



Board of Governors

Memorandum

To: Board of Governors

From: Bobbi-Jean White, Chair, Finance and Audit Committee

Date: 26 November 2024

Subject: Meal Plan Rates 2025-2026

Recommendation:

- The Finance and Audit Committee recommends that the Board of Governors approve the 2025-26 mandatory Meal Plan rates listed below:**

Mandatory Meal Plans - Proposed Rate Changes	2024/2025	2025/2026	Increase
Bronze: increase of 16.5%	\$4,850	\$5,650	\$800
Silver: increase of 16.5%	\$5,400	\$6,291	\$891
Gold: increase of 16.5%	\$5,950	\$6,932	\$982
Platinum: Increase N/A*	\$6,500	N/A	N/A
Convenience: increase of 16.5%**	\$3,250	\$3,786	\$536
* This plan will be eliminated to align with industry standards.			
** Optional meal plan for suite style accommodation students.			

- The Finance and Audit Committee recommends that the Board of Governors approve a 75:25 split of meal plan dollars between food ancillary eateries and non-food ancillary eateries for 2025-26.**

Background and Rationale:

Approximately 2,000 Undergraduate students residing in traditional dormitory-style residence rooms (with no kitchens) are required to purchase a meal plan. These plans benefit students as they are exempt from the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST). In contrast, students living in suite-style accommodations with kitchens, those residing in York Apartments, or those living off-campus may voluntarily opt to purchase a meal plan. These plans are also exempt from the HST.

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To ensure students continue to benefit from the HST exemption on meal purchases, both the University and its food service providers must comply with the regulations outlined in the Excise Tax Act and the guidelines issued by the Canada Revenue Agency. These regulations govern key aspects such as minimum pricing of meal plans, eligible purchases, and other specific stipulations.

Currently at York University, meal plans operate on a "declining balance" system, where funds are loaded onto a student's YU-card and deducted as purchases are made at various campus dining locations. This system is used by several other Ontario universities, though some institutions choose a "board" plan, which may provide unlimited access to dining halls for a single, all-inclusive price. (see Future Plans below).

Meal plans at universities serve several key purposes: they help students manage food expenses throughout the academic year, promote a sense of community within residence life, and support the university's food service infrastructure.

Meal Plan Rate Adjustments:

York University's mandatory meal plan rates are currently among the lowest in Ontario (see Appendix A). While affordability is an important consideration, current rates do not provide sufficient daily purchasing power to meet student nutritional needs. External food service consultants recommend an average daily meal allowance of \$29 to \$35 per day to provide for healthy food options in the City of Toronto. York's daily meal allowance is currently less than \$20 per day well below the recommended level. As a result, students may exhaust their funds mid-year and/or adopt less healthy spending habits to stretch their dollars.

To ensure that our meal plans support nutritious choices while remaining competitively priced, York University proposes aligning with the median rates currently observed at other Ontario universities. Achieving this median rate within one year would require a 16.5% increase, positioning York closer to the projected median for the 2025-2026 academic year, with an estimated rate of \$5,650 (refer to Appendix B). This approach will enhance students' daily spending power while reducing the gap relative to industry benchmarks of \$29 to \$35 per day (refer to Appendix C).

Meal Plan Spending Ratio Adjustments:

While most institutions restrict meal plan usage to specific dining halls, York University currently offers students greater flexibility by allowing meal plans to be accepted at a wide range of dining establishments across its campuses. This flexibility results in a

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revenue loss for the food ancillary. Currently, mandatory meal plans only require that 60% of the meal plan funds must be used at dining facilities operated by the Food Services ancillary (referred to as Meal Plan locations in Appendix C), with the remaining 40% allocated for use at external vendors (known as Meal Plan+ locations in Appendix C). This is a unique structure when compared with other institutions who provide minimal or no meal plans dollars to be spent at non-ancillary food venues.¹

To better align York's meal plan structure with sector standards and enhance financial performance for the Food Ancillary, a shift in the spending ratio from 60:40 to 75:25 is recommended for the 2025-2026 academic year.

The proposed rate adjustments, along with this revised meal plan spending ratio, are projected to generate an additional \$380,000 in annual revenue from ancillary-operated dining establishments during the 2025-2026 academic year.

Restructuring Meal Plan Options:

This recommendation for restructuring the meal plans focuses on optimizing the number of options available. Based on industry standards and insights from external food services consultants, we recommend reducing the number of meal plans offered to align with best practices. Data indicates that Canadian universities, on average, provide approximately 2.9 meal plan options, as an excessive number of choices can often lead to confusion for students and their families.

