



PRECARIOUS INSTRUCTORS

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

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USE WEBLINKS OR READ EXCERPTS ON FOLLOWING PAGES.

“Precarious Historical Instructors’ Manifesto”, *Active History* (February 2020)

<http://activehistory.ca/2020/02/precarius-historical-instructors-manifesto/>. Read online, excerpts [below](#).

“The CHA’s Response to the Precarious Historical Instructors’ Manifesto” *Canadian Historical Association* (March 2020). No longer online, read [below](#).

“An open letter to the Canadian Historical Association from Tenure-Track and Tenured Faculty” *Active History* (March 2020) <http://activehistory.ca/2020/03/an-open-letter-to-the-canadian-historical-association/>. Read [below](#).

“2020 AGM Minutes,” *Canadian Historical Association* (June 2020) <https://cha-shc.ca/uploads/60c0d1d2c6a9d.pdf>. Read [below](#) under “10. Other Business”, page 34)

“Engaged | Engagés A CHA Webinar Series on Precarity,” *Canadian Historical Association* (November 2020 – March 2021) <https://cha-shc.ca/precarity/engaged-engages-a-cha-webinar-series-on-precarity>. See and hear online.

“CHA SHC,” *Youtube* https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu9Wr3ur_ApQI1mUOFrYQGQ/videos

Recommended viewing:

- [“A CHA Webinar Series: Precarity I,”](#) Catherine Murton Stoehr (47:27 - 51:54);
- [“A CHA Webinar Series: Precarity II,”](#) Jeremy Milloy (49:09 – 54:20 and 56:30 – 60:00);
- [“Engaged | Engagés - A CHA Webinar Series III,”](#) Andrea Eiding (6:59 - 13:32) and David Tough (23:39 - 33:37);
- en français [“A CHA Webinar Series: Precarity II,”](#) Godefroy Desrosiers-Lauzon (5:38 - 10:40) and Christine Gauthier (41:38 - 43:46).

Jeremy Milloy, “I Think It’s Time For Us to Give Up Hope,” *Active History* (February 2021) <http://activehistory.ca/2021/02/i-think-its-time-for-us-to-give-up-hope/>. Read online.

Andrea Eiding, “Enough talk, it is time to take action to help precarious faculty,” *University Affairs* (April 2021) <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/careers-cafe/enough-talk-it-is-time-to-take-action-to-help-precarious-faculty/>. Read online.



Steven High, “There is no Solidarity in a Meritocracy: Precarity in the History Profession in Canada,” *Active History* (May 2021) <https://activehistory.ca/2021/05/there-is-no-solidarity-in-a-meritocracy-precarity-in-the-history-profession-in-canada/>; <https://cha-shc.ca/uploads/60c0c7becfc52.pdf>. Read online, excerpts [below](#).

Steven High, “Is it Time to Restore the “Canadians First” Hiring Guidelines for Canadian Universities? Canadian Historical Association (February 2022), <https://cha-shc.ca/precarity/cha-report-on-precarity>. Read online and [below](#).

[en français: “La directive d’embauche «Les Canadiens d’abord» dans les universités”, *Le Devoir*, 9 février 2022. <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/671529/travail-la-directive-d-embauche-les-canadiens-d-abord-dans-les-universites>. À lire en ligne.](#)

“Promising Departmental Practices for Precarious Teachers,” *Canadian Historical Association* (2021) <https://cha-shc.ca/precarity/departmental-best-practices-for-precarious-teachers>. Read online and [below](#).

PRECARIOUS HISTORICAL INSTRUCTORS' MANIFESTO (EXCERPT)

Read it all: Precarious Historical Instructors' Manifesto, *Active History* (February 2020)
<http://activehistory.ca/2020/02/precarious-historical-instructors-manifesto/>

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We are caught in a cycle where a large chunk of historians in the field are precariously employed. Tenured faculty and university administrators often ask about solutions to precarity from the people who are facing it during faculty meetings or when our professional associations meet, but they rarely act on suggestions. Precarity and those who face it are ignored as a problem of their own doing or, simply, as the state of the field in 2020.

