

FUND IT.

FIX IT.



**TACKLING BC'S STUDENT
AFFORDABILITY CRISIS**





STUDENTS WORKING TOGETHER

ABOUT THE BC FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

The British Columbia Federation of Students represents over 170,000 students at colleges, institutes, and universities in all regions of the province. The Federation represents full- and part-time students at the college, undergraduate, and graduate levels. Together these students advocate for a well-funded system of post-secondary education in BC that is affordable and accessible for all students.

The Federation's membership is comprised of:

Camosun College Student Society
Coast Mountain Students' Union
College of New Caledonia Students' Union
Douglas Students' Union
Emily Carr Students' Union
Justice Institute Students' Union
North Island Students' Union
Northern British Columbia Graduate Students' Society
Okanagan College Students' Union
Selkirk College Students' Union
Students' Union Okanagan of the University of British Columbia
Students' Union of Vancouver Community College
Thompson Rivers University Students' Union
Vancouver Island University Students' Union

Joined by:

British Columbia Institute of Technology Student Association
University of the Fraser Valley Student Union Society

207-245 East Columbia Street
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wearebcstudents.ca

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The advocacy goals of the BC Federation of Students are set democratically by student representatives at an annual provincial general meeting. The discussions held at that meeting and the resolutions that arise from those discussions inform the advocacy that the Federation takes on each year.

The recommendations in this document would create more access to financial assistance for low- and middle-income citizens, restore necessary funding to colleges and universities, and reduce financial barriers to education for all learners. These actions toward ensuring access to high-quality education are vital to the government's commitment to building a stronger BC with a dynamic, skilled workforce and will improve the lives of all British Columbians.

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Increase funding to the BC Access Grant to provide at least \$100 million in non-repayable financial aid annually in order to increase access to post-secondary education and skills training.

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDING AND FEES

Complete the post-secondary funding review and determine gaps in government funding, in particular for regional colleges and universities. Then provide an infusion of \$500 million annually.

Freeze tuition fees and develop a plan to progressively reduce tuition fees at public colleges, institutes, and universities to lessen the financial burden on students and their families.

Strengthen the Tuition Fee Limit Policy to ensure that institutions are not increasing fees beyond the prescribed limits in the form of new ancillary fees.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Amend the Tuition Fee Limit Policy to include regulation of fees for international students, capped at 2% annually, in order to ensure fairness, consistency, and predictability of international student tuition fees.

Release a new BC international education strategy that will provide sufficient supports for international students to assist in their cultural, social, and academic integration.

TRADES TRAINING

Develop an apprenticeship completion strategy which includes provisions for returning apprenticeship counsellors back to campuses.

INTRODUCTION

Middle and lower-income people and families have been facing an affordability crisis caused by record high inflation. British Columbians are reeling and scrambling to cover extra costs in all aspects of their lives, with no relief in sight. After an initial surge, the cost of groceries climbed 9.1% in June 2023, followed by an 8.5% increase in July.¹ Average monthly rent in the province now sits at \$2,622 and BC led the nation in month-over-month increase for August.¹¹ The BC government implemented several initiatives, as seen in Budget 2023, to support people and families struggling with cost of living increases: the renter's rebate tax credit, the expansion of the ICBC usage-based insurance discount, the increase in shelter amounts and earning exemption for families receiving income assistance and disability, as well as increases to family benefit amounts. All of these helps alleviate the pressure on British Columbians hardest hit by rising prices. However, students are an intersectional demographic that has been left out of the Government's inflation relief initiatives. The consequences of inaction to middle and lower-income students will be felt for the rest of their lives.

The financial burden on current and future students has never been higher. In addition to the rising cost of living, students – both new and returning – are facing increasing unaffordability and extra costs as well as paying for their education. Along with tuition increases, students must grapple with covering the increasing costs of textbooks, feeding themselves on and off of campus, increases in ancillary fees, upgrading technology for their academics, and covering transportation costs. Students are making these sacrifices in the hopes of learning, growing their skills, and participating in our economy, and we need to do everything possible to support their education and success. The cost of not supporting students is increased in attrition rates, at a time when education is the key to changing the financial fortunes of so many families.

