

EDUCATION FOR ALL:

**WHY CANADA NEEDS A MORE EQUITABLE,
AFFORDABLE, AND HIGH-QUALITY
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**EDUCATION
FOR ALL**

ABOUT THE EDUCATION FOR ALL CAMPAIGN

The Education for All campaign is a joint initiative of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, the Canadian Federation of Students, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Public Service Alliance of Canada, and the National Union of Public and General Employees representing more than one million students and workers. Together, we are putting forward a vision of a more affordable, accessible, high-quality, publicly-funded post-secondary education (PSE) system; a system that is ready to take on the challenges of today and tomorrow.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Post-secondary education (PSE) is a key contributor to the social and economic health of Canada. Universities, colleges and polytechnics are the “foundation and the infrastructure” for our knowledge advantage. They are critical to finding solutions to the pandemic and economic, social and environmental challenges we face. Every year, they educate millions of students of all ages, cultivating individual potential and opportunity while contributing to our economic, social, and cultural fabric.

COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on long-simmering issues threatening Canada’s PSE system. The costs of education are rising, while growing inequality and stagnant wages mean that fewer Canadians will be able to access education and training, just when unemployment and economic displacement are at an all-time high due to the pandemic.

It is time for a national strategy for post-secondary education in Canada.

With a plan for Education for All, we can achieve a high-quality, equitable, affordable, and accessible post-secondary education system. The countless benefits that will come from strengthening and improving our PSE system will extend far beyond the millions of Canadians and international students who study and work at post-secondary institutions to the more than 150 communities across our country in which they are based, and to all Canadians, as PSE is critical for our national well-being.

Participating in high-quality PSE not only helps individuals to achieve higher earnings and a longer, better quality of life; our universities, colleges, and polytechnics make many important social, cultural, and economic

contributions, raising the quality of life for all. High-quality post-secondary education is also essential to a robust democracy and to the research and civic engagement that are necessary to address some of our most challenging social, economic, and environmental problems today and tomorrow.

Yet access to PSE is increasingly a challenge for many low- and middle-income Canadians and residents. Some are unable to attend at all due to cost; but the economic importance of post-secondary education means that many more are attending even though they cannot afford to do so, leaving them burdened with significant debt.

Meanwhile, post-secondary education workers are being forced into increasingly precarious employment or seeing their positions contracted out to private, for-profit employers, while also being expected to deliver the highest-quality education and to engage in the foundational research necessary to unlock the best potential of our citizens and our country.

Our system is surviving on the exploitation of international students and a highly precarious workforce, while many students - especially low-income students, Indigenous, Black, and racialized students, and persons living with disabilities - are either excluded or marginalized.

Embracing Education for All would have many benefits for our country and our communities, for research and policy, and for students, graduates, and workers at our post-secondary institutions. It would help to promote equity, reconciliation and social inclusion. It is an essential element of any post-COVID just recovery plan.

But in order to get there, we need federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work in partnership to develop a plan to enhance quality, access and affordability for all.

Summary of recommendations to governments

Federal recommendations

- Work with the provinces and territories to develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system and commit to a plan for education and lifelong learning for all;
- The plan to strengthen post-secondary education should focus on the shared priorities of improving affordability and accessibility by reducing and eventually eliminating tuition; and improving quality, through an emphasis on decent work and adequate public funding;
- Boost direct federal funding for post-secondary education through the transfer to the provinces by a minimum of \$3 billion, ensure that funding keeps up with inflation and enrolment growth, and require accountability and transparency for federal funding;
- As a first step towards affordability, eliminate interest on federal student loan debt permanently, move to a 50:50 funding model for grants and loans, and replace the Canada Education Savings Program and Tuition Tax Credit with direct funding for student grants;
- To support and promote decent work, work towards a pan-Canadian definition of precarity, support and fund Statistics Canada to track and analyse data on precarious work, and support a workforce renewal strategy that limits the sector's use of precarious contract jobs, contracting out, and privatization;
- Limit corporate influence over education through provision of adequate public funding and put in place requirements for transparency and public disclosure of corporate contracts and donations to protect academic freedom;
- Increase funding for Indigenous post-secondary education by a minimum of \$650 million annually to eliminate the gap in post-secondary attainment between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students; and to invest in the development and expansion of culturally appropriate Indigenous post-secondary education systems and models;
- To prevent exploitation of international students, provide better regulation of international student recruitment and tuition and adequate public funding;

- Expand Canada’s research capacity through increased research funding and graduate scholarships, fully adopt and implement the recommendations of the Advisory Panel on Fundamental Science, and enshrine the position of Chief Science Advisor in legislation;
- Increase support for and collection of vital data on the post-secondary sector through Statistics Canada, including national standards for the collection and provision of data in areas such as access, affordability, quality, equity, mental health, and employment and working conditions of faculty, staff, researchers and student workers;
- Support employment equity by strengthening the *Employment Equity Act* and the Federal Contractors Program; and
- Establish a federal post-secondary education secretariat or branch within the federal government to facilitate collaboration with the provinces and territories, Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous governments, and experts and stakeholders, as well as to coordinate initiatives such as research and science, student assistance, data and innovation.

Provincial and territorial recommendations

- Work with the federal government to develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system and commit to a plan for education and lifelong learning for all;
- Commit to long-term, stable, institutional funding that keeps pace with enrolment and inflation growth;
- Work with the federal government to reduce and eventually eliminate tuition;
- As a first step towards greater affordability and the elimination of tuition, move to a 50:50 model for student grants and loans (or better);
- Support and promote decent work in the sector and a decrease in the sector’s reliance on precarious contract jobs and contracting out, including through fair employment legislation requiring equal pay for equal work, tighter regulation on the use of short-term contracts, and a requirement for wages, benefits, and seniority to be maintained in cases of contract flipping;
- Respect the Charter-protected right to collective bargaining and right to strike, by introducing legislation to facilitate the unionization of workers in the academic sector and to ensure fair working conditions and employment security, in addition to removing wage freezes and caps to annual wage increases that override collective bargaining for those already unionized;

- Limit corporate influence over academic matters and research through adequate public funding and regulation, including requirements for transparency and public disclosure of corporate contracts and donations;
- Support open and transparent governance with diverse representation of academic staff, students, and workers to ensure that decisions that impact the campus community are made by community members with a stake in the outcomes; and
- Introduce bicameral structures for institutions where not currently in existence to ensure academic decision-making over academic matters.



EDUCATION FOR ALL

COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on long-simmering issues facing Canada's post-secondary education (PSE) system. After years of underinvestment from governments, our PSE system is in crisis. Access to a high-quality education is out of reach for too many students – particularly students from low-income families, racialized, Black, and Indigenous students, and students living with disabilities. The rising costs mean that many more students are burdened with years of debt. Meanwhile, post-secondary education workers are increasingly being put in positions of precarity without the resources or working conditions necessary to provide the highest quality education and services to students or to engage in the foundational research necessary to unlock the best potential of our citizens and our country.

It doesn't have to be this way. Canada can embrace a vision of Education for All:

- A PSE system that is high-quality, fully accessible, and publicly-funded and respected for its important economic, social and cultural role in our society.
- Fair wages and working conditions and secure employment for all workers at our colleges and universities and an end to contracting out and the privatization of services.
- A research ecosystem driven by the quest for knowledge instead of corporate priorities, that funds research in all disciplines, protects the public ownership of results and intellectual property, and supports researchers at every stage of their academic careers.

- Open and transparent governance with diverse representation of faculty, students, and workers to ensure that decisions that impact the campus community are made by community members.
- Strict limits on the ability of corporations or private donors to exercise control over research, curriculum, or employment decisions of post-secondary institutions.

Embracing Education for All would have many benefits for our country and our communities, for students and graduates, for research and policy, and for workers. It would help to promote equity, reconciliation, and social inclusion. It should be an essential element of any post-COVID just recovery plan.

But in order to achieve Education for All, we need federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work in partnership to build, strengthen, and sustain a high-quality, accessible system of publicly-funded post-secondary education.

WHY DO WE NEED EDUCATION FOR ALL?

It's good for our country and our communities

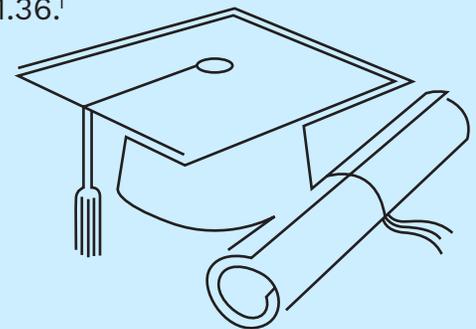
Post-secondary education and research benefits all Canadians. Individual benefits spill over and help everyone, including those who do not attend PSE themselves, contributing to an enhanced quality of life, a stronger economy, healthier communities, and a robust democracy.²

Studies confirm that university and community college graduates generally have:

- Higher lifetime earnings and higher contributions to government revenues through their taxes, making it possible to pay for programs such as health care, child care, and social assistance.
- Lower unemployment rates, shorter periods of unemployment when they are unemployed, greater resilience to economic downturns, and lower rates of poverty.
- Higher contribution rates to research and development activity, innovation, and economic growth.

Post-secondary institutions also provide stable public sector jobs for many people, with economic, social, and cultural spin-offs that benefit entire communities.

The Conference Board of Canada has calculated that for every \$1.00 invested in higher education by Canadian governments, the economic value added to the Canadian economy is \$1.36.¹



¹ Conference Board of Canada. *The Economic Impact of Post-Secondary Education in Canada*. November 2014. <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/8bb18e38-a44d-4ef5-be45-bf208e908b6a/6607-SPSE%20Economic%20Impact-RPT.pdf>.

² David Bloom, Matthew Hartley, and Henry Rosovsky. "Beyond Private Gain: The Public Benefits of Higher Education." *International Handbook of Higher Education*. 2006.