Last year, a group of historians who, in some way, have or continue to experience precarity in the field organized themselves to pull together shared concerns and possible solutions. Speaking about precarity publicly can, and has, put careers at risk. Releasing this document on Active History anonymously is an attempt to move the conversation about precarity forward and push the field at large towards some concrete solutions.

by Anonymous

PREAMBLE

There is a crisis in working conditions for precariously employed history professors in Canadian universities. It is a crisis decades in the making; it has taken a profound personal and collective toll on generations of historians. As real as this situation is to the workers themselves, it is largely invisible at both department and association levels where precarious workers are often held responsible for their own working conditions. At the same time, departments, perhaps unconsciously, benefit from a historically unprecedented multi-decade internship system. This needs to stop.

A review of the past few years of the Canadian Historical Association's (CHA) Bulletin (now called *Intersections*) reveals a near-total conflation between the enrolment crisis, alternative-academic career preparation, and the struggles of precariously employed historians. The first two have prompted real structural analysis backed by a political will for change; nothing has been done about the latter.

Too many of us have experienced the anxiety of being forced to reapply for jobs every four months, of having courses cancelled with no warning after weeks of preparation, of being offered courses with as little as a few days' notice. All of us are denied access to research funding shortly after we achieve our PhDs. Many of us have found ourselves unable to collect unemployment insurance because adjunct and

sessional labour contracts do not meet the minimum hour requirements. Many of us have travelled to multiple institutions, often hours away from home, to cobble together enough contracts to pay our rent. Our working conditions isolate us from our families, relationships, and communities. The ripples of our losses and suffering extend beyond the university.

For many of us, this life of precarity, marginalization, and struggle begins in graduate school. As the underemployment and unemployment of trained historians has become normalized, the role of graduate student supervisors in championing and supporting their students in their job search has largely been abandoned. This has further divorced the profession from the lived conditions of its members. Declining faculty cohorts have decreased the capacity of graduate student supervisors' to give their students the time they need to address this. As a result, more and more graduate students must advocate for themselves in asymmetrical relationships within their departments and their universities, often to the disadvantage of their professional status.

We submit this issue must be addressed immediately and persistently. The severity of the crisis facing contract academic workers, the centrality of their work to the modern university project in Canada, and the extent to which relying on contract labour has benefited history departments places a burden of duty on the historian community to make improving working conditions for contract academic staff an agenda item at any and all collective fora.

With respect and without acrimony, we submit that history departments have benefitted to an unseemly degree from universities' use of contract academic labour as a cost-cutting mechanism. The function of contract work is to externalize risk from institutions and onto individuals. History departments have adopted this practice, however reluctantly, to their benefit. But there are multiple policies that, if departments adopted, would upload some of the personal risk to a department level where it could be absorbed with less catastrophic consequences than it currently does with individual historians.

... CALLS TO ACTION

... 2. Departments

Make policies that create transparency around course offerings known to sessionals, including the right of first refusal and seniority more generally.

Create a "Contract Faculty" agenda item at departmental meetings to identify opportunities to improve working conditions for contract workers, employment or research projects at the university, or grants in-process.

Write contract workers' research into your grant applications.

Consider employment conditions of contract faculty as a factor in your planning surrounding hires, course offerings, and branding.

Pay contract academic staff a professional wage to attend meetings and carry out committee work; be creative about including them in leadership and decision making.

Reform job advertisement protocols.

Limit initial application packages for tenure-track jobs to a CV, job letter, and reference list.

Do not ask job candidates to produce new materials.

Do not interview ABD candidates with no publications.

Collect data on completion rates and the post-PhD employment conditions of their students.

Develop a data-based ethical strategy to determine the numbers of admissions to PhD programmes.

Actively raise the profile of contract academic staff research to colleagues, local decision makers, and students.

Create a department travel fund for contract academic workers for their research and conference travel.

Advocate on behalf of your precariously employed historians with the administration.

Create space for contract academic workers to meet as a closed group.

Reduce contract academic workers workload by giving guest lectures and creating a departmental roster of syllabi, lectures, and slide decks to share with them.

Pay students and sessionals for giving guest lectures in your class.

Use available levers to increase the likelihood of running sessionals' courses.

Educate administrators and staff about the working hours required for course preparation.

Educate students about the working conditions of contract instructors, specifically the difference between full time and contract instructors' resources.

3. Faculty Associations

Bargain research funding for contract academic staff.

Hold firm on ratios.

Bargain for non-tenure-track permanent positions.

Devote significant resources to organizing for meaningful provincial and federal job actions to improve working conditions for contract academic workers.

Lobby hard for re-funding of Universities at the provincial and federal level.

THE CHA'S RESPONSE TO THE PRECARIOUS HISTORICAL INSTRUCTORS' MANIFESTO

Read it all: "The CHA's Response to the Precarious Historical Instructors' Manifesto" *Canadian Historical Association* (March 2020). No longer online, read here.



