

# Turning the Page

**A NEW CHAPTER  
FOR ONTARIO'S  
POST-SECONDARY  
STUDENTS**

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# The Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario

With more than 350,000 members at 38 students' unions in all regions of the province, the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario is the voice of post-secondary students in Ontario. Our Federation represents students at the college, undergraduate and graduate levels, including full- and part-time students.

Algoma University Students' Union  
Association générale des  
étudiants et étudiantes du Collège  
Boréal

Brock University Graduate  
Students' Association

Carleton University Students'  
Association

Carleton University Graduate  
Students' Association

Association étudiante de la Cité  
collégiale

Student Association of George  
Brown College

Glendon College Student Union

University of Guelph Central  
Student Association

University of Guelph Graduate  
Students' Association

Lakehead University Student  
Union

Laurentian Association of Mature  
and Part-time Students

Laurentian University Graduate  
Students' Association

Laurentian University Students'  
General Association

Laurentian Students' Union at  
Barrie

Association des étudiantes  
et étudiants francophones de  
l'Université Laurentienne

McMaster University Graduate  
Students' Association

Nipissing University Student Union

Ontario College of Art and Design  
Student Union

Student Federation of the  
University of Ottawa

Graduate Students' Association  
des étudiant(e)s diplômé(e)s de  
l'Université d'Ottawa

Queen's University Society of  
Graduate and Professional  
Students

Ryerson Students' Union

Continuing Education Students'  
Association of Ryerson

Saint Paul University Students'  
Association

University of Toronto Scarborough  
Campus Students' Union

University of Toronto Graduate  
Students' Union

University of Toronto Students'  
Union

University of Toronto Mississauga  
Students' Union

Association of Part-Time  
Undergraduate Students of the  
University of Toronto

Trent University Central Student  
Association

University of Western Ontario  
Society of Graduate Students

Wilfrid Laurier University Graduate  
Students' Association

University of Windsor Students'  
Alliance

University of Windsor Graduate  
Students' Society

University of Windsor Organization  
of Part-time University Students

York Federation of Students

York University Graduate Students'  
Association

# Summary of Recommendations: Expenses

## Tuition Fees

Guarantee access to post-secondary education by reducing tuition fees for all students, including international students, and for all programs, to 2005 levels. Develop a long-term strategy for the progressive reduction of tuition fees in the province.

**Cost: Dependent upon implementation**

▷ **1 year plan: \$1.2 billion**

▷ **3 year plan:**

**\$0 in year 1**

**(16.3% reduction)**

(Reallocation of funds from Ontario Tuition Grant and provincial education tax credits.)

**\$500 million in years 2**

**and 3 (8.3% reduction**

**per year)**

Re-introduce post-residency fees in Ontario by reducing tuition fees for all graduate students in the research, thesis or dissertation-writing portions of their degrees by 50 per cent.

**Cost: \$134 million**

## OHIP for International Students

Make Ontario the most attractive province for international students to study, work, live and stay by re-integrating them into OHIP with no premium and a maximum three-month waiting period, as is consistent with all new Ontario residents.

**Cost: Program Dependent**

## Sexual Assault on Campus

Create a Sexual Assault Support division within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that would oversee institutional accountability measures, reporting and supports, including a long-term Sexual Assault Support Resource Fund that would allow campus groups and stakeholders to apply for funding for their campus, regional or provincially based support project.

**Cost: \$6 million**

# Summary of Recommendations: Savings & Revenue

## Sector Reform

### HEQCO

End funding for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

**Savings: \$5 million**

### Salary Cap

Implement a \$250,000 cap on university salaries and a \$200,000 cap on college salaries.

**Savings: \$17 million per year**

## Revenue options

### Income tax

Introduce a two per cent surtax on personal incomes over \$250,000.

**Revenue: \$1.3 billion per year**

### Corporate Taxes

Restore the corporate income tax rate back to 2009 levels from 11.5 per cent to 14 per cent and restore the capital tax for medium and large corporations to 0.3 per cent for general corporations and to 0.9 per cent for financial corporations.

**Revenue: \$3.9 billion per year**

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**Total savings & revenue: ~\$4.2B**



# Introduction

Students had reason to cheer in 2004, when the newly elected Ontario government under Premier Dalton McGuinty followed through on his highly popular promise to freeze tuition fees for all college and university students in the province. The move was seen as a welcome relief in a province where successive governments in the 1990's and early 2000's oversaw a tripling of the costs associated with attending post-secondary education, climbing from an average of \$1,464 in 1990 to \$4,141 in 2004.