Countries with higher educated populations tend to have better health outcomes, longer life expectancies, and higher rates of self-reported happiness.³

PSE also makes a significant contribution to maintaining a vibrant and stable democracy: university and college graduates have higher rates of civic engagement and social cohesion. They are more likely to be involved in their communities through volunteering and social and political activism. PSE also contributes to social mobility, preventing socio-economic class from becoming static and determinative.

Furthermore, universities and colleges provide an environment for students and researchers to investigate the world, people, science, technology and the arts, exchange information and ideas, and learn to apply their knowledge through the acquisition of practical skills. These institutions are hubs of research and innovation in all fields. Through their research and teaching, they are an important part of the solution to the major crises of our day, including climate change, the coronavirus pandemic, and racism and income inequality. They help us to understand the problems better and to devise political, social, and technological responses.

In addition to its social and environmental contributions, research undertaken at post-secondary institutions offers significant economic returns on investment. As a single example, the research activities of the University of Waterloo alone are estimated to have contributed \$458 million to the GDP of Ontario in 2018-19.⁴

The social fabric of our communities is deeply enriched by the presence of these institutions of higher learning. Many cities in Canada are known for and are proud of their world class universities and colleges. In smaller communities, they are often major employers, and in communities of all sizes they are a significant source of arts, culture, and intellectual opportunities. Researchers and writers outside the academic community draw upon their libraries. Their campuses provide event spaces, art galleries, museums, green spaces and walking trails, and function as important community hubs.

³ L. Feinstein, R. Sabates, T.M. Sorhaindo, et al. *The Effects of Education on Health and Civic Engagement: Proceedings of the Copenhagen Symposium*. OECD. 2006. <http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/37425753.pdf>; A. Zajacova and E.M. Lawrence. "The Relationship Between Education and Health: Reducing Disparities Through a Contextual Approach," *Annual Review of Public Health*. Vol. 39, 2018, pp 273-89. <https://iaap-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/apps.12158>; and J. Yao, P.L. Curseu, and A. Liang, et al. "Educated and Happy: A Four-Year Study Explaining the Links Between Education, Job Fit, and Life Satisfaction," *Applied Psychology*. Vol. 68, 2019, pp. 150-178.

⁴ Deloitte. *University of Waterloo Economic Impact Assessment*. November 2019. https://uwaterloo.ca/about/sites/ca.about/files/uploads/files/university_of_waterloo_economic_contribution_analysis_2019.pdf

It's good for students

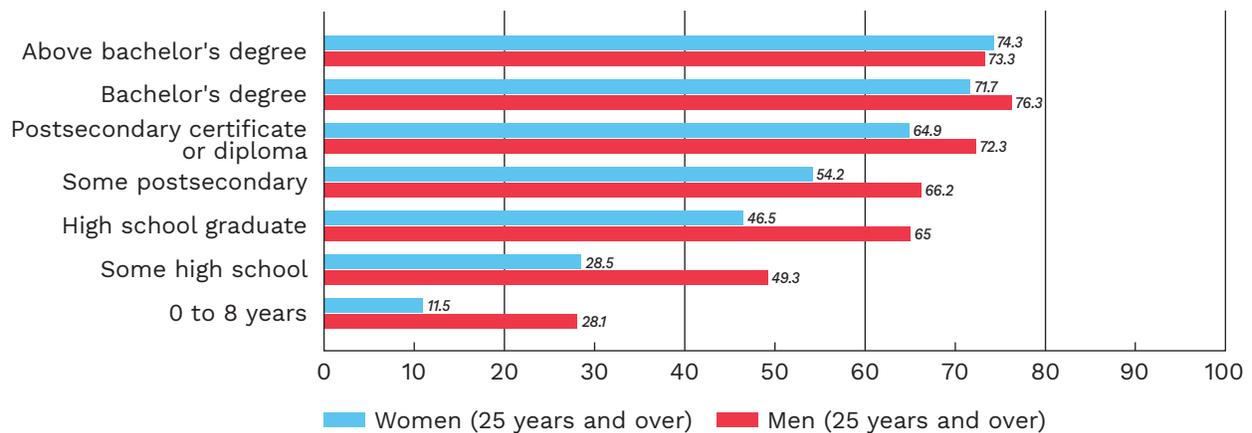
Canadians value equity, equality of opportunity, and social mobility. A college or university education often leads to increased opportunities for young people, including higher financial earnings, lower unemployment, and greater life expectancy. A post-secondary education significantly increases employment rates and

One out of two Canadians has attended a post-secondary institution. 93 per cent of Canadians said they would have pursued post-secondary education after high school if they had not needed to pay tuition.⁵



over 70 per cent of jobs now require some level of PSE. Post-secondary education has become a necessary component of building a strong and successful workforce in Canada.

Employment Rate by Educational Attainment, Men and Women, 25 Years and Above, 2019⁶



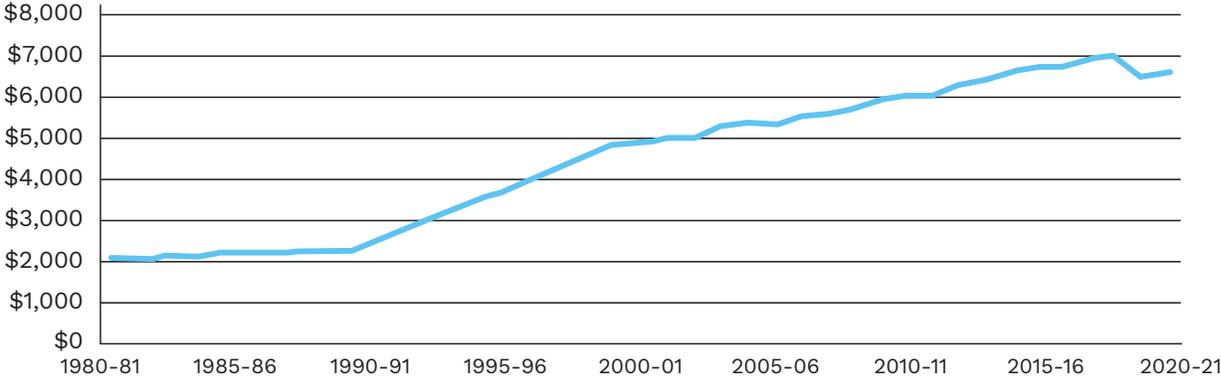
⁵ Abacus polling performed for the Canadian Association of University Teachers, Spring 2019.

⁶ Statistics Canada. *Table 14-10-0020-01 Unemployment rate, participation rate and employment rate by educational attainment, annual.*

Yet the escalating costs of tuition are putting PSE out of reach for some Canadians. As public funding has diminished, universities and colleges have increased tuition and other fees for students to make up for the funding gap.

Average domestic undergraduate tuition has increased by 215 per cent since 1980, after accounting for inflation. The average undergrad student today is paying nearly \$4,500 more per year in tuition compared to the average undergrad in 1980-81. Average domestic graduate tuition, meanwhile, has increased by 247 per cent since 1980, after accounting for inflation. The average graduate student today is paying \$5,200 more per year in tuition compared to the average graduate student in 1980-81.⁷ In 1987, tuition accounted for only 11 per cent of the revenue of universities. By 2017, that proportion had grown to 28 per cent.⁸

Average Domestic Tuition for Undergraduates, 1980-2020, in 2020\$⁹

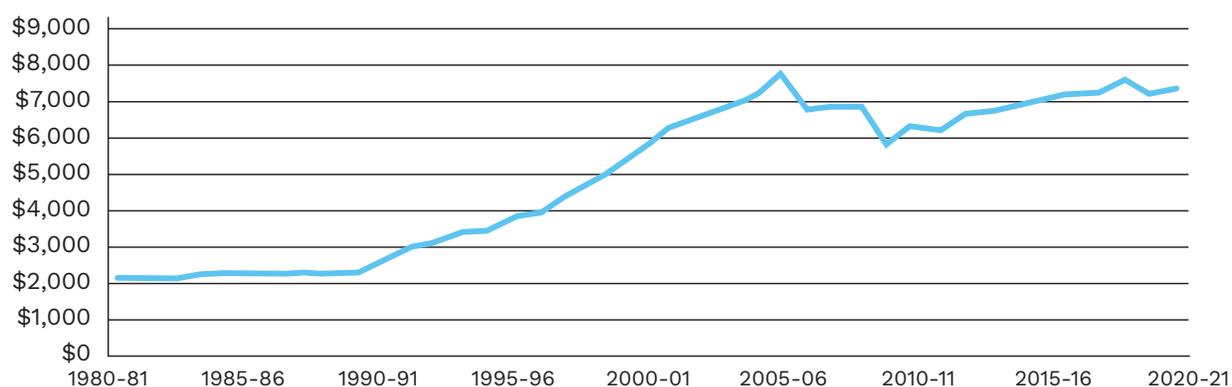


⁷ Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0045-01 Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study*; Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0160-01 Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study, 1972/1973 to 2006/2007*; and Statistics Canada. *Table 18-10-0004-01 Consumer Price Index, monthly, not seasonally adjusted*.

⁸ CAUT Almanac. *Table 2.6 University Revenues & Expenditures, 1977-1978 to 2017-2018*.

⁹ Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0045-01 Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study*; Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0160-01 Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study, 1972/1973 to 2006/2007*; and Statistics Canada. *Table 18-10-0004-01 Consumer Price Index, monthly, not seasonally adjusted*.

Average Domestic Tuition for Graduate Students, 1980-2020, in 2020\$¹⁰



Tuition fees for college students have also increased. Between 2001-02 and 2017-18, the proportion of college operating revenue coming from tuition increased by 70.1 per cent.¹¹

Meanwhile, international students have faced alarming increases in international fees as post-secondary institutions have come to rely on them as a critical source of revenue to make up for shortfalls in public funding.

In response to the high cost of PSE, both the federal and provincial governments offer student financial assistance. However, government student aid comes in a complicated maze of federal and provincial programs, supplemented by institutional programs and private, for-profit aid. Too much of this assistance is back-ended or provides the most help to the students who need help the least.

