



**Submission to the Select Standing
Committee on Finance and
Government Services**

Budget Consultation 2019

Submission by:

The Canadian Union of Public Employees
British Columbia Division

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September 2018**

Introduction

The Canadian Union of Public Employees British Columbia (CUPE BC) appreciates the opportunity to submit its views on priorities for the 2019 budget to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (the Committee).

CUPE BC represents more than 92,000 workers in British Columbia employed in municipalities, and school boards, colleges and universities, and community organizations. Our members also provide transit and library services, and we represent many workers in private sector organizations. Our 92,000 members deliver public services across a wide range of sectors, and thus play an integral role in translating the provincial budget into action.

As such, they are affected by budget priorities like all British Columbians – as citizens receiving vital services, but also as employees in a way that is central to the work that they do in building strong communities. Our working conditions are directly related to healthy sustainable communities, and both are direct functions of budget prioritization.

We support the hard work that the B.C. government has undertaken to understand and reverse the damage to public services incurred after 16 years of a starvation diet of provincial investments in public services under the former government. The recommendations in this document contain high level budget policy recommendations and specific pressing needs identified by our members in each sector. We are hopeful that this budget will encompass sweeping changes in the way public services are funded and we welcome this opportunity to bring forth the concerns and priorities of the membership of CUPE BC.

Provincial Budget

To properly fund public infrastructure and services we must be unafraid to enact policies of fair taxation. Everyone and every business must pay their fair share. Almost two decades of tax cuts for the wealthiest few and big corporations has created a system that is increasing--not reducing--income inequality. This inequality is exacerbated by regressive taxation; these regressive taxes include consumption-based taxes and user fees. We should be addressing income inequality through tax reform instead of continuing to intensify income inequality by requiring those with the least ability to pay to be burdened by disproportionate costs.

Recommendation #1: *Analyze the current taxation structure for the Province through a progressive lens and enact taxation changes that will focus on fairness.*

Everybody in the province benefits when investments are made in public infrastructure. However, not all infrastructure funding models are created equally. The secrecy and lack of transparency around so-called “public private partnerships” is very troubling. The B.C. government should be harnessing its own borrowing power to build public

infrastructure and then operating that infrastructure instead of regressive user fees and hefty payments from government lining the pockets of corporate shareholders.

Further, we should not be allocating public funds to support private corporations in their bid to privatize the vital infrastructure and services that British Columbians rely upon every day.

We are going to pay for these projects one way or another. We might as well build, maintain and operate our facilities publicly. It's cheaper, and provides more accountability. Let's own and control them ourselves, for the public interest and not for private profits.

Recommendation #2: Immediately cease funding to Partnerships BC.

Recommendation#3: Only invest in public infrastructure that is publicly financed, maintained and operated.

Labour Relations Board and Employment Standards Branch

Under the previous government's mandate, the Labour Relations Board's (LRB) budget has been significantly stripped. The LRB struggles to meet and modernize its mandate and lacks the ability to deal with pressing matters in a timely fashion with sufficiently qualified personnel given its lack of funding. We anticipate legislative change following the Section 3 Committee Report which we understand will be released imminently. Thus, the LRB needs funding for both its existing mandate and any additional changes that occur in the future. Without adequate funding, the prospect of meaningful change to make the LRB relevant and useful to workers' rights is merely a pipe dream.

Increasing funding to the LRB is also necessary to ensure that all workers have access to a fair union certification process. More Industrial Relations Officers (IROs) are necessary to ensure the certification process is carried out smoothly and that votes are conducted quickly. For example, currently due to workload IROs often do not to conduct payroll audits which means that the number of employees is determined solely by what the employer reports.

The Employment Standards Branch (ESB) is also currently failing to carry out its responsibility of ensuring that workers in B.C. receive at least the basic standards of compensation and conditions of employment. Workers in our province face high levels of abuse and exploitation.¹ In our view, this is largely attributable to chronic under-resourcing of the ESB. Under the B.C. Liberal government, since 2002 the ESB has experienced a 54 percent reduction in staff while total employment in B.C. has increased by 23 percent. This has led the ESB to restrict the scope of its activities, wholly eliminating proactive investigations and shifting to a complaints-based model, as well as seeking to settle as many complaints as possible without investigation or adjudication.

