

# TAKE IT OVER! 2011 ONTARIO ELECTIONS REPORT CARD



**ANDREA HORWATH**  
NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY



**OVERALL GRADE:**

The NDP released their post-secondary education platform on Thursday, September 15. The announcement contained their major commitments for the sector. For a full copy of their platform, visit [ontariondp.com](http://ontariondp.com) or go to [take-it-over.ca](http://take-it-over.ca).

## THE ANALYSIS

### AFFORDABILITY



The NDP have promised to implement a province-wide freeze on tuition fees for college, undergraduate and graduate students and to eliminate interest on the provincial portion of student loans. These measures would cost \$110 million in the first year. Students have long called for parties to freeze tuition fees in Ontario, which are the highest in the country and have risen at 370 per cent when compared to the rate of inflation. Targeting tuition fees is the most effective way to address financial barriers since it reduces the high up-front cost that prevents many people from attending or finishing a post-secondary education. High fees also force students to assume high levels of debt. However, this policy does not roll back the fee hikes that students have faced over the past six years, and students need a fee reduction to substantially increase accessibility.

The NDP post-secondary education platform also commits to eliminating interest on the provincial portion of student loans through the Ontario Student Assistance Program

(OSAP). This measure will save students a substantial amount of money that would reduce how much they owe on student loans. For example, if a student graduated with the average \$22,000 in debt, they would save about \$1,345. This measure will increase the accessibility of post-secondary education especially for low and middle-income families. It would stop students from paying more for their education simply because of their socio-economic background.

The NDP have also committed to expanding OSAP eligibility to part-time students on the basis of need, and to prohibiting institutions from charging late fees or interest on payments for students who receive OSAP loans to pay their tuition fees. They have also committed to stopping the Liberal policy of charging students different fees based on program and year of study.

Because the NDP have committed to freezing tuition fees and eliminating interest on student loans, they have received a B+. If they commit to implementing a tuition fee reduction, they will receive an A+.

*“We can tackle the problems of high tuition and student debt by freezing tuition fees and by taking the interest off of student loans.”*

*“We believe that education is a right for every willing and qualified student”*

*“In a global economy, our prosperity as a province will be measured by the quality of our education system and by how accessible that system is.”*

**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

## FUNDING & QUALITY

GRADE  
**A**

The NDP has promised to invest in the post-secondary education sector, if elected, and raise Ontario's per-student funding to above the national average. They also commit to creating a multi-year framework that ensures that money is available to hire more tenure-track faculty members to improve quality. The time a student has to spend with their professor is critical to ensuring a high level of quality, and students acknowledge that these are significant promises that would improve quality. Ontario students currently study in the largest classes and are funded by the lowest amount of per-student funding in Canada. Because of these commitments, students are giving the NDP an A for their promises to fund quality at college and university campuses.

## RESEARCH

GRADE:  
**C**

The NDP has promised to invest in the early researcher awards and to create whistleblower protection legislation to protect researchers at post-secondary education institutions. They did not, however, commit to instituting continuing fees for graduate students.

Students are calling on the NDP to commit to introducing reduced tuition fees for students who have finished their course work and offer more research grants. Because the NDP did not commit to re-introducing continuing fees, students give their commitments to funding research a C.

## STUDENT RIGHTS & PROTECTION

GRADE  
**A-**

The NDP have made substantial commitments to protecting students and their rights. They have committed to creating legislation to support students' union rights on campuses, supporting the creation of a "Bill of Rights" for students living in on-campus housing, and extending the purview of the Ontario Ombudsman to the university sector.

In addition, the NDP supports the development of a funding strategy that makes public transit more accessible for post-secondary students, investing in affordable and accessible childcare services on college and university campuses, and reforming the electoral system to better reflect the actual views of voters. The NDP has also expressed support for stopping the sale of bottled water at Government of Ontario facilities.

Due to these commitments, the NDP receives an A-.

*"Today's politicians benefited from low fees and generous grants. We can't pull the rug from under young people exposing them to enormous debt loads as they start out on their careers."*

*"Ontario shouldn't be the most expensive province to go to school in. We can offer people greater opportunities by making education affordable."*



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**OVERALL  
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**B+**

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