



November 17, 2020

Ms. Martha Laboissiere  
McKinsey & Company  
c/o martha\_laboissiere@mckinsey.com

Dear Ms. Laboissiere:

Re: Alberta 2030 Consultations

I am very pleased to submit this letter in my capacity as President of the University of Calgary Faculty Association. We very much appreciate the opportunity that the Alberta 2030 consultations provided us to express our views and concerns about the future of Alberta universities. We wish to associate ourselves with and firmly endorse the November 9<sup>th</sup> statement the Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA) released as part of this review. Our discussions with CAFA during the preparation of this statement enable us to affirm that this compelling document does represent the views and concerns of the academic staff working across Alberta's universities. This said, we do not, in this letter, want to simply reiterate the points in the CAFA statement. I was personally pleased that last week I was able to speak directly with the McKinsey group and think it would be useful to follow up on that conversation by putting some of our concerns more directly on the record.

It is our view that the Alberta university system has benefitted significantly from the fact that its universities have, over the years, been allowed and in fact encouraged to develop and grow in ways that built on their differing strengths and histories and that left them free to vigorously grasp any opportunities for innovation and change that came their way, while preserving the core structures and programs that any comprehensive university needs. The position of the University of Calgary in the Alberta system of universities was accurately described this last summer by a provincial arbitrator as follows:

*"The University of Calgary is a comprehensive academic and research University. It is a member of the U-15 group of research intensive Universities in Canada. The U-15 group maintains that it fosters "the development and delivery of long-term, sustainable higher education and research policy, in Canada and around the world. It is said that, collectively the 15 research intensive Universities undertake 80% of all competitive university research in Canada and produce over 75% of all doctorates awarded in Canada, and hold 85% of Canadian University technology licenses and 81% of Canada University patents."*

The University of Calgary is a relatively young university but four years ago when we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary we were recognized as the "top young university in Canada and North America." The academic staff of the University of Calgary are dedicated to building on our success and to providing a world class education for our students. We ask only for the tools necessary to continue down the path

we have been following. A one-size-fits-all approach would be problematic and we stress the vital importance of the autonomy of individual institutions that underlies success and responsiveness.

I must acknowledge that we do have some concerns about the future of Alberta's universities: we hope that the Government of Alberta will, in the light of these consultations, make clear its commitment to ensuring that Albertans have access to world class institutions and scholars, and that the working environment in universities provides the researchers and teachers with the respect and support that these dedicated professionals deserve. Proposed and actual cuts to post-secondary education funding carry the real and present danger that Alberta's universities in 2030 will be diminished versions of what they are today. Universities and university education are critical to Alberta's economic and social future and government funding must reflect this reality. The funding of post-secondary education must be seen more as an investment in the future of the Province.

To this end, firstly we urge the Government of Alberta to demonstrate its commitment to free collective bargaining and repeal the interference in this process which was part of omnibus legislation passed in 2019. As part of that legislation, the Government indicated that it "is committed to respecting the autonomy of public sector employers and the importance of the collective bargaining process." Nonetheless, the Public Sector Employers Act gave the Government the authority to issue directives that Boards of Governors must follow in bargaining. Moreover, these directives were to be kept secret, something which, in our view, is an affront to the right of academic staff to freely negotiate contracts. Such directives and secrecy damage the working relationship between academic staff and the Boards of Governors as well as the ability of Governors to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities to the institutions they serve. The climate of suspicion and uncertainty this creates on Alberta's campuses serves the province poorly.

Secondly, we wish to emphasize that the existence of such legislation highlights the significance of bicameral systems of governance at our universities and points to the need to ensure that academic staff continue to have the ability to exercise their academic freedom and expertise in determining curriculum and providing input on budget and policy. The representation of academic staff on such bodies should not be reduced and indeed we believe that the role of academic staff on Boards of Governors should be increased to enable Governors to better understand academic issues, priorities and freedom.

Thirdly, we feel that it is important that the Government bear in mind at all times that the economic benefits that come to Alberta from having innovative teaching and research universities flow from their research and teaching activities. Undoubtedly our universities through their teaching and research activities can be and indeed are agents of commercialization, but the Universities must not be seen as being themselves the agents of commercialization. Commercialization where appropriate can be important, but to reap the benefits of commercialization it needs to be clear not only that such commercialization is made possible by the exercise of the academic freedom of skilled researchers, but also that to attract world class scholars and researchers their intellectual property will be protected. Only if this is made publicly clear can we hope to continue attracting world class researchers and scholars. We hope that this review will recognize this basic truth.

Fourthly, we feel it important that we make clear our hope that the ongoing review process recognizes the importance of lifelong education and the career realities faced by today's graduates. We are proud

of our professional and technical programs and of the high quality of their graduates: such graduates play major roles in the life and business of this province. But research suggests that graduates are unlikely to work in one career for the bulk of their working lives and it is critical that university education reflects this reality. Educating students for one particular career or vocation serves both them and the Alberta economy poorly. Our students, whatever their speciality, need to receive the kind of education that ensures they have the analytic and writing skills they will need to be successful in their working careers and which will also leave them well placed to improve the societies in which they and their families will live: this means that our students need a rich exposure to the basic sciences and to the liberal arts.

Finally, we count it important for us to express in no uncertain terms our concern at the fact that so many of our university teachers and researchers exist in a rather precarious world that is not captured by general impressions of university education. At this moment there are almost 500 sessional instructors at the University of Calgary, and they are responsible for delivering almost 800 half-course equivalents (HCE). The University of Calgary could not achieve its enrollment goals or deliver its programs without the contributions of our hardworking sessional instructors. The critical work done by sessionals is not very well compensated. In many cases, if a sessional instructor is fortunate enough to have a graduate teaching assistant, the graduate assistant may be making more money than the sessional who has overall responsibility for teaching of the course. That so many university instructors have no permanent employment or job security is a sad fact about our post secondary system, a fact that receives insufficient attention: it would be unconscionable if this review were to exacerbate this problem by leading to an increased reliance on those who work in such conditions.

The academic staff of the University of Calgary are deeply committed to providing our students with high quality education and our involvement with this review process has made clear that both students and employers recognize the value added by the education provided by Alberta's universities. Reports generated as part of this review make evident the satisfaction employers have in the quality of students who graduate from our institutions. We are particularly proud that more than 90% of our graduates find employment within six months of graduation and that more than 80% find work in "fields related to their discipline." Our academic staff are proud of the value of our degrees and have led the way in fostering experiential learning and the use of co-operative programs to enhance the educational experience of our students. While improvement is possible and to be desired it is vital to recognize the value added by university education today. Once again, we are fearful that cuts and reorganization may well have negative implications.

We do recognize the difficult economic situation in which Alberta finds itself and the importance of supporting our friends and neighbours who have lost their jobs or seen their economic prospects reduced. These are demanding times and in such times the City of Calgary deserves and needs a world class comprehensive research university. Indeed, in our current environment, all Albertans need to have strong universities that will help them to address new challenges and help the provincial economy move forward. More Albertans are likely to access universities than have done so in the past and it is essential that our universities are able to meet their needs and provide the foundation needed to allow Alberta's economy to recover. This review process will not serve this province and our citizens well if it damages the strong and vibrant universities that currently exist, and that Albertans deserve.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Stewart', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Stewart  
President

Cc: Honourable Demetrios Nicolaides, Minister of Advanced Education  
Carmen Baldwin-Dery, Alberta Advanced Education  
Kevin Kane, President, Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations