

The Impact of the Student Choice Initiative on Levy Groups at Trent University

Final Report by:

Laura Murdoch

Host Organization: Ontario Public Interest Research Group Peterborough, Seasoned Spoon Cafe

Faculty Supervisor: Aimee, Anges Blyth, Samantha MacAndrew, Kathryn Norlock

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Abstract

Among many other changes, the 2019 Ontario Budget outlined the new *Student Choice Initiative* which categorized ancillary services as “essential” or “non-essential” (Ministry of Finance, 2019a, pg. 185). According to the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (2019), all compulsory ancillary fees must be approved by a governing body, announced prior to the collection of fees, and be collected for the purpose of providing an essential service. Compulsory fees may only be charged for services that are deemed as “essential.” All fees that are not included in these categories are considered non-essential services and as such, institutions must provide students with the option of opting out of paying the fees. Subsequently, the levy groups at Trent University are at risk of losing considerable amounts of their funding as a result of the Student Choice Initiative. This report outlines the specificities of the Student Choice Initiative, democratic changes affecting secondary education, as well as the perspectives of various groups affected by these changes. Finally, an in-depth budgetary analysis of these organizations was conducted in order to make strategic recommendations for the future.

Literature Review

Levy groups are organizations funded by a small charge to the students at Trent University. As such, a levy fee is a yearly charge approved by students through a democratic referendum which is used to fund organizations in connection with Trent. In addition to levy fees, students also pay ancillary fees for the purpose of the general operating of the university along with tuition fees. Ancillary and tuition fees are both non-refundable while levy fees can be refundable or non-refundable. Excluding tuition fees, levy fees account for around 11% of student's general fees. Levy fees are specifically directed to student organizations or organizations which provide a service or benefit to Trent in connection with the university (Trent Central Student Association [TCSA], 2019). Table 1 and 2 in Appendix A depicts an estimation of the refundable and non-refundable levy groups for the 2019-2020 academic year, while Table 3 delimits the Trent Student Union levy fee. The process for approving levy fees involves a referendum, or general vote, in which 15% of students must participate and 50% of students must approve (MyKawartha, 2018). For example, in 2018 the YES Shelter for Youth and Families was approved with 78% of Trent University students in support of a three-dollar levy fee (MyKawartha, 2018). Levy fees are charged to students on a per-semester basis for those who are enrolled in 1.5 credits or more and the fees can be refundable or non-refundable (TCSA, 2019, pg.6). However, the new Student Choice Initiative modifies these classifications.

According to the Student Choice Initiative, students may be charged a compulsory levy fee for the following services: athletics and recreation, career services, student buildings, health and counselling, academic support, student ID cards, student achievement and records, financial aid offices, and campus safety programs (Ministry of Finance, 2019a). Health and benefits may be refundable given the student provides proof of pre-existing coverage (Ministry of Training,

Colleges and Universities, 2019). Services which cannot be categorized in this way will be deemed non-essential. In the 2019-2020 year, students will have the option to opt-out of non-essential services online. Table 4 in appendix A provides a comparison of the changes to levy fees for the current year as compared to the previous year. The ostensible purpose of the Student Choice Initiative is, “to empower students” (Ministry of Finance, 2019a, pg. 185). However, a recent survey conducted by the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) Peterborough revealed conflicting results.

The Wider Impact

Recently, OPIRG Peterborough conducted a study of 18 out of 46 groups that receive a levy through Trent. This survey determined some of the crucial services offered. As an example, consider the homeless crisis in Peterborough. The Peterborough Homelessness Enumeration Report (2018) provides a comprehensive view of the homeless population in the city and county of Peterborough. Over a span of three days, volunteers identified 259 people experiencing homelessness. In addition, all of Peterborough’s shelters and transitional housing providers were also asked to report their capacity and current guest count on March 20, 2018. Fifty-seven percent of the emergency shelters and transitional housing were at or over capacity including the YES Shelter for Youth and Families and the Warming Room, both of which are currently supported by Trent students through the levy system (Peterborough Enumeration Report, 2018). The Warming Room has an average of 18 overnight guests each night and the YES Shelter for Youth and Families provides 30 emergency shelter beds (Peterborough Enumeration Report, 2018). These services are invaluable to people experiencing homelessness in Peterborough. To explicate, of the 259 people surveyed, 49% were chronically homeless (homeless for six months or more) and 74% reported having stayed in an emergency shelter in the last year (Peterborough

Enumeration Report, 2018). There is an undeniable need for these services in Peterborough and allowing the funding of these organizations to become more precarious may put the safety and well-being of homeless individuals at risk.

Another example is mental health and wellbeing services which are offered in collaboration with Trent. In the Pan-Canadian survey on mental health services, 38% of 2,245 participants indicated that the time between initially seeking professional help and diagnosis exceeded 12 months (Mood Disorders Society of Canada, 2015). Similarly, the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey for Mental Health found that one in six persons have a mental health care need (Statistics Canada, 2012). Further, an estimated 600,000 Canadians reported having an unmet health care need in 2012 (Statistics Canada, 2012). The mental health dilemma in Ontario is further exacerbated by the Student Choice Initiative which, as demonstrated in the OPIRG Peterborough survey, puts more than eighteen mental health and accessibility services and five counselling and peer support services at risk. For example, Active Minds is a levy group at Trent which acts as a liaison between the Trent community and mental health services in the community (TCSA, n.d.). The purpose of the group is to offer students support in order to facilitate positive well-being. In making the funding for groups such as Active Minds more precarious, the Student Choice Initiative limits the availability of these crucial resources at the detriment of the well-being of students.

As well, according to the 2019 Trent University Community Report, 5,524 jobs in the community are directly or indirectly supported by Trent. As of April 2019, Trent employed 1,163 full-time, part-time, and contract employees (Trent University, 2019). Along with the Student Choice Initiative, the 2019 Ontario Budget outlines a new 10% reduction in tuition fees (Ministry of Finance, 2019a). Both of these changes will result in a decrease in employment

opportunities at Trent. The survey conducted by OPIRG Peterborough determined that over 37 work study positions may be lost as well as over 38 student jobs and 59 skills training programs. The resultant impact is on the Peterborough community itself. In the 2015 census, the unemployment rate was 8% and as of 2018, fully 16% of people living in Peterborough City and County were earning a wage below the Low-Income Measure (Peterborough Public Health, 2017). With a reduction of available jobs as a result of the Student Choice Initiative, unemployment rates will increase. This problem is exacerbated by the housing insecurity in Peterborough. According to the 2016 census, 52.6% of the population in Peterborough are spending more than 30% of total household income for shelter needs (Statistics Canada, 2016). This will make it more difficult for students to support their own education and limit the amount of services available to the Trent and Peterborough community.