Barely two years into his term, Premier McGuinty abruptly ended the tuition fee freeze, arguing that like milk and bread, the price of education must also rise with time. His announcement was not a sudden realization that the costs associated with operating colleges and universities increase every year, but rather an admission that the government no longer felt obliged to cover those rising costs. The result was a transfer of economic burden from the provincial government onto students and their families, one that continues to grow larger and more insurmountable every September.

Since 2006, tuition fees in Ontario have increased by as much as 80 per cent and are on course to double within the next few years. Differential fees for professional, graduate and international students – some of which are completely unregulated – register in the tens of thousands annually. Ontario students study in Canada's largest class sizes with the lowest student-teacher ratio, and for six consecutive years, Ontario has outpaced all other provinces as the most expensive place in Canada in which to pursue higher education.

This void of leadership at Queen's Park has resulted in a system of post-secondary education that is unaffordable, inaccessible, underfunded and overburdened. In an economy where over 70 per cent of newly posted jobs require the completion of post-secondary education, it is imperative that the provincial government drastically change course on funding formulas and tuition fee policy to guarantee access to college and university for every Ontarian.

Though Ontario has spent much of the past nine years taking too many steps back, students are proposing a handful of thoughtful and practical solutions that can bring us a few steps forward.

# Affordable & Accessible Campuses

## Guarantee access to post-secondary education by reducing tuition fees for all students

For six years in a row, Ontario has been ranked as the most expensive province in Canada in which to pursue post-secondary education. According to Statistics Canada, average tuition fees for the 2014-15 academic year were \$7,539 for undergraduate students, up from \$7,257 in 2013-14. For graduate students, fees increased to \$8,738, up from \$8,470 last year.

The continuing rise of tuition fees has been a decades-long trend under provincial governments of all political stripes. But even though Ontario students pay more than their counterparts in other provinces, they get less. Ontario's college and university students learn in the largest class sizes, have the worst student-teacher ratio and the lowest per-student funding allocation in all of Canada.

In 2013, the provincial government introduced a new four-year tuition fee framework. Under this framework, tuition fees can increase by three per cent for most programs and five per cent for graduate and professional programs.

By 2016-2017, tuition fees will have increased up to 108 per cent since the Liberals first took office in 2003.

As with previous frameworks, this new plan allows tuition fee increases in professional programs at a higher rate than other programs, compounding the already significant increases some programs saw in the 1990s and early 2000s. During this period, fees for law school tripled, fees for medicine nearly quadrupled, and fees for dentistry increased almost five fold. The sharp rise in professional program tuition fees has created significant barriers for low- and middle-income students looking to pursue legal, medical or dental education and training.

Tuition fees for international students remain unregulated and are often four to five times more expensive than domestic tuition fee rates.<sup>1</sup> Colleges and universities have been aggressively recruiting international students to make up for lost revenue as government funding diminishes

and tuition fee caps for domestic students limit private contributions. International students have faced increases of as much as 50 per cent in the last nine years.

Graduate students also face significant financial barriers to conducting their research and finishing their education in Ontario. In the 1990s, many universities began to end the practice of charging reduced tuition fee rates to graduate students engaged in the research, thesis or dissertation-writing portion of their degree programs, known commonly as post-residency fees. Since these students had completed their coursework and no longer used most university resources, many institutions recognized charging full tuition fees was both unnecessary and unfair. However, most universities today charge full tuition fees to graduate students who have completed their coursework, asking them to pay thousands of dollars annually to simply use a campus library card.

The Ontario government justifies tuition fee increases by pointing to financial assistance options that include tax credits, student loans, targeted grants programs and institutional scholarships and bursaries. These programs



## Enrolment by Socio-economic Background (2011)

### University:



are touted as ways to support students from marginalized communities to attend post-secondary education. But a look at enrolment data from Statistics Canada reveals a persistent socio-economic divide on college and university campuses. In 2011, 52 per cent of university enrolments came from the highest income quartile, while barely 10 per cent came from the lowest. The college student population during that same year, often lauded as more socio-economically diverse, saw 43 per cent of enrolment come from the highest income quartile, while just over 10 per cent came from the lowest.<sup>2</sup>

High tuition fees in Ontario have produced record-levels of debt and negatively impacted the ability of low- and middle-income students to access post-secondary education. Students who take on loans to attend college or university graduate with an average of \$27,000 of debt to repay, delaying important life decisions such as buying a home or vehicle, opening a business or starting a family.<sup>3</sup> Funding higher education by forcing students to take on staggering amounts of debt punishes those who do not have the financial means to cover the costs themselves. In some

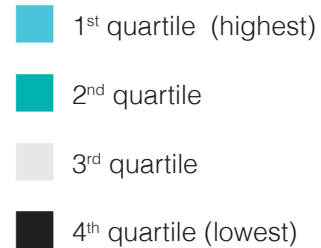
### College:



cases, a student who is made to borrow the maximum allowable government financial assistance will pay 50 per cent more for their education that a student who can pay those costs up front.

