

PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2025: *A Time To Choose Education*

The upcoming provincial election on **February 27**, is our opportunity to challenge policies that have driven our sector to a breaking point. At OCADU we are feeling the squeeze in section cuts, hiring freezes and enlarged class sizes. The fiscal crisis we are facing can be traced to underfunding from the Ford government.

Ontario universities receive the lowest level of funding in Canada. It's impacted the quality and affordability of education, working conditions and harms our capacity to meet challenges of the future. **Ontario provided only \$9,890 per domestic student in total university funding in 2021-22; the Canadian average was \$15,806 that year** (i.e. Ontario funds 40% lower than the national average). The Ford government froze direct provincial funding to the post-secondary sector in 2019, while cutting tuition by [10 per cent](#). Provincial grants for schools dropped more than 30 per cent since 2006. Colleges and universities were [encouraged](#) to recruit international students to make up for the funding shortfalls. **In 2024-25, the average undergraduate tuition in Ontario for an international student is \$48,267. Contrast this with domestic student tuition of \$8,514.** Ontario's overreliance on international students to keep post-secondary campuses running has proven devastating. When the federal government [slashed the number](#) of international student permits available in Canada, Ontario was [hit the hardest](#).

A full analysis of the funding crisis impacting our sector can be found [here](#) in OCUFA's 2024 pre-budget submission to the Ontario government. Ontarians need adequate funding and better funding models for colleges and universities. **OCADFA supports OCUFA's election 2025 campaign: [Strong Universities. Strong Ontario.](#)**

Among our key demands:

- Increase university funding by 11.75 percent annually for a five-year period to bring Ontario on par with the Canadian average in per-domestic student funding. The government's own Blue-Ribbon panel recommended the same. This would include a \$511.8 million funding commitment in year one.
- Convert more loans into grants to ensure postsecondary education is accessible and affordable for domestic students and their families. This will directly affect the affordability crisis Ontario families face today.
- Change the Funding Model. The existing funding model penalizes universities if they increased their enrolment of domestic students. There is a cap on funding per domestic student for each university. Ontario is the only province that imposes funding caps on domestic students. There are currently 28,000 domestic students who are unfunded. Enrolling more domestic students doesn't increase funding, the base level per student funding must increase.

By changing the funding model and investing in postsecondary education, we can end the Gigification of Teaching and Build Stable Jobs. Over half of Ontario's university courses are taught by contract faculty. Hiring contract faculty into permanent positions will create more good jobs on our campuses and allow them to invest in their local economies.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

- TA/RA Drop-In: March 5th, 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM (Teams)
- Spring AGM: April 30th, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM (MCD 200, 115 McCaul Tentative)
- Community Townhall: April 30th, 1:00 PM (MCD 200, 115 McCaul Tentative)



Pictured Above: Attendees of our Drop-In Session on February 12th.



Continued from "*Provincial Elections 2025...*"

Below are some resources produced by OCUFA.

[Party Platform Analysis](#): OCUFA's report card of each party's commitments to the post-secondary education sector.

[Party Voting Record](#): A breakdown of each party's voting record relating to key legislative actions taken by the Ontario government in recent years.

Yes, an expensive snap election nobody wanted has been called. Yes we have a government that refuses to adequately fund post-secondary education. But NO, this is not normal. Universities have been cut to the bone. The chronic underfunding has been a crisis years in the making. We can change this. Advance polls are now open across Ontario. The Ontario Federation of Labour has a [vibrant election action plan](#). You can find out how to get involved in your neighbourhood.

Let's all get out and vote for change on February 27. We can vote for education and a better future for all.

Min Sook Lee, OCADFA President

Spring AGM & Community Townhall

Mark your calendars on **April 30th** as OCADFA will be holding its Annual General Meeting from **10:00 a.m. to noon** and will then be hosting a Community Townhall at 1:00 p.m. to discuss OCAD's future.

