

As the representative of student academic staff at our University, I'm concerned about the impact the cuts will have on the workload of our members. We know that with cuts like those proposed, already large undergraduate class enrolments will swell, but, if history has taught us anything, our members' hours will not increase to support this larger workload. Grader/markers, some already working for free to try to keep up with demanding workloads, will be expected to review more assignments with the same amount of hours – as this work cannot reasonably be truncated without dramatically reducing the quality of review and feedback, our members will end up working more unpaid hours in order to submit their best work. I spoke with an exhausted member just last week who felt helpless in keeping up with their grading work. Since last year the class they grade for has almost doubled in size but their hours have remained completely stagnant.

Access to academic work is an essential part of the graduate student experience. Graduate students need funding and one of the ways they access this funding is through academic work – work which allows them to keep their work and their study within their field – if cuts lead to fewer course offerings we'll likely see stagnant job growth for student academics.

But these are just some of the many ways that students will be negatively impacted by these cuts, and let me emphasize that students, more than anyone else, will be losing out. Dr. Barnard has stated that these cuts are necessary because of budgetary shortfalls but that myth has been busted, there is no shortfall, just a misbalance of priorities. Dr. Barnard has also made it clear that he intends to make tuition fees a target to resolving the university's self-made budget gaps, so what does that mean for students?

Our provincial government has legislated tuition fees to be tied to inflation, ensuring that fees will rise each year. These so called 'protections' are only offered to a particular cohort of undergraduate students, for many students our fees are completely unregulated and at the whims of our administrators. We can expect further assault on the affordability of our education in the years to come.

We need to make sure that our administration, and our governments are listening closely. Education is an indelible human right. When we allow our education to be commodified into a user-fee system and when we allow corporations to buy off our faculties and guide our research we neglect the pursuit of knowledge, we devalue genuine learning, we compromise the truth and, by restricting access to those who cannot afford the fees, we reinforce entrenched systems of oppression.

We know that we are not alone in this struggle, that commodification and corporatization of education is taking place across the country and that we need to work not only on local scales—questioning and reassigning the priorities of our administration—but on broader scales as well, demanding that our provincial and federal governments make education a priority at every budgetary level.

Let me say it again: education is a right. Our fight doesn't end today, this is just beginning