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# Ontario University Governance Review – Make Your Voices Heard

Dear UTFA Colleagues:

This is an item brought to our attention by OCUFA concerning university governance in Ontario. UofT will not have the same degree of input as an institution since we lack a faculty senate. Nevertheless, we know that governance is an issue that is important to many of our members. If you wish to do so, please provide individual input to the survey linked below by August 21, 2025.

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Dear Colleagues,

The Government of Ontario is consulting with universities and colleges about ways to improve institutional government to focus on student success and financial sustainability. University senate chairs and senate vice chairs have been invited to attend virtual consultation sessions to provide their feedback on either August 14 or August 19, with a registration deadline of July 28.

While the provincial government is not consulting widely, they have provided an open and anonymous survey link and are accepting written submissions via email at StrategicPolicyUnit@Ontario.ca until August 21, 2025. OCUFA encourages faculty associations and individual faculty members to respond to the survey or provide written feedback. Please copy OCUFA on your written feedback at governance@OCUFA.on.ca. OCUFA also encourages member organizations to communicate their governance priorities to their senate chairs and vice chairs and suggests that they also reach out to student groups to ensure that their voices are heard as well. Students themselves have not been consulted despite this review's ostensible focus on student success.

OCUFA is concerned about the implications of this governance review given the provincial government's infringement of university autonomy, as seen in Bill 33 and its mandated efficiency and accountability reviews, which have included recommendations to circumscribe the power of senates and to shutter

programs.

The government's survey subtly positions university senates as the problem, asking how senate members can engage more effectively without asking the same of board members. This conforms to what has been included in provincial Efficiency and Accountability reviews, where consultants have indicated that it is inappropriate for faculty involved in their faculty associations to hold positions on senates. This is allegedly because these faculty will not consider an institution's financial sustainability because their interest in labour protections renders them unable to make "tough" academic decisions. This is nonsense that does not understand the role of collegial governance in upholding academic freedom, let alone the importance of university financial health to academic working and learning conditions. Academic faculty depend on institutional finances being healthy to support their livelihoods and to secure gains through collective bargaining. Faculty have also chosen their careers out of their commitment to student success, the other ostensible purpose of this review.

Senates are not the major problem facing Ontario's universities. As found by the Ontario Auditor General, Laurentian University's bankruptcy occurred owing to the gross financial mismanagement of its president and board, not because of its senate, faculty, or academic programs. As the government's own Blue-Ribbon Panel indicated, poor funding – not poor senate performance – is the primary cause of financial difficulty in the university sector. Ontario provides far less funding to its universities on a per-domestic student basis than is common in Canada – over $6,500 less per-domestic student than the Canadian average. While Ontario's universities have long been underfunded, this government has made the situation worse. Even before accounting for inflation, per-student funding declined in Ontario between 2018-19, Doug Ford's first full year as Premier, and 2022-23, the most recent year for which there is data.

Ontario's universities deserve to be stronger. Strong universities require a strong faculty voice in governance. It's time for the government to hear this loud and clear.

Jenny Ahn

Executive Director

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations

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