

Provincial budget 2022 is ambitious, but will faculty be supported
in delivering expanded post-secondary agenda

(For immediate release – Port Moody, BC, February 23, 2022) – The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia (CUFA BC) is pleased to receive the ambitious Budget 2022 “A Stronger BC, for Everyone” from BC Finance Minister the Honourable Selina Robison, but is concerned about the extent to which faculty will be supported in delivering the expanded post-secondary agenda. This is the NDP government’s fifth full budget under Premier John Horgan, and commits \$71 billion to making life better for people by investing in BC’s economic, environmental, and social strengths.

The Honourable Minister Robison builds post-secondary education into the very foundation of the province’s future. Faculty will be essential allies to Government in helping deliver on its financial promises. The BC Labour Market Outlook forecasts the creation of over one million job openings in the next decade of which almost 80 per cent will require post-secondary education or training. This demand will place significant strain on student enrolments and require investment in faculty and staff complements to ensure delivery of quality programs.

The province has allocated \$2.6 billion toward Advanced Education and Skills Training, or about 3.7 per cent of the total operating expenses in Budget 2022. This allocation represents an increase of 1.4 per cent over the updated forecast from the current fiscal year, which raises concerns about the ability of institutions to respond to growing financial pressures created by an inflation rate estimated to run over 4 per cent for 2022. Educational institutions will also receive an additional \$1.2 billion in capital spending to see through previously approved projects. Budget 2022 relies heavily on targeted funding for novel, quick turnaround skills training programmes rather than investing in more robust but time-intensive core education.

“We appreciate the broad investment in social causes reflected in the budget and believe the lives of students and faculty will be improved through investments in child care, housing, high speed connectivity expansion, and climate and economic recovery efforts,” says CUFA BC President Dr. Daniel Laitsch. “That said, the budget’s focus on targeted funding and short-term programs combined with a funding increase that is unlikely to even address inflation puts core programming at risk.”

Faculty at BC’s research universities are excited to be part of the solution to the economic, environmental, and social challenges facing British Columbians today despite concerns that the inadequate response to inflation and a lack of investment in core programming will result in turmoil as institutions enter bargaining this year.

Like so many British Columbians, faculty are exhausted after two years of sacrifice in responding to the increased workload pressures and personal challenges brought about by the pandemic. There remains a great deal of uncertainty in responding to the demands Budget 2022 places on post-secondary education. The public sector compensation mandate has yet to be released, further adding to the uncertainty.

With these concerns in mind, there is also a great deal of hope for the role of post-secondary education in BC's future. Universities are well positioned to step up to the plate and help make life better for all British Columbians, but they will need core support from the Province to fully realize the opportunities outlined in Budget 2022.

For further information or comment, please contact CUFA BC Executive Director Annabree Fairweather at 604-367-5856 or executive.director@cufa.bc.ca.

CUFA BC represents over 5,500 faculty members, professional librarians, lecturers, instructors, and other academics at the five research-intensive universities in British Columbia, which include University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, Royal Roads University and University of Northern British Columbia.

CUFA BC [celebrates fifty years](#) of working closely with the member Faculty Associations at each institution. Our purposes are to support high-quality post-secondary education and research in British Columbia and to advocate for the interests of our members.

