

CUPE 3909, the Union representing Student and Sessional Academic Workers at the University of Manitoba, has three principal points to present.

**1. Universities are being turned into businesses: the misallocation of funds is a feature of the corporatization of the university.** This is how business works. Universities all over North America are cutting programs, increasing class sizes, and putting a freeze on hiring to serve this financial model.

**2. Education is not, and should not be a business; it is a basic right and everyone should have free and universal access.**

**3. Students are bearing the burden: your education is being compromised. And students again are the target of the proposed solution: increased tuition fees make education inaccessible.**

**CUPE 3909 is firmly opposed to this attack on education.**

When this issue is discussed in the media, a great deal of attention is paid to Manitoba's low rate of tuition fees as the source of the University's budgeting concerns, while less attention is paid to the Province's responsibility to fund our public institutions.

Currently tuition fees for undergraduate students in Manitoba are governed by legislation that ties increases to inflation, resulting in an annual increase. Graduate students, not governed by this legislation, only narrowly avoided drastic fee increases this year, a victory due in part to the hard work of organized student leaders.

However, if Dr. David Barnard is successful, there will be deregulation of all tuition fees, allowing the university to raise them at will.

Rather than suggest that the tuition legislation is unfair to Universities, as Dr. Barnard has done, we believe that this legislation does not go far enough to protect the affordability of post-secondary education. We maintain that access to education is a basic right, and that any price tag is an unacceptable barrier to access.

On a very practical level, it is important for our members that CUPE 3909 oppose this neoliberal assault on universities; it affects our employment and our ability to teach and to assist in students' education. With cuts faced at every faculty, it is impossible to imagine a situation where our members will not be severely negatively impacted. University President, Dr. David Barnard, has suggested that cuts to sessional instructor positions are to be

expected. With these positions cut, and enrollment increasing, we will inevitably see an intensification of our labor: with courses amalgamated, class sizes increased, and program offerings cut. This will necessarily be detrimental to the learning experience of students. Student workers, teachers' assistants and grader/markers, will also be vulnerable to an increased workload. Some of our members are already expected or pressured to work for free, this will only increase.

These are all effects we will face as the University continues its shift to the corporate/business model and we should all be committed to halting this shift. But the practical struggle at this time is the one against a tuition increase and CUPE 3909 stands in solidarity with students and members of the university community who are taking up this fight.