



Ontario Liberal Party Responds to Students

This document is the Ontario Liberal Party Response to the 2007 Election Questionnaire of the Canadian Federation of Students.

Mr. McGuinty chose not to directly answer the questions posed by students, but instead submitted a written response. His response was divided up and categorised under the appropriate sections. All responses below are taken directly from Mr. McGuinty's response, except the notations in parentheses. The original response is appended to the end of this document in its entirety.

Accessibility

1. Do you agree that education is a right for every willing and qualified student?
We want and need our universities to help us deliver on three important issues: accessibility, affordability and quality.

2. Recently, concern has emerged over the adequacy of student financial assistance to meet students' financial needs, especially in professional programmes where fees have increased dramatically. From the list below, please circle what, in your opinion, are the best means of addressing this problem (you may circle more than one):
 - a. Reduce tuition fees.
 - b. Double funding for the province-wide, up-front need-based grant system that would provide additional funds beyond the maximum annual student aid awards currently available.
 - c. Adjust the parental income tables used to assess the amount of money parents are expected to contribute to their child's education before receiving public assistance.
 - d. Extend financial aid to part-time students, who are currently excluded from accessing OSAP.
 - e. Enforce the regulations on ancillary fees to stop tuition fee increases through the back-door.

Like the CFS, we understand that improving access to quality postsecondary education means action on a wide variety of fronts. For students to succeed, they need to be able to rely upon a broad range of services to make their educational dreams a reality. For some, that means having better access to affordable housing and daycare, or a more efficient public transit system.

3. Do you agree that an immediate tuition fee freeze for all college and university programmes is a critical step toward increasing accessibility, decreasing student debt, and addressing unmet need for student financial assistance?

We have made progress on affordability as well by delivering on our commitment to put in place a fully funded tuition freeze for two years, making ours the first government in Ontario history to freeze tuition.

We have also instituted a fully regulated tuition framework — one that limits increases to an average of five per cent overall, which means \$100 per year for most college students and \$200 for most university students.

We understand that accessibility is about more than stable and predictable tuition rates. That is why we have also doubled student aid, and brought back grants for those who need it most, with more than 120,000 low-income students now receiving grants. We have implemented additional programs to help Aboriginal students, Francophone students, students with disabilities and students who are the first in their family to attend a postsecondary institution. We recently extended support for crown wards in their third and fourth years of study that covers 50 per cent of their total tuition costs up to a maximum of \$3,000. Moving forward, Ontario Liberals will provide parents with a grant at the beginning of the school year instead of making them wait for a postsecondary education tax credit payable at the end of the year.

Ontario Liberals have recently shared our plan to move Ontario forward by laying out our road map to further the progress we have already made, including commitments to:

- **Provide a new textbook and technology grant of \$300 per student to help them get started each year at school.**
- **Work with the federal government to give students twice the amount of time before they must start repaying their student loans.**
- **Introduce a special distance grant for students from remote areas.**

4. Seventy-five per cent of Ontarians support reducing tuition fees for students in Ontario. Do you agree with Ontarians that tuition fees should be reduced?

We understand that accessibility is about more than stable and predictable tuition rates.

5. Is your party prepared to reject income contingent loan repayment schemes in favour of enhancing grant-based financial aid?

[No response given.]

6. Do you support reinstating post-residency fees, which are reduced tuition fees paid by graduate students upon completion of course work, during the independent research and thesis writing stages of their degrees?

[No response given.]

7. International Students are currently charged much higher fees—often triple the fees charged to domestic students—for attending post-secondary institutions in Ontario. Do you support charging International Students more for the same education?

[No response given.]

8. Currently in Canada, Ontario universities are the third worst funded per capita, and colleges the second worst. Even under previous multi-year funding announcements per capita funding for Ontario's post-secondary education system will remain below the national average. Are you committed to bringing funding above the national average so Ontario can be a leader in learning?

Education has always been a top priority for Ontario Liberals. That is why we introduced our Reaching Higher plan — the biggest investment in postsecondary education in 40 years.

Ontario Liberals remain committed to working toward the national average in per-capita funding for postsecondary education.

Ontario Liberals have increased operating funding by 40 per cent for universities and 35 per cent for colleges. We have invested almost \$1 billion in new capital funding for Ontario's colleges and universities. And our Quality Improvement Fund is being used to hire more faculty, more staff, and to update our libraries, lab equipment and classrooms.

9. As you may be aware, many students studying at northern and rural institutions are not funded by the province, and as a result those institutions are financially disadvantaged. Will you ensure that all students in the system receive fair funding and that no institutions are encumbered by unfunded students?

Ontario Liberals remain committed to working toward the national average in per-capita funding for postsecondary education.

Introduce a special distance grant for students from remote areas.

10. Private post-secondary institutions have higher loan default rates and higher tuition fees than public institutions. Do you agree that private post-secondary institutions draw on public resources that would be better spent on Ontario's public post-secondary institutions?

