

Ref: 2007-02

February 8, 2007

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

In accordance with Section 27-65C(3) of Chapter 27, Council Procedures, the attached Motion headed "Council Support for Post-Secondary Students", moved by Councillor Perruzza, seconded by Councillor Vaughan, is referred to the Executive Committee.

for City Clerk

M. Toft/cd

Attachment



NOTICE OF MOTION

Council Support for Post-Secondary Students

Moved by: Councillor Perruzza

Seconded by: Councillor Vaughan

SUMMARY:

According to Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO), more than 70 per cent of new job openings in Canada will require a postsecondary education. Despite this, only half of high school students in Ontario go directly to college or university. The vast majority of the students who do not attend a post-secondary institution cite the cost of education as the main reason.

This reality is the result of sky-rocketing tuition fees and the debt burden that accompanies them. In fact, tuition fees in the province of Ontario have increased by more than 4 times the rate of inflation in the past 15 years and are now the third highest in Canada.

To address the problem of high tuition fees, which is acknowledged as a barrier to accessibility, the current Ontario Liberal government ran on a platform of increasing funding to post-secondary education institutions and immediately freezing tuition fees.

Recently however, the provincial government cancelled the tuition fee freeze and approved a fee increase of 5% to 8% in the year 2006 as part of a 4 year plan which is likely to increase of 20% to 36% in just four years.

In addition, the Government of Ontario increased student loan limits which will increase average student loan debt for a four-year post-secondary programme to approximately \$28,000. Considering that the average student debt in Ontario is already the highest in Canada (in excess of \$25,000 after graduation), further fee increases resulting in mounting debt will exacerbate the lack of accessibility to post-secondary education for low and middle-income families.

The Department of Epidemiology at the University of Western Ontario proved that accessibility has been affected by tuition fee increases when it completed a four-year survey entitled Study on Accessibility. The study examined participation rates by socio-economic status and documented a 50% decline in the participation rates of low income students. This occurred at the same time as the deregulation of tuition fees for graduate and professional programmes pushed fees up considerably.

A number of organizations including the Canadian Federation of Students, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) and the Canadian Union of Public Employees have been calling for the government to continue the tuition fee freeze. This sentiment is reciprocated by the population at large, as 70 % of Ontarians support freezing tuition fees and 89% consider post-secondary education a high or very high priority for the government of Ontario according to survey's commissioned by the OCUFA.

Additionally, Rosario Marchese, Member of Provincial Parliament for Trinity-Spadina, has presented Bill 12 No Tuition Hikes Act, 2005 to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. The bill calls for no tuition fee increases until voters have had a chance to decide on the matter in the upcoming Ontario general election in October 2007 and has passed first reading.

With over 169 589 post-secondary students currently studying in the Greater Toronto Area, the impact of this fee increase on Toronto families is far reaching.

The Mayor of Toronto, David Miller was elected with a strong mandate from the people of Toronto who want government to provide opportunities for them to improve their quality of life that allow them to better contribute to Toronto communities and the success of the City. Part of this mandate is to lobby the government for accessible post-secondary education, which Mayor Miller summarized by stating:

“I pledge to represent the tens of thousands of students that are enrolled in Toronto’s post-secondary institutions by demanding that the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Federal Government of Canada freeze tuition fees and develop a long-term strategy to reduce tuition fees.”

Toronto City Council should join the other 10 Municipalities (and counting), including Halifax, Nova Scotia, Kamloops, British Columbia and Sudbury, Ontario that are urging their respective provincial governments to make post-secondary education affordable.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. In recognizing education as a basic right of all people and a necessity of the knowledge-based economy, that City Council endorse Ontario Legislative Assembly Bill 12 which, if passed, will keep tuition fees at their current levels until the completion of the fall provincial elections.
2. That City Council petition the Government of Ontario to adopt and implement Bill 12.
3. That members of Council be encouraged to support the National Student Day of Action on February 7, 2007.

February 5, 2007