To simplify our offerings, we propose replacing the current Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum plans with a streamlined selection of Entry, Standard, and Premium plans. Additionally, the Platinum plan will be discontinued due to historically low participation rates (refer to Appendix D).

Consultation:

We have engaged with the Division of Students, York International and the University Registrar leadership, who have expressed their support for the recommended meal plan fees and changes as outlined above.

In preparation for future consultations, this year we established the York University Food Advisory Committee (FAC). The terms of reference have been finalized, and

¹ While some other institutions offer similar flexibility in terms of purchasing from vendors where the revenue is not realized by their Food Services ancillary, the amount allocated to non-Food Services locations is typically modest, often ranging from \$250 to \$500.

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membership has been confirmed. The FAC will provide a strategic platform for members of the university community—including students, faculty, and staff—to offer guidance on policies, initiatives, and operations related to residence dining, retail dining, catering services, and vending across York University campuses.

Future Plans:

In response to student concerns regarding the residential dining experience, the university conducted external evaluations in both 2013 and 2019. These evaluations assessed the meal plan program and overall food service environment, with a primary focus on enhancing the student experience. This process included organizing focus groups and conducting surveys among undergraduate students residing on the Keele and Glendon campuses.

Survey results indicated a strong preference—90% of respondents—for an all-inclusive, unlimited-access meal plan, commonly referred to as a Board Plan. This model has recently gained traction at several Canadian universities, where it has been associated with improved food quality and increased student satisfaction. The all-inclusive meal plan provides students with numerous benefits, including unrestricted access to dining facilities with extended hours, a marché-style format with made-to-order options, a greater variety of diverse and healthier menu choices that cater to a wide range of cultural and lifestyle needs, and high-quality dining venues that support both social and academic engagement.

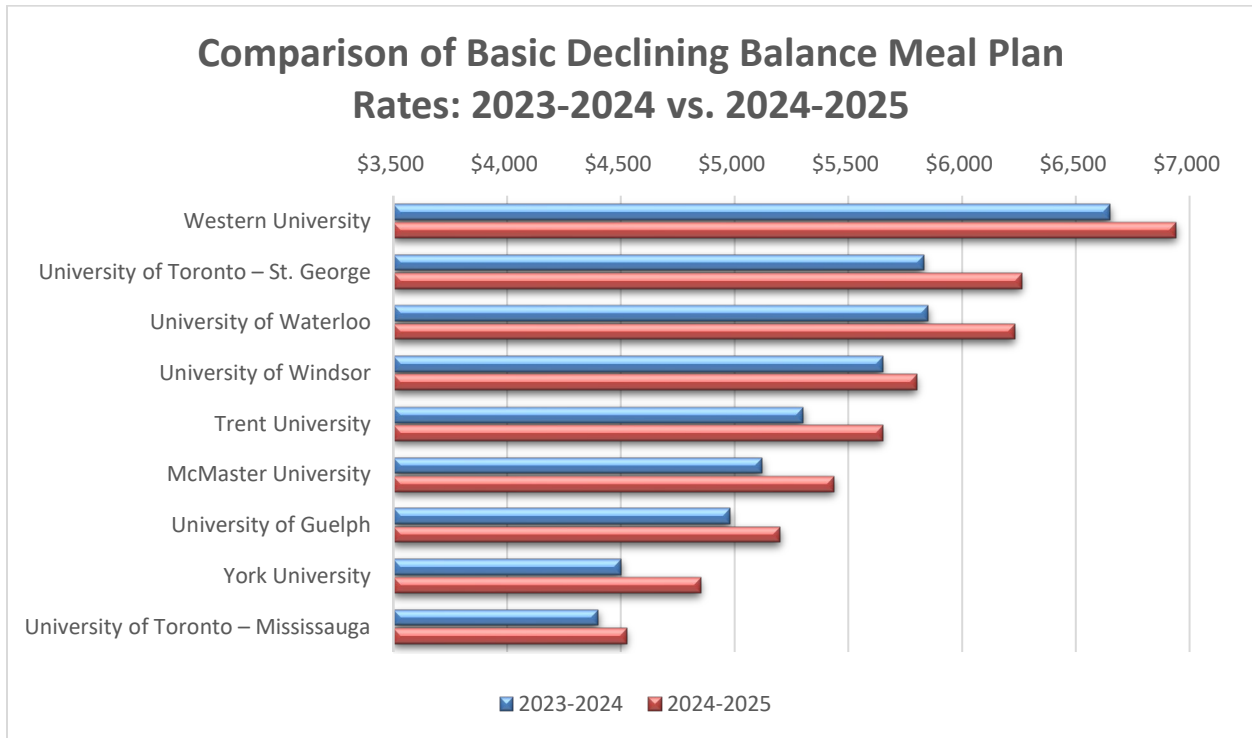
Transitioning to an all-inclusive meal plan at York University would require substantial capital investment, which is not feasible given the university's current financial constraints. However, the Food Services ancillary remains committed to exploring the "All Access" model as a future enhancement. To this end, Food Services is now collaborating with Housing & Conference Services to examine the integration of the All-Access Dining model as a potential component of the Forward Action Plan: Project 9 Housing Strategy.