Finally, the OPIRG Peterborough survey revealed that a grocery assistance program and food/clothing bank at OPIRG Peterborough's free market may lose their funding. With the Student Choice Initiative, this valuable resource will be put at risk. In 2014, food insecurity impacted 11.9% of people in Ontario with Peterborough well above that average at 16.5% of the City and County (Peterborough Public Health, 2017). Peterborough was ranked the highest metropolitan area in Canada for food insecurity in 2014 (Tarasuk, Mitchell, Dachner, 2016). The primary cause of food insecurity in Peterborough is lower income as demonstrated by the 2015 census, which identified \$29,212 as the median after-tax income in Peterborough City and County (Statistics Canada, 2016). As such, supporting food banks in the Peterborough community is essential to addressing food insecurity in Peterborough. In March of 2013, 7,724 Peterborough City and Country residences were helped by food banks (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2015). Of those 7,724 people, 30.5% were receiving disability related income

support (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2015). There are approximately 12,400 people in the City of Peterborough living with a disability which translates to 16% of the population (Peterborough Social Planning Council, 2015). With the new Student Choice Initiative, over 18 support services for student with disabilities will be put at risk. Table 5 in Appendix C outlines the mandates and goals of all the levy groups at Trent University.

Right to Democracy

The Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) provides a voice for the students in more than 80 university and college student unions across Canada. The federation allows students to be represented provincially and nationally in order to achieve educational, administrative, and legislative change. On May 28, 2019, the Canadian Federation of Students in partnership with the York Federation of Students announced they were suing the Government of Ontario's Student Choice Initiative for lack of legal authority and acting with improper purpose (The Charlatan, 2019; The Varsity, 2019). As Kayla Weiler, the representative of CFS, stated, "Despite its claim, the Ford government is not for the people and it is certainly not for the students. Students' unions have been democratically voted in place by students and should remain free of government interference" (Takagi, 2019). The Student Choice Initiative interferes with student's democratic right to determine what organizations to support and the services that will be considered essential. To further expand on this issue, consider how neoliberalism plays a role in the new 2019 Ontario Budget.

Neoliberalism is a modified form of liberalism favouring free-market capitalism. A primary feature of neoliberalism is the idea that capitalist market relations are the idealized model for all social relations (Lipsitz, 2015). In his article, Lipsitz (2015) described a neoliberal educational reform which occurred in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina. These reforms

were characterized by, “draconian reductions in social spending, union busting and the privatization of public education” (Lipsitz, 2015). The reforms outlined in the 2019 Ontario Budget are analogous to the changes in New Orleans. Lipsitz (2015) describes the impact of such reforms:

It offers wealthy people the promise of personal autonomy free from any form of collective responsibility or accountability, while making benefits to middle class or poor students, teachers, workers and welfare recipients contingent on conforming to punitive, inflexible, and essentially rigged audit systems designed to excuse and justify their abandonment by the state. (p. 318)

As demonstrated above, the underlying issue is the disguised attack on people below the poverty line and the estrangement of low- and high-income students. Many students may determine that opting-out of non-essential levy fees is beneficial because of the additional money they receive from the year (\$74.35 before the Student Choice Initiative). However, this action would occur at the detriment of other students who depend on these services. Fogarty (2015) from St. Mary’s University in Halifax outlined the additional hidden costs to succeeding in university. These hidden costs include social costs such as engaging in the social atmosphere of the university, and time costs which encompasses the conflict between gaining academic volunteer experience and earning a living wage (Fogarty, 2015). Fogarty (2015) outlined this dilemma in a scenario of being able to pay for admission to an amusement park but being unable to pay for a ride once inside. As she states, “Similarly with academia, we don’t want to merely get in – we want to do well once we’re here” (Fogarty, 2015). The reduction of tuition and levy fees in the 2019 Ontario Budget is analogous to this scenario; making it cheaper to get in the park but impossible to go on any rides.

Planning for the Future

The levy group fees for the coming 2019-2020 academic year as proposed by the TCSA's Policy Book are listed in Tables 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix A. The TCSA, Trent University's student union, is responsible for the approval, amendment, and removal of all levy group fees (TCSA, 2019). It is the responsibility of the TCSA to report this information to Trent University's Finance Office who collects and remits levy group fees (TCSA, 2019). Since the 2018-2019 academic year, the total levy group fees have increased by 2.87% for the 2019-2020 year which is primarily an inflation adjustment (TCSA, 2019). This information along with Trent's Operating Budget which estimates 9,656 full-time equivalent students in the 2019-2020 year is used by levy groups to budget for the following year (Trent University, 2018). However, this information is unlikely to yield reliable results. As a disclaimer in the TCSA Policy Book describes, "due to the Student Choice Initiative (by the provincial government) many non-refundable fees now have an opt-out option... at the time of publication, the full determination of which groups fees are still recognized as mandatory is unknown" (TCSA, 2019, pg. 6).

In summary, the levy groups at Trent University provide valuable services to members of the Trent community as well as to the City and County of Peterborough. The services provided by Trent's levy groups are essential in contributing valuable resources to the homelessness population of Peterborough, fighting to eliminate food insecurity, and improving the mental health of students and community members. The Student Choice Initiative will be put these essential services at risk and challenges the right of students to form democratically.

Internal Scan

According to the Government of Canada (2019), non-profit organizations are any club, society, or association organized solely for the purpose of social welfare, civic improvement, pleasure or recreation, or any other purpose except for profit. As such, non-profit organizations differ greatly from for-profit organizations in that they usually work to create societal change. Hull and Lio (2006) provide a model for evaluating innovation and the unique challenges that face non-profit organizations. The theoretical model considers the major differences of for-profit as compared to non-profit organizations. These differences include three main categories: the organization's vision, strategic constraints, and financial constraints (Hull & Lio, 2006). This section presents the organizational analysis of the Seasoned Spoon Café and Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) Peterborough, along with the impact of the Student Choice Initiative (Ministry of Finance, Government of Ontario, 2019). Hull and Lio's (2006) model was used incorporating the organizations' budgets, year-end reports, and qualitative analysis of interviews with leaders of the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG Peterborough.