In 2004, the Liberal government made good on their promise to freeze tuition fees for all students in Ontario. Almost eleven years later, they will be remembered as the government that doubled the cost of going to college or university. A decade of tunnel-vision has created a province where ones best hope of a stable future rests in attending post-secondary education, yet accessing that education has never been more expensive. In order to ensure the economic strength of our province and guarantee financial stability for students and their families, Ontario must open a new chapter in higher education policy; a chapter that begins with a real tuition fee reduction for all students.

- 1 Association of Universities and Colleges Canada, "Tuition Fees by University 2012-2013."
- 2 Data requested as custom report from Statistics Canada, February 2014
- 3 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives-Ontario, "Making Every Job a Good Job," October 2013.



### Recommendation:

Guarantee access to post-secondary education by reducing tuition fees for all students, including international students, and for all programs, to 2005 levels. Develop a long-term strategy for the progressive reduction of tuition fees in the province.

### Cost: Dependent upon implementation

▷ **1 year plan: \$1.2 billion**

▷ **3 year plan:**

**\$0 in year 1  
(16.3% reduction)**

(Reallocation of funds from Ontario Tuition Grant and provincial education tax credits.)

**\$500 million in years 2  
and 3 (8.3% reduction  
per year)**

Re-introduce post-residency fees in Ontario by reducing tuition fees for all graduate students in the research, thesis or dissertation-writing portions of their degrees by 50 per cent.

**COST: \$134 million**

# Healthy & Equitable Campuses

## Make Ontario more attractive to international students by re-integrating them into public health insurance

In 1994, the Ontario government eliminated coverage for international students from the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP). Currently international students studying at universities must enroll in a private health insurance program – the University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) – which costs between \$700 and \$2,000 per year.<sup>1</sup> This for-profit health insurance plan provides limited health coverage that is not accepted universally by physicians, hospitals and clinics in Ontario. International college students are also required to pay for mandatory private health insurance plans that may not be universally accepted by health care providers and normally cost between \$500 and \$700 per year.<sup>2</sup>

International students are an integral part of college and university campuses, they make our institutions more diverse and make valuable contributions to the academic community. Not only is Ontario home to the largest population of

international students in Canada<sup>3</sup> but in the 2010 Ontario Budget, the provincial government set a goal of expanding international student enrolment by 50 per cent.<sup>4</sup> A goal they have met in recent years and continue to surpass annually.

The vast majority of international students remain in the province once they graduate and continue to participate in the economy and in their local communities. Between 2011 and 2016 immigration is estimated to account for 100 per cent of the net labour force growth in the country.<sup>5</sup> While international students live and work in Canada they pay both sales and income taxes, and contribute to the Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance. In 2010, international students in Ontario contributed almost \$3 billion

dollars to the Ontario economy, of which \$1.8 billion was contributed to the GDP creating over 29,000 jobs and over \$200 million in government revenue.<sup>6</sup>

International students not only have an incentive to study elsewhere based on lower tuition fees but other provinces including British Columbia, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia currently include international students in their provincial health insurance programs. In order for the province to remain competitive, immediate steps must be taken to ensure Ontario can continue to attract and retain international students.

We need only look to other provinces for models of international student integration into public health insurance that we can emulate or adapt for Ontario. Both the British Columbia Medical Services Plan and Manitoba Health do not charge any premiums for international students to be part of their provincial health plan, but do require a six-month

**International students contribute \$3 billion dollars to the Ontario economy annually.**

waiting period and health cards are issued for the duration of an international student's studies in Canada. In the province of Nova Scotia, Medical Services Insurance requires that an international student reside in the province for 12 consecutive months before they are issued a provincial health card. Immediate coverage in Nova Scotia is offered to international students who have a Research Assistant or Graduate Assistant position at their institution.

The Federation proposes that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care integrate international students into OHIP with no premium and a maximum three-month waiting period, as is consistent with all new Ontario residents. A vast majority of international students already work both on campus and off campus and are part of the Ontario Personal Income Tax System that contributes to the Ontario Health Premium. Charging a premium for integration would be taxing this population twice.

