



Access to Education: The Sanctuary Scholars Program

Presented by

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This presentation is possible thanks to the support of:



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The land we are standing on today is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Huron-Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

DISCLAIMER

This presentation is NOT legal advice. It is for information purposes to navigate and understand the systems discussed.

The information provided in this session is dated February 12, 2026

OVERVIEW

- Land Acknowledgement
- FCJ Refugee Centre
- Precarious Status & Implications with Education
- Education System in Canada – Ontario Education Act
- Sanctuary Scholars Program
- Handout Overview & Question Period

Who We Are

- We are a non-profit organization which serves refugees and others at risk due to their immigration status
- We welcome anyone asking for information, counsel and support regarding these issues.
- We address systemic issues that newly arrived refugee claimants and persons with precarious immigrations status face in Canada including lack of resources, marginalization, and discrimination.
- FCJ Refugee Centre is unique in its capacity to serve anyone who needs assistance. We have a particular penchant for serving populations who we term as “precarious migrants”.

**FCJ
REFUGEE
CENTRE**



**WALKING
WITH
UPROOTED
PEOPLE**



Service and Resources



SETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION

- Shelter for women & children
- Refugee Housing Hub
- Women's services
- Food distribution
- English Classes
- Clinic
- Youth
- Access to Education

IMMIGRATION SUPPORT

- Refugee process
- Immigration orientation
- PRRA (risk assessment)
- Refugee appeal
- H&C (Humanitarian & Compassionate App.)
- Sponsorship
- Work permit
- Etc.

ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Migrants Workers Mobile Clinic
- Direct services to trafficked persons
- Migrant Women's Counter Trafficking Alliance
- Youth Alliance Against HT

PUBLIC EDUCATION & NETWORKING

- Webinars & training sessions
- Borderless Voices podcast
- YouTube channel
- Resources
- Country research
- Newsletter & annual reports

**FCJ
REFUGEE
CENTRE**

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WWW.FCJREFUGEECENTRE.ORG

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE YOUTH NETWORK

- The FCJ Youth Network has been operating for more than 14 years, and has supported over 650 youth since its inception.
- The FCJ Youth Network is a Brave Space for newcomer and migrant youth to come together on a weekly basis to learn, build, and participate in community engagement.
- A Brave Space is where everyone feels safe, heard, respected and involved.
- A really important aspect of our youth group is that it is open to any newcomer youth regardless of their status.
- It is an inclusive space for youth to support each other, get involved in the community, participate in a variety of activities and workshops, and engage in self-advocacy and activism.



- Many of the projects the youth network pursues, including the original idea of Access To Education, are borne from the challenges and barriers many of the youth have personally experienced.
- We often attend and present at conferences, host community gatherings, travel, have movie nights, monthly family dinners, attend marches and rallies in solidarity with each other.
- The members of the FCJ Youth Network continue to act as leaders in the community.
- The FCJYN engages in policy related discussions at all levels of government – Local, Municipal, Provincial and Federal.



- The official age range of the FCJYN is 13-30; with most youth falling between 20-27 presently. The overall network has 120 active members with a weekly attendance of 10-15 youth.
- Majority of the youth come to Canada having some level of Secondary Education, with a significant portion having already completed school or in their final year. Some youth also either have their Post-Secondary Education or had to leave their country in the middle of their post-secondary schooling.
- The youth come from countries such as; Mexico, Columbia, Peru, Gambia, Morocco, Uganda, Barbados, Algeria, United States of America, Kenya, St. Kitts, Bahamas, Cuba, Nigeria, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Brazil, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Chile, Saudi Arabia, El Salvador, India & China.
- Many of their first languages are Spanish, Arabic and English, but we aim to never allow language to be a barrier to access our services with staff and volunteer interpretation; and encouraging methods of learning English to build confidence in integration and socializing.



What is regularized status vs precarious status?

REGULARIZED VS. PRECARIOUS STATUS

What are examples of 'regularized' status?

- Canadian Citizen
- Permanent Resident
- Convention Refugee
- Protected person
- International student*
- Visitor*

What are examples of 'precarious' status?

