 February 2004, A13. See also Heather Sokoloff, “Schools Reach for the Top: University Rankings Are Useful – For Colleges and Parents If Not for Students Themselves,” *National Post*, 22 October 2003, A19.

⁶³ “University Rankings Seen as Work in Progress: *Maclean's*: After 13 Years, Methodology Still Questioned by Many Administrators,” *Windsor Star*, 10 November 2003, D5.

⁶⁴ The reputational rankings are based upon survey data which then are applied to four categories: Highest Quality, Most Innovative, Leaders of Tomorrow, and Best Overall. For the 2003 edition, 11,612 surveys were sent out to a variety of individuals, and just 13.2%, or 1,533 surveys, were returned, with the highest response rate (43.6%) from university officials. Response rates for the other groups surveyed were: guidance counsellors (11.3%), high school principals (9.5%), CEOs (10.0%), corporate recruiters (10.3%), and heads of organizations (11.4%).

Between 1995 and 2003, however, only 4 Ontario universities improved in rank on the *Maclean's* lists - Brock went from 13th to 12th among the Primarily Undergraduate group, Guelph improved from 4th to 1st and Waterloo moved from 3rd to 2nd in the Comprehensive category, and Western rose from 7th to a tie for 3rd among the Medical/Doctoral universities.⁶⁵ Ryerson and the University of Toronto remained at the same rank in both 1995 and 2003, 18th and 1st respectively. All of the other eleven Ontario universities fell in rank during this period, with six falling by at least three ranks (Table 1).

Strictly speaking, it is not appropriate to calculate averages for ordinal or ranked data such as the annual scores produced by *Maclean's*. It is hard, however, to resist the enticement to do so, and I have succumbed to this temptation. Statistical purists, therefore, are urged to skip this paragraph. What the average ranking calculations show is that within each university category, Ontario's public universities slipped, on "average," by about one full rank between 1995 and 2003. No doubt, some of this was due to changes in the number of participants in each category over the years, but significant slippage remains even if the time period becomes shortened in order to obtain a consistent number of participants by category. There seems little doubt, then, that Ontario's universities lost ground in comparison to their counterparts in other provinces, at least on the measures used by *Maclean's*, during the Harris/Eves years. It largely came down to a failure to properly fund the province's system of public universities. As the COU has observed:

in 1991-92, provincial operating grants in Ontario represented 74.1% of operating income versus 78.9% in the other nine provinces (fifth highest among provinces). In 1996-97, the [Harris] government appointed the Advisory Panel on Future Directions for Postsecondary Education, among whose recommendations was to increase provincial government funding to the national average. By that time (1996-97), the provincial contribution to operating income had slipped to 59.4%, well below the national average to ninth in the country. In 2001-02, the last year for which we have comparable statistics, Ontario had dropped to 10th place at 50.6% of operating income.⁶⁶

In the face of declining provincial contributions to their operating budgets, Ontario's universities have become increasingly reliant on tuition fees. In *Blueprint*, their platform document for the 1999 provincial election, the Tories argued that: "to restore the balance in funding for colleges and universities, we brought tuition fees back to the reasonable and affordable 35% level."⁶⁷ No public debate took place

⁶⁵ The data presented in the various issues of *Maclean's* have been taken at their face value. Where averages have been computed, they have not been weighted unless so noted.

⁶⁶ Council of Ontario Universities, *Briefing Notes*, October 2003, section 2.1.

⁶⁷ PC Party of Ontario, *Blueprint: Mike Harris' Plan to Keep Ontario on the Right Track* (Toronto: PC Party of Ontario, 1999), 44. During their time in opposition, the Tories had argued that "tuition fees should be allowed to rise, over a four year period, to 25 per cent of the operating costs."

to determine what a “reasonable and affordable” student contribution might be, and in the absence of such debate, tuition fees rose to new levels. In fact, even in the so-called regulated programs they climbed from \$2,451 in 1995 to \$4,165 in 2003, an increase of 69.9 per cent, and well above the 17.2 per cent rate of inflation over the same period. In the face of the fiscal intransigence of the provincial government, more and more of the Ontario universities’ operating budgets were being derived from tuition and related fees. By 1999/2000 tuition fee revenue had begun to account for more than 40 per cent of operating revenues across the Ontario university system, and were approaching 50 per cent on a few campuses, figures that were well in excess of the Tories’ “reasonable and affordable 35%.” Student debt had become a major concern, even for some Ontario university presidents. By 2002, for those graduating from Ontario universities with a student debt, the average figure was on the order of \$25,000.⁶⁸

The *Maclean’s* rankings, flawed as they might be, still manage to capture a stark reality for Ontario’s university students, especially those at the undergraduate level; namely, their escalating tuition fees are purchasing less and less quality with each passing year. This is unlikely to change until the Ontario Government does something about its contribution to university operating budgets to at least move grant levels to the national average. Without that, the student/faculty ratio will continue to worsen, and Ontario’s universities will remain uncompetitive in what is about to become a fiercely competitive market for new faculty throughout much of the developed world. For example, the battle to recruit PhD students, the main source for new faculty, already was heating up in 2003, with generous new support packages announced from Alberta and British Columbia that more than matched the best such offers from Ontario universities.⁶⁹

Throughout this report, it has been suggested that conditions have deteriorated at Ontario’s universities since 1995. While the overall changes in the *Maclean’s* rankings support this contention, it is also important to examine the trends in specific measures, both over time and in comparison with patterns exhibited by Canadian universities situated outside Ontario. Here, our attention is focussed on five student-related issues: who teaches first-year classes, the incidence of large classes in both first and second year and in third and fourth year, the proportion of university budgets devoted to student services, the proportion

See PC Party of Ontario, *New Directions II* (Toronto: PC Party of Ontario, 1992).

⁶⁸ Tess Kalinowski, “U of T Head Calls for More Student Loans: Middle Class Shut Out of OSAP Aid,” *Toronto Star*, 7 February 2003, A24; Caroline Alphonso, “Student Loan Help Remains at 1994 Levels,” *Globe and Mail*, 22 March 2003, A22; OCUFA, *Brief to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs: Pre-Budget Consultations* (Toronto: OCUFA, 2001), 8.

⁶⁹ Heather Sokoloff and Chris Wattif, “Alberta Spends Big to Draw PhD Students: Free of Money Pressures,” *National Post*, 22 October 2003, A17; Julie Smyth, “UBC Waives PhD Tuition ‘to Attract World’s Best’: Competition for Students Grows,” *National Post*, 25 March 2003, A13. In 2001, the U of T guaranteed a minimum funding level of \$12,000 and free tuition and fees for its PhD students for a period of up to five years.

devoted to scholarships and bursaries, and the proportion of the budget devoted to the library. As might be expected, patterns are complex, but seldom point to quality improvements.