Currently the branch relies on the “self-help kit” – workers are directed to write out their complaint and submit it to their employer before the branch will consider their complaint. In the recent B.C. Law Institute (BCLI) Review of the Employment Standards Act (ESA), the BCLI committee unanimously agreed that the self-help kit should be eliminated. It is not reasonable to expect workers to submit complaints directly to their employers and put themselves at risk of retaliation. The self-help kit deters employees from filing complaints despite legitimate violations of the ESA. After the original implementation of the “self-help kit” complaints to the ESB dropped by more than 50 percent. More ESB officers are required to ensure that there is adequate staffing to handle the increase in complaints that would occur if the self-help kit was finally eliminated.

In Ontario, after the “Changing Workplaces Review” in 2017, the provincial government committed to hiring 175 additional employment standards officers to ensure compliance with the act. They recognized the need for proactive enforcement especially in sectors with a high concentration of vulnerable and precariously employed workers who are less likely to come forward. This type of investment in enforcement is required in B.C. Increased funding is desperately needed to shepherd the ESB back in the direction of proactive investigations and full investigation and adjudication of complaints.

Recommendation# 4: Significantly increase funding for the Labour Relations Board and the Employment Standards Branch for increased staffing to ensure these institutions can fulfill their mandate.

Effective enforcement of the Employment Standards Act (ESA) could result in millions of dollars of additional revenue for government - therefore increasing funding to the ESB could be cost neutral. When workers wages are recovered through ESA enforcement this becomes taxable income. Furthermore, with more resources, the branch could focus on addressing the issues of the underground economy – including failure to pay wages owing and cash under the table.

Penalties for violations of the ESA should also be significantly increased. Currently penalties for violations of the ESA are very low – only \$500 for the first contravention and this penalty remains the same even if more than one employee is affected. In other provinces the penalty is multiplied by the number of employees affected by the contravention. Furthermore, repeat offenders only receive an increased fine if they violate the same provision of the act, if a different provision is violated the penalty remains only \$500.

Recommendation# 5: Review the potential of employment standards enforcement as a revenue stream.

K-12 Education Workers

After 16 years of chronic underfunding of K-12 education under the BC Liberals, we are pleased to now have a government that is undertaking initiatives aimed at restoring funding to B.C.'s K-12 system. The hiring of more than 3,000 teachers, accelerated seismic upgrades, \$639 million in capital funds and a review of the per-pupil funding formula are all welcome steps in addressing the chronic shortfalls facing children, families and K-12 workers across the province. We are also pleased to see infusions of funds to the Annual Facilities Grants and other school enhancements that will replace school buses and upgrade mechanical and infrastructure systems in B.C. schools. Unfortunately, the severity of long-term, structural underfunding of K-12 education means that continued increases in funding, particularly in operating funding, are required in order to ensure quality working and learning conditions, and meaningful inclusive education in B.C. public schools.

CUPE's 27,000 K-12 members provide clerical and IT support, custodial, trades and maintenance work for safe, healthy learning environments, and instructional support as educational assistants working directly with children with diverse and complex needs. We also represent bus drivers and crossing guards who ensure that thousands of children get to and from school safely every day. The substantial and chronic underfunding of this sector has had a dramatic impact on CUPE K-12 workers across the province.

We continue to see the effects of the erosion of custodial positions and/or clawbacks in the hours of clerical and custodial workers. Our custodial workers across the province have raised concerns over their inability to perform the work that they know is vital to maintaining safe and healthy learning environments. Understaffing and overwork in this area is a health and safety issue for our workers, but also for all staff and students.

Similarly, high numbers of clerical workers report not being able to complete their work in the time permitted, and thus regularly do unpaid work. This is not limited to clerical workers; a 2018 survey of all CUPE K-12 workers (approximately 7000 responses) tells us that only 32 percent of K-12 workers said there is usually enough time in a day to complete the tasks outlined for their position. Of those that said there was not enough time, a staggering 62 percent said they are regularly performing unpaid work.

