

# **Stable funding, strong universities**

***Now is the time to invest in the future of  
Ontario postsecondary education***

OCUFA's 2020 pre-budget submission

January 23, 2020

# **OCUFA**

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations  
Union des associations des professeurs des universités de l'Ontario

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Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA)

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations has been the provincial voice of university faculty since 1964. OCUFA represents over 17,000 professors, academic librarians, and other academic professionals in 30 faculty associations across Ontario.

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# Now is the time to invest in the future of Ontario postsecondary education

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Universities are vital institutions within our communities. They deliver education to thousands of students that expands knowledge, they create vibrant campus communities, they produce thought-provoking and groundbreaking research that drives innovation, and they provide good jobs that support local economies. Government commitment to postsecondary education is essential for sustaining these institutions and their contributions to Ontario's economic, social, and cultural health.

These are challenging times for universities in Ontario. Since 2008, per-student funding in the province has been trailing the rest of Canada and in steady decline, leaving Ontario in last place nationally. Years of chronic underfunding of postsecondary education are impacting the quality and sustainability of Ontario's world-class universities. As a result, our province now ranks last in Canada when it comes to the student-to-faculty ratio and we are ninth in the affordability of tuition, while having the country's highest percentage of provincial funding tied to unstable and punitive performance metrics.

Now is the time to intervene and adequately fund the future of postsecondary education in Ontario.

A sensible plan would begin with investments to increase Ontario's per-student funding, which would put Ontario universities in a stronger position to provide the accessible, high-quality education our students deserve and that our economy needs. The recommendations set out in this brief form a modest starting point for addressing decades of underfunding.

The government has layered a complex, costly, and inefficient set of metrics onto one of the most poorly funded systems of postsecondary systems in North America. This new outcomes and market-based performance-funding model is set to negatively impact the ability of universities to develop strength in research and teaching. The radical shift towards allocating a majority of provincial university funding based on flawed performance metrics is counterproductive and will create inequity and instability across the system.

As evidenced by research, the introduction of outcomes-based performance funding in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and various states in the United States has undermined the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education. Rather than employing such unnecessarily risky and destabilizing methods, the Ontario Government must leverage available data from universities to improve policymaking decisions and outcomes.

The funding crisis in Ontario's universities is reaching into the classroom. Every student's learning experience and every university's capacity to produce research relies on the faculty members who teach, research, and engage in their communities; but the growing gap between enrolment and faculty hiring is putting a strain on the system.

Skilled and dedicated faculty are key to ensuring the vitality of Ontario's universities. But in recent years, while student enrolment has increased, full-time faculty hiring has stagnated. It is time for the government to show leadership and make faculty renewal a priority. That means supporting universities in hiring full-time tenure-stream faculty and replacing retiring professors to close the gap

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between faculty hiring and enrolment growth. It also means a commitment to improving conditions for contract faculty who currently face job insecurity, low pay, and lack access to benefits. Faculty working conditions are students' learning environments, so a sustainable plan for faculty renewal is crucial for ensuring Ontario's students receive the cutting-edget pedagogical and research support they need.

This year's budget can start Ontario on a path that prioritizes quality education for students, innovative research, and fairness for the province's contract faculty. The knowledge our universities produce and the good jobs they provide support our local communities, fuel the provincial economy, and address the most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges facing our province. By investing in accessible postsecondary education, we are investing in Ontario's future.

## Summary of recommendations

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OCUFA's 2020-21 pre-budget recommendations aim to preserve the accessibility and quality of postsecondary education in Ontario through stable, consistent, and adequate funding as well as improved working conditions for university faculty. Public funding of universities in Ontario is at record low levels, while tuition fees are high, and faculty in the province are extremely concerned about the impact on the accessibility and quality of postsecondary education.

### We recommend that the Government of Ontario:

1. Increase per-student public investment in Ontario's universities to improve Ontario's rank among other provinces in per-student funding by 2024-25.  
**Cost in 2020-21: \$425 million.**
2. Reverse the unstable and inequitable performance-based university funding model and revert back to the largely effective enrolment-based funding model.  
**Savings in 2020-21: Substantial savings for government and university administrations through reduced red tape.**
3. Eliminate the wasteful, ineffective, and unreliable Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and allocate its budget to student assistance.  
**Cost in 2020-21: No additional cost to government.**
4. Invest in a multi-year faculty renewal strategy that supports meaningful long-term change. This strategy should encourage universities to undertake additional full-time tenure-stream hiring over and above their current planned growth, and direct funds towards transitioning existing contract faculty into secure full-time positions.  
**Cost in 2020-21: \$185 million to support universities across the province hiring approximately 1,580 additional full-time tenure-stream faculty.**
5. Drop the appeal of the Ontario Divisional Court's decision that deemed the "Student Choice Initiative" unlawful to save further legal costs and the additional resources universities and colleges require to support the flawed program.  
**Savings in 2020-21: Substantial savings for government and university administrations through reduced legal costs and red tape.**
6. Repeal the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act* to avoid a lengthy and costly *Charter* challenge and, instead, focus on the province's real problem: the revenue required to adequately fund Ontario's public services.  
**Savings in 2020-21: Substantial savings for government through reduced legal costs.**
7. Adequately and meaningfully consult with sector stakeholders, especially representatives of faculty, workers, and students, before introducing new government legislation or policy initiatives.  
**Savings in 2020-21: Avoids future costly and irresponsible public policies and wasteful legal costs.**



## Adequate funding for sustainable universities

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Strong and stable public funding is essential for maintaining excellence in teaching and research in Ontario's universities, and for ensuring an inclusive and accessible postsecondary system. Universities are unique spaces created to facilitate advanced education and research. They are publicly funded because they produce a vital public good: new knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world.

The absence of reliable and adequate funding drives universities towards short-term cost-saving measures and unstable alternative funding sources, thus undermining the long-term planning, programming, and investments that are vital to the educational, research, and social mandate of universities.

Ontario universities are currently the lowest funded in Canada and this situation has continuously worsened over the last decade. This erosion of public funding for postsecondary institutions has had a number of predictable effects on the quality of education and the student experience at Ontario universities. Class sizes have seen a considerable increase over the past 10 years and will continue to rise without new funds to support full-time tenure-stream faculty hiring. The number of precariously employed professors will also continue to grow, trapping many in insecure, unsupported positions.