At our most recent AGM in November, the membership voted to move the annual meeting to the spring, when it'll replace our usual Spring Membership Meeting (which will now become a Fall Membership Meeting). The AGM is an important opportunity to participate in the business of the Faculty Association, at this meeting we will:

- Elect new Board Members
- Elect a new Negotiations Committee
- Adopt a 2025/26 Operating Budget

Stick around after the AGM as we invite all community members, including members of OPSEU Local 576 and the OCAD Student Union, for a Townhall on the future of OCAD. We are still working on the structure of the Townhall, but provisionally we will have a presentation that situates OCAD's financial challenges within the broader crisis facing the sector as well as speakers who can attest the impact of cuts on faculty, staff, and students, while leaving plenty of space for an open discussion for community members to share their experiences, frustrations, and ideas for how OCAD can not only survive current challenges, but thrive!

AS OCAD approaches its 150th year, now more than ever, the community needs a say in what the next era will look like!

Both events are tentatively scheduled to take place in the **Rosalie Sharp Pavilion (MCD 200, 115 McCaul)**, and OCADFA will provide food and refreshments throughout the day.

Negotiations Wrap-Up

After 17 bargaining dates (2023-2024), 3 mediation dates (November 2024), and 1 mediation/arbitration date (January 2025), we finally have a renewed 2023-2026 Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). This MoA is the contract between OCADFA members/workers and OCAD University, and it reflects the hard work and dedication of both negotiation committees. This round, OCADFA workers made several gains, and we should take the time to celebrate those gains before the next bargaining round in June 2025.

Members can review the Interest Arbitration Award and the Complete Guide to Changes in the MoA [here](#).

I also want to take a moment to say that I valued the opportunity to collaborate with the Administration's bargaining team to address important issues that improve the working and learning conditions at OCAD University.

Next Bargaining Round Begins June 2025

The upcoming bargaining round will be shaped by the uncertainty and shifting political and economic landscape. If I have the privilege to serve in this role again, I'd like to address key issues such as the student experience and workload, access to benefits, and pension.

Participate

We invite members to put their names forward if they are interested in serving on the next OCADFA Negotiations Committee. As per OCADFA by-law 17.01, the Negotiations Committee represents each Faculty (Art, Design, Liberal Arts and Sciences) and the following labour categories:

- Tenure/tenure-track
- Sessional
- Contract Faculty (TS, CLTA, Continuing)
- Technician
- Teaching Assistant

Committee members receive a \$500.00 stipend/honorarium for each academic term of service. The Negotiations Chair receives a \$15,000.00 stipend per year of service, which includes a course buy-out if applicable. The Negotiation Chair also sits on other committees (OCADFA Executive, Grievance, Joint to name a few) and attends weekly OCUFA calls.

I am thrilled to **acknowledge your OCADFA negotiations committee**, who helped to raise the bar in a number of areas. A huge thank you to the committee members for their service and support in this process.

- Min Sook Lee, (OCADFA President, ex-officio), Faculty of Art
- Maria-Belén Ordóñez, Faculty Arts and Sciences – Representative for TS, CLTA and Continuing faculty
- Roderick Grant, Faculty of Design – Representative for Probationary and Tenured faculty
- Eric Steenbergen, Studio Services – Representative for Technicians
- June Pak, Faculty of Art – Representative for Sessional faculty
- Isra Amsdr, Faculty of Art – Representative Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants
- Graeme Reniers, Executive Director, OCADFA

Let's continue to build on our successes and make the next bargaining round even more impactful. If you're interested in joining the committee, **please email us: Annie atung@ocadu.ca and Graeme greniers@ocadu.ca**.

Annie Tung
OCADFA Negotiations Chair 2022-2025

Your Feedback Is Needed on OCADU Students In Distress Protocol

The Students in Distress Protocol is currently being revised by the Student Wellness Centre and will be implemented campus-wide. This protocol will include a 1 page poster on how to support and respond to a student in distress. There will be a more comprehensive 4 page guide that will guide training for staff, faculty, admin across campus. OCADU community members are invited to give thoughts and feedback. No questions are mandatory - feel free to write as little or as much as you'd like. Your name will remain confidential unless requested otherwise. [Please review the draft survey here](#).

