

Universities in Ontario: A Manufactured Crisis

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Overview

- OCUFA represents over **18,000** voices in the postsecondary education sector including university faculty, academic librarians, and a wide range of other academic professionals.
- OCUFA seeks to **maintain the quality of Ontario's postsecondary education system** as well as advance the professional and academic interests of our members.
- Ontario's postsecondary education system is **world class** and remains competitive on a global scale – a distinction that is not only measurable, but is well-recognized across many international jurisdictions.
- Despite this, the **provincial government** and its leaders have repeatedly introduced policies that not only restrict funding to an already starved ecosystem, but also actively seek to **devalue the importance of a university degree**.

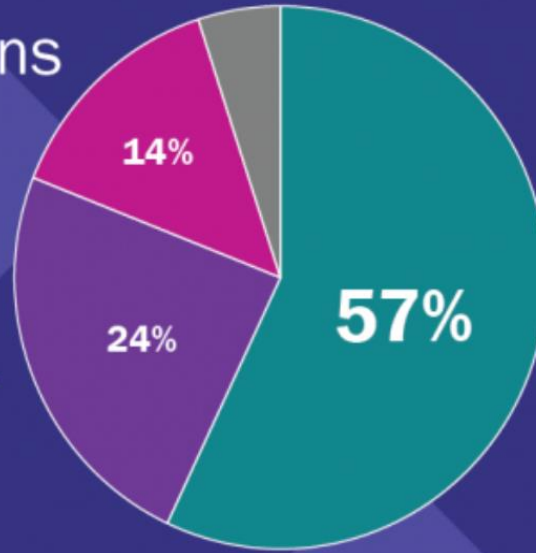


University (Under)Funding in Ontario

Systemic Problem

- At OCUFA we understand how grossly underfunded the university sector is in Ontario. **Ontario universities have the lowest per student funding in Canada**, despite being home to some of the best universities in the world!
- Over the last two decades, governments of all affiliations have left this issue unaddressed...meanwhile a decline in domestic student enrolment has forced universities to rely on international students to make up the funding shortfalls.

The majority of Ontarians believe that the next provincial government should **provide more funding to universities.**



University (Under)Funding in Ontario

Precarity and Universities

Student-Faculty Ratios:

Stagnant funding has contributed to the **increase of class sizes** and **ballooning of the student-to-faculty ratios**.

- Ontario has the highest student-to-faculty ratio in Canada, up 41% since 2000.
- There are 34 students for every full-time faculty member at an Ontario university (CDN average: 28.4 students).
- Courses with 30 students or less at Ontario's universities was 14 per cent lower in 2017 than it was in 2007.
- Courses offered with 250 students or more rose by a stark 25 per cent in the same period.

Contract Faculty:

Over half of faculty at Ontario's universities are now working on contract (53%).