Vision

The mission statement for both organizations are provided in the SWOT analysis in Figure 1 and Figure 2. These SWOT analyses provide an in-depth view of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to OPIRG Peterborough and the Seasoned Spoon in order to, "discover recommendations and strategies, with a focus on leveraging strengths and opportunities to overcome weaknesses and threats" (Business News Daily, 2019). Doing so provides a glimpse into how the Student Choice Initiative threatens the operation of these organizations and the realization of their mission statements and vision. However, Hull and Lio (2006) argue that an organization's vision constitutes more than simply the mission statement. In

their words, “Vision ... can be equated to an organization’s ideals and goals, a symbol of what it is and what it does” (Hull & Lio, 2006, pg. 55). A subcategory of vision is the scope of impact which describes the population affected by the non-profit and the extent to which they are affected (Hull & Lio, 2006).

Mission Statement: “OPIRG works to create and sustain student and community-based engagement through research, education and action on social justice and environmental issues; challenging oppression in all its forms; and using consensus-based decision-making in a non-hierarchical and accessible setting.”

	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieve the objective
Internal Origin attributes of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program offerings: Free Market, Green Dishes, Disorientation • Strong board of directors • Grants, work-study programs, levy fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capacity of the coordinator; only one full-time staff • Lack of institutional memory • Wide-reaching mandate makes it almost impossible to fulfill
External Origin attributes of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a free market on campus • Another full-time staff member 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student choice initiative • Under-staffed

Figure 1. OPIRG Peterborough SWOT Analysis

For example, OPIRG Peterborough has many programs, such as Green Dishes and the Free Market, which are accessible to the Peterborough community as well as students at Trent. In an interview with Samantha MacAndrew, coordinator of OPIRG Peterborough, she explained, “it won’t just be Trent students who will unfortunately have that [lack of resources] as a disadvantage but, for instance, our Free Market, a lot of community members use that.” Another

subcategory of vision is performance expectations or the standards at which the goals of an organization are measured (Hull & Lio, 2006).

Mission and mandate: Seasoned Spoon Mission Statement: to grow a regional food system that is sustainable, inclusive and just. The Seasoned Spoon Café is committed to the following principles: 1) Serve ethically sourced, fairly traded, locally or organically grown foods that meet diverse dietary needs, 2) Be structured as a cooperative and be accountable to our members, 3) Be a student and community-driven, not for profit, social enterprise, 4) Increase awareness, encourage advocacy and inspire action around food issues through education and by fostering active debate, 5) Offer learning opportunities through paid and volunteer positions, community based research, and educational programming, 6) Maintain the Café as a food commons at Trent University and encourage the development of other community food spaces, 7) To strengthen the Peterborough food system and to promote food justice within our community.

	Helpful to achieving the objective	Harmful to achieve the objective
Internal Origin attributes of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a cooperative; being part of a not-for-profit community • Being in a institution; built-in support system • Hardworking, dedicated, passionate staff • Levy funding, Canada work study program • Strong board of directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial struggles • Broader food system set up poorly for processing and distributing local food
External Origin attributes of the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More real estate for food offering on campus • Expand educational offerings • Engage in broader support for other groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing inexpensive and accessible local food • Student choice initiative • More competition for grants • Creating a flexible budget

Figure 2. Seasoned Spoon SWOT Analysis

In her interview, MacAndrew was concerned that “some groups may cease to exist and then the groups that remain will have to, with a smaller budget, do the same as what they’re expected to do now.” With potential cuts to funding as a result of higher opt-out rates, it may be difficult for these organizations to successfully negotiate the performance expectations of students, community members, and others. As a result, coordinators for these organizations may

experience burnout and fewer resources will be available for community members. Overall, the Student Choice Initiative makes it more difficult for organizations to fulfill the requirements of their mandate.

Strategic Constraints

Strategic constraints determine the options that are available to organizations. Hull and Lio (2006) consider ownership and responsibility, and markets, as the major organizational constraints facing non-profit organizations. A non-profit organization is responsible to many parties who may all have differing ideas about how the organization should fulfill its mandate including employees, supporters, and clients or community members. The Student Choice Initiative may impact all of these groups. With uncertain funding, a flexible, scaled back budget may be necessary which will have a particularly negative impact on staff. As Aimee Agnes Blyth, coordinator of the Seasoned Spoon Café, disclosed, “it’s hard on staff, it’s really hard on staff and I’m not really excited about being that kind of employer.” Precarious funding for the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG Peterborough raises the possibility of downsizing. Even as challenges rise though, being a cooperative allows for the Seasoned Spoon to have, “the support of members who want to see the Spoon succeed. That’s a real asset or a piece of resiliency.” In the 2018-2019 year, the Seasoned Spoon sold 610 memberships which equated to 4% of their income for the year. Most importantly, non-profits are also responsible to those who utilize the services provided. MacAndrew described how she feels the weight of these many responsibilities,

Unfortunately, with everything in my job description, it feels impossible to do everything perfectly. Normally you can’t do things perfectly anyway so that’s okay but like I said,

there is so much to cover that sometimes I feel like I fall short in doing what I want to do or doing what the community wants.

MacAndrew later stated that an additional staff member to alleviate some of her responsibilities would be especially beneficial. However, the Student Choice Initiative may make the contrary true, increasing the likelihood of less support for the coordinators of these organizations. As such, the Student Choice Initiative will make it particularly difficult for non-profit organizations such as the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG Peterborough to fulfill their responsibilities to employees, supporters, and clients/community members.

Another strategic constraint outlined by Hull and Lio (2006) is termed scope limitations related to the organization's particular market. Often, the market is, "an intrinsic part of the organization's mission, laid out in the charter" (Hull & Lio, 2006, pg. 57). For instance, a large consideration with respect to market considers the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Along with the Student Choice Initiative, the changes to OSAP include a lower family income threshold, eliminating the six-month interest-free grace period, and a new grant-to-loan ratio of at least 50% loans (Narcity, 2019). With these changes, students may depend on refunding the levy fees in order to help pay for tuition and other school-related expenses. The impact of funding from multiple sources for students creates an unfavourable market, or strategic constraint, for the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG Peterborough. MacAndrew disclosed that the past has held some issues for maintaining institutional memory,

You could have someone come in one-year and then the next person and then the next person but then there's not much connection between them so you don't really know what worked in like the last five years very easily.

This market restraint, considering students, is the inconsistent recruitment and retention rate in employing in a student-based market. Ultimately, resulting in a quick turnover rate.