Published on March 5, 2020

On 20 February, a group of precariously employed historians posted a manifesto on the Active History site (<http://activehistory.ca/2020/02/precarius-historical-instructors-manifesto/>). It describes a "crisis in working conditions" for those history professionals who are employed in a short-term, precarious capacity, and makes three key institutional recommendations for regularizing precarious positions, including precarious historians in decision-making, and accepting responsibility for the perpetuation of precarious positions.

It also makes a number of calls to action directed specifically at professional associations.

Members of the CHA Council and Executive have read the manifesto with interest, and have established a sub-committee to examine and highlight the progress that has already been made toward addressing the concerns expressed in the calls to action, and to consider ways in which we can continue to work towards limiting precarity, and limiting the high professional and emotional cost of such employment.

Working both as a professional association, and together with other scholarly associations and funding agencies, we are committed to reducing the dire effects, both on our profession and on our members, of precarious employment.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CANADIAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION FROM TENURE-TRACK AND TENURED FACULTY

Read it all: “An open letter to the Canadian Historical Association from Tenure-Track and Tenured Faculty” *Active History* (March 2020) <http://activehistory.ca/2020/03/an-open-letter-to-the-canadian-historical-association/>

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Precarity in History is our discipline’s great challenge today.

As the Precarious Historical Instructors’ Manifesto puts it: “There is a crisis in working conditions for precariously employed history professors in Canadian universities. It is a crisis decades in the making; it has taken a profound personal and collective toll on generations of historians.”

All too often, the burden for finding solutions falls on the precarious instructors themselves – the people with the least power to make changes. When they do propose solutions, tenured faculty and university administrators too often ignore those ideas or give them a low priority.

The Precarious Historical Instructors’ Manifesto is a remarkably constructive and thoughtful document. People struggling to make ends meet and faced with broken promises and high walls on the part of their profession would be well within their rights to express anger. The Manifesto instead makes a series of sensible calls for change that would in many cases be simple to implement. Taken together, they lay out an agenda for real change and for greater justice within our profession.

The Canadian Historical Association has responded. It is a welcome step that the peak association for Canadian historians has not ignored the Manifesto. Yet the response reads as half-hearted. The CHA pledges to create “a sub-committee to examine and highlight the progress that has already been made toward addressing the concerns expressed in the calls to action, and to consider ways in which we can continue to work towards limiting precarity, and limiting the high professional and emotional cost of such employment.”

The undersigned welcome the CHA’s decision to address the crisis of precarity, but we see a simpler and more responsive solution: the CHA should work to implement the calls to action addressed specifically to historical associations. Some of these are simple: the removal of institutional affiliations can happen immediately at the 2020 CHA conference, where it would also be simple to make sure contract instructors are referred to by academic title. Others may take longer, but the work can be started now and the end goals accepted.

The CHA's decision to address the Manifesto's calls is a good first step, but discussion of how to do so should be done openly within the wider profession, not only by narrowing it down to a sub-committee. And the intention to listen and act can be announced now. As CHA members and Canadian historians, we urge the CHA to start acting now, and accept the calls to action for professional associations made in the Precarious Historical Instructors' Manifesto.

MOTION TO ENDORSE THE MANIFESTO

Read it all: “2020 AGM Minutes,” *Canadian Historical Association* (June 2020) <https://cha-shc.ca/uploads/60c0d1d2c6a9d.pdf>
(under “10. Other Business”, page 34: “Motion by...”)



The CHA accepts and endorses the Precarious Historical Instructors’ Manifesto and will work to promote the suggestions made within our association; the CHA urges History departments to carefully consider how to best carry out the recommendations in the context of their university, and; the CHA will create a forum for all CHA members to discuss how best to implement the various recommendations, with participation of both full-time and contingent faculty members.

After a discussion on the elements contained in the manifesto and the text of the motion, it was passed.

Motion by Ian Mosby, seconded by Janis Thiessen, that:

The CHA accepts and endorses the Precarious Historical Instructors’ Manifesto and will work to promote the suggestions made within our association; the CHA urges History departments to carefully consider how to best carry out the recommendations in the context of their university, and; the CHA will create a forum for all CHA members to discuss how best to implement the various recommendations, with participation of both full-time and contingent faculty members.

After a discussion on the elements contained in the manifesto and the text of the motion, it was passed.

