

## **Coalition of front-line university groups formed: a strong, new voice in higher education**

Protecting quality and reversing privatization are the goals of a new Ontario University Coalition.

TORONTO, Feb. 18 /CNW/ - All front-line groups at Ontario universities - students, staff and faculty - have joined together to put the collective strength of their voices behind a common message: that Ontario's university system is at a crossroads in providing accessible, affordable, quality education.

In absence of an immediate public investment in higher education, Ontario University Coalition members warn that the affordability, accessibility and quality of Ontario universities will be further threatened.

Ontario lags behind all other provinces in its support for universities. Coalition members will draw on their shared experience and resources to document the deteriorating student experience that results from government under-funding.

The coalition is concerned that inadequate public funding leads to creeping privatization by way of ever-increasing tuition fees and the growing influence of the private sector on our universities ranging from research and teaching to buildings and services. Coalition members say privatization does not reflect the value that generations of Ontarians have placed on a public higher education system.

Coalition members include the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), the Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario (CUPE Ontario), the Confederation of Ontario University Staff Associations (COUSA), the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF), the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance (OUSA), and the United Steelworkers.

The coalition will release a statement about what the university system needs from the 2010 Ontario Budget, but its ultimate focus is the next provincial election, when it aims to make the declining state of Ontario higher education an issue for voters when marking their ballots.

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