

2022 ONTARIO ELECTION

Party voting records and positions on postsecondary education

OCUFA

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

Public universities **for all** • Good jobs **for all** • A better future **for Ontario**

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Ontario party records on postsecondary education issues

This resource covers a selected list of legislation, directives, and initiatives related to postsecondary education that have been introduced over the last four years. Each entry includes a brief description of the measure along with the positions taken by the four parties represented in the Ontario Legislature. OCUFA's commentary and statements have also been added for additional context.

Issue	ONDP	OLP	OPC	GPO
York University back-to-work legislation in <i>Urgent Priorities Act</i>	Opposed	Opposed, but promised similar legislation in 2018 election	In favour	Opposed
Campus free speech directive	Opposed	Opposed	In favour	Opposed
Cutting funding for expansion campuses	Opposed	Opposed	In favour	No position on record
Bill 47, repealing minimum wage, paid sick days, and fair labour laws	Opposed	Opposed	In favour	Opposed
OSAP cuts, <i>Student Choice Initiative</i> , and 10% tuition cut	Opposed	Opposed	In favour	Opposed
Performance-based funding (PBF) and attack on senior faculty	Opposed	Opposed, but started shift to PBF when in government	In favour	Opposed
Wage cap legislation	Opposed	Opposed	In favour	Opposed
Bill 168 and Order-In-Council (OIC)	Raised speech and academic freedom concerns in House. Only opposed OIC	Did not speak in House or comment on Bill or OIC	In favour	No position on record
Granting university status to Canada Christian College	Opposed	Opposed	In favour	Opposed
Laurentian University crisis and CCAA	Supported Laurentian and called on gov to step in	Supported Laurentian and called on gov to step in	Chose to not intervene to save programs and jobs	Supported Laurentian and called on gov to step in
Bill 276 provision to make NOSM standalone university	Opposed	Opposed	In favour	Opposed

July 2018

Back-to-work legislation in *Urgent Priorities Act*

In July 2018, as one of its very first pieces of legislation, the newly elected PC government introduced back-to-work legislation aimed at the striking members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 3903 (CUPE 3903) at York University. Using legislative power to force an end to a strike undermines the collective bargaining process and encourages employers to avoid meaningful engagement in negotiations, resulting in longer future strikes and employers who stonewall while waiting for government bailouts.

OPC: Voted in favour

ONDP: Voted against

OLP: Voted against, although the Liberals had vowed to enact similar back-to-work legislation during their election campaign a few months prior.

GPO: Voted against

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/blog-posts/ocufa-statement-on-back-to-work-legislation-tabled-by-ontario-government/>

August 2018

Free speech on campus directive

In August 2018, the Ontario government announced that universities could face funding cuts if they do not comply with newly introduced requirements for campus free speech policies. Faculty, students, and the campus community are very critical of this initiative and believe threatening to withhold funding from postsecondary institutions will only serve to undermine the quality of education at universities and unfairly penalize students. In fact, the directive can be counterproductive and actually chill free speech on campus. Members of the university community may be discouraged from speaking up for fear of being disciplined.

OPC: In favour [the directive was introduced by the PC government]

ONDP: Released a statement in opposition: <https://www.ontariondp.ca/news/statement-ndp-colleges-and-universities-critic-chris-glover>

OLP: Opposed.

GPO: Released a statement in opposition: <https://gpo.ca/2018/08/30/pc-government-must-clarify-new-free-speech-requirements/>

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/ontarios-faculty-concerned-with-government-effort-to-tie-funding-to-university-free-speech-policies/>

October 2018

Cutting funding for expansion campuses

In 2018, the Ontario government announced that they would no longer be funding three new university and college campuses. The expansion campuses being built by York University and Seneca College in Markham, Ryerson University and Sheridan College in Brampton, and Wilfrid Laurier University and Conestoga College in Milton were all well into development, with over \$300 million in funding having been promised by the previous government, land committed, buildings designed, and years of hard work completed.

OPC: In favour [the announcement was made by the PC government]

ONDP: Spoke at the legislature in opposition

OLP: Opposed and the leader commented on it

GPO: No position on record

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/general/with-no-consultation-government-cuts-funding-for-expansion-campuses/>

Bill 47, repealing minimum wage, paid sick days, and fair labour laws

In fall 2018, the PC government passed an omnibus bill, repealing a host of labour law reforms brought forward under the previous Liberal government, including provisions for paid sick leave, \$15 minimum wage, equal pay for equal work, enhanced bargaining unit consolidation provisions, and fairer rules for joining a union.

OPC: Voted in favour

ONDP: Voted against and held a press conference with representatives from PSE groups to talk about the adverse impact of the bill on students and campus workers.

OLP: Voted against

GPO: Voted against

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/ontario-faculty-deeply-disappointed-with-government-repeal-of-15-minimum-wage-and-fair-labour-laws/>

January 2019

Jan 17 announcement, OSAP cuts, *Student Choice Initiative*, and 10 per cent tuition cut

In 2019, the PC government made several announcements regarding postsecondary education initiatives. These included the announcement of a ten per cent tuition fee decrease and a subsequent two-year freeze on fees at all Ontario universities, without any matching funding from the government to offset the cost to universities. The changes to tuition fees were accompanied by a \$700 million cut to OSAP funding as well as removing the six-month grace period that graduates were previously entitled to, during which they would not accrue any interest on their student loan debt.