Turning first to a consideration of those teaching first-year classes, it is generally assumed that it is preferable to use tenured and tenure-stream (or probationary) faculty for this purpose. The experience for Ontario undergraduates on this measure was mixed, but largely positive, during the Harris/Eves years (Table 2). Between 1995 and 2003, the proportion of first-year classes taught by tenured or tenure-stream faculty rose on 10 campuses, and fell on the other seven. Overall, it rose for both Ontario's primarily undergraduate and medical/doctoral universities, but declined within the comprehensive group. While the percentages remained in the low 60s in each case, nevertheless, by 2003, the Ontario figures were higher than those for other Canadian universities in all three categories. The reasons for these improvements are not clear, but may be due to such factors as a strengthening of faculty collective agreements and the certification of faculty associations on three Ontario campuses – Brock, Queen's, and Western. These relatively small, but positive changes, certainly were not a result of improved funding from the Ontario Government.

On the matter of class size, the picture is far less positive. Unfortunately, comparable figures are not available for the entire Harris/Eves era for this variable. Until 2002, *Maclean's* asked universities for the percentage of **classes** containing certain groupings of students; since 2002, it has requested information on the percentage of **students** in various sizes of classes. The two time periods will be treated separately in this analysis; but the definition of a large class – one with more than 100 students – remains constant throughout the exercise (Tables 3 and 4).

Large classes have been a way of life for undergraduates in their early years for some time. Ontario universities, however, lead the way in Canada on the employment of this strategy. In all three of the university groupings employed by *Maclean's*, Ontario universities displayed a greater use of large classes than did their counterparts in the rest of Canada (Table 3). While there was some improvement amongst the Primarily Undergraduate group between 1995 and 2001, the situation deteriorated for Ontario universities in both the Comprehensive and Medical/Doctoral categories. Furthermore, the gap widened between Ontario schools and those in the rest of Canada in the latter two categories. In 1995, 14 of Ontario's 17 universities (82 per cent) offered first- and/or second-year classes containing at least 250 students. At that time, Ontario was home to 43 per cent of Canada's universities, but contained 56 per cent of the universities with such very large classes. By 2001, Ontario housed 37 per cent of Canada's universities, but claimed exactly half of the total of 30 offering classes containing at least 250 students. At that time, a staggering 88 per cent of Ontario universities (all but Nipissing and Laurentian) featured classes of this size. Furthermore, Ontario universities accounted for two-thirds of the six Canadian universities with classes larger than 500 in 1995, and still claimed four of the nine with classes of this size in 2001.

In theory, large classes in the first two undergraduate years are supposed to be offset by smaller ones in the upper years. To a large extent, this is true. Once again, however, Ontario's universities have been more prone than their Canadian counterparts to employ large classes in third and fourth year (Table

3). As with the analysis of the situation for the lower years, patterns in Ontario universities pointed to an increased use of larger classes at this level on the campuses of the provinces' Comprehensive and Medical/Doctoral schools, and modest improvements among the Primarily Undergraduate group. Happily, no Canadian university used classes of more than 500 at this level in 2001 (though the U of T did in 1995). Nevertheless, Ontario was home to three of the eight Canadian universities with classes of more than 250 in 1995, and six of the eleven doing so in 2001.

Turning to the more recent data concerning the percentage of students in large classes, once again Ontario universities fare poorly in comparison to those in the rest of Canada; and, for the most part, the trend lines are moving in the wrong direction (Table 4). In both 2002 and 2003, about half of the first- and second-year students at Ontario's Comprehensive and Medical/Doctoral universities were in classes of at least 100. At comparable schools outside Ontario, the figures were between 10 and 20 per cent lower. While the proportions were lower for students attending Ontario's Primarily Undergraduate universities, less than 30 per cent in both years, the gap between Ontario and the rest of Canada still exceeded 15 per cent.

The most recent data for the senior undergraduate years are no more encouraging. While fewer students sit in large classes at this level, Ontario universities remain well in the vanguard on the use of this teaching/learning format regardless of university type. Moreover, the percentage of upper year students in large classes increased between 2002 and 2003 at Ontario's Primarily Undergraduate and Medical/Doctoral universities. It did decline, however, at its Comprehensive universities. Nevertheless, the use of larger classes in the senior years in 2003 remained substantially higher in Ontario's universities than in other Canadian institutions – 191 per cent higher for the Primarily Undergraduate group, 80 per cent higher for the Comprehensive schools, and 64 per cent higher among Medical/Doctoral universities. Furthermore, in 2002, Ontario was home to five of the ten Canadian universities offering classes of more than 250 at this level, and five of the twelve doing so in 2003.

During the Harris/Eves years, the proportion of the operating budget devoted to the provision of student services rose on 15 of the 17 Ontario university campuses (it stayed the same at Waterloo and declined at Windsor) (Table 5). On average, it rose by 2.1 per cent at the Primarily Undergraduate universities and by 1 per cent and 1.3 per cent, respectively, at the Province's Comprehensive and Medical/Doctoral schools. On this measure, Ontario's Primarily Undergraduate institutions continued to lag behind their Canadian counterparts, but its universities were ahead of them in the other two categories, though the gap did close between 1995 and 2003. Perhaps this increased spending on student services was intended as evidence that universities were now being run like businesses. On some campuses, the search certainly was on for "best practices," and students were sometimes regarded as customers or clients, which must have brought some joy to the members of the Tory government.