**To maintain a high-quality, competitive postsecondary education system in Ontario, the government needs to provide increased university operating funding that closes the growing funding gap with other provinces. Unless the government commits to changing the decade-long trend of defunding postsecondary education in our province, Ontario's universities are due to lag even further behind the rest of the country.**

### The postsecondary funding crisis

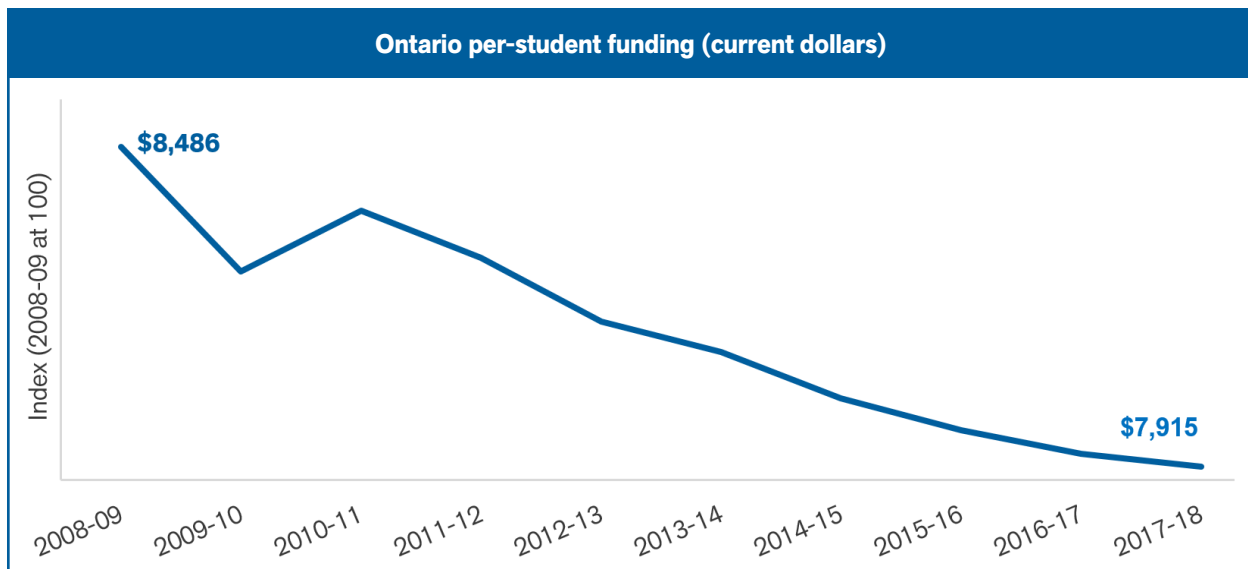
Considered on a per-student basis, inflation-adjusted operating allocations from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities have been falling since 2008-09.

In 2017-18, the most recent year for which confirmed data is available, the Ontario Government provided an average of \$7,915 in per student funding and preliminary estimates show that figure has declined further over the past two years. This level of funding represents a staggering 20 per cent reduction since 2008-09.

In the Canadian context, Ontario's per-student funding levels now sit 37 per cent behind the rest of the country (the average for the rest of Canada was \$12,490 in 2017-18).

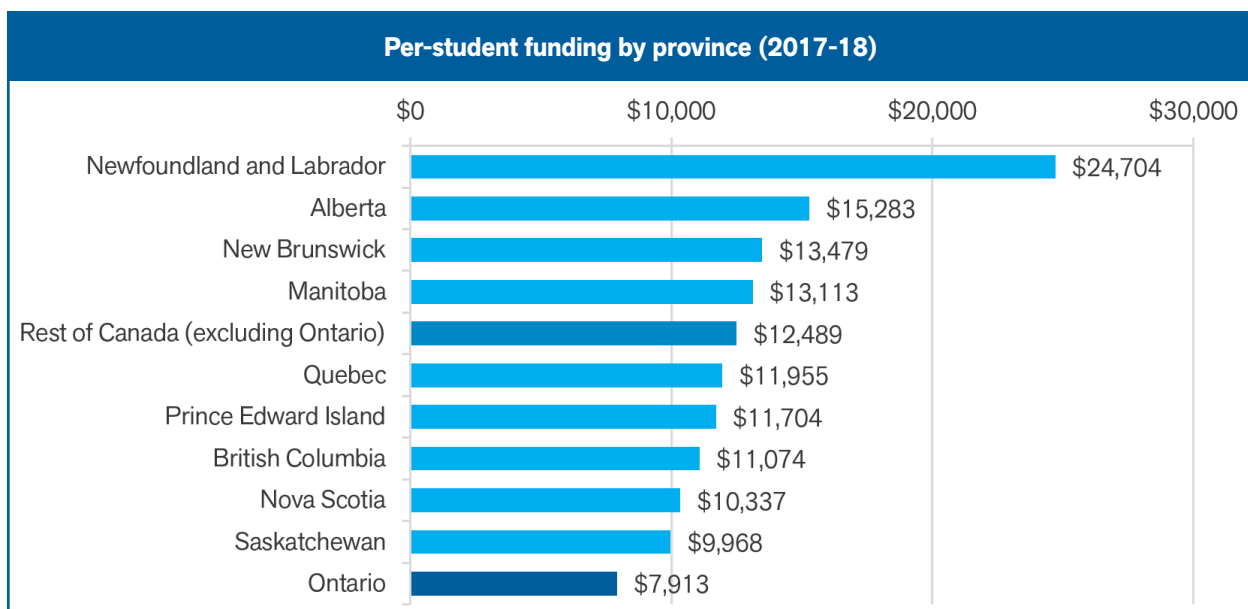
This clearly and unquestionably demonstrates the declining state of postsecondary education funding in Ontario and the damaging results of a decade of austerity measures, flawed policymaking, and the misguided priorities of successive provincial governments. Together, they have left Ontario trailing the rest of the country and falling further behind each year.

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Stagnating funding is forcing universities to stretch existing resources even thinner and is putting Ontario's postsecondary institutions at a clear disadvantage when it comes to investing in the teaching and research excellence that is vital to the success of Ontario's students.

