



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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
The Executive Council of Ontario
Mowat Block 3rd Flr, 900 Bay St,
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

April 24, 2019

Dear Minister Fullerton,

I am writing to express the support of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) for the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework.

Faculty associations across the province highly value this policy framework, especially in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) report, which provided a roadmap for establishing new relationships with Indigenous peoples that respect their land, treaty, and human rights and recognizes settler responsibilities in this work.

As you know, the report and its calls to action highlight the important role of education in the reconciliation process, and call on governments to close the gaps for Indigenous students when it comes to education and employment, amongst other benchmarks. We view the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework as an important part of postsecondary institutions' response to the TRC's calls to action.

The Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework and its associated funding support Indigenous student services at Ontario's universities and colleges, including Indigenous student centers, counsellors, elders, academic skills programs, and Indigenous knowledge access among other essential services.

As is evident in the 2015 progress report, the Aboriginal Postsecondary Education and Training Policy Framework has had a significant positive impact for universities in Ontario. Although much work remains to be done, it has played a key role in making universities more responsive to Indigenous community needs through the provision of support for Indigenous education councils, which provide advice and assistance to universities on academic, and student support programming.

Through the framework and its attached funding, postsecondary institutions have hired counsellors and student recruitment officers who work together to improve retention rates for Indigenous students. Without this framework and its attached funding, postsecondary institutions would have to absorb these costs into their already stretched operating budgets, leading to significantly diminishing essential Indigenous student services on Ontario's campuses.

We are concerned about the policy framework's future because it has not been reported on publicly since 2015 and no information has been made available about its implementation for the 2019-20 academic year and beyond.

Following the TRC's calls to action, it is imperative to continue to support, and in fact expand, this policy framework in order to meet the growing needs of Indigenous students across Ontario.

OCUFA members are concerned about this funding and would appreciate hearing more from your ministry about the current status of this framework and attached funding. We'd be pleased to discuss possibilities for expansion going forward with you.

We reiterate our full support for the policy framework and the need to expand support for Indigenous students and faculty at postsecondary institutions across Ontario as a necessary part of the work needed in the decolonization of Ontario's colleges and universities.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,



Gyllian Phillips

President, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) was founded in 1964 and represents 17,000 faculty and academic librarians in 29 faculty associations across Ontario. We work to maintain and enhance the quality of higher education in Ontario and to advance the professional and economic interests of teachers, researchers, and librarians and aim to make sure the views of our member associations are communicated to the public, policy makers, and the government. We are committed to advancing equity in our workplaces and beyond.