A significant proportion of student financial assistance comes through tax measures. This approach is inherently problematic as it is cumbersome and primarily benefits those who are less likely to require financial assistance – families and individuals who are in higher income tax brackets.

In order to receive this type of assistance, students or families need to pay tuition and other expenses out of pocket, and in turn, they receive a reduction in their taxes the following year – or sometimes years later. This discourages and disadvantages prospective students who cannot pull together the funding upfront. It also puts students at risk of missing out on programs they qualify for as awareness of tax credits is lower than for upfront student aid programs.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0028-01: Revenues of community colleges and vocational schools (x 1,000)*.

According to the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, as many as 200,000 Canadians may not be claiming federal tax credits that they are entitled to.¹²

In 2019-20, the federal government spent \$7.8 billion on direct support to students. Nearly half of the funding – \$3.4 billion – came in the form of tax expenditures, such as the tuition credit, the student loan interest credit, and deferred income tax on earnings from Registered Education Savings Programs (RESP).¹³ But tax expenditures (where the government foregoes tax revenue it would have otherwise collected) are notoriously regressive. Unless they are refundable, they only benefit those who have enough taxable income to see a significant reduction in their taxes. An analysis by the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer found that nearly 40 per cent of the value of the Tuition Tax Credit goes to families among the top 20 per cent of income earners.¹⁴

Similarly, Canada Education Savings Grants, which match contributions from families to a RESP and accounts for 12.5 per cent of direct federal student support, disproportionately go to higher income families. Half the funding goes to families earning \$90,000 or more.¹⁵ Although the Canada Learning Bond was created to provide greater funding for low-income families through RESPs, only one-third of eligible families are actually receiving any benefit.¹⁶

The federal government also provides support in the form of student loans, but they charge students handsomely for the privilege of borrowing. Interest rates on variable Canada Student Loans are prime plus 2.0 per cent, well above the going rate on many mortgage loans. Furthermore, the balance of federal support is heavily weighted towards loans: for every \$1 in grants that the federal government disburses, they loan \$2 in funds which have to be repaid.¹⁷ A more equitable disbursement, as a first step towards fully-funded, tuition-free PSE, would be for the federal and provincial governments to move towards a 50:50 grants and loans model.

¹² Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. *Federal Spending on Postsecondary Education*. May 5, 2016. https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2016/PSE/PSE_EN.pdf.

¹³ Public Accounts of Canada 2020; Report on Federal Tax Expenditures 2020.

¹⁴ Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer. *Federal Spending on Postsecondary Education*.

¹⁵ Employment and Social Development Canada. *Canada Education Savings Program: Summative Evaluation Report*. November 6, 2015. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/reports/evaluations/2015-canada-education-savings-program.html>

¹⁶ Jordan Press. "Very Few Canadians are Using Low-Income Benefits. Now, Liberals are Going to Spend Millions to Reverse That." *The National Post*, December 2, 2017.

¹⁷ Employment and Social Development Canada. *2018 to 2019 Canada Student Loans Program Statistical Review*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/canada-student-loans-grants/reports/csllp-statistical-2018-2019.html>.

Only 24 per cent of direct federal support for students actually provides non-repayable grants and scholarships to students. This funding is important, but it does not represent stable operational funding for post-secondary institutions.

Pressed by rising costs of tuition, stagnant minimum wage, high costs of living, and the pressure of succeeding in order to ensure a good job, student mental health has been declining in recent years. In 2016, more than one in four students reported that they had been diagnosed or treated for a mental health condition in the previous 12 months.¹⁸ Post-secondary institutions have struggled to respond and provide adequate mental health services to students in crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic has only made the problem worse. Students must now deal with isolation, greater financial insecurity, and the stress of online learning without adequate support.

COVID-19 has had an impact on students' ability to access PSE. While it will be some time before we see official enrolment numbers for the fall of 2020, we know that a number of institutions have seen declines in enrolment.

For students looking to enter the trades, lack of apprenticeship opportunities to complete their training are a barrier to successfully completing post-secondary education. Government investments that encourage or require employers to hire apprentices can play an important role in increasing apprenticeship opportunities, particularly for women, Indigenous, and racialized students.

It's good for graduates

Years of tuition growth has resulted in a significant increase in the amount of student debt carried by graduates. This debt has a tremendous impact on young people's ability to start their lives: to buy their first home, have children, launch businesses, pursue career goals, and upgrade their skills.

- 50% of university graduates today leave school with debt
- On average, student debt at graduation today is nearly \$28,000
- It takes 9.5 years on average to repay student debt



¹⁸ American College Health Association. *National College Health Assessment – Canadian Reference Group*. Spring 2016.

We also know that debt has a significant impact on people's mental health and sense of well-being: students and graduates with debt report greater anxiety, depression, and poor health.¹⁹

What is more, this growth in student debt has coincided with a rise in precarious work and a stagnant minimum wage, making it more difficult for young people to pay down their student debt. This situation has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to layoffs or difficulty finding a job for many new graduates.²⁰

About half of all college graduates and just over half of university graduates in 2015 graduated with debt. The average debt owed by college students was \$15,300, while the average debt for university undergraduates was \$28,000. Of these graduates, two-thirds or more were still paying off their debt three years later.²¹ By the time these indebted graduates pay off their loans – with interest – they will have paid significantly more for their education than their peers who were able to pay their tuition upfront. A graduate who takes 10 years to pay off their student loans can expect to pay as much as \$10,000 in interest.

Many graduates are struggling under the weight of this debt. Nearly one in 10 Canada Student Loan holders default on their loans every year. Nearly one in five student loan borrowers were participating in the Repayment Assistance Plan in 2018-19.²² Over the past five years, the federal government has spent more than a billion dollars writing off student debt that could not be collected. More than \$20.5 billion in federal student loans remain outstanding.²³

Skyrocketing tuition and related fees has also meant that student debt from private sources is rapidly outpacing debt from government-sponsored loans. This type of debt, which is not as well tracked and understood as public student loans, often has even higher interest rates than public student loans.

Unsurprisingly, even given a seven-year timeframe during which government student loan holders cannot declare bankruptcy, the number of consumer insolvencies involving student loans has risen steadily over the past decade. According to Hoyes Michalos, a debt advisory firm in Ontario, the number of

¹⁹ Robert T. Muller. "Crushing Debt Affects Student Mental Health." *Psychology Today*. January 2018. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/talking-about-trauma/201801/crushing-debt-affects-student-mental-health>.

²⁰ Statistics Canada. *Impacts on Youth*.

²¹ Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0036-01 National Graduates Survey (NGS), student debt from all sources, by province of study and level of study*.

²² Employment and Social Development Canada. *2018 to 2019 Canada Student Loans Program Statistical Review*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/canada-student-loans-grants/reports/csllp-statistical-2018-2019.html>.

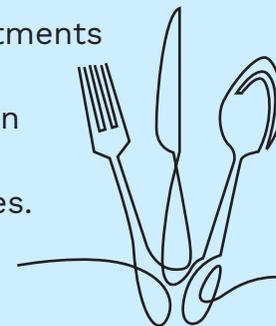
²³ Ibid.

cases they handled involving student loans increased 38 per cent between 2011 and 2018. Nearly one in five insolvency cases handled by the firm includes student loans.²⁴

It's good for workers

Over the past thirty years, universities and colleges have increasingly resorted to precarious forms of employment, putting thousands of workers into insecure, temporary, casual, or contracted out positions.

- More than half of faculty appointments are now contract appointments.
- More than two-thirds of Canadian universities and colleges have contracted out their food services.



Research by the Canadian Union of Public Employees and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that more than half of faculty appointments are now contract appointments and that this has been true at least since 2006-07.²⁵

These contract instructors – also called sessionals, contingent faculty, adjuncts, or contract academic staff – are expected to perform the same teaching and research as permanent staff at significantly lower wage levels and with fewer resources and institutional supports. Per-course rates for contract academic staff can be as little as \$5,230.²⁶

Many of these contract academic workers are denied compensation and institutional support for their research, even though research is an essential component of their work. Even for a teaching-only contract, research is required to stay up-to-date with new developments in the field.²⁷ Without tenure, their academic freedom is in jeopardy. Contract faculty can be fired or simply refused a new contract if administrators or donors do not like the subject or the results of their research. Without institutional support, they cannot train and mentor graduate students in research.

²⁴ Hoyes Michalos. *Student Debt Crisis – A Generation Buried in Student Debt*. 2019. <https://www.hoyes.com/press/joe-debtor/the-student-debtor/>.

²⁵ Chandra Pasma and Erika Shaker. *Contract U: Contract Faculty Appointments at Canadian Universities*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2018, <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/National%20Office/2018/11/Contract%20U.pdf>.

²⁶ Canadian Association of University Teachers, Almanac 2019.

²⁷ Karen Foster and Louise Birdsell Bauer. *Out of the Shadows: Experiences of Contract Academic Staff*. Canadian Association of University Teachers, 2018, https://www.caut.ca/sites/default/files/cas_report.pdf.

In some cases, post-secondary institutions do not even provide contract faculty with the basic tools they need to do their job. They may not have access to an office on campus, an institutional email address, or previous course outlines. These conditions can make it very difficult for contract instructors to provide the guidance and support students need.

To cover tuition cost and living expenses, many graduate students work as Teaching Assistants or Research Assistants while they study, taking on the brunt of undergraduate tutorial and laboratory teaching, marking, and invigilating exams. Like contract academic staff, they are expected to help universities provide high quality education, often with minimal resources, poor wages, and no training, while trying to obtain their graduate degree. While this helps students to cover tuition costs, it often increases the length of their studies, leading to a higher accumulation of tuition costs and even more student debt.

