

February 7 Day of Action

Joint statement by UofT students' unions and campus trade unions

Since tuition fees doubled in the 1990s, the federal and provincial governments have continued their attack on the affordability and accessibility of post-secondary education, relentlessly increasing the gap between funding and fees. Not only are tuition fees in Ontario much higher than in other Canadian provinces, but the McGuinty administration's deafness to community outcry belies its professed commitment to quality of education and equality of educational opportunity.

The University of Toronto has been complicit in this by raising tuition fees, especially for undergraduate students, increasing the financial burden of acquiring a post-secondary education. Furthermore, it has done little to address the symptoms of government underfunding, such as class overcrowding, diminished teaching assistant support, and increasing competition for decreasing financial aid.

In addition to educational quality, and reflective of a larger trend toward the downloading of social services and support, the University has abdicated its responsibility to its students, teachers, and workers in other ways. It has begun using peer grading as a substitute for hiring teaching assistants. It does not adequately support its student parents, and has treated its childcare staff unfairly. It has allowed some rogue departments to violate consistently a number of the collective agreements in place between labour unions and the University. It has shown little strength in maintaining a separation between corporations and the academy. Most egregiously, it has neglected its duty to act as an advocate for students with the provincial and federal governments.

We demand of the federal and provincial governments recognition of and responsiveness to our concerns. We demand to be treated with respect and generosity. We, the students, teachers, and employees of the UofT, call on this institution to be an advocate for equity and social justice here, on this campus, starting with us. We demand that the University rise to its own rhetoric to support public, quality education, family friendliness, and equitable employment. We demand, above all, transparency and honesty at all levels of University and provincial governance.

Furthermore, we demand that the relevant levels of government take action in the following specific ways:

1. Declare a moratorium on all tuition fee increases.
2. Provide more funding for post-secondary education, and for financial aid in the form of grants, not loans.
3. Increase funds for childcare.
4. Provide BIUs to universities for international graduate students.
5. Erase the gap between domestic and international students' health care premiums.

We also demand that the University of Toronto take action in the following specific ways:

1. Declare a moratorium on tuition fee increases, and aggressively lobby the federal and provincial governments to provide more funds for post-secondary education and for financial aid in the form of grants, not loans.
2. Plan and implement a robust and meaningful childcare program for students, faculty, and all UofT employees.
3. Alleviate the burden of increased health care premiums charged to international students and their dependents.
4. Aggressively lobby the government to provide BIUs for international students.
5. Commit to increasing the quality of education at the University of Toronto throughout the graduate expansion plan by reducing tutorial and class sizes, increasing TA support for faculty, and maintaining a robust program of TA training.
6. Make all campus buildings safe for workers and students.

As signatories of this statement, we declare our dedication to the values expressed herein, and vow to continue to push for positive change at the University of Toronto and in the Ontario and Federal governments. On February 7, 2007, we will unite in solidarity to demand respect for students, faculty, and workers.

Signed by:

University of Toronto Students' Union (formerly SAC)
Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students
Arts and Science Students' Union
Victoria University Students' Administrative Council
Graduate Students' Union
CUPE Local 3902, TAs and sessionals
CUPE Local 3907, OISE graduate assistants
CUPE Local 2484, UofT childcare staff
CUPE Local 3261, UofT maintenance staff
CUPE Local 1230, UofT library workers
United Steelworkers Local 1998, UofT administrative staff

Wednesday February 7, 2007

11:30am: gather at Con Hall

noon: march through campus

1pm: rally at Queen's Park

