

**Ontario Government Policy On Accessibility To The Colleges Of Applied Arts And
Technology: 1965-1995**

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Thesis Abstract

In the post-war period from 1945 to 1960, there was a perceived crisis in postsecondary education in Canada. Based on enrolment projections and a booming economy in Ontario, the Progressive Conservative government of John Robarts created the publicly-funded Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) of Ontario to serve students who were not university bound and who were looking for technical or vocational education. The CAATs were created to meet the demand for skilled labour in Ontario.

Between 1965 and 1995, many policies were implemented by the Ontario governments pertaining to access to postsecondary education. This thesis traces the history of policies on access to the CAATs in order to provide an understanding of what policies were implemented and why policy decisions were made. It tells the story of access to the CAATs from the views of those inside government.

This study found that all three Ontario political parties viewed accessibility at the aggregate level, as described by Skolnik as *Type II Accessibility*. Each government attempted to ensure that there was high probability for all people to have access to postsecondary education. In order to meet capacity, one government created the CAATs and it expanded the university sector, thereby creating more accessibility at the aggregate

level. All governments supported a publicly-funded system of CAATs and universities. There were instances where policies were changed or halted due to external factors including economic and social factors.

A significant finding is that the definition of accessibility, or how each government understood accessibility, changed dramatically over time with economic and societal pressures. As governments' understanding of accessibility evolved, the definition shifted to the degree to which some specific groups were able to overcome barriers and access postsecondary education. These groups included women, youth, the economically disadvantaged, Aboriginal students and French-language persons. The study found that access for visible minorities and students with disabilities was not considered important.

