

undecided?

Only a weekend separates the release of this issue and election day. For those who remain undecided or are having second thoughts, perhaps Toast can help. Nathaniel Christopher interviews the local candidates (in alphabetical order):

Why should Trent students vote for you?

PETER ADAMS
I worked closely with the Trent student council. I worked with the two national students' association as chair of the government caucus on post-secondary education and research and in that capacity we lobbied for example over the years for the Millennium Scholarships most of which are in fact grants. More recently the graduate students' scholarships. More recently for the learning bond which allows a family to accumulate money, low income families with grant for the Resp program with Grant. I've worked with Trent as you know, recently got 4. something million for the DNA cluster, but much more significantly I think got eight Canada research chairs one of those research chairs was in fact the seed which produced the DNA Cluster. The five million dollars, which employed Linda Slavin for the Ecuador Mexico environmental project. That was the largest single grant that Trent ever got. Trent's research funding has more than doubled in recent years.

JAMES JACKSON
Because Trent students after graduation twenty years from now when I'm retired are the tax payers of tomorrow and Trent students need to be very involved today with what they are going to inherit tomorrow. twenty years from today whatever is created by this incoming government is going to be inherited by that and they will have to pay the bill.

LINDA SLAVIN
I think there are a few reasons Nathaniel and I'm glad to have a chance to talk about it and appreciate your work. The NDP is quite concerned that the country has decided quite deliberately both at the federal level and the provincial level to withdraw funding from post-secondary education. So we know ten years ago that our current and hopefully soon to be replaced prime minister cut funding for education, lumped it all in with the social transfer and gave it to Mike Harris. Bad move., because Mike Harris didn't follow any kind of regulation as to how it should be spent and so funding education in Ontario has gone from one in the country to ten out of ten provinces in the country which for the richest province in the country is pretty disgusting. The NDP is pretty clear about restoring that funding for post-secondary education so in the first instance we would tie the transfer to post-secondary education, we would make sure that there was enough there to lower fees by at least ten percent. We would do things like students while studying would not pay interest on their loan and when they graduate they could put their loan interest against their tax which would give them some relief.

BRENT WOOD
Well I think Trent students would probably have the most long range view compared to your average voters around here, you might say the average profile of most voters is in their fifties somewhere and there's not such a motivation to be thinking long term so certainly for someone who's educated and young the Green Party I think has the most comprehensive platform that actually has some kind of validity in terms of sustaining us beyond the next ten years.

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

PETER ADAMS
PhD at McGill.

JAMES JACKSON
Sir Sanford Fleming College, getting my real estate license.

LINDA SLAVIN
I have my degree and then a year at the Ontario College of Education so I have a secondary teaching certificate. But I reckon I have a lot of education by living in the world for several years, travelling, and working on international global education and this project in Mexico and Ecuador. So how do you measure education? I made a conscious choice at one point to carry on with activism rather than to go in higher education which I don't mean in any way to demean higher education I just made that choice.

BRENT WOOD
I have my doctorate from the University of Toronto so I have a PhD.

How did you pay for it?

PETER ADAMS
I paid for it on scholarships. Neither of my parents finished high school. My father didn't go to high school, my mother did two years of high school. I was the first generation and I went all the way through school on scholarships. My interests were sports and academics. At McGill I was athlete of the year and I was in the graduate school.

JAMES JACKSON
Actually I paid for it in cash in those days but that's quite a few years ago and it's considerably less than it is today.