Meanwhile, Postdoctoral Fellows and Research Associates, who are highly qualified personnel expected to drive the innovation and discovery that is integral to Canada's knowledge-based economy, are frequently subject to unreasonable hours, unsafe working conditions in aging laboratories, dangerous equipment, and low wages. They often do not have access to sick leave or benefits, even though 75 per cent of respondents in a survey of post-docs indicated that the extreme stress associated with their position caused them to experience stress-related adverse mental health effects such as feelings of hopelessness and loneliness, anxiety or panic attacks, and thoughts of self harm. Post-docs primarily rely on the federal and provincial governments for funding. Approximately 30 per cent report that they do not have enough income to cover monthly expenses after paying for rent, childcare, and student loan payments.²⁸

Support workers are essential to the smooth functioning of post-secondary institutions. They oversee admissions and financial aid, provide clerical and administrative support to faculty and administrators, keep buildings, labs, classrooms, and grounds maintained and functioning properly, ensure that needed technology is available, prepare and serve food, and offer important support services. Universities and colleges are increasingly relying on contract and casual staff to carry out these roles. Full-time positions are being

²⁸ Nafisa M. Jadavji, Chris Corkery, Jiro Inoue, et al. *The 2016 Canadian National Postdoctoral Survey Report*. Canadian Association of Postdoctoral Scholars. 2016. https://www.caps-acsp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2016_CAPS-ACSP-National_Postdoc_Survey_Report.pdf.

eliminated and replaced with part-time or temporary positions. Part-time workers are not being given the option to pick up additional hours to become full-time, with institutions preferring to distribute the workload to casual staff instead.

At some institutions, entire sectors such as food service and custodial services have been contracted out to companies that pay workers very low wages and fail to provide good benefits and pensions. For instance, more than two-thirds of Canadian universities and colleges have contracted out their food services. Although these workers are on campus every day, delivering essential services like every other member of the university or college community, they are not considered employees. They are also excluded from accessing the institution's pension plan or benefits. The companies that tend to hold these food service contracts are notorious for paying low wages, offering few benefits, and frequently flipping contracts, forcing workers to start over again with no seniority, losing any wages or bonuses they have accrued through years of hard work.

In addition to low wages, contract and casual employees often do not get paid sick leave, they receive few if any health benefits, and many have no pension. For instance, a survey of contract academic staff by the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) found that 63 per cent had no health benefits and 69 per cent had no dental benefits.²⁹

Studies on precarity show that employment insecurity has significant impacts on health and well-being for workers. Precariously employed workers are more likely to experience mental and physical health challenges, including anxiety and depression. More than half of contract academic staff who responded to the CAUT survey reported that their ability to make long-term plans such as having children or purchasing a home is impacted by the contract nature of their employment.³⁰

We know that the working conditions of staff are the living and learning conditions of students. When contract academic workers are forced to work in insecure conditions without adequate resources, that has an impact on the quality of education, even though contract instructors are dedicated educators. They are not being given the time and resources necessary to provide the highest quality education.

²⁹ Foster and Birdsell Bauer, *Out of the Shadows*.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Similarly, pushing support workers into precarious positions or contracting out and privatizing services has a significant effect on education. Services end up scaled back, or corners are cut, because there aren't enough people to do the job properly. Contracting out food services or cleaning services can also have a significant impact on health and safety. Forcing workers to rush, failing to provide proper training, and refusing to provide proper tools can compromise quality and put the health and safety of staff and students at risk.

Academic workers and support staff depend on unionization to improve their wages and working conditions, job security, wage equity, benefits, mental health support and sick leave, and to get protection from harassment and discrimination. Governments need to ensure that all workers are able to exercise their Charter right to organize collectively and remove barriers to unionization.

It's good for equity and social inclusion

IN ORDER FOR POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION TO BE A PART OF THE FIGHT AGAINST SYSTEMIC INEQUALITY, GOVERNMENTS NEED TO BE WILLING TO PROVIDE PUBLIC FUNDING AND ENGAGE IN REGULATION.

Education can be an important element in expanding opportunities and providing social mobility. It can also be an important tool in promoting reconciliation, social inclusion, and fighting racism, poverty, colonialism, and other systemic injustices. However, in order for PSE to be a part of the fight against systemic inequality, governments need to be willing to provide public funding and engage in regulation.

Studies have shown that the financial impact of PSE is greatest for students from families in the bottom income quintile. Graduates in the lowest income quintile receive a 165 per cent premium from a bachelor's degree compared to only 86 per cent for those in the top quintile.³¹ This means that making PSE credentials publicly accessible for lower socioeconomic status youth has greater financial benefits than for students from wealthy families. Yet the greatest predictor of post-secondary attendance in Canada today is whether or not a parent attended PSE.

³¹ Marc Frenette. *Do Youth from Lower- and Higher-Income Families Benefit Equally from Postsecondary Education?* Statistics Canada. April 26, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2019012-eng.htm>.

The United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Canada's resulting 2030 Agenda outline the need for international governments to take bold, intersectional approaches to reduce inequality and inequities, end poverty, tackle climate change, and eliminate the systemic barriers faced by marginalized communities. Disparities in employment remain a concern in the PSE sector, yet the Agenda and SDGs also outline the importance of sustainable, inclusive, full, and decent work for all. Livable wages, safe work environments, ending work precarity and ensuring workers access to benefits and sick leave are not privileges, but rather rights. Understanding that quality education, economic growth, accessible healthcare, and ending hunger and water insecurity are interconnected and necessary to meeting these goals is critical to a just COVID-19 recovery for Canada.

Student debt does not affect every student equally. Women make up 56 per cent of students but account for 60 per cent of Canada Student Loan holders and 66 per cent of participants in the Repayment Assistance Plan.³² Racialized students and students with disabilities are also more likely to have student loans and to take longer to repay student debt. Understanding how systemic racism, especially anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, plays a role in our systems within and beyond PSE are necessary in understanding why these inequities persist, and why certain groups of people remain in such excessive debt long past the point of graduation.

A survey of students at five universities across the country found that two out of every five students are food insecure. Rates of food insecurity are even higher among immigrant, racialized, and Indigenous students. One in four food insecure students say their health has been impacted by their ability to procure healthy, nutritious food. Meanwhile, the number of food programs on Canadian campuses has doubled since 2004.³³

There are also growing reports of homelessness among Canadian students, given the combination of high tuition and high rent. Students are sleeping on campuses, in cars, in homeless shelters, or couch surfing with friends, just to make it through the school year.

³² Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0018-01 Postsecondary enrolments, by registration status, institution type, status of student in Canada and gender*; and Employment and Social Development Canada. 2018 to 2019 Canada Student Loans Program Statistical Review.

³³ Drew Silverthorn. *Hungry for Knowledge: Assessing the Prevalence of Student Food Insecurity on Five Canadian Campuses*. Meal Exchange, 2016.

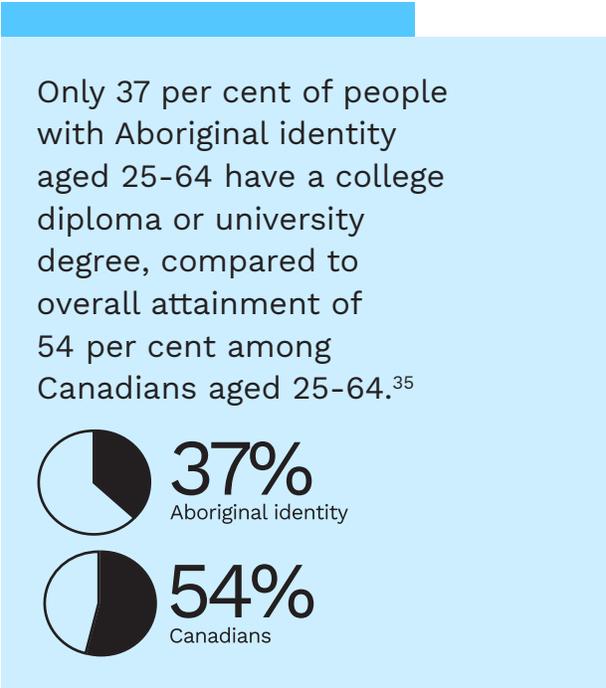
With COVID-19 having significant impacts on the PSE sector, studies have found that mental health needs have increased significantly. In response to a survey by the Toronto Science Policy Network, graduate students reported an increase in symptoms related to depression, anxiety, loneliness, and helplessness compared to before the pandemic. Of these, 72 per cent indicated that COVID-19 was the cause of the increase.³⁴ With all of these factors considered, it is clear that addressing PSE accessibility must happen along with efforts to end poverty, food and water insecurity, gaps in our health care system, and the growing mental health needs during the pandemic.

Public funding and government regulation are also essential to the equal opportunities of workers. Women, racialized people, Black Peoples, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, people who are gender-nonconforming, trans, or queer, and persons living with disabilities are more likely to be in precarious positions, both as contract academic staff and as support staff. They are more likely to earn lower wages and less likely to have pensions and benefits.

While recent employment equity initiatives in the post-secondary sector have made important gains, such as pay equity reviews for women, it is essential that these gains are not undermined by shuttling women, people of colour, and persons living with disabilities into contract and casual positions where they can be paid less without ever being flagged by employment equity guidelines.

It’s essential for reconciliation

Post-secondary education is a treaty right guaranteed by Canada to the Indigenous peoples of this land. This was first asserted in the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and re-affirmed as a constitutional right in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982. In addition, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), to which Canada is a signatory, states that Indigenous Peoples have a right to “all levels and



³⁴ Toronto Science Policy Network. *The Early Impacts of COVID-19 on Graduate Students Across Canada*. August 10, 2020. www.toscipolicy.net.ca/covid19-report/.

³⁵ Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0099-01 Distribution of the Population Aged 25 to 64 (Total and With Aboriginal Identity), by Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree and Age Group*.

forms of education of the State without discrimination,” as well as the right to Indigenous ownership and control of educational systems. UNDRIP also requires that states take effective measures for Indigenous Peoples to have access “to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.” On December 3, 2020, the Government of Canada tabled legislation to fulfil its promises to Indigenous Peoples to implement the UNDRIP declaration.

