



Pay hikes at Alberta's universities and colleges during the downturn

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CANADIAN TAXPAYERS FEDERATION

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About the Canadian Taxpayers Federation

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is a federally incorporated, not-for-profit citizens' group dedicated to lower taxes, less waste and accountable government.

The CTF was founded in Saskatchewan in 1990 when the Association of Saskatchewan Taxpayers and the Resolution One Association of Alberta joined forces to create a national organization. At the end of 2020, the CTF had over 235,000 supporters nationwide.

The CTF maintains a federal office in Ottawa and regional offices in British Columbia, Alberta, Prairie (Saskatchewan and Manitoba), Ontario, Québec and Atlantic Canada. Regional offices conduct research and advocacy activities specific to their provinces in addition to acting as regional organizers of Canada-wide initiatives.

CTF offices field hundreds of media interviews each month, hold press conferences and issue regular news releases, commentaries, online postings and publications to advocate on behalf of CTF supporters. CTF representatives speak at functions, make presentations to government, meet with politicians and organize petition drives, events and campaigns to mobilize citizens to effect public policy change. Each week CTF offices send out Let's Talk Taxes commentaries to more than 800 media outlets and personalities across Canada.

Any Canadian taxpayer committed to the CTF's mission is welcome to join at no cost and receive emailed Action Updates. Financial supporters can additionally receive the CTF's flagship publication The Taxpayer magazine, published three times a year.

The CTF is independent of any institutional or partisan affiliations. All CTF staff, board members and representatives are prohibited from donating to or holding a membership in any political party. In 2019-20, the CTF raised \$4.8 million on the strength of 31,665 donations. Donations to the CTF are not tax deductible as a charitable contribution.



Canadian Taxpayers Federation

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The Blue Ribbon Panel on Alberta's finances found that the Alberta government would spend [\\$10 billion](#) less every year if its per-person spending was in line with costs in similar provinces, such as British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario.

A major contributor to Alberta's big spending problem is our universities and colleges. Alberta spends \$36,510 per post-secondary student, according to the Panel's report. That's about \$10,000 more per student than what the other large provinces spend on average.

Labour costs is a key area where the government needs to find savings. This applies to the province's universities and colleges. The table below shows that more than 11,500 university and college employees received a pay raise during lockdowns in 2020, costing taxpayers and students more than \$29 million, according to freedom of information requests obtained by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation from each post-secondary institution. Pay raises going back to 2015, when the downturn in Alberta began, cost more than \$218 million. As will be outlined in the last section of this report,

compensation paid to all workers in Alberta has declined by about 10 per cent from the end of 2014 to the end of 2020 (calendar year) while total compensation paid to post-secondary employees has increased by nearly nine per cent (fiscal year).

Post-secondary institution	Number of employees that received pay raise in 2020	Cost of pay raises 2020	Cost of pay raises 2015-2020
University of Calgary	4,352	\$10,523,109	\$78,884,413
University of Alberta	4,130	\$11,763,319	\$75,544,311
SAIT	456	\$1,737,431	\$12,253,374
Athabasca University	504	\$1,127,607	\$10,733,382
University of Lethbridge ¹	563	\$1,377,334	\$9,486,427
Bow Valley College	258	\$846,698	\$7,892,730
Mount Royal University	498	\$728,924	\$7,599,626
Red Deer College	151	\$118,472	\$4,091,837
Keyano College	72 ²	\$205,618	\$2,824,878
Medicine Hat College	46	\$161,112	\$2,454,646
Banff Centre	110 ³	\$103,826	\$2,298,858
Olds College	135	\$161,056	\$1,486,613
Portage College	50	\$121,213	\$1,476,928
Alberta University of the Arts	86	\$194,266	\$701,188 ⁴
Northern Lakes College	57	\$39,836	\$451,904 ⁵
NorQuest College	327	N.A.	N.A.
TOTAL	11,500+	\$29,209,821	\$218,181,115

¹ Data is only provided for Academic staff and AUPE members.

² Number of pay raises, not number of employees who received a pay raise.

³ Number of pay raises, not number of employees who received a pay raise.

⁴ Data only provided from 2018 through 2020.

⁵ Conservative estimate of the cost of pay raises because 2015-2018 does not include step pay increases, only negotiated pay raises.