- Refugee Claimants
- Refused Refugee Claimants
- International student*
- Visitor*
- Those caught in limbo due to immigration policy changes
- Victims & Survivors of Human Trafficking
- Those involved in sponsorship breakdown
- Anyone without official immigration status living in Canada

Education System FAQs

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN CANADA

- Education in Canada is Provincially Administered
- Levels of Education in Ontario can be divided by - Preschool Daycare, Elementary, Secondary, and Post-Secondary
- The Ministry of Education is the ministry of the Government of Ontario responsible for government policy, funding, curriculum planning and direction in all levels of public education, including elementary and secondary schools
- Paul Calandra is the Minister of Education for the Province of Ontario
- The Ministry of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security is the ministry of the Government of Ontario responsible for administration of laws relating to post-secondary education.
- Nolan Quinn is the Minister of Colleges, Universities, Research Excellence and Security for the Province of Ontario

Post-Secondary & Beyond

HISTORY - COLLEGE VS UNIVERSITY IN ONTARIO

- Minister of Education Bill Davis' Bill-153, passed on May 21, 1965, directed *to create a post-secondary educational system different from that of universities.*
- The Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, indicates that the purpose of Ontario public colleges is to offer "*career-oriented, post-secondary education and training to assist individuals in finding and keeping employment, to meet the needs of employers and the changing work environment and to support the economic and social development of their local and diverse communities.*"

PRESENT - COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY IN ONTARIO

- There are 24 publicly funded universities in Ontario that are post-secondary education institutions with degree-granting authority.
- The province of Ontario has 24 publicly funded colleges, known as Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs).
- In 2003, three CAATs (Conestoga, Humber, and Sheridan) were designated as Institutes of Technology and Advanced Learning (ITALs).
- George Brown Polytechnic and Seneca Polytechnic are two colleges that were designated as ITALs but do not use the designation in their formal name.

CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL TUITION FEES BY LEVEL OF STUDY

Geography	Level of study	2021 / 2022	2022 / 2023	2023 / 2024	2024 / 2025	2025 / 2026
		Current dollars				
Ontario (map)	Canadian undergraduate	7,850	7,995	8,271	8,704	8,958
	Canadian graduate	9,327	9,304	9,522	9,817	9,930
	International undergraduate	41,744	44,036	46,297	48,013	49,802
	International graduate	26,196	27,086	27,010	27,929	28,624

Release by Stats Canada on 2025-09-10

EXPENSIVE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT FEES – WHY?

- Ira Basen, a Toronto-based documentary producer for CBC Radio, points out that twenty years ago there was very little, if any, focus on international student recruitment by Ontario's colleges and universities but “that began to change after the election of Mike Harris's Progressive Conservative government in 1995.”
- In his article, *Ontario colleges need international tuition. It could cost them*, Basen explains that “colleges were encouraged to think globally, not locally — to establish partnerships with other institutions around the world and even to open up satellite campuses abroad. They were also told that they should compete for students in a deregulated, global educational marketplace [and] in 1996, the Harris government deregulated international tuition and let schools keep all the money it generated. Suddenly, colleges had a new and potentially very lucrative source of revenue.”

Sanctuary: What does it mean?

WHAT DOES *'SANCTUARY'* MEAN?

