**Episode 45 – Doug Ford reduces tuition fees, smashes OSAP, screws students**

[Intro Music: “You are listening to Sandy and Nora's Podcast”.]

Sandy: (In a gruff voice). Noooora.

Nora: (Laughing.) Yes.

Sandy: What's up?!

Nora: I have so missed being in the studio.

Sandy: Oh yeah, I've missed being under this blanket. Naaaaah, not really, I kind of sleep with it. It's a multi-purpose blanket.

Nora: It's so cold in Toronto you might as well love it in there.

Sandy: Mmmmm. Why you remind me? It has been really cold. How are you doing? How was your holiday?

Nora: Ah, well I think the stats are reporting that there were like 73 kids in the ICU because of the flu season this year and my kid was one of them (laughing).

Sandy: Ohhhhh noooooo.

Nora: Yeah, so it was you know when you've got a kid that gets sick pretty frequently you get kinda used to a lot of stuff that people would find unbearable, but my holidays were Christmas eve, Christmas day, the days before in and out of hospital and then in the McMaster Children's Hospital, so I got to check out a part of Ontario that I don't know at all, because I’ve never had kids in Ontario. And I can say that people are very generous around the holidays because there were, there were too many gifts, I would say. We just couldn't take the amount of gifts that we were given from the hospital...

Sandy: Ooooh!

Nora:...yeah, and from Ronald McDonald House.

Sandy: Oh, that's really sweet. And how's your kid now?

Nora: Oh, he's doing really well, he's doing really well.

Sandy: That's great.

Nora: I think we're just waiting for the next flu. But if you listen to this and you are part of a group that donates around the holidays, think about, think about the times of the year when there might not be those kinds of gifts and maybe spread that, that, that joy. Because I've had sick kids for all parts of the year including at Christmas and it's always hardest when you know it's the dead of March and you're like (laughing) “Ohhh, this is so saaaad.”

Sandy: Mmmmmm.

Nora: Yeah, but I'm great. How was your holiday?

Sandy: It was great! I spent most of it in LA. So that was fun and I've got to say I got a lot of feedback on this podcast. A lot of people who I interacted with over the holiday told me they listen to the podcast and people seem to be lovin' what we're doin'.

Nora: Noooo!

Sandy: (Laughs.) Uhuh. So that feels really good!

Nora: (Laughing.) That's awesome.

Sandy: Feel really great! Yeah, so, um, I had a great holiday and today I watched the documentary on the Fyre Festival so that was hilarious and watching rich millennials fall apart, so that was great! You know, I've had a great holiday, up until today. (Laughs.)

Nora: That's awesome. And were you in LA, uh, to experience the rain? (Laughs.) That I've seen around the teachers' strike?

Sandy: You know what, it rained a lot in LA, which is really unusual because of course they've been in a draught for years and years.

Nora: Mhmm.

Sandy: And, um, what I found hilarious is that when it rains in LA nobody knows how to drive. (Both laugh.) People are like "what is this? What do we do?" people literally pull over and are like confused about how to drive (Nora laughs). (Laughing) I thought that was really funny.

Nora: Toronto in November.

Sandy: Yeah. Basically or Vancouver when, when there's one snowflake.

Nora: That's right. Or all of France. (Sandy laughs.) France also shut down last year when there was snow. That was a big deal in Québec.

Sandy: Really?

Nora: Oh, Québecers recorded themselves (laughing) watching the news.

Sandy: Oh god, that is soooo fucking pretentious.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Fuck you Québec. (Both laugh.)

Nora: Well, you know what? We've had about 40, 40 cm fall in last two weeks so it's uh...

Sandy: Fuck that.

Nora:... it's true winter here. It's so beautiful here. You gotta come for Carnival! I know you love Carnival!

Sandy: You do, you know that about me?

Nora: I mean, winter carnival. Bonhomme?

Sandy: I don't know if you know how I truly feel about winter. But anyway, that's not what we're going to talk about today.

Nora: (Laughing.) No.

