

## **Youth and Education**

*Youth in Canada are getting a raw deal. Youth unemployment is over 13%. Underemployment, those taking part-time jobs while they seek a career, [is at a staggering 28%](#). Students are taking on crushing debt loads and being robbed of the tools to recoup their investments. The average student in debt owes more than \$25,000. Yet, all youth hear from the older generation is that if they worked harder, invested in their education more, or just ‘passed out more resumes,’ they would get a job. They hear that record-high tuition fees are just the ‘way it has to be’ and that to speak out against it is to be an entitled millennial. They hear that if they’d just be patient, career opportunities would eventually come. The reality, though, is that today’s youth face barriers that were never in place when their parents were starting their careers.*

*We need to change how we look at post-secondary education. Rather than a private commodity that young people purchase to advance themselves, we need to see education as a public good. We need to see the shared value of empowering a generation of youth to learn a trade, train as scientists, or study the humanities. We can address our skills shortages and create a generation ready for the information economy. We can equip youth with the tools they’ll need to be good global and Canadian citizens.*

### **Abolish Tuition Fees**

**\$7539:** *The average undergraduate tuition fees per year in Ontario<sup>1</sup>*

It’s time to break the status quo on education in Canada and abolish tuition fees for college, university and skills training programs. Whether Germany, Austria, Norway, Sweden, or Finland, many of the world’s most successful economies have proven that expanding the public education system to include post-secondary increases prosperity, equality, productivity, and economic competitiveness.

We will start investing in Canada’s future by abolishing tuition fees for students without adequate financial means, including removing the inadequate 2% annual cap on increased funding for post secondary education for all First Nations and Inuit students. **Through consultation and collaboration with provincial governments and universities and colleges, by 2020 we will abolish tuition fees for post-secondary education and skills training for Canadians, guaranteeing that income is never a barrier for qualified students.** It is widely recognized that Canada’s success depends on an educated population, yet we burden youth with tens of thousands of dollars in student debt.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/educ50k-eng.htm>

## Youth Employment

**13.7%:** *Canada's Youth Unemployment Rate in June 2015*<sup>2</sup>

It is unacceptable to the Green Party, and should be unacceptable to every Canadian, that the unemployment rate among Canadian youth is twice the national average. The actual youth unemployment rate is likely much higher as many young people have given up on finding that first job and are no longer counted.

Investment in Canadian skills, training, and education is a proven means to create real jobs, and is the backbone of Canada's future as a sustainability superpower. But for many young people just getting out of school, they face a Catch-22. They cannot get hired in new jobs because they lack experience. But unless they get that first job, they'll never have experience. **Greens will create a national Community and Environment Service Corps, which will provide \$1 billion/year to municipalities to hire Canadian youth to do work that needs to be done.**

## Student Debt

**\$15 billion:** *The total student debt owed to federal and provincial governments.*

Instead of making it easier for students to get an education, the federal government has turned into Canadian students' largest creditor. Almost 455 000 students have had to borrow to finance their education this past year alone. Government's borrow money at prime interest rates, and then loan it back to students at a higher rate - some of [the highest rates, in fact, in the world](#). And, despite default rates falling by more than half in the past decade, [the Harper Conservatives' have directed debt collectors to be more aggressive](#).

Canadians know the value of a good education. However, what happens to the student who graduates with a diploma in hand and a crushing debt load on their mind? What about the young Canadian that avoids getting an education because they don't want to take on debt? What are the economic consequences of an indebted generation?

The cost to the Canadian economy of neglecting an indebted generation is more than we can afford. There is increasing evidence that taking on student debt has negative effects on student mental health, including difficulty sleeping, greater tension and anxiety.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/150710/t001a-eng.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Cooke, Richard et al. "Student Debt and its Relation to Student Mental Health." *Journal of Further and Higher Education* Vol. 28, No. 1, February 2004

Many youth limit their own economic potential through debt aversion. Youth will be unable to buy houses, start businesses, or take any of necessary risks that we know help stimulate economies.

We are contributing to the gap between students whose parents can afford to pay for their education, and students whose parents cannot. Education should be the great equalizer. Instead, it is serving to reinforce pre-existing inequality.

Even when young people are out of school, they face increasing pressure to take unpaid work for months or even years. While youth with support from their parents can advance their careers through internships, seen as a requirement in today's job market, those that cannot are left behind. Youth work must be valued like all other work. We need to level the playing field. **The Green Party will introduce legislation to ban unpaid internships in federally regulated industries and work with the Provinces to cease the practice altogether.**

The Green Party's Guaranteed Livable Income (GLI), will also give the students the security they need to pursue an education without living in fear of falling into poverty. A GLI would provide a regular payment to every Canadian, at a level above the poverty line, to meet Canadians' basic needs while encouraging additional income generation. For higher-income Canadians, the amount of the GLI is merely taxed back in whole. A GLI will give students the support they need to study, without having to sacrifice their mental and physical well-being.

Instead of ignoring youth who say they are getting a bad deal, we need to look at how the rules have changed for today's students, and find ways to fix things.

As our plan to abolish tuition fees is being phased in, we will invest in the success of current students, jumpstart the Canadian economy, and give our graduates a hand-up by implementing a debt forgiveness program. **Our plan will eliminate any existing or future student federal debt above \$10,000. We will abolish charging interest on new student loans and will increase available funding for bursaries.**