

# PRESS RELEASE

## The Mount Royal Faculty Association Rejects the Provincial Government's Misguided Attempts to Control Federal Research Funding.

(Calgary, Alberta, April 15, 2024) The MRFA is deeply concerned about Bill 18 and its implications for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The MRFA calls for the government to withdraw post-secondary institutions from the list of provincial entities whose federal funding, including research funding, is subject to vetting by provincial officials. The MRFA joins the [Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations' \(CAFA\) condemnation of this Bill](#).

The value of post-secondary institutions rests on the academic freedom of their academic staff, including free inquiry during research, the ability to publish challenging findings, and the ability to engage in critique. Bill 18 interferes with the academic freedom of MRU faculty members whose research may not align with the priorities or beliefs of the government or political officials. Indeed, the MRFA is deeply concerned about the detrimental effect that this proposal will have on research conducted by academic colleagues across our province. We are particularly troubled about the chilling impact Bill 18 will have on the work of Alberta researchers focused on climate change, the energy transition, and social justice issues.

While the Minister of Advanced Education Rajan Sawney [claims](#) that the legislation will have no effect on universities' ability to do research, Premier Smith is on record stating she believes the Federal government funds "[ideological](#)" research, which the Province wants to veto. Premier Smith has singled out the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) as a particular concern.

The Premier's remarks reveal that the Alberta Government suffers from some basic misconceptions about how Tri-Agency research funding is allocated to Canadian researchers: these grants are awarded by arms-length agencies through a competitive peer review process, and only those deemed the strongest application receive federal funding. The Trudeau government does not decide who receives grants.

The MRFA believes Bill 18, if enacted as announced, will have a negative impact on the amount and type of research that is conducted in the province. It will also negatively affect the futures of thousands of undergraduate and graduate students - students choose Alberta's post-secondary education opportunities because of the ground-breaking research opportunities available. If Bill 18 is enacted, these students will be denied opportunities to learn and train as the researchers of tomorrow.

Bill 18's many flaws underscore the Provincial Government's complete lack of consultation with stakeholders during the Bill's creation, their deeply insufficient understanding of the way that federal Tri-Agency funding is allocated to researchers, and their senseless disregard for the critical importance of academic freedom in our Province's post-secondary institutions.

The MRFA calls on the Alberta Government to immediately clarify its intentions with respect to federal research funding and to remove post-secondary institutions from Bill 18. As a sign of good faith, the MRFA also calls for the Minister of Advanced Education and the Premier to meet with the CAFA and to hear the concerns of Alberta university teachers and researchers.

To connect with Lee Easton, President of the Mount Royal Faculty Association, for additional comment on this important issue please email [president@mrfa.net](mailto:president@mrfa.net).

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