

Dear QUFA members,

On May 24th I wrote to the candidates from the Conservative Party, the Green Party, the Liberal Party, and the New Democratic Party in the following four ridings: Kingston and the Islands, Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston, Hastings-Lennox and Addington, and Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes. I asked each of the candidates to respond to four questions related to higher education so that their responses could be compiled and circulated to all QUFA members prior to the June 7th provincial election. The questions that I asked them to respond to are provided below. Of the fourteen candidates that I wrote to requesting a response, only three responded: Gary Bennett, Robert Kiley, and Anita Payne. Their responses are attached below.

Regards,

Jordan Morelli, QUFA Political Action and Communications Committee Chair

Questions for the Candidates

Faculty renewal

Ontario universities have the worst student-to-faculty ratio in Canada, and it has been increasing in recent years. Meanwhile, the number of courses taught by contract faculty has doubled since 2000, and student enrolment has actually grown seven times faster than full-time faculty hiring in the last decade.[1]

This has drastic implications for the overall quality of education and student experience. Growing class sizes, less one-on-one engagement, fewer opportunities for mentorship and academic advising, are only a few of the impacts of this disparity between student enrolment and faculty hiring.

1. Do you agree that launching a faculty renewal strategy that supports full-time faculty hiring and creates pathways for contract faculty into secure, full-time positions is a good way to address these issues?

Fairness for contract faculty

Over half of university teaching in Ontario is now done by contract faculty.[2] This number is even higher at Ontario colleges (closer to 70%).[3]

We are facing a high level of precarious work in the postsecondary sector. Contract faculty lack job security, face unpredictable scheduling, and often juggle jobs at multiple institutions. The recent college faculty strike also emphasized the need for urgently addressing precarious academic work in the province.

2. Do you agree that enforcing and funding the implementation of new labour laws, including equal pay provisions for part-time and contract workers is a good way to address precarious work in general and in the postsecondary sector specifically?

Re-investing in quality education

On a per-student basis, public funding has been on a downward trend in Ontario since 2008 and Ontario’s universities receive the lowest level of per-student funding in all of Canada (35% below the rest of the country average).[4]

Some positive steps have been taken in recent years to improve access for students through the Ontario Student Grant, but tuition fees are still increasing and parallel investments are not being made to ensure that students have a quality and supported experience throughout their studies. Operating funding for our institutions is not even keeping up with inflation.

3. What are your party’s plans for investing in the teaching and learning that is critical to the success of Ontario students? Would you commit to increased investments in operating funding for Ontario universities and colleges?

The important role of research in our community

One role colleges and universities play is as creators of research. Whether it is gaining a better understanding of who we are, achieving scientific breakthroughs, or developing new and innovative ideas, this research enriches our lives and contributes to our economic development.

4. What will your government do to support research, and enhance these beneficial outcomes of university and college research?

Written to request response:

Riding	Conservative	Green	Liberal	New Democratic
Kingston and the Islands	Gary Bennett	Robert Kiley	Sophie Kiwala	Ian Arthur
Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston	Randy Hillier†	Anita Payne	Amanda Pulker-Mok	Ramsey Hart
Hastings-Lennox and Addington	Daryl Kramp	Sari Watson	Tim Rigby	Nate Smelle
Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes	Steve Clark	Derek Morley	David Henderson†	Michelle Taylor

†Note: I was unable to find email addresses for the Randy Hillier campaign and for the David Henderson campaign, so they never received a request for responses.

References

- [1] Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) Pre-Budget Submission, “Time for renewal: Investing in the future of Ontario’s universities”, January 2018. Available at: <https://ocufa.on.ca/assets/2018-Pre-Budget-Submission.pdf>
- [2] Council of Ontario Universities (COU), “Faculty at Work: The Composition and Activities of Ontario Universities’ Academic Workforce”, January 2018. Available at: <http://cou.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Public-Report-on-Faculty-at-Work-Dec-2017-FN.pdf>
- [3] Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU), “Precarious work takes centre stage as college faculty rally at Queen’s Park,” November 2, 2017. Available at: <https://opseu.org/news/precarius-work-takes-centre-stage-college-faculty-rally-queens-park>
- [4] Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) Pre-Budget Submission, “Time for renewal: Investing in the future of Ontario’s universities”, January 2018. Available at: <https://ocufa.on.ca/assets/2018-Pre-Budget-Submission.pdf>

Response from Gary Bennett (Conservative Party candidate for Kingston and the Islands)

Jordan;

Thank you for your survey questions. The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario wants to respond to any surveys that we receive to ensure a consistent position is presented from all candidates across Ontario on matters of provincial policy.

I can tell you that as a two time graduate of Queen`s University, I will continue to support the important role that Queen`s plays in their role as an educator, and research institution. Queen`s has brought global recognition and prestige to our community and Canada as a whole. We are fortunate to have one of Canada`s leading research and teaching institutions in our community.

The Partnering for a Better Future for Ontario is an excellent research project that clearly identifies the important roles that our Universities play in the lives of all Ontarians. I will continue to support programs and funding that will commit to improving and enhancing the University experience for both faculty and student.

If I can provide any further information, please let me know. I would look forward to the opportunity of meeting to discuss these matters in the future.

Thank you again for your email.

Gary

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Response from Robert Kiley (Green Party candidate for Kingston and the Islands)

Faculty renewal

1. Do you agree that launching a faculty renewal strategy that supports full-time faculty hiring and creates pathways for contract faculty into secure, full-time positions is a good way to address these issues?

