



## **Ontario voters want postsecondary education to be a high priority**

**Toronto** – Almost three quarters of Ontarians want universities and colleges to be a high priority for the Government of Ontario, according to a new poll released today. At the same time, many Ontarians are concerned about the affordability of postsecondary education, particularly young Ontarians between the ages of 18-24.

The poll, commissioned by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) and the Canadian Federation of Students - Ontario (CFS-O), found that 74 per cent of Ontarians want postsecondary education to be a high priority for the provincial government. Respondents are also more worried about the affordability of the postsecondary education system than unemployment, reducing taxes, or crime. Two thirds of Ontarians – and nearly 90 per cent of Ontarians between the ages of 18-24 – believe tuition fees are too high.

“These results send a clear message to Premier Dalton McGuinty and his government,” said Dr. André Turcotte, professor at Carleton University’s School of Journalism and Communication and chief investigator for this study. “Ontario voters want the Government of Ontario to continue investing in the quality and affordability of our institutions to ensure an exceptional experience is affordable for every potential student.”

In Ontario, tuition fees have risen by an average of 28 per cent over the past five years. Ontario now has the highest tuition fees in Canada – an average of \$6,307 per year for an undergraduate student and \$6,917 for a graduate student.

“The poll shows that the people of Ontario are deeply worried about the cost of college and university education,” said Sandy Hudson, Chairperson of the CFS-O. “The government needs to hear their voices and take action to ensure the accessibility of our post-secondary education system. Ontario needs a tuition fee freeze, and it needs it now.”

Other important findings indicate that parents of university or college students are more critical of the McGuinty Government’s performance in improving the quality of the postsecondary education sector than the population at large. Parents with students in high school are the most skeptical of the government’s record, indicating anxiety over the future educational prospects of their children.

“There is an apparent contradiction here: the McGuinty Government has invested heavily in universities and colleges, but parents aren’t aware of the results,” said Professor Mark Langer, President of OCUFA. “I think parents and students of Ontario understand that five-year investment plans just aren’t enough to ensure an affordable, high-quality postsecondary system. We need sustained, long-term investment to achieve best results for students, our economy, and our province as a whole.”

The results of this study are based on a poll of 1800 Ontarians over the age of 18 conducted between January 5 and 14, 2011. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 2.9 percentage points within a confidence interval of 95%.

This is the sixth wave of poll findings released. Previous releases include data from the Ottawa Region, the 905 belt, Southwestern Ontario, and Northern Ontario. Results examining Ontarians' attitudes towards the internationalization of post-secondary education were released in January. For more details and complete results please visit <http://www.ocufa.on.ca>.

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations is the voice of 17,000 university professors and academic librarians across Ontario. The Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario unites more than 300,000 college and university undergraduate and graduate students studying at post-secondary institutions across the province

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