

# 2021 Budget Consultations

Submitted by the Waterloo Undergraduate  
Student Association

The Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association (WUSA) represents over 35,000 undergraduate students studying at the University of Waterloo. Students studying and graduating today face challenges like never before. As we look forward to vaccine distribution and long-term economic recovery, it is clear that post-secondary education and post-secondary students will play a key role as Ontario recovers from the pandemic. We seek the government's investment in students to help us contribute to Ontario's economic growth and accelerate a decade-long recovery process.<sup>1</sup>

## Contact

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<sup>1</sup> [CTV News.](#)

## Student Financial Aid

Adequately address student financial need by increasing grants and placing a hold on student debt and interest payments.

At the beginning of the pandemic, 70% of students expressed financial concerns about their financial situation.<sup>2</sup> Such concerns have persisted as unemployment rates rose through 2020. The government can address these concerns by increasing needs-based grant funding for students, as well as following suit with the Federal government and suspending loan repayments through a temporary relief program.

## Quality of Education

Fund research through the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario to help achieve high-quality remote delivery in the wake of COVID-19.

Pivoting to remote delivery has been a challenging task for instructors and students alike. With new variants emerging and the long-term challenges of COVID-19, it is clear that remote delivery and online learning will continue for the foreseeable future. Students would greatly benefit from more research on how instructors and institutions can deliver high-quality, online education.

Continue to freeze tuition while increasing funding for institutions to ensure high-quality education

Students would be very grateful for the extension of the current tuition freeze. However, it is critical to note that any continued freeze of tuition must be accompanied by a corresponding increase to operating grants. This will ensure that students' quality of education does not suffer as a result of lack of funding.

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<sup>2</sup> [Statistics Canada.](#)

## Equity on Campus

Establish equity grants to fund equity staff, programs and services at post-secondary institutions.

Students are continuing to call for equity work at our post-secondary institutions. There is an imperative to decolonize university curricula, properly compensate individuals conducting equity work, and ensure equitable support for students. We propose a system modeled after the current Mental Health Worker Grant and Mental Health Services Grant to fund such initiatives.

## Students in Our Community

Allocate \$1 billion in funding towards the GO rail expansion on the Kitchener line as detailed and approved in Metrolinx's Board of Directors' Preliminary Design Business Case approved in June 2020.

WUSA is committed to ensuring that students have a world-class education and quality of life during that education. In the spirit of that commitment, we are keen supporters of Two-Way-All-Day-GO which would guarantee more efficient and reliable transit for students along the Toronto-Waterloo Corridor.

Support the development of transition programming for students as they enter and exit postsecondary education.

COVID-19 has had a profoundly negative impact on student mental health and well-being. In a nation-wide survey, 70% of students said they had felt stressed, anxious, or isolated due to the pandemic, and 82% said they were worried about their future beyond the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> This means that transition to and from post-secondary education is an especially precarious time for our youth today. Building on the governments' investments in post-secondary mental health, we need support for students as they transition through this difficult period of their lives.

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<sup>3</sup> [Canadian Alliance of Student Associations.](#)