Sandy: What are we actually going to talk about today? I mean, what is going on that either of us would have even a remote interest in that is political. (Both laugh.) That is political? I don' t know.

Nora: I, you know what, so the last couple of days... You know, we're recording this on the weekend, um, the last couple of days being December, I don't know 16, 17, 18, 19. I really feel like things are so fucking bad (both laugh) in Ontario.

Sandy: Did you say December? The last couple days is January.

Nora: Oh, well, I also don't really, time doesn't mean shit to me OK? (Both laugh.)

Sandy: OK, yeah, things are a little weird in Ontario right now. I mean they've been a little weird for a minute. But the government has announced a lot of things, one of which we are going to focus on tonight. We haven't even talked about this.

Nora: No.

Sandy: Like I keep telling people that when we, when we record we don't really plan it we like call each other and decide what to talk about which I don't think people believe. But we literally have not talked about this (both laugh) at all. In fact, Nora calls and says is what we're going to talk about so obvious that we don't need to chat about it beforehand, and I said yes and then we recording (both laugh). So, ahhhhh, we're going to talk the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, the ruling party in Ontario and their announcement of a tuition fee reduction...

Nora: Great!

Sandy: Of major changes to the Ontar... Oh yeah, great! So fantastic. (Both laugh.) Major changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program.

Nora: Mhmm.

Sandy: The loan, the loan and grant program. And, they just threw in this little thing, Ford's like "you know students, they need choice, in all of the things that they pay for, not tuition of course (both laugh) no choice when it comes to tuition.”

Nora: No.

Sandy: But students just need choice in the, in the added benefits of school.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: It's just a little add on.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Just a teeny little thing that most of the media is not paying attention to because Nora, ten percent reduction in tuition fees! Which is good, no wait, bad because it eliminated free tuition (Nora laughs) which is something that we had.

Nora: (Still laughing.) What the fuck? This, this episode's going to be like us in a spider web (laughs) being like...

Sandy: I know! I'm like "ohhhhhh my god" I've been pulling my hair out for the last few days, like I hate everyoooooone.

Nora: Don't pull your hair out it is not worth it!

Sandy: I know, it's not.

Nora: No.

Sandy: (Deep breath.) It's not.

Nora: OK, so how are we going to do this?

Sandy: I don't know, how do we even start? Do we start from chronologically? Do we start from like the most ridiculous to the least ridiculous, do we start from what's at stake? Like all of it, like I feel like this could be like a two hour podcast. Buckle up folks. (Laughs.)

Nora: Possible. Very possible. So here's my proposal. So why don't we start with the grants part because I think that that is the easiest to explain, then go into tuition fees and we'll check the time, and if this needs to be a special double episode that will be released probably at the same time because these issues are so current then we will talk about the, the fees.

Sandy: Cute. I like it.

Nora: OK, great.

Sandy: So grants. I just want to say #1 (clears throat) Nora and I are really prescient? Is that how you pronounce that properly? Or precinct?

Nora: I think so, yeah. Prescient.

Sandy: Prescient people.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: And weeee, predicted this turn of events on a previous podcast that you can go listen to if you like. I'm sure it has something to do with Liberal schemes. Although that might be, that might describe several of our podcasts. You're just going to have to, you're just going to have to sift through (laughing) and find the one that talks about tuition fees and grants. But let us explain the grant situation.

Nora: I think it's episode 14, I just shared it with someone so it's kind of fresh in my mind. So check around that, that stratosphere, the teens of this podcast. OK, giver.

Sandy: You giver! Glenn Murray hates you not me, I've never been blocked.

Nora: Oh, is that right?

Sandy: I mean I was blocked on the Chair account but not my own...

Nora: Oh yeah, that doesn't count.

Sandy: Probably because I started using Twitter last year. (Laughs.)