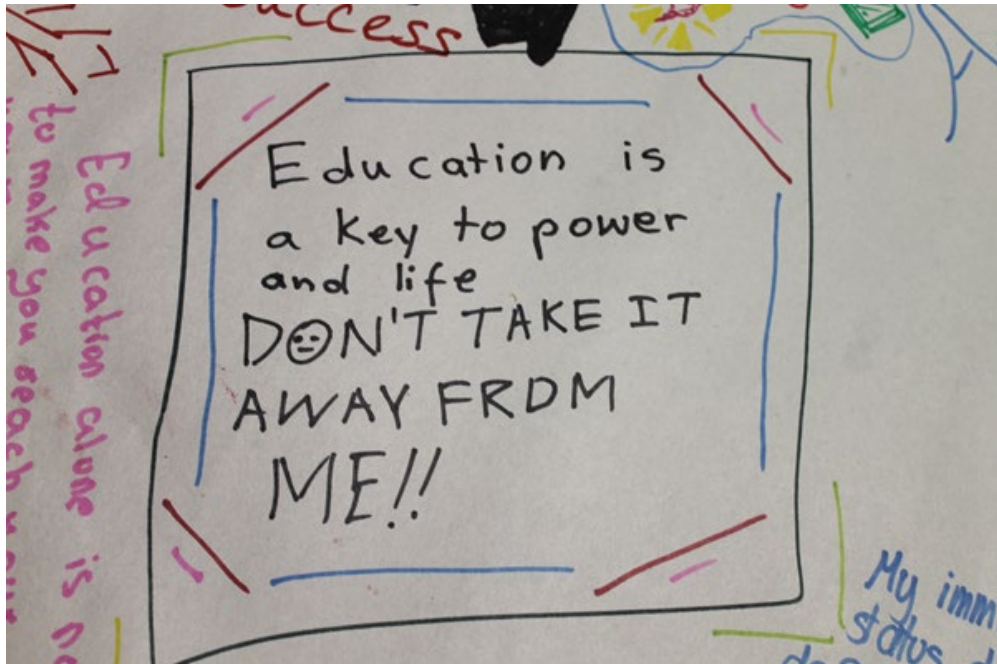
- A sanctuary, in its original meaning, is a sacred place, and by the use of such places as a haven, by extension the term has come to be used for any place of safety.
- Although the word "sanctuary" is often traced back only as far as the Greek and Roman empires, the concept itself has likely been part of human cultures for thousands of years. The idea that persecuted persons should be given a place of refuge is ancient, perhaps even primordial, deriving itself from basic features of human altruism.

SANCTUARY CITIES

- In February 2013, Toronto became the first sanctuary city in Canada to enable all residents to access municipal services.
- In January 2017, [City Council re-affirmed Toronto as a Sanctuary City](#), where all residents have full rights to access City services without fear, regardless of their immigration status. This policy is formally called [Access to City Services for Undocumented Torontonians \(Access T.O.\)](#) and can be found on the City's website.
- As of 2022, seven Canadian cities (Toronto, Hamilton, Vancouver, Ajax, Montreal, Edmonton, and London) have official sanctuary or access without fear policies.
- They aim to allow non-status migrants to access some municipal programs and services without fear of being arrested, detained, or removed from the country.
- In some cities, policies include “non-co-operation” with the law enforcement authorities or “don't ask, don't tell” policies, whereby the city does not require their staff members to ask about an individual's immigration status and commits to not sharing any personal information with the police

Sanctuary Scholars

THE FCJ/YORK PROGRAM



- After the Pan Am Games in Toronto in 2015, the City of Toronto welcomed proposals to the Community Legacy Initiative Fund for projects which would increase capacity and address systemic barriers experienced by the city's Latin American, South American and Caribbean communities.
- The project, Access to Education, was submitted and approved - for providing two options for accessing post secondary education at York University.
- The project offers two pathways for entry into University - a bridging course program, and a direct entry program.

DEVELOPMENT OF BRIDGING COURSE

- The bridging program was designed to support students who had been out of formal education for some time. The course provides a re-introduction to formal education structure, and introduces the students to the support services available within the university.
- There have been several rounds of delivery of the Bridging Course – from Winter 2017, until now.
- The bridging course itself, ‘Critical Approaches to Migration and Uprootedness’ is delivered from within the department of Sociology, with the course contents focusing on migration theory.
- The course has been a collaborative effort, with staff from the writing centre, legal services and York Campus Security participating.

DIRECT ENTRY

- The Direct Entry program was created to support students at the point of graduation who meet or exceed the standard for qualification to university admission.
- This program required several coordination and implementation processes from the Admissions and Registrars offices, in order to create student profiles online, which recognized them as domestic students.
- All of the students who have been admitted to the degree programs have shown incredible gratitude and excitement at the opportunity to study at university – an opportunity that for many would otherwise not have been an option in the near, or distant future.
- The program has been no less than life changing for it's participants.

What should I consider?

