



# Building Access, Building Canada

A Strategy for the Federal Government's Role in Post-Secondary Education

Presented to you jointly by



CASA | ACAE



UNION ÉTUDIANTE  
DU QUÉBEC

QUEBEC STUDENT  
UNION

# Executive Summary

Post-secondary education is a critical part of Canadian society, as it helps us form a highly educated workforce and socially engaged communities. Because of its importance, we must ensure that Canada's post-secondary education system is accessible and affordable to all, while remaining innovative and of the highest quality.

In recent years, major investments have been made to reduce the upfront costs of post-secondary education. Federal student assistance is now distributed in a more consistent, targeted and equitable fashion. Most importantly, more of that aid is now delivered in non-repayable grants to students in need. For many, these changes will prove invaluable.

It is in this environment that students are now calling on the government to shift focus to some of the persistent gaps that exist in federal post-secondary support. Targeted action in these areas will ensure that Canada provides equitable access to advanced education, while creating the best learning experience for those already enrolled.

## This will mean:

- » Effectively defining and supporting students with disabilities;
- » Providing needs-based financial assistance to students in graduate programs;
- » Cutting red tape to ensure international students can access a complete post-secondary education;
- » Committing to the scale and scope of support required by Canada's treaty obligations to Indigenous peoples; and
- » Fostering the development of, and ensuring access to, innovative educational materials.

Canada has created a post-secondary education system that is undoubtedly something to be proud of – but we must continue to do better. By acting to address the above-mentioned gaps, we will.

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# Better Supporting Students with Disabilities

Canadians with disabilities are strong and valuable contributors to the country's workforce and society. With nearly 14% of the Canadian population aged 15 or older reporting having a disability that limits their daily activities,<sup>1</sup> it is of the utmost importance that these individuals be given the supports needed to both attend and thrive in post-secondary education.

While Canada Student Grants (CSG) for Students with Permanent Disabilities help to offset the costs of necessary equipment and support services, eligibility for these programs remains overly restrictive. To be eligible for these grants, a student must have financial need and provide documentation that proves they have a serious, lifelong permanent disability.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this definition excludes students with other kinds of debilitating disabilities, including those with episodic or shorter term conditions, and many of those with mental health issues or illnesses.

Beyond this, the CSG for Students with Permanent Disabilities, currently valued at \$2,000 per student annually, has not increased since its introduction in 2009. This stands in contrast with other CSG programs, which were increased by 50% in Budget 2016. As the National Educational Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) explains, post-secondary is often more expensive for students with disabilities “owing to the costs associated with their disability (such as accommodations) and the

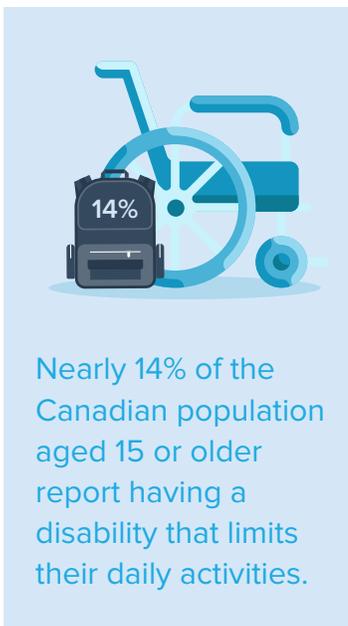


Post-secondary is often more expensive for students with disabilities “owing to the costs associated with their disability (such as accommodations) and the fact that many students with disabilities take an extended period to complete their education.”

fact that many students with disabilities take an extended period to complete their education.”<sup>3</sup> Considering the significant rise in employment and income levels for those persons with disabilities who have a post-secondary degree,<sup>4</sup> it is imperative that we act.

## Recommendations:

- » CASA recommends the federal government increase the Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities by 50%, at an estimated additional cost of \$43 million per year. CASA further recommends the CSLP undertake an official review of its definition of “permanent disabilities,” to ensure that it meets the diverse needs of students.



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1 Matthew Till, Tim Leonard, Sebastian Yeung and Gradon Nicholls, *A Profile of the Labour Market Experiences of Adults with Disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years and older, 2012* (Statistics Canada, December 3, 2015). Accessed online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2015005-eng.htm>

2 *Apply for Severe Permanent Disability Benefit* (Employment and Social Development Canada). Accessed online: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/student-financial-aid/student-loan/student-loans/student-loans-permanent-disability-benefit.html#severe>

3 *Enhancing Accessibility in Post-Secondary Education Institutions: A Guide for Disability Service Providers* (National Educational Association of Disabled Students, 2012). Accessed online: [http://www.neads.ca/en/norc/eag/eag\\_en.pdf](http://www.neads.ca/en/norc/eag/eag_en.pdf)

4 Till, Leonard, Yeung and Nicholls, *A Profile of the Labour Market Experiences of Adults with Disabilities among Canadians aged 15 years and older, 2012*.