Nora: That's true. OK. So here's the thing about grants. The Ontario system of grants, first of all what you have to know is that it's tied to loans. Right? So you cannot get a public grant in Ontario unless you apply for OSAP, which means you have to get some loans and you're get some grants. And as the Liberals increased tuition fees by more than doubling tuition fees they systematically increased and changed the grants system in Ontario and so for the first, for the first half of their mandate, uh, maybe a bit more than half, the, the thing that they created was called the student access guarantee and this was to be able to tell Ontarians that yes we're increasing tuition fees but no student will be left behind. (Sandy laughs.) Right. And so that, that was a weird pot of money. Because if you were at any university in Ontario or college in Ontario and you went to your financial aid office and you told them the saddest story ever about how destitute you are you might be be able to convince someone in financial aid to give you, uh, a grant that covered all of your tuition fees but of course again you have loans because the amount of money together goes up and above tuition fees because there's living coasts and residence or whatever the hell else. The program was expensive and it was problematic because it was opaque and so we did research many years ago to see what schools were getting the most money of the student access guarantee and it, it came out to be U of T, Queen's, and Western. Students there, like from like, they tend to be from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, so we thought that was pretty interesting that those were the schools that were doling out the the highest grants and it was by a lot. Um, University of Ottawa I think was on the list, and then what we kind of assumed what that those were the places that law schools were so it may have been a bit of a skewing to who was going to law school and the law school tuition fees were so high and so the student access guarantee was paying for a lot of law school fees. Anyway, whatever. The government took that money added more money and created the 30 off and then eventually the, the, the "free tuition plan".

Sandy: So step one was, 30 off was like billed as a 30% reduction in tuition fees, they said “we're reducing tuition fees by 30%”. However, tuition fees were increased each year that apparently tuition fees were reduced by 30% because they didn't do anything to tuition fees (Nora laughs). In fact they continued to increase tuition fees faster and higher than any government had before them. So that Ontario tuition was higher than any tuition in the country, which if you're following the news right now you'll see a lot of, uh, Liberal MPPs and former MPPs and just Liberal operatives saying "oh my god tuition fees are higher than ever right now, how could the conservative party make students pay this?" When it's like their fault so what the fuck?

Nora: (Singing.) Womp, womp.

Sandy: Womp, womp. (Both laugh.) And, and what they did was they implemented this grant which they said was worth 30% of tuition and they said that instead of reducing tuition fees across the board, which would benefit a high number of wealthy people, which it's like who cares, everything benefits wealthy people because we live in capitalist society (Nora laughs) stop focusing on them. Who the fuck cares? So they're like "We don't want to benefit wealthy people so we're gonna give a targeted 30% grant to low income people." There's a few problems with this grant. 1) Not worth 30%...

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: Don't know what numbers they were using, wasn't Stats Can numbers but it fell a lot short of 30%. Very similar to how the tuition grant that made “tuition free” later on did not equal what Stats Can was saying was average tuition. So problem #1. Problem 2, not eligible if you were a mature student, a part-time student, a student who had been living outside of your family home for what four years was it? I can't remember.

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: Essentially, if you, if you've been living outside of your family home for a certain period of time you weren't eligible. If you were a professional student, if you were an international student. There were all sorts of things, metrics that you had to meet in order to be eligible for this grant that wasn't even 30% of your tuition fees. Certainly wasn't 30% of your tuition fees if you were an Engineer, or in law or in any of the more expensive programs and at the end of the day I can't remember what the actual number was but it ended up, and sorry it was an opt in grant. You had to, you had to, you had to request a (laughing) 30% reduction in your tuition fees and at the end of the day it helped, uh, I think we requested the numbers from OSAP, from the Ontario Student Assistance Program and it helped less than 20% of students in the province? Is that correct?

Nora: That I don't remember. But it was definitely fewer than they said it was helping.

Sandy: It was so, so few students. And so they got a lot of good press out of this because journalists are lazy and what they did (laughs) in the press was that they repeated the government's press release instead of actually investigating what the government is doing. So the government releases a press release that says we are reducing tuition fees by 30%, the press repeats the government has reduced tuition fees by 30% and people like myself and Nora are like "Nooooo it's not true!" And journalists are like "what? But they said. Mmmm. Whatever." And so...

Nora: Right.