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Appendix A

Comparison of Basic Mandatory Meal Plan Rates for Declining Balance Plans at Ontario Universities

Institution	2023-2024	2024-2025
Western University	\$6,650	\$6,940
University of Toronto – St. George	\$5,830	\$6,260
University of Waterloo	\$5,850	\$6,230
University of Windsor	\$5,650	\$5,800
Trent University	\$5,300	\$5,650
McMaster University	\$5,120	\$5,435
University of Guelph	\$4,980	\$5,200
York University	\$4,500	\$4,850
University of Toronto – Mississauga	\$4,400	\$4,525

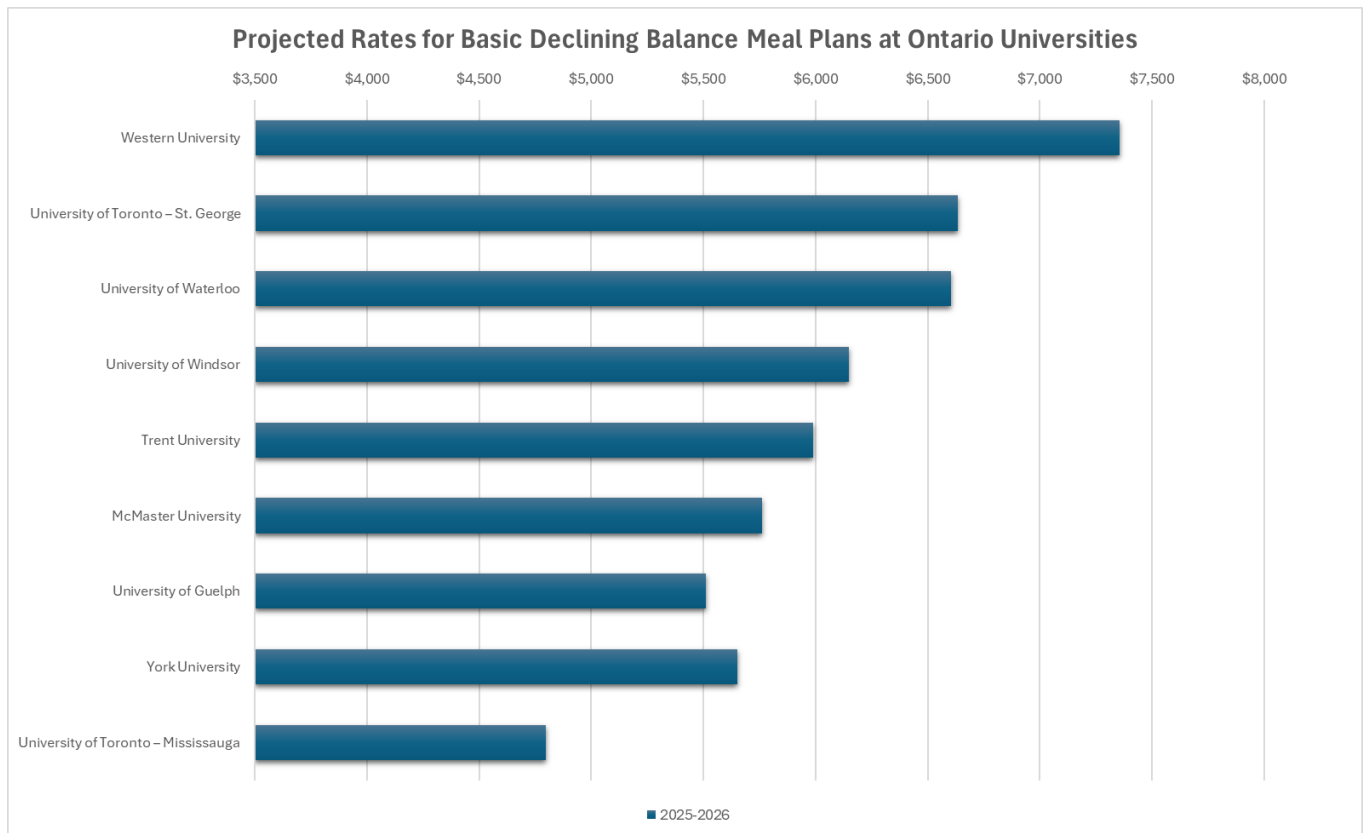


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Appendix B

Projected Meal Plan Rates at Ontario Universities with Declining Balance Plans

The table below outlines the projected outcomes of implementing a 16.5% increase in meal plan rates for the 2025-2026 academic year. Assuming other institutions raise their rates by 6% annually, York's meal plan rates are expected to approach the provincial median during this period. While this adjustment would increase the daily purchasing power of meal plans to \$21.93, consultants note that this amount may still be insufficient to fully support students' healthy dietary needs under a declining balance model in the Toronto market, particularly given the ongoing rise in meal costs. Nevertheless, this strategy would improve the plans' ability to offer healthier options and assist students in managing their budgets more effectively.



Note: Rates at other universities are anticipated to increase by approximately 6% annually.

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Appendix C

Proposed Increases in Rates to Expand Daily Budgetary Capacity²

Proposed Meal Plan Packages 2025-2026 (16.5% increase)

			75%	25%
Plan	Total Cost	Daily Spend	Meal Plan	Meal Plan Plus
Entry	\$5,650	\$21.93	\$4,013	\$1,338
Standard	\$6,291	\$24.55	\$4,013	\$1,978
Premium	\$6,932	\$27.18	\$4,013	\$2,619
Convenience	\$3,786	\$14.29		\$3,486
Unspent Funds Carry Forward			No	Yes

Current Meal Plan Packages 2024-2025

			60%	40%
Plan	Total Cost	Daily Spend	Meal Plan	Meal Plan Plus
Bronze	\$4,850	\$18.85	\$2,650	\$1,600
Silver	\$5,400	\$21.11	\$2,650	\$2,100
Gold	\$5,950	\$23.36	\$2,650	\$2,600
Platinum	\$6,500	\$25.61	\$2,650	\$3,100
Convenience	\$3,250	\$12.30		\$2,875
Unspent Funds Carry Forward			No	Yes

² Meal Plan locations, operated by the Food Ancillary, include approximately 20 venues. Meal Plan Plus locations, numbering around 60, accept meal plan funds but are externally managed, with revenue retained outside the Food Ancillary. The estimated daily buying power is calculated as: (Cost - Operational Enhancement Fee) / Days in Academic Term.