For the last two decades, no student has ever expected their post-secondary experience to be a cakewalk – studying today requires dedication, sacrifice and hard work. But, in order for their sacrifice and hard work to pay off, attaining a post-secondary credential cannot crush students under an ever-increasing financial burden. We risk crippling the skilled workers of tomorrow by exacting even more sacrifices from students whose budgets are already very lean. Education is a crucial tool that ensures transferability of skills, opportunities for retraining, and the ability to keep up with the innovations of the future. British Columbia will continue to grapple with a growing shortage of workers in health care, childcare, skilled trades, and other sectors if it does not address the mounting financial pressures of obtaining all levels of post-secondary education.





It is imperative that British Columbians access the skills needed to fill labour market demands to weather the unstable, unpredictable economic realities of today.

The government has committed to building a stronger BC for all of us: aiming to help make life affordable, delivering services that people count on, and building a strong, sustainable, innovative economy. By focusing on affordable and accessible post-secondary education, the government can tackle poverty and inequality, contribute to good-paying jobs in all regions of the province, and ensure people from all backgrounds can have the opportunity to fully participate in the workforce.

BRITISH COLUMBIANS SUPPORT AFFORDABLE EDUCATION

90%

of British Columbians agree that making college and university education in BC more affordable for students is important.

87%

of British Columbians oppose increases in tuition fees; moreover, 50% support a reduction from current levels.

79%

of British Columbians support providing students from low- and middle-income backgrounds with grants.

60%

of British Columbians think government funding should make up a higher proportion of university funding.

STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Post-secondary students have disproportionately shouldered the weight of rising unaffordability in the province. As wages have fallen out of step with increased cost of living, students have seen their tuition more than double since 2001.^{III} Tuition fees will always remain the largest upfront barrier to attending and succeeding in post-secondary. For students who come from lower and middle-income families, tuition fees determine everything: where they go to school and what type of program they take. Especially when other costs of living are rising, financial consideration disproportionately influences key decisions around post-secondary education, outweighing aptitude, skill, passion, and critical labour market needs.

Enmeshed with the affordability crisis is the labour market shortage: the province forecasts that there will be over one million job openings in the next 10 years, and 78% of future jobs will require some form of post-secondary education or training.^{IV} Despite the necessity of post-secondary education or training to grow BC's economy, the current system of grants and loans still expects struggling families, living paycheck to paycheck to save for post-secondary studies. Many students and their families do not earn enough to save for post-secondary education, while still meeting basic financial obligations to sustain the household. The volatility of today's economy, compounded by the barriers to post-secondary education that existed before the pandemic, are widening the gaps between people who can afford education up-front and those who can't.

Grants, Not Loans

Budget 2020 introduced the BC Access Grant, the first comprehensive up-front, needs based, and non-repayable financial aid program for BC students in nearly twenty years. The Grant has helped to level the playing field for many forced to borrow to access post-secondary education; however, the limited funds available mean that the door remains closed for many. The Mandate Letter for the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills directs the expansion of the Grant by increasing eligibility to ensure that people can access the education they need for the jobs of the future. Students support the program's expansion, however we implore the Government to be mindful that its own investment in the grant program is slowly eroded, as institutions manage underfunding by increasing costs to students.

Additional funding for the BC Access Grant is well within the government's budget. Eliminating expensive and inefficient tax credits for tuition fees and other education-related costs would divert funds to a more beneficial program while not impacting the government's budget. The 2023 Budget indicates that the province plans on spending \$75 million on these tax credits, yet these funds don't increase up-front access to post-secondary education, where many people need the most help.^V

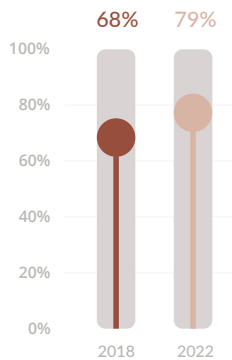
In times of uncertain employment, increasing access to post-secondary education has been a tried-and-true method to ensure that residents can train and retrain to remain relevant in an ever-changing labour market. A well-funded and expanded BC Access Grant will ensure more students can begin or continue their studies and assist workers to get the retraining they need to combat underemployment. Students who rely on financial assistance should not be saddled with more debt, as this hampers their ability to undertake big life events in the future; it is widely known that large amounts of student debt delays or prevents graduates from starting families, entering the housing market, purchasing a vehicle, and relocating for work opportunities in other communities. The BC Access Grant not only helps to reduce student loan debt at the end of a person's academic journey, it also opens the door to education that has previously been closed to many. At this time – when education is so integral to labour force participation – ensuring access for all British Columbians will help uplift everyone.

