



## **Ontario wants less austerity, more investment in higher education: new study**

TORONTO – Ontarians do not want the government’s austerity agenda to compromise the quality of university education in the province, according to a new study released today by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA). While most Ontarians think it is important to reduce the provincial deficit, two-thirds oppose any cost-cutting measure that reduces the quality of education received by students.

“The OCUFA poll clearly shows that Ontarians are worried about the deficit and the economy,” said researcher André Turcotte, Associate Professor at Carleton University's School of Journalism and Communication. “But they also recognize that investing in education is an excellent way to grow our economy and ensure the success of our young people.”

Released at OCUFA’s “Academia in the Age of Austerity” conference, the study indicates that 72 per cent of Ontarians oppose cuts to university funding, and 79 per cent oppose shifting the cost of higher education onto students and their families through higher tuition fees. In addition, 52 per cent believe that a university funding freeze by government would harm the quality of higher education in the province.

“The message is clear: Ontarians know higher education is too important to be subjected to funding freezes, cuts, or other austerity measures,” said Constance Adamson, President of OCUFA.

While higher education is still important to Ontarians, the study suggests that concerns about the provincial deficit, job creation, and the economy are now top of mind for most people in the province.

The study also shows that Ontarians support the rights of professors and academic librarians to bargain their contracts free from government interference, with 63 per cent in favour of free negotiations. Ontarians also reject taking away collective bargaining rights to meet deficit-reduction goals, with 43 per cent opposed and only 34 per cent in favour.

“Ontario’s professors and academic librarians have a long tradition of free local bargaining responsive to the needs of students, communities, and the province,” said Adamson. “These results show that Ontarians reject the government’s heavy-handed attempts to take away the rights of hard working citizens.”

The OCUFA study was conducted December 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012 and received 1,518 responses. The margin of error is +/- 2.5 per cent at the 95 per cent confidence interval. Full results can be found at <http://bit.ly/WPaJbI>.

Founded in 1964, OCUFA represents 17,000 professors and academic librarians in 27 faculty associations across Ontario. For more information, please visit the OCUFA website at <http://www.ocufa.on.ca>.

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