However, this downward trend can be stopped. What Ontario needs is a bold and meaningful investment in our higher education system, one that matches the severity of the funding crisis. The 2020-21 budget is an opportunity to break from years of stagnating funding to ensure that neither access to, nor the quality of a university education is compromised. It is an opportunity to demonstrate to the people of Ontario that this government believes in higher education, research, and good jobs.





**A sensible step in the right direction would be to improve Ontario's level of per-student funding to match the next worst province, Nova Scotia. This would require an investment of an additional \$2.7 billion over five years, starting with an additional \$425 million in this year's budget.**

Renewed investment in Ontario's universities over the next five years must be part of a long-term commitment to a robust system of public funding for postsecondary education. It is time to set our province on an upward trend, demonstrating to Ontario's students that they deserve an equitable, stable, and high-quality learning experience comparable to that of students in the rest of Canada.

A high-quality and accessible higher education system is only possible through robust public funding. It is important to recognize that public funding of universities truly is an *investment*. Previous reports by the Conference Board of Canada have shown that economies that invest in their population's education and skills development receive direct social and economic benefit (through higher tax revenues and lower social transfer costs). Therefore, a meaningful investment in our higher education system is not only a good investment but a vital one for the future of our society and economy.

Cost of pulling Ontario out of last place in per-student university funding					
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Annual increase	\$425 million	\$475 million	\$535 million	\$590 million	\$660 million
Cummulative increase	\$425 million	\$900 million	\$1.4 billion	\$2 billion	\$2.7 billion



## Rejecting reckless performance-based funding

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Unfortunately, the government's new outcomes and market-based performance funding model will not solve any of the funding challenges currently facing postsecondary education in Ontario, and will, in fact, exacerbate the system's current funding crisis.

In April 2019, the government announced a drastic shift in the current funding model towards an outcomes and market-based approach that would tie 60 per cent of postsecondary funding (over \$3 billion dollars across all universities and colleges) to a set of performance metrics, most of which these institutions have little to no control over. This dramatic and potentially destabilizing shift follows years of stagnant public funding for postsecondary education in Ontario.

Faculty across the province are deeply concerned about the impact of this funding model on the postsecondary education system in Ontario. Without any consultation with sector stakeholders, this government is ignoring sound public policy and imposing its own destabilizing ideological framework on Ontario's postsecondary education system.

### Performance-based funding: a reckless approach

A wide body of research shows that performance-based funding is incapable of credibly reflecting or evaluating the breadth and depth of a student's education, the long-term benefits of basic research projects, or the contributions of a faculty or staff member. Instead, research shows that this funding model is far more likely to have negative consequences – slowly but certainly eroding the integrity of Ontario's postsecondary education system.

By design, performance-based funding rewards institutions that meet specific targets while penalizing those that do not. In doing so, it denies vital funding to the institutions that need it most to improve their educational outcomes. In effect, rather than encouraging institutions to improve in areas where they are not meeting targets, this approach will ensure institutions fall further behind.

This reckless approach to funding provides only the illusion of accountability, but is a very real threat to equity, accessibility, and the quality of postsecondary education. It will work against quality improvement and do nothing to improve accountability, as Ontario's universities and colleges already have comprehensive structures in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs they offer.

### Performance-based funding undermines equity and access

Evidence suggests that performance-based funding models pose a serious threat to equity and diversity, which will be especially devastating for smaller Ontario universities and will undermine access for Indigenous students and other equity-seeking groups.

A recent study has shown that, when compared to larger research schools, minority-serving institutions are, on average, more likely to be negatively impacted by performance-based funding models.<sup>1</sup> This

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1. Hillman, Nicholas and Daniel Corral. "The Equity Implications of Paying for Performance in Higher Education." *American Behavioral Scientist* 61.14 (2017): 1757–1772.

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has resulted in several of these institutions revisiting and altering their approach to admitting students from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. Performance-based funding hinders access to higher education, especially for marginalized students, and penalizes universities that seek to enroll under-represented students.

Other adverse consequences include shorter programs with less quality control,<sup>2</sup> lower graduation requirements, increased hiring of precariously employed contract faculty, increased campus bureaucracy, and less institutional autonomy as government exercises more influence over which programs are offered.

Furthermore, the metrics set by the Ontario Government for assessing each university's "performance" are almost solely focused on economic factors and labour market demands, which will likely institutionalize existing social inequities. They include no measures of the teaching, research, or social impact of universities, all of which are essential to their missions and mandates. These impacts cannot simply be measured through economic contributions, but must also take into account the contributions postsecondary education makes to building knowledge, fostering innovative and critical thinking minds, and creating more equitable and inclusive societies.

These metrics and the complicated cyclical reporting mechanisms they require will lead to increased bureaucracy for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and postsecondary institutions. Universities and colleges will now have to allocate substantial resources to monitor, measure, and report on a number of metrics, most of which their institutions have no control over. In a time of austerity and in the midst of a funding crisis that has had drastic impacts on the learning conditions of Ontario students and working conditions of university faculty, it is absolutely irresponsible of the government to create an unstable and unpredictable funding system that forces universities to direct their resources away from their core mandate of teaching and learning and towards meaningless bureaucratic measures and reporting schemes.

### **The way forward**

Rather than engage in risky and destabilizing changes to Ontario's postsecondary education funding formula, the government should instead put students first and invest in the province's colleges and universities. Evidence shows that, even in the absence of explicit performance goals or financial incentives, completion rates increase when institutions receive additional resources.

Adequate, stable public funding for postsecondary education will help students by ensuring better academic support services, sustainable faculty-to-student ratios, and lower tuition fees – all of which are effective ways to increase degree attainment. Publicly funded postsecondary institutions also support good jobs on campus by providing institutions with resources to invest in faculty renewal and hire precariously employed contract faculty and staff into secure full-time positions.

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2. Hillman, Nicholas, David A. Tandberg and Alisa H. Fryar. "Evaluating the Impacts of "New" Performance Funding in Higher Education." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 37.04 (2015): 501–519.

## Stable funding, strong universities

Higher education should foster creative, curious, and critical minds. It should provide students with the support, opportunity, and inspiration to push forward in the quest for knowledge and understanding. Outcome and market-based performance funding measures undermine these values and the very purpose of postsecondary institutions.

