

## Alleviating Ontario's high tuitions

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Re: Tuition

Late last week, StatsCan released the 2010-11 average tuition numbers for the country. Ontario, once again, has the highest tuition in Canada, over \$800 more than second-ranked New Brunswick.

As a representative of more than 20,000 undergraduate students, the cost of education is a constant concern to my constituents.

It is time to change the tuition framework in this province. The system leaves the most vulnerable in our society unable to obtain a post-secondary education. Despite the welcome OSAP reforms announced this year, students from high-income backgrounds are still more than twice as likely to attend university as students from low-income backgrounds. This gap has been increasing since 2002.

This is not a black-and-white issue of low income vs. high income. Students from middle-income backgrounds struggle to pay for their education. Financial assistance is available, but results in students entering the world with a high debt load. Ontario must take a serious look at our tuition model.

I don't recommend free university; our economy could not handle the cost. Nova Scotia has lowered its tuition fees for the fourth year in a row while maintaining a high level of quality. Australia has one of the most interesting and sustainable tuition models in the world. Governments loan students the full amount for their education; the loans are repaid only after the students surpass a certain income threshold. The loan is deducted in small increments from their pay.

A system along these lines would provide greater educational opportunities for all students, not just low-income students. It would effectively level the playing field for all attending post-secondary institutions in Ontario.