Support has Grown

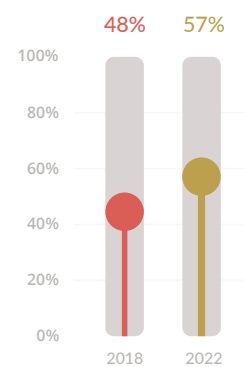


Support for financial aid and debt relief initiatives, including up-front grants programs and eliminating at least one year of tuition fees continues to be very strong amongst British Columbians. Public support for both initiatives has increased in recent years.

Providing up-front grants for students from low- and middle- income families



Eliminating tuition fees for at least one year of college and vocational/trades programs



RECOMMENDATION

Increase funding to the BC Access Grant to provide at least \$100 million in non-repayable financial aid annually in order to increase access to post-secondary education and skills training.

FUNDING FOR POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

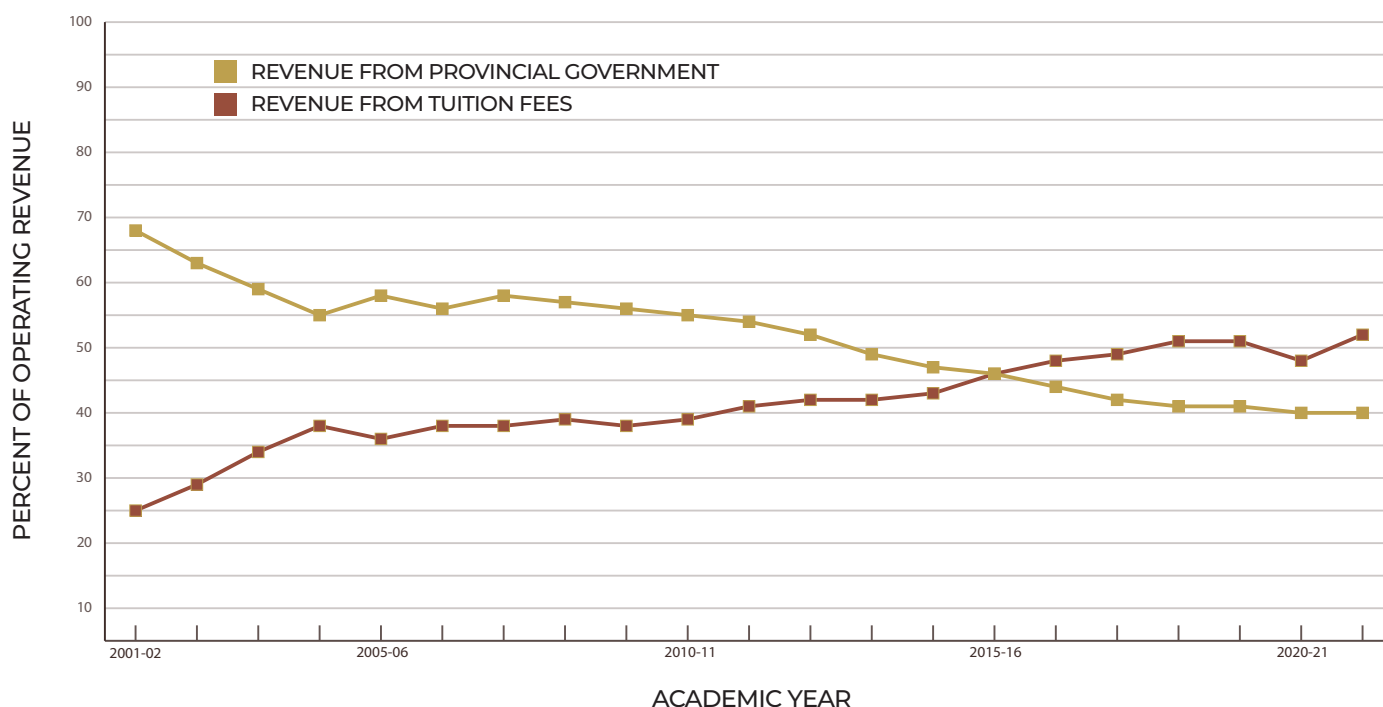
INVESTING IN BC'S FUTURE

The pandemic highlighted critical deficiencies in sectors that are key to economic growth and stability, like public health. Although major investments have been made to address some of these deficiencies, additional investments into the post-secondary system in BC are needed to ensure that we have the qualified, skilled labour force to solve the deficiencies of today and tackle the challenges of tomorrow. A prime example of the disconnect between public policy and funding for post-secondary education is the closure of the Bachelor of Science Nursing Program at Okanagan College in the middle of a nursing shortage. The Government announced 602 new nursing spots at 17 post-secondary institutions around the province^{vi} to address the 5,200 unfilled positions (as of spring 2022) and to support the training of 26,000 nurses needed by 2031;^{vii} the Government also announced that BC would be the first province to adopt nurse-to-patient ratios.^{viii} In addition, the Government announced \$100 million for “career laddering” for experienced nurses and healthcare workers, \$750 million for a new domestic and international nursing recruitment plan, and \$1.3 million in support for international nurses to gain credentials in BC.^{ix} In April of 2023, Okanagan College announced “the government notified [the institution] of its intention to consolidate the four-year Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)”,^x leaving only one program in the Okanagan educating nursing students. With ambitious goals of increasing patient care with the nurse-to-patient ratio, investments into career laddering opportunities for healthcare professionals and committing to having 26,000 new nurses in the province in under a decade, institutions like Okanagan College must be supported to play their part. Losing a nursing program in our communities during a nursing shortage hurts the future of healthcare in BC. It also hurts the students and faculty who make the Okanagan their home.^{xi}