We also have serious concerns about staffing levels and working conditions for EAs. We are pleased that the government has recently announced an increase in EA positions. However, many districts face significant difficulties in filling already existing EA positions, thus much more needs to be done to address significant problems surrounding EA staffing levels.

We acknowledge the government's willingness to provide funding that may potentially be used to provide additional hours for EAs in various districts across the province via the Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate. We nonetheless repeat our call for EA hours to be increased in a manner that is standardized, predictable and stable.

Recommendation #6: That budget provisions for the K-12 system contain the funding necessary to pay for full-time hours to support staff and to ensure adequate staffing levels.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada placed significant emphasis on the role of education in helping to facilitate reconciliation. The government has taken up important TRC Calls to Action by integrating Indigenous content into all subjects in the new K-12 curriculum. CUPE Aboriginal Education EAs and support workers across the province play an integral role in working with Aboriginal communities and students. They provide academic support aimed at maximizing the educational experience of Aboriginal students and play key roles in assisting school staff and students in understanding the role of Aboriginal culture and heritage in the lives of students, and in their educational outcomes.

We are concerned that Aboriginal EA positions have not grown significantly in many districts, and that staffing shortages in these key roles will be even more acute with the increase and integration of Indigenous content in the new K-21 curriculum.

Recommendation #7: K-12 funding must be adequate in meeting the Province's commitment to responding to the TRC's Calls to Action involving the role of education in reconciliation. This includes ensuring adequate staffing for implementing culturally appropriate programming in B.C. schools.

We are pleased that the government has undertaken a comprehensive review of the per-pupil funding formula and we welcomed the opportunity to participate in that process. There are numerous problems with the current funding model; chief among them is that it is not responsive to the actual cost of program delivery and obscures the fact that many K-12 costs are not very sensitive to enrolment (i.e. maintenance, custodial and many educational costs will not change with fluctuations in enrolment to the same extent that funding will).

We had many recommendations in the submission we made to that process, but we feel that it is important to reiterate our broad priorities for funding allocation for K-12 education in British Columbia:

Recommendation #8: That adequate, stable and predictable funding be allocated to K-12 so that school districts can meet their obligations to deliver accessible, quality education.

Recommendation #9: The K-12 funding model must be responsive to needs that are not directly subject to enrolment levels.

Insufficient hours remain one of the most prominent concerns we hear from our EAs. Hours that generally range from 4 to 6 hours per day (very often less than 6) means that large numbers of EAs are not earning living wages. High numbers of EAs, and in fact many K-12 support workers across the province, report working additional jobs in order

to make ends meet. The 2018 survey mentioned above reports that 38 percent of CUPE K-12 support workers work second jobs, and a shocking 46 percent of EAs do so.

Not only do insufficient employment hours result in personal hardship for many K-12 workers, but our members tell us that this factor is a major contributor to the recruitment and retention problems plaguing many districts.

Such shortages are taking place in the context of increasingly complex challenges in classrooms and educational settings. For example, violence in the workplace is a significant and growing problem in the sector. The results of our 2018 survey show that 41 percent of K-12 members say that they have seen an increase in the level of violence in their workplaces, and 65 percent say that they have experienced angry or abusive encounters with students. When we isolate the responses to EAs only, this number rises to 85 percent. Our members tell us that increasing staffing levels and better training are critical components needed to address these challenges.

Recommendation #10: *K-12 education funding must ensure that staffing levels and training are sufficient to ensure safe working and learning conditions for all staff and students in B.C. schools.*

All of these issues combine to create difficult working conditions for K-12 workers, but importantly, they also underserve the thousands of B.C. children who rely on the supports provided by K-12 workers in order to access education. We believe that many of the frustrating factors that endure in the workplace are also creating an inequity in access to education, increasing privatization, and eroding commitments to truly inclusive education.

Disability rights and advocacy groups are bringing increasing attention to the lack of supports available for providing special needs children in B.C. with meaningfully inclusive education. They claim that many parents feel they are being “forced out” of the public system, turning to special needs schools only because they cannot get the programming and supports they need in the public system.