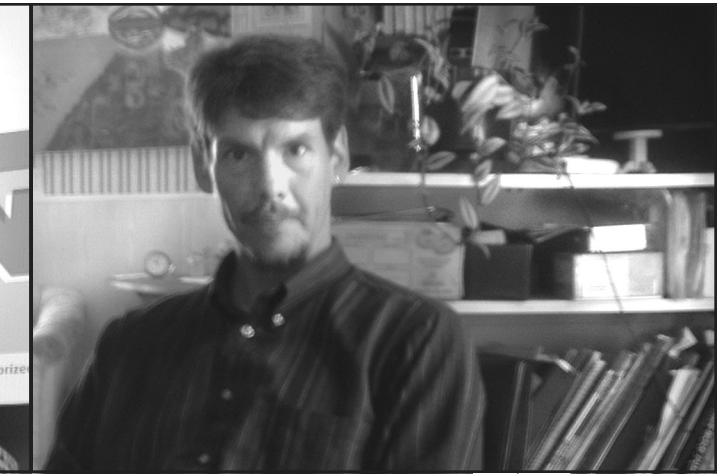
Peter Adams



James Jackson



Linda Slavin



Brent Wood



LINDA SLAVIN
It was back in the days when tuition fees were a lot cheaper and so my parents helped and I worked like crazy as a waitress every summer and made huge bucks. I got a lot of tips!

BRENT WOOD
The PhD itself I didn't have to pay for too much because I was actually going to U of T which has some decent funding I worked my through as a teaching assistant all the way through, I had some U of T fellowships. It was a matter of living a very frugal lifestyle in terms of that. I did have to take out some student loans to pay for my Master's however and I've still got those to deal with.

Do you believe that post-secondary education is a right?

PETER ADAMS
Yes I do. Rephrase it, access to post-secondary education is a right. I don't believe people have to do it.

JAMES JACKSON
I believe it becomes an earned right if the student wants to go to school, yeah, it's his right to be able to go to school. If they choose not to continue on to post-secondary education than there are other fields of activity that they can get involved in.

LINDA SLAVIN
I do think it's right. I would like it down the road and I know it's a long way off but I would like it if payment was removed for childcare and post-secondary tuitions fees were frozen. I think we should all be entitled to that and there are various European models.

BRENT WOOD
Education is a right. Post-secondary is an option and it should be an option to everyone. I think people have the right to choose their own kind of education. There are maybe different options for different people and all those options should be open to everyone. That's the way I would look at it. Some people would maybe choose to seek education in some other form and that's great too.

What are the barriers to post-secondary education?

PETER ADAMS
The main ones are: family and social things. Including poverty but not just poverty. I think there's a social aspect, some kids grow up in families, which sort of think post-secondary education and some kids don't. Those kids that don't often don't go for poverty reasons. But there are other reasons why families don't. For example, immigrant entrepreneur families don't often think

post-secondary education. You have to reach right down into the family system to plan the seeds of interest and then the students go on to higher education.

JAMES JACKSON
The chief barrier to post secondary education is probably financing it. Finding out exactly how to finance it and paying the tuition and overhead cost.

LINDA SLAVIN
Well I mentioned some of them. Having enough financial support is difficult and I think that's the biggest barrier but then as I say there are supports for a disabled person to go to post-secondary, we have to increase that support and make it more accessible as well I think new Canadians find barriers and that's look at those and how we can package the supports differently. The biggest one is financial and I think that the millenium scholarship, if you get the millenium scholarship great, but it comes off your OSAP so you make the same level of money - it's not an addition. We would replace these scholarships with a needs based grant system.

BRENT WOOD
The biggest barrier is money obviously, and it's not just money in terms of discouraging people from being able to go or sadly people with huge debt-loads, but what we've found in the last couple of years is that students are obliged to work part time, a significant number of hours just to break even during the school year. It really takes away from the educational experience and the extra-curricular possibilities. That's the double-whammy that you've got with high tuition fees, not just that you're giving people debt but you are actually reducing the quality of their experience because they have no time to do any reading outside the curriculum or to pursue any extra-curricular things which will help them develop as people and that's the real shame of it.

What commitment is your party making to eliminate these barriers?

