

News Release Communiqué



Ministry of Training,
Colleges and Universities

Ministère de la Formation
et des Collèges et Universités

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McGUINTY GOVERNMENT PLAN TO IMPROVE QUALITY AND ACCESS IN POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Student Access Guarantee for Working Families

TORONTO - The McGuinty government is providing a student access guarantee that means no qualified Ontario student will be prevented from attending Ontario's public colleges and universities due to lack of financial support programs, said Chris Bentley, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

"As part of our plan to improve quality and access, our government is making it easier for students from working families to attend postsecondary education – Ontario students will have access to postsecondary education based on their ability to learn and not their ability to pay," Bentley said.

The student access guarantee means that students in need will have access to the resources they need for their tuition, books and mandatory fees. Under the guarantee, the government will provide assistance to almost 200,000 students from lower- and middle-income families. Institutions that want to increase fees may do so only if two conditions are met: they participate in the student access guarantee, and any fee increases improve the quality of programs.

"We aim to give students the best postsecondary education possible," said Bentley. "Through our Reaching Higher Plan, our government is investing in more spaces, increased student aid and improved quality.

"But more needs to be done to enhance quality," the minister added. "To achieve our goal, we need an additional contribution from students. For every \$3 extra Ontario invests under Reaching Higher in postsecondary education, we are asking students to contribute \$1."

The student contribution will come from a regulated tuition framework. Increases will be capped, predictable and linked to improvements in quality and access. Institutions will have more flexibility to set fees, but only within this capped, regulated and predictable framework.

Under the plan, average tuition increases for the coming year will be limited to about \$100 for almost 90 per cent of college students and about \$200 for almost 70 per cent of university students. Increases in tuition fees may vary, but the majority of undergraduate students will see increases below 4.5 per cent. Tuition will be allowed to increase by a maximum average of up to five per cent at each institution.

For professional, graduate and certain other programs, institutions may increase fees up to a maximum of eight per cent in the first year of study, but only if the institutional average is five per cent or less, the student access guarantee is in place, and the money buys improvement in quality. Increases will be limited to four per cent in subsequent years of study.

“As part of the government’s commitment to students and to ensure Ontarians get the best value for their investment in postsecondary education, our government is also creating the Higher Education Quality Council to monitor quality and access,” said Bentley. “The council is an independent body that will help us ensure continued improvement of the postsecondary education system by monitoring quality in the sector, access to postsecondary education and the accountability of institutions.”

Quality improvements and access for students will also be ensured through multi-year accountability agreements that every institution is required to sign. The agreement sets out the institutions’ commitments to quality, access, affordability and will include the student access guarantee.

Improving the quality and accessibility of higher education are two goals of Reaching Higher, the McGuinty Government Plan for Postsecondary Education. Through the plan, the government is investing \$6.2 billion more in the province’s postsecondary system over five years – the single largest infusion of funds in the sector in 40 years. This includes \$1.5 billion more for student aid. The McGuinty government has also created almost 75,000 more spaces since 2002-03 and is aiming to increase participation further.

New government investments at colleges and universities are already improving quality through more faculty, better student services, and access to the best libraries, laboratories and equipment for hands-on learning.

“We need to invest in our people. Our province’s future depends on it,” said Bentley. “This plan will deliver the investments, results and quality needed to ensure Ontarians have access to the best possible postsecondary system, and will finish their education capable of competing with anyone, anywhere in the world.”

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