Breakdown of university and college pay raises (2015-2020)

University of Calgary

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	5,380	\$16,877,150
2016	5,211	\$15,403,039
2017	5,289	\$13,319,377
2018	4,289	\$8,667,835
2019	4,495	\$14,093,903
2020 (Jan – Oct)	4,352	\$10,523,109
Total		\$78,884,413

FOI: http://taxpayer.com/media/UofC-Pay-Hike-Downturn.xlsx?gl=1*15vet34*_ga*MTU1MTc4MDI2Ny4xNTM4MTAwMjM1*_ga_QQ077RS897*MTYxNTI0MjExMC4xMjUuMC4xNjE1MjQyMTFwLjYw

SAIT

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	944	\$2,918,648
2016	878	\$2,675,653
2017	646	\$1,781,940
2018	491	\$1,459,181
2019	510	\$1,680,521
2020	456	\$1,737,431
Total		\$12,253,374

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/SAIT-Pay-Hikes.pdf>

University of Alberta

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	4,368	\$12,487,122
2016	4,447	\$12,772,094
2017	4,552	\$13,068,492
2018	4,572	\$13,019,545
2019	4,396	\$12,433,739
2020 (Jan – Oct)	4,130	\$11,763,319
Total		\$75,544,311

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/UofA-Pay-Hike-Downturn.pdf>

Athabasca University

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	786	\$2,596,985
2016	632	\$1,409,187
2017	597	\$2,863,086
2018	856	\$1,505,764
2019	486	\$1,230,753
2020 (Jan – Oct.)	504	\$1,127,607
Total		\$10,733,382

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/AthabascaU-Pay-Raises.pdf>

Note: This is a conservative estimate as pay raise data is not available for staff who are paid hourly in 2020.

University of Lethbridge

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2016	727	\$2,063,576
2017	726	\$2,464,485
2018	694	\$2,068,770
2019	596	\$1,512,262
2020	563	\$1,377,334
Total		\$9,486,427

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/ULeth-Pay-Raises.pdf>

Note: The University provided information for 2016 through 2020. The information provided applies to academic staff and AUPE members.

Red Deer College

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	739	\$784,949
2016	477	\$423,627
2017	254	\$263,756
2018	256	\$314,494
2019	664	\$2,186,539
2020 (Jan – Oct)	151	\$118,472
Total		\$4,091,837

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/RDC-Pay-Hike.pdf>

Bow Valley College

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	959	\$1,681,941
2016	923	\$1,466,286
2017	352	\$1,150,323
2018	363	\$984,557
2019	509	\$1,762,925
2020 (Jan – Oct)	258	\$846,698
Total		\$7,892,730

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/BVC-Pay%20Raise.pdf>

Keyano College

Year	Number of pay raises	Cost
2015	560	\$832,391
2016	387	\$652,114
2017	126	\$472,399
2018	218	\$394,889
2019	103	\$267,467
2020 (Jan – Oct)	72	\$205,618
Total		\$2,824,878

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/Keyano-Pay-Raises.pdf>

Note: The numbers are for the number of pay raises, not the number of employees that received a pay raise.

Mount Royal University

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	1,172	\$2,388,817
2016	1,082	\$1,804,094
2017	676	\$1,129,873
2018	532	\$795,964
2019	495	\$751,954
2020	498	\$728,924
Total		\$7,599,626

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/MRU-Pay-Raises.pdf>

Medicine Hat College

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	258	\$676,594
2016	282	\$818,468
2017	135	\$427,718
2018	48	\$148,411
2019	120	\$222,343
2020 (Jan – Oct)	46	\$161,112
Total		\$2,454,646

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/MHC-Pay-Hikes.pdf>

Banff Centre

Year	Number of pay raises	Cost
2015	360	\$342,097
2016	742	\$513,538
2017	699	\$514,735
2018	758	\$603,787
2019	300	\$220,875
2020	110	\$103,826
Total		\$2,298,858

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/Banff-Centre-FOI.pdf>

Note: Number of pay raises not number of employees that received a raise.

Alberta University of the Arts

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2018	77	\$281,368
2019	81	\$225,554
2020	86	\$194,266
Total		\$701,188

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/UArts-Pay-Raises.pdf>

Notes: The university only provided data for years 2018 through 2020.

Olds College

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	187	\$433,618
2016	164	\$344,650
2017	62	\$188,235
2018	90	\$161,628
2019	86	\$197,426
2020	135	\$161,056
Total		\$1,486,613

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/Olds-College-Pay-Hikes.pdf>

Northern Lakes College

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	231	\$186,407
2016	177	\$151,275
2017	N.A.	N.A.
2018	N.A.	N.A.
2019	65	\$74,386
2020	57	\$39,836
Total		\$451,904

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/Northern-Lakes-Pay-Hikes.pdf>

Note: The table above shows a conservative estimate of the cost of pay raises because 2015-2018 does not include step pay increases, only negotiated pay raises.