Nursing students who planned and budgeted to study at Okanagan College will now have to pay an additional \$4,000 to finish their studies at another institution offering the program.^{xii} College education is a preferable option for many students, as it typically offers smaller class sizes, more one-on-one student support, education opportunities closer to rural communities and lower fees. Removing options for programming in a time of such dire need is detrimental to the province as a whole.

Sector-Wide Funding Review: More Funding Needed

BC's post-secondary sector funding has not recovered since the deep cuts made in the 1990s. The chronic underfunding of the 90s was exacerbated by the austerity measures implemented by the BC government in the wake of the 2008 market collapse and subsequent recession. Despite its goal of creating a world-class post-secondary education system, past BC governments have been remiss in adequately funding post-secondary institutions, leaving institutions scrambling to make up for annual shortfalls with cost-recovery programming and ancillary fees. For example, between 2000 and 2019, provincial funding decreased by 27% in BC;^{xiii} at the same time, institutions looked to create new ancillary fees and increase tuition fees, specifically leaning on international tuition fees to fill the budget gaps. In fact, institutional dependence on ancillary fees is so marked that for 2020-2021 lost ancillary revenue was one of the top 3 causes of lost revenue at colleges^{xiv} and universities^{xv} alike. Decades of massive divestment in BC's post-secondary education system has left the current generation of young people to pay the price as costs are being downloaded onto students amid the affordability crisis of today.



In recent years, the proportion of public funding to BC colleges and universities has dropped to 41.1% of general operating revenue and tuition fees now make up more than 50% of general operating revenue.^{xvi} Current levels of government funding are significantly lower compared to past levels. For example, in the 1980s, 80% of operational funding was the responsibility of the provincial government, and in the 1970s, the provincial government provided 90% of these funds.^{xvii} It is abundantly clear that the province's post-secondary education system needs significant investments to recover from decades of divestment in order to provide the students of today and of the future with levels of support that would be comparable to the support provided to those who attended college and university in past decades.

Compounding decades of public disinvestment is an antiquated funding formula that no longer provides sufficient financial resources for institutions to sustain meeting their primary teaching and training mission. The government mandated its Ministry to conduct a sector-wide funding review, which was carried out by then-Minister Anne Kang. Unfortunately, completing and publishing the results of the funding review were surprisingly absent as priorities in the mandate letter Minister Selina Robinson received. This oversight is a blow to the collaboration and participation of students who articulated what they and their communities needed from a public post-secondary system.

