

Government's national security legislation a setback for public safety

by Sylvia Jones

For the first time in Ontario, students at every publicly-assisted college and university will see their tuition rates drop by 10 percent thanks to a province-wide tuition rate reduction introduced by the Ontario government. The tuition rate reduction is the latest step in our government's plan to keep more money in the pockets of Ontario students and families. Under the Liberal government, post-secondary tuition fees were allowed to skyrocket. Since 2006, undergraduate tuition for Ontarians has risen from an average \$5,000 to almost \$9,000. The average college tuition is \$3,400 and professional degrees can be in excess of \$15,000. As a result of our government's plan, Dufferin-Caledon students attending an Ontario college, will see a savings of ? on average - \$340, depending on the program. Those pursuing a general arts and science degree at an Ontario university will see their tuition reduced by an average of \$660. Students in many professional programs will see their tuition decrease by more than \$1,000 as of this September. Dufferin-Caledon students and their families make great sacrifices to pursue post-secondary education and every dollar counts. The recent report from the Auditor General notes that by 2020-2021, OSAP could cost the province over \$2 billion ? a 50 percent net increase from spending in 2016-2017. In fact the cost of OSAP is already \$2 billion in 2018-2019. Given what we have learned from this report, our government is taking the responsible approach of ensuring the sustainability of OSAP so Ontarians who need assistance the most can continue to access the program for generations to come. Starting in the 2019-2020 school year the government will ensure that students who receive OSAP have demonstrated financial need ? we will eliminate the non-needs-based portion of the Ontario Student Grant. Parental contributions will be restored to 2017-2018 rates. The government is also making changes that will result in all students being eligible for provincial loans. Our government also announced a Student Choice Initiative, giving every student in Ontario the freedom to choose which student fees they want to pay and how that money will be allocated. Student fees in Ontario can be as high as \$2,000 per year and, too often, force students to pay for services they do not use or organizations they do not support. The opt-out initiative will ensure that students have transparency and freedom of choice regarding the campus services and organizations which get access to their money. We believe you, the taxpayer, is better qualified than the government to choose how you spend your money, we believe students should get to choose how they spend theirs. Education is a significant ? and important ? investment. I'm proud that thanks to our action, families and students here in Dufferin-Caledon will pay less for their education. If you have any questions regarding the post-secondary tuition changes please contact my office at Sylvia.jonesco@pc.ola.org or call 1-800-265-1603.