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Appendix D

Historical Meal Plan Selection Data

Based on the purchasing data below, a relatively low percentage of students select York’s Platinum meal plan. On average, universities typically offer 2.9 meal plans, while York currently offers four. Feedback from our external food services consultant suggests that having too many meal plan options can create confusion for both students and parents. With this in mind, we have decided to streamline our offerings by eliminating the Platinum plan for the 2025-26 academic year.

Meal Plan Count	Pandemic Years											
	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025	
	# Plans	%	# Plans	%	# Plans	%	# Plans	%	# Plans	%	# Plans	%
Bronze	922	44%	257	39%	607	44%	1098	50%	1173	52%	1175	57%
Silver	534	25%	185	28%	366	26%	557	25%	512	23%	406	20%
Gold	262	12%	49	7%	194	14%	233	11%	256	11%	139	7%
Platinum	108	5%	52	8%	78	6%	105	5%	103	5%	59	3%
Convenience	292	14%	111	17%	140	10%	209	9%	230	10%	300	14%
<i>Total Plans</i>	2118		654		1385		2202		2274		2079	

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Memorandum

To: Board of Governors

From: Bobbi-Jean White, Chair, Finance and Audit Committee

Date: 26 November 2024

Subject: Undergraduate Residences – Residence Rates 2025-2026

Recommendation:

The Finance and Audit Committee recommends that the Board of Governors approve the rates of the undergraduate residences rates for the following averaged values:

Residence Style – per bed	Rate (8 Months) 2024-2025	Rate (8 Months) 2025-2026
Traditional double	\$ 8,075	\$ 9,041
Traditional single	\$ 9,372	\$ 11,056
Suite - double room	\$ 9,547	\$ 10,789
Suite – single room	\$9,721	\$11,279
Two-person suite – Pond	\$ 11,076	\$ 12,775

On average, the increases across the board in 2025-2026 for the undergraduate residences rates are listed below:

Room Type	% Increase
Double rooms	12%
Single rooms in dormitory-style residences	18%
Double room in suite-style rooms (with kitchen) – Keele campus – Excluding Pond	13%
Single room in suite-style rooms (with kitchen) – Keele campus – Excluding Pond	16%
Suite-style rooms (with kitchen) – Keele campus – Pond only	15%
Suite-style rooms (without kitchen) – Glendon campus	12%

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Background and Rationale:

York's undergraduate residences' current room rates range from \$7,862 to \$12,270, depending on room types. These rates are at or below the median in comparison with other neighbouring universities (see Appendix A Tables 1-3).

