



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

OCUFA: Government attack on workers' rights will deny fair wages and benefits to contract faculty and already underpaid academic staff

TORONTO – Ontario faculty are deeply concerned by the Ford government's attempt to cap public sector compensation increases at one per cent per year. This legislation represents an 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.

Following previous legislation that reduced the minimum wage and took away basic employment rights from Ontario workers, including paid sick days and equal pay for equal work, the Ford government is now attempting to deny public sector employees their Constitutional right to collectively negotiate their salaries and benefits. Ontario's faculty and academic librarians firmly believe in the right to free and fair collective bargaining. It is through this process that equity is fostered, ensuring that good jobs and fair pay are provided to traditionally under-compensated groups, including women-identified, racialized, and contract faculty.

"Doug Ford has made it clear that he believes Ontario workers should have lower wages and fewer rights," said Gyllian Phillips, President of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. "We couldn't disagree more. Encouraging more poorly paid precarious work is a step in the wrong direction. Ontario universities should be leaders when it comes to providing good, secure jobs."

If passed, this new legislation would have serious equity implications for university workers, especially for precariously employed contract faculty who teach a majority of courses at Ontario's universities. Denying faculty unions the ability to negotiate better compensation for their contract faculty members will deny fair wages and benefits to thousands of faculty working term-to-term and already struggling to take care of their families and make ends meet. Further, this legislation would make it more challenging to close systemic pay gaps for women-identified, Indigenous, and racialized faculty and staff.

"The government should be helping to create good, stable jobs for those currently forced to work short-term precarious contracts," said Phillips. "Instead, Ford is wasting energy on sham 'consultations' and introducing reckless new university funding models that will further entrench the exploitation of contract workers."

This government has been intent on undermining Ontario's public services, announcing cuts to education and postsecondary education, and attacking student and worker rights at Ontario's universities. In a written submission to the Treasury Board Secretariat regarding the sham

“consultation” process held in advance of this legislation’s introduction, OCUFA detailed its concerns about the government’s motives. This response clarified that faculty members are employed by, and negotiate their contracts with universities, not the provincial government. Any attempt by Ford to interfere in university collective agreements would violate university autonomy, in addition to the constitutionally protected rights of faculty and staff.

Further, OCUFA highlighted that Ontario has the lowest levels of per-capita revenue and per-student funding in Canada. Instead of attacking hard-working Ontarians, the Ford government should be asking the province’s corporations and most wealthy to pay their fair share to ensure the government can properly invest in Ontario’s public services, including postsecondary education.

OCUFA believes in a high-quality public postsecondary education system that provides good stable jobs that foster vibrant communities both on and off campus. Together, Ontario’s university faculty and academic librarians will work to resist this government’s vindictive, ideological agenda and will continue efforts to build fairer universities where all students can get an excellent education and where all workers have job security, fair pay, and benefits.

Founded in 1964, OCUFA represents 17,000 faculty and academic librarians in 30 faculty associations across Ontario. For more information, please visit www.ocufa.on.ca.

-30-

For more information or to arrange an interview, contact:
Ben Lewis, Communications Lead at 416-306-6033 or blewis@ocufa.on.ca