

CAFA calls for Public Debate on For-Profit Post-Secondary Education

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(Edmonton) CAFA is concerned with the Government of Alberta’s announcement that they are creating a new Independent Academic Institution in the form of MaKami College Inc. This announcement took us by surprise since it was announced through an Order in Council on the last day of the session—March 30th, 2023. This is the first time in Canadian history that a provincial government has chosen to fund a for-profit vocational college with precious taxpayer contributions. CAFA believes all major policy announcements should be made through legislation if possible and at minimum announced to the public and have their ministers answer questions on proposed changes and their cost to the citizens.

“CAFA is calling on all political parties to address this policy change in the upcoming election. We believe that major policy changes should be announced and discussed publicly,” said Dr. Jon Doan, CAFA’s president and Associate Professor in the Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education at the University of Lethbridge. “One question for all Albertans, during this election, should be “What is the role of for-profit corporations in delivering post-secondary education in Alberta?””

CAFA believes that this secretive policy change highlights the lack of transparency on multiple levels: Why did the UCP government attempt to hide this policy change from the public? How much is the operating grant that MaKami College Inc. is going to receive in the 2023-24 academic year? What are the tuition costs of MaKami College Inc.? How do these tuition costs compare to what is being offered and charged at public institutions? All these questions need to be answered in the coming weeks as Albertans enter an election that will determine the provinces future.

“The UCP government has set new precedent in regard to PSE policy by giving a for-profit college the status of a publicly funded PSE institution and funding them with taxpayer dollars,” said Dr. Doan. “Most Albertans do not know that our province is the only jurisdiction that funds private or religious colleges and universities with public dollars, and now the UCP government has expanded that to include for-profit vocational colleges.”

Alberta has a world class post-secondary education system (with two top 200 rank universities, some world famous polytechnics and a strong system of rural and small town colleges through every corner of the provinces), and CAFA is concerned that funneling money into private corporations will weaken this system overall. Our student’s tuition dollars and taxpayer contributions should be used to provide the excellent teaching and research that Alberta is known for, and not used to line the pocketbook of shareholders and investors.