THERE IS NO SOLIDARITY IN A MERITOCRACY: PRECARITY IN THE HISTORY PROFESSION IN CANADA (EXCERPTS)

Read it all: Steven High, “There is no Solidarity in a Meritocracy: Precarity in the History Profession in Canada,” A Report by Steven High, Vice-President, *Canadian Historical Association* (May 2021) <https://activehistory.ca/2021/05/there-is-no-solidarity-in-a-meritocracy-precarity-in-the-history-profession-in-canada/>; <https://cha-shc.ca/uploads/60c0c7becfc52.pdf>.

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“We all love what we do deeply. ... This love is taken from us by our institutions, employers, and administrators. It’s used to exploit us every time we do extra work or support the students we teach or mark papers properly even though we’re not paid enough to do it, or get a course outline just right even though we’ve only been given a week.”

– Dr. Jeremy Milloy, CHA round-table, January 2021 (and published in Active History)

“To all tenure-track and tenured professors who have and have not yet signed the letter: step up to the plate and take action. You benefit from a system that systematically exploits the labour of both precarious instructors and graduate students. You might think this has nothing to do with you, but it does. You might wring your hands and say it’s the department, but you are the department. You might say it’s the administration, but you are the administration. You have power and job security, and the ability to make real changes in the lives of so many people. It’s on you to use it.”

– Dr. Andrea Eidinger, CHA round-table, March 2021 (and published in University Affairs)

The Canadian Historical Association must recognize precarity within our discipline for what it is: a form of structural violence. The “collegial” structures within the academy implicate full-time faculty in a system, while not of our making, that is fundamentally unfair and exploitative.

As Rob Nixon has shown, structural violence is a slow violence that is normalized to such a degree that many don’t even recognize it as violence at all. The dismissal of precarity in our universities has been aided by the corrosive idea that we live and work in a meritocracy: that the “best” candidates do find full-time employment. On the one hand, the internalization of the meritocratic idea has caused many contingent faculty and recent graduates looking for work to doubt themselves. If only they had worked harder, published more, met more people: then the outcome might have been different. On the other hand, meritocratic thinking has served to comfort the comfortable: effectively depoliticizing precarity and rendering the structural violence all but invisible to others. There is no solidarity in a meritocracy.

That is why the Precarious History Instructors Manifesto has been so momentous – shattering the silence surrounding precarity in our profession and demanding that full-time faculty, department chairs and our professional association act.

[...]

POLITICALLY FRAMING THE PROBLEM

This is a start. To build the political-will needed to affect real change, the Canadian Historical Association organized a three-part round-table series on precarity designed to educate our members about the issues, grapple collectively with the problem, and recognize the ways that many of us are implicated in an unjust system. It was a necessary next step in further politicizing precarity within the discipline. Fundamentally, it is a structural issue rather than some kind of individual failing. It is also part of a wider deterioration in workplace relations in Canadian universities.

To that end, the round-table series began with new research undertaken by Chandra Pasma, from the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and author of *Contract U: Contract faculty appointments at Canadian universities* (2018) who shared some of the key findings from the data collected from 78 Canadian universities covering the period from 2008 to 2017. There is departmental level data for 71 universities, you can probably find statistics for your history department at CUPE Database. This research provides us with a much better understanding of the scale and scope of the problem, providing us with a political frame through which to understand and talk about precarity within our discipline.

Many panellists spoke of the necessity for precarious workers to organize. The fundamental problem of precarity, according to Dr. Jeremy Milloy, is not a supply and demand problem or a training problem but a power problem, an exploitation problem. Dr. David Tough likewise encouraged us to tackle structural divides within our departments and our profession that render some people disposable or invisible. Dr. Godefroy Desrosiers-Lauzon highlighted the political limits of alliance building, pointing to the pressing need to organize autonomously. Unions have a seat at the table and are part of the solution. History shows that collective action drives progressive change.

The pain, hurt, and yes, anger, so powerfully communicated by precarious workers during the round-tables stem from the material conditions of precarity but also from a profound sense of betrayal. This is not the life that any of them dreamed of or trained for. And many have experienced demeaning micro-aggressions that have only made their situation worse, alienating them from their departments and their wider profession. This ranges from not being listed on departmental websites to “friendly” corridor advice that they should not speak up about these issues because it would be bad for their career.

