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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

McMaster students disappointed so few will benefit from Pan Am/Parapan Am OSAP changes

HAMILTON - This week, a joint statement from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) and the Ministry of Tourism, declared that PSE students who volunteer during the 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games will be given a grace period of one year - interest-free - to begin repaying OSAP loans. This is a further six months beyond the current repayment structure.

In addition, those same volunteers will be assessed differently on their OSAP application. They will not be required to make the pre-study financial contribution to their OSAP financial needs assessments, thus qualifying for a larger OSAP loan. Though the move will certainly benefit some PSE students, only a select few of Ontario's students will be able to take advantage of the opportunity.

"Students across the province struggle to keep pace with the rising cost of tuition and living expenses," said Spencer Graham, Vice President (Education) of the McMaster Students Union (MSU). *"Preferential treatment for Pan Am and Parapan Am Games volunteers is grossly unfair to the students who are unable to participate, due to a variety of social, geographic and/or ability barriers. Although the Pan Am and Parapan Am volunteer initiative has good intentions, it is exclusionary by definition. Given the high unemployment rate faced by Ontario's youth, all students in Ontario should qualify for at least a one year grace period before they begin to repay OSAP loans."*

The timing of the announcement soured an otherwise strong week for MTCU. The day prior to the OSAP misstep, Minister Duguid announced a \$42M investment into Ontario Online, an online hub designed to provide e-courses to students registered in any participating post-secondary institution. Scheduled for the 2015-2016 school year, the program will hopefully realize the desire of thousands of students who wish to have greater access to a wide variety of online, accredited courses, transferable between institutions.

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