

MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release: Monday, February 26, 2024

FORD GOVERNMENT'S UNIVERSITY FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT CONTINUES TO FAIL STRUGGLING UNIVERSITIES

TORONTO, ON — Today, the provincial government announced almost \$1.3 billion in funding over three years for post-secondary institutions who have been struggling due to the Ford government's deliberate underfunding of public post-secondary education. Below is a statement from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation in reaction to today's announcement:

"Today's announcement of \$1.3 billion over three years is not even close to what is needed to overcome Premier Ford's deep cuts to post-secondary funding since taking office in 2018.

For years, colleges and universities have been forced to become over reliant on exploitative tuition fees from international students in order to address the immense funding shortfall by the province. Now that the federal government has put a cap on the number of international students allowed to study in Ontario, Ford's Progressive Conservatives have been forced to address years of provincial underfunding.

Post-secondary institutions will likely continue to struggle as today's announcement falls far short of the investments needed to restore Ontario's world-class post-secondary sector.

The Ford government is well aware that publicly funded post-secondary institutions cannot continue to operate at current funding levels. Ontario is dead last among all Canadian provinces in public funding per student at the post-secondary level, amounting to only 57 per cent of average funding provided by the other provinces.

The government's own appointed blue-ribbon panel found that post-secondary institutions' fiscal situations are "currently at serious risk" and called for a series of interventions, including immediate and sustained funding increases. Their interventions would total approximately \$2.5 billion of investment over three years. The province has not been clear as to why they have announced approximately half that amount today.

The Ford government had an important opportunity today to live up to their promise of prioritizing students and investing in Ontario's future. They have failed on both accounts. Students will continue to go without the resources and services they need as more programming and services are cut, and workers' livelihoods at post-secondary campuses will continue to be put at risk.

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In order to lift Ontario out of last place and deliver the quality education Ontario students need in order to reach their potential, OSSTF/FEESO renews its call on the provincial government to create a strategy to boost public investment in the post-secondary sector by 20 per cent next year and then match annual funding increases to inflation going forward.”

OSSTF/FEESO represents approximately 3000 support staff at six universities across the province and works closely with partners in the post-secondary sector, including the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) and the Canada Labour Congress (CLC), to advocate for better working and learning conditions in Ontario’s universities and colleges.

OSSTF/FEESO, founded in 1919, has over 60,000 members across Ontario. They include public high school teachers, occasional teachers, educational assistants, continuing education teachers and instructors, early childhood educators, psychologists, secretaries, speech-language pathologists, social workers, plant support personnel, university support staff, and many others in education.

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