**Funding allocation mechanisms should not be structured in ways that harm the student learning experience. As the government moves forward with its funding allocations for the third round of Strategic Mandate Agreements, it should abandon its plans to link performance metrics to funding. The evidence clearly shows that they will fail to help the government achieve its goals and are likely to do real damage to postsecondary education in Ontario. Instead, the data being collected should be leveraged to identify better ways for universities to improve their educational quality and research outputs.**



# Tuition fees as a threat to access

The decline of per-student funding in Ontario, has put increasing pressure on institutions to raise tuition fees in order to fill the financial gap.

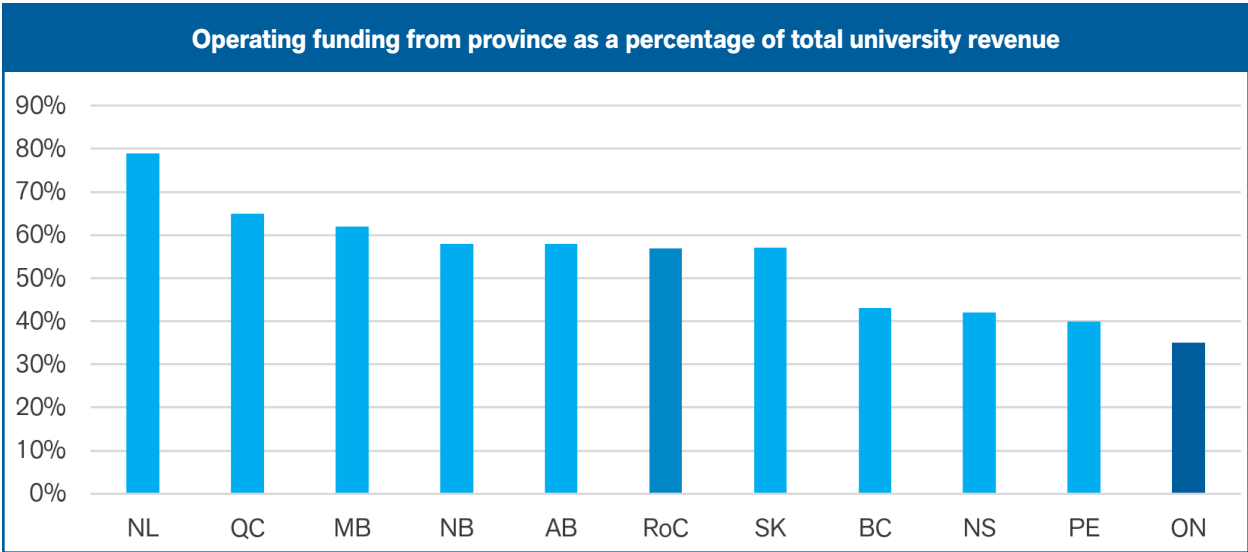
Ontario's undergraduate tuition fees have increased by 25 per cent over the last decade, resulting in the province having one of the highest levels of tuition fees in the country (\$7,922 at the undergraduate and \$9,507 at the graduate levels). Compared to the rest of the country, undergraduate tuition fee levels in Ontario are an astounding 58 per cent higher than the average for the rest of Canada.

Ontario's undergraduate international tuition fees have increased by 100 per cent over the last decade, resulting in the province having the highest level of tuition fees in the country (\$38,276 at the undergraduate and \$23,770 at the graduate levels). Compared to the rest of the country, international undergraduate tuition fee levels in Ontario are an astonishing 66 per cent higher than the average for the rest of Canada.

As of 2016-17, tuition fees surpassed public funding as the single largest source of university revenue. Currently, 55 per cent of Ontario university operating income is provided through student fees. This figure was only 20 per cent in 1990, demonstrating the increasing reliance on user fees and the gutting of the public funds provided to universities over the past three decades.

Without recourse to higher tuition fees – which is proven to be a flawed policy and damaging to the accessibility of Ontario universities and the quality of student experience – universities will need new public investment to protect educational accessibility and quality.

While we welcome the Ontario Government's decision to reduce tuition fee levels by 10 per cent in 2019-20 and freeze fees for 2020-21, without proper funding to offset the consequent reductions to university revenue, this policy initiative has set Ontario institutions back even further.



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Based on Ministry of Colleges and Universities' own estimates, the 10 per cent tuition fee cut was set to reduce university budgets by 2-4 per cent. OCUFA is deeply concerned about the impact of this cut to university revenue, especially in smaller and northern institutions. If tuition fee cuts are not matched with an equivalent level of provincial funding, they will have a negative effect on the quality of education and research in our universities.

### **Cuts to student assistance**

Furthermore, for Ontario's low and middle income students the Ontario Government's cut of over \$671 million and changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) largely negate any benefits from the simultaneously announced tuition fee cut. The OSAP cuts and changes to eligibility criteria for financial assistance mean it is becoming harder for many students to access postsecondary education. Not only will universities and colleges struggle with less funding, but students are reporting being burdened with less access to financial assistance, costlier loans, and higher amounts of debt. These changes are, by definition, regressive because those most adversely affected are those already forced to borrow for their education.

These changes to student assistance will make postsecondary education less accessible for students in Ontario, and negatively impact diversity and innovation at our universities as they limit access for low and middle income students.

### **A multi-pronged approach**

OCUFA has long argued that tuition fees are a barrier to access that prevent students from pursuing a postsecondary education and should not be relied upon as a foundation for university funding. Thus, we strongly argue for further regulation and reduction of university tuition fees, including international tuition fees, to close the increasing gap between what Ontario students pay for their education compared to students in other provinces. Students in Ontario are bearing the burden of the government's chronic underfunding of postsecondary education by having to pay astronomically high tuition fees for their education.

However, we strongly believe that university funding, tuition fees, and financial aid cannot be viewed in isolation from one another; rather, it is our position that that these three elements should be considered as part of a unified funding system. Doing otherwise will produce incomplete and contradictory policy provisions. While we strongly advocate for the reduction of tuition fees in Ontario, any such reduction must be accompanied by a corresponding increase in government funding.

### **Shutting down HEQCO and investing in student assistance**

OCUFA recommends that the Government of Ontario shut down HEQCO, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and allocate its budget to student assistance instead. While this is not sufficient to make up for the government's drastic cuts to OSAP, it is important, on principle, that no further public funds be squandered on a government agency that has proven itself unnecessary and harmful.