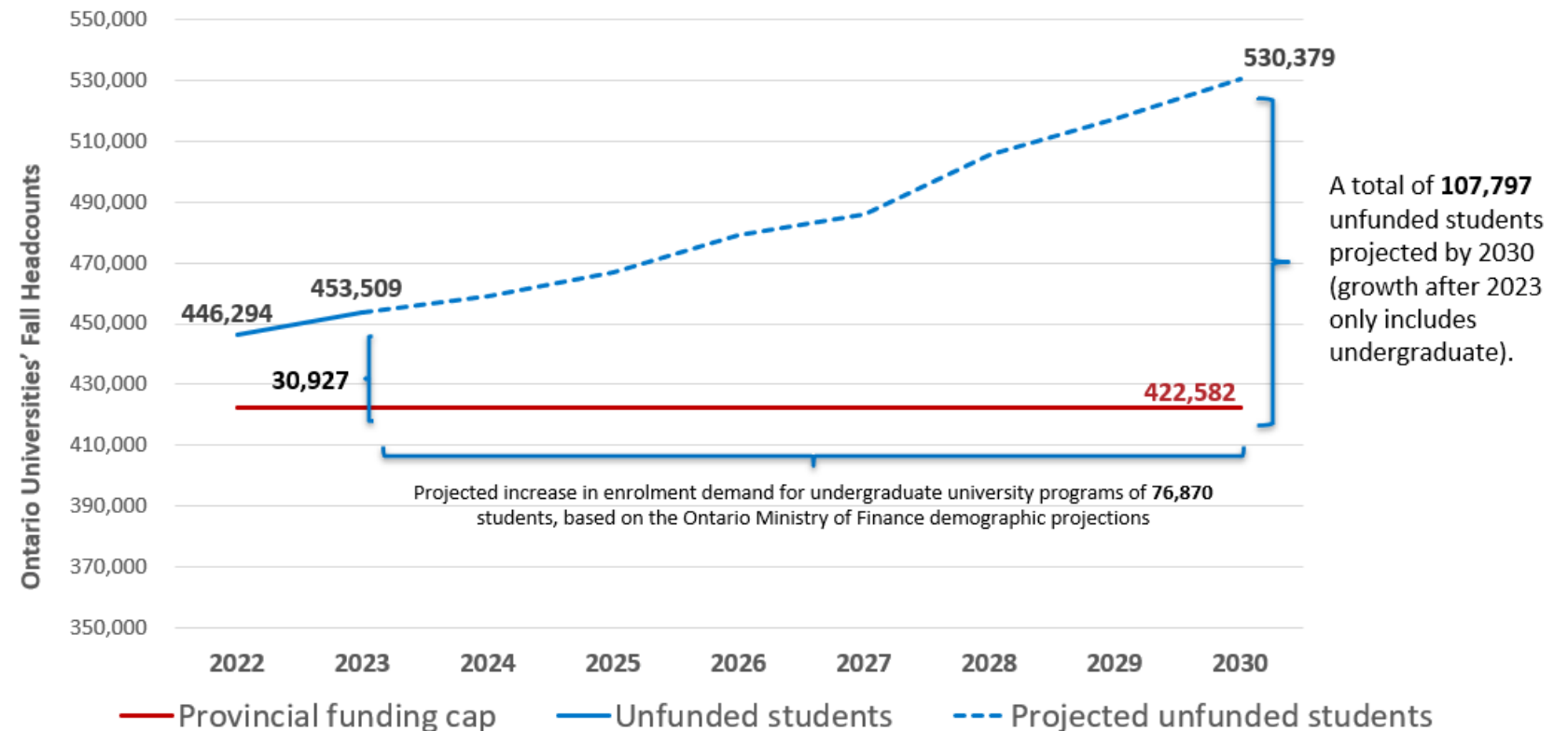
- OCUFA estimates that ~8,000 full-time professors would need to be hired by 2026 to reduce the ration from 31 to 24 students.

Ontario's Demographic Shift

- The university aged demographic in Ontario is growing!
- In Ontario, the post-secondary participation rate among the 18-24 yr. olds has increased from **30% in 2000** to **49% in 2021**.
- Due to chronic underfunding and domestic enrolment caps, there may not be enough spots for even the best domestic students who want to attend university.
- With changes coming to the **PGWP process** in Canada, Ontario universities are on the verge of yet another crisis.



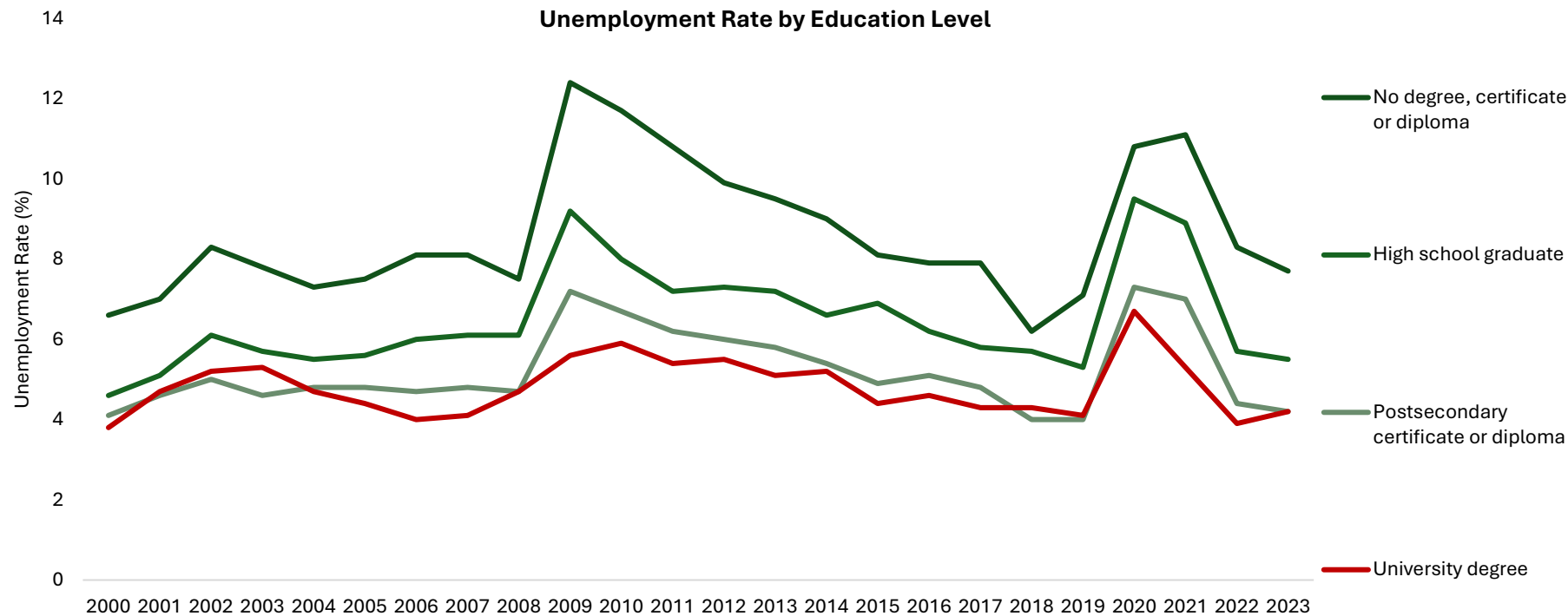
Ontario Funding Policy Falling Further Behind in Supporting Ontario High School Student Demand to Attend an Ontario University



