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MEDIA RELEASE

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Faculty, staff and students say, “Ministry proposals harmful to quality of post-secondary education and won’t improve access”

TORONTO, Ont. – Proposals put forward in a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities discussion paper will damage the quality of post-secondary education and increase government interference in higher education in Ontario, according to faculty, staff and students. Today, provincial faculty, staff and students’ unions and associations released their responses to the discussion paper, Strengthening Ontario’s Centres of Creativity, Innovation and Knowledge.

“This government is not interested in a genuine conversation with stakeholders on how we can improve and expand the post-secondary education system,” said Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU). “Instead, the Ministry discussion paper and roundtables show their agenda is sector-wide cost-cutting that threatens quality education.”

“The Ministry’s proposals would take away the ability of students, staff and faculty to make meaningful academic decisions,” said Constance Adamson, President of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA). “It’s clear from the discussion paper that the government is trying to exert more control over our work. But it does not have the experience or expertise to make good decisions for students. We do. It’s our job.”

“After decades of underfunding, the Ministry’s proposals expect colleges and universities to do even more with less,” said Janice Folk-Dawson, Chair of the Ontario University Workers Coordination Committee of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario. “The Minister claims to want to improve higher education, but won’t discuss the real issues the sector faces – chronic underfunding, decreasing affordability and mounting threats to quality. Engaging in consultations, but ignoring the real issues facing the sector is a setup for a fatally flawed process.”

“Students have been speaking out on our campuses about everything from the impact of high fees on students’ mental health to not having enough seats in our lecture halls,” said Sarah Jayne King, Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario. “With tuition fees and student debt at record levels in Ontario and high rates of youth unemployment, the government’s priority should be increasing funding and dropping fees, not cutting corners.”

Ontario students pay the highest tuition fees in the country, and colleges and universities in Ontario receive the lowest per-student funding in the country. In their responses to the discussion paper, faculty, staff and students are calling on the government to work with the sector to improve the quality of colleges and universities and make sure that all students can afford to attend.

Collectively, CUPE, OCUFA and OPSEU represent more than 65,000 academic and support staff at colleges and universities, and CFS–Ontario represents over 300,000 college, undergraduate and graduate students across Ontario. The responses from each organization are available online: [CFS-Ontario](#) (French available [here](#)), [CUPE](#), [OCUFA](#) and [OPSEU](#).

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