## Stable funding, strong universities

Governed by a board appointed by the government, HEQCO has often implied that it is an independent, arms-length agency seeking to influence key decision-makers, when in fact it receives its direction from government.

HEQCO has been repeatedly criticized for a lack of rigour and scientific integrity in its data analysis and research. Its reputation and credibility among sector stakeholders quickly deteriorated along with the quality of its research. Its controversial recommendations and failure to account for the fundamental role chronic underfunding has played in undermining postsecondary education and research quality resulted in its work being widely dismissed.

Furthermore, HEQCO has been the chief advisor to the current government on a number of controversial and harmful initiatives, including the introduction of performance-based funding and attacks on Ontario faculty over the age of 65. This poorly considered advice to government is an excellent example of the irresponsible role HEQCO has played in the policy discussion in Ontario. This narrow, petty focus on faculty pensions was driven largely by the personal animus of the former HEQCO President toward faculty and is hardly the basis for rigorous, evidence-based policy decisions. It has long lacked the capacity or the confidence of the sector to play any role in improving postsecondary education in Ontario and it is long past time to reverse the mistake that is HEQCO.

**OCUFA recommends that the Ontario Government shut down HEQCO and allocate its budget to student assistance instead.**



## Faculty renewal and fairness for contract faculty

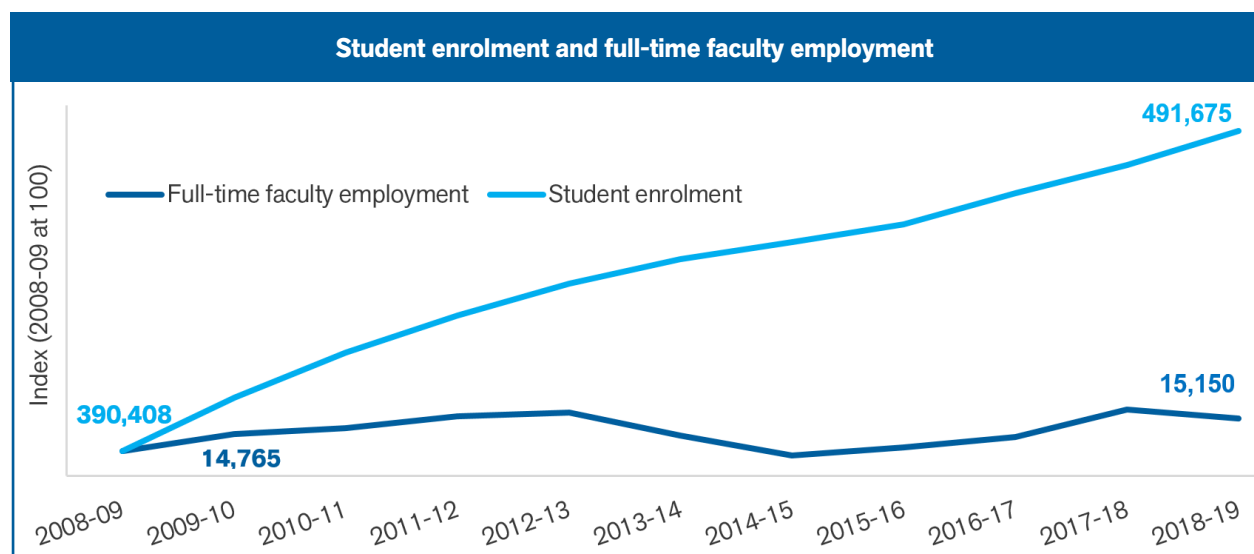
Professors and academic librarians are at the heart of Ontario's vibrant universities. They teach courses, mentor students, and conduct research that expands knowledge and drives innovation. Their role is central to the mission and mandate of Ontario's universities and to driving the economy.

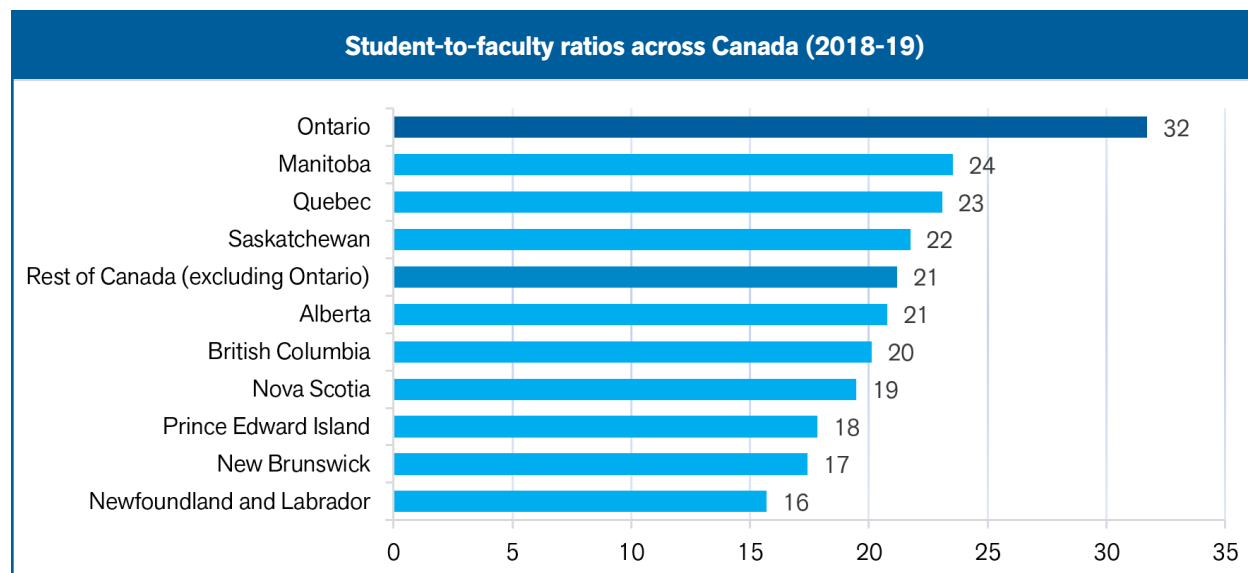
For over a decade, student enrolment has far outpaced full-time faculty hiring at Ontario's public universities. This has put a strain on academic institutions across the province and introduced an alarming shift in academic labour. Today, a majority of courses at Ontario universities are taught by precariously employed faculty who face constant job insecurity and unfair working conditions. In the face of declining funding levels, Ontario universities have turned to hiring more and more contract academics to fill the growing gap between student enrolment and full-time faculty hiring. This unsustainable approach has already proven to have disastrous consequences both for faculty and students.

