

OPEN LETTER TO ONTARIO ELECTION CANDIDATES

Attention: Ontario Election Candidates seeking election in Ottawa Centre, Ottawa South, Ottawa West-Nepean

As the primary advocate for 25,000+ young people in the nation's capital, The Carleton University Students' Association would like to know the plans of each candidate in this year's provincial election. We ask that you take the time to read this letter, consider the issues that are raised, and engage in meaningful discussion with your constituents.

The 2015 election saw an 18% increase in young voter turnout, a group of eligible voters aged 18 to 24. Such a spike is not coincidental; it is apparent that young people in Canada are interested. We are interested in what our government values, the promises that are made, and the people who take up the responsibility of leadership. We look up to these leaders and expect that they, in turn, will take notice of the problems that we face on a day to day basis.

The ridings that you seek to represent house thousands of students who constantly battle with the financial burden of University tuition, or the lingering shadow that is cast by provincial debt after graduation. International students continue to see unregulated increases to their tuition costs that often total to triple the amount of what a domestic student would pay.

Unfortunately, sexual violence and rape culture have become normalized in society, especially among young people. Meanwhile, the provincial requirements for sexual violence policies on campuses do not ensure an intersectional policy that puts survivors first. Currently, the policies are more reflective of a checklist as opposed to a rubric.

The lack of off-campus accessible housing is an issue that can not be ignored. The wait list for accessible housing can range anywhere between 5 and 7 years. While there are many measures in place on campus to ensure accessibility, students with disabilities are often forced to place holds on their future plans after graduation.

The conversation about mental health is increasing across the globe. There is a more concerted effort from young people to pop the stigma around reaching out for help and seeking support for mental illnesses.

We recognize the work that the provincial government has done on some of these issues -- the new OSAP, a minimum salary before repayment of OSAP loans kick in, and an increase in funding for frontline mental health workers on campuses. However, more can be done.

These are more than just student issues -- they are our city's issues, and ultimately our country's issues. This letter is not a list of complaints, nor is it a list of demands. These are realistic expectations from a community that is 25,000+ strong, a community that has already begun to take on the crux of leading our society.

What are your ideas for lowering University tuition and removing OSAP interest? How can sexual violence policies on campus be made more intersectional and survivor-centric? Do you plan to increase funding for mental health initiatives? How can accessible off-campus housing be expanded to cut down on the insane 7 year wait time?

I've outlined a process for response below:

May 23rd: letter published

May 23rd to May 31st: receive responses from candidates

Week of May 31st: publish responses on our website and social media

I am excited to hear back from all of you and potentially work with some of you in the coming year. Thank you, and best of luck on election day.

David Oladejo

President

Carleton University Students' Association