International students not only contribute over \$3 billion dollars to the Ontario economy annually, they create revenue-generating jobs and contribute to the growth of the Ontario economy. A vast majority of international students in Ontario remain in Canada after their studies, start families and continue to work and contribute to the economy. It is unfair that while studying and working in Ontario they are not afforded the same health care as their domestic peers.

### **Recommendation:**

Make Ontario the most attractive province for international students to study, work, live and stay by re-integrating them into OHIP with no premium and a maximum three-month waiting period, as is consistent with all new Ontario residents.

### **Cost: Program Dependent**

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- 1 UHIP, 2014.
  - 2 Institutional fee summaries, 2013.
  - 3 Roslyn and Kunin, 2012.
  - 4 Government of Ontario, 2010.
  - 5 Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Government of Canada, 2012.
  - 6 Roslyn and Kunin, 2012.

# Safe Campuses

## Make Ontario colleges and universities leaders in sexual assault prevention

One in five women experience sexual assault while attending a post-secondary institution.<sup>1</sup> It is no understatement that sexual assault continues to be a serious issue at every single college and university campus in Ontario.

Campuses are a reflection of greater society, experiencing similar systemic issues as are experienced at home and in the workplace. However, when it comes to sexual assault, campuses are unique. Post-secondary students experience a disproportionate number of sexual assaults as compared to the general population.<sup>2</sup> Universities and colleges possess unique tools to prevent, mitigate and address sexual assault. From lecture halls to dorm rooms, universities and colleges have numerous avenues to implement mandatory consent education programs and clear rules and procedures around preventing and dealing with sexual assault.

Unfortunately, universities and colleges have remained largely inactive around the issue of sexual assault on campus. In

fact, it is students who have actually been at the forefront of combatting sexual assault in post-secondary institutions. Since 1981, the Canadian Federation of Students has led the charge against sexual assault on campus and rape culture through the *No Means No* campaign.



**1 in 5 women will be sexually assaulted while attending a post secondary institution.**

Students across the province have demonstrated that they take this issue seriously. From the York Federation of Students implementation of mandatory equity and consent training for thousands of students during orientation, to the Ryerson Students' Union Sexual Assault Support Line serving students every day, students are working on the front lines of this issue. Unfortunately, despite

this leadership, college and university administrators have resisted supporting this work in the past.

In fact, in 2013, the problem became so widespread that the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario produced an information sheet for students' unions on how to respond to administrators' lack of will to address sexual assault.<sup>3</sup> At some universities and colleges, students were told that by talking about sexual assault it

would draw unwanted attention to the fact that it happens on campus, or that students weren't mature enough for that subject matter. This can no longer be an acceptable response. It has not been for students and should not be for the Ontario government.

As was recognized in The Toronto Star investigative report this year, many campuses are ill-prepared to handle instances

of sexual assault, and in many cases, aggravate the situation. This is due to the fact there are few policies in place, varied and underfunded support systems and no accountability within the sector.

In fact, in November 2014, only 9 out of 102 Canadian colleges and universities had sexual assault policies.<sup>4</sup> There is also no oversight or accountability when it comes to sexual assault in the post-secondary education sector. Universities and colleges are expected to handle complaints of sexual assault, and when they don't, students have nowhere else to turn. It is also important to acknowledge that many students coming into Ontario's colleges and universities are simply uneducated or unaware of concepts of consent and the true definition of sexual assault.

Action must be taken to ensure that steps towards mandatory preventative education, proper policy and procedure, well-funded and varied support resources and accountability

measures are all implemented. This is the only way that we can combat sexual assault on campus in a meaningful way.

### **Recommendation:**

Create a Sexual Assault Support division within the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that would oversee institutional accountability measures, reporting and supports, including a long-term Sexual Assault Support Resource Fund that would allow campus groups and stakeholders to apply for funding for their campus, regional or provincially based support project.

### **Cost: \$6 million**

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- 1 Toronto Star, "Involving 'bystanders' to fight sexual violence on campus," March, 2014
  - 2 Statistics Canada. Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends. 2013.
  - 3 Campus Tool Kit on Sexual Violence, Canadian Federation of Students- Ontario, 2013
  - 4 Toronto Star, "Canadian post-secondary schools failing schools failing sexual assault victims," November, 2014

# Paying for our Priorities: Savings & Revenue-Generation

The Ontario Budget is a reflection of the priorities of a given government at a given time. Unfortunately, when reviewing how to provide high quality public services for people in Ontario, the revenue options available to the government are often ignored. Students understand the importance of not only proposing thoughtful and practical solutions to the challenges the post-secondary education sector faces, but also being honest about how we can pay for those solutions. The cost of the proposals contained with this submission could easily be addressed through implementing certain cost-saving measures and improving the fairness and progressivity of the Ontario tax system.

