

March 11, 2015

Via e-

mail: premier@ontario.ca

Kathleen Wynne, Premier

Legislative Building

Queen's Park

Toronto, ON

M7A 1A1

RE: Algonquin College investment in Saudi Arabia

Dear Premier Wynne:

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) is proud to represent more than 25,000 faculty and support staff at Ontario colleges. These dedicated workers deliver quality post-secondary education to more than 200,000 students.

I have some questions for you: Why is Algonquin College offering diplomas at the newly established Jazan College of Excellence in Saudi Arabia? And why are Ontario tax dollars being funneled into this overseas campus rather than being invested in our province's college education system?

Saudi Arabia is a country with a terrible human rights record. Most recently, Amnesty International has taken up the case of Raif Badawi, the blogger subjected to a brutal flogging sentence for his activism. Is this really a regime we want to support? Do you consider Saudi Arabia a good place to invest Ontario citizens' tax dollars?

Chronic underfunding is seriously undermining the Ontario college system. This squeezing of the colleges is forcing them to find alternative income sources, and is in large part to blame for them turning to these very dubious overseas partnerships. When will this government recognize that the colleges are a driving force of the Ontario economy, which delivers jobs, innovation and quality education for the next generation of workers?

It is time for this government to establish an ethical framework for the college investment decisions, and to enforce it.

I look forward to hearing what this government is doing to ensure Ontario College funding remains where it belongs: In Ontario.

Sincerely,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas

President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)

WST/ev

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