Sandy: That's kind of how that went. And so similarly the government's like "this is great, that went so well for us, why don't we make tuition free? Or say that we made tuition free?" because what's happening at this time that's, um, like in the political landscape that's important to recognize is that in the United States Barack Obama starts talking about making all colleges free, and so the Liberal government, I don't know wanting to appear to be like the Obama, like ride the Obama wave decides that they want to make it appear that they are giving tuition for free, and they said "that 30% off thing worked so well for us, we didn't have to spend much money, we eliminated a bunch of expensive grant programs in order to pay for it, we were giving less money to low income students than we were before, and it counted really great for us in the press. Why don’t we make tuition free, quote unquote, by doing the exact same thing (Nora laughs). We'll give a grant that's average tuition based on some numbers that we come up with ourselves (laughing) and ignore Stats Can and still increase tuition every year and we don't have to change anything in respect to funding or anything like that. We'll eliminate the previous grants and we'll use that to fund these grants." And so that's the situation that we had. They were saying that it was free tuition, it was not free tuition. We have a broader explanation on that in a previous episode, the problem with that is that tuition fees continue to increase every single year higher and faster than ever before. Thank-you Liberals.

Nora: Yeah, so you're left with an actual fee that every student has to pay and the Liberal argument, and it has always been this argument and I'm coming up against Liberals making this argument to me now, is that it's more just to create a system where you're giving individual grants to students to cover off these tuition fees while you allow tuition fees to go higher. I mean, do you need any more fucking proof about why that system sucks than this past week? Or, are you just going to sit there and be all like (in a crying voice) "Uh I fucking hate Doug Ford. Uhhhhh we were so good. Why did you trick us?" (Sandy laughs.)

Sandy: Yeah, because one of the things that we mentioned the last time we were talking about this stuff is that one of the reasons why this is such a terrible thing to do is because it's so easy to get rid of a grant program, and when you just get rid of a grant program like the conservatives have just done, what you're left with is all of the tuition that you've increased over the years.

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: Tada! (Laughing.) The conservatives have just gotten rid of this grant program, which is not anything to do with free tuition (yelling) it's a fucking grant program that when you get rid of it, that now students are saddled with all of the tuition that the Liberals have increased over the years. Except the conservatives are reducing tuition fees by 10%. (Laughs.)

Nora: It's so, like you step back and look at this from a completely real politics kind of position, it's so delicious the way that they are fucking the Liberals.

Sandy: Oh yeah.

Nora: It's like, you know why did the Liberals, why were the Liberals, why were the Liberals giving out grants to people whose family income is $170, 000 a year? (Sandy laughs.) Like let's start there. It's like I believe in actual free education. I don't really believe that we should have a system that... $170, 000, if you have a system that expects parent income to factor into anything. And I don't think we should have that system, that is literally the system that Ontario has.

Sandy: Yes.

Nora: That's, that's a lot of money. And if you're going to tell the average Ontarian that that's, that that's an income threshold that makes sense, that students of those families should have grants. The conservatives are going to walk in and be like "guess what, we're for the people. Those fucking people have enough money to pay for their kids to go to school. We're cuttin' that grant." It's just so simple!

Sandy: It's so simple. (Laughing.) The other brilliant wonderful thing about the way that the conservatives are doing this is that they implemented the kind of tuition fee decrease, and we'll start talking about this in a second, that is actually exactly what we want. OK. It's an across the board decrease for everyone. OK. (Nora laughs.) It's, it's, it's, it's wild. It's like “Oh my God finally” except now everyone's speaking against it. So that years down the line when it comes time for this to expire, which is in two years, they're going to be like "well nobody liked this shit anyway." (Big laugh). “Nobody liked the good policy where we actually reduced the user fee, so we're not going to do that. Not a single person though it was good." So, thank-you Liberals for paving the way for this. Um, everyone you need to truly understand why the tuition fee policy is actually, like it's not good in conjunction with the whole package, but actually...

Nora: Nope.

