



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
STUDENTS' UNION



Pre-Budget Submission

Ontario's 2021 Budget Consultations

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SUBMITTED BY

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO STUDENTS' UNION (UTSU)

CONTACT

MUNTAKA AHMED (*SHE/HER*)

PRESIDENT

PRESIDENT@UTSU.CA

TYLER RICHES (*HE/THEY*)

VICE-PRESIDENT, PUBLIC & UNIVERSITY AFFAIRS

VPPUA@UTSU.CA

About Us

The University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) is a not-for-profit organization incorporated under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act (CNCA). The UTSU functions autonomously from the University of Toronto, and acts as the primary student government for over 38,000 undergraduate students at the University of Toronto's St. George campus.



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The University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU) believes that post-secondary education should be accessible to all students. Therefore, we urge the government to continue to support students, particularly low-income and first-generation students. The COVID-19 pandemic has put increased financial burdens on students, and we urge you to implement our recommendations to support students throughout these challenging circumstances.

With this in mind, the University of Toronto Students' Union offers the following recommendations for the 2021 Ontario Budget:

Student Financial Assistance

- Address student financial need by increasing OSAP grants for low-income and middle-income students.
- Implement a two-year interest-free grace period after graduation on provincial student loan payments.
- Continue to freeze tuition across all programs while increasing operating grants, until students are contributing approximately one-third of universities' total operating budgets.

Student Mental Health

- Increase funding for campus-based mental health services and supports, such as the Mental Health Worker Grant and the Mental Health Services Grant, and further support peer-to-peer programming, frontline counselling services, and preventive and early intervention initiatives.
- Increase funding to post-secondary Accessibility Services offices that provide supports to students with disabilities, including non-physical and transient disabilities.

Housing & Student Tenants

- Provide funding for a residential rent relief program to provide rent assistance to tenants affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sexual Violence Prevention

- Increase funding for sexual violence centres across Ontario, including crisis response and peer support programs.

Keeping Transit Affordable

- Provide permanent, conditions-free operating grants to municipal transit agencies, such as the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC).
- Restore the GO-TTC fare discount program.

Student financial aid, mental health, housing, sexual violence prevention, and transit are all interconnected areas of need for students. The pandemic has put a financial strain on students, and additional funding is needed to remove financial barriers for students to continue their education, and support students after their graduation. Financial stresses also impact mental health. The ongoing student mental health crisis has only worsened during the pandemic, and all students should have access to mental health supports that respond appropriately to their needs. This requires further funding of campus services and support. In order to improve mental health, we also need to invest in housing conditions, sexual violence prevention, and transit affordability, amongst other factors. Safe and reliable housing is essential, and folks should not live with the fear of eviction. We have also seen a rise in domestic and sexual violence as a result of the pandemic, resulting in an increased demand for support and services. Lastly, affordable transit for students would encourage its continued use.



Final Words

Though we have excluded some recommendations for the sake of brevity, the UTSU welcomes the opportunity to provide perspective on any other post-secondary education initiative or student initiative that the Ministry of Finance may wish to inquire into.

Thank you for your time and consideration.