The rate increases proposed for 2025-2026 are a response to increased operating and maintenance costs as well as the need for ongoing annual renewal and future growth of the existing housing stock. The current replacement value (CRV) for the residence buildings at Keele and Glendon campuses are estimated at \$1.04B based upon a nominal CRV of \$600 per square foot.¹ Industry norms suggest institutions should expend annually 1.5%-2.5% of the CRV of their assets on maintenance and/or building maintenance reserves above and beyond annual operating costs.² For York's Housing & Conference Services unit this translates to between \$15.6M to \$26.0M annually. Currently, an average of only \$3.0M to \$5.0M is spent annually on maintenance.

A higher rate increase is recommended for single dormitory rooms and Pond Residence which have higher demand, as compared with double dormitory rooms and other suite-style rooms. The lower price of shared rooms provides an affordable option for students.

New this year, the proposed increases include the cost of content and liability insurance covering all residents through a program provided by our broker of record (Marsh Canada Limited). This initiative provides: a hassle-free service to residents; helps them build their insurance history; protects students financially from loss of contents/belongings; provides liability coverage to students for acts of negligence; reduces the university's liability due to students acts of negligence; and reduces the overall financial risk to the University.

In terms of strategic enrolment management, the availability of good quality housing stock plays an important role in the recruitment and retention of students. These recommended fee increases balance considerations of both the financial needs of Housing & Conference Services in terms of costs related to operations; renovations and maintenance, as well as student affordability; and access while narrowing the residence fee gap with other comparator institutions.

Consultations:

To maintain the undergraduate housing exemption from the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA), the University is expected to act reasonably and in good faith in consulting with students about residence fee increases. Consultations regarding the proposed fee increases were held

¹ Source: SLAM CAP, Facilities Management software recording all parts of our university buildings with an estimated replacement year and costs.

² Office of the Auditor General Ontario, "Value-for-Money Audit: York University Operations and Capital", December 2023, Section 4.4.3, page 30.

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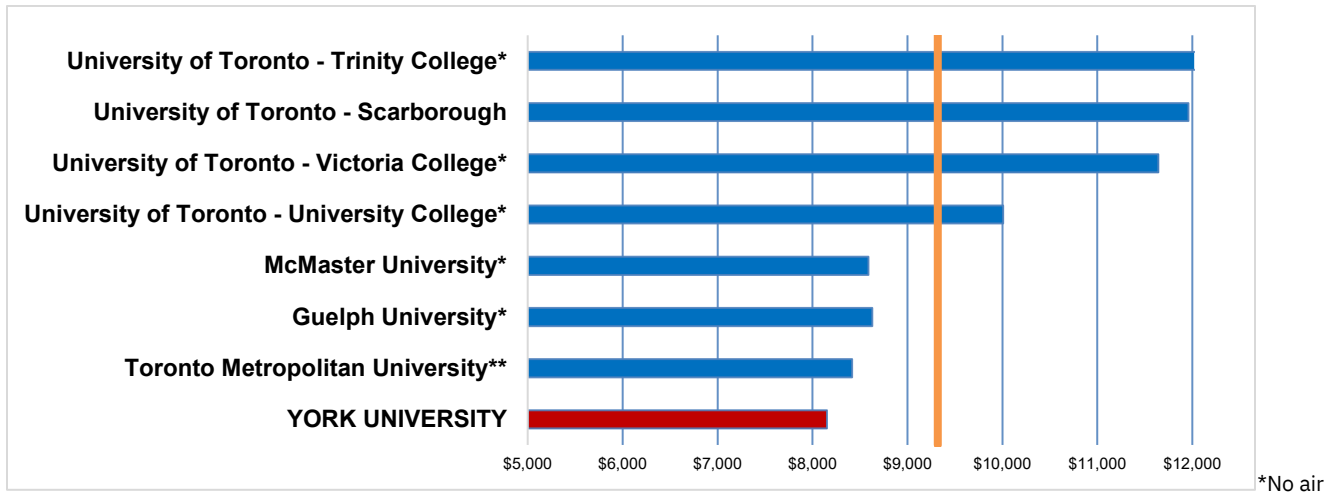
with the Division of Students, York International and the University Registrar. Following those consultations, Housing & Conference Services and the Division of Students held two consultation meetings with the Residence Student Advisory Group (RSAG) on Friday, September 6th, 2024, and on September 12th, 2024. At these meetings background and context was provided outlining the need for the proposed fee increases. Students provided feedback and input and were supportive of the fee increases especially in terms of supporting residence facility improvements.