As such, employing in this market can reveal its own unique problems. As well, a permanent market consideration for the Seasoned Spoon is the food service industry which comes with challenges of its own. As Blyth describes, “I feel like there are a lot of pieces in the food system that are not set up for real substantial, local food like processing facilities, distribution facilities like the CSA (community shared agriculture).” More specifically, however, both OPIRG Peterborough and the Seasoned Spoon have their main market with the university students on campus. In the interview, both MacAndrew and Blyth mentioned that the opportunities for their organizations included expanding to more areas on campus such as opening a new café for the Seasoned Spoon and a free market for OPIRG Peterborough. These opportunities for growth and innovation are limited by the lack of space and accessibility of that space on campus.

Financial Constraints

The final category for analysis is financial constraints which include the organization’s means of acquiring money or revenue (Hull & Lio, 2006). Specifically, non-profit organizations work to maximize services rather than generate profit (Hull & Lio, 2006). Blyth, coordinator for the Seasoned Spoon Café, revealed in an interview that it is a constant challenge to fulfill the organization’s mandate since,

Food is both very inexpensive and also inaccessible which is a real challenge in the food system. And so, I think that that is a constant challenge for us to fulfill our mandate which is why we’re really lucky to have other core sources of funding like our levy and Trent work study program funding, in particular.

As demonstrated in figures 3, 4 and 5 in Appendix B, in the 2017-2018 year, undergraduate and graduate levy fees accounted for 21.4% of the Seasoned Spoon's total income. Similarly, Trent Levy Revenue was 86.9% of OPIRG Peterborough's total income for the 2018-2019 year. As such, these organizations will be losing considerable amounts of their funding as a result of the Student Choice Initiative. This loss of funding will result in a loss of resources for students, but also a reduction in learning. As Blyth stated,

A lot of people come to university to learn a broad set of skills and this is an important way in which people do that. And it corresponds to work they do later, and corresponds to supporting the person, their whole self and that's really important and a really important role for universities to play as a broad community.

The value of organizations like the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG Peterborough is more than the numbers to be analyzed on paper. An amazing benefit for students is the experience and learning that occurs at the Spanish Cooking workshop at the Seasoned Spoon where students can learn about another culture, gain valuable cooking skills, and meet new people. Or, attending a tour during OPIRG Peterborough's DisOrientation Week where students can learn about the Indigenous background of the land where Trent University stands. These are only two examples of the many workshops and broad educational opportunities that these organizations offer.

Included in financial constraints are incentives. Typically, "non-profit organizations usually employ a mix of volunteers filling unpaid positions and employees working a pay level lower than that of a similar position in a for-profit company" (Hull & Lio, 2006, pg. 58). This overview is consistent with the Seasoned Spoon. Blyth stated that one year yielded a surplus of income which allowed for them to, "change our pay rates [for staff], they're even a bit low yet for the industry standard but it's closer to the industry standard for not-for-profits, not for the

actual industry.” In the 2017-2018 year, the Seasoned Spoon had 27 volunteers at the end of the fall semester and 24 volunteers at the end of the winter semester. The responsibilities of volunteers at the Seasoned Spoon includes chopping and processing vegetables, assembling menu items, serving food, washing dishes and cleaning (Seasoned Spoon Year-End Report, 2017/2018). As non-profit organizations, the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG Peterborough depend on their volunteers to ensure their continued existence.

In conclusion, the Seasoned Spoon Café and OPIRG Peterborough depend greatly on the levy fees in order to provide valuable workshops, local food, and resources like the Free Market. The offerings from these organizations allow students to learn more about themselves, their community, and the world. Uncertain funding as a result of the Student Choice Initiative may result in fewer resources for students and community members, reduced employment opportunities at these organizations, and increased likelihood of burnout for coordinators. Overall, the Student Choice Initiative makes it more difficult for these organizations to fulfill their mandates which, consequently, has a negative impact on the staff, supporters, and client/community members.

Strategic Direction Assessment

Anticipating many changes in funding as a result of the Student Choice Initiative, the Seasoned Spoon and OPIRG Peterborough have been planning strategically for the new year. In a follow-up interview with the coordinator of the Seasoned Spoon, Aimee Agnes Blyth revealed that they are anticipating a 25% decrease in levy funding for the year. She states,

Given that cut to our funding, what we’ve done is made some price increases and we’ve cut our hours which means we’re cutting staff. Because we’re cutting staff, it also means we’ll probably get less TWSP funding because we will have fewer staff positions so

that's down a bit. We're also expecting catering sales to be a bit lower because university and levy budgets are cut and they're primary customers there. So we're anticipating cuts in a few places and of course, there will also be cuts to our revenue because we're closing a little earlier . . . We're closing at 3:30 instead of 6:00.

Further, Blythe expands that if these predictions are inaccurate, "if we receive less funding, the areas where we cut, we'll have to cut more." For OPIRG Peterborough, the worst-case scenario is very similar to that of the Seasoned Spoon, as it may be for many of the levy groups at Trent University. Coordinator of OPIRG Peterborough, Samantha MacAndrew, states that the "worst-case scenario [is] we don't have money to pay any staff and our organization is run by a volunteer board of directors and volunteer." Furthermore, MacAndrew described how the organization's vision for the future is limited by these financial restraints,

More time focusing on alternative models for funding means less time would be spent on events and campaigns, unfortunately. Instead of expanding in our programs and services we offer we may have to only focus on what we currently provide.

Both organizations are making many plans in anticipation of changes. As such, a strategic direction assessment for these organizations is more focused on maintaining as many services as possible rather than looking to expand.

Students in Ontario have been placed in a very difficult position. The recent changes to OSAP funding in the province forces the hands of many students in financial need to opt-out of paying levy fees in order to fund other aspects of their education such as textbooks. In an interview with Student Affairs, they were sympathetic to students who may be receiving less financial aid from OSAP grants as a result of new legislation as well as for the levy groups who anticipate many cuts,

I know what we've seen over the years is that Trent students have voted to pay a lot of different fees which is why we have such a long list. And I'm hoping that that sort of generosity continues but I'm also very aware that for students in financial need, this is something that – you know, I'm not going to say don't opt-out because I know that some students are in financial need – so I'm hopeful that it's not going to have a huge impact. And what I've said to the groups is though certainly the office and myself are committed to, if it is impacting groups, to working with them to figure out some solutions because what they do is very important.