Dr. Ian Mosby was precarious for 8-long years until he landed a tenure-track position. Feelings of failure and worry were part of his everyday. It took its toll, as did the “subtle cruelties” of being asked to create new syllabi in applying for jobs. For her part, Dr. Catherine Murton Stoehr challenged the ways that workplace inequality has been normalized. “Academic harm reduction” is long overdue. However, she added: “real problems need real solutions.” There is also a sense of isolation, as precarious historians juggle contracts, often between institutions. Dr. Stacey Zembrzycki spoke of how precarious instructors in her department informally organized themselves and opened up a much-needed conversation within the wider department.

Full-time faculty members also spoke from the heart, raising tangible ideas about what departments and full-time faculty might do. Dr. Laura Madokoro noted that these massive structural issues “require radical solutions.” The urgent need to rethink power relationships in our universities can also be tied to wider efforts (such as they are) to decolonize, as raised by Dr. Crystal Fraser. Addressing full-time faculty in attendance, Dr. Tina Chen asked “what are our responsibilities”? When she was hired in 1999, she was the only person of colour in her department. That has slowly changed but only by years of struggle and explicit decision-making. There are lessons to be learnt in anti-racism activism about allyship but it can’t be about speaking for. Her department revisited its honoraria policy for speakers, deciding that those on salary should not get one and that precarious historians should. Dr. Catherine Larochelle also spoke to the added challenges for women in the academy and that many precarious workers are women. Dr. John Lutz’s noted that the full-time faculty association at his university bargained to convert three sessional faculty to tenure-track, including one in history. Internal hiring needs to be de-stigmatized. These small victories matter.

Among the other comments, Dr. Janis Thiessen spoke of the ways that being an historian can destroy your health. There is a lot of ill-health in her department, even amongst those with tenure. Dr. Ele Chenier spoke of the value of an ethics of care in our relations with each other. There are limits to what we as a professional association can realistically do. But there is still much we can commit to undertake, Dr. Harold Bérubé reminds us.

I want to thank all of the round-table panellists, as well as the three session chairs (Dr. Shannon McSheffrey, Dr. Nancy Janovicek, and Dr. Barrington Walker) for agreeing to participate in what was a difficult but necessary conversation. The round-table series caused many full-time faculty and others to read the Manifesto for the first time as well as the other resources circulated, and contributed to the organizing efforts of precarious workers themselves. New ideas were generated and two presentations by precarious historians were later published in *Active History* and *University Affairs*. About 270 historians attended the live round-table sessions and another 844 have so far viewed the round-tables on our Youtube channel. Taken together, this represents substantially more than the CHA’s current membership of 650.

[...]

SO, WHAT NEXT?

The Canadian Historical Association and its membership must continue to implement the action points of the Manifesto. In addition to the actions already undertaken by the CHA (see above), it is proposed that we undertake five further actions (organized as ten motions) that build on this foundation:

DEVELOP a set of best-practices for department chairs that would become part of an orientation package and perhaps a webinar. The Manifesto identifies a number of tangible actions that departments can take:

- Work with sessional and part-time instructors in course scheduling
- Identify opportunities to improve working conditions for contract faculty
- Consider contract faculty in hiring priorities for tenure-track positions
- Integrate contract faculty into departmental governance structures and find ways to remunerate them

- Limit what is asked for in the initial application packages and avoid asking job candidates to produce new materials
- Track what happens to PhD students after graduation
- Ensure that contract faculty are included on Departmental web-pages
- Find other ways to support contract faculty
- Advocate for contract faculty with the administration and faculty unions
- Pay students and contract workers for giving guest lectures

Motion #1: That the CHA form a 3-member committee, including at least one part-time or occasional instructor (who would receive an honorarium), that will prepare a document identifying best-practices for department chairs on issues of precarity. Once approved by the CHA Council, this will be combined with the latest data from our survey and form the basis of an orientation package and webinar for department chairs. The training of incoming department chairs needs to go beyond lists, they need to be oriented to these issues and hear the voices of precarious historians. The CHA orientation package might include a short digital story centred on the experiences of precarious workers themselves (with their permission and collaboration of course).

EDUCATE members about the structures of inequality within the profession via regular articles in Intersections, round-tables, and other formats. Additional ideas will continue to be generated in the years to come.

Motion #2: That the CHA create a regular space in Intersections dedicated to issues of precarity including the latest data from the survey to department chairs.

RETHINK the training of History master's and doctoral students.

