The Provincial Budget 2017 – 18

The Provincial Budget was announced last week. Drastic funding cuts were made across the province and the two universities and their federated colleges shared the pain.

The University Faculty Associations spoke with one voice. Our message was simple. Universities are autonomous institutions serving the public good and adding to the economy of the province. Public post-secondary institutions thrive only as a result of stable, adequate public funding. Any departure from this model harms the universities and harms us all. What our institutions look like in the future depends on base operating funds from the provincial government. Our reasoned message will not change the minds and heart of Government.

The undergraduate students have been moved to action. They want their voice heard. They planned a rally and a march to the Legislature. We need to support their efforts.

_Students Mobilizing Against Cuts (SMAC) is holding a rally and march on March 30th at 12:00 from Victoria Park to the Legislative Building. The aim of this march is to highlight the budget cuts. We as SMAC, are encouraging students, community members, faculty to all be part of our campaign. However, it should be noted that this protest might impact classes; students are advised to let their professor know ahead of time if they are attending this protest._ [https://www.facebook.com/smacsask/](https://www.facebook.com/smacsask/)

Where are we on campus? The posted budget message from President Timmons outlined a number of challenges facing the university and our membership. It is an ominous document worthy of examination and discussion on campus.

How will URFA mobilize to meet the budget challenge? Might I suggest we look to our March 21, 2017 meeting as a starting point? URFA’s prebudget talk, _Will the sky fall on budget day?_, focused on issues of information, transparence and messaging. The take away message was the sky will not fall unless we allow it to fall. The slides from that meeting addressed Board transparency, audited financial statements and spending priorities. They are posted on the URFA site. URFA is prepared to present an encore edition of this presentation to any member group.

One final point – URFA is often UofR centric. This unit represents the largest number of our members and negotiations with UofR set the tone. However, the government letter, the foreshadowing document that set the budget cuts forward, was sent to Campion, Luther and First Nations University. We are all in this together. Now that the budget has come down the negotiations will begin.

In solidarity,

Dennis Fitzpatrick
President URFA