An inability to get individualized support, specialized programming such as Applied Behavioral Analyses (ABA), special resources such as assistive speech technology and staff trained to work with such technology, are just some of the many issues parents point to for their reasons for leaving, or contemplating leaving the public system.

Many parents who stay in the public system end up paying for such resources privately, either supplying their children in the classroom, or providing additional therapies and supports privately in their own home. When forced to turn to independent specialized schools, parents frequently pay high tuition rates. In both of these cases, such options are clearly not available to all parents due to financial constraints, thus creating a pernicious disparity in access to education for children with special needs.

Enrolment in bricks and mortar private schools is not the only way in which special needs children are leaving the public school. Many parents are turning to independent schools offering distributed learning (DL) to obtain the programming they believe necessary for their children's education. At present, there are 16 independent schools offering this online modality of education for children with special needs. Growth in private school DL education has been increasing dramatically year over year. From 2010-11 to 2014-15 there has been a 191 percent increase in Group 1 Special Education Grants going to private online DL schools.

CUPE BC believes that all children are entitled to equitable access to education, in regular classrooms, in a fully public system. We have serious concerns that this statutory commitment is not being met for many children across the province.

Distributed learning and parent financed education is not the only way in which privatization happens in B.C.'s K-12 system. Funding for private schools has increased 58 percent percent in just the last 4 years and is budgeted to receive \$426 million in 2017-18.

Recommendation #11: *That funding to independent schools be eliminated. This course of action would likely require a progressive reduction but should be undertaken with the aim of expeditiously redirecting public funds to the public system.*

CUPE BC believes that a strong public education system is the best way to ensure that education is inclusive, equitable, and accessible. Public education is the backbone of a democratic society.

Municipal Workers

CUPE BC represents 30,000 municipal workers who provide the services and maintain the infrastructure that is vital to the health and well-being of British Columbians, but B.C.'s cities and towns are facing unprecedented pressures and lack the sound financial footing to meet growing needs. Our municipalities need better revenue sources if we want them to continue to feed our success.

Many British Columbian municipalities are struggling to pay for the infrastructure and services their residents need to have a decent quality of life. Cities and towns are on the front lines of many challenges, such as climate change, the widening gap between rich and poor, and an aging population. Over the last two decades, senior levels of government have downloaded more responsibilities to local governments, but often without the necessary funds to pay for them. Municipalities in B.C. still depend primarily on property taxes and user fees to pay their bills. These revenues weren't designed to support the types of services modern-day municipalities provide and aren't based on ability to pay.

Recommendation #12: *Investigate progressive models for fair taxation and make new progressive models of revenue generation available to Municipalities.*

Social Services and Child Care Workers

We are very pleased to see the efforts that have been made toward addressing the issue of chronically low-waged jobs in social services. The \$60 million targeted funding that resulted from the recent round of bargaining under the Sustainable Services Negotiating Mandate is a much-needed boost to help address low wages of those working with some of British Columbia's most vulnerable citizens. These workers work with people with developmental disabilities, they support families and youth in need, provide quality child care, assist people with substance abuse issues, support victims of violence, and offer various other critical assistance in support of the health and well-being of thousands of British Columbians.

The low-wage redress will help close the wage gap that has persisted between these workers and others doing similar work but who work directly in the healthcare sector. It will also serve as an important component in addressing the high staff turnover in the sector, all while ensuring sustainable and quality services.

In addition to being low-waged, workers in this sector report facing high rates of workplace violence. In a recent survey they identified this as their second most important concern outside of monetary issues.

Recommendation #13: *We urge the government to continue with its effort to address low wages for those doing care work and its effort to pursue wage parity amongst those doing this work across sectors.*

Recommendation #14: *We urge the government to continue efforts to address retention issues in the social services sector. In addition to addressing low-wages and wage parity, high rates of precarious work in the form of part-time and/or casual work must be addressed for social services and child care workers.*

Recommendation #15: *Measures must be taken to address the issue of work-place violence in the community social services sector, including but not limited to increased staffing and training.*

CUPE BC commends the province on its initiatives aimed at improving the state of early education and child care in B.C. The subsidies announced earlier in 2018, combined with the promise to create 22,000 new licensed child care spaces are significant steps in addressing the crises of affordability and availability characterizing the state of child care in B.C. They are also welcome first steps toward the realization of a universal child care program.