NOTES FROM THE SECTOR:

Last year we witnessed an unprecedented number of strikes across the sector, but that trend has not continued this year as several Faculty Associations across the province have recently reached agreements or received awards through interest arbitration.

York University: The York University Faculty Association ratified a three-year collective agreement after a difficult round of bargaining, securing a 3.1% across-the-board increase in year one, followed by 2.85% in subsequent years. They also agreed to some benefit improvements, progress towards Indigenization, and increased ability for Teaching Stream faculty to secure teaching releases.

Toronto Metropolitan University: Arbitrator Kaplan issued an award for the Toronto Metropolitan University Faculty Association (TFA) 2023-2026 collective agreement, which included across-the-board increases of 3.5% in year one, and 3% in subsequent years. They also secured a Task Force on Student Accommodations and Academic Considerations, which will propose actions to ameliorate increases in workload associated with student accommodations.

Guelph University: The University of Guelph Faculty Association (UGFA) ratified a new three-year agreement that includes across-the-board increases of 3.75%, 3.5%, and 3% (note that UGFA did not have a Bill 124 settlement). They also agreed to a new joint committee to study how to ameliorate intensifying workloads.

King's University: The King's University College Faculty Association (KUCFA) ratified a new agreement with across-the-board raises of 5%, 3.5%, and 3.5% - making up for their lack of a Bill 124 settlement. They also secured a number of other gains, such as significantly reducing service expectations for new members in the first year of their appointment, a new tenure and promotion process specific to Indigenous scholars, elimination of student evaluations for teaching, and the potential for those on Limited Term Appointments to convert to Tenure-Track if a position is approved.

St. Jerome's University: The St. Jerome's University Academic Staff Association (SJU ASA) full-time unit ratified a three-year collective agreement with across-the-board increases of 4.7% and 3.6% in each of the first two years, with a salary reopener for the third year. They also agreed to convert Definite Term and Continuing Lecturers into a newly created Teaching Stream category.

University of Ottawa: Members of the Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa (APOU) ratified a two-year collective agreement, with across-the-board increases of 2.5% in both years. Other improvements include lowering the normal course load to 4 half-credit courses (from 5) in some faculties, and a working group to examine needs for teaching assistant and administrative support.



Pictured right: Gerald Grison, Annie Tung and Graeme Reniers presenting at the OCADFA Updated Memorandum of Agreement 2023-2026 Meeting on January 24th, 2025.



OCADFA COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND

The OCADFA community support fund addresses situations where OCADFA members are experiencing a significant life event that places them in a position of economic, food, or housing insecurity.

While OCADFA recognizes that this is not a long-term solution to the endemic and long-term poverty experienced by some of our members, **it will provide material assistance** which we hope will alleviate the most catastrophic consequences this poverty entails. OCADFA members who are in financial need can apply to this fund, and if their request fits within the fund's mandate, **can receive up to \$250 of financial assistance within 10 days of applying for it.**

Examples of such situations where the fund may be accessed by OCADFA members:

- Dental and vision care costs for members or their dependents who do not have access to a health care plan
- Unanticipated medication costs for members or their dependents who do not have access to a health care plan
- Unexpected vehicle maintenance costs
- Equipment repair costs (for laptops etc.)
- Extraordinary, temporary caregiving expenses
- Fees associated with counselling support required on an emergency basis for members who have experienced assault or other forms of violence, including gender-based violence
- Income gap associated with the time difference between prepping course and its first pay period which may result in the possibility of housing insecurity

Any OCADFA member can access this resource twice per calendar year, with priority given to first time applicants for that year. If you are an OCADFA member experiencing a situation that will result in economic, food or housing insecurity, please feel encouraged to apply to this fund.

[APPLY HERE](#)

Report From The Grievance Chair

It is with sorrow that we see the departure of Ali Qadeer as Grievance Co-chair as he begins a well-deserved sabbatical, but with joy welcome **Ésery Mondésir, Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Art**, who has agreed to take his place. We're confident that Ésery, who is an experienced labour organizer in addition to being an educator, artist and designer, will be a valuable ally to members fighting for fair treatment in the face of challenges to our rights under the MoA, OCAD's policies and Ontario's Employment Standards Act.

