

TAKE IT OVER! 2011 ONTARIO ELECTIONS REPORT CARD



MIKE SCHREINER
GREEN PARTY

B-

The Green Party of Ontario (GPO) released their platform during late spring 2011 and was the first party to address the cost of tuition fees by promising to freeze fees if elected. For the full copy of their platform, visit gpo.ca or go to take-it-over.ca

OVERALL GRADE:

THE ANALYSIS

AFFORDABILITY

GRADE C

The promise to freeze tuition fees is a necessary step in the process of curbing the high tuition fees ushered in by the current Liberal government and previous Progressive Conservative and New Democratic Party governments. Freezing tuition fees is an important first step and would have to be accompanied by funding improvements, and the GPO promised to ensure that they would have a stable multi-year funding formula.

The GPO also promised to index tuition fee increases to inflation. Unfortunately, tuition fee increases have outpaced inflationary increases by 370 per cent. Students need assurances from the GPO that a tuition fee freeze will not be replaced with tuition fee increases, and indexing tuition fees to inflation is in effect, a fee increase. Debates about how much inflation actually is in the post-secondary education sector are common, and some argue that when fees are tied to a post-secondary education inflation, they should rise faster than the standard rate of inflation. Students reject this and argue that a freeze should be fully funded to cover inflationary increases.

The GPO, unfortunately did not commit to making needed improvements to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP). Student debt in Ontario has surpassed \$7 billion while at the same time tuition fees have risen to become the highest in Canada. Students need all political parties to commit to addressing ballooning student debt and to reform the OSAP system to ensure that students can afford to finish their studies. The GPO did commit to work with students to lobby the federal government to transfer education tax credits to a system of upfront grants.

The GPO promised to stop a policy of fee differentiation based on year and kind of program. The current Liberal government allowed tuition fees to rise at different rates based on a student's program and year. This has confusing and unfair effects on what amount students pay, and has enabled first year fees in professional and graduate programs to rise by eight per cent. The GPO has promised to stop this practice, if elected. Because the GPO committed to freeze tuition fees, with the promise to index fees to inflation, students are giving them a C for affordability.

“Freeze tuition for the 2012-13 school year while maintaining university and college budgets; index tuition increases to the rate of inflation from 2013-15.”

“Expand training and certification programs in job growth areas such as green buildings, biomedical technology, renewable energy and sustainable transportation.”

NOTE Each of the report cards have been created with the most up-to-date content at the time of printing. If there are additional announcements that affect students throughout the campaign period, the report card may change accordingly. Visit take-it-over.ca for updates throughout the election campaign period.

TAKE-IT-OVER.CA

**CANADIAN
FEDERATION OF
STUDENTS-ONTARIO**

FUNDING & QUALITY

GRADE
B

The GPO response to the Federation demonstrated that they support increasing funding to the post-secondary education sector to improve quality. For students and professors, improving quality is an absolute necessity and would mean starting to reduce the size of classes that students take. The GPO also promises to provide tax incentives to encourage businesses to create and fund programs that expand apprenticeship, co-op and mentorship opportunities. Promising to fund quality has earned the GPO a B from students.

RESEARCH

GRADE
A-

The GPO promises to reinstate reduced tuition fees for students who have finished their coursework and are writing their Master's or Doctoral theses. Reduced fees exist across the country and, in Ontario, were slowly eliminated throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The GPO also promises to create whistleblower protection legislation. However, they did not commit to increasing the number of available Ontario Graduate Scholarships or other granting programs. Because of this the GPO has earned a A-.

STUDENT RIGHTS & PROTECTION

GRADE
B

The GPO made many promises to enhance student rights and protection. First, they promised to create a strategy to make public transit more accessible to college and university students. They committed to creating a Bill of Rights for students living in residence, supporting electoral reform and extending the purview of the Ombudsman into the university sector. Because they do not commit to extending OHIP to international students or investing in child care on campus, they receive a B for student rights and protection.

“Increase investments in apprenticeship, co-operative and mentorship programs.”

“Ensure clean air, water and food by reducing pollution, improving water quality and sewage treatment, and by paying landowners for producing healthy environmental goods and services.”

“Improve high-speed Internet access for all areas of Ontario.”



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