Studies in Europe, Quebec and from the US demonstrate that quality universal child care provides life-long benefits with respect to brain development. In addition, these studies show that universal child care increases female participation in the labour force, increases social mobility, narrows the gender pay gap and reduces poverty.

Recommendation #16: *That the government continue its initiatives aimed at strengthening B.C.'s early care sector, with the objective of achieving affordable, universal child care in the province.*

We are also very pleased at the recent announcement of measures that will increase wages to early education workers, improve recruitment and retention in the child care sector, and provide accessible training to those providing early education to B.C.'s children.

Providing well-paid jobs in the child care sector is a critical component to eliminating the gender pay gap - not only because most child care workers are female, but because access to affordable child care significantly increases the ability for women to participate in the workforce. In addition, low wages have a negative impact on the ability to attract and keep qualified early educators in the sector.

The Coalition of Child Care Advocates of B.C. notes that the median wage for early childhood educators "is 19 percent lower than that of B.C. workers overall, which leads to high turnover and chronic staff shortages, and contributes to financial insecurity of educators, many of whom are women with children of their own. Recruitment and retention of early childhood educators is a major challenge across the province."

Recommendation #17: *We urge the government to continue with its effort to address low wages for those in the early education and child care sector.*

Recommendation #18: *That the government continue with its commitments to strengthening the child care sector made in its 2018 budget, aimed at creating universal, affordable child care in the context of a fairly-paid, well-trained, stable workforce.*

Recommendation #19: *We believe that the Ministry of Education should play a prominent role in the development of universal child care. It is our position that child care should be viewed through the lens of 'early learning', and as such, should be housed under the Ministry of Education, including, but not limited to, the creation of child care spaces in schools.*

Community Health Workers

CUPE BC represents B.C.'s more than 3600 ambulance paramedics, and so we will briefly discuss the emergency healthcare sector. Although underfunding has been a chronic issue in all health sectors significant problems unique to CUPE's paramedics have been exacerbated by the funding shortages by the previous government. In addition to inadequate funding levels, paramedics across the province are carrying much of the burden of the ongoing opioid overdose crisis.

Suggestions put forward by the paramedics to improve the situation, including new staffing models, were ignored by the previous government. This underfunding affects

the ambulance service across the province. For example, a rural/remote station may have an unstaffed ambulance. Emergency calls in that region would then be redirected to the nearest available ambulance (which could be hours away) which then in turn would leave no ambulance in that region. In urban areas, the volume of calls is much greater than the staffing levels provided due to underfunding. After 16 years of a government that chose confrontation over collaboration in the emergency health sector, an increase to ambulance numbers is necessary to ensure that paramedics are available when and where they are needed. We are pleased to see the recent announcements of increased ambulances and paramedics, and look forward to continued progress on this issue.

Recommendation 20: *Continue to increase resources to paramedic services to ensure the safety of British Columbians.*

CUPE BC represents more than 1,300 community health workers across multiple health authorities – Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal Health, and Island Health. About 800 of our members work under the Health Sciences Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) collective agreement, and about 500 are employed under the Community Bargaining Association (CBA) contract. We represent a large variety of professions including clerical support clerks, environmental health officers, mental health workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, social workers, and many more.

We commend the government's commitment to addressing the low wages of workers in the Community Bargaining Association. The \$40 million of funding allocated to low-wage redress in the latest round of bargaining will help to address inequalities between CBA members and workers doing similar work in acute care. We hope that this funding will help to improve morale in this sector, where workers often feel undervalued, while improving recruitment and retention. As the government continues to increase health care provisions beyond traditional hospital settings, this recognition that workers in the community provide equally valuable work is key to ensuring that health care jobs remain attractive and decent.

Recommendation #21: *Continue to prioritize improvements in compensation for low-wage workers in the health sector.*

The community health sector is in urgent need of more funding for staffing, especially in-home health where workload is currently at crisis levels.

