

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? New restrictions on Canada Summer Jobs program

Canada Summer Jobs has largely been a successful program which supplies employers with subsidies to assist them in creating summer employment opportunities for secondary and post-secondary students.

It's a program which has benefitted thousands of young Canadians, including youth right here in Dufferin-Caledon. Unfortunately, the current Liberal government made changes to the 2018 program that now potentially excludes organizations from accessing funding.

The Canada Summer Jobs program has existed for a number of years. Funding is supplied to not-for-profit organizations, public-sector employers and small businesses with 50 or less full-time employees to provide summer job opportunities for secondary and post-secondary students. Canadian youth benefit from valuable work experience, increased skills, and money to help with their post-secondary education. The program is also intended to help communities across Canada act on local priorities. The experiences gained assist Canadian youth in making the leap from school to careers in the competitive Canadian job market. It's a program I've been supportive of and I've been fortunate enough to see, firsthand, the positive impact it has for both our community's youth and local employers.

Unfortunately, the current Liberal government changed the rules around which employers can qualify for funding to hire students for the 2018 Canada Summer Jobs program. This year's program requires organizations to sign an attestation stating that their organization's core mandate respects individual human rights in Canada, including the values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as other rights, including reproductive rights and the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression. This is problematic because requiring organizations to attest that this is their organization's 'core mandate' would force many organizations to choose between their freedoms of belief and of expression, and being able to receive federal funding. Such a requirement discriminates against organizations based on their beliefs.

We, the Official Opposition, were deeply troubled when the current Liberal government announced the changes to the 2018 Canada Summer Jobs program. The right to freedom of belief and opinion is guaranteed by Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canadians should be very concerned that the government of Canada is basing funding decisions on whether or not you hold a certain belief. We are concerned for the students who won't find work as a result of this decision. We are also concerned that individuals who hold private convictions may, for example, no longer be able to help care for the disabled, refugees or provide day camps for children in need.

We will continue to push for the current Liberal government to roll back these requirements and restore the Canada Summer Jobs program to its former successful state and will permit all Canadians to continue to exercise their freedom of belief and of expression without facing institutionalized discrimination by the government of Canada.