Sources: COU's unfunded student model, Ontario universities' undergraduate enrolment data, and Ontario Ministry of Finance projections for the 18 - 24-year population.
Notes: Enrolment data for 2022 and 2023 are unfunded fall headcounts calculated from unfunded Weighted Grant Units. Estimates for 2024 and later years apply the average cumulative change in participation rate from 2018 to 2020 to future years and apply it to population projections.

Value of a University Degree

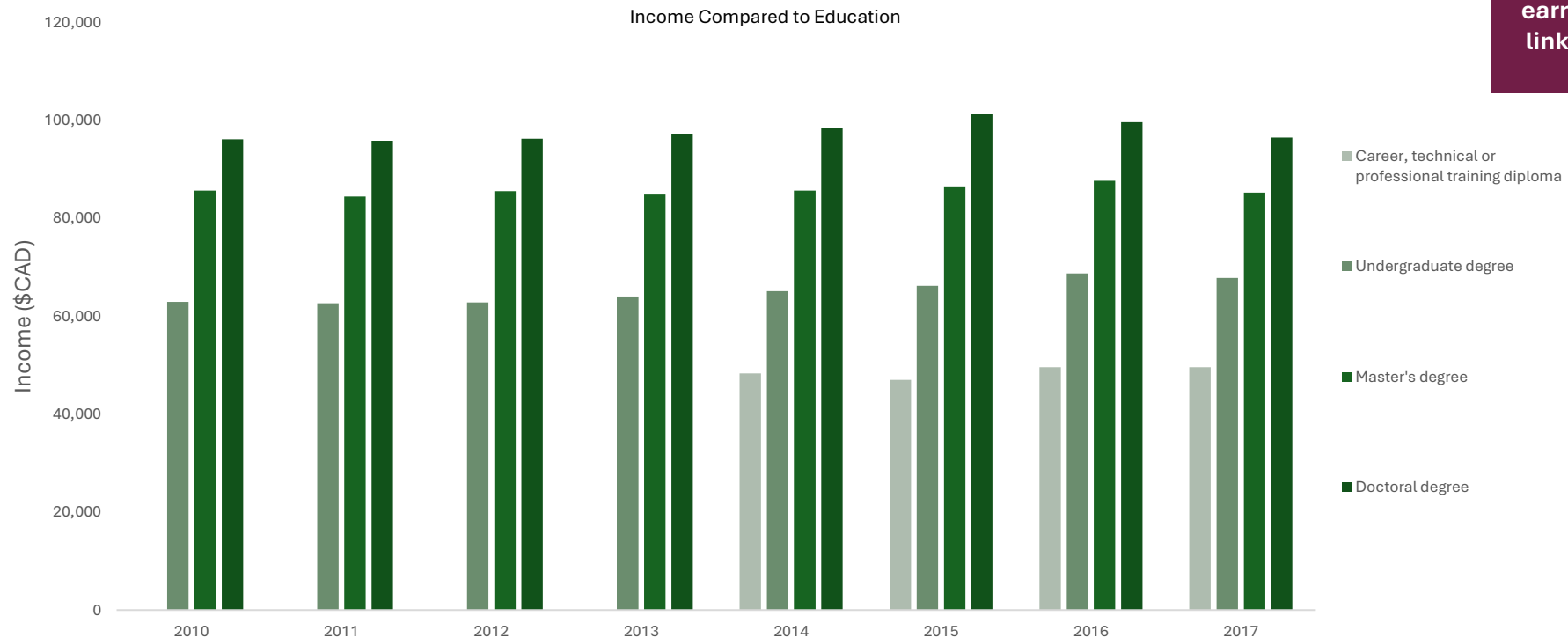
- Recent messaging from the Ontario Government implies that Ontarians no longer see value in obtaining a university degree. Recent data shows that the perceived decline in value of a university degree couldn't be further from the truth.
- The Ontario Government wants us to believe that investment in our colleges sector, micro-credentials, and on-the-job training are greater value for money.
- The reality is that these pathways should complement each other as part of a robust ecosystem; not pit against each other in the context of manufactured scarcity.