Portage College

Year	Number of employees receiving pay raise	Cost
2015	436	\$500,353
2016	86	\$277,993
2017	177	\$241,425
2018	77	\$180,212
2019	80	\$155,732
2020 (Jan – Oct)	50	\$121,213
Total		\$1,476,928

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/Portage-College-Pay-Hikes.pdf>

NorQuest College

Year	Number of Employees receiving a pay raise
2015	599
2016	576
2017	471
2018	527
2019	419
2020	327

FOI: <http://www.taxpayer.com/media/Norquest-pay-hikes.pdf>

Other universities and colleges

For the universities that did not provide the Canadian Taxpayers Federation with data on pay raises, the CTF has tracked down collective bargaining agreements, [published](#) by the Alberta government. While many of these post-secondary institutions handed out pay raises, the CTF did not find a single university or college collective bargaining agreement that resulted in a pay reduction.⁶ The following section outlines the collective bargaining agreements among the universities and colleges that have not provide the CTF with pay raise data:

MacEwan University

Union	Wage Settlements	Date of bargaining update	Employees covered
MacEwan University Faculty Association	1st year = 0%	2015-03	1,000
	2nd year = 2.25%		
	3rd year = 2.25%		
MacEwan Staff Association	1st year = 0%	2015-03	720
	2nd year = 2%		
	3rd year = 2.25%		

Grande Prairie Regional College

Union	Wage Settlements	Date of bargaining update	Employees covered
Academic Staff Association	1st year = 2%	2015-08	230
Grande Prairie Regional College Employees' Association	3rd year reopener = 2%	2015-06	140
	4th year reopener = 2%		

Lakeland College

Union	Wage Settlements	Settled on	Employees covered
Lakeland College Faculty Association	1st year = 1.90%	2016-12-14	194
Lakeland College Faculty Association	1st year = 2%	2015-05	119
	2nd year = 0%		
	3rd year = 2.5%		
	4th year = 2%		
AUPE	1st year = 2%	2015-01	300
	2nd year = 2.25%		
	3rd year = 2.5%		

Lethbridge College

Union	Wage Settlements	Settled on	Employees covered
AUPE	1st year = 1.9%	2016-11-08	334
Lethbridge College Faculty Association	1st year = 1.9%	2016-06-06	350
	2nd year = 1.9%		
Lethbridge College Faculty Association	1st year = 2.5%	2015-06	406
	2nd year = 2.5%		
	3rd year = 2.5%		
AUPE	1st year = 2.5%	2015-03	400
	2nd year = 2.5%		

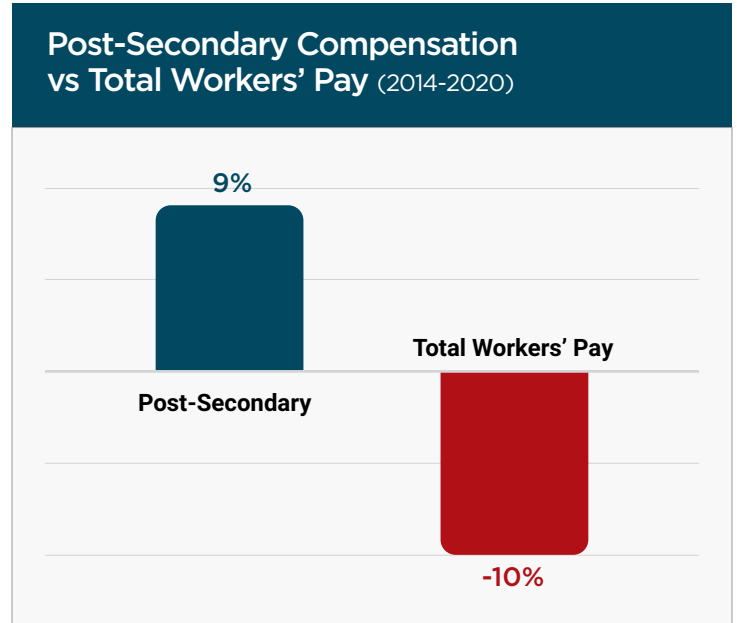
NAIT

Union	Wage Settlements	Settled on	Employees covered
NAIT Academic Staff Association	1st year = 1.5%	2016-06-22	1,200
	2nd year = 0%		
	3rd year = 0%		

⁶ University of Calgary and the University of Alberta are now proposing wage reductions.

Private sector

While the CTF found no post-secondary union agreements that resulted in a pay reduction, we did find 107 private-sector union wage settlements that resulted in pay reductions during the downturn, which can be found in a [report](#) published in December, 2020. This figure only includes union wage reductions, but doesn't include the many other pay reductions and job losses that have impacted Albertans working outside of government. Furthermore, it is important to note that total compensation paid to all employees across the province has declined by about 10 per cent from 2014 to 2020, according to [Statistics Canada data](#).⁷ While total workers' pay across the province has declined, compensation at post-secondary institutions has increased by nearly nine per cent from [2014](#) to [2020](#), according to Alberta government budgets (see figure below).



⁷ Total compensation paid to all workers across the province still fell by five per cent from 2014 to 2019 (pre-COVID downturn).