Sandy:... the way they're reducing tuition when they spoke about it and they said, you know a law student's tuition will reduce by $4, 000 and a, and a Arts **[cannot understand]** $4, 000 at the U of T if you're paying $40, 000 for tuition fees for school. An Arts and Science student would be decreasing by an average of $600 to $700. Like that's what we want. Like different figures. (Laughs.)

Nora: Mhmm.

Sandy: Not this weird one figure that the, that the ah Liberals had because it was just one grant for everybody that didn't, it didn't matter like what, what, what they were talking about. It was like this one grant, based on numbers that they didn't, ah, get from Stats Can, that didn't make any sense. Um, so yes, this is the exact way that user fees should be eliminated progressively. If you're not going to do it in one shot, this is how it should be eliminated progressively.

Nora: 110%.

Sandy: But they've set it up (laughing) in a way that makes it so confusing and so impossible for people to actually say that this is a good policy because it comes in this terrible package that years down the line they're going to be able to point back and say (laughing) "hey, nobody liked that policy anyway." It's fucking brilliant.

Nora: It really is. Um, so maybe, I guess we should probably explain a little bit about what the problem is with, with creating a grant system the way that it exists in Ontario and, and one of the ways that I like to talk about the grant system is it, it tries to assume that it can capture everybody.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And the problem with trying to capture everyone obviously is that there is no one size fits all. There are people who have come from high income families where their parents have kicked them out of the house or they're not going to pay for their, their tuition fees or your parents are real estate agents and I know that there is a weird real estate agent way that you report your money and your assets and then all of a sudden your kids are not able to get OSAP even though, anyway, I don't know. Always heard that was an issue.

Sandy: Or you have six siblings and it looks like you're really rich but actually you're not because you have six siblings and all of that money, um, goes to making all of you live and it actually turns out that your entire family is in poverty. Like (laughs) but it doesn't look like it on paper.

Nora: Right. And so, so there's this system that is designed to try and identify all of these different particularities that are, that are in the, in Ontario, in the province. Right? And, and the way that they do that is that they create massive bureaucracies to deal with these issues. So every single campus in Ontario right? What, what is that? 36 colleges and 24 universities, I don't know (Sandy laughs) that's totally off the top of my head, I don't remember any more.

Sandy: Neither do I. (Laughs.)

Nora: Yeah, anyways. Tonnes of schools. (Both laugh.) We could probably name them all but I, I can't count them for you right, right now. But every single school has a financial aid department so you're paying people to administer financial aid to deal with all of these problems. Then you have a provincial bureaucracy to manage student aid both at the intake, during school, to actually distribute people's money and then when they are finished. In that process you also have people that fall through the cracks or people who have problems with their OSAP, or who drop from full course load to partial course load and then lose their OSAP, or their name is the same as someone else's name and they get their OSAP and then you deposit that OSAP and then all of a sudden you're charged $5, 000 because you shouldn't have deposited that even though it went into your account without... Like these are literally issues (laughing) that I knew about at Ryerson.

Sandy: Mhmm. Mhmm.

Nora: And I'm sure you've got, you know, a hundred other options, or um examples as well. And this is what happens when you create a system that tries to match individuals with a pile of money to mask the real issue which is the base tuition fee payment in the first place.

Sandy: Mhmm. And the justification for that was always "the reason why we're doing this is that we don't want to benefit wealthy students, we don't want to benefit wealthy students we have to make sure that we're only helping the, the students who are really in need and that means that we have to ensure that the wealthy students are paying tuition and the students who are in need we're going to give them grants. But guess what?! The students who are wealthy like why are you focusing on them as your first priority? Because it doesn't matter how much tuition you charge, they're going to be able to pay it because they're wealthy (laughs). Like, they are wealthy so it does not matter. Your focus should be on the poor students and that means if you want to make sure that the wealthy students are paying and you're capturing all of the people who can't pay and making it free for them, ahhhh, let me tell you about this little thing called the progressive tax system. It's like the only way to make sure that that happens. It's the only way to make sure that that happens. The tax system accounts for your income and charges you taxes to pay for a whole bunch of different services, ah, based on your ability to pay. To capture it on the other end through user fees doesn't make sense because you're going to catch everyone and wealthy people will continue to be wealthy forever (laughs) it's just never going to stop happening. Sooooooo. Bad justification.