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Appendix A

Tables 1, 2 and 3 below, provide a comparison of 2024-2025 rates and the median rate for traditional double rooms, traditional single rooms, and two-person suites.

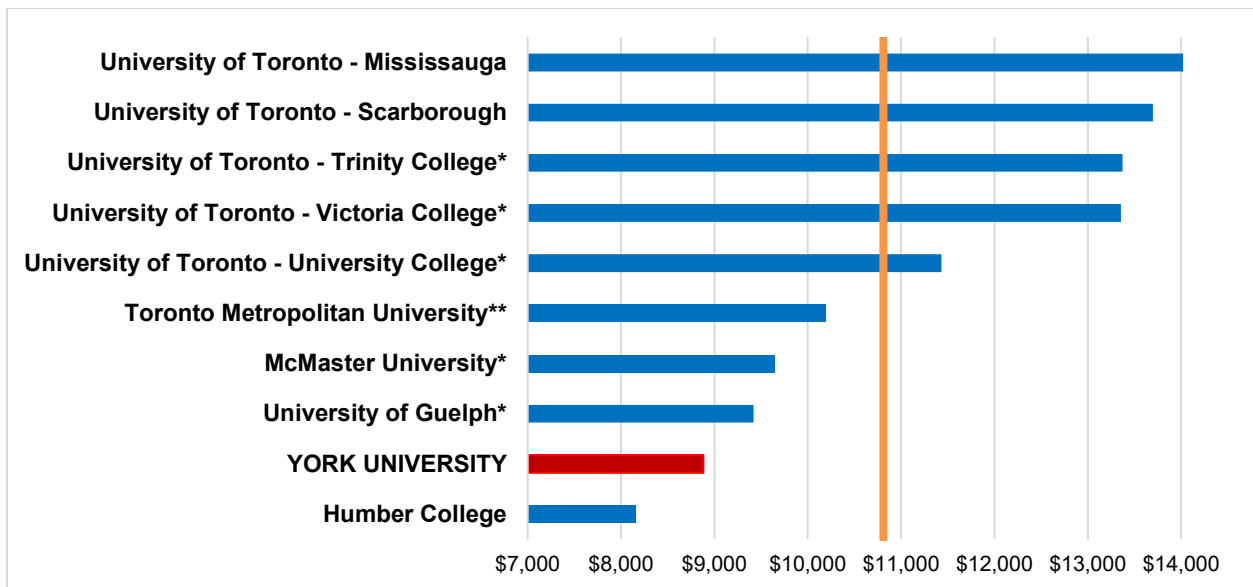
Table 1 Traditional Dormitory Double Room Rates Comparison 2024-2025
(eight-month contract, excludes dining plan)



conditioning

** Opened in 1991, no air conditioning

Table 2 Traditional Dormitory Single Room Rates Comparison 2024-2025
(eight-month contract, excludes dining plan)

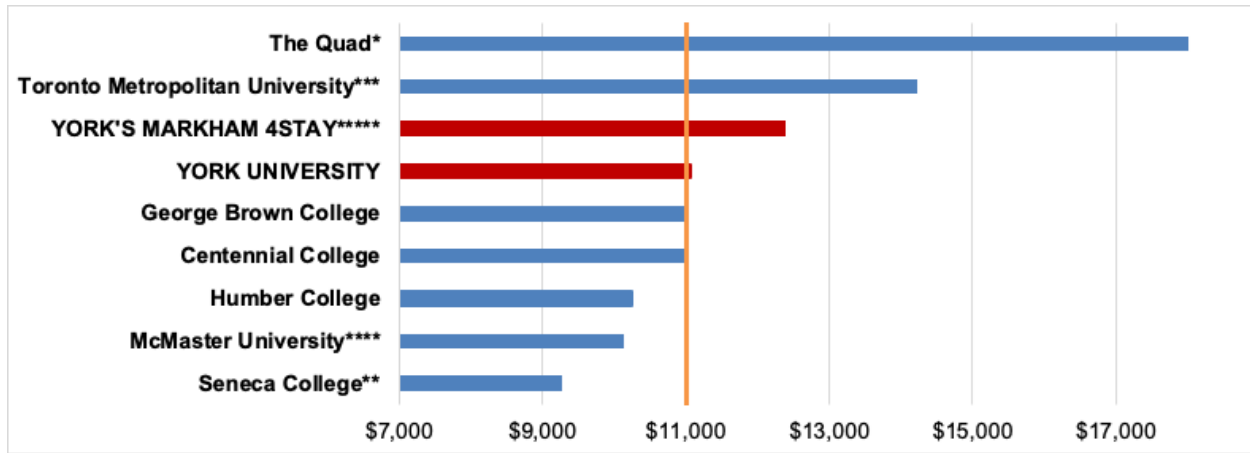


*No air conditioning

** Opened in 1991, no air conditioning

Table 3 Two-Person Suite Single Room Rates Comparison 2024-2025
(eight-month contract, excludes dining plan)

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*Twelve-month lease agreements; do not include utilities.