Table 4 demonstrates how the Student Choice Initiative has impacted the levy groups at Trent University. Of the 58 services outlined in the table, 25 were refundable in the 2018-2019 year which has increased to 44 in the coming 2019-2020 year. As such, 76% of the levy fees at Trent University are now refundable. These changes in funding for levy groups will continue into the coming years which is cause for some concern for coordinators of these organizations. As Blythe disclosed,

the long-term effects that I'm worried about more broadly is, if levies group go bankrupt, there isn't a good mechanism for re-creating that. I'm worried that it's a system that will get chipped away at and be difficult to rebuild.

The long-term effects of the Student Choice Initiative should be monitored in the future as described in these recommendations.

Recommendations for moving forward:

1. Conduct a longitudinal analysis entailing continued analysis of the levy groups at Trent University

2. Assessment of other organizations including a comparison of refundable and non-refundable groups
3. Enhanced partnership with the Trent Central Student Association (TCSA) to continue lobbying for funding to meet the needs of current and future students

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Appendix A: Levy Groups and Fees

Table 1

Trent's Refundable Levy Groups 2019-2020

Organization	Cost
Absynthe Magazine	\$ 4.64
Active Minds	\$ 2.33
Anne Shirley Theatre	\$ 3.01
BIKE	\$ 4.35
Community Movements Conference at Trent	\$ 0.79
Community Race Relations Peterborough	\$ 2.22
Electric City Hacks	\$ 3.12
Journal of Undergrad Studies	\$ 2.44
Kawartha World Issues Centre	\$ 5.98
Ontario Public Interest Research Group	\$ 13.88
Oxfam Working Group	\$ 3.49
Seasoned Spoon Cafe	\$ 6.60
Student Co-operative Housing Initiative	\$ 3.49
Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Society	\$ 2.13
Trent Nature Areas	\$ 2.33
Trent Outdoor Club	\$ 3.07
Trent Queer Collective	\$ 1.74
Trent Students for Literacy	\$ 2.33
Trent University Native Association	\$ 2.17
Trent Valley Fencing	\$ 2.13
Warming Room Homeless Shelter	\$ 2.11

Table 2

Trent's Non-Refundable Levies 2019-2020

Organization	Cost
Arthur	\$ 11.07
Centre Gender & Social Justice	\$ 5.82
College Cabinet/Council	\$ 14.85
International Scholarship Fund	\$ 5.83
Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre	\$ 3.59
Organic Gardens	\$ 4.95
Peter Robinson Community & Student Association	\$ 29.37
Sustainable Trent	\$ 2.33
Theatre Trent	\$ 3.49

Trent Annual	\$ 20.95
Trent Child Care	\$ 2.33
Trent Film Society	\$ 3.49
Trent International Student Association	\$ 2.33
Trent Radio	\$ 20.87
Trent University Emergency First Response Team	\$ 8.24
Trent University Music Society	\$ 2.90
Walkhome	\$ 1.17
World University Service of Canada	\$ 6.88
YES Youth Emergency Shelter	\$ 3.07

Table 3

Trent's Student Union Levy

TCSA Levies	Cost
TCSA Membership	\$ 34.46
TCSA Clubs & Groups	\$ 10.00
TCSA Food Bank	\$ 3.50
Student Centre	\$ 101.24
TCSA Transit	\$ 294.63
CFS Ontario	\$ 7.77
CFS National	\$ 9.33

Table 4

Comparison of 2018-2019 Levy Fees vs. 2019-2020 Levy Fees

Organization	2018-2019 Year		2019-2020 Year	
	Refundable	Non-Refundable	Refundable	Non-Refundable
Accessibility Services		X	X	
Athletics		X		X
Athletics Expansion		X		X
Campus Card		X		X
Ceilie - Campus Pubs		X	X	
College Fee		X		X
Counselling Services		X		X
Convocation		X		X
Health Services		X		X
Orientation (New Students Only)	X		X	

College Cabinet		X	X	
Trent Central Student Association (TCSA) Membership		X	X	
TCSA Clubs and Groups		X	X	
TCSA Grocery Assistance Program		X	X	
Student Centre		X		X
TCSA Health Benefits (Opt-out Info)		X		X
Transit (Education Students Excluded)		X		X
Canadian Federation of Students (Ontario)		X	X	
Canadian Federation of Students (National)		X	X	
Absynthe Magazine	X		X	
Active Minds	X		X	
Anne Shirley Theatre Company	X		X	
Arthur Newspaper		X	X	
B!KE	X		X	
Centre for Women & Trans People	X		X	
Community Movements	X		X	
Conference at Trent				
Community Race Relations Committee	X		X	
Electric City Hacks	X		X	
International Scholarship Fund		X		
Journal of Undergraduate Studies at Trent (JUST)	X		X	
Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre		X		X
Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC)	X		X	
Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG)	X		X	
Sadleir House (P.R. Community & Student Association)	X		X	
Seasoned Spoon Cafe	X		X	
Student Co-op Housing Initiative	X		X	

Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Society	X		X	
Sustainable Trent		X	X	
Theatre Trent		X	X	
Trent Annual		X	X	
Trent Child Care		X	X	
Trent Film Society		X	X	
Trent International Student Association (TISA)		X	X	
Trent Nature Areas	X		X	
Trent Outdoors Club	X		X	
Trent Oxfam	X		X	
Trent Queer Collective (TQC)	X		X	
Trent Radio		X	X	
Trent Students for Literacy	X		X	
Trent University Emergency First Response (TUEFRT)		X		X
Trent University Music Society (TUMS)		X	X	
Trent University Native Association (TUNA)	X		X	
Trent Valley Fencing Club	X		X	
Trent Vegetable Gardens	X		X	
Walkhome		X		X
Warming Room Homeless Shelter	X		X	
World University Service of Canada-Trent (WUSC)		X	X	
Youth Emergency Shelter (YES)		X	X	