[No response given.]

11. The average age of a university building in Ontario is 30 years, and many facilities are desperately in need of repair. How much funding will you provide for facilities renewal in Ontario's post-secondary institutions?

We know there is more to do and we will continue to invest in higher education to address, among other things, the physical space and repair needs of Ontario universities.

Quality

12. There is a severe faculty shortage facing Ontario colleges and universities. What, in your opinion, is the best means of addressing this problem (you may circle more than one answer):
- provide long-term stable funding based on a per-student spending ratio that reflects at a minimum the national average
 - hire more contract faculty
 - hire more teaching assistants
 - make it more difficult for students to pursue a Ph.D. programme by increasing tuition fees for all graduate programmes
 - make it easier for students to pursue a Ph.D. programme by eliminating tuition fees for all graduate programmes

Accessibility and affordability lose their value if the quality of education provided in our postsecondary institutions does not reach its full potential.

Ontario Liberals remain committed to working toward the national average in per-capita funding for postsecondary education.

Ontario Liberals have increased operating funding by 40 per cent for universities and 35 per cent for colleges. We have invested almost \$1 billion in new capital funding for Ontario's colleges and universities. And our Quality Improvement Fund is being used to hire more faculty, more staff, and to update our libraries, lab equipment and classrooms.

13. Recently, the caliber of corporately-funded research has been called into question. Efforts have been made to silence faculty who have publicly criticised corporate interests, private donors have attempted to influence college and university curricula and limit academic freedom. Do you support ending the imposition of public-private partnerships as a condition of public research funding?

[No response given.]

Accountability

14. Illegal ancillary fees are being charged to students at colleges across the province, effectively raising tuition fees through the back door. Will you enforce the ancillary fee regulations that prevent colleges and universities from charging students ancillary fees for core operational costs and academic services?

[No response given.]

15. In British Columbia, a council on transfer credits exists to ensure accountability in transferring credits between public universities and between public colleges and universities. Do you support similar measures to improve accountability in Ontario?

[No response given.]

16. Currently part-time college workers do not have the right to unionise despite the recent supreme court of Canada decision that guarantees all workers the right to collective bargaining. Do you support the right of part-time college workers to form a union?

[No response given.]

17. University and college administrations have a history of intervening to prevent students from organising on campus. Would you support legislation protecting the autonomy of students to organise and collect membership fees?

[No response given.]

Equality and Equity

18. During the 1990s the government banned part-time students from eligibility for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Those barred from access to public financial aid programmes are often forced to rely more heavily on private loans, which have high rates of interest. Do you support part-time students' access to OSAP?

[No response given.]

19. In the early 1990's, the government disqualified international students from being eligible for the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP). Do you support reinstating international student eligibility for OHIP?

[No response given.]

20. Without adequate child care subsidies and bursaries, post-secondary education is more burdensome for students with parental responsibilities. Do you support the restoration of childcare bursaries and implementation of a provincial childcare strategy?

Like the CFS, we understand that improving access to quality postsecondary education means action on a wide variety of fronts. For students to succeed, they need to be able to rely upon a broad range of services to make their educational dreams a reality. For some, that means having better access to affordable housing and daycare, or a more efficient public transit system.

Since 2003, Ontario Liberals have created over 22,000 new child care spaces, and we are committed to the implementation of full-day kindergarten for Ontario children. Not only does this ensure a seamless and effective early learning program for all four and five year olds — it also has the effect of freeing up over 20,000 spaces and 8,000 subsidies for children under the age of four.

21. Rent is one of the most costly non education related expenses for students. If elected will your party support investments in the creation of quality public housing for low-income earners?

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Ontario Liberals have made up significant ground in the area of affordable housing. Since 2003, we have created 35,000 new housing allowances, funded nearly 20,000 new affordable housing units, and created the Rent Bank, which has prevented over 9,600 evictions. And, to keep moving forward, Ontario Liberals are also committing to the creation of a long-term housing strategy for the province.

22. Students rely heavily on public transit for their transportation needs. Do you support a provincial subsidy for local transit agencies so that public transit is affordable for college and university students?

Like the CFS, we understand that improving access to quality postsecondary education means action on a wide variety of fronts. For students to succeed, they need to be able to rely upon a broad range of services to make their educational dreams a reality. For some, that means having better access to affordable housing and daycare, or a more efficient public transit system.

When it comes to public transit, we feel the best way to ensure we have a high quality, affordable transit system is to invest significantly in all systems across the province. That is why we transferred two cents of the gas tax to municipalities for public transit. Eighty-six transit systems in 104 communities received \$313 million this year alone and \$701 million since 2003. Over the next five years, these municipalities will receive more than \$1.4 billion for public transit. This includes support for extending Toronto's subway to York University and beyond.