Current issues that we are addressing or have resolved are proper recognition and application of the Right of Reappointment for sessional faculty, initial placement and promotion on the salary scale, workload issues (both individual and arising from administrative decisions), workplace safety, academic freedom, problems with the RWELP investigation process, hiring processes, issues of discipline, and faculty consultation on academic administration.

Thanks to the work done by OCADFA's Negotiations Committee, **we have a new Memorandum of Agreement** with OCAD's management. Inevitably, the changes introduced in the new MoA will present new problems of interpretation and application, which the OCADFA Board and Grievance Committee, as well as our stalwart **Executive Director, Graeme Reniers**, stand ready to take action on.

As always, if you have any questions about or problems with your working conditions, whether or not you feel there is grounds for a grievance, **please don't hesitate to get hold of me, Ésery, Graeme, or any other of the OCADFA Board members.**

Richard Hunt
OCADFA Grievance Co-chair

"Dear Graeme"

Q: Why do my Sun Life benefits end at age 70?

This is a question we get asked every year, as more faculty members at OCAD (and elsewhere) continue to work past the "normal retirement age" of 65.

It's fairly standard for group benefits to terminate at age 65, ours extending to 70 is what you tend to see across our sector. There are multiple reasons for this:

Many of the benefits are only supposed to get you to retirement age, like accidental death coverage (which is to provide your family with the income they were depending on you to earn), or long-term disability, which is universally cut-off at 65, as it's designed to provide you with an income until retirement;

There are some benefits supplied by governments for those over age 65 which are not available for people under that age, like the Ontario Drug Benefits;

Insurance companies charge more to provide benefits for people over 65, and even more for over 70, so having a cap on the age allows employers to provide a greater degree of coverage at a certain price point;

Until recently, it was legal to discriminate against people over 65 in employment matters. **When the Ontario Human Rights Code was amended in 2006 to prohibit mandatory retirement based on age, it also added a provision that exempted employee benefit plans from age discrimination.**


This is an evolving question in human rights and employment law, and OCADFA and our legal representatives at Goldblatt are actively monitoring

legal developments. **In 2018, a teacher for the Erie District School Board successfully challenged having their benefits cut off at 65 as discriminatory, after proving it would not be an undue hardship for the School Board to continue providing benefits.** This case has not yet been successfully replicated, so it has yet to be determined to what degree a precedent has been set.

There have, unfortunately, been several unsuccessful cases – most prominently one brought forward by the Ontario Nurses Association. They usually lose because either the law explicitly allowed such discrimination, or because of the combination of factors I listed above allow employers to sufficiently argue differentiation based on age is not arbitrary and produces an undue hardship (based on cost).

If you find yourself approaching 70, and you want to continue working at OCAD, you do have some options. Most employers/insurers, including ours, offer a conversation option: i.e., you have the option to continue some of the group benefits at a discounted rate than would otherwise be available to you. I believe it also precludes a medical, and you can still be covered for what would otherwise be considered "pre-existing conditions." You can also attain insurance through [Municipal Retirees Organization Ontario](#). Both options are also available if you plan to retire.

If you want to explore continuing your benefits past age 70, or post-retirement, let me know and I can share further information.


Do you have a questions for Graeme? Submit your questions [here](#). See the answers to your questions in our Monthly Dispatches in the "Dear Graeme" Column!

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- Secretary/Treasurer: Parantap Bhatt
- TA/RA Director: Casper Sutton-Fosman
- Director: Natalie Waldburger
- Director: Gerald Grison
- Director: Ross Bullen

Grievance Committee

- Richard Hunt
- Ésery Mondésir
- Min Sook Lee
- Annie Tung
- Natalie Waldburger
- Eric Steenbergen

OCADFA Representatives on the Joint Health and Safety Committee

- Gerald Grison, Worker Co-Chair
- Tred Kennedy
- Kate Sellen
- VACANT (please contact Graeme if you're interested in this position)

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