Not surprisingly, given the mandated 30 per cent set aside associated with tuition increases in Ontario after 1998, the proportion of Ontario university operating budgets devoted to scholarships and bursaries rose at all 17 of the province's universities between 1995 and 2003 (Table 6). In the former

year, Ontario universities lagged behind their Canadian counterparts in all three categories. By the latter year, Ontario universities were devoting at least 2.4 per cent more of their operating budgets to this type of expenditure in every university category. While it is tempting to argue that Ontario students were better off because of this trend, it must be remembered that these increases had been self-funded by those very same students because of the required “levy” on their increased tuition fees. Indeed, the bulk of the increases in the proportion of Ontario university operating budgets devoted to scholarships and bursaries took place between 1998 and 1999, or precisely when the mandated set aside came in to effect.⁷⁰

If proportional spending was up for some lines in Ontario university operating budgets, those gains had to come from one or more other lines. Sadly, one of the negative lines was associated with the proportion of their operating budgets devoted to university libraries (Table 7). During the Harris/Eves era, only the University of Windsor and the University of Toronto increased the proportion of the budget devoted to such expenditures. The other 15 universities reduced their relative expenditures on this line item. Between 1995 and 2003, the proportional reductions were 1.2 per cent, 0.6 per cent, and 0.8 per cent, respectively, for Ontario’s Primarily Undergraduate, Comprehensive, and Medical/Doctoral universities. In 1995, Ontario universities had led their Canadian counterparts on this measure in all three university categories; by 2003, they had fallen behind in the first two and were even in the third. Given that many library purchases are made in foreign currencies, inflationary pressures often are even more volatile for these expenditures, making any reductions, either absolute or relative, in library budgets a quality issue for both students and faculty.⁷¹

Ontario university presidents should not expect to see any improvement in their *Maclean’s* rankings in the short term. Given the massive enrolment increases in the Fall of 2003, it might not be too early for

⁷⁰ Between 1998 and 1999, the proportion of the operating budget for Ontario universities devoted to scholarships and bursaries increased as follows: Primarily Undergraduate - from 3.7% to 5.2%; Comprehensive - from 4.3% to 5.3%, and Medical/Doctoral - from 6.6% to 7.3%. For non-Ontario universities, the increases for this period were much more modest except for the Medical/Doctoral schools, and were, respectively, from 2.5% to 2.9%, from 3.8% to 4.4%, and from 5.0% to 6.1%.

⁷¹ According to the annual index produced by the Washington-based Association of Research Libraries, the libraries at Ontario’s largest universities fell in stature during the Harris/Eves era. Using a sophisticated index based on five data elements – number of volumes held, number of volumes added, number of current serials received, total operating expenditures, and number of professional and support staff – six of the seven Ontario universities who are members of the ARL fell in rank between 1994 and 2002, with the exception being the University of Toronto which rose from 6th to 4th over this period. Western fell from 71st to 93rd, York from 78th to 85th, Queen’s from 85th to 108th, McMaster from 99th to 112th, Waterloo from 105th to 113th, and Guelph from 108th to 114th. In 1994, the ARL had 108 members and it had 114 members in 2002. Information on these ranking was accessed from www.arl.org in February of 2004.

them to put their campus spin doctor to work on the interpretative message that will be used to greet the publication of the 2004 rankings. As Ann Dowsett Johnston, the editor responsible for the annual rankings told Paula Todd, host of TVO's nightly current affairs show *Studio 2* on the evening of the release of the 2003 rankings:

[2002/03] was a difficult year [for Ontario's universities]. More than half of the universities fell [in the annual Maclean's rankings], 9 out of 17, only 2 rose, and the remaining 5 held their own. [It was] a very, very tough year. You're seeing the universities taking a huge number of students [without receiving] the proper kind of funding, giving that kind of pressure. And this year that we're measuring is the one before the large part of the double cohort came in, so it will be really interesting to see what happens next year.⁷²

Furthermore, when Ms. Todd asked: "Your prediction obviously is that we are going to see real downward pressure on the quality of the universities?", Ms. Dowsett Johnston suggested:

I think we're going to. Just to give you a quick snapshot: in the country [there were] 50,000 new undergrads last year, and absolutely no movement to speak of in terms of faculty.⁷³

Future Prospects

The statistical and anecdotal evidence cited earlier in this report strongly suggests that the administrators at Ontario's public universities have much to fear in the *Maclean's* rankings for the next few years. According to some sources, the situation is "past critical," and the challenges are numerous – continued enrolment increases, the need for research infrastructure, a looming faculty shortage crisis, and the ticking time-bombs of deferred maintenance and the capital debt associated with the SuperBuild program. At the national level, it has been estimated that Canadian universities will need \$6.2 billion more annually in operating revenues and \$6.4 billion in research funds by 2011, with absolutely no assurance that

⁷² These comments were made during an interview with co-host Paula Todd on TVO's *Studio 2*, 10 November 2003, which was the day that *Maclean's* university rankings issue hit the newsstands.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

such sums will be available.⁷⁴ There is good reason, therefore, for concern. As Bernard Shapiro, former Principal of McGill University, recently argued:

we are, however, right to continue to worry. We should worry about the relative collapse of public (i.e. government) support for the core funding of the university. In recent years, we have had massive new government (primarily federal) support programs for Canada's universities. Every federal budget in recent years has brought hundreds of millions of dollars for university institutions. Each of these programs is, however, carefully targeted to particular and very current government priorities rather than to the longer-term requirements, not only of the universities in particular, but also of civil and civilized society more generally. . . . If, however, Canada is really to launch itself into a secure and rewarding future, Canadians and Canadian universities will have to find ways to get over our exclusive focus on science, medicine, and engineering in order to make room for the arts, the humanities, and the social sciences.⁷⁵

In Ontario, the type of interference Shapiro associated with federal programs was further exacerbated by a host of provincial programs – related to capital projects, research and research infrastructure, and even student aid – that forced universities to seek corporate partners and/or private donors. Not surprisingly, this has skewed curricular design and research direction in our universities. As a result, the needs of the largest group of university applicants, the more than 40 per cent seeking access to social sciences and humanities programs, often have been ignored under such scenarios.

Indeed, in both 2002 and 2003, more than 40.5 per cent of direct high-school university entrants registered in first-year Arts programs in Ontario's universities, which was virtually identical to the combined first-year registrations in science, business administration, and engineering programs in both years. While Arts registrations by direct high-school entrants increased by 42.6 per cent between 2002 and 2003, slightly above the overall increase of 42.0 per cent in this category of registrants, business administration registrations grew by only 35.9 per cent, with engineering increasing by just 30.3 per cent. Science registrants increased by 47.8 per cent over this period, but those in mathematics programs rose by just 16.7 per cent. Some of the largest year-over-year registration gains, in fact, occurred in programs that were very closely related to the social sciences and humanities: fine and applied arts - 117.2 per cent, family and consumer studies - 76.4 per cent, journalism - 70.3 per cent, and social work - 65.8 per cent. Overall, the demand for Arts and Arts-related programs surpassed the surge in first-year registrations in 2003.

⁷⁴ Sarah Schmidt, "University Overcrowding Past Critical: Bigger Classes, Fewer Resources Hurting Quality of Education," *National Post*, 2 September 2003, A7; Robert J. Giroux, "Looking Down the Road by the Numbers: Challenges to Universities in the Next 10 Years," *Policy Options* 24 (September 2003), 10-14.