The Ontario Government should take leadership by making a province-wide commitment to faculty renewal that includes fairness for contract faculty, new full-time tenure-stream hiring, and the replacement of retiring tenured faculty members with new tenured positions. This approach will ensure the sustainability and quality of Ontario's universities.

### Alarming rise of the student-to-faculty ratio

**As public funding has stagnated, full-time tenure-stream faculty hiring at Ontario's universities has not kept pace with student enrolment. In the last decade, full-time student enrolment increased by over 25 per cent. Over the same period, the number of full-time faculty employed at Ontario universities increased by only 2.6 per cent. This means that, since 2008-09, student enrolment has increased at a rate almost nine times that of faculty hiring.**





As a result, Ontario has the highest student-to-faculty ratio in Canada and since 2000 that ratio has worsened substantially – increasing by more than 45 per cent. As of 2018-19, there were 32 students for every full-time faculty member at an Ontario university, compared to an average of 21 students for each university faculty member across the rest of Canada. Ontario is by far the worst on this measure – the province with the next highest student-to-faculty ratio in the country is Manitoba, with a ratio of 24 to 1.

These trends have a negative impact on teaching and learning in Ontario. Having more students and fewer professors leads to substantially larger class sizes, less one-on-one engagement, and fewer opportunities for mentorship and academic advising. These concerns are reflected in data on the number of first year course sections offered by Ontario universities. The latest data on class sizes from Common University Data Ontario (CUDO) show that the number of courses with 30 students or less at Ontario universities was 14 per cent lower in 2017, the last year of available data, than it was in 2007. By comparison, over the same period, the number of courses offered with 250 students or more rose by a stark 25 per cent and the number of courses offered with 101-250 students was 14 per cent higher.

This data speaks to the gradually eroding quality of the learning experience available to Ontario university students and the declining opportunities for mentorship and one-on-one engagement with their educators as a result of years of chronic underfunding.

To address this growing problem in our higher education system, the provincial government must commit to setting a faculty renewal strategy for Ontario's universities. An effective strategy would set universities on a path to closing the gap between student enrolment and faculty hiring. This would require an expansion of the tenure-stream faculty complement, and would support improvements to Ontario's student-to-faculty ratio.

This strategy should also ensure that retiring tenured faculty members are replaced with new tenure-stream positions, that pathways are created for contract faculty to attain secure positions at their institutions, and that the reliance on contract faculty in the system as a whole is reduced.

### **Reliance on precarious academic labour: an unsustainable approach**

The decline in public funding, and the resulting rise in the student-to-faculty ratio has paved the way for a dramatic and troubling shift in the nature of academic work at Ontario's postsecondary institutions. While full-time tenure-stream faculty hiring has stagnated, the reliance on contract faculty, initially a temporary stopgap measure to accommodate significant enrolment increases in the early 2000s, has become an entrenched strategy in universities across the province. These contract faculty members are generally hired on either a limited-term contract or as sessionals on a per-course basis.

**Over half of faculty at Ontario universities are now working on contract. OCUFA estimates that the number of courses they teach has nearly doubled since 2000. These faculty lack job security, are regularly paid less than their tenure-stream colleagues for performing the same work, face unpredictable scheduling, and often juggle jobs at multiple institutions. This lack of job security means these individuals struggle to make long-term plans for themselves and their families. While some contract faculty are professionals who teach on the side, research suggests that most rely on teaching as their primary employment and aspire to have secure full-time positions in the academy. Further, the majority of contract faculty are women, making fairness for contract faculty an issue of equity.<sup>1</sup>**

A study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives concluded that Canadian universities' heavy reliance on contract faculty is a structural issue, not a temporary approach to hiring.<sup>2</sup> Universities should address their ongoing reliance on contract work and begin creating pathways for contract faculty to secure full-time faculty positions.

Despite the lack of security afforded to them in their employment, many contract faculty have been working in these positions for years. A 2016 study by the Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education (CSCIHE) suggests that over 15 per cent of contract faculty have been working as contract faculty for over 15 years, and roughly one-third have nine or more years of experience as contract academics.<sup>3</sup>

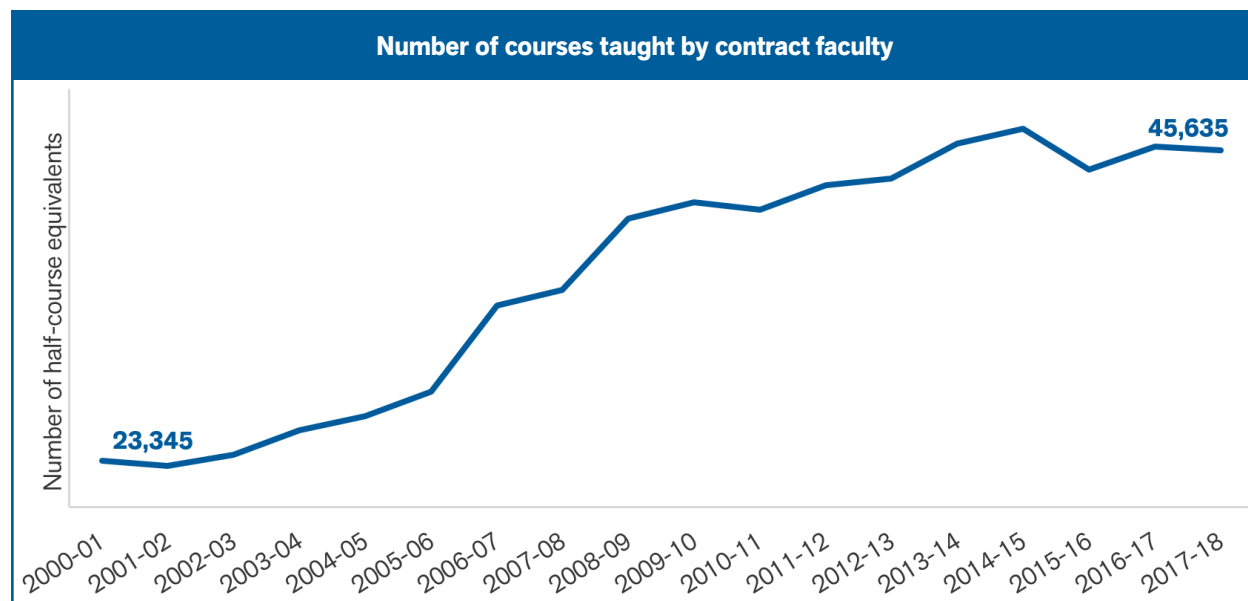
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1. Research conducted by CSCIHE suggests that the typical contract faculty at Ontario universities is female. Research conducted by HEQCO suggests over 60 per cent of contract faculty at Ontario universities are women