## Sector Reform Savings

### HEQCO

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) is an arms-length body that undertakes research on post-secondary education in Ontario. HEQCO should provide much-needed insight into pressures in the post-secondary education sector and policy options and alternatives that can improve or strengthen the college and university education system. Instead, HEQCO has consistently prioritized research that aligns with the governments' agenda for sector transformation and refused to explore the concerns raised by students, staff and faculty about the state of college and university education in Ontario.

The council's research practices have also come into question as researchers subcontracted

by their institutions to work on HEQCO projects have sounded the alarm about limits to their academic freedom. In particular, researchers at Queen's University publicly condemned HEQCO when the results of their research were significantly altered to fit with the policy recommendations desired by the council and the university. The authors were not even informed about the changes prior to the release of the findings.

At the same time, HEQCO has ignored the need to do research on important issues like the impact of high tuition fees, long completion times, low retention rates, the proliferation of contract faculty and other issues, despite calls from students, staff and faculty to investigate them further.

### Recommendation:

End funding for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario.

**Savings: \$5 million**

## Salary Cap

While chronic government underfunding has led to the privatization of post-secondary education by stealth, it remains important that colleges and universities are transparent and accountable for their use of public funds and tuition fees paid by students. Students support the capping of executive compensation at colleges and universities. Capping college and university administration salaries would not only redirect money within the system to benefit students, but would ensure a balance between reasonable compensation and institutional expenses.

### Recommendation:

Implement a \$250,000 cap on university salaries and a \$200,000 cap on college salaries.

**Savings: \$17 million  
per year**

## Revenue Generating Options

Investing in post-secondary education to make sure that Ontario has a system of high quality, affordable and accessible college and university education would have positive impacts on health, community development, civic engagement and the economy. By increasing the province's revenue, students' recommendations and other investments could be made to improve public, post-secondary education and other public services in Ontario.

Students applaud the steps made in the 2012 Ontario Budget that introduced a surtax on personal incomes of \$500,000 and froze the planned cut for the fiscal year, recognizing the need to retain this revenue. Building on these measures by including more

people under this surtax and restoring corporate taxes could substantially build on the province's ability to maintain and expand public services in Ontario.

### Recommendation:

Introduce a two per cent surtax on personal incomes over \$250,000.

**Revenue: \$1.3 billion per year**

### Recommendation:

Restore the corporate income tax rate back to 2009 levels from 11.5 per cent to 14 per cent and restore the capital tax for medium and large corporations to 0.3 per cent for general corporations and to 0.9 per cent for financial corporations.

**Revenue: \$3.9 billion per year**

**Total savings & revenue:  
~\$4.2 billion**

# Conclusion: Three Steps Forward After Many Steps Backward

The Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario has always believed that post-secondary education is a fundamental human right that should be free of any and all social, political and financial barriers. One's prospects of self-improvement and the promise of a bright, meaningful and stable future should never rely on their ability – or lack thereof – to access enough financial leverage to pay for their tuition fees and other associated costs. Yet today we are farther away from this ideal than we were in 2004, when the government instituted a province-wide freeze on college and university tuition fees – a freeze implemented after the massive tuition fee increases and funding cuts introduced by previous governments in the 1990s and 2000s.

Since the tuition fee freeze was lifted, we have seen deterioration in both access and quality of education, but also in access to opportunity and quality of life for an entire generation. Students today face a society far more expensive than generations before them, a labour market far more dismal and a future that is much more uncertain.

A leadership vacuum and pocket-book politics have prevented governments and parties of all political stripes from making bold and visionary decisions to guarantee access to higher education, preferring instead to rely on ineffective and unfair financial assistance programs and blanket tax credits that go to homes that never needed them in the first place. Our system of post-secondary education faces profound challenges in the years ahead. How do we maintain quality as our institutions continue to grow and serve more students? How do we create more reliable, stable and sustainable funding models for higher education? How do colleges and universities prepare students for the workforce without compromising their role as centres for inquiry and critical reflection?

We can begin to tackle these challenges by making college and university more affordable for all students, attracting international students to Ontario campuses by guaranteeing access to public health care and making our institutions of higher education leaders in preventing and addressing sexual assault and gender-based violence.

These recommendations cannot answer all the questions we need to ask about our current system of college and university education, but they can be a start. After nine years of stepping backward, let's forge a new path by taking three bold, thoughtful, practical and moral steps forward together.











Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario  
Fédération canadienne des étudiantes et étudiants-Ontario