

Questionnaire Response: Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA)

1. What will your party do to ensure Ontario universities have the funding they need to provide a high quality education to every student?

The Ontario Liberal Party is deeply committed to funding postsecondary education in Ontario and has increased funding to universities over 83 per cent or an additional \$1.58 billion per year in the last ten years. Ontario Liberals are also committed to an average increase of 1 per cent over the next three years as outlined in our 2014 Budget.

The increase would help ensure Ontario universities receive funding to provide high quality education to every student. The Ontario Liberal Party is also committed to ensuring that the facilities at Ontario's colleges and universities are safe and updated to the current needs of students. The 2014 Budget also announced an additional \$500 million in funding for facility renewal at publicly funded postsecondary institutions, and we are committed to the major capacity expansion of degree-level programs across Ontario.

2. How does your party plan to address the full-time faculty shortage in Ontario?

The Government of Ontario has no direct involvement in the recruitment and retention of faculty. However, the Ontario Liberal Party is committed to ensuring that colleges and universities have the tools and resources required to attract the best faculty available in order to teach and conduct research at Ontario's institutions. Our party's drive towards differentiation and centres of excellence will better support institutions in their pursuit of high quality faculty.

Furthermore, the Ontario Liberal plan helps to address the issue of full-time faculty shortage by committing to invest in more new spaces to make higher education more accessible and renew campuses to support high-quality learning spaces. We will provide funding to build new campuses and create spaces for 15,000 more students to study for undergraduate degrees closer to home, and to provide an economic boost to communities. We will also provide almost \$500 million over 10 years to support deferred maintenance projects at colleges and universities.

3. What will your party do to address the increasing precarity of academic employment in the province?

The Government of Ontario has no direct involvement in the recruitment and retention of faculty. It does, however, provide operating grants that are used to hire and retain faculty and to provide universities with incentives to attract top researchers. The Wynne government is also committed to the continued investment in our postsecondary institutions to enable them to retain the best and brightest faculty.

The Ontario Liberal Plan also helps to address the precarity of academic employment by committing to invest in more new spaces to make higher education more accessible and renew campuses to support high-quality learning spaces. We will provide funding to build new campuses and create spaces for 15,000 more students to study for undergraduate degrees closer to home, and to provide an economic boost to communities. We will also provide almost \$500 million over 10 years to support deferred maintenance projects at colleges and universities.

4. What will your party do to control tuition fees and ensure Ontario's universities are affordable to every willing and qualified student?

The Ontario Liberal Party is committed to making postsecondary education affordable and accessible based on students ability to learn, not the ability to pay. The Ontario Liberal Party recently announced a 4-year tuition framework that caps tuition at 1 per cent above inflation.

The plan sets up a predictable framework for both students and institutions to plan for the future, while also saving students at least \$1,200 over the next four-years compared to the previous framework. With the current robust supports for students, tuition is currently at rates similar to that over 10 years ago. Additionally, recent changes to many fee structures like flat-fee or per-credit tuition billing, along with the elimination of deferral fees, will save all students hundreds of dollars each. We are committed to maintaining current student assistance programs, including 30 per cent Off Tuition Grant, the Ontario Access Grant, Ontario Distance Grant, and the Student Access Guarantee, to name a few.

All students who received loans will continue to have 40 per cent of their maximum assistance debt capped through the Ontario Student Opportunity Grant, which converts nearly \$5,000 of loans to grants for students with the highest need.

5. What will your party do to ensure fair labour laws that benefit all Ontarians?

We're proud of the balanced and fair approach we've taken to Ontario's labour relations, which have resulted in more than 97 per cent of labour negotiations ending without disruption. That's good for both employers and employees.

Our party believes that unions play an important role in our economy, and it's too bad that we are the only party that's willing to say it aloud. We're proud of the changes we've already made to Ontario's labour laws to reverse some of the damage done by the Harris government that Tim Hudak is so proud of. We were very disappointed that the huge improvements on social issues, which unions have pushed for, were defeated by Andrea Horwath for the NDP's partisan political gain.

We have repeatedly repudiated the Ontario PC Party's right-to-work-for-less schemes. We remain convinced that Tim Hudak can't be trusted on labour issues. Eliminating the Rand Formula would be an outrageous attack on the right of trade unions to operate for the benefit of their members. Tim Hudak's plan will lead to lower wages and less benefits for all workers in Ontario in a global race to the bottom.

The Ontario Liberal Party continues to be the most prominent voice speaking out against these schemes, and standing up for the value Ontario's unions add to our society by building the middle class and protecting their members.

6. What steps will your party take to ensure that the university sector is able to develop and implement fair and sustainable pension solutions?

The Ontario Liberal Party is committed to ensuring sustainable pensions across the broader public sector. A large number of university pension plans have significant funding shortfalls. The structural problems and the magnitude of funding shortfalls in these employer sponsored pension plans not only create substantial financial risk to the future of these universities, but also undermine the sustainability of these pension plans in the long term.

The Wynne government has put in place strategic time-sensitive incentives to induce change in the sector, such as exemption from the solvency funding requirements for making progress towards matching contributions. In our recent budget, Ontario Liberals reaffirmed our commitment to addressing sustainability and affordability for pension plans through measures such as reforming funding rules for defined benefit plans, developing regulatory frameworks for target benefit plans, the conversion of single-employer pension plans to jointly-sponsored pension plans, and asset plan pooling that can lead to lower administrative costs and higher returns. We will continue to work with the Council of Ontario Universities and faculty associations to ensure successful implementation of the pension reform, and to explore the changes needed to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of the university pension plans.

7. How will your party use research policy and funding to strike a balance between basic research and research commercialization?

The Ontario Liberal Party remains committed to supporting the full spectrum of research. This includes support for our world leading centres of basic research like the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics and SNOLAB, funding to researchers at our post-secondary institutions through the Ontario Research Fund, and working with the province-wide network of Regional Innovation Centres to support commercialization. That is why our government has invested over \$3.8 billion in research and innovation initiatives to help researchers and entrepreneurs create the ground breaking businesses of tomorrow.

We have further committed \$250 million over three years to support world-leading discoveries that will create the jobs and technologies of the future. We expect this funding will leverage funding from the federal government and the private sector.



In this knowledge-based economy, research, innovation, and collaboration between our sector leaders is critical if Ontario is to remain a leader.

8. What will your party do to ensure that the transition to a new teacher training model in Ontario doesn't create chaos at universities where students in the Faculty of Education account for a significant portion of enrolment?

The Ontario Liberal Party announced changes to Ontario's initial teacher education program, doubling the length of the program to four semesters with an emphasis on more practical, hands-on experience. Ontario is modernizing teacher education to help new teachers get jobs and provide students with the best possible education.

Over the past nine years, the Ontario Liberal government has worked hard to rebuild confidence in Ontario's public education system. It's now recognized as one of the best in the world and that is due in large part to the dedication and professionalism of our teachers.

The Wynne government is now working with the Ontario College of Teachers (the College) and universities to implement a new program for 2015-16. The new program will also double the practicum requirement to a minimum of 80 days, in addition to introducing mandatory core content. Strengthening teacher education will make programs more current, consistent, and responsive to the needs of a changing population in a competitive global economy. We will also reduce the number of graduates from Ontario programs by approximately one-half to better align the number of graduates with demand for teachers.