

Addressing inequities in Ontario's education system: statement on prioritizing police training funding over free tuition for all

We, the undersigned Ontario academic CUPE and PSAC locals, express our opposition to Premier Doug Ford's [decision to cover the full costs of the Basic Constable Training at the Ontario Police College](#). We find it outrageous that the province prioritizes the abolition of tuition fees for police training over addressing the exorbitant tuition fees and student debt that many students face to complete their post-secondary education.

This decision highlights a lack of commitment to addressing the systemic barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized communities who are also often overpoliced. Particularly, it is disturbing that police training has been prioritized, given its inability to properly address community needs. Policing does not address the complex social factors that contribute to the perpetuation of social issues in our communities. Rather, relying on policing *perpetuates* the discrimination and victimization of Black, Indigenous and other racialized people, disabled people, and those who live with mental illness.

As academic workers, we believe that education is a fundamental human right and a public good that should be accessible to all, regardless of background or socioeconomic status. We call on the Ontario government to demonstrate its commitment to this principle by investing in post-secondary education and ensuring that all students have access to the resources and support they need to succeed. Free tuition for all, not just the police trainees.

Therefore, we urge the Ontario government to reconsider this decision and redirect public funds towards initiatives that address the pressing needs of Ontarians, regardless of their status. We also call on the government to engage in meaningful consultation with community organizations and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive approach to policing that prioritizes accountability, transparency, and the safety and well-being of Ontarians.

We want to highlight the hypocrisy of the Ontario government's decision to provide full funding for police training while ignoring student pleas to end poverty and reduce student debt. It is unacceptable that police officers receive special treatment while the needs and well-being of students, who are the future of our province, are neglected. Even during the pandemic, when post-secondary students and workers did not use any of the on-site facilities, the Ontario government refused to waive the tuition fees despite persistent campaigns led by graduate students and workers across the province.

The Ford government's double standard between the police force and higher education students/workers is not new, as the government has shown disregard for the concerns and interests of the latter before. The government's decision to exclude the police force from the austerity measures imposed by Bill 124, which restricts public sector wage increases to 1% per year, is another example of the government's misplaced priorities and lack of commitment to building a fair and equitable society. All the bargaining processes before the appeal of Bill 124 forced the graduate workers' unions to leave the table with only a 1% increase while the inflation rates were soaring. Students and workers in Ontario are still suffering the consequences of this exclusionary double standard.

We call on the Ontario government to listen to the voices of students and workers and take concrete steps to address the urgent social and economic challenges facing our province. This includes investing in post-secondary education and addressing the systemic barriers to accessing education and employment.

CUPE 3902

CUPE 3903

CUPE 3906

CUPE 3908

CUPE 2626

PSAC 610

PSAC 901

PSAC 902