Though the findings and recommendations of the funding review have not been released, institutions and student unions continue to advocate for the completion of the process, as highlighted in the Budget 2024 Consultation Report. In addition to completing the funding review, the Report recommends that the provincial government implement an updated funding model that equitably distributes financial resources based on regional needs, ensures sufficient program funding to address labour needs, expands access to student supports like health counselling services, as well as enhancing financial flexibility for institutions to use resources more effectively. It is also crucial to acknowledge that an updated funding model will only be successful in increasing access to education and supporting today's students to become tomorrow's workforce if the Government commits new annual funds to the post-secondary education system and simultaneously takes action to reduce current tuition fees for all students.

Stronger Fee Regulation Needed

The lack of sufficient government funding has incentivized institutions to increase tuition and ancillary fees as much as possible. As a result, tuition fees in BC have more than doubled since 2001, outpacing inflation by every possible measure. Throughout this period, the cost of obtaining an undergraduate degree has increased by over \$15,000 in tuition fees alone.^{XVIII XIX}

The Tuition Fee Limit Policy has had a substantial moderating effect on fee increases since its implementation. However, the loopholes and limitations of this policy have allowed institutions to circumvent the rules for years. For example, in the 2016-17 academic year, Vancouver Island University^{XX} (VIU) and North Island College^{XXI} implemented new ancillary fees to pay for services that were previously covered by students' tuition fees. These new ancillary fees—which at VIU total almost one million dollars annually—are tuition fee increases by a different name and constitute an all-too-easy means to circumvent the government's Tuition Fee Limit Policy. British Columbians are struggling financially. The rising costs of tuition and a multitude of new ancillary fees, unaffordable housing, gas and food costs, and other rising costs are erecting barriers to people's ability to get reskilled and re-join the workforce.



RECOMMENDATION

Complete the post-secondary funding review and determine gaps in government funding, in particular for regional colleges and universities. Then provide an infusion of \$500 million annually.

Freeze tuition fees and develop a plan to progressively reduce tuition fees at public colleges, institutes, and universities to lessen the financial burden on students and their families.

Strengthen the Tuition Fee Limit Policy to ensure that institutions are not increasing fees beyond the prescribed limits in the form of new ancillary fees.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

A VITAL COMPONENT OF OUR POST-SECONDARY SYSTEM

International students come to Canada for an opportunity to access one of the top ranked countries for higher education globally. Yet two decades of stagnant or reduced core funding to BC's public post-secondary institutions has resulted in an over-reliance on ever-increasing fees charged to international students to make up budget shortfalls.

British Columbia hosts the second largest population of international students in Canada. In the 2012-13 academic year, the international student headcount in the province was 35,325, and by 2021-22 this number reached 81,545, an increase of 130%.^{xxii} Notably, much of the growth of international enrolment in the province has been seen in the college system, particularly in the North, the Kootenays, and Thompson Okanagan regions.^{xxiii} The steadily increasing international enrollment has resulted in an ever-growing dependency of institutions and communities on the international students who choose to study in BC.

International student tuition fees are not included in the Tuition Fee Limit Policy like domestic fees, and remain entirely unregulated. The lack of regulation is one of the main factors that allow international students to be used by institutions to balance their budgets, as they can increase international tuition fees by any amount at any time. Based on fees from 2022-23, international undergraduate students pay an average of 426% more for their academic year than domestic students.

This overreliance on international students as a source of revenue can be traced back to the 2010s, which marked a distinct shift in how the provincial government viewed international students in post-secondary education: Premier Christy Clark announced that her government would increase international student enrolment by 50% (an increase of 40,000 students) with the goal of replacing our aging population and increasing support to local economies through the paying of tuition fees, accommodations and living expenses. Throughout the decade, the government's coordinated effort to recruit international students evolved to focus on the sale of education at a profit to international students, which they identified would become a major component of the funding model for BC's public post-secondary education system. This paved the way for the overreliance institutions have on international student tuition fees to make up budget shortfalls that we see today. The slow and steady move away from institutions relying on government grants and instead depending on tuition fees for their operational funding has numerous negative impacts on the system and leaves the entire education system in precarity.