Despite education being a fundamental right, the legacy of colonialism, residential schools, the mass removal of Indigenous children from their families during the Sixties Scoop, daily racism against First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples, and decades of underfunding by the federal government means that there are significant barriers for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis students to access PSE. While the government has a moral and legal responsibility to ensure access to education, financial barriers prevent many Indigenous people from attending college or university. There is a significant and persistent gap in access to PSE between Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) and non-Indigenous students.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action – which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised to implement in their entirety – included adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking PSE.

In order to respect inherent and Treaty rights and to make reconciliation meaningful in Canada, the federal government must provide adequate funding to close the gap in Indigenous PSE and allow Indigenous Peoples to establish and control their own education systems.

It’s good for research

POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS ARE THE CRADLE FOR FUNDAMENTAL, CURIOSITY-DRIVEN RESEARCH.

Publicly-funded research is essential to sparking new discoveries and keeping Canada competitive in the global economy, while ensuring that research promotes the public interest and supporting public trust in science and research.

Basic Research

Performing curiosity driven, experimental or theoretical work, acquires new knowledge of underlying foundations of phenomena, no immediate or commercial objective.

For example: Studying a new way to identify gene sequences in antibodies

Applied Research

Performing original investigation to acquire new knowledge aimed at a specific practical goal.

For example: Investigating the structural differences between antibodies for different diseases

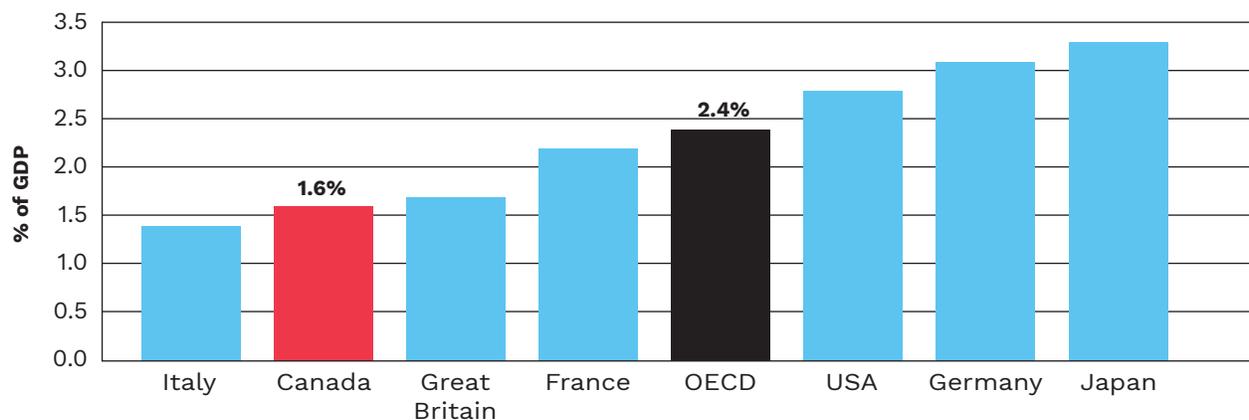
Experimental Development

Drawing on knowledge gained from research to produce additional knowledge, for example to improve existing processes

For example: Determining how to produce antibodies for a disease based on knowledge of its structure and test efficacy in clinical trials

Basic research, which takes place predominantly in post-secondary institutions, is the critical foundation for applied research and other experimental developments. The monumental scientific advances we hope to achieve are not possible without basic research driven by nothing more than curiosity. Highly trained researchers developing a vaccine for COVID-19 in post-secondary institutions, in the public sector, or industry have one thing in common: they received their training as graduate students and postdoctoral researchers at post-secondary institutions doing fundamental research that laid the foundation for ground-breaking discoveries and life-changing interventions.

Canada's Gross Domestic Spending on Research and Development, % of GDP, 2018³⁶



³⁶ OECD. Gross domestic spending on R&D (indicator). 2020. <https://data.oecd.org/rd/gross-domestic-spending-on-r-d.htm#indicator-chart>.

The government's quick response in providing COVID-19 related emergency funding for research proves that funds dedicated to research can be made available when the government deems them necessary. Canadian researchers from all disciplines stepped up to the challenge to address the health and economic issues arising out of COVID-19, demonstrating what scientific advances and solutions we can achieve when Canadian research is funded at an appropriate level. Short-term support of COVID-19 related research is not enough. To maintain a competitive edge on the international stage and to lead Canada's economic recovery, we require sustained support, not only for basic research in postsecondary institutions, but including research performed in other institutions, industry, the not-for-profit sector, and government labs.

Post-secondary institutions are the cradle for fundamental, curiosity-driven research. Academic research is held to the highest standards and subject to academic freedom. Academic freedom and grant-based research funding are essential to the academic research sector. Industry-based research and development (R&D) is generally based on a known potential application tied to expected goals and financial values. Degrading financial support already forces post-secondary institutions to sign contracts, partnership arrangements, and sponsorship deals with corporations. Universities and colleges and the research performed there is publicly-funded due to operational support such as laboratory space and the salary costs of researchers. Relying on corporate support or partnerships blurs the line between curiosity driven and application driven research. Private corporations gain access to research facilities and expertise that is supported by public funds. Not only would this mean that the public inadvertently supports private interests, it will inevitably reduce accuracy of research and may no longer be in the best public interest.

Each year approximately 7,000 bright minds in Canada earn their PhDs. Of those, only 20 per cent will eventually work as tenured university professors performing research and only two percent of jobs in Canada require a PhD, creating an expensive mismatch of talent and opportunity. Some graduates will work as postdoctoral researchers, frequently with no benefits, pensions, health-plans, or employment security, and for a salary often close to the poverty line. The best and brightest take their expertise outside of Canada where their efforts are compensated at much higher levels.

The final report of the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science recommended increasing base funding for Canada's three research granting councils (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council) from \$3.5 billion to \$4.8 billion over four years. This recommendation would increase Canada's federal budget by only 0.4% a year. This minimal investment would raise funding to a level that is equal to those of other G7 countries which would ensure long-term viability and competitiveness with other G7 countries.³⁷

The Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science recommended that the federal government improve and expand support for student and postdoctoral research, including expanding the number of awards and providing more generous support, both in amount and duration. The federal government's 2019 budget dedicated \$114 million over five years to create additional masters and doctoral, and postdoctoral scholarships. However, many issues remain unsolved. For example, the length of doctoral scholarships under the Canada Graduate Scholarship Program remains capped at three years. Considering that the average completion time of a PhD is over six years, capping these scholarships at three years is not appropriate. To properly address financial constraints, the federal government should fully implement the recommendations of the Advisory Panel.

Systemic barriers to equity and diversity in academia and the research community persist. Fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion in research, and ensuring that our research community is reflective of Canada's diversity will address the chronic underrepresentation of equity groups in research. Providing appropriate and ongoing support to researchers who are members of equity-seeking groups will help attract and retain the exceptional talent of equity-seeking researchers and trainees, whose creativity, innovation, contributions, and perspectives will make our research and Canada better.

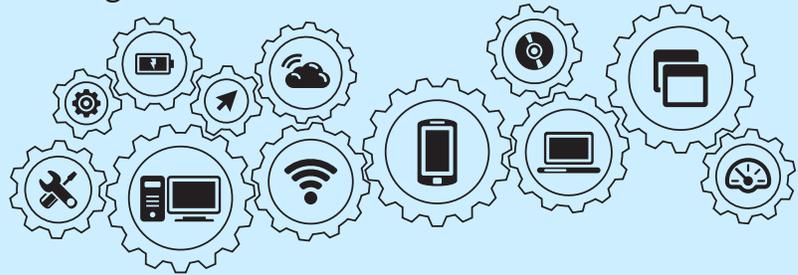
The bottom line: Fully funded public post-secondary education is good for education

Fully funding public post-secondary education is essential to ensuring a high-quality education:

³⁷ Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science. *Canada's Fundamental Science Review Final Report. Investing in Canada's Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research*. 2017. <http://www.sciencereview.ca/eic/site/059.nsf/eng/home>.

- Since 1992, the ratio of university students to full-time faculty has grown 40 per cent.⁴⁰ Fully funding PSE would support lower class sizes. For students, very large class sizes have been shown to correlate with negative outcomes.

- The price tag for deferred maintenance at Canadian universities is \$17.2 billion.³⁸
- The total cost of deferred maintenance at colleges is \$7.6 billion.³⁹



- Public support plays a key role in boosting the participation of students, researchers, and educators who are racialized, Black, Indigenous, queer, living on low income, living with a disability, or identify as female, increasing the diversity of perspectives, enriching the understanding of students, and strengthening the research activities of our post-secondary institutions.
- Public funding and strong employment regulation are essential to improving the working conditions of workers, which are the living and learning conditions of students.
- Public investments are needed to close the gap in deferred maintenance. Without investments in infrastructure, students and workers can end up working, learning, and living in crumbling, outdated, sometimes dangerous buildings.
- Public funding and public regulatory frameworks together limit the role of corporate influence and control, ensuring that private corporations are not able to use universities and colleges to advance their private profits or private interests at the expense of students and the Canadian public.
- Public funding supports collegial governance which allows community members – faculty, staff, and students – to participate in the decisions that affect them rather than a private, corporate mindset that sees students as products, corporations as customers, and faculty and staff as interchangeable employees in the assembly line of producing workers.

³⁸ Doug Johnson. “Deferred Maintenance: Universities Can’t Keep Up With Expensive Upkeep and Repairs,” *Maclean’s*. December 3, 2020. <https://www.macleans.ca/education/deferred-maintenance-universities-cant-keep-up-with-expensive-upkeep-and-repairs/>.

³⁹ Colleges and Institutes Canada. “Infrastructure.” <https://www.collegesinstitutes.ca/policyfocus/infrastructure/>.

⁴⁰ Calculation based on Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0011-01 Postsecondary enrolments, by field of study, registration status, program type, credential type and gender*; and Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0077-01 Number and median age of full-time teaching staff at Canadian universities, by highest earned degree, staff functions, rank, sex*.



WHY NOW?

Post-COVID Just Recovery

THOUSANDS OF WORKERS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RETURN TO WORK ONCE THE PANDEMIC IS OVER.