Sanctuary Scholars Handout

Post-Secondary Access To Education Options with Precarious Status

YorkU (York University) AND **TMU** (Toronto Metropolitan University formerly known as Ryerson) –
Sanctuary Scholars Program

Program Overview

YorkU – [The Sanctuary Scholars Program](#)

- More information the [Sanctuary's Scholar Bridging Program](#)

TMU – [Sanctuary Scholars](#)

- **Tuition Fees:** Eligible students pay domestic fees rates (a significant reduction from international rates).
- **OSAP Eligibility:** Students with precarious immigration status are not eligible for OSAP until:
 - They receive a positive refugee decision (Protected Person/Convention Refugee)
 - They receive permanent residence.
 - For more information please refer to [OSAP's](#) website.
- **Scholarships/Bursaries:** Limited availability for students under this program.

Direct Entry Stream	Bridging Program
For students who have the required courses to apply directly to York or TMU. How to Apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school students in Ontario: Apply through OUAC. • International high school grads: Apply through York website, or through OUAC if you want to apply only to TMU or to both York and TMU. Contact the program officer to check if you're eligible. York: spisinfo@yorku.ca TMU: sanctuaryscholars@torontomu.ca	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who: For students who don't meet direct entry requirements or need extra academic preparation or support • What: Includes a free, one-term Sociology course to build skills and confidence (no credit). • How: Students must contact the program officer to check if they qualify (Tanya Aberman – email: spisinfo@yorku.ca). • Where: Half semester on YorkU's campus and half at TMU.

Once students complete the course they can choose whether they will apply to YorkU or TMU.

[Spanning the Gaps](#) is separate program at **TMU**

- Mature learners (21+) who didn't finish high school or have been out of school for several years and are missing the prerequisite needed for the program they want to study in
- **Part-time, fully online** with a mix of synchronous and asynchronous courses.
- Typically spans **four semesters** (≈ 1½ years).
- Expect **2–3 evening classes per week**, plus 6–10 hours/week of homework.
- **Tuition:** Eligible learners can have their tuition fully subsidized.

Financing Education

- **Budget Consideration:** Prospective students must carefully consider their decision and manage their finances when applying for a program and selecting courses. Tuition is charged per course, so starting part-time or with fewer courses may be a more affordable option.
- Fees must be paid at the start of the semester — please note that you will be charged a small amount of interest per month if the fee is not paid.

Next Steps

Sanctuary Scholars Applications & Other Ventures

[York University](#)

What else do I need to know?

This program isn't open to students who are currently in Canada with international student immigration status or students who are hoping to come to Canada as international students. We have also worked hard to make other modifications across the University to ensure student safety, accessibility and a welcoming environment for Sanctuary Scholars.

To apply

Students must contact the program coordinator during their application process to ensure they are eligible for the Sanctuary Scholars program. For more information on the Sanctuary Scholars program, please contact a program coordinator: spisinfo@yorku.ca.

[Toronto Metropolitan University](#)

About This Program

The Sanctuary Scholars program offered at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) via the Office of Social Innovation (OSI), provides an access pathway specifically for students who hold precarious immigration status.

While students with precarious immigration status, who we have termed Sanctuary Scholars, can enroll in school at the elementary and secondary levels in Ontario, accessing the post-secondary level is often very difficult or even impossible. Sanctuary Scholars may have completed all of their education in Ontario, or may be coming to Canada with high school or even university-level education, but they cannot join their friends and peers in pursuing post-secondary education. This is why at Toronto Metropolitan University we have worked hard to develop a new access pathway specifically for Sanctuary Scholars.

In keeping with our commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion, and access as outlined in the 2020-2025 [Academic Plan](#), TMU has taken an important step by creating the Sanctuary Scholars program. We have furthered our commitment to welcome all people to an environment of belonging, based on the university's values of inclusivity, innovation and excellence. We work continuously to establish a safe and welcoming place for Sanctuary Scholars. We take the confidentiality and the unique needs of this group very seriously.

Contact

sanctuaryscholars@torontomu.ca

What is Precarious Immigration Status?