The volatility in this funding model was clearly demonstrated by the disproportionate loss of international enrolment and the equating effects on institutions' revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic, which further resulted in many institutions tabling a deficit budget. For example, Okanagan College lost 25% of its international students during the pandemic which roughly translated to 380 students.^{xxiv} Those 380 students resulted in a loss of over \$2.3 million dollars in revenue; in comparison, the college also lost 900 domestic students which resulted in a loss of \$2.0 million dollars.^{xxv}

International Students' Impact on the Economy and BC's Labour Force

In addition to tuition fees, international students invest vast sums into local economies across BC on staples such as housing, food, transportation, and entertainment. In a report by Canmac Economics Limited, in 2018 alone, the annual spending of international students in BC amounted to \$4.7 billion, created 53,493 jobs, and contributed \$5.0 billion to the provincial GDP.^{xxvi}

With the ever-increasing cost of living, and the housing issues in British Columbia, the province is becoming less attractive for international students to choose as a place of study. Though it may not seem significant, we believe that this downward trend is a result of the increasingly challenging conditions international students face in BC such as the high cost of living, high cost of tuition fees, lack of cultural supports on campus and institutional outcomes.

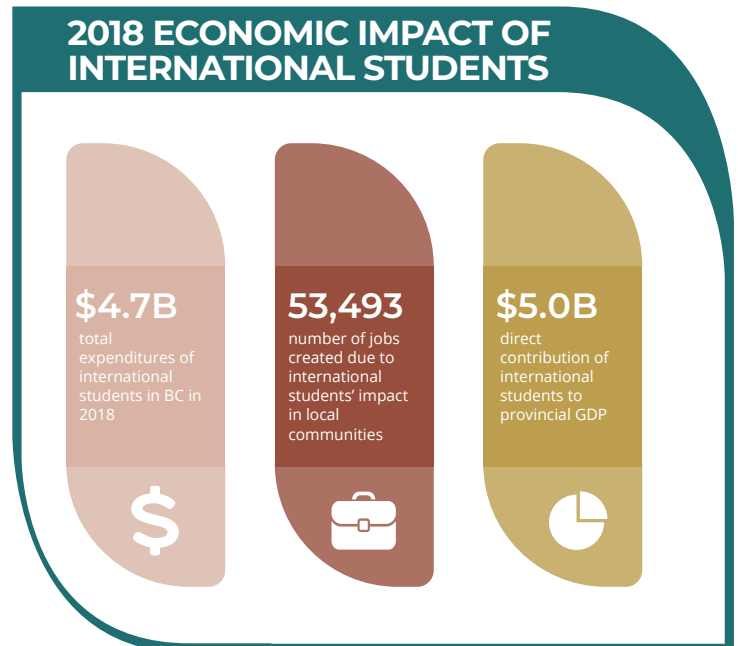
Decreasing enrollment during 2020 caused a loss of roughly \$7.3 billion in total student expenditures, leading to a total loss of \$7.1 billion from Canada; in BC there was a loss of \$1.2 billion to the provincial GDP.

When the post-secondary system relies primarily on international student funding, it is also at risk of failure for reasons outside of the control of administrators and governments. After seeing the devastating impacts of COVID-19 on public post-secondary institutions, we have the opportunity to improve the resiliency and financial stability of the post-secondary system. BC's post-secondary system is crucial in supporting the growth and strength of our economy. This government has announced its Future Ready Plan, with the goal of filling more than one million job openings over the next 10 years. The province must lean on immigration to fill labour shortages in major sectors including public health and trades. But, to do this we must invest in the post-secondary system. Institutions across BC need more funding to be strong enough to serve the social and economic needs of our province and local communities while remaining a desirable place for international students to study and want to remain beyond graduation.

International Students Deserve Predictability

One of the biggest financial challenges facing international students is the inability to budget reliably for their education. In addition to international fee increases being unregulated, there are no regulations governing when, how or in what manner institutions must apply fee changes for international students. Currently, British Columbia has a Tuition Fee Limit Policy in place for domestic students, limiting domestic tuition increases to 2% a year. International student tuition, however, does not have such a policy in place meaning that in any given year, fees may increase by any amount. These international student fee increases are used as a crude mechanism to balance institutional budgets. In December 2022, Emily Carr University of Art and Design increased tuition fees for incoming international students by 30% (almost \$5,000) and by 10% (roughly \$1,000) for returning international students.^{xxvii} This unsustainable model of increases often results in students struggling to stay in BC to finish their studies.

