



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO EDUCATION WORKERS

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Executive Committee

22 January 2019

Chair:
Jess Taylor

Ford's Tuition Cuts, Program Cancellation and Removal of Mandatory Student Fees
Targets Low-Income Students and Equity-Seeking Groups

Secretary-Treasurer:
Amy Conwell

Official Statement

Vice Chair, Unit 1:
Jeremy Rothschild

On Thursday 18 January 2019, the Ford Government announced a 10% tuition cut for students, cancellation of the free tuition program for low-income students, and removal of mandatory student fees. While at first glance some students may only recognize the drop in tuition, these cuts have a huge negative impact on the University community, workers at the university, low-income students, and students who rely on student groups to advocate for their rights on campus. With no increase to university funding promised by the Ontario Government, a 10% tuition cut will restrict the finances of the university which in turn has implications for workers' collective bargaining, students' learning conditions, and the increasing commodification of the university education system.

Vice Chair, Unit 3:
Kristin Cavoukian

Vice Chair, Unit 5:
Glenna Kramer

Vice Chair, Colleges:
Merlin Charles

*Communications/
Recording Secretary:*
Fang Xi Lin (*pro tem*)

Change: 10% Tuition Cut

Internal Liaison Officer:
Hamish Russel

Who's Impacted?

Low-income students, workers on campus, the student body as a whole

External Liaison Officer:
Mahdi Zamani

How?

Reducing tuition and changing the fees structure without improving the post-secondary funding formula guarantees that students will see this change reflected in the quality of education and campus services. Ford seems to believe that publicly funded institutions can do more with less, which is unrealistic, dangerous and only ever hurts those in the positions of greatest need.

Grievance Officer:
Jamie Ashby

Executive Director:

Wayne Dealy

The decrease in fees for individuals is not significant enough to allow students to graduate debt-free, be able to reduce their workload at part-time or full-time jobs while studying, or significantly lessen the financial stress that contributes to abyssal state of mental health on campus. This decrease will have a huge impact on the financial situation of universities and push them to cut services, create more contentious rounds of collective bargaining with workers, and continue to monetize their institutions, which should primarily be places of learning and research.

Staff Representatives:

Rebecca Strung

Tiffany Balducci

Tamara Williams

Change: Free-Tuition Program for Low Income Students

Who's Impacted?

Low-income students

How?

Ontario's previous OSAP model gave funding to students with low-income up to their full

tuition covered, but the Ford Government's changes will saddle students with student loans. This change targets students who already are struggling financially and provides another barrier to education for this group.

On 1 January 2017 and 4 September 2017, the Federal and Provincial Governments removed the tuition tax-credits for students and created the free-tuition program in lieu of these credits. There has been no indication of a return of this program to offset the cost of tuition for students.

Change: Removal of Mandatory Student Fees

Who's Impacted?

Student groups, unions, and clubs deemed to be outside of "campus wellness services"

How?

This change specifically targets LGBT and other equity-based campus groups and draws a distinction that such groups are not part of "campus wellness" services. For many LGBT students, such groups are safe havens in terms of mental health, emotional support, self-discovery and community building. Making their funding non-mandatory almost guarantees that many will be defunded and become unable to provide the programming that many students rely upon.

Our campus organizations, clubs, groups, and unions are vital to university communities and some of the only places where students can engage in democracy, feel supported as equity-seekers, belong to a community, and have their rights taken seriously. Creating a distinction between health and wellness services and these groups ignores the toll that equity-seekers experience on their mental and physical health when they are unsupported in the university community.

Change: Removal of the Six-Month Grace Period for Student Loans

Who's Impacted?

Low-income students, any students who need OSAP loans to cover tuition

How?

Being able to defer student loan payments is one of the mechanisms which allow low-income students to access post-secondary education. Removing that mechanism will create barriers to access, disproportionately increase the financial burden on low-income and international students, and guarantee a higher drop-out rate as students will not be able to juggle their rising debt with their need to make ends meet. As students enter a world where precarious employment is the norm, they will now have to immediately face their student debt, which will begin to accumulate interest instantly.

CUPE 3902 refuses to accept the careless nature of these decisions, which ignore the reality of most students' economic situation. The workers we represent, many of which are also students, should not have the conditions of their workplace restricted by these cuts, and the students on campus have a right to vibrant campus life. The changes to the OSAP funding and loan structure target students who need financial support the most and add stress to new workers as they enter the workforce from university.

We urge our members and students at universities to speak out against these cuts and mobilize. We invite our members to protest the changes to OSAP at 2 p.m. on [Friday 25 January at Yonge-Dundas Square](#).