2. Shaker, E. and C. Pasma. "Contract U: Contract faculty appointments at Canadian universities." Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2018). <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2018/11/Contract%20U.pdf>

3. Field, C. C. and G. A. Jones. "Survey of Sessional Faculty in Ontario Publicly-Funded Universities." Centre for the Study of Canadian and International Higher Education at OISE-University of Toronto (2016): 14.

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These studies belie the picture of the “happy moonlighter” who is merely supplanting a full-time job with occasional teaching. For the most part, sessionals in Ontario are experienced professionals who rely on their precarious work to support themselves and their families.

It is widely acknowledged that sessional faculty are too often paid less than their tenure-stream colleagues for performing work of equal value. In addition, many do not have access to benefits or pensions. While the expectations of university teaching done by sessional faculty and tenure-stream faculty are the same, sessionals are not being compensated on an equal basis.

With the government's imposition of a one per cent wage cap, contract faculty are at further risk. Their already low real incomes will decrease further since inflation rates outpace the government's legislated wage cap.

The government's decision to cut tuition fees by 10 per cent without increased public funding for Ontario's universities and colleges represents an additional hurdle facing contract faculty trying to gain job security. This will incentivize institutions to further rely on contract work and push contract faculty further into precarity, contradicting the government's stated commitment to promote good jobs. Moreover, while most contract faculty are only paid for teaching, many continue to do unpaid research and service to remain competitive for future positions. Yet, despite taking on this work, contract faculty do not have access to the same resources as their full-time tenure-stream colleagues, including access to libraries and research funding.

Filling the gap between enrolment and tenure-stream faculty hiring with more contract faculty in precarious jobs is not an acceptable path forward. Contract faculty are highly qualified teachers and researchers, but their conditions of work do not allow them to contribute to their fullest potential in the classroom or provide the educational continuity students deserve. Job insecurity reduces their ability

to follow through with students and provide them with the ongoing support and guidance that will help them excel.

## Public support for secure full-time faculty hiring

There is broad public support for setting Ontario's universities on a path towards hiring faculty in secure full-time positions that will provide the learning experience students deserve.

A poll commissioned by OCUFA showed that 94 per cent of Ontarians believe universities should be model employers and support good jobs in their communities. Ontarians also support improvements to the working conditions of contract faculty – over 84 per cent think contract faculty should receive fair pay, access to benefits, and be converted into secure full-time positions. Universities are well placed to provide good, stable jobs in our communities.

## Faculty renewal as a priority

The provincial government must take leadership and set a standard for the future of postsecondary education that recognizes the importance of decent, stable jobs at universities. The province must support increased tenure-stream faculty hiring and replacement through the provision of adequate public funding for universities across the province. Professors' working conditions are students' learning environments and faculty renewal will ensure that every student in Ontario has access to a high-quality university education.

An effective faculty renewal strategy must have the dual goals of increasing the tenure-stream faculty complement and delivering fairness for contract faculty. This requires an expansion in the overall size of the tenure-stream faculty complement, and supports improvements to Ontario's student-to-faculty ratio.

A faculty renewal strategy must create pathways for contract faculty to attain more secure positions at their institutions and reduce the reliance on contract faculty in the system as a whole. The creation of new positions must also preserve the principle of tenure and the fundamental connection between teaching, research, and service within the academic profession. Action on this issue will ensure that future scholars are not denied the opportunity to contribute to our communities through research, teaching, and innovation.

### FACULTY RENEWAL STRATEGY

- ✓ **Create additional full-time tenure-stream faculty positions**
- ✓ **Close gap between full-time faculty hiring and student enrolment**
- ✓ **Improve student-to-faculty ratio and enrich student learning experience**
- ✓ **Support pathways for contract faculty into secure full-time positions**

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While hiring decisions are made by each university, government can and must take leadership on this issue by setting direction and encouraging universities to invest in hiring more tenure-stream faculty.

A faculty renewal strategy can also help to ensure that retiring tenured faculty members are replaced with new tenure-stream positions. Too often, when tenured faculty members retire, departments will turn to precariously employed contract faculty members to take over the teaching responsibilities, and leave the remaining tenure-stream faculty members to pick up the slack on university service responsibilities. This, in turn, limits the time faculty have available for teaching and research, which provides justification for even further reliance on contract faculty members.

Without institutional assurances that retiring faculty will be replaced, the future of small departments and programs is often uncertain. Again and again, we hear retiring professors express concern that the quality or survival of their programs or departments will be jeopardized. It is against this background that eligible faculty are making decisions about when to retire. A faculty renewal strategy can help achieve a robust, self-renewing tenure-stream faculty complement.

**In this year's budget, the government should launch a faculty renewal strategy backed by a multiyear investment to support meaningful long-term change. This strategy should encourage universities to undertake additional tenure-stream hiring, over and above their current planned growth, and direct funds towards transitioning existing contract faculty into secure full-time positions.** Given that many of these matters are governed by collective agreements, the logistics and specifics of faculty hiring would have to be worked out at individual universities.

To improve the student-to-faculty ratio by a modest margin and get Ontario to the student-to-faculty ratio of the next worst province, OCUFA estimates that 7,900 full-time professors would need to be hired by 2024-25. Hiring at this level should be supported by increased public investment and would cost universities approximately \$1 billion over five years – beginning with a \$185 million investment to support 1,580 positions in 2020-21.<sup>4</sup> With this level of investment, Ontario could reach a student-to-faculty ratio of 24 students per faculty member by 2025.

