

January 24, 2006

Hon. Chris Bentley
Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
3rd Floor, Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2

Dear Minister Bentley,

On December 5, 2005, I met with representatives of the Canadian Federation of Students, who wished to communicate a number of pressing issues. One of them, which I wholeheartedly support, is a tuition fee freeze. I urge our government to reconsider the plan to lift the freeze in September this year. The tuition fees as they stand now are already imposing a considerable burden on our students and a potential fee hike would only heighten the pressures our youth face. As you know, our province's tuition fees are the second highest in the country and the students I met alerted me to the fact that current fees have risen by 200% since 1990, a rate of change four times faster than the rate of inflation. Moreover, upon graduation, these students will be saddled with a \$25 000 debt, which surely dims a milestone that should be celebrated and held with pride. These statistics are disheartening and unacceptable.

Our government should strive to ensure that our youth have equal access to education. The future and prosperity of our province is dependent on the knowledge and skills that our youth can only attain and hone through a quality post-secondary education. Thus far, the McGuinty government has expressed great understanding and support for our students through its core funding and I hope that our government will continue to back our youth.

I understand that both federal and provincial governments have developed many strategies to respond to the complexities of maintaining reasonable tuition fees and providing first-rate education, from income contingent loan repayment plans to tax credits. There is clearly no simple solution. I strongly believe, however, that a tuition-fee freeze should be part of it.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Jim Brownell, MPP
Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh

Cc - Maggie MacDonald, Canadian Federation of Students