



# **The University of Guelph Pre-Budget Submission**

January 2017

The Honourable Charles Sousa  
Minister of Finance  
c/o Budget Secretariat  
Frost Building North, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
95 Grosvenor St.  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1

Dear Minister Sousa:

On behalf of the University of Guelph, I am pleased to submit our 2017 provincial pre-budget submission to the Ministry of Finance.

The University wishes to thank the Government of Ontario for its ongoing willingness to actively work with partner institutions to strengthen the post-secondary sector. Specifically, we applaud the government's 2016 budget commitment to transform the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) and improve access to education through net tuition billing. At the University of Guelph, we look forward to participating and assisting the government in the early implementation of this policy which will lead to improved access to post-secondary education by removing and lessening financial barriers to higher education for Ontario students.

We also appreciate the government's ongoing collaboration in discussions of extension of the tuition framework; development of a new outcomes-based funding framework; and initiatives to strengthen work-integrated learning.

About the University of Guelph

The University of Guelph is among Canada's leading comprehensive universities. Research-intensive and learner-centred, we are known for excellence in the arts and sciences and for our commitment to developing exceptional thinkers and engaged citizens. With campuses in Guelph, Toronto and Ridgetown, U of G covers both urban and rural areas of the province. With roots extending back some 150 years to our founding colleges, we now pursue active inquiry and exercise creativity across a range of disciplines, from the physical and life sciences, to business and the arts and humanities, to social, agricultural and veterinary sciences.

Across our campuses, we have more than 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students, with 94 per cent of our graduates finding employment within two years of graduation. Our global reach which includes 1,200 international students from more than 100 countries, more than 122,000 alumni living in 150 countries, and more than 200 international research projects in more than 70 nations.

The University of Guelph wishes to encourage and advocate for provincial investment in four specific areas that will enable us to build on our recognized strengths:

- continued support for the agriculture and food sector;

- further relief from pension solvency requirements;
- dedicated support for work-integrated learning and the implementation of the Highly Skilled Workforce Strategy; and
- further support for student wellbeing, including mental health supports on campus.

## Building on Our Strengths

### 1. Continued Support for the Agriculture and Food Sectors

As Canada's Food University, the University of Guelph is uniquely positioned to help the government strengthen the already prosperous agri-food sector in Ontario. Our expertise in agriculture and food spans a number of areas including environment; health care and "one health"; food safety and security; and product development and production. That comprehensive expertise is also reflected in a recent federal investment of \$76.6 million for our Food From Thought project intended to find sustainable ways to feed our growing world population.

Today's agriculture and food sectors have grown to include family farms in rural Ontario, larger commercial farming operations and an increasing number of high-tech multimillion-dollar industries for leading-edge research and development. With expertise in innovation and research and development, U of G stands at the centre of an Ontario agriculture and food cluster. Conveniently located on the innovation corridor, we play a significant role in supporting the Ontario government as it continues to strengthen its own role as a global leader in agriculture and food. Through an enhanced partnership between the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and U of G, the provincial government continues to invest directly in research that improves the health, well-being and prosperity of people in Ontario, Canada and beyond.

We encourage government to continue to make strategic investments in this sector which support and allow U of G to deliver continued excellence in innovation, research, and teaching and learning.

### 2. Further relief from Pension Solvency Requirements

The financial sustainability of Ontario's universities is impacted by policies set by government, including policy concerning pension plan funding obligations. The University of Guelph has made a number of significant changes to improve the sustainability of our pension plans and we appreciate the government's work thus far to work with the post-secondary sector and minimize the impact of these policies on universities like the U of G.

We ask that government continue to work with us to minimize the impact that solvency payment requirements place on university operating budgets, ensuring that funds support excellence in post-secondary education.

Further, we strongly support the recommendations put forth by the Council of Ontario Universities (COU) in its own pre-budget submission and recommend that the government exempt universities from solvency payment requirements as the sector continues to work toward a jointly sponsored pension plan (JSPP), and as the government considers the upcoming recommendations from the Marshall Review.

### 3. Work-Integrated Learning and the Highly Skilled Workforce Strategy

As previously mentioned, U of G strongly supports the government's commitment to expand hands-on learning opportunities for Ontario students. Our emphasis on educating the whole student makes us a leader in setting and meeting learning outcomes and in preparing our students for the workforce. Close collaborations with industry enable us to train our students to meet the needs of our partners and our students.

However, we recognize that the post-secondary sector cannot do this work alone. We echo COU's request that the government work with universities – including U of G -- to determine effective investments to support implementation of the Highly Skilled Workforce strategy.

### 4. Additional Support for Student Well-Being, Including Mental Health Supports

The University of Guelph has seen demand for wellness supports continue to rise and outpace enrolment growth. Like many post-secondary institutions across Canada, we have seen more and more students turn to their university to provide the full continuum of well-being services and supports.

Further, despite the increasing number and wide range of mental health supports and services offered on campus, and despite the outstanding work of our dedicated staff and students, U of G — like many communities — continues to experience challenges and loss.

The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) and Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA) are working with their member stakeholders on a proposal that would see increased flexibility and funding for student wellness supports. We support this direction and ask the government to consider all recommendations that would increase campus and community-based wellness supports for youth.

In closing, the University of Guelph acknowledges the benefits of continued provincial investment in Ontario's post-secondary sector. Thank you for the opportunity to provide recommendations for the 2017 provincial budget. We look forward to working together over the coming months to make our post-secondary education system even stronger.

Dr. Franco J. Vaccarino  
President and Vice-Chancellor  
University of Guelph