Motion #3: That the Canadian Historical Association establish a 5-member CHA Task Force on History Graduate Training in the 21st Century with a one-year mandate to assess and provide guidance on the future of History graduate training in Canada. One of the five-members will be a graduate student named by the CHA Graduate Student Committee (and receive a small honorarium). The Task Force will invite written submissions and organize a series of public round-tables open to members, culminating in a written report. Highlights of the report will be published in Intersections and a special session organized during our annual meeting. The budget for the Task Force will be \$6,000 from our Rethinking Canadian History fund.

ADVOCATE for the value of historical training and knowledge as well as the excellence of Canadian PhD programs.

Motion #4: That the CHA launch a publicity campaign centred on the value of historical training and knowledge. This would involve the writing of op-eds and doing media interviews. A member of Council would be assigned this portfolio and serve as the campaign's coordinator.

Motion #5: That the CHA recognizes that during a jobs crisis for PhD History graduates it is often untenable to claim that there are "no qualified" Canadians in order to hire non-Canadians/landed immigrants for tenure-tracks positions in History. We direct the CHA President to undertake research as the basis of advocacy on this issue.

Motion #6: That the CHA encourage the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to adjust its eligible expense policy so that precarious scholars without full-time employment would become eligible to pay themselves a salary as grant recipients (much as postdoctoral fellows are).

SUPPORT the collective efforts of precarious workers to organize and promote greater accessibility within the CHA.

Motion #7: That the Canadian Historical Association believes that part-time and occasional lecturers as well as teaching assistants should be unionized. Our members should therefore be supportive of the efforts of precarious workers and graduate students to unionize and their ongoing struggle to improve wages and working conditions.

Motion #8: That the Canadian Historical Association invite precarious historians to form an affiliated committee of the association if they wish.

Motion #9: That we set the CHA fees for our annual meeting for graduate student and precarious members at one-fourth that charged to full-time members.

Motion #10: That we continue the practice of paying precarious participants on CHA-organized panels an honoraria of one-year's free membership.

The time for action is now.

IS IT TIME TO RESTORE THE “CANADIANS FIRST” HIRING GUIDELINES FOR CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES?

Read it all: Steven High, “Is it Time to Restore the “Canadians First” Hiring Guidelines for Canadian Universities?,” *Canadian Historical Association* (February 2022), <https://cha-shc.ca/precarity/cha-report-on-precarity>.

en français: “La directive d’embauche «Les Canadiens d’abord» dans les universités,” *Le Devoir*, 9 février 2022, <https://www.ledevoir.com/opinion/idees/671529/travail-la-directive-d-embauche-les-canadiens-d-abord-dans-les-universites>.

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The humanities and social sciences are in a prolonged crisis. Canadian universities are pumping out outstanding graduates from PhD programs for permanent jobs that simply don’t exist. The single major factor is the growing proportion of undergraduate teaching that is being done by precariously employed part-time or occasional instructors. Few permanent jobs are being advertised as a result. That said, it doesn’t help that a growing number of those hired are foreign nationals who were not trained in Canada. There is an unfortunate tendency in the academy to equate excellence with what school you a candidate attended, placing Canadian graduates at a distinct disadvantage in the reputational marketplace. It is not unheard of to have all non-Canadian shortlists in job competitions with over one-hundred applicants.

The sense of anger, even betrayal, is palpable among highly qualified recent graduates and precarious instructors.

To understand the deteriorating situation better, the Canadian Historical Association (CHA), which represents professional historians across the country, organized a series of virtual round-table last year which resulted in a major report and a set of recommendations. Our Committee on Precarity has since developed best-practice resources and guidelines for History Department Chairs to mitigate what we can. We also established a seven-member Task Force on the Future of the PhD in Canada to better understand the structural problems. It will be reporting this spring at our centenary conference. I was also directed to investigate the specific issue of hiring policies.

Controversy over the under-representation of Canadians in our universities is nothing new. In the 1960s, those concerns centred on the informal old boy’s network that saw Americans hired without advertising the position. According to one estimate, the proportion of Canadian faculty at 15 surveyed universities declined from 75% in 1961 to 49% in 1968. Once established in Canadian universities, “foreign academics tended to hire individuals who were much like themselves in terms of training, outlook, approach.” The controversy led to the establishment of the Commission on Canadian Studies, chaired by T.H.B. Symons, and eventually to the “Canadians First” policy in academic hiring in 1981.

Between 1981 and 2001, Canadian universities were required to conduct a Canadian search first before opening it up to non-citizens/permanent residents if no qualified candidate was found. Naturally, there were always exemptions for those disciplines such as biotechnology, electro-engineering and computer science where there was a demonstrated shortage of Canadian talent or when the university was able to attract an academic superstar.