Nora: There's also one other policy that they announced, before we talk now specifically I think about tuition fees. Which was eliminating the grace period on repaying your student loans and so the Liberals brought in a grace period of I believe it's 18 months...

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora:... to be able to get through before you pay your loans. That was a victory that students won actually. The Liberals did not want to give that to people and it was us (laughs) like we were involved in the movement that fought to win that.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: So let's not also get too like forgetful where these kind of great policy ideas came through. And I don't even remember if the Liberals didn't charge interest from the start. Because I believe from when they first introduced it you had a grace period but interest still started.

Sandy: Yeah, but then we did win that, they stopped charging interest in the grace period I think for six months, I don't know if it actually ever expanded to the full 18 months.

Nora: Right.

Sandy: But for six months they weren't charging interest based on, on you know fucking students, like us banging on their door. (Laughs.)

Nora: Right.

Sandy: Being like, stop being shit heads.

Nora: Yeah, so that, that's, that's obviously something that will be annoying and difficult for people to pay although there's also a threshold that you have to make more than $25, 000 before your interest kicks in that they also announced and so Iiiiiiii, it's like OK (Sandy laughs). So you won't be charged interest if you're not working, which is cool and if you do make more than $25, 000 then yeah, then you've got to start paying back your loans, which is the fucking problem with the loans system in the first place and the reality in Ontario is that grants and loans are tied together and so if you support grants unfortunately that means you must support loans. Because there is not seperate systems.

Sandy: And if you support grants and loans what you are really saying is that you support a system where those who are poor pay more than those who are wealthy and so if your situation, if you really want to focus on how unfair it is that the wealthy get helped or whatever by, by certain types of policy, this is the worst policy. Because of course when you are paying back your loans you're paying back those loans with interest and the poor students, student who are in need, pay far more for their education than any wealthy students ever are asked to pay.

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: Which wouldn't happen if we just relied on a progressive tax system.

Nora: Which in case you're listening and you don't know this stuff, like that's segmented by, by, by race, that's segmented by gender, that's segmented by ability. It's like we literally in Canada, and this is the case across, across provinces, to a lesser extent in Québec and to a lesser extend in Newfoundland and Labrador, because the fees are lower. But we, we, we enforce societal oppressive segmentation through this loan system...

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: Because women make less than men, Black women make less than white women, like we know these stats and, and, and I'm just so... I know that this is a moment that's very confusing and frustrating and I mean like as far as I'm concerned the announcement that came last, last week is literally putting a gun to the head of the canary and the coal mine is about to fill with like lava (laugh) like (Sandy laughs) it is so bad and...

Sandy: Mmmm, mmm. (Laughs.)

Nora: I hope that was illustrative enough of what I feel about this.

Sandy: Super.

Nora: Great. (Both laugh.) And so I feel the, the, the anger and the desperation that people, that people have in trying to content with this policy. And my god (laughs) aside, have you seen the Minister? (Laughs.)

Sandy: Oh, I saw her when she was giving the announcement.

Nora: Ughh, there's an interview with Power and Politics where it's like (laughing) I'm sorry, is this like a robot and there's like a switch that's...

Sandy: (Laughs.) Oh yeah. Yeah. She can't say anything outside the fucking message box. Someone was like "if anybody asks you any questions just repeat this statement." (Nora laughs.) "We, we are reducing fees by tuition fees by 10% and making, uh, you know we're really here for students, we're a government for the students and we're reducing tuition fees by 10% and uh, yeah." (Laughs.)

Nora: "And I'm just going to blink to anybody who knows morse code that I have literally been kidnapped, someone has taken my brain out, it's in a jar in the middle of Queen's Park (Sandy laughs) and a bunch of people are..." Uh, I'm going to stop there because I was going to get really vulgar with her brain. Part of the fun of kicking a government's ass. So this is like, I think we'll also probably have to talk about how to fight this. Because I think a lot of people are feeling like really desperate.

