

Platform Analysis

Ontario New Democratic Party

OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des Associations des Professeurs des Universités de l'Ontario

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING PARTY PLATFORMS

Over the course of the election campaign, all of the major parties will present their vision for the future of the province through their election platforms. In order to assess the impact of what each party is proposing for university professors and academic librarians, and for the higher education sector more broadly, OCUFA has developed a set of criteria for assessment. When it comes to higher education, the ideal platform would:

- Increase per-student funding to bring it in line with the national average, allowing institutions to pursue their core functions – teaching and research – free of financial strain;
- Provide funding to hire adequate faculty to bring the student-faculty ratio in Ontario in line with the national average, while addressing the increasing precarity of academic work;
- Introduce measures to control the cost and ensure the accessibility of high quality higher education for students;
- Protect the collective bargaining rights of faculty and faculty associations across Ontario;
- Provide the legislative space for the university sector to develop pension solutions that will ensure the fairness and long-term sustainability of pension plans in the sector

The Ontario NDP's election platform contains a series of pocketbook promises, but fails to articulate a comprehensive overarching vision for the future of the province in general, or for higher education in particular. The platform is silent on most of the important issues facing the higher education sector in Ontario.

FUNDING AND FACULTY HIRING

The Ontario NDP platform does not include any reference to funding for universities, the need for increased faculty hiring, or the increasing precarity of academic work.

AFFORDABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Ontario NDP platform promises to freeze tuition for post-secondary education at 2014 levels and to eliminate interest on student loans.

In order to maintain the overall level of funding that post-secondary institutions receive, any freeze to tuition must be accompanied by an increase in government funding to compensate for lost tuition revenue. Without adequate compensatory funding, universities are forced operate on a reduced overall budget, which compromises their ability to deliver a high quality educational experience for all students.

The NDP platform estimates that the cost of freezing tuition in all post-secondary institutions *and* of eliminating interest on student loans would be \$90 million in 2015-16, \$175 in 2016-17 and \$270 million in 2017-18. OCUFA estimates that the cost of providing compensatory funding for a tuition freeze in the universities alone would be slightly higher than the amounts estimated in the NDP platform (\$97 million in 2015-16, \$200 million in 2026-17 and \$310 million in 2017-18). Add to that the cost of freezing tuition in the colleges and the cost of eliminating interest on student loans, and it becomes clear that NDP platform's estimate of the cost of freezing tuition would not be adequate to compensate institutions for lost tuition revenue.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING RIGHTS

The Ontario NDP platform does not include any reference to the protection of collective bargaining or labour rights, nor does it propose any measures that would directly threaten collective bargaining in Ontario.

PENSIONS

The Ontario NDP platform does not include any reference to pensions.