⁷⁵ Bernard Shapiro, "Canada's Universities: Quantitative Success, Qualitative Concerns," *Policy Options* 24 (September 2003), 16.

Unfortunately, this reality did not accord with the ideologically-driven scenario envisioned and funded by the Harris/Eves governments.

Clearly, the expectations generated by the investment directions associated with such programs as SuperBuild, the Ontario Research and Development Challenge Fund, the Access to Opportunities Fund, and the Ontario Innovation Trust, with their heavy emphasis on business, engineering, and high-tech fields, were not well synchronized with the postsecondary educational aspirations of Ontario's double cohort members.⁷⁶ Not only had the Harris/Eves governments miscalculated the demand for university places that would emerge in 2003, but they also had employed an accommodation strategy that was not well tailored to the educational choices those students would make. A more balanced approach would have allowed Ontario's universities to better accommodate the interests of double cohort students.

During the enrolment surge in the 1960s that was sparked by the maturation of the baby-boom generation, the Ontario Tory government of the day built, equipped, and staffed seven new, broadly-based universities, several of which specialized in humanities and social science education and research. In those days, full grants were provided for each and every student in the system. Moreover, they established the system of community colleges across the Province at that time. The Tory response to the latest, and much larger, enrolment growth was the poorly-timed and inadequately-funded SuperBuild initiative, late and seemingly reluctant payment of grants for the new enrolment, the approval of applied degrees for community colleges, the construction of one new and very-narrowly focussed institution, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Oshawa, and the establishment of the Northern Ontario Medical School to be shared by Laurentian and Lakehead Universities, and set to open to students in 2005. Ontario deserved better, and the Province's electorate spoke loudly on 2 October 2003.⁷⁷

The Liberal Platform

The Harris/Eves legacy in the area of postsecondary education is not one in which much pride can be taken. It is time, therefore, for the new Provincial Government, under the leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty and Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities Mary Anne Chambers, to plan a strategy

⁷⁶ On the skewed funding emanating from these programs see Heather-jane Robertson, David McGrane, and Erika Shaker, *For Cash and Future Considerations: Ontario Universities and Public-Private Partnerships* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2003), 34-43.

⁷⁷ The University of Ontario Institute of Technology was given a start up grant of \$60 million in the 2001 Ontario Budget and opened its doors to some 933 students in the Fall of 2003. On the shaky nature of its expansion plans see Ian Urquhart, "Oshawa Institute Plan for Growth on Hold: \$140 M Expansion Loan Questioned," *Toronto Star*, 1 February 2004, A1 and A7.

to enable Ontario's public universities to escape their current sorry position at the bottom of the Canadian postsecondary hierarchy, whether measured by *Maclean's* or other bodies.

The election platform employed by the Liberals during the 2003 campaign was entitled *Choose Change*. In a section dealing with the Economy, the Liberals linked higher education with higher productivity, thus stressing its importance to the future prosperity of Ontario. Their platform outlined a number of promises related to postsecondary education, including: 1) the creation of spaces for 50,000 more students at public colleges and universities, allowing the institutions to hire thousands more academic staff and reduce student/faculty ratios; 2) a tuition freeze for two years, but with compensation of \$103 million to universities and colleges for the lost revenue; 3) a 50 per cent increase in graduate scholarships; 4) improvements to the student financial aid system by expanding eligibility and increasing loan amounts; 5) tuition waivers for the neediest 10 per cent of students; 6) the establishment of a faculty recruitment fund to attract up to 800 "star" faculty; and 7) the establishment of a tuition savings program.⁷⁸ Furthermore, during the 1999 election campaign, Dalton McGuinty had signed a pledge to bring university funding up to the national average during his first mandate as Premier. It remains to be seen how many of these noble promises will be kept, and how long their implementation will take.

The economic future of the Province depends on a healthy public university system, one that is based upon quality, opportunity, and affordability. Quick action was taken by the Liberals on the latter issue; for it was announced in the Throne Speech delivered on 20 November 2003 that tuition fees would be frozen for two years while the government "put in place a long-term plan that ensures the quality and accessibility of higher education for generations to come." Unfortunately, the phrase "compensatory funding" was not to be found anywhere in the text of the Throne Speech.⁷⁹ Modest as the tuition increases in regulated programs had become, universities, nonetheless, had factored them into their long-term fiscal planning, with the overall tuition increase for all types of programs equal to 5.5 per cent for 2002/03.⁸⁰ A tuition freeze without compensation from the provincial government, therefore, would only place university finances in an even more precarious position, with the shortfall for the first year of the freeze estimated at

⁷⁸ Ontario Liberal Party, *Achieving Our Potential: The Ontario Liberal Plan for Economic Growth* (Toronto: Ontario Liberal Party, 2003), 8-10. McGuinty promised the \$103 million in compensatory funding during an address to the OCUFA Board on 8 February 2003. The COU has estimated that the required compensation would be \$151 million for the first two years of a freeze. See letter from Ian Clark, COU President to Dalton McGuinty, 9 October 2003.

⁷⁹ The most common fiscal phrase in the 2003 Throne Speech was "inherited deficit," a repeated reference to the \$5.6 billion deficit the Liberals claimed the Tories had left as their parting gift.

⁸⁰ Kristin Rushowy, "Tuition Increase of 5.5% Keeps Ontario's Universities Among the Costliest," *Toronto Star*, 13 August 2003, A4.

\$73 million. Fearful of this, Wilfrid Laurier University had rushed passage of a motion to deregulate its business program, and increased fees by \$1,500, in order to beat the imposition of any tuition freeze.⁸¹

In the 2003 Throne Speech, Ontario's colleges, universities, and skills training programs were characterized as "critical to creating prosperity."⁸² Increased funding, as always, remains the key if Ontario's universities are to come anywhere near their potential in that vital aspect of their mission within the Province.⁸³ OCUFA and the other stakeholder groups eagerly await the details concerning the planning exercise announced in the Speech from the Throne. One wonders, however, how many more studies are needed to reveal the core problem faced by Ontario's universities: namely, a fundamental shortage of funds to enable them to carry out their mission to the citizens and taxpayers of Ontario. As *Maclean's* editor Ann Dowsett Johnston observed in 2002:

real preparation demands a significant boost to operating funds: money to maintain and hire faculty, equip labs, resource libraries, pay for heating and lighting. But in recent years, per-student funding [in Canada] has amounted to chump change. Let's do the math: in 1977, funding averaged \$13,400 per student; in 1990, \$10,500. Today? An embarrassing \$8,350. Just enough, as one registrar says, to keep the wheels from falling off the bus. Sort of.⁸⁴

Ultimately, the Harris/Eves legacy was to leave Ontario's system of public universities tenth and dead last in Canada on too many critical measures of quality, opportunity, and accessibility. If comparisons are extended to American public universities, Ontario looks even worse. The Province deserves better, so the new Liberal government will need to be seen to be moving forward during its first mandate to ensure both the Province's future prosperity and the continued support of the electorate.

