



City Hall Office
Councillor's Row
110 Laurier Avenue W
Ottawa, ON
City Hall | K2P 2H9
613-580-2400, ext. 28490
capitalward@ottawa.ca

Bureau de l'Hôtel de Ville
Rang du conseiller
110 Avenue Laurier O
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Hôtel de Ville | K2P 2H9
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January 28th, 2019

TO: The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

CC: The Honourable Merrilee Fullerton
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
Mowat Block 3rd Flr
900 Bay St
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Re: 'For the Students' Announcement

Dear Premier Ford,

I am writing to you today not just as a City Councillor, but as a former post-secondary education (PSE) student, a former president of the Carleton University Students Association, and a former academic contract worker. Your government's recent announcement on PSE is concerning for students, academic workers, and ultimately the people of Ontario.

The introduction of American style 'right to work' rules for Ontario student organizations threatens the provision of crucial student-run businesses, services, and programs, such as u-pass transit programs (like the U-Pass program I helped establish here in Ottawa), student health benefits, campus food banks, LGBTQ+ centres, women's centres, campus newspapers and radio stations. Allowing students to opt-out of paying dues and fees to student organizations is not an enhancement of choice, it is an invitation to undermine collective structures established for common benefit that previous generations worked hard to establish.

The 10% reduction in tuition fees your government is proposing is unfunded, and so it forces universities and colleges to make up the difference. This represents a de facto funding cut to PSE institutions. This cut will further reinforce trends towards precarious contract work replacing well-paid and secure jobs, towards ever-larger class sizes, towards a further corporatization of PSE and campus life, and towards the curtailing and closure of critically-oriented departments that often do not attract as much tuition fees as others (e.g. women's and gender studies). The quality of PSE will suffer as a result.

I support reducing tuition fees, up to and including their elimination, at our universities and colleges, but this must be coupled with increased funding to our PSE institutions. In other words,



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we must replace user fees with funding generated through progressive revenue streams, ensuring that the wealthy are contributing their fair share while at the same time avoiding a consumer model for PSE. Education must be a public good, not a commodity.

This unfunded reduction in tuition fees is coupled with a cut to needs-based grants for students, which means better-off students will pay slightly less for tuition in a province that will still have the second highest tuition fees in the country, while low-income students will be paying more—a further shift towards an elite model of PSE. As MPP Joel Harden put it: this is a hustle.

I am calling on you to reverse your government's position. I am also letting you know that I will be standing with students and campus workers—who were not consulted—in their resistance to these proposed measures.

Sincerely,

Shawn Menard
Ottawa City Councillor - Capital Ward