



**Poverty Free  
Kitchener-Waterloo**

Poverty Elimination Framework

Support to All Low-income People

## We need to invest in the future of our youth

The social, educational and economic policies we put in to place today shape the environment in which today's youth mature and take on adult responsibilities. They are the future! Just what kind of future do they have?

### The cost of post-secondary education keeps climbing

Over 70% of new jobs in Canada require higher education, so why is it that Ontario Students have to struggle to afford an education? Over 70% of high school graduates who didn't go to college or university said that the high cost of tuition was the reason. Tuition fees in Ontario have tripled since 1990, with Ontario students paying the highest average tuition in Canada at \$7,259 per year. The average undergraduate student debt has ballooned to \$37,000, which, if paid back over 10 years can translate to \$49,500 thanks to government interest fees.

### Huge debt loads are bankrupting a generation

Student debt has skyrocketed, with the average undergraduate student debt being \$37,000. A \$37,000 loan paid back over 10 years could translate to one owing as much as \$49,500. The Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), which provides financial assistance to full-time students during their studies, puts a huge debt burden on students. As a result of the government's emphasis on repayable loans through OSAP rather than non-repayable needs-based grants, many students cannot help but rack up mortgage-sized debt loads. This debt reality penalizes lower-income people and those entering a job market when prospects of securing well paid, entry-level positions upon graduation are few. These graduates may spend decades working to pay it off.

### Youth employment is precarious

Ontario's youth unemployment rate is 16-17%, double the national average. Entering the workforce is difficult for youth, which results in the majority of youth engaging in precarious forms of employment which usually pay minimum wage, lack stable hours, and provide little or no benefits. When youth miss out on employment opportunities in their early 20's, their chances of remaining low income earners increases. Coupled with the reduced opportunity for education because of tuition costs and the high debt load on graduation, the dismal job prospects of today's youth should be a serious concern for us all.

### Financial insecurity is poverty

As youth become more independent they need adequate income to cover their living costs. As costs rise and jobs and income are uncertain, financial insecurity can easily lead to emotional insecurity which can severely hamper less experienced young adults and could have a lasting impact on their ability to problem solve and plan for the future. Is this the legacy we want for our children's futures?

**Resources:** Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca) ; Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario: [www.cfsontario.ca](http://www.cfsontario.ca) ; Canadian Association of University Teachers: [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca)



**Social Planning Council  
of Kitchener-Waterloo  
Community Information Centre  
of Waterloo Region**

How, where, when & why to vote  
Issues worth voting for  
[www.waterlooregion.org/provincial-election-2014](http://www.waterlooregion.org/provincial-election-2014)

es produced by Social Planning Toronto.

## Where Ontario political parties stand

Party	Cost of Education	Student Debt	Youth Employment	Youth Poverty
<b>Green</b>			Social Innovation Foundation to provide grants, loans, and mentorship to help young entrepreneurs invent and implement solutions to problems we face.	
<b>Liberal</b>	30 % reduction in university tuition fees for families earning less than \$160,000 a year		Increase apprenticeship opportunities and training. \$295 million in the Ontario Youth Jobs Strategy. Youth Investment Accelerator Fund - up to \$250,000 per eligible technology-focused firm founded by under age 30 entrepreneurs. Introduce Experience Ontario, a nine-month paid community work and service program to support graduating high school students before they go on to apprenticeship, work, or postsecondary education. Invest \$150 million over 3 years in technology and learning tools to prepare students for future jobs. Create an online career planning tool for high school students. By 2025 have over 70% of ON's adult population hold postsecondary credentials	
<b>New Democratic</b>	Freeze post-secondary tuition	Interest-free student loans		
<b>Progressive Conservative</b>		Make sure that no Ont. student is denied access because of a lack of money.	More university spaces in science, technology, engineering, business and math. Build an entrepreneurial culture. Remove redtape for apprenticeships Universities to create job-ready students. Tax cuts to push up employment. Primary education: Invest savings (from cuts) in extra support for struggling schools and children with special needs who are having a hard time keeping up. Give every student a top quality math & science education	

### Get Involved... Ask your candidates:

How will your party:

- Invest in post-secondary education to help stop tuition fee increases and high student debt?
- Ensure your job strategies provide opportunities and support to find and keep well-paying decent jobs for youth with all education and skill levels?
- Approach income and social assistance for youth and their families in different life situations to ensure there is appropriate support for getting a good start in life and long term support for those whom that is necessary?