

For Immediate Release

CAFA's Response to UCP's 2020 Budget

Edmonton, February 28 - Alberta's UCP party has unveiled their *2020 Budget A Plan for Jobs and the economy*. For the second time in this academic school year, Alberta's PSE institutions are facing a 5% funding cut to the Alberta Campus Grant. The budget continues down the path of larger classroom sizes, less teaching time per student, higher tuition, and less supports for research and student services.

“I am extremely disappointed in the Alberta government's decision to further undermine Alberta universities' ability to serve students and remain world class research institutions. This budget signals to the staff and faculty, students, researchers and Albertans that quality post-secondary education is far from a priority” Jolene Armstrong, President of Athabasca University Faculty Association and Vice-President of CAFA.

Alberta's public universities and colleges are still coping with last autumn's -5% cut. This has led to both layoffs and hiring freezes in both the support staff and the academic staff at our PSE institutions. These consequences hold potential for larger class sizes, fewer staff to assist students, and fewer resources for research. Post-secondary education is an economic driver in Alberta, both as an employer and a site of innovation, and the UCP's cuts and layoffs means that Alberta's economy will not recover as quickly as the general public hopes and expects.

“Universities have suffered continuous and unrelenting cuts for decades now,” said Armstrong. “Albertans should be furious that, along with all of the other cuts to the public services, this government has chosen to decimate the post-secondary sector, thereby harming the future of young Albertans who wish to gain an education that will allow them to compete both at home and internationally.”

CAFA is also deeply concerned that the UCP government is planning another round of cuts before the ink is even dry on the 2020 Budget. The UCP is seeking a vendor to conduct a system review and develop *Alberta 2030: Transforming Post-Secondary Education*. The Request for Proposal is to be released in March, the review completed by the end of 2020, and the recommendations implemented in early 2021. This strict timeline demonstrates that the vendor and the contents of the report are likely preordained as there is not enough time for a truly independent third party to be hired, parameters set, consultation with stakeholders, and a written report based upon well researched findings to be provided. CAFA is disturbed that a rushed, predetermined review will produce the justifications for the UCP's next round of cuts rather than construct a useful roadmap on the possibilities for the PSE landscape in Alberta.

“As someone who has been involved in several RFP processes, this expedited plan that is lacking in critical details and information, is of grave concern”, Melanie Peacock, President of Mount Royal Faculty Association and Associate Professor, Bissett School of Business.

CAFA is a federation of academic staff associations in Alberta. The five member associations are: The Association of Academic Staff University of Alberta, Athabasca University Faculty Association, Grant MacEwan Faculty Association, Mount Royal University Faculty Association and the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association