Within the Sanctuary Scholars program at TMU, the term 'precarious status' is used to include people who have made immigration applications, including: refugee claims, refused refugee claims, humanitarian and compassionate ground (H&C)* applications, pre-removal risk assessment (PRRA)* applications, people on temporary resident permits (TRPs)*, as well as those who have no immigration status.

*See the Terminology list

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ACCESS PROGRAMS

Broad access programs:

- York University
- Toronto Metropolitan University

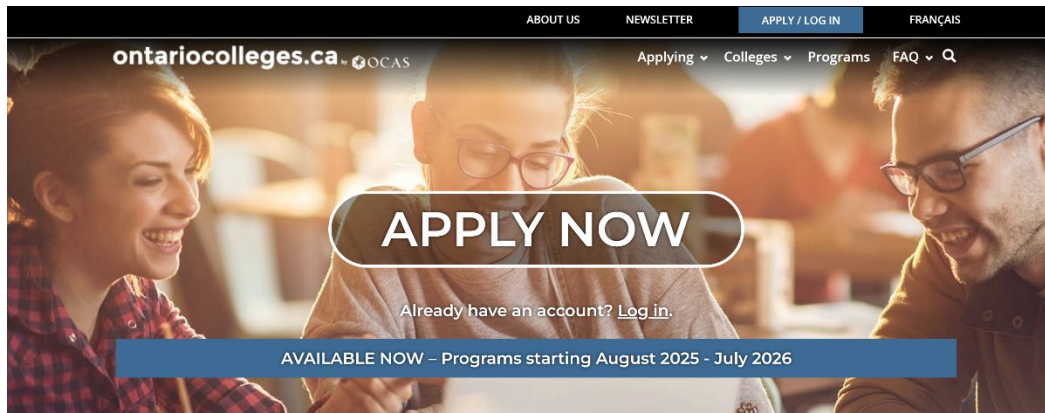
Some discussion, but no broad access programs:

- Queen's University
- Wilfred Laurier University
- University Of Toronto

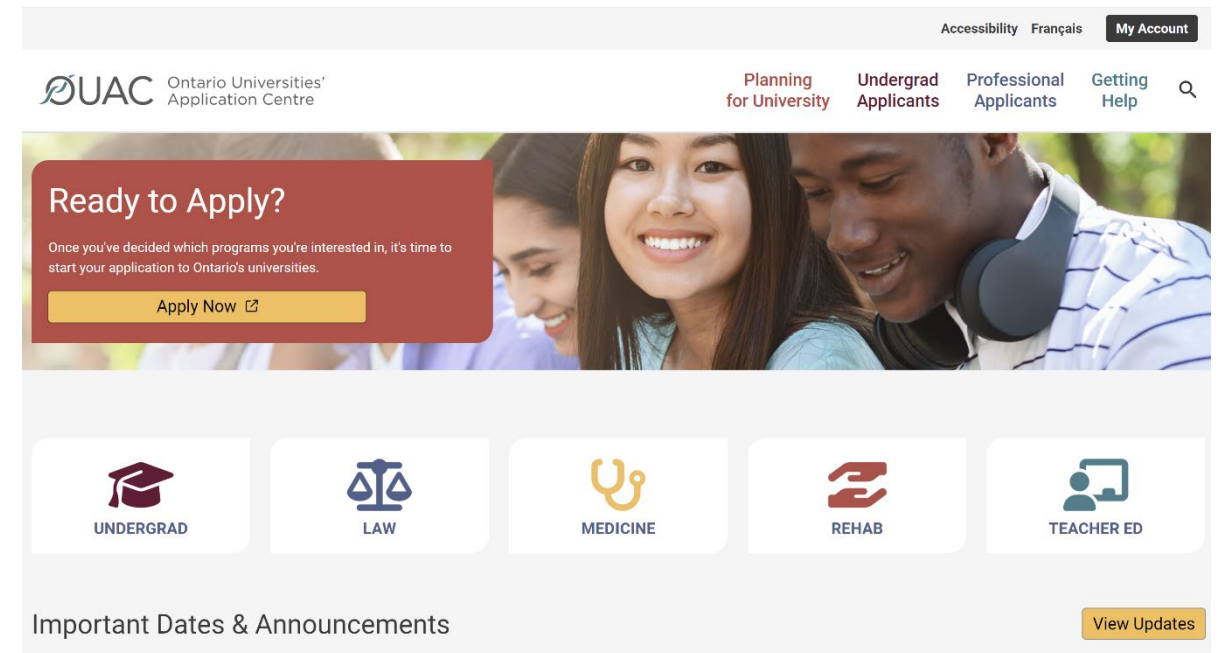
****No colleges so far***

College & University Applications

Ontario College Application Service



Ontario Universities' Application Centre



OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program)