Funding for faculty renewal					
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Annual increase	\$185 million	\$195 million	\$205 million	\$220 million	\$235 million
Cummulative	\$185 million	\$380 million	\$585 million	\$805 million	\$1.04 billion
Total jobs created	1,580	3,160	4,740	6,320	7,900

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4. This figure is adjusted for inflation and takes into account latest hiring trends.



## Good policy making and reducing red tape

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Since assuming office, the Ford government has refused to meaningfully consult with stakeholders in the postsecondary sector, including OCUFA, on any of the policy initiatives or legislation it has introduced. While one of the main talking points of the government has been the need for efficiency and the desire to “cut red tape” to save public dollars, in reality many of the government’s newly introduced policy initiatives in the higher education system, including the performance-based funding model and the “Student Choice Initiative,” have resulted in a significant rise in bureaucratic measures, increased red tape, and unnecessary costs.

It is imperative that the government adequately and meaningfully consult with sector stakeholders, especially representatives of students, professors, and workers, before introducing any new government legislation or policy initiatives. We believe that meaningful consultation with sector representatives will ensure that introduced measures are effective, in line with the mandate and mission of Ontario’s universities, supported by sound research, and a responsible public investment. Failing to do so will inevitably result in costly and irresponsible public policies that do not meet their stated goals and waste valuable resources in an already underfunded system.

### **“Student Choice Initiative”**

In 2019, the Ontario Government announced a new policy initiative titled the “Student Choice Initiative” that made many student ancillary fees for university and college students voluntary since they were deemed “non-essential” by the government. This is despite the fact that many of these fees were introduced by students themselves through democratic votes and processes.

This directive was based on the false premise that students’ very real financial burdens are caused by ancillary fees, in particular, by students’ union membership dues. In reality, students’ growing financial burdens are caused by skyrocketing tuition fees and dwindling student assistance.

Not only did this undemocratic move undermine students’ rights on campus and their collective decision-making, it also created havoc on campuses. University administrations were forced to set-up complex opt-out systems within a short timeframe, despite the fact that the “non-essential” fees were insignificant in relation to students’ overall tuition fee levels. Students’ unions and levy-based organizations were also forced to scramble in the aftermath of this directive as they tried to figure out which part of their membership dues or levies would remain and which parts of their operations they could maintain. This put students’ unions and other levy-based groups in a particularly difficult place since, more often than not, they provide the only services that offer support and advocacy to the most marginalized communities on campus.

To defend their democratic rights, students’ unions challenged the Ontario Government directive in court and won when the Ontario Divisional Court ruled the “Student Choice Initiative” unlawful. This pointless and flawed policy thus resulted in millions of dollars in lost revenue for student groups, substantial expenses for Ontario universities and colleges, and wasteful and unnecessary legal costs,

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all of which could have been prevented had the government consulted with student groups and other stakeholders in good faith.

The government has yet to reveal the impact of this initiative or its achieved savings, especially as compared to the costs incurred developing the "Student Choice Initiative" and defending it in court.

**To avoid additional red tape and legal costs, and given the lack of evidence of savings for students as a result of the "Student Choice Initiative", OCUFA recommends the Ontario Government drop its appeal of the Ontario Divisional Court's unanimous decision that deemed the initiative to be unlawful.**

## Wage-cap legislation

In May and June of last year, the Treasury Board Secretariat held a series of sham consultations on a provincial wage-cap legislation. The government's consultation was run by a costly law firm, where the lawyers present did not answer any of the questions posed by those being "consulted."

This legislation is a clear attack on the right to free and fair collective bargaining, a threat to pay equity and benefits for contract faculty and other marginalized workers, and an erosion of the foundations of Ontario's important public services.

The government introduced the wage-cap legislation less than 10 business days after the Treasury Board Secretariat's "consultation," which confirmed the suspicion that the legislation was drafted behind closed doors from the onset without any input from sector stakeholders. It further proves that the consultations were just a way for the government to shield itself from a legal challenge to the legislation.

Furthermore, this legislation was put forward without any evidence of how a wage cap would impact the Treasury or the provincial deficit. This is especially concerning for professors, academic librarians, and other university workers in the province, as they negotiate their contracts with and get paid by universities, not the government.

In addition to the exorbitant costs of the legal consultation, over 15 unions in Ontario are now taking the government to court after its attack on the right to free and fair collective bargaining through this legislation. OCUFA has recently joined the OFL coordinated coalition to challenge the constitutionality of the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act*.

**We appeal to the Ontario Government to reverse the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act*, avoid the lengthy and costly legal process, and instead, focus on the province's real problem: the lack of revenue required to adequately fund Ontario's public services.**

## Conclusion

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OCUFA's 2020-21 pre-budget recommendations aim to preserve the accessibility and quality of postsecondary education in Ontario through stable, consistent and adequate funding, and improved working conditions for university faculty. Public funding of universities in Ontario is at record low levels, while tuition fees are high, and faculty in the province are extremely concerned about the impact on the accessibility and quality of postsecondary education.

To maintain strong universities in Ontario, OCUFA recommends that the Government of Ontario increase per-student public investment in the province's universities to improve Ontario's rank among other provinces in per-student funding by 2024-25; reverse the unstable and inequitable performance-based university funding model and revert back to the largely effective enrolment-based funding model; and eliminate the wasteful, ineffective, and unreliable Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario and allocate its budget to student assistance.

In addition, OCUFA recommends that the Government of Ontario invest in a multi-year faculty renewal strategy that supports meaningful long-term change. This strategy should: encourage universities to undertake additional full-time tenure-stream hiring, over and above their current planned growth, and direct funds towards transitioning existing contract faculty into secure full-time positions; drop the appeal of the Ontario Divisional Court's decision that deemed the "Student Choice Initiative" unlawful to save further legal costs and the additional resources universities and colleges require to support the flawed program; repeal the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act* to avoid a lengthy and costly *Charter* challenge and, instead, focus on the province's real problem: the lack of revenue required to adequately fund Ontario's public services; and adequately and meaningfully consult with sector stakeholders, especially representatives of faculty, workers, and students, before introducing new government legislation or policy initiatives.