

TO: All media

RE: Ontario College Student Support Fund - ***Student Support Fund is Insufficient***

FROM: Niagara College Student Administrative Council  
Fanshawe Student Union  
Sheridan Student Union  
Georgian College Students' Association  
St. Lawrence College Cornwall Student Union  
Seneca Student Federation  
St. Clair Student Representative Council  
Student Association George Brown College



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, November 30, 2017 – ***Student Support Fund is Insufficient***

The dust has now settled on the longest strike in the history of the Ontario College System, yet students are still left in the dark as they attempt to access the Student Support Fund; formerly the “Student Hardship Fund.”

Student associations across the province are asking the Government to reconsider the current structure of the fund, as the allocated funds are insufficient. The fund will reimburse a select few groups on campus and the ministry guidelines leaves colleges to decide what constitutes a strike expense, ultimately leaving most students unrecognized for their hardship.

On November 20<sup>th</sup>, the Honourable Minister Matthews and the Ontario Liberals announced that a “hardship fund” would be created for students “who experienced financial hardship as a result of the strike.” The overall estimated, gross savings across the province was approximately \$135M on the conservative side. The fund is comprised of the colleges’ net savings from the estimated \$135M, but according to the Minister it will diminish to approximately \$5M once the strike expenses of the colleges are submitted. How can this be the case? Ministry instructions in regards to college expenses that can be charged to this gross savings, are extremely vague, but include lost revenues, tuition reimbursements and “added expenses caused by the strike.”

The fund is designed to reimburse students up to \$500 for “incremental expenses” due to the semesters being extended. Currently, the following students qualify for funding:

- Students who can prove incremental childcare costs during the weeks of December 18-22, January 2-5 and April 23-27.
- Students scheduled to graduate in December will be permitted to claim January’s rent.
- Students incurring incremental transit costs due to extended semesters.
- Students who rescheduled their travel plans due to the strike.

Students across the province are outraged that this fund does not acknowledge the financial hardship of students will suffer lost wages over the Holiday Break or the over 15 days of lost class time.

It is imperative that the Government create clear directions to the colleges as to what constitutes net savings, as to not completely deplete the fund before students get access.

The collective student associations are asking that the Government add funding in order to aid in the disbursement of \$500 to all full-time students of all 24 Ontario colleges. All students have experienced a financial hardship and are thus entitled to a fair and equal amount.

Student associations from across the province will continue to ensure that the student voice is represented, and that Government and College administrations are held accountable. Minister Matthews has continually mentioned that she “has heard from students about the hardships they have experienced as a result of the strike.” It is time to recognize those hardships and to reform the Student Support Fund to a format that is all encompassing, and not situationally discriminatory.

## **QUOTES:**

### **Questions to Presidents:**

#### **1. What action would you like the MAESD to take in regards to amending the fund?**

“I would like to see the MAESD remove some restrictions around incremental costs and open the opportunity for all students who have experienced hardship to access this fund. If the MAESD is worried about the net savings being insufficient for all students, mandate the colleges to budget a refund amount per student, rather than relying on what net savings may amount to. Help invest in our students.”

***Ryan Huckla – President, Niagara College Student Administrative Council (NCSAC)***

“It is the stance of our Federation that all full-time students should receive \$500.00 or an allotted amount from the Fund. Additionally, students who have experienced a greater loss should then have the opportunity to apply for reimbursement through a regulated process. The current application process cannot accurately compensate students for the time wasted as well as the immense stress for those student trying to complete their fall semester.”

***LéNea Richardson - Acting President, Seneca Student Federation***

## **2. What do you feel is the biggest deficiency in the structure of this fund?**

“The biggest deficiency is fair equity for all students affected by the strike, and this speaks to the last point where there shouldn’t be any proof needed for that baseline disbursement. There is also the lack of clarity of the fund and how colleges are casting their expenses against the fund.”

***Enrique Ponce – President, Sheridan College Student Union Inc.***

“The Ministry says each student can apply for up to \$500 after they “prove their hardship” yet we are told there is only about \$5M in net Hardship funds available. For that math to work, only 10,000 students can access the maximum allowable amount which is less than 5% of the full time students in the Province. This is a system full of inherent barriers to students. That math does not work for me. All students, at all colleges, deserve fair and equal treatment, hence we are requesting the funds to support that. It would be a more efficient use of public administration money to have 24 Colleges submit strike expenses to the Ministry rather than 250,000 students required to submit the explanations of their hardships to their College.”

***Morganna Sampson – President, Fanshawe Student Union***

“The lack of acknowledgement of student’s mental health, and other hardships during the strike. Also ignoring that many students had plans of working over the holiday break, but instead now have to be in school. This causes more financial hardship during an already financially stressful time.”

***Ryan Huckla – President, Niagara College Student Administrative Council***

“The Ministry has been putting up the facade that they are really looking out for our students but refuse to provide adequate compensation to all students affected. All student circumstances are unique. Therefore, students should be entitled to an allotted amount without having to endure further duress of this application process. After five long weeks, they are entitled to be treated fairly and equitably. Please remember that these are not just our students. These are your students . They deserve better and on their behalf we urge you to do better.”

***LéNea Richardson - Acting President, Seneca Student Federation***

## **QUICK FACTS:**

- The MAESD announced the Student Support Fund on Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup> and gave colleges five days to develop protocol around the fund “in conjunction with students.”
- The estimated gross savings from faculty wages to the college is \$135M
  - \$90,000 average salary + 30% remittances savings x 12,000 faculty x 5 weeks = \$135M
- The estimated amount of the fund as announced by the ministry is \$5M, although total gross savings or expenses cannot be provided by the ministry or colleges at this time.
- Colleges will be permitted to claim loss revenues as a result of the strike, but students are not permitted to claim loss wages they would have earned during the extended semesters.

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