⁸¹ Barbara Aggerholm, "Worried about Possible Tuition Cap, WLU Backs [\$1,500] Jump in Business Fees," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 2 October 2003, B2; Barbara Aggerholm, "WLU Moves to Deregulate Fees: Senate Votes 35-19 to Raise Tuition [by \$1,500 per year] for Honours Business Students," *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, 23 September 2003, B1-B2; April Lindgren, "Colleges, Universities Fear \$83 M Shortfall: Institutions Plead for Grants to Make Up for Tuition Freeze," *Ottawa Citizen*, 10 January 2004, A3.

⁸² Government of Ontario, *Speech from the Throne: Strengthening the Foundation for Change* (Toronto: Government of Ontario, 2003), 12.

⁸³ For some reasonable targets for the new government see OCUFA, *Benchmarks: A Prescription for a Healthy Public University System* (Toronto: OCUFA, 2003).

⁸⁴ Ann Dowsett Johnston, "The Crisis in Quality," *Maclean's* 115 (10 June 2002), 36.

It is time to break free from the Harris/Eves legacy in postsecondary education. The new government's first real opportunity to signal this pivotal change in direction will come in its initial budget to be presented to the Legislature in the Spring of 2004. In the 2003 election campaign, Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal colleagues urged Ontarians to "Choose Change." They followed his advice all over the Province, but especially in the 22 ridings that contain universities. In those constituencies, Liberal candidates captured almost 48 per cent of the votes cast and claimed 17, or 77.3 per cent, of those seats.⁸⁵ Having chosen change, Ontarians now expect the Liberals to deliver on their promises. In their early days in government, however, a fixation with the "inherited deficit" seemed to paralyse them. Like other interested parties, OCUFA will be urging the Liberals to choose change themselves so that the health of the Province's vital system of public universities can be restored as quickly as possible.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Michael J. Doucet, "A New Day Dawns: Analysis of Voter Behaviour in University Ridings," *OCUFA Forum* (Fall 2003), 3-7.

⁸⁶ "Didn't Ontario Choose Change?", editorial, *Toronto Star*, 10 January 2004, F6.

Ontario Universities and the *Maclean's* Rankings: The Harris/Eves Years, 1995-2003

University	Category	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	Average Rank
Trent	U	5	6	3	4	3	4	3	3	2	3.7
Wilfrid Laurier	U	6	5	7	5	5	5	5	4	4	5.1
Brock	U	12	14	12	15	19	17	14	14	13	14.4
Lakehead	U	17	17	13	21	20	18	15	17	16	17.1
Ryerson	U	18	16	19	19	17	19	19	19	18	18.2
Laurentian	U	19	18	18	17	15	16	17	18	17	17.2
Nipissing	U	20	19	17	14	18	21	20	16	15	17.8
Total Rankings		97	95	89	95	97	100	93	91	85	
Average Ranking		13.9	13.6	12.7	13.6	13.9	14.3	13.3	13.0	12.1	
No. of Undergraduate Universities		21	21	21	21	21	21	23	19	19	
Guelph	C	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	4	4	2.2
Waterloo	C	2	2	1	3	2	3	4	2	3	2.4
York	C	8	6	6	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.6
Carleton	C	10	9	8	8	7	7	7	9	8	8.1
Windsor	C	11	11	9	7	8	8	8	7	7	8.4
Total Rankings		32	29	27	25	23	25	26	27	27	
Average Ranking		6.4	5.8	5.4	5	4.6	5	5.2	5.4	5.4	
No. of Comprehensive Universities		11	11	11	11	12	12	13	11	9	
Toronto	M/D	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1.0
Queen's	M/D	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2.3
Western	M/D	3	3	6	5	5	5	9	6	7	5.4
McMaster	M/D	11	10	8	7	6	6	5	5	5	7.0
Ottawa	M/D	12	9	10	9	12	11	11	10	9	10.3
Total Rankings		30	25	28	25	26	25	28	24	24	
Average Ranking		6	5	5.6	5	5.2	5	5.6	4.8	4.8	
No. of Medical/Doctoral Universities		15	15	15	15	15	15	15	13	11	
Overall Totals		159	149	144	145	146	150	147	142	136	
Average Ranking - All		9.4	8.8	8.5	8.5	8.6	8.8	8.6	8.4	8.0	

Table 2
Per Cent of First-Year Classes Taught
by Tenured or Tenure-Track Faculty

University	% 1995	% 2003
Primarily Undergraduate:		
Brock	61.0	66.1
Lakehead	57.9	70.2
Laurentian	59.7	64.8
Nipissing	61.0	68.3
Ryerson	67.0	65.4
Trent	60.4	71.5
Wilfrid Laurier	41.4	36.0
Ontario Average	58.3	63.2
Non-Ontario Average	67.4	62.9
Comprehensive:		
Carleton	48.5	35.8
Guelph	65.7	74.1
Waterloo	52.8	80.0
Windsor	67.9	56.7
York	86.7	61.9
Ontario Average	64.3	61.7
Non-Ontario Average	50.3	49.7
Medical/Doctoral:		
McMaster	75.9	55.1
Ottawa	62.9	52.6
Queen's	41.0	58.1
Toronto	62.1	71.9
Western	65.8	72.8
Ontario Average	61.5	62.1
Non-Ontario Average	60.1	56.2

Source: *Maclean's* annual rankings for 1995 and 2003.

