



Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

Bill 55, Strong Action for Ontario Act (Budget Measures)

Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

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Prepared by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

On behalf of the 17,000 professors and academic librarians that the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) represents, we would like to outline a number of concerns with the budget bill. In particular, we object to the broad provisions for the privatization of public services outlined in schedule 28, the Government Services and Service Providers Act. This section of the budget bill would enable government ministries and broader public sector institutions to contract out services to third party service providers – a development in itself that OCUFA finds troubling. Moreover, the fact that the specific details of what services would be contracted out are unclear in the Act itself and are left to be clarified by regulation at a later date through a process without legislative oversight is extremely problematic.

In terms of the impact on the university sector, OCUFA is deeply concerned that the provisions of the Act could potentially enable and empower universities to contract out teaching services or even research services, thus undermining the work of faculty. The Act itself is silent on the specifics of the kinds of government services that could be contracted out and OCUFA recognizes that there is no specific provision for contracting out faculty functions outlined in the Act, nor does it appear that universities and/or faculty are the intended focus of schedule 28. Nonetheless, by including broader public sector institutions, including universities, in the Act, work that is part of the core mission of university professors and academic librarians could be contracted out to outside providers, thus eroding the integrity of the faculty role. As enabling legislation that does not include any limiting provisions, the Government Services and Service Providers Act makes possible a whole range of undesirable consequences.

We understand that there are amendments to this section of the budget bill under consideration. Regardless of how schedule 28 is handled, OCUFA has concerns about what the provisions outlined therein, or in any other piece of legislation with the same intention as that of schedule 28, would allow. Beyond the potential consequences for universities and faculty, we are concerned about the impact on accountability, quality, and job displacement that any contracting out legislation would engender.

By replacing with outside contractors services that would otherwise be provided as part of the mandate of the public and broader public sectors, the structures and processes of accountability become more complex and legislative oversight is limited. As a result, the potential for mismanagement is increased, as we have seen with entities such as ORNGE. Moreover, it is clear that under the model of privatization and contracting out proposed under the Act, stable public service jobs could be eliminated in favour of a lower cost, and likely lower quality contract model. Although such a model might help to reduce government expenditures, it would erode the capacity of the public service to perform its core functions while offering Ontarians a less accountable alternative of questionable quality.

OCUFA supports the public provision of public services. We object to the model of contracting out that is proposed in schedule 28 of the budget bill and encourage the committee to support any amendment to the budget bill that would work to keep public service provision public.