The [Ontario Student Assistance Program \(OSAP\)](#) is a financial aid program that can help you pay for college or university.

OSAP offers funding through:

- **grants:** money you don't have to pay back
- **a student loan:** money you need to repay once you're done school

When you apply for OSAP, you are automatically considered for both grants and a loan. If you don't want to take a loan, and you're a full-time or part-time student, you can decline it after your application is approved.

OSAP can help you pay for: tuition, books and equipment, fees charged by your school, living expenses (full-time students only), child care (for full-time and part-time students with children)

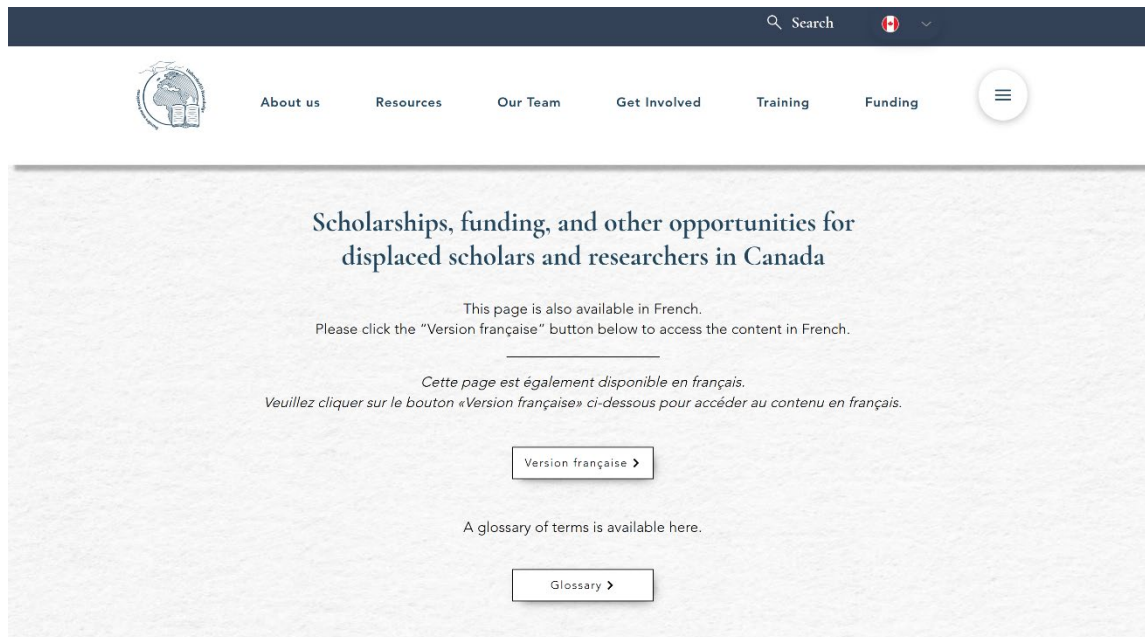
OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program)



Note: There have been some changes to the OSAP and tuition freezes in Ontario as of February 12, 2026:



- The allocation of OSAP funding for eligible students in the new school year will be reduced from a maximum of 85% to a maximum of 25% for grants, with funding for loans increased to a minimum of 75%.
- From the 2026-2027 school year, publicly-assisted colleges and universities will be able to raise tuition fees by up to 2% per year for the next three years.
- Learn more: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/osap-ontario-student-assistance-program>

Some Financial Assistance Options

[UnborderED Knowledge](#)



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Scholarships, funding, and other opportunities for displaced scholars and researchers in Canada

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A glossary of terms is available here.