Unpaid overtime is systemic throughout community health. A workload survey we conducted in the Fall of 2017 demonstrated that this sector is dependent on staff working unpaid overtime to complete their duties. Eighty-four percent of HSPBA survey respondents and 73 percent of CBA survey respondents regularly work unpaid time during their breaks, and before and after work. In general, workers reported that managers are not willing or able to provide overtime when needed. As frontline workers in health, our members understand the importance of their work and find it challenging to leave work unfinished. Without adequate staffing or the availability of overtime,

workers feel pressured to sacrifice their own breaks, sometimes at the cost of their own health and well-being.

Furthermore, the quality of public services is suffering as a result of workload. Less than half of HSPBA members are satisfied with the level of service they can provide, and nearly 80 percent said that workload impacts quality of service.

Our Environmental Health and Licensing Officers for day care and adult care facilities reported only being able to respond to immediate demands and not having time to complete the routine checks required to ensure compliance with provincial regulations for health and safety.

The most significant burnout and workload stress is among our home health practitioners. Patients are being discharged from hospital and referred to home health without adequate consideration of staff available to provide care. This puts vulnerable patients at risk and causes moral distress for our members, who feel that this very serious issue is being overlooked. There are currently no case load limits and, as a result, practitioner caseloads are extremely unreasonable. For example, many of our Social Worker Case Managers, Occupational Therapists, and Physiotherapists have caseloads of more than 130 patients. More than 50 percent of our survey respondents in home health said they are not able to see patients within the prescribed timeframe. Furthermore, practitioners reported the frustration of only being able to respond to the immediate needs of and risks facing patients, even though they could support them in activities that would help them reach a full recovery if they had more time.

In addition to the unreasonable size of caseloads, patients are becoming more complex. More acute patients are being discharged from hospital sooner, and there has also been an increase in patients who are facing poverty, mental health, addiction and other vulnerabilities that make the provision of care more complex. In order for community health care and home care to be successful, to address significant recruitment and retention issues, and to ensure quality of care, adequate staffing needs to be provided.

Recommendation #22: Increase funding to increase staffing in community health, especially for practitioners in home health units, and implement case load limits.

Post Secondary Education Workers

CUPE BC represents approximately 15,000 workers in the Post-Secondary Sector. We represent workers in a wide range of classifications including teaching assistants, sessional instructors, facilities staff, event staff, library staff, clerical staff, maintenance workers, custodial staff, and more.

Total funding for the post-secondary sector has continued to decline since 2001. Total provincial funding for the sector in 2001-2002 was \$1.9 billion dollars. (In current dollars this would be \$2.54 billion). In 2017-2018 total government funding for the sector was just \$2.15 billion. After accounting for inflation, simply to match 2001-2002 funding levels, the government would need to spend approximately \$400 million more than it has currently allocated. University and colleges have expanded greatly over this same

period. While funding in the sector has fallen behind inflation, total expenses for colleges and universities have gone up immensely – more than 80 percent since 2002.

Chronic underfunding has put increasing pressure on staff as post-secondary institutions try to do more and more with less. Staff are faced with increased workloads, while their pay increases have not kept up with inflation.

As a result of the pressure to cut costs, jobs in the sector are becoming more and more precarious. For non-academic workers, as full-time regular staff retire institutions are not hiring replacement full-time regular staff. Instead, post-secondary institutions are increasingly relying on part-time and casual staff that often have limited access to benefits. Contracting-out has also become a significant issue in the sector for food and custodial services. Large corporations such as Compass, Sodexo, Chartwells, Best Cleaners etc. are being awarded contracts in many institutions across the province. These corporations pay low wages and use pending contract bids as an excuse not to improve poor working conditions.

Our academic workers are also very precarious. With tight budgets, post-secondary institutions have also been hesitant to hire tenured faculty and permanent teaching staff. Class sizes are growing, and teaching assistants, employed on temporary contracts, are being asked to play an increasingly significant role in core teaching functions and pressured to take on extremely high workloads. Post-Secondary institutions have also become over-reliant on under-paid contract sessional instructors, with limited or no job security, to expand the course offerings instead of using permanent teaching staff. These academic workers are extremely precarious, and many must face the disheartening reality that they may never be able to secure, what seem to be increasingly rare, tenured faculty positions.ⁱⁱ

These are significant concerns, since post-secondary institutions have been an important source of good jobs in communities throughout B.C., especially outside of the lower mainland.

