

BY E-MAIL

January 25, 2021

Derrick Antson
Mount Royal Faculty Association
W315 - 4825 Mount Royal Gate SW
Calgary, AB T3E 6K6

Dear Mr. Antson:

We are Cupe 3911 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, representing more than 350 continuing part time academic instructors at Athabasca University. We are participating in the Stop PSE Cuts campaign because of our concern for the future of post secondary education in Alberta. As the frontline educators at Athabasca University, we work directly with students to support their academic success. Many of these students are the first generation in their families to attend university; they are parents and working people, they live in rural, Indigenous and remote areas, as well as our towns and cities. Athabasca University (AU) is an open university that offers accessible education to these students in Alberta, across Canada, and around the world. AU is at the forefront of online education in Canada -- especially crucial at this time. Our key role in distance education is being threatened by unprecedented budget cuts to AU and all post-secondary institutions across Alberta. While cuts of this extent and nature would be dangerous under any conditions, it is even more harmful during the COVID-19 pandemic.

AU is the leanest post secondary institution in Alberta; we receive the lowest per capita funding per FLE. We cannot absorb any further cuts to our budget without harm to our institution and the students who depend on us for their education. Affordable post secondary education is essential during this economic recession. Affordable education helps to break the cycle of poverty. It is an investment for the whole society, which has a continuing positive impact on students, their families, and their communities. We are not in the business of skills training, so any half-baked schemes to link learning outcomes to the needs of business through "performance metrics" are doomed to fail. We believe in the well-rounded education offered at comprehensive institutions such as AU.

Increasingly, we speak with one voice, joining together with faculty, staff and students across Alberta in campaigns such as stopsecuts.ca.

On the national level, CUPE is participating in a multi-partner campaign called *Education for All* to promote a vision of high-quality, publicly funded post secondary education in Canada. The campaign, launched on January 21, includes the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Federation of Students, and the Public Service Alliance of Canada.

We hereby serve notice to the conservative government of Alberta: we will not stand idly by while it attacks our institutions. The United Conservative Party, under the leadership of Jason Kenney and Demetrios Nicolaides, seeks to destroy our world-class post secondary institutions using torqued and highly inaccurate research. This only demonstrates that the UCP does not understand Alberta's post-secondary education system and the crucial role it plays in the wellbeing of our province and our people. This government should immediately reverse its current efforts to impose further cuts that will damage the working conditions of faculty and staff and the learning conditions of students.

For further information, please contact Dr. Ronnie Joy Leah
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