Table 3
Percentage of Classes with >100 Students
1995 and 2001

University	First-Year and Second-Year		Third-Year and Fourth-Year	
	% 1995	%2001	%1995	%2001
Primarily Undergraduate				
Brock	15.7*	11.9*	0.0	0.2
Lakehead	12.4*	7.0*	1.1	0.5
Laurentian	6.2*	2.8	0.5	0.3
Nipissing	4.3	3.1	0.0	0.0
Ryerson	3.7	7.4*	1.1	1.2
Trent	4.7*	3.8*	0.2	0.0
Wilfrid Laurier	4.8	9.9*	0.2	0.0
Ontario Average	7.4	6.4	0.4	0.3
Non-Ontario Avg.	3.3	3.4	0.1	0.3
Comprehensive				
Carleton	16.6*	19.4*	1.4	2.6*
Guelph	17.2*	16.8*	3.8	5.4*
Waterloo	19.6*	8.9*	1.7*	1.6*
Windsor	14.9*	22.7*	0.4	0.9
York	18.6*	22.2*	1.6*	1.8*
Ontario Average	17.4	18.0	1.8	2.5
Non-Ontario Avg.	10.0	8.1	1.1	0.8
Medical/Doctoral				
McMaster	27.4*	29.8*	2.0	2.7
Ottawa	12.9*	11.8*	0.6	1.2
Queen's	12.4*	16.4*	2.2	1.9*
Toronto	14.2*	17.0*	2.6*	2.7*
Western	13.1*	6.8*	0.8	1.3
Ontario Average	16.0	16.4	1.6	2.0
Non-Ontario Avg.	12.7	11.3	2.1	1.4

* indicates universities with classes of >250 at this level

Source: *Maclean's* annual rankings for 1995 and 2001.

Table 4
Percentage of Students in Classes of >100
2002 and 2003

University	First-Year and Second-Year		Third-Year and Fourth-Year	
	% 2002	%2003	%2002	%2003
Primarily Undergraduate:				
Brock	42.5*	46.7*	4.2	8.0
Lakehead	28.2*	30.9*	4.6	1.1
Laurentian	15.9	23.5*	0.0	2.3
Nipissing	19.6	20.7	0.0	0.0
Ryerson	21.7*	24.5*	7.1	9.7
Trent	19.9*	21.6*	0.0	0.0
Wilfrid Laurier	35.6*	32.5*	2.0	1.0
Ontario Average	26.2	28.6	2.6	3.2
Non-Ontario Avg.	10.9	10.5	0.7	1.1
Comprehensive:				
Carleton	48.9*	51.8*	19.1*	17.1*
Guelph	45.8*	43.6*	14.7*	13.3*
Waterloo	29.2*	29.2*	9.9*	9.9*
Windsor	59.5*	53.3*	7.4	5.9
York	59.5*	63.2*	11.1	12.1
Ontario Average	48.6	48.2	12.4	11.7
Non-Ontario Avg.	29.0	28.7	4.7	6.5
Medical/Doctoral:				
McMaster	69.6*	68.0*	21.0	27.2
Ottawa	34.3*	38.2*	8.1	8.9
Queen's	53.7*	60.7*	19.1*	21.0*
Toronto	62.2*	63.3*	16.1*	13.4*
Western	29.2*	29.2*	7.1	5.2
Ontario Average	49.8	51.9	14.3	15.1
Non-Ontario Avg.	38.4	37.9	9.8	9.2

* indicates universities with classes of >250 at this level

Source: *Maclean's* annual rankings for 2002 and 2003.

Table 5
Percentage of the Operating Budget Devoted to
Student Services, 1995 and 2003

University	% 1995	%2003
Primarily Undergraduate:		
Brock	3.7	7.1
Lakehead	4.3	5.4
Laurentian	3.2	4.5
Nipissing	5.5	5.8
Ryerson	3.0	6.4
Trent	4.5	5.7
Wilfrid Laurier	3.7	7.7
Ontario Average	4.0	6.1
Non-Ontario Average	5.3	6.9
Comprehensive:		
Carleton	5.2	5.7
Guelph	4.7	7.2
Waterloo	5.2	5.2
Windsor	5.8	5.3
York	4.3	6.5
Ontario Average	5.0	6.0
Non-Ontario Average	3.3	4.4
Medical/Doctoral:		
McMaster	2.9	4.4
Ottawa	4.5	5.5
Queen's	4.2	4.4
Toronto	5.0	7.2
Western	3.8	5.4
Ontario Average	4.1	5.4
Non-Ontario Average	3.2	4.7

Source: *Maclean's* annual rankings for 1995 and 2003.

Table 6
Percentage of the Operating Budget Devoted to
Scholarships and Bursaries, 1995 and 2003

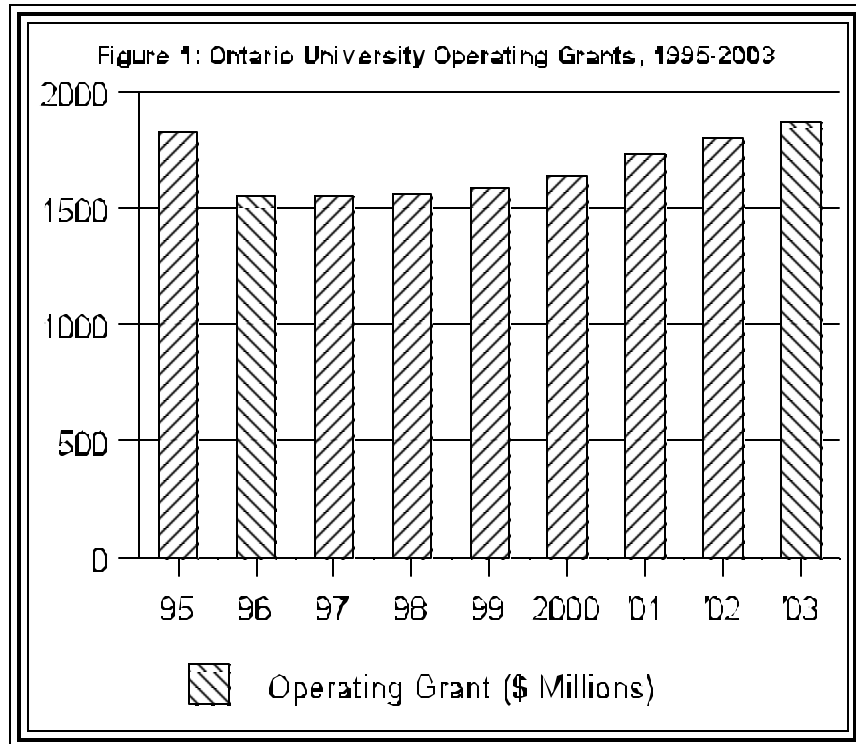
University	% 1995	%2003
Primarily Undergraduate:		
Brock	1.1	6.0
Lakehead	2.3	8.3
Laurentian	0.8	8.1
Nipissing	2.1	6.7
Ryerson	0.6	5.1
Trent	1.9	9.7
Wilfrid Laurier	2.3	9.0
Ontario Average	1.6	7.6
Non-Ontario Average	2.2	3.9
Comprehensive:		
Carleton	2.6	11.1
Guelph	2.0	7.5
Waterloo	2.7	8.8
Windsor	1.7	6.5
York	2.6	9.6
Ontario Average	2.3	8.7
Non-Ontario Average	3.0	5.8
Medical/Doctoral:		
McMaster	2.6	8.2
Ottawa	4.4	8.8
Queen's	7.0	14.5
Toronto	7.7	12.7
Western	3.1	13.5
Ontario Average	5.0	11.5
Non-Ontario Average	4.2	9.1

Source: *Maclean's* annual rankings for 1995 and 2003.

