

From Queen's Park by Sylvia Jones MPP ? Government must ensure that colleges strike does not leave students behind

Monday, 12,000 faculty at Ontario's colleges went on strike; impacting about 500,000 students.

Many students are feeling left out, because they have paid thousands of dollars for their education, but could potentially miss out on classes for an unknown time period. In fact, two students have begun a petition asking for a student fee refund. As of Tuesday, that petition had drawn 60,000 signatures.

The Progressive Conservative Caucus and I are calling on the government to show leadership so students can get back to class. As my leader Patrick Brown said, "The government can just ignore this and allow it to go on, but I want, and what I'm pushing for, is that we get a commitment that the Premier is going to take this seriously and the Premier is going to do everything she can to get both sides back to the table and get students back in class."

Currently, there are no bargaining talks scheduled, and there are growing concerns about a potential long strike. An extended strike will leave students behind. Students have already paid their tuition for their year, so regardless of how long the strike is, students have already spent thousands of dollars under the assumption that they will be learning and completing their courses. In fact, the students pay an average of \$280 a week to be at school. Many students are accumulating debt, but not receiving the education they are paying for ? meaning they will have to wait longer to find the employment they need.

For our current generation of students, an education strike is nothing new. This generation was in high school when the high school teachers took job action to delay report cards and stop extra-curricular activities.

The irony of this is that the Liberals promised and campaigned on labour peace and that students would be in classrooms. But the reality is that the Liberal track record has shown that the labour issues have continued. In the end, the Liberals are failing on their education promises, and it is time for the government to get the two parties back to the negotiating table.

I encourage anyone who is impacted by the college strike to email my office at sylvia.jonesqp@pc.ola.org or call 416-325-1898. Sharing your stories will help me put pressure on the government to do everything it can to get students back in the classroom.

