



# Communicating the New OSAP: Challenges, Successes and Lessons Learned

Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills  
Development

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# Overview of Presentation

- ✓ OSAP size and scope
- ✓ Perceptions of student aid in Ontario (Pollara Strategic Insights)
- ✓ Ontario's outreach to students and their families
- ✓ Impact of OSAP transformation and outreach on the caseload and growth in under-represented students
- ✓ Ongoing work with HEQCO on the impact of OSAP Transformation

## OSAP Size and Scope

- OSAP is an integrated program funded by both the federal and provincial governments.
- OSAP provides needs-based assistance through loans and grants to help qualified students/families afford postsecondary studies.
- More than 400,000 students per year benefit from OSAP, representing 70% of full-time students (80% of college students).
- OSAP is an entitlement program. No cap is set on the number of students who can qualify for funding.
- OSAP will disburse \$4.5 B of loans/grants to students in 2017/18

# Perceptions of Student Aid in Ontario

- Worked with Pollara Strategic Insights to gain understanding of OSAP and the costs of PSE

## Objectives of the market research



Understand how PSE is paid for by families and the extent to which this is a concern for parents and students



Determine perceptions of student debt load



Gauge impressions of OSAP; improve understanding of where these impressions come from



Explore the role OSAP can play in the PSE journey



# Perceptions of Student Aid in Ontario - Survey

## Financing postsecondary education



Parent

Concerns:

- Where the money is coming from?
- Stress somewhat “alleviated” after child in PSE.



Student

Concerns:

- Financing their education.
- Paying for loans after graduation.

## Graduating with debt



Parent

Concerns:

- Debt their child will be left with.
- Many consider debt to be “moderate”.
- Most believe that debt is simply a part of adult life.



Student

Concern:

- Debt load will be larger/more daunting than their parents’ think.



# Perceptions of Student Aid in Ontario – Focus Group

## Financing postsecondary education



Parent

Concerns:

- Many concerns over most financial aspects of their children's PSE.
- Worry that their concerns may discourage their children from PSE.

## Graduating with debt



Parent

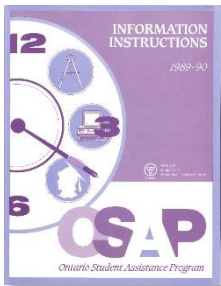
Concerns:

- Most parents willing to help out their children with PSE debt if they can, BUT
- Almost all say their child will be ultimately responsible for own debt.

# Perceptions on Student Aid in Ontario

OSAP Brand – one of most recognizable in Ontario, and across Canada!

PROBLEM: Learned that most parents get their information primarily from personal experiences and their time on OSAP!



OSAP App 89-90



The OSAP Website, 1997

Same brand, new look!



Now,  
the new  
OSAP  
is here to  
help you.



# Outreach to Students and Families

## Key Messages for Students

- *“You get the grades. We’ll help you pay.”*
- *“You may be eligible for more financial aid than you think. Find out how much you can get.”*
- *“Get the monkey off your back. Free tuition for eligible students.”*

## Key Messages for Parents

- *“Your child may qualify for free tuition with the new OSAP.”*
- *“You worked hard to help your child get into college or university. OSAP can help pay for it.”*



# Impact of Outreach and Messaging

The screenshot shows the OSAP website interface. At the top, there is the Ontario logo, a search bar, and a language selector set to 'français'. The main heading is 'OSAP: Ontario Student Assistance Program'. Below this, there is a sub-heading 'Get help paying for college or university when you qualify for OSAP.' and a large 'osap' logo with a green checkmark. There are 'Log in' and 'Register' buttons. The main content area is titled 'How much you could get' and includes a 'Calculate' button. The form fields are: 'I left high school in' (dropdown menu with 'Still in high school' selected), 'I am a married/common-law student' (checkbox), 'I have 0 children' (dropdown menu), 'Parental Income \$' (dropdown menu with an asterisk), 'I will go to' (radio buttons for 'university', 'college', and 'private career college'), and 'I will live with parent/guardian' (checkbox). To the right of the form, there are links for 'Learn about OSAP', 'How to apply for OSAP', 'After you apply', and 'Repay your loan', each with a brief description.

BUSIEST website in OPS – 24 months running!

Over 3 million page views at ontario.ca/osap since the launch of the calculator.

Used by over 1.8 million unique visitors

# Impact of Outreach and Messaging

The 2017-18 full-time OSAP application was launched on March 29, 2017.

Applications increased more than 20% in ONE year – more than 75,000 additional applicants.

The screenshot shows the OSAP Full-Time Application website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the Ontario logo, "OSAP Apps" dropdown, "Help", and "français" language selector. A "Log out" button is in the top right. The main heading is "osap Full-Time Application" with a green checkmark icon, followed by "Start a New Application". Below this, a message states: "There are just 4 steps to the application! It will take you about 15 minutes to complete." The four steps are listed in a row:

- 1 School & program**  
Tell us what school you're going to and what program you're taking. [More info](#)
- 2 About you**  
Tell us if you're single or married and where you live. You'll need to share personal and financial information. [More info](#)
- 3 About your family**  
You might need to share information about your parents, spouse or children. [More info](#)
- 4 Submit**  
Review your application, submit it and track the status. [More info](#)

Below the steps, there is a "Ready to apply?" section with a "When do your classes start?" label and two dropdown menus for "Month" and "Year". At the bottom right, there are "Exit" and "Next" buttons.

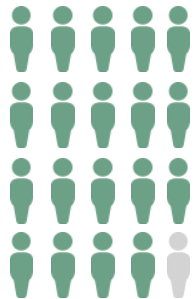
# Impact of Outreach and Messaging

Over **225,000** students have **FREE TUITION** in 2017-18, one year earlier than initially projected.

**60%** of all full-time OSAP recipients attending **college** have free tuition.



**32%** of all full-time OSAP recipients attending **university** have free tuition.



The year-over-year increase in the number of total OSAP awards 16%.



Over **95%** of students who are receiving OSAP have grant funding.







**Two-thirds** full-time Ontario students will receive OSAP this year.



# Impact of Outreach and Messaging

Number of OSAP awards have increased by **16%**

 Low-income students	There is a <b>20% increase</b> in OSAP awards for students from low-income families.
 Indigenous students	There is a <b>36% increase</b> in OSAP awards for students who self-identify as Indigenous.
 Mature students	There is a <b>33% increase</b> in OSAP awards for mature students.
 Sole support parents	There is a <b>19% increase</b> in OSAP recipients who are sole support parents, of which <b>95%</b> are single mothers.

# Impact of Outreach and Messaging

Number of OSAP awards have increased by **16%**



Middle-income students

There is a **23% increase** in OSAP awards for students from middle-income families.



Independent students

There is a **31% increase** in OSAP awards for independent students.



Married students

There is a **47% increase** in OSAP awards for married students.



# Evaluation the Success of OSAP Transformation

HEQCO will manage evaluation projects

Higher Education  
Quality Council  
of Ontario  
An agency of the Government of Ontario



Conseil ontarien  
de la qualité de  
l'enseignement supérieur  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

- 1. Student/Parent Perceptions of OSAP and PSE affordability - Ipsos**
  - Quantitative/Qualitative
- 2. Social media scan of OSAP – Ryerson University**
  - Text mining; content analysis; sentiment analysis
- 3. Five years of census/national household survey data – SRDC**
  - Household income and PSE participation; characteristics of disadvantages; impact of policy changes on PSE participation
- 4. Five years of census/national household survey data – Prism**
  - Have PSE participation rates by income changed over time
  - Impact of tuition, living costs, labour market and aid on PSE participation



# Questions?