Appendix B: Expenses and Income for OPIRG and Seasoned Spoon

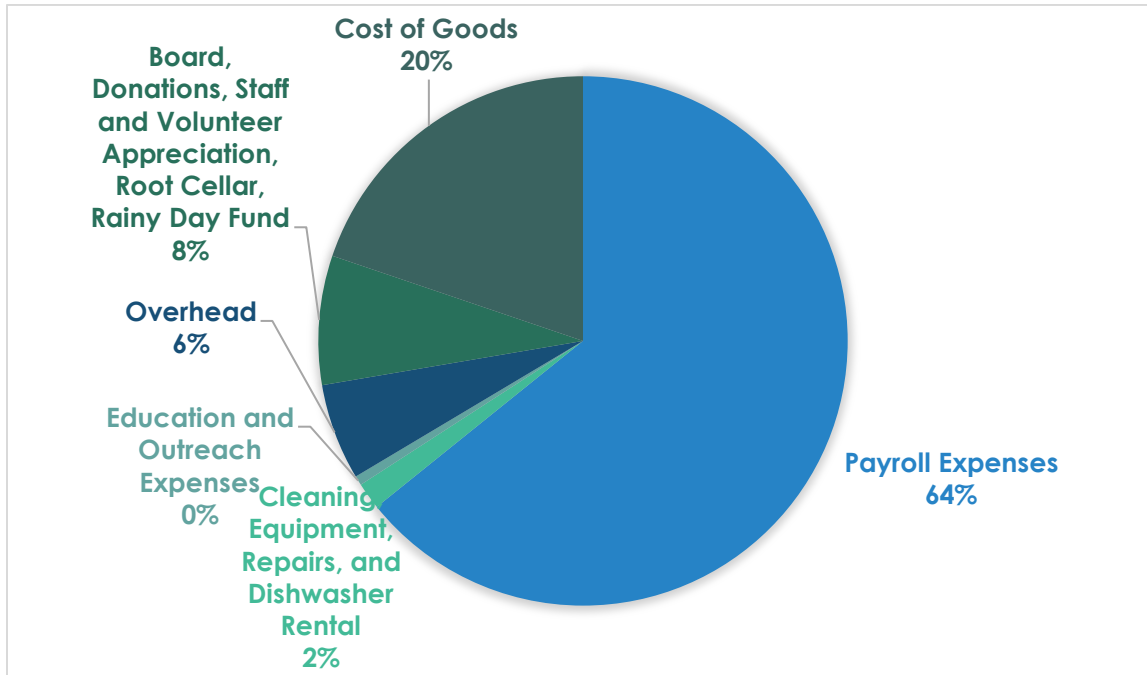


Figure 3. Seasoned Spoon Expenses 2017-2018

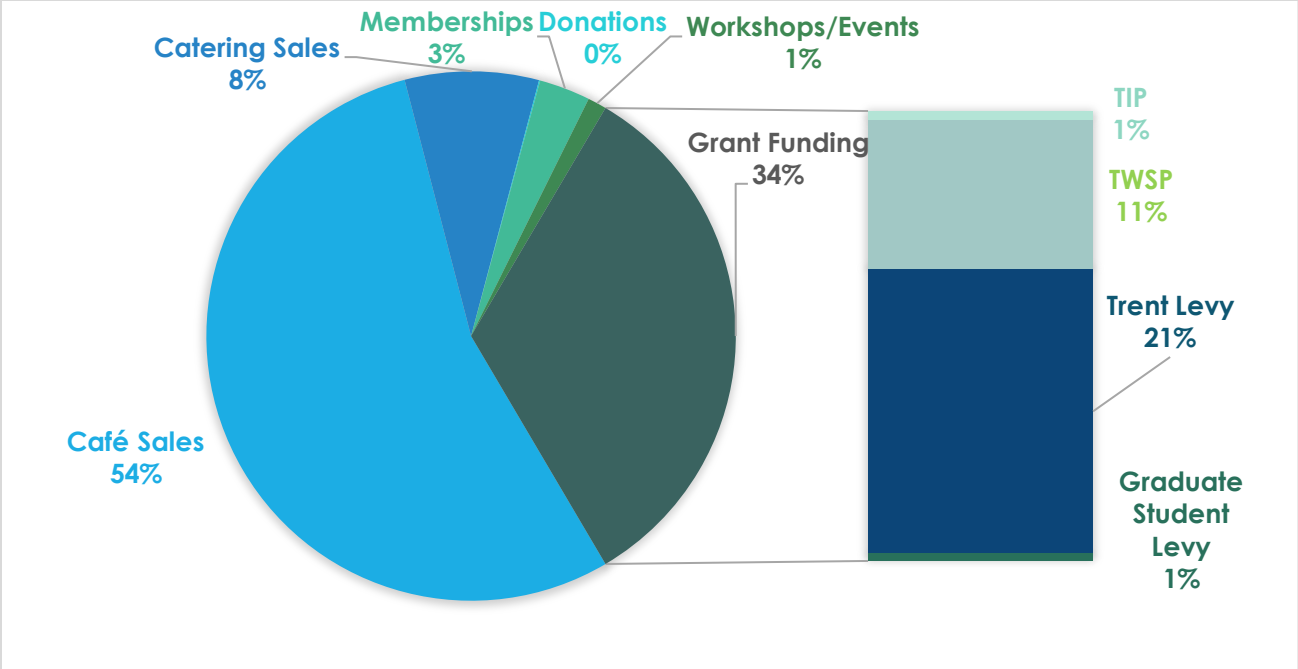


Figure 4. Seasoned Spoon Income 2017-2018

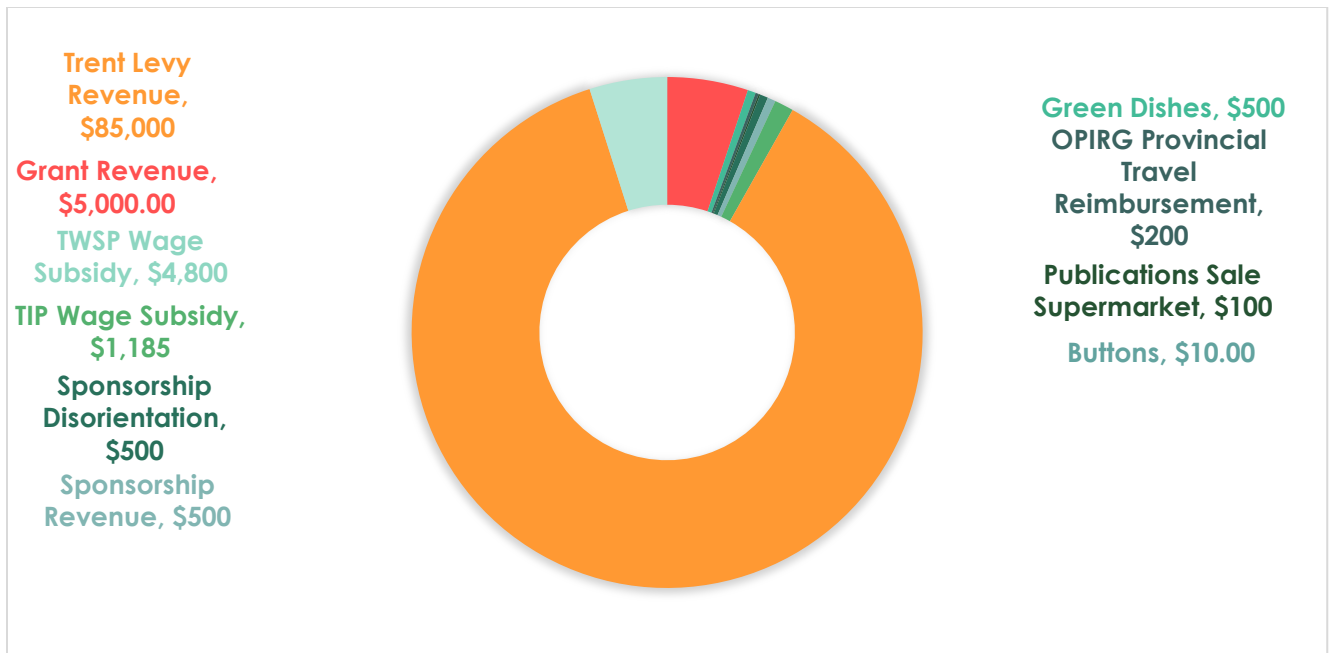


Figure 5. OPIRG Income 2018-2019

Appendix C: Goals and Mandates

Table 5

Goals and Mandates of Levy Groups at Trent

Organization	Goals	Mandates
Absynthe Magazine	provide an open forum for students to write about their personal interests and opinions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • submission-based • accepts all expressive forms • one-time submissions or regular columns accepted
Trent Active Minds	a student-led group determined to raise awareness about mental health and encourage help-seeking on Trent campus aims to reduce stigma surrounding mental health issues, and cultivate a comfortable environment for dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information, opportunities, leadership and advocacy training
Anne Shirley Theatre Company	goal of providing performance and technical experience for students who are passionate about the arts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce a musical and play each year
Arthur Newspaper	goal is to produce a weekly newspaper that gives informative, interesting and accurate accounts of events and issues relevant to Trent students and the broader Peterborough community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • publish weekly during the school year • offer paid and volunteer positions and opportunity for students to serve on Board of Directors • no experience is necessary • students can contribute articles or photographs, assist with editing, layout, or web development, help with fundraising and events, etc.
B!KE: Peterborough Community Cycling Hub	B!KE increases active, affordable, and safe travel at Trent and in the greater Peterborough community Advocate for safe transportation infrastructure Support you in meeting your unique active transportation needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide on-campus workshops and events • offer student employment opportunities • host academic research projects • maintain 24/7 bike repair stations

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer workshops on bicycle maintenance, repair, and riding skills • lead recreational rides • run a year-round bicycle repair workshops
Centre for Women and Trans People	creating and reclaiming spaces within the Peterborough and Trent communities for those who have been marginalized, excluded, and underprivileged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actively fighting for, creating, and maintaining space where we can feel safe enough to express ourselves as individuals and communities • explicit commitment to confronting and challenging all forms of oppression
College Cabinet/Council	an elected student governmental body called a college cabinet, consisting of dedicated leaders elected to represent student interests on campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organize college weekends, student formals, photo contests, and other fun activities to build community and to engage, inspire, and connect students
Community Movements Conference at Trent	aims to provide a forum for students and academic scholars to discuss issues pertaining to international development provide an important opportunity for networking, skill sharing, and fostering linkages between international, national, and local movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • includes presentations and workshops from academics and social activists concerned with extractivism and its relation to development studies and the current global economic recession
Community Race Relations Committee	a non-profit, city funded, community based organization, committed to encouraging and promoting equitable race relations in Peterborough aimed at identifying and eliminating all forms of institutional and systemic discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides advocacy supports, consultation services, and public education initiatives for the purposes of promoting greater understanding of race related issues.