The government also introduced the *Student Choice Initiative*, a plan to make many student ancillary fees (including dues paid to student unions and advocacy and support groups) voluntary.

OPC: In favour [the announcement was made by the PC government]

ONDP: Opposed and released a statement <https://www.ontariondp.ca/news/osap-cuts-hit-students-hard>

OLP: Opposed and spoke at the Legislature against the tuition fee reduction and OSAP cuts

GPO: Opposed and released a statement: <https://gpo.ca/2019/01/16/buck-a-beer-approach-wont-fix-post-secondary-problems/>

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/reckless-government-announcement-threatens-education-quality-and-students-rights/>

April 2019

Performance-based funding and attack on senior faculty

As part of its first budget in 2019, the PC government introduced several major PSE measures including the close to \$700 million cut to OSAP, a new funding model for universities and colleges that tied 60 per cent of university funding to “performance outcomes” by 2024-25, and proposed legislation that targeted the rights of senior faculty.

The drastic shift to a performance-based funding model and the significant cut to student assistance had a destabilizing effect on the sector. In dollar figures, funding tied to performance increased from \$50 million (the figure for 2018-19) to an estimated \$2.2 billion by 2024-25. OCUFA had long cautioned against shifting towards allocating university funding based on performance. This shift is counterproductive as it will, by design, create inequities and slowly but certainly undermine the integrity of Ontario's postsecondary education system.

The budget bill also included proposed legislation that threatened to cut the salaries of senior faculty and attack faculty collective bargaining rights and collective agreements.

OPC: Voted in favour [part of the budget bill]

ONDP: Voted against the budget bill and released a statement on PBF: <https://spy.ontariondp.ca/news/ford-tying-post-secondary-funding-political-directives-wrong-ndp>

OLP: Voted against the budget bill; however, the previous Liberal government was the one that began the work of shifting the funding model to a performance-based one.

GPO: Voted against and criticized the introduction of PBF.

OCUFA statements: <https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/ontario-faculty-alarmed-by-proposal-to-overhaul-university-funding-in-provincial-budget/>

<https://ocufa.on.ca/blog-posts/ocufas-analysis-of-the-2019-ontario-budget/>

July 2019

Wage cap legislation

In June 2019, the PC government introduced Bill 124, *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act*. The bill, which eventually passed into legislation, capped the salary and compensation increases for many public sector workers, including university employees, at one per cent for a three-year period. This was yet another attack on the rights of faculty, and all unionized workers in the public sector, to free and fair collective bargaining. The legislation has had particularly negative impacts on contract faculty who are paid low stipends that leave many of them struggling every month, who have precarious jobs and volatile incomes, and who have waited too long already for fair pay and just working conditions.

OPC: Voted in favour

ONDP: Voted against

OLP: Voted against

GPO: Voted against

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/blog-posts/ocufa-responds-to-governments-proposed-wage-cap-legislation/>

October 2020

Bill 168 and Order-In-Council

In 2020, the PC government introduced Bill 168, the *Combating Antisemitism Act*, which would have enshrined into law the flawed International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism and further conflate legitimate criticism of the policies of the State of Israel with antisemitism. While the bill was going through the legislative process and was scheduled to go through public hearings and receive public submissions, the Ford government chose to abuse its power and circumvent democracy and public debate to ram through provisions of Bill 168, through an Order-In-Council.

The IHRA's working definition and its list of illustrative examples restrict free speech and threaten academic freedom by limiting the ability of scholars to engage in pedagogy and scholarship that include critiques of a foreign state. The adopted definition and its application increase the possibilities of ongoing intimidation, censorship, and attacks on scholars and academics who are critical of Israeli state policies.

OPC: In favour [introduced the legislation and subsequent OIC]

ONDP: Raised concerns regarding free speech and academic freedom in the House but did not oppose the bill. <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/house-documents/parliament-42/session-1/2020-02-27/hansard#para949>

OLP: Did not speak in the House or comment on the bill and subsequent OIC.

GPO: No position on record.

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/ocufa-opposes-ontario-government-circumventing-democracy-and-public-debate-on-bill-168/>

November 2020

Canada Christian College

In 2020, the PC government introduced Bill 213, *Better for People, Smarter for Business Act*; an omnibus bill that included a provision (Schedule 2) allowing the Canada Christian College (CCC) to be granted university status and award arts and science baccalaureate degrees.

OCUFA and other sector groups raised alarm over this provision on several accounts, including: the circumvention of proper process for the CCC application, as the government's bill was introduced before PEQAB had made a recommendation and the Minister of Colleges and Universities had made a decision about it; the undermining effect of giving private institutions degree-granting privileges on the quality and accessibility of postsecondary education in Ontario; and the very serious concerns regarding the human rights violations attributed to the owner of CCC, Charles McVety, who is also a close ally to Premier Ford, as well as concerns surrounding financial transparency and accountability.