Recommendation #23: *Restore post-secondary funding to 2001-2002 levels (in current dollars) and eliminate the present shortfall.*

As a result of underfunding, our post-secondary institutions are being forced to pursue private sources of funding. They are becoming more like 'education businesses' rather than public institutions serving the public good through educating our society. After 16 years under the BC Liberals, the Boards of Governors of our post-secondary institutions have been dominated by right-wing political appointments who have tried to make our post-secondary institutions more financially independent from government, with little regard for the transformative impact of the pursuit of private revenue has on the goals and aims of our public post-secondary institutions.

In 1995 government funding made up 74 percent of the operating revenues of universities in B.C. now it is less than 48 percent. Public universities in B.C. are officially

now less than 50 percent publicly funded. Community colleges are slightly better, but government funding as a proportion of total revenue has still dropped significantly – from 64 percent in 2001 to less than 57 percent in 2015.

The proportion of revenue that comes from fees and tuition has greatly increased since 2001. At universities in B.C., in 2001-2002, total tuition made up 26 percent of operating revenues; it now makes up over 43 percent of operating revenues. At community colleges in B.C., in 2001-2002 total tuition made up 22 percent of operating revenues, and now this has increased to more than 31 percent of operating revenues.

When students are treated as customers rather than citizens the priorities of post-secondary institutions change.ⁱⁱⁱ The emphasis in a ‘customer’ approach is to focus on what programs will be the easiest to sell, rather than a ‘citizen’ approach where the focus is on educating individuals who will contribute to building the society we want to live in. Also in a ‘customer’ or ‘corporate’ model the money spent on providing the services, in this case education, is reduced as much as possible to save costs. When the focus is on selling degrees, the quality of the education and the support services provided can be justifiably compromised in order to save costs. We have seen evidence this through cuts to student support services such as counselling, increased class sizes, and the increasing role of contract teaching staff rather than permanent faculty. It is imperative to prevent institutions from prioritizing profit over their purpose as public institution - to provide our communities with educated workers, and innovative research aimed at the betterment of society.

Recommendation #24: *Ensure that funding levels are high enough that post-secondary institutions remain majority government funded, and therefore public institutions, over the long-term.*

We commend the government’s decision to eliminate tuition fees for Adult Basic Education and English Language Learning, commitment to expanding the tuition waver program for former youth in care, and reduction of interest on student loans. These are extremely important steps in making post-secondary education more affordable and reducing barriers to those who already face the greatest obstacles.

We hope that the government will continue to reduce barriers facing students pursuing a post-secondary education. Tuition and other compulsory fees have doubled since the BC Liberals came into power in 2001. In 2001-2002 the average undergraduate tuition was \$2,527; in 2015-2016 it was \$5,964. B.C. currently relies too heavily on student loans and should offer more non-repayable student aid to students based on financial need.

Recommendation #25: *Decrease tuition, offer more non-repayable student aid, and eliminate interest on student loans.*

Tuition fees are especially exorbitant for international students. Recruitment of international students is now more about profit than it is about attracting international

talent, enriching our institutions through knowledge exchange, or to engaging in a global community of research and innovation.

On average, in Canada, international students pay three times the tuition fees of domestic students.^{iv} For example, in 2017 the tuition and fees for two semesters at SFU was about \$5,520 for domestic students, whereas for international students it was \$22,930 - more than 4 times higher. At UBC in 2017, tuition and fees for two semesters at UBC was about \$5,190 for domestic students, whereas for international students it was \$36,588— a shocking 7 times higher!

This is completely unfair and increasingly will restrict access to education in B.C. to the global elite who can afford it. This seriously compromises B.C.'s ability to attract talent, and to recruit students from a diversity of backgrounds.