Electric City Hacks	brings 400 of the most out-of-the-box thinkers from across North America to Peterborough, challenging innovators to design, build, and demonstrate their developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an excellent opportunity to meet new friends, make industry connections, and increase your knowledge base in the world of computing.

International Scholarship Fund *	a peer-reviewed, academic publication that aims to create space for exchange of quality undergraduate research from Trent University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • giving the Trent community access to the research of its scholars • welcomes well-supported, well-reasoned essays and research from all disciplines • only manuscripts written while the author is enrolled as an undergraduate student at Trent University are eligible
Kawartha World Issues Centre	provide career-related training, transferrable skills and valuable networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work-study, research, volunteer and academic placements- also for credit, that make a difference • sunny, quiet study and gathering space with an alternative library and a comfy couch • inspiring workshops, forums and events on important global-local issues • innovative programs, multi-sector networking and youth leadership training • supportive space to explore new ideas and act on issues you care about • excellent references for employment and continuing education
Ontario Public Interest Research Group	a non-profit organization that works to create and sustain student and community-based engagement through research, education, and action on social justice and environmental issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • class placements, volunteer, and board member opportunities • paid positions for students • the Free Market Store • the Green Dishes program • events like: Vegan BBQ, Succulent workshop, Free Market Giveaway, etc. • professional development training

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funding for community events and initiatives • research projects through the Trent Community Research Center
Sadlier House (P.R. community and student association)	operates as a cultural and educational facility for the University and Peterborough communities serve as an important bridge and meeting place between the University and Peterborough communities, housing the offices of 14 student groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has space for performances, meetings, discussions, studying, reading, creativity, adventure, learning, growing and general absurdity • organisation offices, event space, common rooms, performance space, libraries
Kawartha Sexual Assault Centre	a not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to supporting those affected by sexual violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer individual counselling, group counselling and workshops, peer supports, public education and professional training • individuals and family members can consult with us, request accompaniment and/or advocacy with respect to other agencies, court, hospital and police services
Student Co-op Housing Initiative	seeks to establish an affordable downtown housing alternative to on-campus residence and downtown landlords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sustainable project that will combine social events with community involvement and educational opportunities
Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Society	mission is to create a community for Trent students to engage and deepen their understanding of food sovereignty and regenerative agriculture believe in truly democratic and equitable food systems, locally, regionally and globally, and maintain that quality, healthful and culturally appropriate food is a basic human right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • run projects such as the Trent Market Garden
Sustainable Trent	objective of Sustainable Trent is to make Trent University more environmentally, economically and socially	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting a bottled water free campus, a paper reduction policy, the Lug-a-Mug campaign, the Graduation

