CFUW ONTARIO COUNCIL | ADVOCACY BRIEF

Stop the OSAP Debt Shift to Protect Student Access

CFUW Ontario Council urges Premier Ford to halt OSAP grant cuts and protect equitable access to postsecondary education.

1 Executive Summary

This brief sets out the position of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) Ontario Council on Ontario's postsecondary funding announcement. We welcome the province's **$6.4-billion investment** over four years and recognize the pressures the new tuition framework is intended to relieve.

Our concern is the **restructuring of the OSAP grant-to-loan ratio**, which takes effect in the 2026–2027 academic year. CFUW Ontario Council urges the government to rescind the OSAP changes, open a consultative process with affected stakeholders, and adopt a gradual transition that protects equitable access to higher education.

85% → 25%	+$6,000	100%
Maximum grant share of an OSAP package, from Fall 2026	Additional repayable debt per year on a $10,000 OSAP package	Loan share for private career college students

2 Policy Overview and Key Changes

Provincial Funding and Tuition Framework

- **Government investment.** $6.4 billion in new operating funding over four years, raising annual baseline operating support to $7 billion.
- **Tuition framework.** The domestic tuition freeze introduced in 2019 ends. Publicly assisted colleges and universities may raise domestic tuition by up to **2% per year for three years** beginning in Fall 2026, after which increases are pegged to inflation or 2%.

OSAP Financial Aid Restructuring — effective Fall 2026

	Non-repayable grants	Repayable loans
Previous model	up to 85%	15%
New model, Fall 2026	maximum 25%	minimum 75%
Private career colleges	none	100%

The province has said it will negotiate an enhanced **Student Access Guarantee** with institutions to cover tuition and textbook shortfalls for low-income students.

3 Financial and Sector Impact

Indicator	Impact
Individual student debt load	On a sample $10,000 OSAP package, grant coverage falls from as much as $8,500 to $2,500 — shifting an additional **$6,000 per academic year** into repayable debt.
Compounding financial pressure	Students face rising tuition alongside sharply reduced non-repayable aid, on top of cost-of-living pressures already driving record student reliance on food banks and worsening housing unaffordability.
High-cost and professional programs	Programs with high fee structures, such as medicine and dentistry, will see disproportionate debt accumulation — risking socio-economic stratification and discouraging lower- and middle-income students from entering vital health professions.

Indicator	Impact
Long-term economic consequences	Heavier debt burdens delay home purchases, small business formation and wealth building, and reduce disposable income circulating in the Ontario economy.

4 Stakeholder Perspectives

- **CFUW Ontario Council** — 48 clubs, 4,500 members. Welcomes institutional operating funding but strongly opposes the reversal of the grant-to-loan ratio, on the grounds that education is a primary pillar of economic mobility and gender equality.
- **Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario** — calls the overhaul a devastating blow for students, and notes that the decision was made without adequate student representation at the table.
- **Student organizations, including OUSA and campus unions** — seek policy offsets such as a zero-interest provincial loan model matching federal policy, and an extension of the OSAP repayment grace period from six months to two years.
- **Postsecondary institutions** — acknowledge the strain on students while welcoming the $6.4-billion investment as essential to operational viability after years of fiscal pressure.

5 Our Requests to Government

1	**Rescind the announced OSAP changes** Halt implementation of the 25/75 grant-to-loan cap scheduled for Fall 2026.
2	**Establish formal consultations** Open structured dialogue with student associations, equity-seeking organizations and community advocates on the design of student financial aid.
3	**Develop a graduated transition** Replace an abrupt ratio shift with a phased, manageable approach that shields lower- and middle-income families from immediate financial distress.
4	**Protect professional and healthcare pathways** Keep targeted grant frameworks intact for high-demand, high-cost fields such as healthcare and medicine, so that entry is not determined by family wealth.

6 Why This Matters

Education is a primary pillar of economic mobility and gender equality. Shifting the cost of postsecondary study from public grants onto individual borrowers does not reduce that cost — it transfers it to the students and families least able to absorb it, and defers its consequences into the decades that follow graduation.

> The $6.4-billion investment and the OSAP restructuring are being introduced together, but they do not offset one another. Institutions gain stability; students absorb the cost. CFUW Ontario Council asks the government to hold the funding commitment and reconsider the aid model.

> **About CFUW Ontario Council**
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> CFUW Ontario Council represents 48 clubs and approximately 4,500 members across the province. Through briefs, letters and direct submissions to the Ontario government, we work to ensure women's voices are heard on the issues that shape their lives.