Not surprisingly, many university administrators never liked the policy, seeing it as an obstacle to achieving top international standards. There is some truth to this. And it wasn't just administrators who opposed the regulations. Academics are more likely to see themselves as global citizens and believe, to varying degrees, that knowledge knows no borders. Who would not want to work with or learn from the best?

But "excellence" is a slippery fish.

After all, university rankings are grounded in reputational surveys and include such indicators of greatness as the number of Ivy League-trained professors on the payroll. Canadian universities with global pretensions like to trumpet these associations.

This two-tier policy, first adopted by the Liberals under Pierre Trudeau, survived the Brian Mulroney years and the free trade agreement only to die under the Jean Chretien Liberals.

The 2001 policy change, which followed the blanket exemption for the new Canada Research Chair programme the year before, was prompted by doomsday predictions about the coming shortage of qualified candidates given the expected increased university enrollment with the baby boom "echo". In 2000, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada issued a report entitled "Revitalizing Universities through Faculty Renewal" that warned of a serious labour shortage, predicting they would need to hire up to 32,000 new professors by 2010. Canadian universities were expected to only graduate half that number.

In response, the federal government relaxed the policy, allowing universities to advertise domestically and internationally at the same time. But with the promise that qualified Canadians would still be first hired. The "Canadians first" policy thus remains in place today at least in theory.

After getting the green light, Canadian universities used the federal government's Temporary Foreign Workers Program as its primary vehicle for hiring permanent employees outside of the country. The early 2000s saw the "rapid influx" of temporary foreign workers into Canada more generally. The programme, however, is supposed to be limited to sectors where there is a demonstrated labour shortage and that is the rub.

The argument that there is a labour shortage in Canada within the humanities and social sciences is simply untenable.

It is strange to read old predictions of the coming labour shortage, as things did not work out that way. It was all a mirage of course. The modest opening up of the academic job market for historians, at least, only lasted two or three years. I was lucky to be hired during this small window.

The resulting inequities are striking. The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) raised this issue back in 2015 when it charged that universities were abusing the Temporary Foreign Workers

Programme. According to CAUT President David Robinson, “The reality is there are scores of qualified Canadian academics who are employed on temporary and part-time contracts who should be considered for full-time openings.”

At present, Canadian law requires that all faculty job ads include the following wording “All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply; however, Canadians and permanent residents will be given priority.” In practice, however, what does it mean to be “qualified”? Does it include anyone who is a strong candidate, actively publishing and effectively teaching, or does it signify the best candidate available in the international pool of applicants? Nor is there any more clarity in what is meant by giving Canadians’ “priority.”

To better understand the prevailing situation, I analysed eight university hiring policies freely available online to see what formal direction our universities are giving faculty hiring committees. All repeat the government’s vague wording that qualified Canadians and permanent residents would continue to be given first priority. Otherwise, current practice appears to vary considerably from one university to another.

The University of Calgary, for example, seems to have the most restrictive reading of the law: “All Canadian citizens and permanent residents who meet the advertised requirements of the position are to be invited to participate in the selection process, i.e. interviews, presentations, etc. Canadian citizens and permanent residents who are found qualified are to be offered the position before it can be offered to a foreign candidate.” For its part, the University of Toronto asks hiring committees to “keep a record of all attempts through written or personal communication or other means that you have made to find qualified Canadian or permanent residents to fill the position.” Most universities, however, seem to follow the lead of the University of Alberta, which insists that Canadian citizenship or permanent residency matters only when two candidates are “equally qualified based on the advertised criteria.” This wording effectively enshrines a straightforward international job search, albeit one that requires the subsequent denigration of Canadian candidates to justify the final choice. Universities Canada, the voice of upper university administrators in the country strongly supports this global labour market vision.

Because there is little government oversight, universities can pretty much do as they please.

Another key factor to consider is the overdue prioritization of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion criteria in hiring. History, as a discipline, has been one of the whitest in the humanities and social sciences. This urgently needs to change. Accordingly, any restoration of the “Canadians first” policy must not be a barrier to these efforts. One way to advance our EDI goals, while supporting our own graduates, is to recognize Canadian-trained international students amongst the priority job pool.