Following public pressure and continued advocacy on the part of OCUFA and other sector groups, the Minister of Colleges and universities, upon recommendation from PEQAB, rejected the CCC application. The government then announced that even though Bill 213 had passed in its entirety, they would not proclaim Schedule 2 of the bill.

OPC: In favour. Introduced Bill 213 and supported Schedule 2.

ONDP: Against and introduced and got a motion passed in the Legislature condemning McVety's hate speech and the government's intention to grant university status to the CCC: <https://www.ontariondp.ca/news/ndp-motion-passes-legislature-condemns-mcvety-s-hate-speech-opposes-ford-s-deal-make-ccc>

OLP: Against and published a statement: <https://ontarioliberal.ca/petition/doug-ford-is-wrong/>

GPO: Against and published a statement: <https://mikeschreinermp.ca/schreiner-statement-on-canada-christian-college/>

OCUFA statement: <https://ocufa.on.ca/blog-posts/canada-christian-college-should-be-denied-university-status/>

February 2021

Laurentian University crisis and CCAA

In February 2021 Laurentian University, a public institution in Ontario, filed for insolvency protection under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act* (CCAA). This process led to the loss of hundreds of jobs and devastating cuts to academic programs that were integral to Laurentian's mission as a bilingual and tricultural institution, with a mandate to serve the broader community of Northern Ontario. The financial crisis at Laurentian was the direct result of the Ontario government's chronic underfunding of public universities. However, this situation was compounded by the Ontario government's refusal to step in to protect Laurentian, causing it to become the first public university in Canada to seek creditor protection under the CCAA.

OPC: The PC government chose to stand by and allow the CCAA process and resulting loss of programs and jobs at Laurentian University to continue even though they could have stopped these devastating proceedings by agreeing to support and fund Laurentian.

ONDP: Supported the Laurentian community and made multiple calls on the government to step in:

<https://www.ontariondp.ca/news/horwath-says-it-s-not-too-late-save-laurentian-university>

<https://www.ontariondp.ca/save-laurentian>

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/ndp-leader-andrea-horwath-laurentian-university-financial-crisis-1.6209146>

OLP: Ontario Liberals were supportive of the Laurentian community's calls and spoke in support of Laurentian and against government inaction at the Legislature.

GPO: Supported the Laurentian community and released a statement: <https://gpo.ca/2021/04/13/government-drops-the-ball-in-helping-laurentian/>

They also committed to supporting the establishment of University of Sudbury as a French language school: <https://www.thesudburystar.com/news/local-news/green-government-would-support-university-of-sudbury-as-french-language-school>

OCUFA statements: <https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/laurentians-collapse-driven-by-ford-governments-agenda-of-austerity-and-privatization/>

<https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/ocufa-calls-for-resignation-of-ross-romano-amid-devastating-cuts-to-jobs-and-programs-at-laurentian-university/>

<https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/laurentians-senior-leadership-and-minister-of-colleges-and-universities-should-step-down-in-wake-of-financial-crisis/>

<https://ocufa.on.ca/blog-posts/ccaa-at-laurentian-university-threatens-indigenous-studies-and-the-truth-and-reconciliation-commissions-calls-to-action/>

<https://ocufa.on.ca/press-releases/ocufa-disappointed-laurentian-still-resisting-accountability-for-ccaa-devastation/>

May 2021

Bill 276 provision to make NOSM a standalone university

In June 2021, the Legislature passed Bill 276, *Supporting Recovering and Competitiveness Act*, an omnibus bill that included two schedules regarding the independence of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) and Université de Hearst received royal ascent. The two Schedules in the act were introduced with no consultation or notice to the faculty, staff and students at Hearst and NOSM. The Government had also opted to exclude provisions regarding the composition and powers of Board and Senate from the new acts for these two universities, threatening collegial governance and proper university status for the new institutions.

Following advocacy on the part of the faculty associations at NOSM and Hearst as well OCUFA and other stakeholder groups, the government amended the acts to include language regarding the composition of Senate and Board; however, defining the powers of these two governing bodies were still left to regulations under the act.

OPC: Voted in favour [introduced the bill and subsequent amendment regarding composition of governing bodies]

ONDP: Voted against and spoke in the Legislature and at committee level calling on the government to remove the provisions regarding NOSM and Hearst becoming independent institutions and consult the stakeholders involved. At the committee level, they also supported the calls for the inclusion of proper governance language in the two acts.

OLP: Voted against and spoke at committee requesting consultation to be held with stakeholders and for the provisions to be removed from the bill.

GPO: Voted against and spoke at committee requesting consultation to be held with stakeholders and for the provisions to be removed from the bill. They also filed notice at committee to vote against Schedule 16.

OCUFA statements: <https://ocufa.on.ca/blog-posts/ocufa-submits-recommendations-on-government-decision-to-make-nosm-stand-alone-university/>

<https://ocufa.on.ca/blog-posts/nosm-and-universite-de-hearst-officially-become-independent-institutions/>