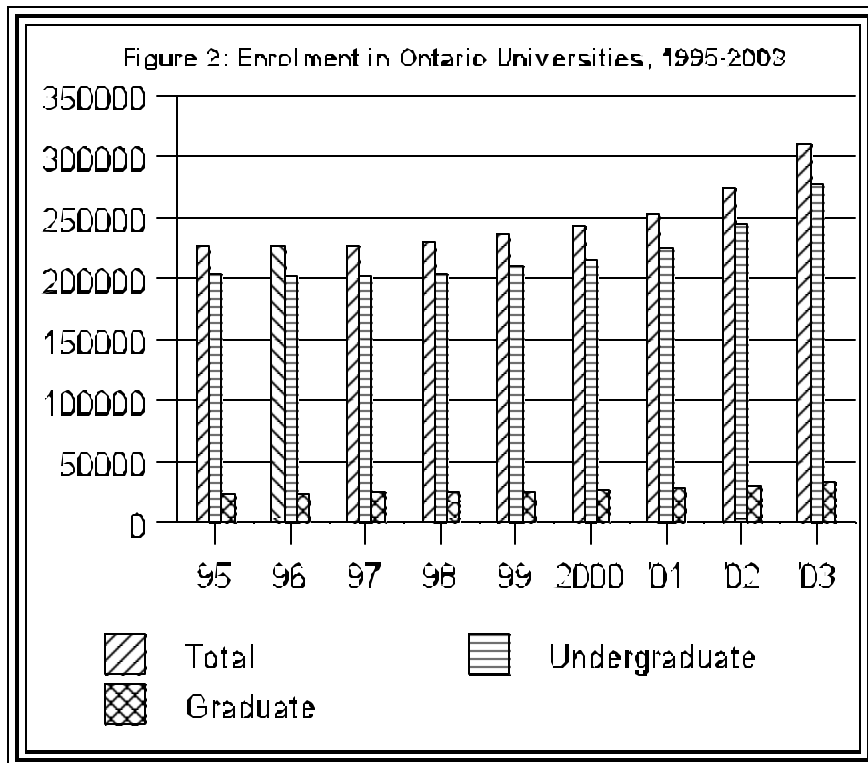
Table 7
Percentage of the Operating Budget Devoted to
Library Services, 1995 and 2003

University	% 1995	%2003
Primarily Undergraduate:		
Brock	6.9	5.8
Lakehead	5.9	5.7
Laurentian	6.2	4.9
Nipissing	6.8	4.1
Ryerson	3.8	3.6
Trent	7.9	5.5
Wilfrid Laurier	6.0	5.7
Ontario Average	6.2	5.0
Non-Ontario Average	6.1	5.5
Comprehensive:		
Carleton	7.5	6.6
Guelph	6.1	5.8
Waterloo	6.7	5.5
Windsor	6.3	6.4
York	5.8	5.4
Ontario Average	6.5	5.9
Non-Ontario Average	6.4	6.1
Medical/Doctoral:		
McMaster	6.8	4.7
Ottawa	6.2	4.9
Queen's	7.5	7.0
Toronto	8.6	8.9
Western	7.4	7.2
Ontario Average	7.3	6.5
Non-Ontario Average	6.4	6.5

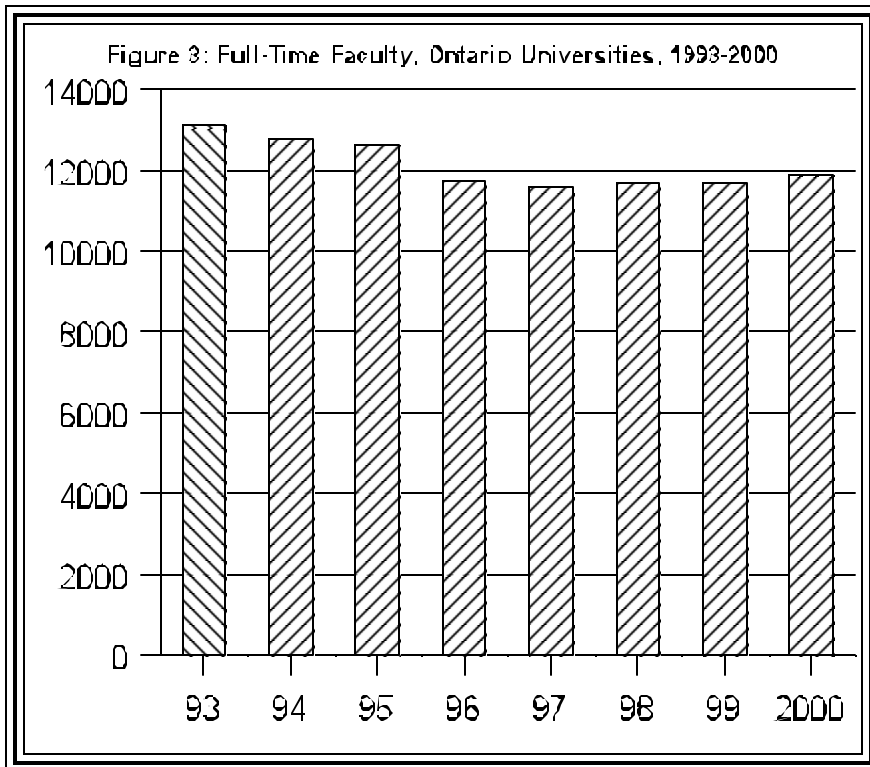
Source: *Maclean's* annual rankings for 1995 and 2003.