**Contract is two weeks shorter than York

***Opened in 2019

****4-person apartment, built in 1973

*****3 or 4 people living in a two-bedroom apartment



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Memorandum

To: Board of Governors

From: Bobbi-Jean White, Chair, Finance and Audit Committee

Date: 26 November 2024

Subject: York Apartments – Residence Rates 2025-2026

Recommendation:

The Finance and Audit Committee recommends that the Board of Governors approve the 2025-2026 York Apartments average across the board rental rate increases on new leases:

Apartment Type	Average Price Per Month 2024-2025	Average Price Per Month 2025-2026
Bachelor	\$ 1,255	\$ 1,549
1-Bedroom	\$ 1,507	\$ 1,865
2-Bedroom	\$ 1,973	\$ 2,450

The 2025-2026 York Apartments average across the board rental rate increases are:

- 2.5% increase for all units with continuing leases, to reflect the allowable increase established by the Ontario Rent Increase Guidelines (ORIG) for January 2025.
- 24.2% increase on average for all units with new leases effective May 1, 2025.

Apartment Type	Increase in %
Bachelor	23.4%
1-Bedroom	23.8%
2-Bedroom	24.2%

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Background and Rationale:

The current York Apartments rates range from \$1,205 to \$2,215 per month. These rates include the monthly cost of utilities and internet services. Currently, these rates are below the median when compared to surrounding market and other comparable institutions (see Appendix A). The largest differences in monthly rent are found in 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units. Also, most off-campus comparators do not include in their rates furniture, costs of utilities or internet services.

York Apartments are subject to the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA), which governs leases, including the allowable rent increase for continuing leases. The ORIG regulates rate increases for continuing leases; it does not limit increases for vacant/new-lease units. As a result, differential rates are charged for similar units depending on the lease status.

The rate increases proposed for 2025-2026 are a response to increased operating and maintenance costs as well as the need for ongoing annual renewal and future growth of the existing housing stock. The current replacement value (CRV) for the residence buildings at Keele and Glendon campuses are estimated at \$1.04B based upon a nominal CRV of \$600 per square foot.¹ Industry norms suggest institutions should expend annually 1.5%-2.5% of the CRV of their assets on maintenance and/or building maintenance reserves above and beyond annual operating costs.² For York's Housing & Conference Services unit this translates to between \$15.6M to \$26.0M annually. Currently, an average of \$3.0M to \$5.0M is spent annually on maintenance.

New this year, the proposed increases include the cost of content and liability insurance covering all residents through a program provided by our broker of record (Marsh Canada Limited). This initiative provides: a hassle-free service to residents; helps them build their insurance history; protects students financially from loss of contents/belongings; provides liability coverage to students for acts of negligence; reduces the university's liability due to students acts of negligence; and reduces the overall financial risk to the University.

In terms of strategic enrolment management, the availability of good quality housing stock plays an important role in the recruitment and retention of students. These

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² Office of the Auditor General Ontario, "Value-for-Money Audit: York University Operations and Capital", December 2023, Section 4.4.3, page 30.

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recommended fee increases balance considerations of both the financial needs of Housing & Conference Services in terms of costs related to operations, renovations and maintenance as well as student affordability and access while narrowing the residence fee gap with other comparator institutions and neighbourhood rentals.

Consultation

York Apartments falls under the RTA and as such, unlike undergraduate residences, there is no formal requirement for consultation. However, with the recent hire of a York Apartments Community Life Coordinator, Housing & Conference Services and the Division of Student are together working on the development of a York Apartments Advisory group targeted for launch later in the 2024-2025 academic year.³