I believe it is time to restore the two-tier policy as there is no shortage of well qualified, indeed excellent, candidates already in Canada. To say there are no qualified Canadians or permanent residents for these positions is a lie, and not even a subtle one at that. Our PhD graduates deserve more than precarious part-time or occasional work.

PROMISING DEPARTMENTAL PRACTICES FOR PRECARIOUS TEACHERS

Read it all: “Promising Departmental Practices for Precarious Teachers,” *Canadian Historical Association* (2021) <https://cha-shc.ca/precarity/departmental-best-practices-for-precarious-teachers>.



Summary Table of Promising Practices

| Principles | Actions |
|------------------------------|---|
| Communication + Transparency | <p>Outreach: Meet with new precarious instructors (PIs) and let them know about the resources available at the department and the institution. Ask them what the department can do to improve their working conditions.</p> <p>Checklist: Prepare a document that lists resources, academic regulations, standards and templates for course outlines and evaluations, and contacts in the department and elsewhere in the institution.</p> <p>Representation: Help PIs elect one or more representatives to the department. Offer to host a general meeting with the PIs, at least once a year. Greet them, inform them, answer their questions/comments, and let them continue the meeting in camera.</p> <p>Professional information: Inform PIs in your unit of upcoming job openings, the course schedule for upcoming terms, courses taught by graduate students. Inform PIs of program revisions in your unit.</p> <p>Explain, regularize, communicate rules and procedures related to hiring, evaluation, professional support and teaching. Value the contribution of PIs in your department's course offerings. Promote their research and publications. Post PI's profiles on your department's web page.</p> |
| Resources | <p>Provide PIs in your unit with resources equivalent to those available to full-time faculty. An office equipped with a computer and telephone; access to a photocopier and scanner; ensure that this equipment is kept up to date.</p> <p>Teaching Assistants: Inform PIs promptly of the TA hours assigned to their courses. Inform them of the rule that determines the number of hours. Offer them a list of candidates. Maximize the hours for courses taught by PIs.</p> |

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| | <p>Share teaching resources: syllabi, slide presentations, etc. Offer PIs guest speakers in courses they teach, offer them paid lectures in other departmental courses.</p> |
| Collegiality | <p>Representation: Ask PIs to elect two representatives and invite these individuals to attend the department's meetings. Invite their representatives to departmental committees, especially the one responsible for undergraduate studies. Include a "precarious faculty" item on the agenda. Pay them for their work representing PIs.</p> <p>Education planning: Invite PI representatives to sit on committees that review curricula, course offerings, and plan course offerings. Consider the working conditions and strengths of PIs in your unit when planning course offerings.</p> <p>Invite PIs to your department's social events.</p> <p>Support governance reforms that allow PIs and student representatives to sit and vote on institutional and faculty committees/assemblies with voting rights.</p> |
| Working Conditions | <p>Compensation: Ensure that PIs are compensated for their work: preparation of syllabi, course preparation, grading of assignments/exams, administrative duties, representation.</p> <p>Seniority: Inform PIs in your unit of teaching opportunities. Assign teaching loads based on seniority and teaching experience, with a right of first refusal. Explain and communicate seniority and hiring rules. Inform PIs of new opportunities after the employment relationship is terminated.</p> <p>Student Teaching: Graduate student teaching must be subject to the same conditions (status, rights, salary, seniority, TAs, etc.) as that of Graduate PIs. Pay PIs and graduate students who lecture in your department. Graduate funding should not be used to pay for graduate student teaching. Limit the number of teaching loads offered to graduate students. Provide coaching and mentoring for new PIs.</p> <p>Teaching evaluations: Offer support to PIs who receive a low rating in student evaluations of teaching. Treat these evaluations as opinion polls. Avoid punitive measures except in cases of misconduct.</p> <p>Rights: Precarious faculty have the same rights as permanent faculty. Fairness, academic freedom, intellectual property, labor standards, support for teaching, due process and transparency...</p> <p>Support the demands of PIs and their representatives, through your association/union, and through your faculty and institutional administrative functions.</p> |
| Career and Institutional Support | <p>Access to professional resources: Support PIs' access to your institution's research and teaching support services, and access to training and development offerings.</p> <p>Research and Outreach: Integrate PIs into your department's research teams and projects and pay for their work. Support their research, publications, funding</p> |

and job search. Contribute to their travel expenses and participation in research and outreach activities. Regularize this support. Post PI profiles on your department's web page.

Tenure: Consider PIs in your department for tenure-track positions, and support their job search. Explore the possibility of offering them longer term teaching contracts.