# Creating a Canada Student Grant for Graduate Students

In a world that demands the skills of highly trained master's and PhD graduates, Canada cannot afford to create barriers to advanced study. Unfortunately, the fact that Canada Student Grants (CSG) remain unavailable to graduate students creates just that.

In 2016, the federal government redirected student aid funding away from tax credits and into the CSG program, which offers up-front, non-repayable aid to students with financial need at the college and undergraduate level. While this move laudably shifted funds to those undergraduate and college students who needed it most, graduate students saw their aid clawed back.

Currently, graduate students are ineligible for Canada Student Grants and have lost out on the assistance the tax credits provided. As a result, the net costs of graduate studies have increased substantially, dissuading some from pursuing it at all. In fact, four in ten students report financial concerns and debt impacting their decision on whether to continue their education following a Bachelor's degree.<sup>5</sup>

Additionally, while a small number of graduate students receive research scholarships from the Tri-Agencies, these awards only covered 2,500 students, or approximately 2% of master's students, in 2012.<sup>6</sup> Given the lack of financial support for students past the undergraduate level, it is no surprise that Canada is falling behind peer competitor countries in producing PhD graduates.<sup>7</sup>

## 4/10

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By expanding eligibility to Canada Student Grants, the government will ensure that all those with the desire and drive to pursue graduate degrees can afford to do so.

### Recommendation:

- » CASA recommends the federal government create an up-front, non-repayable Canada Student Grant for graduate students with financial need at an estimated cost of \$58 million per year.



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5 *2015 Graduating University Student Survey: Master Report* (Canadian University Survey Consortium, July 2015). Accessed online: [http://www.cusc-ccreu.ca/CUSC\\_2015\\_Graduating\\_Master%20Report\\_English.pdf](http://www.cusc-ccreu.ca/CUSC_2015_Graduating_Master%20Report_English.pdf)  
6 *Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's Program* (Natural Science and Engineering Research Council, August 2016). Accessed online: [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSM-BESCM\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSM-BESCM_eng.asp)  
7 *International Rankings: PhD Graduates* (Conference Board of Canada, March 2013). Accessed online: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/education/phd-graduates.aspx>



# International Student Study Permits and Co-ops

International students add immeasurable value to the quality of post-secondary education and to Canadian society. The diverse perspectives they bring to our classrooms, social groups and workplaces have helped us build the inclusive and innovative Canada we are today. International students and their families also invest significant sums to come study here, contributing \$11 billion annually to the economy and supporting an estimated 122,000 jobs.<sup>8</sup>

Considering these facts, it is in Canada's best interest to provide the very best education possible for international students, part of which involves offering co-op and internship opportunities. Unfortunately, while a student study permit allows international students to work up to 20 hours a week, it does not permit them to participate in co-ops or internships. Instead, international students must apply for a separate work permit, which stays valid for only one year. This makes it difficult for international students to benefit from the complete post-secondary experience.

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Average processing times for co-op or internship work permits are nearly three months.

On top of this, these restrictions hinder Canada's ability to keep these diverse and highly educated individuals in the Canadian workforce after graduation. One of the clearest pathways to employment for new graduates is to have practical work experience in their field. When faced with a disappointing lack of work opportunities, international students often opt to leave the country while Canadian companies starve for talent. Allowing international students to more easily access co-op and internship opportunities will help Canada to both foster and retain their talent.

### Recommendation:

- » CASA recommends the federal government allow international students to do an internship or co-op under their study permit rather than requiring them to get a separate co-op or intern work permit.

<sup>8</sup> *Economic Impact of International Education in Canada – An Update. Final Report* (Vancouver: Roslyn Kunin & Associates, Inc., July 2016), iii. Accessed online: [http://www.international.gc.ca/education/assets/pdfs/Economic\\_Impact\\_International\\_Education\\_in\\_Canada\\_2016\\_Update.pdf](http://www.international.gc.ca/education/assets/pdfs/Economic_Impact_International_Education_in_Canada_2016_Update.pdf)



# Meeting Canada's Obligations to Indigenous Learners

While Budget 2017's \$90 million in new funding for the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) was encouraging, additional investments are needed to better support First Nations and Inuit learners. Years of a 2% cap on the program have left too many eligible students without funding and many more whose funding is insufficient to support the costs of their education. CASA believes the federal government must continue to enhance its support of PSSSP by investing more money per eligible student.

