



May 19, 2018

Gyllian Phillips
President
Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

Dear Dr. Phillips,

Thank you for reaching out on behalf of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations as well as professors and academic librarians. We also thank you for the important work your organization is doing in advocating for a higher quality of higher education in Ontario.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP believe that Ontario colleges and universities are research hubs and future builders. Unfortunately, years of cuts and budget freezes have chipped away at quality and access to post-secondary education. Cancelled courses and deteriorating facilities are the most visible results. Ontario has the lowest per-student funding of any province in Canada – that means campuses are crumbling, students have fewer resources, and faculties rely on temporary sessional instructors rather than full-time, permanent professors that can be there when students need them. Further, successive Liberal and Conservative governments have shifted the burden for funding universities and colleges to students. Ontario has the highest undergraduate and graduate tuition fees in Canada.

It's time we had a government at Queen's Park that understands that and makes getting quality post-secondary education easier – not harder.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP will end the financial constraint on colleges and universities by lifting the budget freeze. We will also make sure that funding keeps up, so post-secondary institutions can offer the choices and quality of instruction Ontario students deserve.

New Democrats believe that a good funding formula should ensure that post-secondary institutions have the funding they need to effectively support students and faculty as well as allow these institutions to plan into the future. This means sufficient, stable, and equitable financial supports as opposed to performance-based funding. It is clear that the current model is not working – Ontario is home to both the highest tuition fees in the country and the lowest per-student funding of any province in Canada. A New Democrat government will engage in meaningful consultation with faculty as part of the Strategic Mandate Agreement development process.

For students, Andrea Horwath and the NDP will address affordability head-on with a game-changing initiative: every student who qualifies for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) will get a non-repayable grant instead of a loan and graduate free of debt to the province. We will also retroactively forgive all interest for everyone carrying provincial loan debts or currently holding a student loan.

A New Democrat government will also ensure that universities are able to attract and retain talented full-time faculty. We will launch a faculty renewal strategy to allow contract educators to become full-time professors and instructors as well as invest in more tenure-track faculty positions. This will help ensure students can learn from professors and educators who are there for the long term — who they can seek out to take more classes or reach for letters of recommendation. It will also help Ontario attract the best academic talent the world has to offer.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP supported many of the reforms in the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*. In fact, we put forward several other reforms to increase protections for workers, but unfortunately the Liberals and Conservatives voted against these amendments.

An NDP government will do better to protect and strengthen workers' rights. We will:

- Raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all workers regardless of their age or occupation, and we'll index future increases to inflation.
- Require employers to provide at least three weeks paid vacation to every full-time employee, and we will ensure that every worker has 5 paid sick days.
- Strengthen equal pay for equal work laws.
- Introduce 10 days paid leave for survivors of domestic violence for access to medical care, to find safe housing, or to participate in legal proceedings.
- Protect the right to join a union by making sure any workplace can unionize when 55% of workers sign a union card. We will also introduce first contract arbitration.

- Establish a broader-based bargaining structure to ensure our labour laws reflect the reality that work has changed.
- Protect workers by putting an end to contract flipping, where private contracts for services are turned over to the lowest bidders every couple of years, resulting in workers getting laid off only to be rehired again with lower wages and fewer benefits.
- Require regular updates of workplace safety rules and workplace safety and insurance board (WSIB) rates and coverage. We will also expand coverage and definitions of occupational illnesses.
- Introduce Ontario benefits, so that every worker will have workplace benefits for themselves, and their family. This includes people in part-time or casual jobs, as well as independent workers.

Further, we will distinguish between people who want to work independently and those who are pushed into contract work. People are too often misclassified as contractors when they are, for all intents and purposes, a permanent employee. We will ensure that people who are employees are treated as such, with access to equal pay, benefits, and protections, while making sure that those who choose to be independent workers have access to benefits, vacation, sick pay, pensions, and parental leave – and are covered by employment standards, labour, and safety laws.

We will also change the law when it comes to contract or temporary workers, making it harder for employers to label long-time workers “contractors” instead of employees. We will require employers to make temp workers permanent employees after 90 days of work and will require employers of temp workers to bear the same responsibilities as employers of all workers when a worker is injured or killed on the job.

Once again, we thank you for reaching out on issues that are important to OCUFA and its members. A New Democrat government is excited to work in partnership with OCUFA and others to ensure that Ontario’s faculty and students benefit from a robust post-secondary system. We look forward to getting to work.

Best,

Ontario's New Democrats