Exacerbating the unpredictability of the cost is the lack of requirements for fee increases, which allows institutions to implement substantial fee increases with only a few weeks of notice, leaving students scrambling to gather resources by whatever means necessary. Unlike domestic students, the consequences for international students who fail to assemble the payment for impromptu increases are grave: removal



from their courses and programs and removal from the country for violating the terms of their student visa. Moreover, the lack of predictability for international student tuition increases is not a recent problem. International student fees at universities in BC have risen 594% since 1991, from \$3,991 to \$30,903 annually in 2021, an exponential increase from their domestic peers. With the economic volatility post-pandemic, these increases acutely affect the international student population more now than ever.

The regulation of tuition and ancillary fees for international students would create fairness, consistency, and predictability to changes in international student fees. It would respect those travelling great distances and paying substantial fees to participate in our education system. It would also mean that pricing policies for this vital export would be set centrally by the BC government and not left to the individual board of governors, who regularly implement increases to offset projected budget shortfalls.

BC Needs an International Education Strategy

BC's international education strategy concluded in 2016; thus, developing a new strategy through consultation with students and key stakeholders in the sector is imperative. The new strategy should consider the full benefits of having international students participate in PSE and look beyond the economic contributions of international education to local economies and to institutional budget balancing. These considerations should include providing adequate services to international students inside and outside the classrooms, supporting integration into their host communities during and after their studies, and empowering them to amplify their contributions to the diversity of thought, opinion, and lived experience in the academic hemisphere. Research has shown that when institutions act to embrace diversity and create socially supportive school contexts, the social inclusion and academic success of not only international students, but of all students are improved.^{xxix}

International students who feel supported in their academic experience and who feel integrated into their local communities are much more likely to complete their studies and are more likely to stay after graduation to be an enduring presence in the labour force. An international education strategy should ensure international students have the potential to expand BC's job market while still delivering a positive return on investment fairly and ethically. Hence, a new strategy must focus on providing support that assists international students in their cultural, social, and academic integration and move away from the current overreliance on international tuition fees in order to adeptly weather any changes in the international education market.



RECOMMENDATION

Amend the Tuition Fee Limit Policy to include regulation of fees for international students, capped at 2% annually, in order to ensure fairness, consistency, and predictability of international student tuition fees.

Release a new BC international education strategy that will provide sufficient supports for international students to assist in their cultural, social, and academic integration.

TRADES AND SKILLS TRAINING

IT'S TIME TO BUILD BACK BC

Whether it is building infrastructure, getting goods from point A to point B, manufacturing essential products, or providing important services, the skilled trades and skilled workers are an essential part of BC's economic and social tapestry. In order to successfully confront the challenges posed by an ever-changing world, trades education and trades workers must be supported. These important jobs require skilled tradespeople who go through training, many at public post-secondary institutions.

An essential part of trades training is apprenticeships, a mix of classroom and paid on-the-job training. It teaches students all the theoretical parts of their trade with invaluable on-the-ground instruction in their chosen field. Apprenticeships are the historic foundations of trades and a proven method of high-quality skills training that works. Yet, when the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission (ITAC) was dissolved in 2003 and replaced with the Industry Training Authority (ITA), it took only 4 years to see apprenticeship completion rates drop by over 30%.^{xxx} The drop in completion rates is partly the consequence of the gutting of supports for apprentices, including the removal of trades counsellors from post-secondary institutions. Those counsellors helped apprentices or future apprentices navigate and successfully manage technical class offerings across institutions and the province.

In addition to removing the support for apprentices, evidence shows that the move away from compulsory trades has negatively impacted apprenticeship completion rates.^{xxxi} Also, with the modularization of trades, we have had a 'narrowing and shallowing' of the trades and have created a far less mobile workforce able to take their fulsome set of skills and apply it to new industries as the needs of the economy change.

Students in trades programs must have the same academic and professional support enjoyed by students on other post-secondary tracks. To ensure parity between the trades and other programs, the government must put forward an apprenticeship completion strategy that is student-centered and based on the evaluations and recommendations from independent assessments of the ITA system. In addition, any student-centered strategy must include provisions for apprenticeship counsellors embedded in the trades programs offered in each region and working with institutional partners who provide support to trades students who are not yet apprentices.