Sandy: Oh my god this is totally two episodes. (Laughs.)

Nora: Yeah, exactly. But part of the fun of kicking a government's ass is literally kicking some (laughs)...

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: Like a Minister like that. (Laughs.) Not literally. Figuratively kicking a Minister like that's ass. Because it's like these people are cowards. They are the, they are the biggest fucking cowards and they have, they make too much money, they are way to far away from the average person. They're the kind of people that can't even shake someone's hand without fucking sanitizing it 'cause they think that they'll catch, like, poor.

Sandy: I mean I sanitize my hands when I shake hands with Progressive Conservatives.

Nora: (Laughs.) Yeah, but you're Jamaican. (Sandy laughs hard.)

Sandy: OK, touche. You win, continue.

Nora: (Both laugh hard.) You're like the gold standard of hygiene. (Sandy laughs.)

Sandy: You win, you win this round Nora Loreto. (Laughs.)

Nora: Thanks. (Laughs.) They, they are so easy to knock off balance. And so like people need to think about how to go for the jugular in the most figurative way possible of Merrilee Fullerton

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: Merrilee Fullerton. You have just made enemies with a lot fucking people and it is going to be so awesome to watch them convince you to change your mind. Which they will.

Sandy: OK, now, they announced a whole other thing.

Nora: Woah! We're not there yet.

Sandy: Nevermind.

Nora: We haven't talked about the 10%, have we talked about the tuition fee like reduction? Because I feel like there is a lot of fucking confusion on that too.

Sandy: It's a great policy! You like, I know, I know, I said it, y'all are upset with me for a second but give it like two seconds. It's actually exactly the type of reduction policy that we want.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: Go Nora.

Nora: Yeah, so just in advance of this announcement when it was leaked, I think it was two days before, to the Canadian Press, like what they were anticipating. You know, someone like Alex Usher, who's made his entire career out of selling this bullshit fucking lie about grants being the way to fund higher education.

Sandy: Blech.

Nora: And you know, it's Alex Usher, it's Bob Rae.

Sandy: Blech.

Nora: It's fucking Glenn Murray. I'm sure fucking Chris Bentley is somewhere being all like "grants, grants, grants" right?

Sandy: All the white guys.

Nora: John Milloy. All of these people.

Sandy: Who never needed it.

Nora: Yeah, they, they have made their careers off of selling this lie to Ontarians and the problem is that the lie sounds like it might make sense and it obscures the fact that 1) So the, the Liberals first got in power in 2003, and from 2003 to today right with the tuition fee framework that is still the Liberal tuition fee framework have more than doubled. MORE THAN FUCKING DOUBLED.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: That is worse than what Mike Harris did.

Sandy: The Liberals did it worse than the conservatives everyone. (Laughs.) Like pay attention. Ahhhhh.

Nora: Way worse.

Sandy: Way worse.

Nora: Way worse. And it's, and it's, and they've saddled, like not only did they double tution fees and then be like "oh but we're so enlightened we've offered these fucking grants", how many people are now paying massive sums every single month to the government to pay for their student loans? bBecause the tuition fees have gone so high.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And the problem with the loan, it's so smart right? This is where the, the cleverness of the Liberals, like the, the conservatives are clever in fucking over the political enemies where the Liberals are clever in fucking over average people.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: The conservatives just fuck over average people straight up, they don't actually care about being clever with that.

Sandy: They tell you exactly what's happening. (Laughs.)