From 2004-05 to 2013-14, the overall number of students supported by PSSSP declined, while the Indigenous youth population grew by 30%.

The per-student expenditure must be raised to keep pace with significant overall increases in the cost of post-secondary. From 2004-05 to 2013-14, during which time the 2% cap on PSSSP was in effect, tuition grew by 1.7% above inflation.<sup>9</sup> During that same period, the overall number of students supported by PSSSP declined, while the Indigenous youth population grew by 30%.<sup>10</sup> Years of underfunding has left a backlog of eligible students without access to PSSSP. Per the Assembly of First Nations, there are 18,261 students who use PSSSP and an additional 36,901 who are eligible for the program.<sup>11</sup>

## Post-Secondary Student Support Program

18,261  
USE PSSSP

36,901  
OTHERS ARE ELIGIBLE

Canada needs to take steps, with a sense of urgency, to adequately address the institutional inequalities Indigenous peoples face. Investing in Indigenous student access to post-secondary is a sound investment, and it is the right thing to do.

### Recommendation:

- » CASA supports the Assembly of First Nations' recommendation that the per-student expenditure for PSSSP be increased from \$13,407 to \$17,307 for 18,261 current and 36,901 eligible students, for a total PSSSP budget increase of \$2.1 billion over three years.

<sup>9</sup> *Federal Spending on Postsecondary Education* (Ottawa: Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, May 2016). Accessed online: [http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2016/PSE/PSE\\_EN.pdf](http://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca/web/default/files/Documents/Reports/2016/PSE/PSE_EN.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> *Federal Spending on Postsecondary Education*.

<sup>11</sup> *2018 Pre-Budget Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance* (Assembly of First Nations, August 4, 2017). Accessed online: <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/FINA/Brief/BR9081067/br-external/AssemblyOfFirstNations-e.pdf>



# The Importance of Fair Dealing for Students

As the review of the *Copyright Act* approaches, CASA and the Quebec Student Union (QSU) strongly believe that fair dealing has proven crucial to making post-secondary education more affordable and accessible. In an era where information is changing rapidly, the ability to fairly use and distribute the most up-to-date content for educational purposes is vital.

Fair dealing is an exception to copyright infringement set out in the *Copyright Act*,<sup>12</sup> which allows the use of a copyrighted work without explicit permission from or payment to the copyright owner, in specific circumstances. In an educational context, fair dealing grants post-secondary institutions, educators and students the flexibility to fairly access and use copyrighted work to enhance their education. Such works may include photos or videos shown in class, book excerpts, and other valuable learning materials.



Unfortunately, some have accused fair dealing protections of decreasing revenue for publishers of textbooks and course packs. Available data does not support this assertion. In fact, educational titles were one of “the top two contributing commercial categories” in domestic book sales in 2014.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, average household spending across all types of books has been in decline since 2005, well before educational fair dealing was added to the *Copyright Act* in 2012.<sup>14</sup>



Canada needs a balanced copyright system that encourages content creation while also protecting the rights of those who access it.

In short, students understand that respecting copyright and paying for educational content is important, but they also deserve fair access to content. As both users and creators, students recognize that Canada needs a balanced copyright system that encourages content creation while also protecting the rights of those who access it.

## Recommendations:

- » CASA and QSU recommend preserving education as a component of fair dealing under the *Copyright Act*, and preserving the existing exceptions to copyright infringement for educational institutions.

<sup>12</sup> *Copyright Act*, RSC 1985, c C-42 [Copyright Act], ss 29–29.2. Accessed online: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-42/page-9.html#h-26>

<sup>13</sup> *Book Publishing Industry 2014* (Statistics Canada, 2016). Accessed online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/160519/dq160519e-eng.htm>

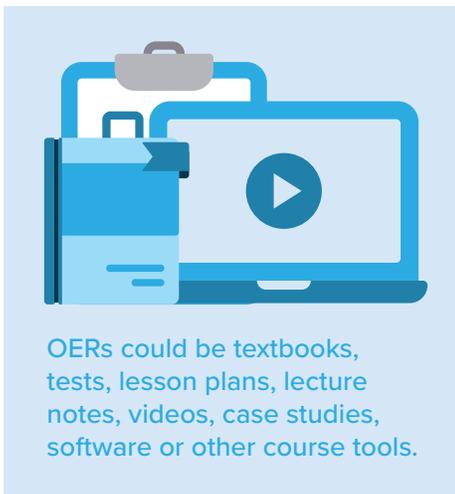
<sup>14</sup> *Book Sales are Dropping* (Statistics Canada, 2016). Accessed online: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-402-x/2011000/chap/culture/culture02-eng.htm>