	sustainable, as well as to provide education and awareness on a variety of issues	<p>Green Pledge, sending members to the Sierra Youth Coalition's Provincial Sustainability Conference and providing opportunities for students to propose projects of their own and receive funding to implement them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • works with Aramark, EcoTrent, the Physical Resources Department and the Bata Library to reduce waste, improve compost and recycling diversion rates, and improve water and energy conservation • plan several yearly events such as Early Earth Day and the Trent-Lakefield Bike-a-Thon
Seasoned Spoon Café	riverside café at Trent University that offers healthy, vegetarian and locally-sourced meals and beverages at affordable prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • subsidizing prices of locally grown, organic and fair trade food • providing meaningful employment and volunteer opportunities to many students, • paying farmers fairly • offering a variety of workshops, community meals, for-credit research projects and other educational opportunities • fostering food security initiatives, such as our sustainably-built root cellar and partnership with Trent Vegetable Gardens
Theatre Trent	mission is to nurture Trent student life by funding accessible and inclusive creativity for hundreds of students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides funding for theatre and multidisciplinary performances • provides support for practicum courses, and opportunities for Trent students to connect with alumni and the wider community • offer Experiential Learning internship opportunities in marketing and communications

		(with Trent's School of Business)
Trent Annual	capturing moments of Trent's vivid and colourful student life in a student produced yearbook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student submissions are welcome • paid positions are available
Trent Child Care	a non-profit organization which provides high quality, regulated child care for children from six weeks to twelve years of age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offer a wide range of programs for children between the ages of 6 weeks and 12 years of age
Trent Film Society	a student and community group, established in 1969 working to create a space for cinema in Peterborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • screenings are open to everyone, not just students, and there is never an admission charge • host curated film screenings, academic talks, fundraisers, and other community-focused events
Trent International Students Association	represents the multiculturalism and acts as a bridge between the International and the Domestic students at Trent University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • financially supporting and encouraging international student groups and organizations, by hosting a series of events throughout the year that seek to bring together students from all over the world, and by providing support and services to international students
Trent Nature Areas	the Nature Areas occupy about 55 per cent of the Symons Campus (some 518 hectares in all) and represent 40 per cent of the "green space" in the City of Peterborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plan events such as tours led by naturalists and general outdoor activity days • maintaining trails (eg. signage, mowing and grading) and boardwalks, as well as photocopying and printing maps • the levy has provided funds for research by students in the NAs and for prizes in nature area photography contests
Trent Outdoors Club	creating a fun, community-based environment for seasoned veterans and newcomers alike to enjoy the outdoors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make these activities, and many more, available to as many students as possible

Trent Queer Collective	strives to build and strengthen an active, visible and inclusive Queer community at Trent University and in the wider Peterborough area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connecting people to each other, to supportive networks, to information resources, and to Queer media • provide support and promote acceptance through the creation of safe social spaces that are free of judgment and prejudice against any group or individual
Trent Radio	a great way to learn about the Peterborough-area community and to share your ideas, music and meet new friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • offers students the opportunity to get involved in radio, produce their own shows, and gives them access to studio training and time
Trent Student Charity Program (Trent Gives)	a student charity group that encourages support and donations towards a chosen charity each academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raising thousands of dollars every year
Trent Students for Literacy	a student-run volunteer group who work with children, youth, and senior citizens throughout Peterborough by assisting in the development of literacy skills, sharing the joys of reading, and helping to improve reading and writing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a variety of programs, including Tutoring, School Sidekicks, Reading Circle, and Seniors' Outreach • annual Literacy Conference at Trent University's Symons Campus, a free event open to the community
Trent University Emergency First Response Team (TUEFRT)	a student-run volunteer organization that provides first response first aid treatment to anyone who is injured or having a sudden medical emergency on the Trent Symons campus, the Traill Campus, and all applicable housing annex locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on call 24/7 throughout the fall and winter sessions and responds to a wide range of injuries and emergencies
Trent University Music Society (TUMS)	is group dedicated to providing opportunities for students to play and listen to music on and off campus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We organize two choirs and two bands that practice weekly, in addition to coordinating a number of musical events throughout the year

Trent University Native Association	provided a voice for Indigenous students within the Trent community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a student organization that encourages a good way of life (Mino Bimaadiziwin) through cultural, social, academic, and athletic activities
Trent Valley Fencing	was restarted in 2013 to continue the legacy of fencing at Trent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both a competitive team and recreational club • offer training in all three weapons (foil, epee and sabre.)
Trent Vegetable Gardens	seeks to reconnect students and community members with the source of their food by providing opportunities to learn about ecological agriculture, hands-on gardening skills, and food system issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • operate two garden sites at Trent that take inspiration from organic, intensive permaculture, and Indigenous agricultural methods, and that strive to practice low-impact ecological agriculture • workshops, student research projects, service learning placement, work bees, as well as paid and volunteer positions.
Trent Oxfam	a community working group initiated by the Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC) and OXFAM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus is on making local connections to the global issues of inequality that surround food, gender and climate
Trent Walkhome	Trained WALKHOME volunteers are available every night to walk you from one place to another on Symons Campus or downtown at Traill and Champlain College Annex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers are recruited among the undergraduate and graduate student body and have completed a screening process and training program in order to provide a high standard of service
The Warming Room	break down the barriers that exist in the city of Peterborough by providing a space where volunteers and overnight guests have a chance to meet, talk, and learn from one another	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff, volunteers, and visiting community organizations will also help to connect guests with resources, especially those that help to secure safe affordable housing • an open door policy where all, no matter the state they

		are in when they arrive, are welcome
World University Service of Canada – Trent	a student run organization that believes the importance of education and its empowerment in fostering human development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> majority of members form Local Committees that consist of students, faculty and staff in over 80 active college and university campuses across Canada
Youth Emergency Shelter	YES works to reduce and prevent homelessness by providing shelter, education and transitional supports for youth and families in Peterborough and the Kawarthas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> longer term transitional housing at Abbott House assistance adapting to independent living through the Transitional Life Skills program alternative high school education at The Carriage House (in partnership with PACE and the KPRDSB) vocational, educational and recreation programs (in partnership with other community services) assistance with housing and employment searches an emergency food cupboard the shelter is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Note. * no information could be found