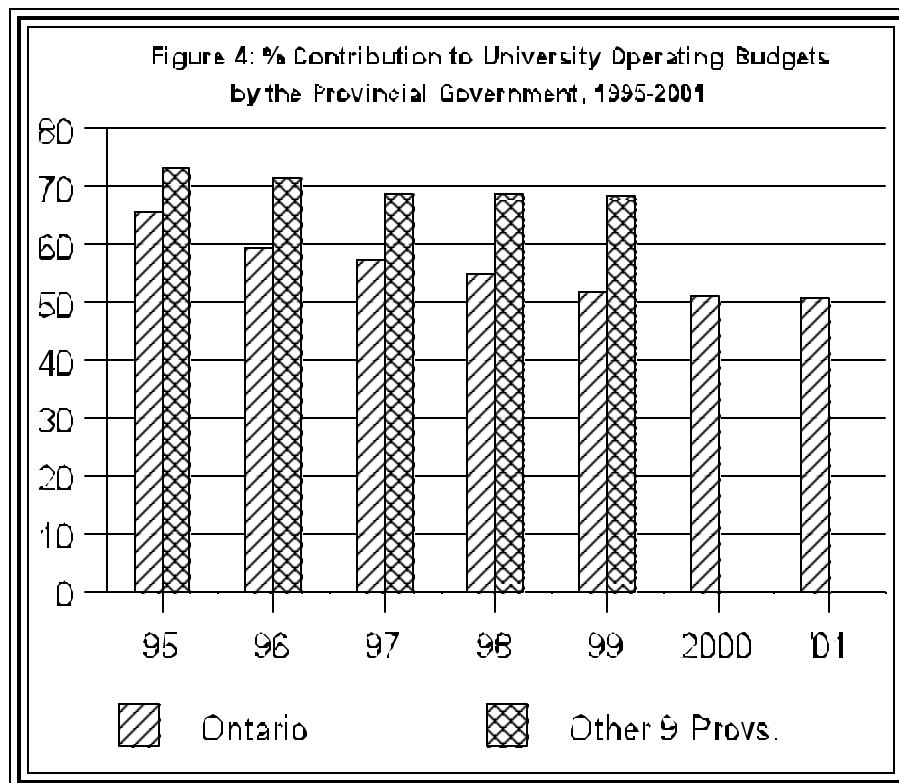
Source: MTCU data, various years



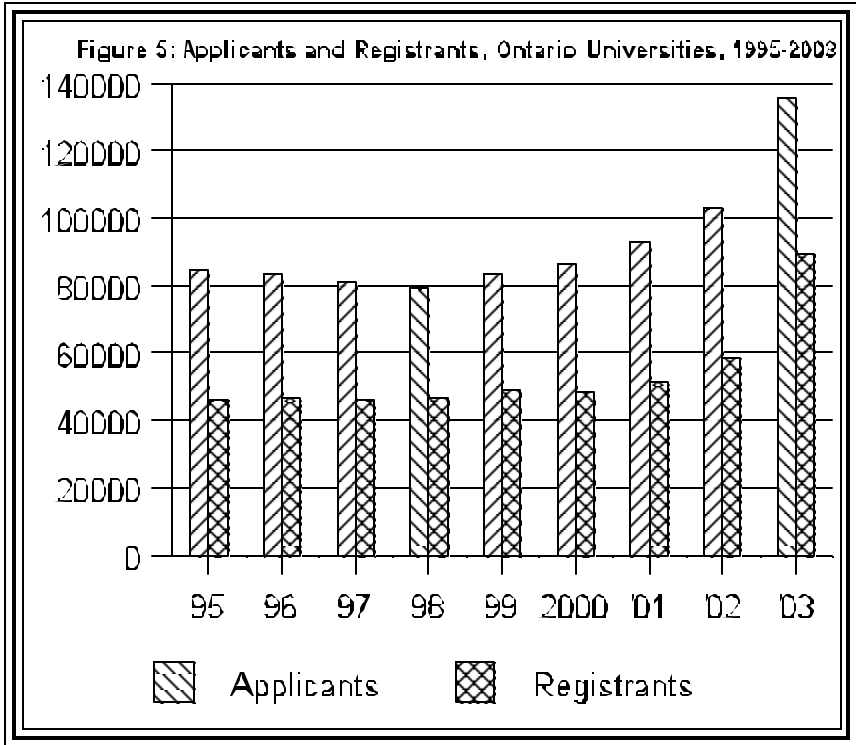
Source: COU data, various years



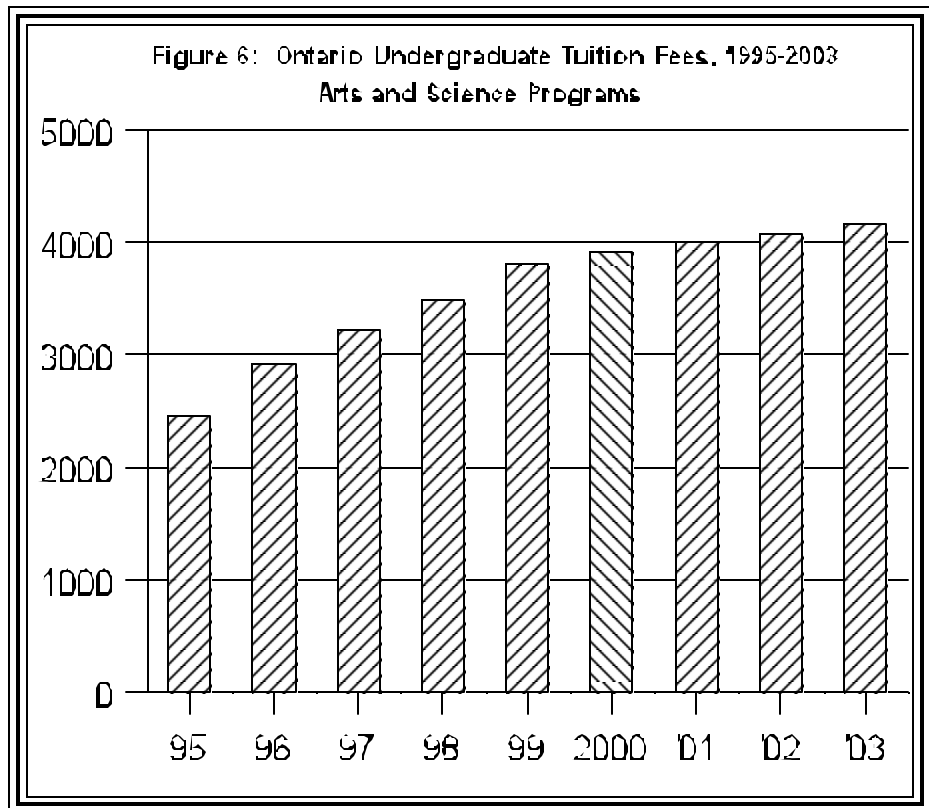
Source: COU data, various years



Source: COU data, various years



Source: COU/OUAC data, various years



Source: Statistics Canada data, various years