



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

## 2022 Ontario election advocacy platform

Over the years, OCUFA has been a strong advocate for accessible, high-quality postsecondary education delivered through secure academic jobs, by publicly funded, autonomous universities that are governed collegially through shared governance. This vision has been formalized in several OCUFA policies over the years and informed the organization's advocacy and political lobbying. Below are the main areas of OCUFA's advocacy platform for the 2022 Ontario election.

### Contract faculty

#### Election priorities

- ▶ Remove the wage constraints legislated under Bill 124.
- ▶ Reform Employment Standards Act (ESA) language to include equal pay for work of equivalent value for workers in the province, including contract faculty, using a pro-rata system.
- ▶ Increase university funding to ensure faculty renewal, that retiring faculty are replaced.

#### Context

Full-time faculty hiring has stagnated at Ontario's universities, while the reliance on contract faculty has increased at an alarming rate. Rather than serving as a temporary measure to accommodate significant enrolment increases in the early 2000s, the use of contract faculty has become an entrenched strategy to reduce costs in universities across Ontario. It is widely acknowledged that sessional faculty are paid less than their full-time colleagues for performing work of equal value. Research also suggests that the majority of contract faculty are women and racialized faculty are overrepresented in contract positions, making fairness for contract faculty an issue of equity. OCUFA has long advocated against the systemic use of precarious labour, in particular contract faculty, at Ontario's universities and called on the provincial government to take leadership on the issue.

### Government funding

#### Election priorities

- ▶ Commitment to discontinue the performance-based funding model for Ontario's universities.
- ▶ Meaningful increase to university operating grants.

- ▶ Meaningful increase to northern and bilingual grants in recognition of the important mandate of northern and bilingual institutions and the particular challenges they face. An increase in special purpose funding, particularly for Indigenous programming and supports.
- ▶ Increased funding for research under the research funding envelope under the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. Currently, per-student research funding provided by Ontario is less than half of the rest of Canada average.

## **Context**

Strong public funding for universities is necessary to support excellence in teaching and research, and an accessible postsecondary education for Ontarians from diverse backgrounds. On a per-student basis, public funding has been on a downward trend in Ontario since it last peaked in 2008-09. Since then, per-student funding has been declining. On a per-student basis, Ontario university operating funding is 40 per cent lower than the rest of Canada average; provincial-sponsored research funding is 55 per cent lower.

OCUFA has long been an advocate for enrolment-based public funding for universities with consideration for special grants for universities with specific missions or purposes. In recent years, OCUFA has also been vocal in opposing performance-based funding schemes and competitive models of university funding. Moreover, OCUFA has been cautioning against the growing privatization and corporatization of Ontario's universities as a direct result of decades of chronic underfunding.

## **Tuition fees**

### **Election priority**

- ▶ Increase OSAP and provide grants, not loans to ensure an accessible postsecondary education system for all.

## **Context**

For years now, Ontario has consistently had amongst the highest tuition fees in Canada for domestic students at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and the highest tuition fees in Canada— by far—for international students. To make up for low levels of per-student public funding, postsecondary tuition fees have been allowed to increase. Since 2014-15, tuition fees have made up more than half of Ontario university operating revenue. The continued shift in Ontario towards funding individual students rather than the system as a whole undermines the quality of higher education and can drive universities towards short-term, cost-saving measures. This strategy ignores long-term planning and investments that are needed to support universities' educational and research mandates.

OCUFA has been critical of the exponential rise in tuition fees as a clear barrier to access, and one which has been encouraged to make-up for the chronic underfunding of universities and postsecondary education. OCUFA has also repeatedly cautioned against universities' increased reliance on international students' tuition fees, as evidenced by the sudden and severe impact on revenues for some institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.