In the context of chronic underfunding, as international tuition becomes a more and more important revenue stream, it could result in post-secondary institutions prioritizing international recruitment over domestic student recruitment. Furthermore, programming might become geared to what is easy to sell abroad rather than what our society needs. In a corporate-marketing governance model, recruiters are also more inclined to encourage students who are not qualified to apply, to exaggerate the quality of services offered, or to sell education on the basis that it is a stepping stone to permanent residency. The government needs to seriously consider the current strategy for international student recruitment to ensure that programs are achieving their intended goals, and to help prevent international students from being taken advantage of.

Recommendation #26: Amend the Tuition Fee Limit Policy to include the regulation of fees for international students.

Library Workers

CUPE BC represents more than 3700 library workers in more than 50 communities across the province. Provincial government funding for libraries was cut by nearly 20 percent in 2010 and funding has not increased since then. Restoring provincial funding to public libraries is critically important to ensure that libraries can continue to provide quality services in our communities throughout B.C.

Libraries provide essential and unique public services should not be overlooked. Their existence alone is a vital public statement that all people deserve access to knowledge and information and demonstrates our society's commitment to promoting democratic values and critical thinking. Libraries provide free access to life-long learning, which has become increasingly important as tuition for post-secondary education increases. They are centers for community building and important spaces for celebrating and promoting local arts and culture.

Libraries also play an important role in addressing the digital divide in B.C. through supplying free access to internet and technology. This is extremely important in our

society where the internet has become central to how we communicate and share information. Furthermore, online application forms are now the primary method of accessing many government services and programs including social assistance. Library workers play an important role in supporting library patrons in developing their digital literacy, and in many cases play a supportive role in assisting patrons in applying for government services and programs. Libraries provide the main access point to internet and technology for many who cannot afford high-speed internet or a computer at home.

Libraries also provide an important social safety net for vulnerable populations including the homeless, people struggling with mental health issues, seniors, and new immigrants.^v Libraries should receive funding, support, and resources to effectively respond to their role in addressing poverty on the front lines.^{vi}

Recommendation #27: Increase provincial grants to public libraries in B.C.

Libraries workers provide a vital service in our communities, yet library jobs are often precarious and poorly paid. Many library workers are part-time, do not have a regular schedule, and lack access to benefits such as extended health and pension. The large majority of library workers are women, and in general library workers have pay grids that are separate than other municipal workers in the same city and are paid less than other municipal workers with similar levels of responsibility and experience. Currently the average woman working full-time full-year jobs in Canada earn 74 percent of the annual earnings of the average man, and this gap has remained relatively stable over the last 10 years. This can be partially explained by the fact that that female workers are concentrated in industries and occupations where their duties parallel traditional gender roles. In order to reduce the gender-pay-gap, the systematic undervaluation of traditionally women's work needs to be addressed. The library sector is a great sector to begin addressing pay equity in B.C. and ensure that the quality of the service library workers provide is recognized by providing decent compensation and benefits.

Recommendation #28: Provide extra funding to libraries for the purposes of pay equity with other municipal workers.

Many indigenous communities in B.C. have little or no access to library services. Without specific agreements in place, residents of indigenous reserve communities may not have access to nearby municipal library services. The B.C. government should invest the staffing, training, and infrastructure necessary to ensure that indigenous communities on reserve have access to borrowing print materials, internet, and other digital and technological resources provided by libraries.

Recommendation #29: Specifically increase funding for Indigenous Communities to access library services and free internet.

ⁱ <http://bcemploymentstandardscoalition.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/BCESC-Workers-Stories-of-Exploitation-and-Abuse-July-2017.pdf>

ⁱⁱ CUPE 2017 - Quality Jobs, Quality Education, Better Futures: REPORT What We Heard About Precarious Work In the Post-Secondary Sector https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/report_townhalls_2017_05_18.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ See Brownlee reference above

^{iv} <http://cfs-fcee.ca/issues/international-students/>

^v <http://www.policynote.ca/public-libraries-are-becoming-the-new-social-safety-net/>

^{vi} <https://engage.gov.bc.ca/app/uploads/sites/242/2018/04/Canadian-Union-of-Public-Employees-British-Columbia-Library-Workers.pdf>