

Let's Future-Proof Ontario By Reducing Barriers And Promoting Equal Opportunities For All Students

My "Take Flight" program for post-secondary education will make it more accessible for all Ontarians, not just higher-income earners

As a former Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, I am extremely concerned about access to post-secondary education as well as the mounting pressures being placed on students as they pursue higher education and after they have completed their studies. Doug Ford is pushing post-secondary education out of reach for so many.

Cuts from the Ford government have created obstacles and are hurting students:

- In their first budget, the Ford government slashed more than \$750 million in funding from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities. This was one of the first things to go;
- The Ford government eliminated free tuition for low- and middle-income students;
- The Ford government is forcing students to be charged interest on OSAP during the 6-month grace period;
- Approximately 1.5% of the funding for colleges and universities from the province is currently tied to "Ford's performance outcomes". This is how the Ford government is planning to hold our universities and colleges hostage in their negotiations;
- The Ford government implemented student opt out of non-mandatory fees, which is putting many campus clubs and programs for students at risk, while saving little real dollars for students

Housing is becoming unaffordable for students and young people starting their adult lives. Almost 90% of low-income earners spend more than 30% of their income on rent. In the last year alone, rents rose by 10% in Ontario's urban centers, while your average salary grew less than 3%. Anxiety about the future is at its highest in decades, as young Canadian students are uncertain about whether they can afford to study.

The average Ontario student now graduates with \$28,000 in debt (and this was after receiving new support from the previous Liberal government.) This debt figure will almost double thanks to the Ford government's policies. Students are finding it harder to make ends meet. Some are just barely hanging on. Many students are worried about how they can afford to learn the skills required for the workplace of the future.

My education policy would create opportunity for younger generations:

- Restore every single dollar that has been cut by Doug Ford from postsecondary access (that amounts to \$750M) – It's an investment in our future;
- Introduce the "Take Flight" program to help launch young people to a successful future:

- **Improve the on-campus experience** by restoring integral student services supported by fees approved democratically by students and student unions;
- **Commit to covering mental health care** for all youth under 30 with OHIP+, which will help give our young people the support they need to build the Ontario of tomorrow;
- **Introduce a grace period of 2 years for interest-free repayment of student loans.** The government of Ontario should support its students by empowering them to achieve financial sustainability from the moment they leave post-secondary;
- **Permanently remove +1% over prime rate for student debt.** We need to help the next generation achieve financial sustainability so they can become the best they can be, faster;
- **Empower students to graduate with less student debt**, not be weighed down by it. Our students will be given the best opportunity to take flight as soon as they graduate and get started in their careers and life.
- **Affordable student housing is a real need.** Inclusionary zoning for student housing development will help students find a decent place to live close to universities and colleges;
- **Co-living program** to pair seniors with students.