As a result of the \$4.9 billion we have invested in public transit since 2003, annual ridership has increased by 65 million trips — last year it increased by an astounding 23 million trips alone. However, Ontario Liberals strive for further progress. In June, we launched MoveOntario 2020 as part of our climate change plan. MoveOntario 2020 is the largest transit plan in Canadian history — a \$17.5 billion investment in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton. Upon its completion, Ontario Liberals will have created or expanded 902 kilometers of rapid transit — equivalent to taking 300 million car trips off the roads each year.

23. Do you support an immediate and mandatory increase of the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 per hour?

Increasing the minimum wage is something Ontario Liberals have long understood as vital to expanding opportunity in this province. We have increased the minimum wage every year during our mandate — after 10 years of no increases under the previous governments. Since Ontario Liberals have been in power, the minimum wage has increased from \$6.85 to \$8.00 and, as a result, we now have the highest minimum wage of any province in Canada. Our Budget 2007 included a plan to continue incremental increases in the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010.

24. Any other remarks?

[See full response attached.]



September 21, 2007

Ms. Jen Hassum, Chairperson
Canadian Federation of Students: Ontario Election
900–180 Bloor Street West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 2V6

Dear Ms. Hassum:

Thank you very much for your correspondence regarding education in Ontario. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your membership about the progress we have made in improving higher education in our province, and how we intend to keep moving Ontario forward, together.

Education has always been a top priority for Ontario Liberals. That is why we introduced our Reaching Higher plan — the biggest investment in postsecondary education in 40 years. This plan has allowed us to move forward after years of conflict and cuts under the previous Conservative government, and the NDP before them. Our investment over the last four years in postsecondary education alone surpasses what the two previous governments invested in more than 12 years.

Ontario Liberals remain committed to working toward the national average in per-capita funding for postsecondary education. We want and need our universities to help us deliver on three important issues: accessibility, affordability and quality.

In four short years, we have made big strides in accessibility. There are now 86,000 more students — a 22 per cent increase since 2003 — in our postsecondary institutions. We understand that accessibility is about more than stable and predictable tuition rates. That is why we have also doubled student aid, and brought back grants for those who need it most, with more than 120,000 low-income students now receiving grants. We have implemented additional programs to help Aboriginal students, Francophone students, students

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We have made progress on affordability as well by delivering on our commitment to put in place a fully funded tuition freeze for two years, making ours the first government in Ontario history to freeze tuition. This is in stark contrast to the 50 per cent increase in university tuition fees under the NDP and the 84 per cent increase under the Conservatives. Under our Reaching Higher plan, for every \$1 students invest through tuition, the government invests \$3. We have also instituted a fully regulated tuition framework — one that limits increases to an average of five per cent overall, which means \$100 per year for most college students and \$200 for most university students.

Accessibility and affordability lose their value if the quality of education provided in our postsecondary institutions does not reach its full potential. That is why we have worked diligently over the last four years to repair the damage caused by the lack of funding from the previous NDP and Conservative governments. Ontario Liberals have increased operating funding by 40 per cent for universities and 35 per cent for colleges. We have invested almost \$1 billion in new capital funding for Ontario's colleges and universities. And our Quality Improvement Fund is being used to hire more faculty, more staff, and to update our libraries, lab equipment and classrooms.

We know there is more to do and we will continue to invest in higher education to address, among other things, the physical space and repair needs of Ontario universities. Ontario Liberals have recently shared our plan to move Ontario forward by laying out our road map to further the progress we have already made, including commitments to:

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When it comes to public transit, we feel the best way to ensure we have a high-quality, affordable transit system is to invest significantly in all systems across the province. That is why we transferred two cents of the gas tax to municipalities for public transit. Eighty-six transit systems in 104 communities received \$313 million this year alone and \$701 million since 2003. Over the next five years, these municipalities will receive more than \$1.4 billion for public transit. This includes support for extending Toronto's subway to York University and beyond.

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For the past four years, we have worked hard and we have worked together. After so many years of conflict, cuts and division under first the NDP, and then the Conservatives, Ontario is finally moving forward.

The work we have accomplished, however, and our future progress are at risk. For example, the Conservatives have no plan to ensure affordability for postsecondary education. The CFS and Ontario residents should question if they would continue where they left off after deregulating tuition during their previous term in office. The NDP say one thing, but do another — they voted against the Ontario Child Benefit, raising social assistance rates, new child care spaces, and grants for college and university students.

We believe Ontarians deserve better. We have a responsibility to strengthen our public services, not tear them apart. We are at a watershed moment and Ontarians have an important decision to make. By choosing Ontario Liberals, you are choosing to keep moving forward, together. Or you can chose to vote for one of the other parties, and end up with another Conservative government, with the same failed approach to postsecondary education and other vital public services such as health care and housing, child care and publicly funded education — an approach that will only take us backwards.

Ms. Hassum, thanks again for bringing forward the questions of the CFS. I hope to be able to count on the support of the members of your federation so that we can continue to move Ontario forward, together.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dalton McGuinty
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Premier