

UWOFA

Bargaining Bulletin

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Just the Facts: Ontario's Budget and Collective Bargaining at Western

A recent open letter authored by Western's Provost and Vice-President, Resources and Operations, makes two related claims. First, the Employer states that the Ontario government's recent budget mandates a compensation freeze for public sector employees. Secondly, and following from the first claim, the employer states the need for university-wide financial restraint – including caps on employee collective agreements “of at least two years that do not include any net increase in employee compensation.”

What is actually known?

The Ontario government's budget legislation, [Bill 16](#), states unambiguously in clause 4. (2) that “This Act does not apply to an employee who is represented by any of the following organizations which represent two or more employees for the purpose of collectively bargaining,” including “A trade union certified or voluntarily recognized under the Labour Relations Act, 1995.”

In other words, there is no provincial compensation freeze affecting unionized employee groups at Western. The rules of collective bargaining continue to apply. The provincial government has stated its intention to “work with” employers and unions with the goal of preventing any increases in the total amount spent on compensation and agreements of at least two years' duration. But our right to collective bargaining is protected under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The province may attempt to influence collective bargaining through moral suasion, but it does not dictate the outcome.

Is the budget for the University frozen? One finds an interesting contradiction. On the one hand the Government is crying “restraint.” But on the other, the government is actually giving the University sector substantially more money than it did last year. According to an analysis of the budget by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), provincial grant and tuition policy, announced in and after the March Budget, allows for increases in grants, enrolment and tuition fees that are projected to *increase university operating revenues by roughly 6.8%*. University revenues are expected to rise, not fall.

There is no compensation freeze for Western employees, and according to the latest provincial budget revenues for Ontario universities are expected to rise. In this context, UWOFA is committed to good faith bargaining. UWOFA will continue to advocate for recruitment and retention and improved working conditions for faculty.