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown hundreds of thousands of Canadians out of work and has shut some industries down altogether. Some of these industries will take a long time to recover; others may never fully recover or need to take this moment to transition to less fossil fuel dependent practices. This means that thousands of workers will not be able to just return to work once the pandemic is over.

Post-secondary education will be an essential part of re-training these workers to take on new jobs in new industries or develop the skill sets they need to work in a sector that has transitioned to more environmentally-friendly technologies and practices.

Although the federal government has provided some income support, unemployed workers have experienced great financial precarity and many have had to dip into savings or go into debt to make ends meet. If we require them to go further into debt in order to attend PSE, that will create an insurmountable barrier for many to achieve the PSE and training that they need. A better approach would be to reduce and eventually eliminate tuition so that all workers can seek the re-training that they need and pay back the costs of the education through taxes on the higher incomes they will achieve as a result.

The pandemic has demonstrated the immense social cost of closing down industries without having a plan in place for the workers who depend on them. While action on climate change is urgent – according to the International Panel on Climate Change, we have only ten years to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees – action must be accompanied by a plan to transition workers who are affected to new jobs or the human suffering will be incalculable. Accessible, high quality PSE will be an essential part of this shift and we should be doing everything we can to remove any and all barriers to PSE. Meanwhile, investments in research on climate change and green technologies will help aid the transition to a green economy.

The pandemic has also exposed many of the fundamental inequalities underlying our society. Systemic racism, growing income inequality, and the systemic weaknesses of our social safety net have blighted the lives of millions of people living in Canada. Post-secondary education and research need to be part of the solution, helping us to understand and address the problem, breaking down barriers and promoting inclusion.

Years of underfunding

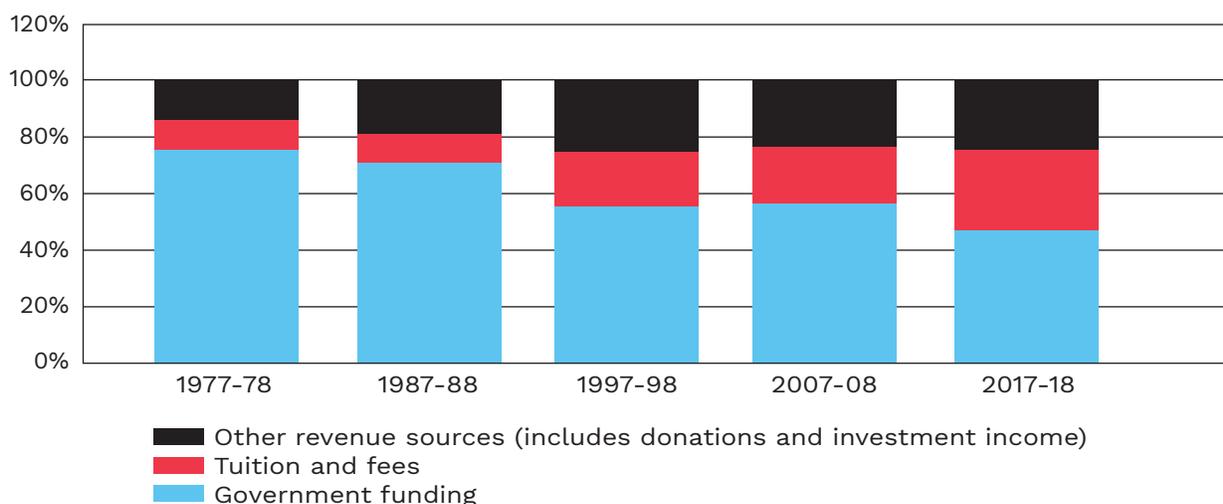
PUBLIC FUNDING NOW REPRESENTS LESS THAN HALF OF TOTAL UNIVERSITY REVENUE IN CANADA.

Internationally, Canada lags behind many of its peers in providing public support for PSE. Of the developed countries represented by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), 27 countries rank ahead of Canada in terms of the proportion of funding for post-secondary education coming from public, rather than private, sources.⁴¹

Public spending on PSE in Canada has not kept pace with enrolment over the past several decades. Public funding now represents less than half of total university revenue in Canada. Students and their families are bearing an ever-larger burden of the costs of higher education, with private donations, investments and endowments, and corporate contracts also taking up a larger portion of the costs.

⁴¹ OECD. *Education at a Glance 2020: OECD Indicators*, Table C3.1.

University Revenue Sources, 1977-78 – 2017-18⁴²



A big part of this shift from public support to private funding has been due to the declining share of funding provided by the federal government. In Canada, education is under provincial jurisdiction. This means that provincial governments have the responsibility for setting the rules under which universities and colleges operate. But since World War II, funding for PSE has come from both the federal and provincial governments, in recognition of the important role that education plays in our society and in our economy.

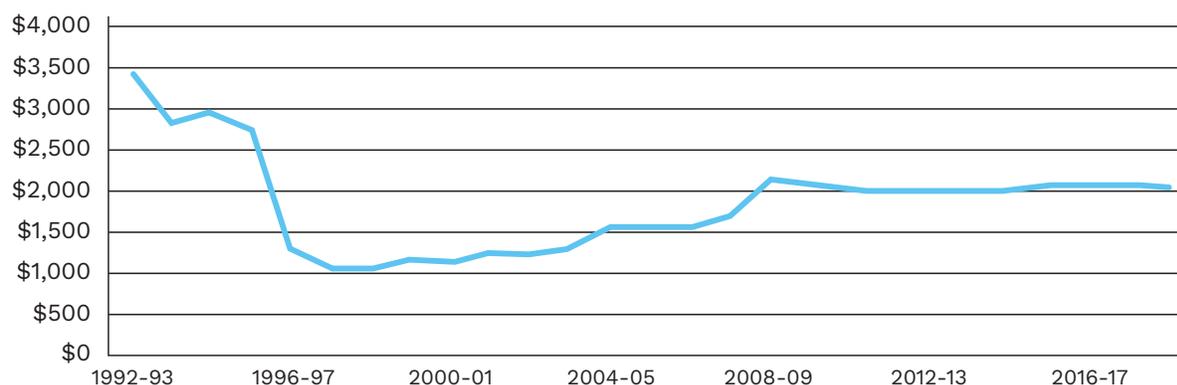
In fact, at one time, the federal government was committed to providing half of the post-secondary operating expenses of the provinces. Since that time, however, the federal share has diminished considerably.

In 1992, the federal government’s contribution to PSE amounted to \$3,432 per post-secondary student adjusted for inflation; in 2017-18, the federal government’s per student contribution was only \$2,068. If the federal government provided the same per student amount in 2017-18 as it did in 1992-93, the PSE component of the Canada Social Transfer would have been \$7.3 billion – \$3 billion more each year than what the government is currently providing.

⁴² CAUT Almanac. Table 2.6 University Revenues and Expenditures, 1977-78 to 2017-18.



Federal Cash Transfer Per-Student, 1992-93 – 2017-18, in 2019\$⁴³



What’s more, this reduction in the federal contribution has happened even though the government’s capacity to spend, measured by the growth in our economy, has grown considerably. In 1992-93, the federal government’s cash transfer for PSE was 0.41 per cent of GDP. In 2018-19, it was only 0.19 per cent.⁴⁴

This is all despite the fact that PSE has become an essential part of Canada’s economic growth: more than two-thirds of jobs are estimated to require some form of PSE and the Advisory Council on Growth calculated that the additional funding required for adult reskilling through PSE over the next decade is \$3 billion.⁴⁵

An unfair and unsustainable reliance on international students

Faced with declining public funding, many universities and colleges have become dependent on international students as a convenient source of funding. Because international student tuition is not regulated, the average undergraduate tuition fees are more than four and a half times the sticker price for Canadian undergrads. In 2020-21, the average undergraduate tuition fees for international students are \$32,019.⁴⁶

Educating international students is big business these days. According to the federal government’s International Education Strategy, in 2018, international students in Canada spent approximately \$21.6 billion on tuition and other expenses. In fact, the strategy notes, “[e]ducational expenditures by

⁴³ Authors’ calculations from Donald Fisher et al. *Canadian Federal Policy and PostSecondary Education*. 2006; Public Accounts of Canada; Budget 2005; Budget 2006; Finance Canada; Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-00118-01 Postsecondary enrolments, by registration status, institution type, status of student in Canada and sex*; and Statistics Canada. *Table 18-10-0005-01 Consumer Price Index, annual average, not seasonally adjusted*.

⁴⁴ CAUT Almanac. Table 2.1 *Federal Cash Transfers for Post-Secondary Education (%GDP)*.

⁴⁵ Advisory Council on Economic Growth. *Learning Nation: Equipping Canada’s Workforce with Skills for the Future*. December 1, 2017. <https://www.budget.gc.ca/aceg-ccce/pdf/learning-nation-eng.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Statistics Canada. *Table 37-10-0045-01 Canadian and International Tuition Fees by Level of Study*.

international students have a greater impact on Canada's economy than exports of auto parts, lumber or aircraft."⁴⁷

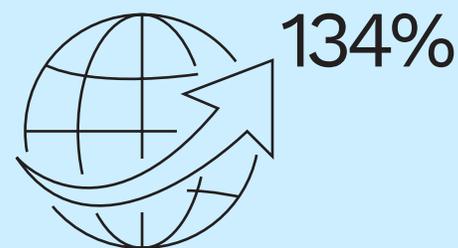
But trying to build the stability of the Canadian post-secondary system on the backs of international students has resulted in a system with no resiliency. Ffaced with a decline in international enrolment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some institutions are experiencing significant revenue shortfalls. Others are even contemplating closure.

International students provide an important diversity of experience and perspectives to Canadian education. They are a significant source of highly skilled new immigrants who contribute to our economy. But to treat them as the financial cornerstone of the Canadian system is deeply problematic and risky.

It has also had disastrous consequences for international students themselves. As observers note, the whole system is set up in a way that makes education a secondary concern while putting international students into an incredibly precarious and vulnerable situation.

