

## Wages are Going Up Across Alberta: So, why can't faculty salaries go up too?

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

(Edmonton) February 16, 2022 -- Contrary to the prevailing narrative that the Alberta public sector earns too much, and their wages need to be constrained, Alberta's average weekly earnings have increased again in 2021. The Government of Alberta's own website shows that Alberta average weekly earnings increased by 3.2% in November 2021 compared to November 2020.<sup>1</sup> If you compare it to last year, or five years ago, or ten years ago, in each case we have seen increases to Alberta weekly earnings.

Date	Alberta Average Weekly Earnings
Nov 2011	\$1,049
Nov 2016	\$1,128
Nov 2020	\$1,179
Nov 2021	\$1,242

In fact, when comparing Alberta average weekly earnings Nov 2020 to Nov 2021, Alberta leads all of Canada with a 3.2% growth in weekly earnings.<sup>2</sup> Nationally, weekly earnings were only up 1.9% for the same period, and this shows a rather large growth in Alberta's wages when compared to the national average.

Another common false narrative is that private sector wages are decreasing or have not rebounded. Again, looking at the industry breakdown provided by the Government of Alberta, all industries except healthcare, management, and finance/insurance have seen wage increases over the last calendar year. Our forestry sector has seen weekly earnings grow by 24.9%, our manufacturing sector has seen a 4.8% increase, construction sector has increased 8.4%, utilities has increased by 8.9%, and mining/oil and gas has seen a 10.9% increase in weekly earnings.<sup>3</sup> Wages in all key private sector industries have seen large wage increases between Nov 2020 and Nov 2021. In fact, each one of these sectors has seen their employees' earnings go up in a single year more than any Alberta university is willing to offer over the course of four years to academic staff.

"The Government of Alberta's secret mandates, that promote wage suppression in the post-secondary education sector, are at odds with a provincial landscape of wage increases," said Dr. Kevin Kane, President of CAFA and Professor of Medical Microbiology & Immunology at the University of Alberta. "The government is picking winners and losers in regard to wages, and those in public service are going to end up losing purchasing power, that will trickle down to economic slowdowns for everyone."

Alberta wage increases are not part of the supposed Great Resignation (the current trend of workers using the pandemic to get better paying jobs), but rather Alberta weekly earnings have steadily been on the rise for the last five years. Combining the stress and long hours of a pivot to online teaching with wages that are stagnating and losing ground on inflation, Albertans should not be surprised if academic staff look to other jurisdictions that treat academics with respect and pay them accordingly. Academics are not looking for a handout, but rather the same treatment all Albertans are receiving with respect to increase in wages and benefits.

“Given the important and increasing contributions that faculty members make to building and sustaining a healthy economy through innovation and the development of leaders of today and tomorrow, shouldn’t their wages rise commensurate with such contributions?” noted Dr. Kane.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca/AverageWeeklyEarnings#alberta>

<sup>2</sup> <https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca/AverageWeeklyEarnings#interprovincial>

<sup>3</sup> <https://economicdashboard.alberta.ca/AverageWeeklyEarnings#type>