Student advocacy organizations deride Ontario's latest tuition pronouncement

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EXTRACT

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Since 2006, universities and colleges have been allowed to raise tuition fees by no more than 5 percent per year. Moving forward between now and 2017, these higher education institution will be permitted to raise costs by an additional 3 percent overall, while schools that include professional training courses in their curriculum can increase tuition fees by a maximum of 5 percent.

Despite the relative dip in what's deemed permissible for tuition hikes, the news hasn't settled well with student advocacy organizations, such as the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the College Student Alliance.

Alysha Li, president of OUSA, noted that allowing Ontario universities to raise costs will further stigmatize the province as having some of the least affordable tuition expenses in the country.

"Support for a more affordable tuition framework, including an immediate tuition freeze, strongly exists in Ontario," said Li.

Compounding the problem is the high rate of unemployment among teens and young adults who are about to go to college or have just recently made the transition from high school. OUSA indicates that the government ought to put more investments toward targeting the rate of youth joblessness so students can better afford to go to school.

Meanwhile, Ciara Byrne, president of the CSA, indicated that she and her advocacy organization will "continue working with the ministry to create a sustainable framework that ensures affordability and quality for our students." CSA requested that a two-year freeze be implemented on tuition increases.

Student loan debt is a continent-wide issue
Ontario students aren't the only collegiate attendees who often face expensive tuition costs, as student loan debt is an issue all across North America. For example, according to the U.S.-based Equifax - which has operations in 18 different countries, including Canada - balances for student loan debt rose more than 14 percent in the month of February, averaging $852 billion, which is up from $746 billion at this time last year.

Amy Crews Cutts, the credit reporting agency's chief economist, said that one of the factors that appears to be driving delinquencies is the high prevalence of students not being able to find steady employment.

"Continued weakness in labor markets is limiting work options once people graduate or quit their programs, leading to a steady rise in delinquencies and loan write-offs," said Cutts.

She added that officials are discussing different strategies that have the potential of being implemented in order to reduce some of students' fiscal burdens, which can often last several years after they graduate.

Parents often help their kids attending college by offering to pay for some of their tuition bills, leaving them to look for ways to save in other areas. Fortunately, policyholders may be eligible for discounts with their local car insurance provider. If their college kids perform well in class or if they have taken the family car and are a certain number of miles away from home, they may qualify for more affordable premiums.

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