

# TAKE IT OVER! 2011 ONTARIO ELECTIONS REPORT CARD



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**LIBERAL PARTY**



The Liberals released their platform on Labour Day, Sept 5. Their platform contained the majority of their promises, and post-secondary education featured prominently. For the full copy of their platform, visit [ontarioliberal.ca](http://ontarioliberal.ca) or go to [take-it-over.ca](http://take-it-over.ca).

**OVERALL GRADE:**

## THE ANALYSIS

### AFFORDABILITY



The promise to create 60,000 new spaces is consistent with what the Liberal government included in the 2011 Ontario budget. In that budget, they projected this enrolment increase to cost \$300 million.

The central piece to the education platform is the promise to create a grant of \$1,600 for undergraduate students and \$730 for college students, as long as their family makes a combined income of less than \$160,000 annually. This grant will not be available to graduate students, international students, part-time students and full-time undergraduate students in professional programs. The cost of this grant program is estimated at \$430 million annually and the amount of the grant going to students would increase at the same rate as tuition fees. This is a significant amount of money and would be the largest form of up-front financial assistance promised since the Liberals came to power in 2003.

The Liberals have made almost no new announcements about the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), except for the extension of the interest-free period for OSAP loans – from six months to 12 months after graduation – for people who work for not-for-profit organizations after they graduate. This change would benefit only a small amount of employed graduates and falls well short of

students' recommendations to extend the interest-free and payment-free period for all graduates – no matter which sector they work in. The Liberals say that no other changes will be announced.

The Liberal platform does not have a tuition fee policy. Unlike their promise to freeze tuition fees during the 2003 election, they have stated that a new tuition fee policy will be developed after the election. The Liberals have increased tuition fees by 34 to 59 per cent since 2006, so it is a major concern that the party will not state its tuition fee framework. Any post-secondary education framework that aims to increase affordability for students must address the high up-front cost of education, a legacy of all three political parties while in government. Because the Liberals have no plan to address tuition fees, they receive an F. However, their significant investment in grants earns them an A, making their overall mark for affordability a B.

*“Develop a new tuition policy for fall 2012 that provides cost certainty to families by continuing to regulate tuition fees.”*

### FUNDING & QUALITY

The Liberal Party's policies are encompassed within a framework called *Putting Students First*. While the details were somewhat vague when it was announced, it did indicate that the Liberals wanted to institute a funding framework for post-secondary education.



*“To make sure there's a space for every student who is willing and qualified, we'll create 60,000 more spaces.”*

**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](http://take-it-over.ca) for updates throughout the election campaign period.

**TAKE-IT-OVER.CA** CANADIAN FEDERATION OF STUDENTS-ONTARIO

The Liberals have committed \$430 million for an upfront grant, \$300 million for the enrolment increase and \$300 million for three satellite campuses. The money dedicated to enrolment increases and new satellite campuses will not address the issue of quality in universities and colleges. While these two announcements will create new spaces for students, there is no commitment to hire additional faculty. What's worse, the satellite campuses are planned to be teaching-only undergraduate campuses. The quality of education offered at these campuses should be of concern, since teaching and research together form the foundation of a university education. It is highly likely that cheaper sessional or contract faculty will be hired for these positions rather than hiring tenure-track faculty that would teach and conduct current research in their respective field. Because the Liberals continue to deny the link between class size and quality, and because teaching-only universities are bad public policy for Ontario, they receive a C.

## RESEARCH

GRADE  
**F**

The Liberal platform does not mention research or graduate students. Graduate students pay the highest tuition fees in the country and research opportunities have become harder and harder to obtain. The creation of three new undergraduate satellite campuses is an investment that could have included graduate students, but will instead differentiate the teaching and research functions of the university, negatively affecting quality.

The Liberal Innovation Agenda does not mention publicly-funded research – such as research conducted at post-secondary institutions. It instead focuses on increasing the number of start-up companies in Ontario. As such, they receive an F for their lack of a research funding plan.

## STUDENT RIGHTS & PROTECTION

The good: The Liberal promise to expand GO train service on all corridors will help enable students to travel to and from school.

GRADE  
**C**

The bad: Liberal MPP Yasir Naqvi Bill 184 and NDP MPP Rosario Marchese introduced a bill that protected students' unions' right to organize in March 2011. The Bill did not have enough support from the Liberal caucus to pass before the prorogation of Ontario's Legislative Assembly.

In May 2011, a private member's bill was amended that would extend the oversight of the Ontario Ombudsman to include universities. While the opposition parties voted in favour of this bill, every member of the Liberal caucus but one voted against the bill. Considering their lack of response to the range of questions students asked about student rights and protections, the Liberals have earned a C.

*“We’re going to support all middle-class Ontario families with a 30% across-the-board postsecondary undergraduate tuition grant... [T]he families of five out of six students [will] save \$1,600 per student in university and \$730 per student in college.”*

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CANADIAN  
FEDERATION OF  
STUDENTS-ONTARIO



DALTON  
MCGUINTY  
LIBERAL  
OVERALL  
GRADE

**C+**

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