Data shows that university graduates have the lowest unemployment rates when compared to those with other education credentials.

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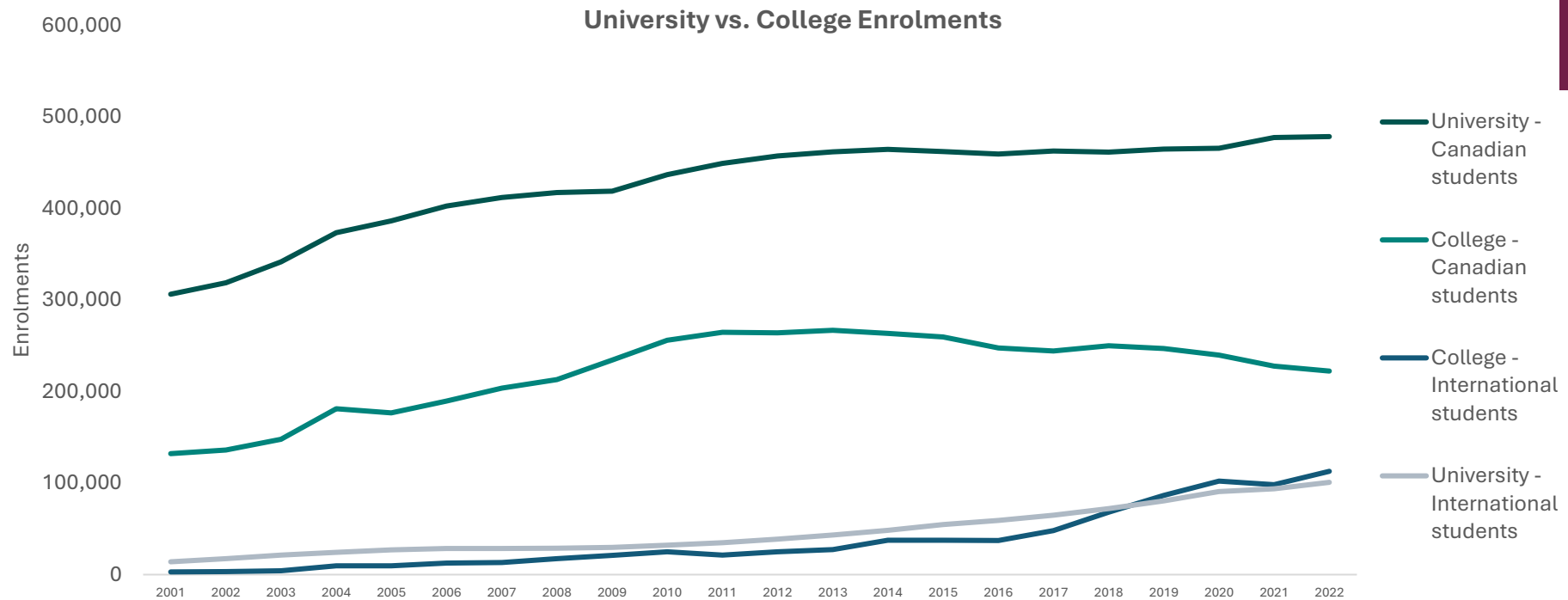
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Historical data shows reveals a consistent pattern where earning potential is strongly linked to level of education credentials.

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In the last 20 years, interest in Ontario universities has grown in comparison to college enrolments.

Northern Ontario

The Ontario Government's own [Blue Ribbon Panel](#) made several observations with respect to northern Ontario universities:

- Northern institutions should be offered the possibility to reduce the lower limits of their corridor funding model.
- Northern institutions are typically smaller than southern counterparts, impacting cost efficiency.
- Thinner labour pool/less access to highly qualified personnel and external labour.
- Student recruitment a major challenge. Postsecondary participation in the relevant age group is typically proportionately lower, lagging behind larger urban centres in southern Ontario.

Northern Universities: Isolated?



Recommendations

FUNDING INCREASE	FUNDING FORMULA	PERFORMANCE	TUITION
11.75% annual provincial funding to universities over a period of five years.	Review of university funding formula, including the corridor model.	Reverse implementation of performance-based-funding.	Enhance student assistance programs Convert loans to grants.



THANK YOU FOR
YOUR TIME!