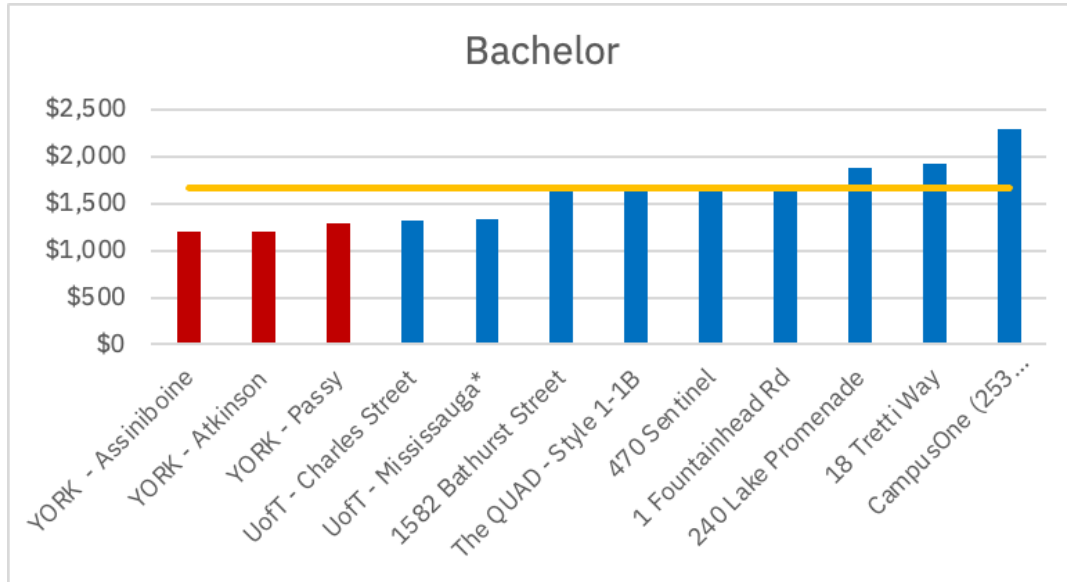
³ York Apartments has a Community Life Coordinator (CLC) role responsible for establishing a York Apartment Residence Advisory group. The CLC role reports to the Division of Students but is paid for by Housing & Conference Services. This role was recently hired but had been vacant since 2018. Prior to 2018 the Director, Housing & Conference Services would consult with the York Apartment Residence Advisory group annually.

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Appendix A

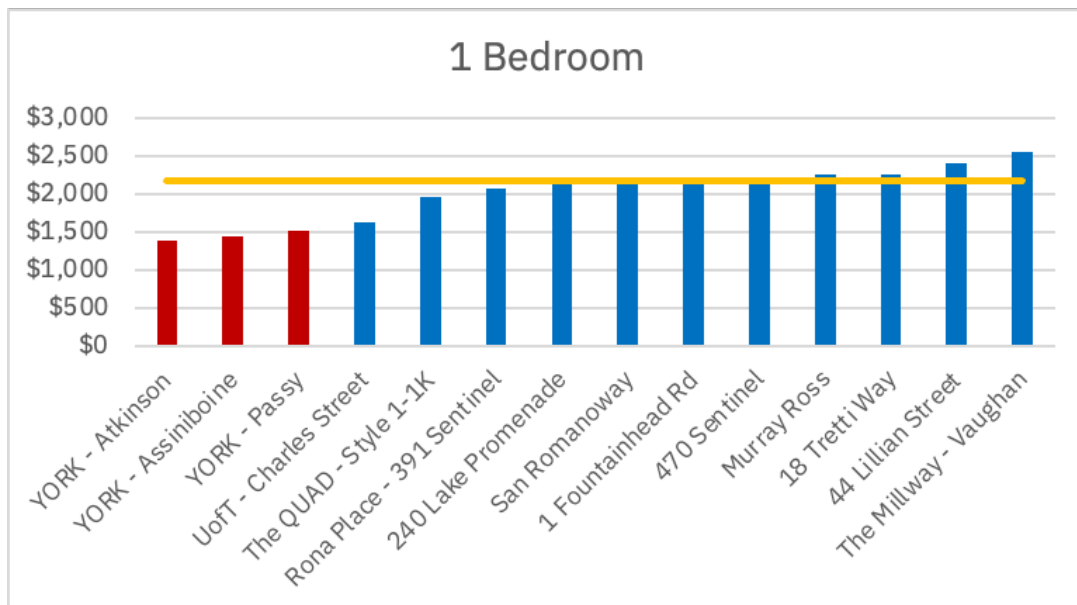
Tables 1, 2 and 3 below, provide the comparative rates and the median monthly rental costs for bachelor apartment units, one-bedroom units, and two-bedroom units in the surrounding market and at other institutions.

Table 1 Bachelor Apartment Rates Comparison 2024-2025



* Managed outside the RTA

Table 2 One-Bedroom Apartment Rates Comparison 2024-2025



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Table 3 Two-Bedroom Apartment Rates Comparison 2024-2025