Nora: 100%. What the conservatives have done, or what the Liberals had done, is like one of the things that we encountered in student organizing is that you would talk about student debt to a second year university student for example and the student's like "that means nothing to me because I have my OSAP I'm spending that money, I've paid for my tuition fees and it doesn't, it doesn't bother me" because they're not paying it back yet. Right? It's not something that's real. And we'd always get folks who graduated and were like why don't you try to reach out to X students, why didn't you warn me? So it was like during school talking about tuition fees was really tangible, that's literally what students understood, that was their bill, they were paying their tuition fees. But you wait until people are in the real world where there's not really ways to get politically involved, you're, you're, you're trying to hustle to get your life together, to get your jobs to get permanence, or to get a good contract, or pay for your family and it's there that you're suffering and suffering under the repayment of your student loans (laughs) without the access that you had on campus to, to, to the political action to be able to fight this government decision.

Sandy: It's brilliant.

Nora: It's so smart.

Sandy: It's brilliant. It's like really attacking a vulnerable population who doesn't have the, the like, like the natural kind of instinct because of the way that it's designed, to fight it.

Nora: Exactly. And so, you know the other part of this tuition fee reduction. So this is the first tuition fee reduction ever, or certainly since, I don't know 1987 or something like, I don't know what happened before 1987 (laughing) tuition fees were pretty stable. But it's an unfunded tuition fee increase, or tuition fee decrease. And I think that we do need to address that, because that has been the way that a lot of progressive people have been condemning this tuition fee decrease.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And so unfunded means that, that the government's not going to give universities and colleges the money that they should have gotten by, by, by completely fucking students with another tuition fee increase next year.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: And that the universities need to make up the money internally, internally to figure out where they are going to get the, the, you know, get it from. And you know, it's like, yeah, ideally a tuition fee decrease is fully funded, ideally, for sure. But like don't fucking pretend that there's not places on campus (laughs) that like... just fire all the managers (laughs) if you can't.

Sandy: Honestly. There are people who are working at the University of Toronto who make $600, 000 a year, like $700, 000 a year, like the people who manage their assets or whatever, it's like c'mon. There's a bunch of people in the upper administration who you know they add like another VP every few years...

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy:...at certain institutions. It's like, there is a lot of bloat. So, is it possible for there to be a tuition fee reduction that is unfunded that actually amounts to good policy without a reduction in quality? It is possible.

Nora: Yup.

Sandy: It is possible. (Laughing.) So please keep that in mind. It's not like this terrible thing where all of a sudden our institutions are being run in the most altruistic way possible and they're already stretched to the, to the, to the brim. Which I'm not saying that they're not. Like we are in Ontario funded per student less than every other province. But there is a lot of bloat at the top and that is something that we as progressives critiquing this policy, should recognize.

Nora: Yeah! And where did that bloat come from? It came from the era of the Liberal government.

Sandy: Mmmmmmhmmmmm.

Nora: (Laughing). Like if you look at the management salaries, the management explosion all of the supplemental services that, that, that campuses have said that they have to provide because students are what? You know not as prepared or suffering or falling through the cracks. It's like, you know what makes students fall through the cracks and suffer? Like incredible financial fucking stress.

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: So, I don't know. You can keep adding layers and layers and layers to make this problem way more complicated and not go away or you can start addressing the core issue which is the, is the actual cost. And so, wow, what a, what a slight of hand by the, by the conservatives, um, wow.

Sandy: Mhmm. And the Liberals. (Laughs.)

Nora: No but fuck you the Liberals, so fucking much because you know what did you expect was going to happen?

Sandy: Yeah.

Nora: I mean c'mon.

Sandy: Exactly.

Nora: You set this up. You literally set the pins up. And we were the ones saying "you're setting the pins up, you're setting the pins up"...

Sandy: Mhmm.

Nora: "You set the pins up!" Doug Ford just fucking walked over them.

Sandy: (Growls.) It's, it's like. We keep saying that it's brilliant. But it's not even brilliant, because it's just obvious. (Both laugh.) It's like the obvious thing that should happen.

Nora: Yeah.

Sandy: So I don't know. Yeah.

Nora: Alright, so part, I guess we should say. So that was, just keep listening we're going to have part two like right now. (Laughs.)

Sandy: (Laughs.) Uhhhhh. Part two right now. Ummmmmm, stay tuned. (Singing) Dun, dun, dun, dun, dun. That was Sandy and Nora, OK.

[Outro music.]