# Developing Open Educational Resources (OERs)

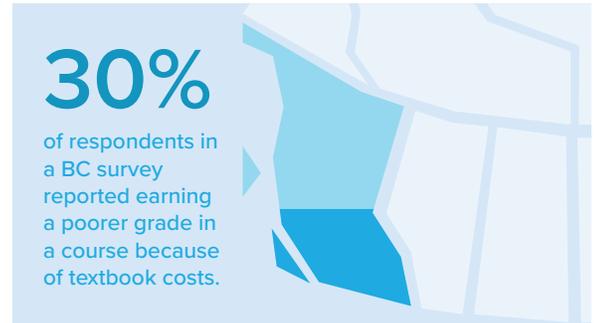
Part of a good quality education involves students being able to access high quality educational materials that complement their courses. As it stands, students are struggling to afford these materials, with 54% of students in BC reporting having not purchased a required textbook at least once.<sup>15</sup> Open educational resources (OERs) offer a solution to this problem.

OERs are “teaching, learning and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others.”<sup>16</sup> For example, OERs could be textbooks, tests, lesson plans, lecture notes, videos, case studies, software or other course tools. Because they are affordable and highly adaptable, this innovative learning tool greatly benefits both students and educators.



Notably, OERs save students money while supporting student success. In British Columbia (BC), a provincial grant program supporting OERs has helped over 40,000 students save more than \$4 million since 2012.<sup>17</sup> This is significant, especially considering that 30% of respondents in a BC survey reported earning a poorer grade in a course because of textbook

costs.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, CASA recommends federal action to support the development of OERs which, in turn, will empower producers of Canadian educational content.



The federal government should play a role in supporting the development of OERs, as increasing access to varied information sources and learning materials helps more Canadians to obtain a high quality and well-rounded post-secondary education.

## Recommendations:

- » CASA recommends that the Tri-Agencies create a pilot grant, at an estimated cost of \$8 million annually, that provides funding for graduate students and faculty to develop OERs. CASA is also recommending the Tri-Agencies explore creating an online repository of OERs developed with support from their grant.

<sup>15</sup> Rajiv Jhangiani and Surita Jhangiani, “Investigating the Perceptions, Use, and Impact of Open Textbooks: A Survey of Post-Secondary Students in British Columbia,” *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning* 18, no. 4 (June 2017): 172-192. <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/3012/4214>

<sup>16</sup> *Education/OER* (Creative Commons). Accessed online: <https://creativecommons.org/about/program-areas/education-oer/>

<sup>17</sup> *Open Textbook Stats, Known adoptions in B.C.* (BC Campus OpenED). Accessed online: <https://open.bccampus.ca/open-textbook-stats/>

<sup>18</sup> Jhangiani and Jhangiani, “Investigating the Perceptions, Use, and Impact of Open Textbooks: A Survey of Post-Secondary Students in British Columbia,” 172-192.



# Summary of Recommendations



**CASA recommends** the federal government increase the Canada Student Grant for Students with Permanent Disabilities by 50%, at an estimated additional cost of \$43 million. CASA further recommends the CSLP undertake an official review of its definition of “permanent disabilities,” to ensure that it meets the diverse needs of students.

*\$43 Million*



**CASA recommends** the federal government create an up-front, non-repayable Canada Student Grant for graduate students with financial need at an estimated cost of \$58 million per year.

*\$58 Million*



**CASA recommends** the federal government allow international students to do an internship or co-op under their study permit rather than requiring them to get a separate co-op or intern work permit.

*Administrative  
Costs*



**CASA recommends** that the per-student expenditure for PSSSP be increased from \$13,407 to \$17,307 for 18,261 current and 36,901 eligible students, for a total PSSSP budget increase of \$2.1 billion over three years.

*\$700 Million*



**CASA and QSU recommend** preserving education as a component of fair dealing under the *Copyright Act*, and preserving the existing exceptions to copyright infringement for educational institutions.

*No  
Charge*



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*\$8 Million*

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*\$809 Million  
per year*

# CASA's Members



Canadian Alliance of Student Associations  
Alliance canadienne des associations étudiantes

## About CASA

Established in 1995, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, national student organization composed of 22 student associations representing 255,000 post-secondary students from coast to coast. CASA advocates for a Canadian post-secondary education system that is accessible, affordable, innovative, and of the highest quality.

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## About QSU

The Quebec Student Union's mission is to defend the rights and interests of the student community, of its member associations, and of their members, by promoting, protecting, and ameliorating the conditions of students and those of local and international communities.

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