PETER ADAMS
I mentioned some of them earlier. The Canada Student Loan Program, which by the way we are grossly over dependent on but still represents support for students. It's now much better than it was a few years ago. It's much better integrated with provincial programs, the terms of and conditions of the receipt of grants and payment of them, the conditions of families, or the costs which can be included in a Canada Student Loan are much better. And I believe by the way the Canada Student Loan has helped ease the burden of provincial student loan programs but I believe we are over-dependent on it.

JAMES JACKSON
I would personally like to see student loan interest rates underwritten by the government and reduced down to very very low rates so your maximum is two percent for example. There's no reason for students to be paying above market rates.

LINDA SLAVIN
Our policies that I just talked about. I think you can find them in what I just said.

BRENT WOOD
Absolutely it's time to put more real funding into the university system. It's been needed for so long. Everyone knows this who's in their twenties or anyone who has to use this system or teach in this system. The reason it's not there is because there hasn't been any motivation for politicians to appeal to that demographic so basically politicians have been elected to office by appealing to the fifty-five and older crew and they don't care about tuition fees and that's why tuition fees are so high because you can't votes out of putting money into post-secondary education right now. It's sad but true.

What kind of relationship should Canada have with the United States?

PETER ADAMS
I think it should be a relationship of mutual respect. It's very much like relationships should be in a very very extended family so that you can realise there are family relationships that can sometimes be very bitter, sometimes can be very friendly. But all the time it should be mutual respect.

JAMES JACKSON
I think it should have a very close and endearing relationship with the United States.

LINDA SLAVIN
I think we're neighbors and we have obviously a huge trade relationship but I think that we have to look at our position in the world. Canada has always tried to work on a multilateral basis, the United States is going increasingly towards a bilateral arrangement where people can be pressured into doing things and I think we should keep doing what we've always done well which is our multilateral connection with the world as well as working through the United Nations. So all these treaties that are being abandoned by the United States I think Canada should be in the United Nations pushing it. We need those treaties, we need disarmament, we need Kyoto. I think that's our role, we're a third power we shouldn't aspire to be more and I think that would define our relationship as a neighbor and a friend but a friend who's not afraid to say "no, that's wrong."

BRENT WOOD
A very delicate one I would say! We're just way too focused on the United States and our relations with the United States – there's a whole world out there. Somehow the positive possibilities of globalisation have escaped us in terms of our abilities to relate and trade with other countries and look to other countries as models. The obvious example is that a lot of the European countries from where most of who are living in Canada have come, or at least a large percentage of us, have moved well beyond the sort of economy in which we have here still today. Places like Germany and the United Kingdom they've been cutting their greenhouse gas emissions twelve to fifteen percent in the last fifteen years and ours have gone up nineteen percent. If we keep looking to the United States as someone to compare ourselves to, well that's just like comparing yourself to the worst student in the class and saying "well I'm not doing too bad." You've got to look at some other countries and see how far behind we really are because we're so focused on the United States. Once you start focus on Europe I think we'll start seeing some change around here.

What is your party's position on the passage of Bill C-250 that adds sexual orientation as a factor to take into account when a specific hate crime has been committed?

PETER ADAMS
C-250 is of course a private member's bill but the Liberal Party supported it.

JAMES JACKSON
Well I can tell you my own particular position here and of course I'm the only candidate running locally to include it in writing in more than twenty thousand brochures that have gone out in circulation and that is conjugal union rights *can* be established in law to facilitate equality of rights available to all Canadians in the Charter of Rights. Property, pensions, and benefits etc should be transferable without question. It must *not* be called marriage. The sanctity of traditional marriage must be maintained. So this allows for a civil union to take place where people have all the benefits of marriage without actually the word being married used in the terminology.

LINDA SLAVIN
We support that bill.

BRENT WOOD
It makes perfect sense to me. Our party is all about equality and choice and peoples' freedom to live their lifestyle in self determinant. Our party's platform is beyond the idea of tolerance we're just moving right through to the idea of mutual respect and giving people the options they need.