Yes, provided there is a voice and vote for all individuals and organizations at the table (administration, unions, faculty heads, even student groups as needed) and that the strategy's consultation times were set up to accommodate for different schedules. In other words, engagement must be fair, equitable and meaningful.

Fairness for contract faculty

2. Do you agree that enforcing and funding the implementation of new labour laws, including equal pay provisions for part-time and contract workers is a good way to address precarious work in general and in the postsecondary sector specifically?

Yes, equal pay for equal work - including preparation, teaching, assessment and student mentoring time - is imperative for social and economic justice in the postsecondary sector. This is a point I made when picketing with college staff in fall 2017.

The Green Party of Ontario would like to see a minimum three courses per contract to help avoid precarious work.

Re-investing in quality education

3. What are your party's plans for investing in the teaching and learning that is critical to the success of Ontario students? Would you commit to increased investments in operating funding for Ontario universities and colleges?

Yes, especially to enable continued quality instruction and lifelong learning with further subsidies for students of all ages. We would balance OSAP between grants and loans (as it has tipped to the latter recently), forgive student debt over \$10K and freeze tuition fees per cohort with increases in each new cohort by inflation only.

The Green Party of Ontario would also invest deeply in deferred maintenance to increase the energy efficiency of postsecondary campuses and ultimately save money and increase safety.

The important role of research in our community

One role colleges and universities play is as creators of research. Whether it is gaining a better understanding of who we are, achieving scientific breakthroughs, or developing new and innovative ideas, this research enriches our lives and contributes to our economic development.

4. What will your government do to support research, and enhance these beneficial outcomes of university and college research?

I am grateful for the financial support I received /was offered for my research as a grad student (Ontario Graduate Scholarship, MPA, Queen's and President's Scholarship, PhD, Waterloo -

declined).

Greens will support increased investment in research councils, specific institutional and departmental grants for research centres and funds for community based research organizations operating in postsecondary institutions. Our support will always strike the balance between flexibility and accountability so academics and students feel free to inquire all the while providing insight to pressing questions of the day.

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Response from Anita Payne (Green Party candidate for Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston)

Faculty renewal

Ontario universities have the worst student-to-faculty ratio in Canada, and it has been increasing in recent years. Meanwhile, the number of courses taught by contract faculty has doubled since 2000, and student enrolment has actually grown seven times faster than full-time faculty hiring in the last decade.[1]

This has drastic implications for the overall quality of education and student experience. Growing class sizes, less one-on-one engagement, fewer opportunities for mentorship and academic advising, are only a few of the impacts of this disparity between student enrolment and faculty hiring.

1. Do you agree that launching a faculty renewal strategy that supports full-time faculty hiring and creates pathways for contract faculty into secure, full-time positions is a good way to address these issues?

Yes, as a holder of three degrees from Ontario's universities, I have been concerned about the growing trend to more contract and less full-time faculty over the past number of years. Tenuous work does not provide security for faculty who may have to look for alternative work between contracts. Keeping class sizes manageable for professors is also important.

Fairness for contract faculty

Over half of university teaching in Ontario is now done by contract faculty.[2] This number is even higher at Ontario colleges (closer to 70%).[3]

We are facing a high level of precarious work in the postsecondary sector. Contract faculty lack job security, face unpredictable scheduling, and often juggle jobs at multiple institutions. The recent college faculty strike also emphasized the need for urgently addressing precarious academic work in the province.

2. Do you agree that enforcing and funding the implementation of new labour laws, including equal pay provisions for part-time and contract workers is a good way to address precarious work in general and in the postsecondary sector specifically?

Yes.

Re-investing in quality education

On a per-student basis, public funding has been on a downward trend in Ontario since 2008 and Ontario's universities receive the lowest level of per-student funding in all of Canada (35% below the rest of the country average).[4]

Some positive steps have been taken in recent years to improve access for students through the Ontario Student Grant, but tuition fees are still increasing and parallel investments are not being made to ensure that students have a quality and supported experience throughout their studies. Operating funding for our institutions is not even keeping up with inflation.

3. What are your party's plans for investing in the teaching and learning that is critical to the success of Ontario students? Would you commit to increased investments in operating funding for Ontario universities and colleges?

The Green Party of Ontario's policies to drive access to post-secondary education and improve the quality of post-secondary education include the following:

- Properly fund higher education with public subsidies, eventually guaranteeing fully funded public tuition for all Ontario residents attending public colleges, trade institutions and universities (not including graduate and post-graduate studies), and index the base operating grant provided by inflationary increases year to year.*
- Continue to regulate tuition fees by indexing any increases to Ontario's Consumer Price Index.*
- Freeze tuition within each cohort.*
- Work towards a standard contract minimum of 3 courses per semester for adjunct/casual/contract professors to avoid precarity of employment in colleges and universities*
- provide supports for racialized groups, LGBTQ+ and those with disabilities in colleges and universities*
- increase access to gender and culturally-sensitive mental health services and supports that are timely, effective and flexible, and provided in a safe and comfortable environment*
- increased funding and resources for food security programs for post-secondary institutions to supplement mental health and poverty reduction efforts*
- provide interest-free student loans for students with financial needs.*

The important role of research in our community

One role colleges and universities play is as creators of research. Whether it is gaining a better understanding of who we are, achieving scientific breakthroughs, or developing new and innovative ideas, this research enriches our lives and contributes to our economic development.

4. What will your government do to support research, and enhance these beneficial outcomes of university and college research?

There is nothing specific in our policy document addressing research in general. Personally, I believe that research is essential as we transition to a post-carbon society. There are many opportunities for research into clean technology innovations as well as ways that we can better provide social supports, especially in health promotion and health care.