

October 25th, 2018

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

Dear Minister Fullerton,

On behalf of the 150,000 students that the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance represents, I want to thank you and your government for supporting post-secondary education. At OUSA, we believe in responsible investments that will effectively improve the lives of students and the future of our society.

That is why our students wanted to communicate alignment with your decision on October 23rd. We believe that the Ontario university sector should ensure that any new or growing university institutions and campuses are financially sustainable. Proposals for new universities and satellite campuses must clearly demonstrate commitments to accessibility, alignment with differentiation, economic impact and a high-quality educational experience. Our concern is that many newly established institutions and satellite campuses may fail to meet the approval criteria outlined in the Major Capacity Expansion Framework. With decreasing enrolment in undergraduate institutions, any new expansion projects will likely be underutilised. Our recommendations are, therefore, that your government should not grant public funding to proposals that explicitly do not satisfy the Capacity Expansion Framework. We also recommend that services should be focused on existing satellite campuses, such as the Laurier Brantford campus and the Trent Durham campus.

The decision regarding the cancellation of funding for the three satellite campuses in the GTA is unexpected to some stakeholders in post-secondary education, including OUSA. Moving forward, OUSA recommends that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities should ensure that significant decisions like this one come with consultation with students at OUSA, focusing on stability and predictability when it comes to the post-secondary education sector.

In addition to our alignment with your decision to halt the expansion of the satellite campuses in the GTA, OUSA would like to provide the following recommendations to find increased efficiencies in the post-secondary education sector. We hope you may find them useful in the review of the finances of the Ontario government.

- Your government should review the plans for the Ontario Francophone University. OUSA believes that all willing and qualified Franco-Ontarians should be able to access and excel within the provincial post-secondary education system. However, the creation of a new French-language university could harm the success of existing bilingual and Francophone post-secondary institutions, especially Laurentian University. Your government should only approve a new French-language university if it will directly benefit the local economy, offer experiential learning opportunities for its students, and align with the Capacity Expansion and Differentiation policy frameworks.
- Your government also has the opportunity to modernize the Ontario Student Assistance Program. Students currently face challenges with OSAP obtainment and repayment because of a lack of technology in the processing systems. OUSA believes that by working with our organization, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities could better, and more efficiently, serve students by utilizing technology rather than outdated systems.
- Your government should allow international students to pay a premium, equitable to that of the domestic population, to receive coverage through the Ontario Health Insurance Plan. Currently the young people studying in Ontario as international students contribute to a private health insurer and receive insufficient coverage.
- Your government should look to preventative investments in the areas of mental health and sexual violence to reduce cost burdens on the healthcare and criminal justice systems. Strategies include utilizing the [“In It Together: Taking Action on Student Mental Health”](#) report to reduce the duplication of services on and off campus, and implementing the pre-existing bystander intervention module as a mandatory aspect of the SmartServe certification. This can reduce costs for government services, but also employers. For example, sexual and intimate partner violence costs Canadian’s upwards of \$200 million/year, including \$18 million/year to

employers.¹ Mental health issues are estimated at costing Canadian businesses almost \$1,500 per employee, per year.²

With the efficiencies found through your government's hard work, in partnership with the students we represent, OUSA hopes you will consider moving forward on investments in post-secondary education to make every dollar in the sector count.

- Students believe investment in meaningful, experiential opportunities both in and outside of the classroom, including through employers, will make our graduates more prepared for the workforce.
- Students believe that post-graduation finances, including student loan repayments and other debts accumulated as the result of responsibilities of being an undergraduate student, should not be a barrier to contributing to society and finding meaningful employment.
- Students believe investment in classroom technology, including open educational resources and infrastructure, will put money back in the pockets of students and bring Ontario's education into the future.

Students hope to discuss efficiencies in post-secondary education and the most effective investments during our Student Advocacy Week from November 12th-15th.

Thank you,



Danny Chang
OUSA President

¹ http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/cj-jp/victim/rr14_01/rr14_01.pdf

² <http://www.occ.ca/mentalhealth/>