Students have complained that unscrupulous recruiters (some working on commission) misrepresent the rules regarding student permits and have fraudulently guaranteed students access to permanent residency, all while collecting thousands of dollars in fees.⁴⁹ Many students also get caught between the high costs of tuition and fees and the limited number of hours that international students are allowed to work while in Canada. International students have become another source of migrant workers, working in low wage service sector and manufacturing jobs. They are easy to exploit, since they fear

- Between 2006-07 and 2016-17, enrolment of international students at publicly-funded Canadian postsecondary schools increased 130 per cent.
- In 2016-17, international students made up 13.6 per cent of university students and 9 per cent of college students.⁴⁸



⁴⁷ Global Affairs Canada. *Building on Success: International Education Strategy 2019-2024*, 2019. <https://www.international.gc.ca/education/assets/pdfs/ies-sei/Building-on-Success-International-Education-Strategy-2019-2024.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Statistics Canada. Table 37-10-00118-01 Postsecondary enrolments, by registration status, institution type, status of student in Canada and sex.

⁴⁹ Kathy Tomlinson. "The Foreign Students Who Say They Were Lured to Canada by a Lie," *The Globe and Mail*, June 26, 2019. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-international-students-coming-to-private-colleges-say-they-were-duped/>.

being deported if they complain about wages, working conditions, or abuse.⁵⁰ If hours of work are limited, then the hours worked should be compensated at a rate that allows students to cover more of their expenses, especially if the student is employed by an academic institution.

The lack of regulation has also given rise to a whole industry of private colleges, many of whom seem to exist solely for the sake of charging exorbitant fees while offering the promise of a Canadian diploma or access to immigration programs, even though many of them do not qualify graduates for permanent resident visas. In Ontario, an agreement between private career colleges and public colleges allows private career colleges charging thousands of dollars in tuition to offer students a diploma from a publicly-funded college, in exchange for a portion of the revenue. A review by the Ontario government noted that “[t]he partnerships do not serve an important purpose and are an inefficient way to provide needed revenue to colleges,” in addition to being highly risky. However, the Ontario government, reluctant to take away this cash cow from public colleges who might then demand more funding from the government, has refused to shut this scheme down.⁵¹

Corporatization

As public funding has failed to keep up with the costs of providing high-quality post-secondary education, private funding in the form of donations, investments, and sales contracts has become ever more important.

Donations and grants to universities and colleges are not necessarily problematic. But as a major source of funding, donations from wealthy individuals and corporations do not simply replace operating revenues that used to come from governments. Many of these donations have conditions attached and that is where problems often occur.

Between 1977 and 2017, the proportion of university revenue coming from donations, investments, and contracts increased 60 per cent.⁵²



⁵⁰ Nicholas Keung, Isabel Teotonio, and Grant LaFleche. “We Think of Them as Cash Cows: International Students Want to Immigrate, But Colleges, Employers Want to Boost Their Bottom Lines,” *Toronto Star and the St. Catherines Standard*, September 27, 2019. <https://www.stcatharinesstandard.ca/news-story/9617661--we-think-of-them-as-cash-cows-international-students-want-to-immigrate-but-colleges-employers-want-to-boost-their-bottom-lines/>.

⁵¹ David Trick. *Review of Ontario College Partnerships With Private Providers in Canada: Prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development*, March 2017. <https://files.constantcontact.com/b69f8b4d001/70b86477-0535-4363-87fa-3616a570ff31.pdf>; Alex Usher. “Ontario Doubles Down on Dodgy Colleges,” Higher Education Strategy Associates, November 18, 2019. <http://highereducationstrategy.com/ontario-doubles-down-on-dodgy-colleges/>.

⁵² CAUT Almanac. *Table 2.6 University Revenues and Expenditures, 1977-78 to 2017-18*.

The funding is often directed towards a specific cause that is focused on the donor's priorities, rather than the academic community's priorities or the public interest. Often, the donation comes with the expectation that others – governments, other donors, the institution itself – will match the donation and continue to provide ongoing funding for the program being created. This results in the donor having the power to direct the funding priorities of governments and institutions.

In the same way, corporate contracts for research can end up allowing a private, for-profit corporation to direct publicly-funded research and claim ownership of intellectual property developed in part with public funding. Corporations can also claim the public legitimacy of post-secondary institutions to support their government lobbying efforts, as occurred with a TransAlta contract with the University of Alberta in 2015.

Corporate funding for research can also end up influencing the type and even direction of research toward “preferred solutions.” For instance, oil and gas companies have invested heavily in research on climate change that either justifies their continued practices or emphasizes technological solutions such as carbon capture. Without publicly-funded research in the public interest, we can't be sure that we are identifying the real nature of the problems and the best solutions from the public's perspective.

Collaboration between researchers at post-secondary institutions and corporations should not be dictated by lack of public funding and should only occur with clear guidelines around transparency and ownership of intellectual property. Students should not be required to develop intellectual property for for-profit companies in order to graduate. Furthermore, donors or funders should not be given control over personnel decisions, curriculum, or research agendas – all of which would be an infringement upon academic freedom. Unfortunately, this has happened at some universities in recent years.⁵³

Even when there is no conflict of interest or incursion on academic freedom, corporate sponsorship erodes public faith in the fairness and accuracy of research. Corporate funding is no replacement for public funding when it comes to public trust.

⁵³ Canadian Union of Public Employees. *Background: Corporatization in Post-Secondary Education*. January 2019. <https://cupe.ca/corporatization-post-secondary-education>.

The amount of time that post-secondary institutions need to spend soliciting private donations and contracts or managing investment portfolios has an impact on administration. Over the past few decades, we have seen the growth of the number of administrative positions and a rise in administrative compensation. At the University of Toronto, the highest paid person has for many years been the president of the Asset Management Corporation (AMC), which manages the institution's investments and pension fund. In 2017, the president of the AMC received a salary equivalent to the tuition of 146 undergraduate arts and science students.

In fact, post-secondary institutions are increasingly adopting corporate styles of management, led by Boards of Governors with heavy representation from the corporate sector and administrators recruited from the private sector or who function as “professionalized administrators,” rather than as academic staff serving a part of their career in a governance role.

An analysis of the Boards of Governors at the 18 largest universities in Ontario conducted by PressProgress found that corporate executives predominate, accounting for 33.5 per cent of board members. This was higher than the number of students, staff, and faculty (30.3 per cent); other external members (28.1 per cent), and ex-officio presidents and chancellors (6.9 per cent). At five universities, more than two-thirds of all external appointments were from the corporate sector.⁵⁴

The increasing corporate mentality among administrators has contributed to an increasing embrace of privatization, contracting out, and the use of precarious forms of employment by universities and colleges.

This privatization is not limited to support services; educational services are being privatized as well. In Ontario, six colleges have signed agreements with private, for-profit colleges that grant a diploma from the publicly-funded institution to international students who have studied at the private college. At another 13 colleges and universities across the country, partnerships have been signed with private, for-profit educational service providers who provide English classes and, in some cases, academic courses to international students on campus as well.

⁵⁵ Press Progress. “Corporate Canada Now Controls More than One-Third of All Seats on University Boards Across Ontario,” April 16, 2018.

Research funding gap

Canada's expenditure on Research & Development (R&D) as a percentage of its gross domestic product has declined since 2001 and is now below the OECD average and second to lowest among the G7 countries.⁵⁵ Canadians need new knowledge and new ideas to improve our quality of life and to help us meet the critical challenges we face. The report from the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science, released in 2017, provides the blueprint to ensure Canada is a world leader in research. However, there remains a shortfall of approximately 40 per cent to reach the levels of funding needed to keep Canada competitive internationally. Meeting this recommendation would only add 0.4 per cent to Canada's annual budget and would ensure that funding for research was equal to that of other G7 countries.⁵⁶

Canada is providing only 54 per cent of the funding level recommended by the Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science.



Without continued investment, Canada risks falling even further behind. Despite increases in 2018, Canada is providing only 54 per cent of the funding level recommended by the Advisory Panel in order for Canada to stay competitive on the international stage. Additionally, support for postdocs and early career researchers still falls significantly short, at only 22 per cent of the levels recommended by the same committee. Low funding ultimately decreases research quality and output by depressing working conditions, adversely affecting employees' performance, health, and mental health.

The pandemic, while serving as a moment of tremendous research into viruses, vaccines, and public health, has stalled or delayed research in other areas. Support for basic research will be essential to rebuilding our social infrastructure, growing our economy, and ensuring that Canada trains and retains global research talent. With this support, Canada's world-class researchers will help to solve emerging problems, such as mitigating the impacts of climate change, and building a stable, sustainable country.

⁵⁵ OECD. Gross domestic spending on R&D (indicator). 2020. <https://data.oecd.org/rd/gross-domestic-spending-on-r-d.htm#indicator-chart>.

⁵⁶ Advisory Panel on Federal Support for Fundamental Science. *Investing in Canada's Future: Strengthening the Foundations of Canadian Research*. April 2017. [http://www.sciencereview.ca/eic/site/059.nsf/vwapj/ScienceReview_April2017-rv.pdf/\\$file/ScienceReview_April2017-rv.pdf](http://www.sciencereview.ca/eic/site/059.nsf/vwapj/ScienceReview_April2017-rv.pdf/$file/ScienceReview_April2017-rv.pdf).

Lack of support for Indigenous students and Indigenous post-secondary education

Between 1996 and 2016, funding for First Nations and Inuit education through the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) was officially capped, allowing only two per cent growth per year, even as inflation and population growth exceeded two percent annually. But even since 2016, federal support for the PSSSP has not reflected actual growth in inflation and population.

As a result, the number of students supported by the PSSSP in 2016 was almost the same as the number of students who received support in 1996, despite the fact that Indigenous youth are the fastest growing segment of the population and more Indigenous students are achieving a secondary school diploma.

