



“Ontario can’t afford it...”

And other myths about tuition fees

(Created by the Ryerson Students’ Union)

MYTH 1: Canada cannot afford a reduction in tuition fees; we will have to raise taxes unnecessarily.

FACT 1: All budget expenditures are choices about priorities. The elimination of the 3% surtax on earnings over \$250 000 cost \$650 million-enough to reduce tuition fees by 10%.

Any discussion on the cost of a social program must be put into context. In the case of the federal government, tax cuts for the wealth class of society seem to take priority over funding access to post-secondary education. It is also important to note that many other countries-both rich and poor-have eliminated fees for post-secondary education. These countries include: Ireland, Norway, France, Finland, Sweden, Cuba, Brazil and Libya.

MYTH 2: Tuition fee freezes unnecessarily subsidize the cost of post-secondary education only for those who can afford it.

FACT 2: The facts do not support this assertion. Economist Hugh MacKenzie examined the issue and found no evidence that low tuition fees result in a net transfer of resources from low income households to high-income households.

The model of having higher tuition fees for all but a small sliver of the poorest will only exacerbate the gaps in participation rates of different socio-economic classes. It will only serve to ‘ghettoize’ and alienate middle-class families who can barely afford tuition fees today.

MYTH 3: Lower tuition fees mean lower quality of education.

FACT 3: This is a common misconception about tuition fees. Studies show that higher tuition fees neither improve the quality of education nor provide financial stability for post-secondary institutions in the midst of funding crisis.

The most striking example of this is in the United Kingdom, where tuition fees were imposed in 1998. By the 2002-03 academic year, total per-student funding from both the government and tuition fees was lower than it had been in 1996-97, the year before tuition fees had come into effect.

MYTH 4: Removing a financial aspect to attending post-secondary education will flood institutions with opportunists who cannot fulfill the requirements of university or college.

FACT 4: This ludicrous assumption is in itself racist and classist. It assumes that those of lower-income backgrounds are intellectually inferior to those of wealthier families. Standards for entrance into post-secondary institutions will not change in relation to tuition fees. Access to education is about giving an opportunity to those who otherwise could not afford it but possess the skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm to excel at school just as well as anyone who could afford it.