

The Honourable John Horgan,  
Premier of British Columbia  
Office of the Premier  
PO Box 9041  
Stn Prov Govt  
Victoria, BC V8W 9E1

July 19, 2017

Dear Premier Horgan,

The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) is the voice of professors, lecturers, instructors, and professional librarians at BC's research universities. On behalf of our over 5500 members, congratulations on being sworn in as the 36<sup>th</sup> Premier of British Columbia. We look forward to a productive working relationship with you and your government in dealing with the mounting challenges faced by BC's research universities.

The record of the outgoing Liberal government on post-secondary education policy is best characterized as decreased funding and increased political meddling.

Our institutions have suffered real dollar cuts in excess of 10% and the Ministry of Advanced Education was the only ministry to suffer budget cuts during the last mandate of the Liberal government. While the commitment to spend an additional \$100 million in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) related disciplines will provide some relief, it will not reverse a decade of underfunding. We would like to start a dialogue about how the systemic funding challenges in the sector might be addressed.

In addition to the chronic shortage of funding, governance at BC's universities has been undermined by the overt politicization of our Boards of Governors. Handpicked Liberal supporters and donors have been appointed to boards with little or no knowledge of the sector. This environment of patronage and political meddling has had particularly serious consequences at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) and the University of British Columbia (UBC). At UNBC the Liberal dominated Board of Governors rammed through the appointment of James Moore as Chancellor with a 7 - 6 vote. This appointment ignored the legislative duty of the Board to consult with Senate on the appointment of the Chancellor. As you know, Mr. Moore previously served as federal Minister of Industry in Stephen Harper's government and in that role presided over cuts to the granting councils, and participated in climate change denial and muzzling of government scientists.

The role of Chancellor at BC's universities is typically not filled through a political appointment, but rather by a respected, long serving member of the community who represents the values of the institution. James Moore is a deeply partisan figure and a wholly inappropriate choice to serve as Chancellor. Faculty, staff, and students have been united in opposing this appointment and continue to work toward the appointment of a chancellor who represents the values of teaching, research and service that define the university.

At UBC, the sordid episode of Arvind Gupta's departure was engineered by the Liberal Board appointees who acted largely without the knowledge of elected Board members. The entire episode caused a great deal of internal division and external embarrassment for the institution. Since 2005, nine of the eleven Liberal appointees to the UBC Board have contributed a combined total of \$387,284 to the Liberal Party of British Columbia.

We have a comprehensive plan for reforming the system of appointments that we believe would be in the best interest of protecting public, post-secondary education in British Columbia. We look forward to sharing the details of our plan with the Honourable Melanie Mark, Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Training .

The issue of a merit based graduate scholarship has been a long standing lobby item for CUFA BC and we were delighted to see a \$50 million commitment to graduate scholarships in your election platform. We look forward to working with Minister Mark to roll out this program as soon as possible.

The final issue we would like to draw to your attention is the climate of collective bargaining in the province. As I am sure you have heard from numerous other unions, the public sector labour relations environment in British Columbia is dysfunctional. We have had several fractious rounds of bargaining amongst our members, including a two week strike at UNBC in 2015. At the heart of this dysfunction is the controlling role the Public Sector Employers' Council (PSEC) plays in bargaining. PSEC sets the mandate in advance of all bargaining and micromanages every table in the province. This model has undermined the principle of collective bargaining and robbed both unions and employers of the creativity and flexibility needed to devise local solutions to the unique challenges facing BC's research universities. In both principle and practice it is our view that the operation of PSEC is an affront to free and fair collective bargaining. It is our position that BC's research universities and our members are not served by being under the jurisdiction of PSEC and we ask that bargaining in our sector be removed from PSEC's mandate.

Congratulations again on becoming Premier. We wish you every success in dealing with the pressing social and economic challenges facing British Columbians. We look forward to meeting with you personally to discuss these issues, as well as working on an ongoing basis with Minister Mark.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Johnson  
President