[Glossary >](#)

[Maytree Scholarship Program](#)



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Maytree Scholarship Program

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What is the Maytree scholarship program?

The Maytree scholarship program is for Protected Persons who were formerly unaccompanied minors. The scholarship is for one year for students enrolling in a full-time undergraduate degree or college diploma program, in any field of study, in an accredited university or community college in Toronto.

What is Maytree's history advocating for and supporting Protected Persons in post-secondary education?


In 1999, Maytree launched the Maytree Education Access Program, a scholarship program for

Current Advocacy Efforts

ONTARIO EDUCATION REPORT CARD PROJECT

- The Uprooted Education 2016 Ontario Report was the result of a project undertaken by members of the FCJ Youth Network to explore how the unique trajectories and social locations of migrant youth with precarious immigration status intersect with Access T.O.; particularly its involvement in, Ontario High Schools.
- The 2024-2025 reports did a follow-up on the 2016 edition detailing the current experiences through the same five salient themes (Getting In, Equitable Participation, Anti-discrimination, Support, Moving On), and offers insight into promising practices and possibilities to ignite change.


REPORT CARDS, FOCUS GROUPS & ROUNDTABLE



Walking with Uprooted People


A ROCKY PATH

Understanding Access to Education Challenges for Newcomer Children & Youth

Ontario Education Report Card
Phase 1: June 2024

Prepared by:  FCJ YOUTH Network


Funded by:  Maytree
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Walking with Uprooted People

BUILDING PATHWAYS

Enhancing Access To Education Systems for Newcomer Children & Youth

Ontario Education Report Card
Phase 2: February 2025

Prepared by:  FCJ YOUTH Network

Funded by:  Maytree
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**SEPTEMBER 25
9:30AM TO
12:00PM**

ROUNDTABLE ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN ONTARIO

 FCJ YOUTH Network

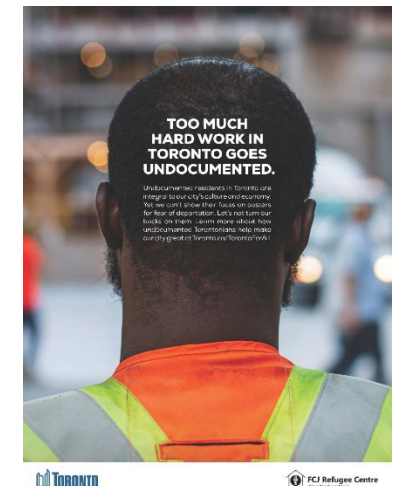
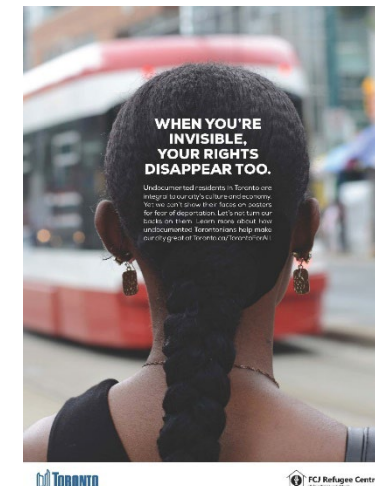
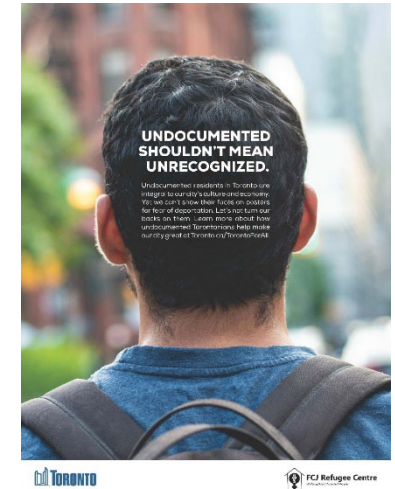
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 Maytree
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WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE?

- When vulnerable populations are marginalized, it often falls to local, grass roots efforts to support and advocate for equitable access and equal rights.
- Using your privilege as power.
- Importance of allies & networks
- Advocacy – the needle is moving; but it takes collective action and tireless advocacy

Toronto For All Campaign



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Thank you

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