A photograph of a man with a beard and dark hair, wearing a grey t-shirt and a lanyard, speaking into a microphone. He is looking slightly to the right. In the background, another person is partially visible. The image is part of a larger graphic that includes a recommendation box.

RECOMMENDATION

Develop an apprenticeship completion strategy which includes provisions for returning apprenticeship counsellors back to campuses.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IS AN ESSENTIAL INVESTMENT FOR A STRONGER TOMORROW

Amid Canada's affordability crisis, the impact of record high inflation on the costs of living are squeezing students' wallets like never before. High tuition fees, coupled with unprecedented housing costs, and rising costs of food, gas and other expenses has students struggling to make ends meet, deciding between buying groceries or buying their textbooks, and working multiple jobs to get by. It is time to turn the page on the era of student financial struggle – it is not a right of passage, nor a badge of honour. Students are the future of British Columbia and must be set up for success; our province needs to be a leader in creating a more affordable post-secondary system that is accessible to all.

Education is a critical tool that the BC government must use to retrain workers, achieve ambitious goals in service provision, tackle critical shortages of healthcare professionals and skilled tradespeople and ensure all regions benefit from growth and development. Accessible post-secondary education is the vehicle to ensure that all British Columbians can participate more fully in the labour market and become more resilient in uncertain times. BC's economy is changing rapidly; it is imperative that British Columbians are equipped to build a brighter tomorrow by accessing the skills and knowledge to get them there.

Restoring necessary funding to the province's institutions – through annual investments of \$500 million is a vital step in allowing the government to provide a post-secondary education system that is accessible and of high quality. This, coupled with increasing access to financial assistance for low- and middle-income individuals, strengthening the Tuition Fee Limit Policy and extending its reach to include the regulation of international student tuition fees, and the development of strategies to support international students and trades students are key to reducing financial barriers to education for all learners. These actions are crucial to the government delivering on its commitment to building a stronger BC that makes life more affordable and allows our province to prosper.

By focusing on affordable and accessible post-secondary education, the government can tackle poverty and inequality, contribute to good-paying jobs in all regions of the province, and ensure people from all backgrounds can have the opportunity to fully participate in the workforce. Further, a robust and accessible system of high-quality post-secondary education is key for British Columbia to remain competitive and innovative into the future.

\$ 75M INCREASING ACCESS TO THE BC ACCESS GRANT

\$ (75M) SHIFTING FUNDING FROM TAX CREDITS TO THE BC ACCESS GRANT

\$ 500M INCREASING FUNDING TO INSTITUTIONS TO ENSURE QUALITY AND AFFORDABILITY

\$ 0 STRENGTHENING THE TUITION FEE LIMIT POLICY & INCLUDING INTERNATIONAL TUITION FEES

\$ 0 ACTING TO SAFEGUARD BC'S REPUTATION AS A DESTINATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

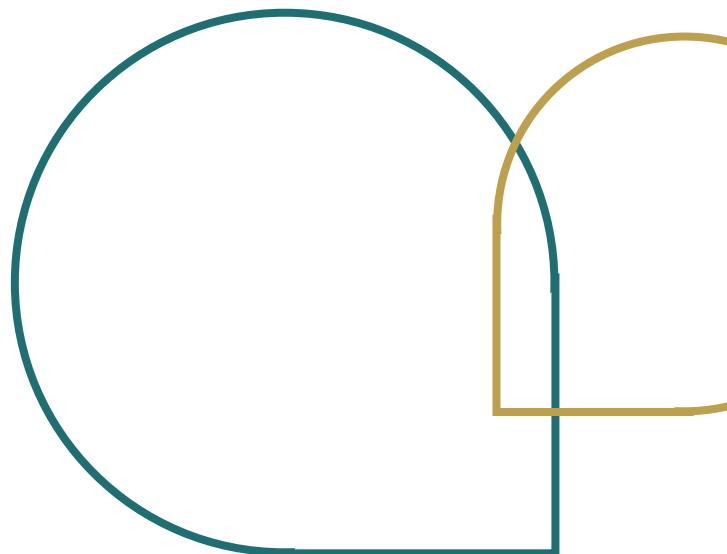
\$ 0 DEVELOPMENT OF AN APPRENTICESHIP COMPLETION STRATEGY

\$ 500M TOTAL ANNUAL INVESTMENT

ENDNOTES

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