In addition, many students who receive funding do not actually receive enough financial support to complete a diploma or a degree. This gap in funding has pushed some Indigenous students who do pursue PSE into attending colleges rather than universities, due to the lower costs. The choice between a university and college education should be a personal decision, not dictated by low funding levels. According to the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), more than half of students receiving PSSSP funds are in college or pursuing training in the trades. Indigenous post-secondary students are also more likely to be older and more likely to have dependents to support than the average Canadian student.

Both the gap in post-secondary attainment and the fact that Indigenous learners are more likely to attend college than university have contributed to an employment and wage gap between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous students. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) notes that the boost to earnings from achieving a post-secondary education is even higher for Inuit graduates than it is for non-Indigenous students.

The Assembly of First Nations estimates that only 21 per cent of eligible First Nations students are receiving funding for post-secondary education.⁵⁷



⁵⁷ Assembly of First Nations. *First Nations Post-Secondary Education Fact Sheet*. 2018. https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/PSE_Fact_Sheet_ENG.pdf.

The AFN calculates that more than 78,000 First Nations graduates are needed to eliminate the PSE gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous students. They have called for an investment of \$427.3 million in annual funding and \$124.5 million in transitional funding to close this gap.⁵⁸

According to ITK, 18,200 more Inuit graduates are needed to close the gap between Inuit students and non-Indigenous students. ITK has proposed a plan to double the number of Inuit graduates over the next ten years, with an investment of \$416 million over the ten-year period. ITK has also flagged that more supports are needed for primary and secondary education to better prepare Inuit learners for PSE.⁵⁹

Both the gap in post-secondary attainment and the fact that Indigenous learners are more likely to attend college than university have contributed to an employment and wage gap between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous students.

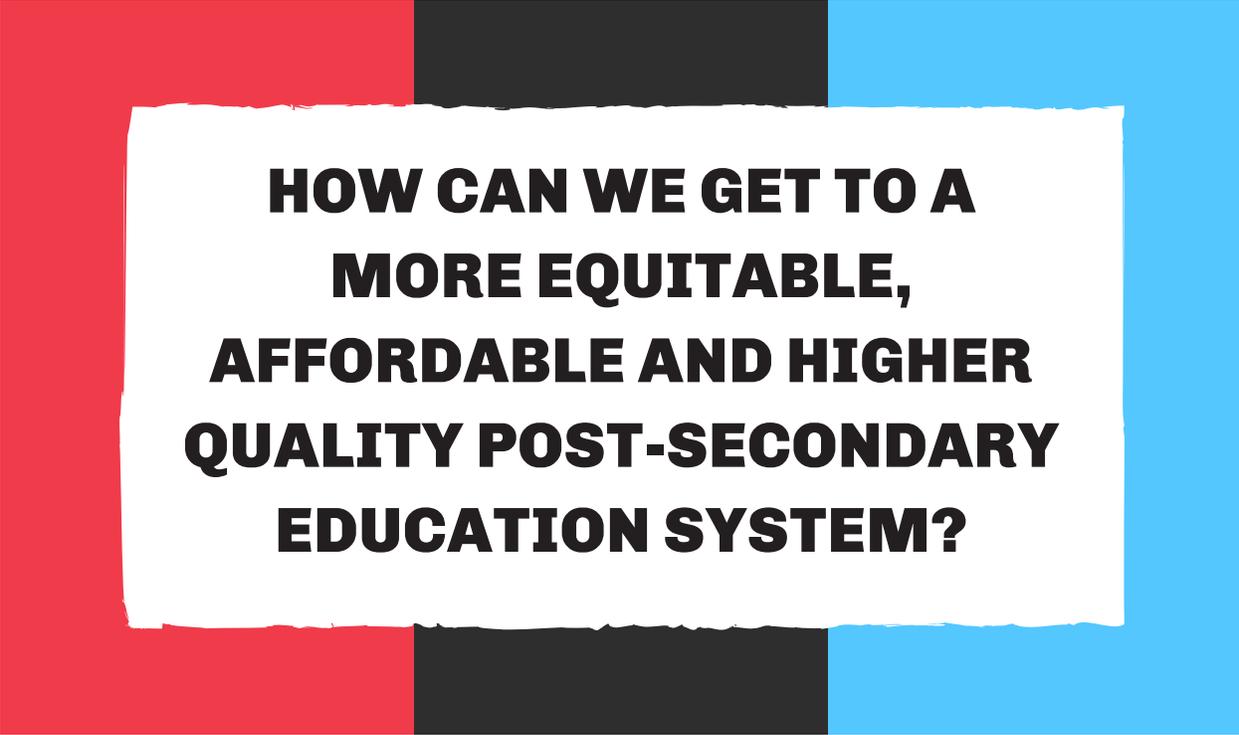
Finally, there are multiple systemic barriers which make it more difficult for Indigenous students to access and complete PSE. The legacy of residential schools has created a deeply held mistrust towards non-Indigenous educational institutions. Faculty, staff, and fellow students are often unaware of Indigenous history, culture, and traditional knowledge, which can make post-secondary campuses and classrooms an unwelcoming place for Indigenous students. Lack of affordable transportation and child care options can also prevent students from pursuing studies.

Eliminating tuition and fees for PSE would be an important step towards providing access. This would allow PSSSP funding to go towards living expenses and support services to make PSE truly accessible to Indigenous students.

The federal government should also commit to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis to ensure that Indigenous Peoples are granted control over Indigenous education.

⁵⁸ Assembly of First Nations. *Policy Proposal: First Nations Post-Secondary Education*. December 4, 2018. <https://www.afn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/18-12-04-First-Nations-Post-Secondary-Education-Policy-Proposal-V8-FINAL.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. *Inuit Post-Secondary Education Strategy: Raising Education Attainment Rates*. June 2020. https://www.itk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ipse-strategy_draft_english.pdf.



HOW CAN WE GET TO A MORE EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE AND HIGHER QUALITY POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM?

In order to achieve Education for All, we need federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work in partnership to build, strengthen, and sustain a high-quality, accessible system of publicly-funded post-secondary education.

Although education is a provincial jurisdiction, much like health care, housing or child care, PSE is of social, cultural, economic and political importance to Canada and is supported through a variety of federal mechanisms. Therefore, the federal government plays a key role in the success of our PSE system. Canadians need a stronger federal partner for PSE and research. The federal government must work with the provinces and territories, universities, colleges, and polytechnics to ensure high levels of quality, access, and affordability of higher education in Canada.

Federal recommendations

In order to be a strong, federal partner and ensure high levels of quality, access, and affordability in post-secondary education across the country, the federal government must:

- Work with the provinces and territories to develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system and commit to a plan for education and lifelong learning for all;
- The plan to strengthen post-secondary education should focus on the shared priorities of improving affordability and accessibility by reducing and eventually eliminating tuition; and improving quality, through an emphasis on decent work, adequate public funding, and regulation;
- As a first step towards affordability, eliminate interest on federal student loan debt permanently, move to a 50:50 funding model for grants and loans, and replace the Canada Education Savings Program and Tuition Tax Credit with direct funding for student grants;
- To support and promote decent work, work towards a pan-Canadian definition of precarity, support and fund Statistics Canada to track and analyse data on precarious work, and support a workforce renewal strategy that limits the sector's use of precarious contract jobs, contracting out, and privatization;
- Limit corporate influence over education through provision of adequate public funding and put in place requirements for transparency and public disclosure of corporate contracts and donations to protect academic freedom;
- Boost direct federal funding for post-secondary education through the transfer to the provinces by a minimum of \$3 billion, ensure that funding keeps up with inflation and enrolment growth, and require accountability and transparency for federal funding;
- Increase funding for Indigenous post-secondary education by a minimum of \$650 million annually to eliminate the gap in post-secondary attainment between Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students; and to invest in the development and expansion of culturally appropriate Indigenous post-secondary education systems and models;
- To prevent exploitation of international students, provide better regulation of international student recruitment and tuition and adequate public funding;

- Expand Canada’s research capacity through increased research funding and graduate scholarships, fully adopt and implement the recommendations of the Advisory Panel on Fundamental Science, and enshrine the position of Chief Science Advisor in legislation;
- Increase support for and collection of vital data on the post-secondary sector through Statistics Canada, including national standards for the collection and provision of data in areas such as access, affordability, quality, equity, mental health, and employment and working conditions of faculty, staff, researchers and student workers;
- Support employment equity by strengthening the *Employment Equity Act* and the Federal Contractors Program; and
- Establish a federal post-secondary education secretariat or branch within the federal government to facilitate collaboration with the provinces and territories, Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous governments, and experts and stakeholders, as well as to coordinate initiatives such as research and science, student assistance, data and innovation.

Provincial and territorial recommendations

In order to create a strong and vibrant, high-quality publicly-funded post-secondary education sector, provincial governments must:

- Work with the federal government to develop a shared vision for a renewed post-secondary education system and commit to a plan for education and lifelong learning for all;
- Commit to long-term, stable, institutional funding that keeps pace with enrolment and inflation growth;
- Work with the federal government to reduce and eventually eliminate tuition;
- As a first step towards greater affordability and the elimination of tuition, move to a 50:50 model for student grants and loans (or better);
- Support and promote decent work in the sector and a decrease in the sector’s reliance on precarious contract jobs and contracting out, including through fair employment legislation requiring equal pay for equal work, tighter regulation on the use of short-term contracts, and a requirement for wages, benefits, and seniority to be maintained in cases of contract flipping;

- Respect the Charter-protected right to collective bargaining and right to strike, by introducing legislation to facilitate the unionization of workers in the academic sector and to ensure fair working conditions and employment security, in addition to removing wage freezes and caps to annual wage increases that override collective bargaining for those already unionized;
- Limit corporate influence over academic matters and research through adequate public funding and regulation, including requirements for transparency and public disclosure of corporate contracts and donations;
- Support open and transparent governance with diverse representation of academic staff, students, and workers to ensure that decisions that impact the campus community are made by community members with a stake in the outcomes; and
- Introduce bicameral structures for institutions where not currently in existence to ensure academic decision-making over academic matters.