



# Members' Advisory **Provincial Budget 2018**

**April 2018**

The 2018 Ontario government released its annual budget on March 28. In this document, the Federation explains what this budget means for students.

## Revisiting Budget 2017

Budget 2017 included free prescription drug coverage for children and youth aged 24 and under. However, relatively little else was included that was specific to students.

## Progress in Budget 2018?

This year's budget reflects students' call to action in the Federation's [\*Fairness for Students\*](#) campaign, which calls on the government to prioritize public funding for public services, such as health care, education, transit and child care. Many students rely on these services to make ends meet throughout their education.

Unfortunately, this budget did not expand OSAP eligibility to include part-time or international students, or provide more support for students in expensive professional programs, all of whom are currently underserved by the existing financial aid framework.

## Victories for Students

Students did see significant victories in Budget 2018.

- \$17 billion over four years in funding for mental health and addictions services across the province, including \$11.6 for campus mental health promotion workers.
- Free preschool child care for children aged two-and-a-half until kindergarten by 2020.

## Changes to OSAP

Following through on commitments made in the 2016 budget to change OSAP to make it easier for students to access financial assistance, two changes will come into effect for students as of fall 2018, impacting primarily middle-income and married students.

- There will be a reduction in the amount parents are expected to contribute towards their child's education. For example, the government estimates that a dependent arts and science student in a typical family whose parents earn \$90,000 per year could receive an additional \$3,200 in OSAP loans and grants.
- There will be a reduction in expected spousal contributions, making it easier for married students to receive OSAP. For example, a married student with one child whose spouse earns \$30,000 per year could receive almost \$3,000 more per year in OSAP grants.

- Single students will not have to start repaying the Ontario portion of their student loans until they are earning a minimum of \$35,000 a year (as compared to a minimum of \$25,000 previously).

### Budget 2018 for Parents

Budget 2018 includes commitments to:

- Offer free child care for children aged two-and-a-half until they are eligible for kindergarten by 2020.
- Add 100,000 child care spaces across the province and offer additional financial support to families with subsidies for approximately 60 per cent of new spaces.
- Require school boards to provide before- and after-school programs in most elementary schools.
- Offer free preventative, routine and emergency dental services for children under 17.

### Budget 2018 for Student Workers

Building off of the significant measures included in the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act 2017*, some student workers will also see new benefits from Budget 2018, with commitments to:

- An increase of \$900 million over the next 10 years to expand and extend the Jobs and Prosperity Fund.
- An increase in the government's investment in the Pay Equity Office by 25 per cent.

### Budget 2018 for International, Racialized and Indigenous Students

The provincial government has committed to:

- Improving on-reserve child care through an additional \$40 million in operating funding and \$290 million over six years to double child care capacity on reserves.
- Investing an additional \$45.6 million over three years into the Ontario Bridge Training program.
- Supporting a total of 95 new projects that will help improve social and economic outcomes for refugees.
- Creating an International Post-Secondary Education strategy.

### In a Nutshell?

The Federation recognizes that investments in public services benefit everyone in this province. While students should be pleased to see this government's emphasis on care for Ontarians, we must acknowledge that this budget fails to

address many of the core demands student groups have been lobbying to improve access to post-secondary education.

In terms of post-secondary education, this budget puts an emphasis on investing in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines, with a lofty goal of increasing student graduates in these fields by 25 per cent over the next five years. To accomplish this goal, \$132 million over three years will be spent on developing post-secondary education programs designed to meet “the changing needs of employers.” The Federation is excited to see new money being invested in expanding programs for high-tech industries. However, it is important to note that there is much less support from the government for basic science and humanities studies, which are not at all mentioned in this year’s budget.

Overall, Budget 2018 delivers a number of major investments in child care and mental health that will benefit students, but does little to move towards universal access to post-secondary education. With these developments in mind, in advance of the upcoming provincial election, the Federation will continue to mobilize towards free education and organize in the call for fairness for students.

Sincerely,

Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario